



Australian Government
Department of Education

Our Ref MC24-001823

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Dear Professor Bell, A/Professor Shabala, and Professor Thordarson

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2024 to the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, regarding eligibility for the recently advertised positions on the Australian Research Council (ARC) Board. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

You will be pleased to know that in response to concerns raised by you and others in the sector, the department recently provided additional guidance regarding the management of conflicts of interest, and in so doing, extended the deadline for applications for the ARC Board by one week to 4pm AEST (2pm AWST) on Monday 15 April 2024.

The *Australian Research Council Amendment (Review Response) Act 2024*, as recently passed by Parliament, provides for strong integrity protections including through a restriction that Board members must not engage in any paid work that conflicts or could conflict with the proper performance of the member's duties. Avoiding conflicts is essential given the Board's accountability for the effective overall performance of the ARC, and for research funding decisions, in the new arrangements that follow the ARC Review.

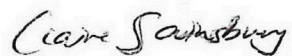
Many roles in Australian universities will constitute paid work that conflicts with the proper performance of a board members' duties, particularly if those roles involve applying for or receiving funding from the ARC or the management or leadership of research funding programs and administration. Governance roles in Australian universities such as Council or Senate members present similar challenges.

However, if a prospective candidate considers that their specific circumstances do not present a conflict, and would not contravene this legislative provision, then they are encouraged to apply. This may include active researchers in Australian universities. The selection panel will consider conflicts of interest on a case-by-case basis as part of the shortlisting and assessment process.

All advertisements for the ARC Board positions now reflect this additional guidance. Individuals who enquired about the positions through Challis & Company have been sent correspondence informing them of this clarification and the extended advertising period. The department has also disseminated this through social media channels.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claire Sainsbury".

Claire Sainsbury
Assistant Secretary
Research Policy & Programs Branch
Research Division

11/04/2024