

**ACADEMIC BOARD**

**Report title** REPORT OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE:  
29 OCTOBER 2010  
**Prepared by** Peter Janssen, Acting Director, Research Services  
**Reviewed by** Professor Tim Brown, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)  
**Date** 3 November 2010

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**I.1 Background**

The Research and Graduate Studies Committee is a Policy Committee of Academic Board. It meets approximately 10 times a year and provides a report to Academic Board on key items resolved and discussed after each meeting.

**I.2 Summary**

Items considered by the Committee at the 29 October 2010 meeting included:

- (a) Policy and Procedures:
  - Revised Animal Ethics Procedures
- (b) Annual Reports:
  - Genetic Manipulation Supervisory Committee Annual Report to the Gene Technology Regulator
  - Higher Degrees Committee (Research) Annual Report to the Committee
- (c) ERA: Selection Committee and next ERA round
- (d) Outcomes of ARC Major Grants Rounds
- (e) Faculty Plans for Full-Cost Advance 2010
- (f) Human Ethics PEER Panels
- (g) The Role of Cross-Faculty Institutes
- (h) Reports of Sub-Committees and Working Parties:
  - Human Ethics Committee: 11 October 2010
  - Animal Ethics Committee: 8 April, 6 May, 24 May, 10 June, 24 June, 8 July, 5 August, 9 September & 7 October 2010
  - Higher Degrees Committee (Research): 11 August & 8 September 2010
  - Research Misconduct Procedures Working Party: 15 September 2010

**I.3 Issues (including any financial, legal or compliance issues)**

Not applicable.

#### **I.4 RECOMMENDATION**

*Academic Board is invited:*

- (a) To receive and note the briefing document on the proposed amendments to the Animal Ethics Procedures, as detailed in Attachment A.*
- (b) To resolve to endorse the Animal Ethics Procedures, as detailed in Attachment B.*
- (c) To receive and note the briefing document on the ERA, as detailed in Attachment C.*
- (d) To receive and note the Report of Research and Graduate Studies Committee from the meeting held on Friday, 29 October 2010.*

## **2. LIST OF DOCUMENTS ATTACHED**

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- Attachment A: Briefing document on Animal Ethics Procedures
- Attachment B: Animal Ethics Procedures
- Attachment C: Report on La Trobe Excellence in Research Australia Submission

## **ATTACHMENT A**

Briefing Document: Revised Animal Ethics Procedures

### **Revised Animal Ethics Procedures**

The Animal Ethics Procedures were amended by the PVC(GR), the AEC and myself and approved by the AEC / endorsed by the PVC(GR) to incorporate the new system under which animal research is conducted at La Trobe.

The changes concerned:

1. Preamble (re-written to include core concepts of the Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes);
2. Section 1 Regulatory Environment (oversight by PVC(GR) and creation of position Director LARTF as well as re-establishment of the Animal User Group and the LARTF Steering Committee);
3. Section 5 AEC Membership (Director LARTF and AWO occupy non-voting positions on the AEC as ex officio attendees; the latter is also reflected in Section 11 Role of the Animal Welfare Officer);

The Academic Board is asked to approve the amendments.

