

Policy submission

Submission to the Australian Research Council Open Access Policy Update 2025

August 2025

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The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (the Academy) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that brings together the multidisciplinary expertise of our nation's leading thinkers to provide practical, evidence-based advice on important social issues facing society.

As the pre-eminent organisation in Australia representing excellence across the social science disciplines, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the Australian Research Council (ARC) Open Access Policy Proposed Policy Updates 2025.

Introduction

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (the Academy) recognises that Open Access supports the dissemination and uptake of research and scientific knowledge to deliver public value and maximise the impact of Australian research. Broadly, the Academy welcomes the proposed changes to the ARC Open Access Policy. Noting the complexity of implementing some of the proposed changes, we offer comments for further consideration.

To discuss any matters raised in this response, please contact Dr Honae Cuffe, Policy Director on 0434 636 748 or email honae.cuffe@socialsciences.org.au.

Enhancing the impact and efficiency of public expenditure on research

The Academy welcomes the explicit encouragement that authors and institutions adopt a rights retention clause. Rights retention enshrines the principle that publicly funded research should be accessible the public and reusable in research, education, industry and civil society without additional fees or permissions, thereby using existing public expenditure on research more efficiently.

The Academy notes, however, that Australia's publishing landscape is complex, comprising various intellectual property laws and university policies on intellectual property ownership and authorship. While many universities in Australia attempt to adopt rights retention, sector-wide consistency on how they do so does not exist. This can make it challenging for staff to negotiate contracts that are compliant with Australian university Open Access and ARC Open Access Policy. The Academy therefore draws attention to the mechanisms necessary to support Open Access practices that reduce university compliance and administrative costs and in line with ARC mandates, such as the development of standardised rights retention clauses.

Supporting researchers to fulfil their obligations

The Academy welcomes the proposed continued inclusion of article processing costs as an allowable expense through National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) funding. This inclusion is particularly significant given the current review and proposed changes to the NCGP, which will give greater focus to early career researchers, and the need to ensure ARC Open Access mandates are not prohibitively expensive for researchers in the early, precarious stages of their career.

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights

The Academy particularly welcomes the explicit reference to consideration of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights (ICIP) and, albeit only implied, the broader movement towards integrating Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) into Australia's existing research infrastructure.

Requirements relating to consultative approaches, determining ownership and access conditions, acknowledgement of ICIP, and research outputs demonstrate a clear commitment to researcher compliance and institutional accountability to First Nations peoples. The Academy suggests that consideration be given to the costs of managing ICIP and how this is recognised in grants funding policies.

The Academy welcomes progress towards developing an ARC FAIR Policy, acknowledging that the ARC will consult on the FAIR policy separately to Open Access. However, we take this opportunity to call attention to and advocate for the inclusion of the [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#) alongside FAIR. The CARE Principles recognise that access to data and respectful use of data is central to First Nations' wellbeing and self-determination, as well as a research sector that uphold First Nation peoples' rights. In the [Decadal Plan for Social Science Research Infrastructure 2024-33](#), the Academy underscored the importance of consistent integration of IDG, IDS, ICIP and the CARE Principles within the research sector by establishing national, standardised processes applicable to all research work and outputs concerning or affecting First Nations peoples.

The current review of ARC Open Access Policy and other programs of work relating to data access presents an opportunity for the ARC to develop policies for publicly funded research that embrace the goals of the Australian IDS movement and will transform the research sector.