



Australian Government

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

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Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

cc. CRN@innovation.gov.au

Dear Minister

I am pleased to provide you with the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council's (IHEAC's) submission in response to the Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) program discussion paper.

As you noted in your address to Council on 22 February, while the number of Indigenous enrolments in PhD programs has increased in recent years, Indigenous doctoral candidates represent less than one per cent of all students enrolled in doctoral degree programs in Australian universities. In addition, although Indigenous PhD completions increased between 2002 and 2007, less than half of one per cent of all graduating PhDs in this period were Indigenous.

We must make every effort to increase the number of Indigenous researchers in Australia. To this end, the former IHEAC commenced work on a concept for an Indigenous Centre of Researcher Development. The scoping study proposed that the Government fund the establishment of "a discrete Indigenous Centre of Researcher Development (ICRD)...to provide a nationally coherent, locationally diverse, program of Indigenous researcher capacity building and Indigenous research leadership development".

IHEAC has resolved to further develop a network "hub and spokes" model as a first step towards an ICRD. While the model has yet to be fully developed, the CRN program could potentially provide initial funding for the initiative.

IHEAC proposes that the guidelines for CRN are flexible enough to potentially allow a proposal for the ICRD to be funded from the CRN program.

While the Council notes that the aim of the CRN program is to assist less research intensive universities build research capacity by partnering with more research intensive ones, IHEAC suggests that building the capacity of researchers, particularly of Indigenous researchers, should be an integral part of the program.

Any ICRD network would need the participation of a range of universities as partners, and potentially other institutions such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Guidelines would therefore need to be flexible enough to allow publicly funded research agencies to participate as partners.

Lighthouse projects may provide an opportunity for funding an ICRD. The discussion paper notes that these projects would potentially be aligned with strategic objectives or other priorities that the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research may identify from time to time, and a proposal to establish an Indigenous researcher network is a priority which you may wish to consider.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Larkin', written in a cursive style.

Professor Steven Larkin

16 March 2010