**ATTACHMENT B****Animal Ethics Procedures**

<b>Parent Policy Title</b>	Research Integrity Policy																															
<b>Associated Documents</b>	Research Misconduct Procedures Genetically Modified Organisms Procedures																															
<b>Preamble</b>	<p>The use of live non-human vertebrates and higher-order invertebrates in research and teaching is governed by State legislation and by the <i>Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes</i>. The primary aim of legislation is to ensure that appropriate attention is given to animal welfare and the humane treatment of animals in research and teaching, while the <i>Code</i> emphasizes the importance of using replacement technology where possible, minimizing the number of animals used in projects, and avoiding pain and distress to animals. The <i>Code</i> also requires that institutions justify the use of animals in research, taking into account the scientific and educational benefits of research, and the effects on the welfare of animals.</p>																															
<b>General</b>	<p>La Trobe University has set in place policies and procedures to ensure that animal usage conforms to current legislative requirements and best practice. The University is registered with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).</p>																															
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<p><b>1. Regulatory Environment</b></p>	<p>At La Trobe University, the person responsible for animal usage is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) i.e. (DVC(R) who is also the license holder for the institution with the Department of Primary Industries Victoria. Oversight of animal usage is delegated by the DVC(R) to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Graduate Research) i.e. (PVC(GR) who chairs the La Trobe Animal Research and Teaching Facility (LARTF) Steering Committee and oversees LARTF itself and the AEC. The Director (LARTF) is responsible for animal management systems throughout the University and reports to the PVC(GR).</p> <p>La Trobe University holds six Scientific Procedures Premises licenses with the Bureau of Animal Welfare:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. School of Human Biosciences</li> <li>2. School of Life Sciences</li> <li>3. School of Molecular Sciences</li> <li>4. School of Psychological Sciences</li> <li>5. School of Environmental Management and Ecology</li> <li>6. Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre</li> </ol> <p>The Heads of School / Directors of Centres are <i>ex officio</i> license nominees with the Bureau of Animal Welfare and are responsible to the DVC(R) and the Bureau of Animal Welfare for animal usage under their license. As part of the requirements of their license, license holders must have current knowledge of the number and types of projects conducted under their license. An Animal User Group with membership from these licenses advises both LARTF and the LARTF Steering Committee on projected requirements in animal usage and facilities by licensed Schools or Centres of the University.</p>
<p><b>2. Relevant Legislation and Guidelines</b></p>	<p>The use of live non-human vertebrates and higher-order invertebrates for research and teaching is governed by the <i>Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes</i> (7<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2004), or <i>Code</i>. In addition to the Code, States have their own acts and regulations. In Victoria, animal usage is governed by the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i> under the auspices of BAW. The Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria require permits for wildlife studies and research undertaken in parks and reserves. For projects undertaken interstate, La Trobe University investigators must register with a particular state authority. Interstate government departments have additional permit requirements.</p>
<p><b>3. Role of the Animal Ethics Committee</b></p>	<p>All use of live non-human vertebrates and higher-order invertebrates for research and teaching must be reviewed and approved by the AEC prior to usage. The AEC must apply a set of principles, outlined in the <i>Code</i>, that govern the ethical conduct of people whose work involves the use of animals for scientific purposes and teaching. The role of the AEC is to ensure that the use of animals is justified, that it provides for the welfare of those animals and that it incorporates the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement. Policy support and secretariat to the AEC is provided by the Research Compliance Unit.</p>

<p><b>4. AEC Terms of Reference</b></p>	<p>The AEC must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) approve guidelines for the care of animals that are bred, held and used for scientific purposes on behalf of the University;</li> <li>(ii) monitor the acquisition, transportation, production, housing, care, use and fate of animals;</li> <li>(iii) recommend to the University any measures needed to ensure that the standards of the <i>Code</i> are maintained;</li> <li>(iv) describe how members are appointed, re-appointed, or retired, according to procedures developed by the institution in consultation with the AEC;</li> <li>(v) require that all members declare any conflict of interest;</li> <li>(vi) deal with situations in which a conflict of interest arises;</li> <li>(vii) examine and approve, approve subject to modification, or reject written proposals relevant to the use of animals for scientific purposes;</li> <li>(viii) approve only those studies for which animals are essential and justified and which conform to the requirements of the <i>Code</i>. This should take into consideration factors including ethics, the impact on the animal or animals and the anticipated scientific or educational value;</li> <li>(ix) withdraw approval for any project where inspections detect activities that are non-compliant with the <i>Code</i>, at least until remedial action is initiated;</li> <li>(x) authorise the emergency treatment or euthanasia of any animal provided that all reasonable steps have been taken to consult with the responsible experimenter;</li> <li>(xi) examine and comment on all institutional plans and policies that may affect the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes;</li> <li>(xii) maintain a record of proposals and projects, including outcomes of the AEC's deliberations in deciding on applications / requests for variation;</li> <li>(xiii) comply with the reporting requirements of the University, the <i>Code</i> and all relevant federal and state authorities; and</li> <li>(xiv) perform all other duties required by the <i>Code</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. AEC Membership</b></p>	<p>The La Trobe University AEC must have a membership that will allow it to fulfil its terms of reference. It must comprise at least four persons, including a separate person appointed to each of the following categories:</p> <p><b>Category A</b> a person with qualifications in veterinary science and with experience relevant to the activities of the University. Veterinarians who lack this experience must familiarise themselves with the biology and clinical characteristics of the species of animals used;</p> <p><b>Category B</b> a suitably qualified person with substantial recent experience in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities. This will usually entail possession of a higher degree in research;</p> <p><b>Category C</b> a person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the University, and who is not involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Veterinarians with specific animal welfare interest and experience may meet the requirements of this Category. While not representing an animal welfare organisation, the person should, where possible, be selected on the basis of active membership of, and nomination by, such an organisation; and</p>

