ARC and NHMRC encourage access to research findings

■ **The ARC and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have called on researchers to make the results of research funded by the Australian Government publicly available, whenever possible and appropriate.**

The ARC and NHMRC Chief Executive Officers are keen to ensure that research findings are available to other researchers and to the community.

"The Australian Government makes a major annual investment in research to support its essential role in improving the wellbeing of our society," NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said.

"We are committed to ensuring the Australian community has access to the outcomes of government-funded research. And by making research findings widely available, we are also improving our ability to translate research findings into real benefits for the community.

"Accordingly, we encourage researchers, at the earliest opportunity, to deposit their data and any publications arising from government-funded research in an appropriate repository that has free public access."
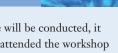
"The ARC and the NHMRC know that researchers take into account many factors when deciding where to publish government funded research—for example the status and reputation of a journal or publisher, and the likely impact of their work on users of research," the ARC's CEO, Professor Peter Høj, said.

"We also know that researchers may, in some cases, be bound due to commercial sensitivities and restrictions by publishers. But, even in the latter case, free access could possibly be made available after a period of subscription access only.

"We are hopeful that work with publishers will lead to development of viable business models that accommodate the need for a sustainable peer review-based publication system and much enhanced access to the data and publications arising from publicly funded research."

Together, the ARC and the NHMRC invest more than $1 billion in research each year. They are the key advisers to the Government on research and administer several thousand research projects across many disciplines at any given time. Both organisations require regular reports from funding recipients on the status of their publicly funded research.

e-Research initiative extolled

■ **Researchers involved in the ARC's pilot e-Research Special Research Initiative have reported that their ARC-supported work has generated interest and recognition within their respective research areas, stimulated new research opportunities and helped to secure additional funding.**

The researchers were at a post-funding workshop held in Canberra during February that gave them an opportunity to present and discuss a summary of the work that had been undertaken as part of the initiative.

Thirty-seven e-Research projects were funded for one year, commencing in 2005. The projects, which spanned the ARC's six discipline groupings, sought to overcome initial barriers to the adoption of e-Research methods across all research disciplines by encouraging an open exchange of information, sharing of resources and better use of existing ICT infrastructure.

Many of the researchers said that the ARC support had enabled them to establish valuable Australian data repositories where national and international data could be recorded for a diverse range of applications and provided increased capacity for high-quality research.

They also related their own successful accumulation of initial expertise in adopting e-Research and integrating it into mainstream research activities.

While a full review of the initiative will be conducted, it was clear that the researchers who attended the workshop considered the e-Research initiative to have successfully achieved its goals of:

- creating opportunities for greater collaboration among Australian researchers
- developing international research linkages, and
- cooperatively developing high-quality research capacity in an emerging area.

ARC Executive Director Professor Jonathan Manton (left, kneeling) with e-Research workshop participants. Photograph by David Hine.

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