

17 August 2022

Open Letter regarding concerns about the National Interest Test and delays with DECRA and Future Fellowships

Dear Ms Zielke,

The Australian Institute of Physics (AIP) expresses concern about multiple reports from our members that the ARC has sent DECRA and Future Fellowships applications back to the universities with requests to modify the National Interest Test (NIT) statements. As a result, the outcome announcements for these fellowships have been delayed.

Peer review is the most profound guarantee for high-quality research that inevitably leads to innovation and, in the long term, to commercialization. Australia can be proud that the ARC has a robust peer-review process in place. However, the NIT – a few-sentence summary of a 3 or 4-year research project – is excluded from the peer-review process. In addition, there is no avenue for the applicant and host institution to respond to the NIT assessment as part of the rejoinder process. The AIP would like to express its willingness to support the ARC through consultation and feedback since a clear and transparent process is essential.

We would like to stress that delays in announcing grant application outcomes is impacting the research sector. In particular, early-career researchers rely on clear timelines for career planning. Unexpected delays endanger their careers.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Sven Rogge, President
– on behalf of the National Executive of the AIP –