**Category D** a person who is both independent of the University and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, either in their employment or beyond their under-graduate education. Category D members should be viewed by the wider community as bringing a completely independent view to the AEC, and must not fit the requirements of any other Category.

The Animal Welfare Officer and the Director, LARTF, or nominee, are *ex officio* attendees at AEC meetings. Attendance is optional for the SPPL license holder and license nominees. The AEC may also invite people with specific expertise to provide advice as required.

The Chairperson should either hold a senior position in the University or, if an external appointee, be given a commitment by the University to provide the necessary support and authority to carry out the role. To perform a key role in the successful operation of the AEC, the Chairperson should possess the following attributes:

- (i) an ability to bring impartiality to the task;
- (ii) the skills to manage the business of the AEC;
- (iii) an ability to communicate, negotiate and to resolve conflict; and
- (iv) an understanding of the ethical and animal welfare issues involved in the use of animals for scientific purposes.

A Category B member of the AEC should be nominated as Deputy Chair.

If the committee has more than four members, Categories C plus D should represent no less than one third of the members at AEC meetings where quorum is required.

Appointments are made on invitation by the University pending a successful interview with University representatives nominated by RGSC and subsequent approval by RGSC. As part of the interview process, invited members must declare real and potential conflicts of interest and factors that may preclude them from the nominated Category. Appointees are sent a letter of appointment outlining that the appointment is offered on the terms that members accept the terms of reference of the AEC and that they sign the enclosed confidentiality agreement for La Trobe University AEC members. Appointments take effect upon acceptance, in writing, of the letter of appointment and its conditions. Membership is *for two years in the first instance with service to the AEC of no more than five consecutive years in total*.

Changes in the membership must be approved by RGSC and noted in the minutes of the next AEC meeting. Memberships may be terminated by RGSC at any time by providing not less than 24 hours notice in writing. In general, members may voluntarily retire during their appointment by providing not less than 24 hours notice in writing to the DVC(R). Members that are staff of the University may need to seek approval from their Head of School or Dean prior to submitting a notice of retirement.

The AEC will appoint an Executive that must include at least the Chair, one Category A member, one Category B member and one Category C or D member. The AEC Executive may (i) approve minor modifications to projects; (ii) specify emergent or alternative action required in

