

Statement of associations of humanities and social sciences academics across Aotearoa New Zealand on the disbanding of humanities and social sciences panels of Marsden Fund

Press release

Professional associations representing fields in the humanities and social sciences across Aotearoa New Zealand are appalled and saddened at the decision announced on 4 December 2024 by the Hon. Judith Collins, Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology concerning a 'refocus' of Marsden funding.

From 2025, the panels supporting humanities and social sciences research are to be disbanded. This means that the only significant and focused government funding for wide-ranging research will no longer be available to budding and established academics in these fields.

All successful nations fund research in the humanities and social sciences, demonstrating the value of this kind of research for the health, welfare, and enrichment of society.

Is New Zealand prepared to let such expertise die?

Researchers in these fields ask probing questions about who we are. We examine the history of how we came to be. And we imagine futures for who we might become, at the levels of the individual, whānau, community, iwi, and nation.

How could these research questions not be considered as helping to create, in the Minister's words, 'new ideas which lead to . . . boosting economic growth, and enhancing New Zealand's quality of life'? Without an understanding of people, such ideas will fail.

The research we produce helps New Zealanders better understand ourselves in a complex global world.

In a period of climate catastrophe and global threats to democracies, research in the humanities and social sciences has never been more important.

The Minister claims that what makes a 'real impact' on our economy is 'areas such as physics, chemistry, maths, engineering and biomedical sciences'.

This is a dangerously narrow and impoverished view. As many scientists have pointed out, scientific research and innovation depend on critical interventions from humanities and social science scholars.

Climate adaptation models, as one example, are necessarily interdisciplinary exercises, often drawing on the expertise of political scientists, sociologists, Māori and Pacific studies scholars and many others.

Scholars in the associations we represent will continue to do the crucial work for democracy, for social cohesion, and for the enrichment of New Zealanders' lives, that we do everyday.

We call on the government to recognize the value of this work and reverse the devastating decision to stop supporting our research.

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On behalf of:

New Zealand Historical Association (Miranda Johnson, President, on behalf of the Executive)

Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (Rebecca Lenihan and Ewan Morris, Co-Presidents)

Linguistic Society of New Zealand (Julia de Bres, President)

Aotearoa Communication and Media Studies Network (Rosemary Overell and Brett Nicholls, University of Otago; Alex Beattie, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington; Sean Phelan and Sy Taffel, Massey University; Leon Salter and Bridget Conor, University of Auckland)

New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions (Joseph Watts, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha - University of Canterbury, President of the Association)

Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association (executive members and New Zealand representatives Tara Ross, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury; Lewis Rarm, Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington; Elena Maydell and Gwen Isaac, Massey University)

Journalism Educators of New Zealand Association (James Hollings, President)

ARANZ - Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (Richard Foy, President)

International Communication Association - ICA (Mohan Dutta, Massey University, member of the ICA Board and Division Chair, Ethnicity & Race in Communication)

New Zealand Political Studies Association | Te Kāhui Tātai Tōrangapū o Aotearoa (Jeremy Moses, President)

Australia New Zealand Shakespeare Association (Hannah August, Massey University, Vice-President of the Association,)

New Zealand Asian Studies Society - NZASIA (Robyn Andrews, Massey University, President of NZASIA, on behalf of the Executive)

Pacific History Association (Safua Akeli Amaama and Adrian Muckle, executive members)

ASLEC-ANZ, Association for the Study of Literature, Environment and Culture, Australia and New Zealand (Professor Susan Ballard, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington, and Dr Jessica White, Co-Presidents)

Romantic Studies Association of Australasia (Professor Nikki Hessel, Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington, President of the Association)

Australasian Society for Classical Studies (Associate Professor Alison Griffith, University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, President of the Society)

New Zealand Archaeological Association (Dr Chris Jennings, President)

Australian Association for Pacific Studies (Associate Professor Victoria Stead, President; Professor Katerina Teaiwa, Vice President; Talei Mangioni, Secretary)

Australian and New Zealand American Studies Association (Dr Prudence Flowers, President, Flinders University)

Australasian Association of European History (Professor Maartje Abbenhuis, President of the Association and Co-Coordinator Critical War Studies Network at Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland)

Professor Charlotte Macdonald, Emerita, FRSNZ, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington

Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Dr Fiona McCormack, Chairperson, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato)

George Rudé Society (Emeritus Professor David Garrioch and Associate Professor Kirsty Carpenter, Massey University)

South Pacific Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (Chair, Michael Griffiths, Wollongong University; Secretary, Chris Prentice, University of Otago)

New Zealand Modernist Studies Consortium (Professor Jacob Edmond, University of Otago, and Professor Erin Carlston, co-conveners)

National Oral History Association of New Zealand (President and Adjunct Professor Anna Green, Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies, Victoria University of Wellington | Te Herenga Waka)

Australia and New Zealand Law and History Society (members of Executive Committee)

SAANZ - Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (Assoc. Prof. Bruce Cohen, Chair, University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau)

Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand (Prof. Malcolm Campbell, President, University of Auckland, Dr Maebh Long, University of Waikato,)

New Zealand Geographical Society (Associate Professor Sophie Bond, President on behalf of the Executive. Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, University of Otago.)