



AHA Statement on Marsden Fund cuts to Humanities Research Funding

The Australian Historical Association is dismayed by the New Zealand government's decision to cut funding to humanities and social science researchers (HASS) via the Marsden Fund. This decision removes New Zealand's only significant and focused government funding for humanities and social sciences.

On 4 December 2024, Judith Collins, New Zealand's Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology, [announced](#) that the Marsden Fund's social science and humanities panels would be disbanded. She claimed that the focus of the fund would shift to 'core science', arguing that 'real impact on our economy will come from areas such as physics, chemistry, maths, engineering and biomedical sciences.'

This is a dangerous, short-sighted view which ignores the economic and social value of humanities research. As democracies around the world face intersecting crises of mis- and disinformation, loss of trust in institutions, and growing social polarisation, the need for humanities and social science research is more urgent than ever. What's more, this decision overlooks the fact that the arts and creative sector is [the fastest growing sector in the New Zealand economy](#), belying the Minister's claim that it is STEM only that has a 'real' economic impact.

Further, these cuts will have a deeply damaging impact on the teaching of the humanities and social sciences in New Zealand. Access to up-to-date, dynamic, and relevant research is key to teaching and learning at university. Disbanding funding schemes for humanities and social science research denies New Zealand university students the most rigorous and relevant education possible.

Researchers in the humanities and social sciences ask critical questions about the past and the present that not only develop our understanding of humanity, but also provide crucial context to research undertaken in science, engineering, mathematics, and health. To relinquish this funding is to weaken the research and innovation also underway in STEM. It also drastically limits the possibilities for international collaboration, communication, and cooperation, projects that are of prime importance in our current climate of social, cultural, and political division.

The AHA stands in solidarity with our New Zealand colleagues in their fight against these cuts, and implores the New Zealand government to reverse its decision.

Contact:

*Professor Michelle Arrow, FASSA
President, Australian Historical Association
michelle.arrow@mq.edu.au*

9 December 2024