	<p>response to adverse events; (iii) approve or reject amendments to applications and variations as directed by the AEC, provided that the actions are ratified by the AEC at the next meeting.</p>
<p><b>6. Conflict of Interest</b></p>	<p>The AEC will deal with situations in which a conflict of interest arises, including any situation where a member of an AEC has an interest that may be seen to influence the objectivity of a decision by:</p> <p>(i) Requiring members to disclose the nature of their interest and conflict as soon as practicable after they become aware of anything that may be reasonably considered to be a conflict of interest.</p> <p>(ii) Making it a requirement to declare conflicts of interest at the start of each AEC meeting and to document the declarations and resolutions in the minutes of the quorate meeting.</p> <p>(iii) Requiring a member whose objectivity may be influenced by an interest (including consideration of a proposal submitted by that member) to leave the meeting at an appropriate time (certainly during the decision-making process).</p> <p>(iv) Considering and responding to any concern raised by an experimenter or other party that an AEC member has an interest in that may have influenced the objectivity of an AEC decision. In this case, the Chair person must advise the complainant, in writing, of the AEC response. If the complainant is not satisfied with the AEC response, a grievance may be lodged with RGSC or the University Ombudsman.</p>
<p><b>7. Review and Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The La Trobe University AEC will normally consider proposals from La Trobe University staff and associated centres and institutes who wish to conduct research or teaching involving the use of higher-order invertebrate and vertebrate animals. The AEC will examine and approve, approve after modification, or reject written proposals relevant to the use of animals for scientific purposes by:</p> <p>(i) Considering new proposals, variations to existing activities and reviewing / ratifying Executive decisions on minor variations at quorate meetings.</p> <p>(ii) Inviting comment from a person(s) with specific technical expertise. The person may submit written comments or address the meeting, either in person or via a telephone or video link. The AEC should reach agreement on how it may seek advice, without breaching confidentiality.</p> <p>(iii) Seeking clarification of and / or agreement to amendments to a proposal from the chief investigator or a representative. The chief investigator and / or representative may be invited to address the AEC in person. In circumstances where the chief investigator / representative is unable to attend the meeting, the interview may be conducted via a telephone or video link.</p> <p>(iv) Making decisions on the basis of consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable effort to resolve differences, the AEC should explore with the applicant(s) ways of modifying the project that may lead to consensus. If consensus is still unachievable, the AEC should only proceed to a majority decision after members have been allowed a period of time to review their positions, followed by further discussion.</p> <p>The AEC will approve only those studies for which animals are essential and their use is justified and which conform to the requirements of the <i>Code</i>. This should take into consideration factors including ethics, the</p>

	<p>impact on the animal or animals and the anticipated scientific or educational value by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Assessing applications for the use of animals for scientific purposes only after the committee receives an application form that is completed to the Committee's satisfaction.</li> <li>(ii) Assessing whether the information provided by the Chief Investigator adequately and concisely details appropriate justification of the proposed animal use, the impact on the animals of the proposed use and adequately shows the means by which it will be minimised and that it complies with the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement.</li> <li>(iii) Insisting that all applications are written in language that can be understood by all members of the AEC.</li> <li>(iv) Ensuring that, in addition to ethics approval, the Chief Investigator is aware of the need to obtain all relevant wildlife permits and approvals to use genetically modified organisms.</li> </ul> <p>The AEC may withdraw approval for any project when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) An inspection detects activities that are non-compliant with the <i>Code</i>. The AEC must ensure that such activities cease immediately and that remedial action is initiated where appropriate.</li> <li>(ii) An animal is used in a way other than as approved in the initial application or subsequent approved modification or amendment to an application.</li> <li>(iii) It becomes aware that an activity or project is associated with a higher negative welfare impact than was approved or an unnecessary or unjustified welfare impact.</li> <li>(iv) Annual reporting requirements are not fulfilled by the Chief Investigator.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Multi-centre Research</b></p>	<p>The La Trobe University AEC recognises approvals from other AECs that are registered with NHMRC but reserves the right to permit or refuse participation by La Trobe University experimenters on animal welfare grounds. La Trobe University experimenters taking part in research or teaching collaborations at other institutions must be included in the AEC approvals from those institutions and must request formal approval from the La Trobe University AEC to participate in the collaboration. Where the research includes work conducted on La Trobe University Licensed Scientific Procedures Premises, a formal agreement must be reached between AECs as set out in the <i>Code</i>.</p>
<p><b>9. Annual Reporting</b></p>	<p>The AEC must report regularly to RGSC. Minutes of AEC meetings must be forwarded within two weeks after a meeting and the annual report to RGSC must be completed by 31 March covering the previous calendar year. The annual report must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) numbers and types of projects assessed and approved or rejected;</li> <li>(ii) comments on the physical facilities for the care and use of animals by the institution;</li> <li>(iii) activities that have supported the educational needs of AEC members, and of personnel involved in the care and use of animals;</li> <li>(iv) administrative or other difficulties being experienced; and</li> <li>(v) any matters that may affect the University's ability to maintain compliance with the <i>Code</i> and if necessary the provision of suitable recommendations.</li> </ul>

