

*ERA 2012 –
Methodology Changes
and Implications for
Strategy and
Tactics*

ERA – what's the aim?

- To retain the top performing disciplines (4/5) from 2010
- To increase the number of top performing disciplines
- To increase the number of disciplines performing at or above world average (3+) – a Compacts PPI
- To decrease the number of disciplines performing below world average (2-)
- To increase one's position in The Australian's rankings
- To increase the number of disciplines evaluated
- To produce a result that aligns with one's research profile and/or strategic goals

ERA – what are the dataset parameters?

- Guidelines are due this month
- Staff eligibility: increase to 0.4 FTE appointment
 - 31 March, so nothing one can do about that
- Evaluation threshold
 - Increased from 20 to 50 for the peer review disciplines
 - Unclear if journal listing (as an evaluation criterion for peer review, as per citations disciplines) survives the excision of journal rankings
 - Good result for the excellence profile of Australian research, but for most universities only good in terms of shedding disciplines
 - Possible that indexed conference papers will be permitted for relevant disciplines (Engineering, ICT)

What counts: discipline/output match

- ERA 2010: ~70% of journals were assigned to one 4FoR
 - For any discipline where getting over the threshold was an issue, there was limited opportunity to be strategic in the match-up
- For ERA 2012: the journal - FoR assignments may be very similar to 2010 – or they may be very different – but:
- “We will strengthen the capacity of the ERA framework to accommodate multidisciplinary research, allowing articles with significant content from a given discipline to be assigned to that discipline regardless of where they are published” (as per Maths 2010) [Prof Margaret Sheil]

And how will pubs/output be evaluated?

- Journal rankings are gone, but:
 - “To [the three bibliometricians on the group set up by the ARC to advise on the development of ERA indicators] the ranks were of mild interest, but largely irrelevant as citation measures look at the actual impact of articles and don't have to rely on a journal's prestige as an imperfect surrogate to assess it.” [Dr Linda Butler]
 - Indeed, the correlation between journal rankings and FoR assessment (at least for the citations disciplines) was not strong
- “We will be replacing them with a journal quality profile for each committee which will show the most frequently published journals for each unit of evaluation and give more weight to expert opinion in determining whether the journals are both of high quality and appropriate to the unit being evaluated.”