



Australian Historical Association

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Arts Funding, Arts NSW

As Australia's peak body of academic historians, the Australian Historical Association greets the recommendations of the recent review by Arts NSW of its prestigious Fellowships and Scholarships program with approval and apprehension.

We acknowledge that the State Government intends to renew its commitment to the researching and writing of History, albeit with adjustments that reduce the number of Fellowships from three to two, and with a substantial reduction in funding from \$55,000 to \$40,000. Although we are pleased and relieved to learn that the broader fellowship program will be maintained without reductions in overall funding, as an organisation vitally interested in historical research the AHA regrets the apparent reallocation of funding from the history sector to other sectors.

We welcome the continuation of the 'History Fellowship' and the broadening of its scope to include 'mid-career' historians, who we know are often overlooked in many of the funding opportunities available to members of our profession.

We also welcome the establishment of a second biennial History Fellowship targeted at 'emerging historians', funded equally and complementary to the Fellowship for mid-career and 'established' historians. It is, however, concerning that this appears to replace, rather than add to, the existing Archival Research Fellowship.

The Review considers the Archival Fellowship 'specialist' in its focus on research conducted in State Records, but we must note the centrality of the State Records collections to much of the best research undertaken and produced in this State. While we understand that State Records technically sits outside the policy priorities and responsibilities of Arts NSW, the separation of History Fellowships and archival research at State Records is extremely unfortunate, all the more so given the difficulties and damage to historical research caused by recent funding cuts to State Records. We strongly urge that this Fellowship be restored in some form in order to encourage greater use of this very precious public resource.

Finally, we are very concerned by the proposed discontinuation of the 'Indigenous History Fellowship'. Again, the Review appears to deride this award as 'specialist' in nature, suggesting further that the demand for it has been limited in the past, and that such opportunities are more appropriately offered by tertiary institutions and the history sector. We suggest that the particular and specialist focus of this award underlines its importance, and we draw attention to the very fine research that has been conducted under its auspices in recent years, when it has also served to provide invaluable support for a number of leading Aboriginal historians. While the tertiary and history sectors do maintain various programs to support Indigenous historians, we submit that the precious and high-profile support of Arts NSW has been both a credit to the State Government and a vital service to our sector. We ask that the Indigenous History Fellowship be maintained in recognition of its role in enhancing and empowering Indigenous history scholarship.

Dr David Andrew Roberts
Prizes Officer
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