	In addition, the AEC must report to regulatory authorities, including NHMRC, state animal welfare bodies and other authorities as required. Such reports must be authorised by RGSC and signed by the DVC(R).
<b>10. Additional Operating Guidelines</b>	Other AEC operating guidelines such as rulings on record keeping by the AEC and investigators, animal displays and field-based teaching and research must be endorsed by RGSC and, upon approval, be displayed in their most current form on the <b>AEC web site</b> .
<b>11. Role of the Animal Welfare Officer</b>	The role of the AWO is to ensure that the high standards of animal welfare goals set by La Trobe University are met in all teaching and research projects. The AWO inspects animal holding facilities and field research sites, arranges training and education for researchers and research trainees, and provides general advice on animal welfare for La Trobe University researchers. The AWO is an <i>ex officio</i> attendee at AEC meetings and assists applicants in the preparation of applications and requests for variation before they are submitted to the AEC. The AWO investigates matters relating to animal welfare and reports these matters to the AEC.
<b>12. Complaints and Adverse Events</b>	<p>The University has established a complaints and grievances mechanism for La Trobe University personnel, students and persons external to the University to allow the voicing of concerns regarding animal use in research and teaching. Such concerns may be submitted in writing to the AEC Secretariat or the AWO.</p> <p>Complaints or grievances by La Trobe University personnel about decisions reached by the AEC or AWO may be submitted to the DVC(R) or the University Ombudsman.</p> <p>Any unplanned impacts on the welfare of animals outside the scope of an AEC-approved project must be reported promptly by the responsible personnel to the AEC (see Adverse Events Form on the AEC web site).</p>
<b>13. Animal Facilities Inspections and Record Keeping</b>	<p>Animal facilities on La Trobe University grounds must be registered with the AEC and, if in Victoria, with BAW. Both AEC and BAW must inspect the facilities on a regular basis. Record keeping in the facilities must adhere to NHMRC, BAW and AEC standards. Animal usage must comply with the conditions approved by the AEC.</p> <p>Animal colonies must be established following AEC approval and managed according to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 regulations. Colony activities must be reported to the AEC on a regular basis.</p>
<b>14. Field Work, including Observational Studies and Wet Pitfall Trapping</b>	<p>Fieldwork requires in addition to AEC approval permission by State government authorities. Copies of permits must be lodged with the AEC prior to the commencement of field work. The AEC and AWO can inspect fieldwork at any time.</p> <p>Observational studies involving animals, even ostensibly innocuous</p>

	teaching exercises such as fauna spotlighting field trips, and wet pitfall trapping targeting lower vertebrate animals must only be conducted after approval from the AEC.
<b>Status</b>	Revised Month, Year. Previously approved at committee (meeting #, date). The implementation of the latest version of this procedure supersedes all previous versions of this procedure.
<b>Approval Body</b>	Academic Board Meeting xxx on dd month yyyy, item 433.3.2.
<b>Initiating Body</b>	Research and Graduate Studies Committee Meeting xxx on dd month yyyy, item xxx.x.x.x.
<b>Definitions</b>	<p><b>Animal:</b> any live non-human vertebrate, that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife, and also cephalopods including octopus, squid, cuttlefish and nautilus, and decapod crustaceans including lobster, crab, yabbie and crayfish.</p> <p><b>Animal Ethics Committee (AEC):</b> a committee constituted in accordance with the terms of reference and membership laid down in the Code.</p> <p><b>Animal welfare:</b> an animal's quality of life based on an assessment of an animal's physical and psychological state as an indication of how the animal is coping with the ongoing situation as well as a judgment about how the animal feels.</p> <p><b>Compliance:</b> acting in accordance with the Code.</p> <p><b>Ethics:</b> a framework in which actions can be considered as good or bad, right or wrong. Ethics is applied in the evaluation of what should or should not be done when animals are proposed for use, or are used, for scientific purposes.</p> <p><b>Facilities:</b> places where animals are kept including yards, paddocks, tanks, ponds and buildings.</p> <p><b>Wildlife:</b> free-living animals of native, non-indigenous or feral species including captive-bred animals and those captured from free-living populations.</p>
<b>Date Effective</b>	dd month yyyy
<b>Next Review Date</b>	In 3 years' time following approval by Academic Board.
<b>Keywords</b>	Animal ethics; animal research and teaching; animal welfare; animal ethics committee; compliance; wildlife research.
<b>Owner/Sponsor</b>	Director, Research Services

