



Cooperative  
Research  
Australia

**CRA's submission to the Review of  
Australia's Higher Education System -  
Terms of Reference  
(Dec 2022)**

*Cooperative Research Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands across Australia upon which our members operate.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.*

**For further enquiries contact:**

Jane O'Dwyer

Chief Executive Officer

Cooperative Research Australia

Level 1, 33 Allara Street

Canberra ACT 2601

02 6260 3988

[www.cooperativeresearch.org.au](http://www.cooperativeresearch.org.au)

## Executive Summary

Cooperative Research Australia (CRA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Department of Education's Review of Australia's Higher Education System – Terms of Reference.

CRA commends the Australian Government on its commitment to drive lasting reform in Australia's higher education system that meets the current and future needs of the nation, and the targets to achieve this.

CRA is the voice of industry-research collaboration and advocates for the translation of research into commercial, economic, social, and environmental outcomes that benefit all Australians. Our members form a lynchpin in the Australian innovation system and are focused on creating new products, services, industries, and value in our economy. CRA represents Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), CRC Projects (CRC-Ps), post-CRC entities, and universities as well as other industry-research collaborative entities, associated businesses, alumni and professionals.

CRA has focused on the following key areas for review:

- Meeting Australia's knowledge and skills needs, now and in the future
  - Through an ecosystem view
  - Through development of a highly skilled workforce
- Delivering new knowledge, innovation and capability

Cooperative Research Australia is committed to working collaboratively with the Australian Government to build an education system that ensures a productive and prosperous country for all Australians. We are open to facilitating a platform for further consultation and/or clarification with our members on any of the points.

## Recommendations

Meeting Australia's knowledge and skills needs, now and in the future

### **Through an ecosystem view:**

CRA believes that the review of Australia's higher education system, should recognise that the translation of research occurs across portfolios and funding streams and across States.

We as a nation will better harness existing investment and expertise by facilitating greater collaboration across programs and entities. This can be done by taking an ecosystem view, rather than seeing entities and programs in isolation.

The review would benefit from exploring the interactions between those programs that support research translation with a view to identifying ways to build greater efficiency and ability to move through the system.

### **Through development of a highly skilled workforce:**

CRA believes that the review should consider in its recommendations how to develop a local highly skilled workforce while also attracting and retaining international talent.

Australia needs to create better career pathways that appeal talented people to undertake the training needed for the high-skilled jobs that contribute to the Australian industrial transformation. An ecosystem approach unlocks greater career potential and pathways for very highly skilled workers and offers greater non-academic opportunities for research-trained workers.

We also need to incentivise and encourage businesses to recognise the benefit of employing and investing in staff with HDR qualifications as prospective drivers of innovation and growth for their business through mechanisms such as the R&D Tax Incentive.

As to international talent, Australia exists in a global talent market, where we face real and immediate challenges in attracting and retaining a very highly skilled workforce. The recent impacts of COVID-19 international border closures have exacerbated the challenge of attracting the most talented prospective HDR scholars and industry-focused researchers to Australia.

Speeding up and simplifying the process for HDR graduates to take up permanent residency, and further Australian citizenship, would make our country a more attractive destination, not only to study, but to build a lifelong career that sums to Australian productivity.

### *Delivering new knowledge, innovation and capability*

The Terms of Reference identify the importance in supporting a system of university research to ultimately drive greater commercial returns. While CRA commends such a vision, we also believe that the review would benefit from incorporating how translation and research can drive economic, social and environmental returns, as opposed to solely commercial outcomes.