



Australian
Historical
Association

Australian Historical Association Statement on Recent Political Interference in ARC Grants

The Australian Historical Association expresses its staunch opposition to political interference in Australian Research Council grants. Education Minister Jason Clare's recent direction to the ARC to 'investigate' Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah's research represents a new kind of political interference in ARC grants.

In 2023, Education Minister Jason Clare strengthened the ARC's governance arrangements to prevent Ministers vetoing ARC grants that they 'didn't like the title of'. This followed several incidents where Ministers had intervened to prevent the funding for several research grant applications that had been approved through the ARC's rigorous peer review process. These Ministerial vetoes were acts of arbitrary interference on political grounds, undermining the integrity of the peer review process and the expertise of the College of Experts, and the AHA expressed its [absolute objection](#) to these interferences.

Minister Clare's action to remove the Ministerial veto was welcomed by the Australian academic community, including the Australian Historical Association. On 21 March 2024, he declared: 'I promised to end the days of Ministers using the ARC as a political plaything and today, that's what we're doing.' However, in directing the ARC to investigate Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, Minister Clare has created a new form of arbitrary political interference in research, one seemingly triggered by an Opposition and media campaign against an academic, and directed at a project already funded and in progress.

The AHA condemns the investigation of grant recipients beyond the existing reporting requirements. It calls on the Minister to reaffirm his commitment to ending such political interference in order to ensure the integrity of the ARC and its independent, peer-review processes.

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