<b>Author</b>	Manager, Research Compliance
<b>Contact person</b>	<a href="mailto:researchintegrity@latrobe.edu.au">researchintegrity@latrobe.edu.au</a>

# Report on La Trobe Excellence in Research for Australia Submission: November, 2010

## Background and Overall Submission

Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) aims to 'identify and promote excellence across the full spectrum of research activity, including discovery and applied research, in Australia's higher education institutions (ERA 2010 Submission Guidelines, December 2009:6).' ERA will evaluate research activity at a discipline level using a discipline-specific combination of indicators and expert review. Evaluations will be undertaken across eight clusters of disciplines. Research Evaluation Committees (RECs) will evaluate the overall research performance of disciplines within institutions using a range of indicators. The full ERA process commenced in June, 2010 and will inform the performance component of the Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) funding from 2012 – worth \$300 million from 2013.

Results from the first evaluation are expected relatively early in 2011.

The importance of ERA has been underlined by the announcement of the Government that the second ERA evaluation will occur in 2012. The details of the staff census date, the publication date range and the income date range are not yet available, but it is clear that a balance will need to be struck between timeliness of the review and overlap with the first ERA evaluation.

The implications of ERA will not only be for SRE funding. The most important implications, judging by experience in Britain and New Zealand of comprehensive evaluations of research excellence, are likely to be on reputation. The reputational consequences have led to significant shifts in student demand and resulting significant shifts in focus of institutions. Since the Government decided to expand research block grants with SRE funding not only on the basis of current subsidies of the full cost of Australian Competitive Grants, but also on the basis of driving focus and excellence, it is clear that the aims of ERA are, in part, to motivate similar institutional focus here.

La Trobe's biggest investment in research occurs through the time of staff. Our collective agreement provides that the default position for staff workloads is for 40% of time to be spent on research. There are 882 (full-time equivalent) Level B and above teaching-and-research and research-only staff in the ERA submission.

These staff are the main investment of the University in research in that they set research directions, either on their own or increasingly in groups. Their selection and their workloads are two of the most important influences that the University can have on its research effort and quality.

Using the 40% allocation, La Trobe spends \$42 - \$47 million<sup>1</sup> on the research component of salaries of those leading the research effort. This number is comparable with the total income earned directly to engage in research but is provided in large part from general government support and student contributions.

Key questions that arise are:

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<sup>1</sup> The range is taken by using the minimum and maximum salary in the applicable pay rate and adding 30% on-costs.

## ATTACHMENT C

- What value is the University getting in research quality and productivity from the investment in staff time?
- Are there differences in the value obtained from different areas of the University?
- What implications arise for cost, pricing and budgeting for this time?
- What implications are there for management of staff workloads?

With increasing competition for research resources, questions of focus and output become even more important. The Research Plan commits the University to review its research strengths on the basis of the ERA submission and this paper starts that process by considering the overall submission, staff involvement in research and relationships between quality indicators at 2-digit level. The ERA results will be very important in affirming or changing our views of strength in research quality and productivity.

The University will receive 22 evaluations for the period 2003-2008 in 21 out of 22 of the 2 digit fields of research (the two digit field of research for medical and health sciences is split across two research evaluation committees). These areas are

- Physics, Chemistry, Earth Sciences (Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences REC)
- Law and Legal Studies, Creative Arts, Language, Communication and Culture, History and Archaeology, Philosophy and Religious Studies (Humanities and Creative Arts REC)
- Environmental Science, Engineering, Technology (Engineering and Environmental Sciences REC)
- Education, Economics, Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services, Studies in Human Society, Psychology and Cognitive Sciences (Psychology and Behavioural Sciences REC)
- Mathematical Sciences, Information and Computing Sciences (Mathematics, Information and Computing Sciences REC)
- Biological Sciences, Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences (Biological and Biotechnological Sciences)
- Biomedical and Clinical Health Sciences (Biomedical and Clinical Health Sciences)
- Public and Allied Health (Public and Allied Health).

This reflects a diversity of effort in the University. Analysis of fields of research in this report is at this level because even here there is a great disparity in size of research effort. Analysis at the four digit level, where 49 evaluations are expected, is even more influenced by random fluctuations making conclusions on the evaluations from the data difficult, especially in the absence of national norms.

The submission covers 1494 eligible research staff in three categories, Research Only Staff, Teaching and Research Staff and Others. The category Others includes academic staff in support roles (leadership, library, teaching and learning support) as well as adjuncts. Publications for the Other category must include the University in their title. When calculating indicators like competitive grants per staff member only the first two categories of staff are used.

There were 8968 research outputs reported, of which 238 are books, 5465 are refereed journal articles, 1310 are refereed book chapters, 1666 conference publications and 263 non-traditional research outputs (29 live performances, 166 original works, 26 portfolios and 42 recorded works).

Research income of \$99 million of research income was reported for the years 2006 to 2008, of which there are 152 competitive grants (Category 1 Higher Education Research Data Collection) worth \$38 million, \$ 53 million in government and public sector income (Category 3), \$22 million in

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industrial, commercial and international income (Category 4) and \$4 million in CRC income (Category 4).

There were 62 esteem measures (including 18 memberships of learned academies in humanities and creative arts and 16 in social and behavioural sciences with the remainder mostly competitive fellowships), \$2.37 million of research commercialization income (\$4,000 in materials science, \$1.09 million in biological sciences, \$617,000 in biotechnology, \$617,000 in biomedical and clinical sciences and \$37,000 in education) and 13 patents.

### Staff Investment and Productivity

Of the 1494 researchers in the submission 1326 are staff members with the remainder being adjuncts, emeriti etc who have published with the La Trobe university in the by-line. Of these staff members 967 (65% of the total in the submission) are teaching and research staff, 305(20%) are research only staff and 54(4%) are others.

As mentioned in the Background and Overall Submission, the most significant investment in research is the time of staff. The group of leaders (and potential leaders) consists of teaching-and-research and research-only staff at Level B and above. Accordingly, analysis uses this group when relevant to consider size of investment and productivity or income per staff member. This group will from now on, unless otherwise stated, be referred to as staff.

There are 967 people and 882 effective full-time staff. Using the bottom and top of salary ranges (and including 30 per cent oncosts), the investment in staff time for this group, at the collective agreement default of 40%, is between \$41.5 and \$46.9 million<sup>2</sup>. The university staff time investment is much greater than this because many Level A's and non-academic staff are a vital part of the research effort.

Staff have been classified as having 0 publications in the ERA submission ("no output"), between 0 and 5 publications ("some output") and 5 or more publications or equivalently at least one book ("research productive"). Multiple authorships were attributed to each author. The reason for the number 5 was the equivalence with one book over a six year period as well as use in the former research quality framework. There are 19% of staff FTEs in the no output group, 24% in the some output group and 57% in the research productive group.

The implied staff time investment in research is \$6.8 to 8 million in the no output group, \$9 to \$10.4 million in the some output group and \$25.7 to \$28.5 million in the research productive group. Shifting investment between these groups has the potential to materially lift the University's productivity and quality. The workload management system is one tool for having the necessary conversations; practice in hiring staff is another.

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<sup>2</sup> This analysis is only based on the ranges. It does not take into account any salary loadings that may be paid on top of the ranges.

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Investment in staff time occurs through Faculties and Schools decisions. It is instructive therefore to compare the investments across Faculties. Table 1 illustrates this. The entries are the percentage of staff FTE followed by very rough lower and upper estimates of the investment in thousands of dollars (on the basis of range for the level and FTE of staff member and 40% of time on research).

**Table 1 - Research Investment by Area**

Area	No output	Some output	Research Productive
AgriBio	11 (21-23)	11 (21-23)	78 (149-164)
Central	0 (0-0)	73 (107-119)	25 (39-43)
Education	30 (294-337)	30 (289-331)	40 (388-445)
Health Sciences	29 (1439-1642)	27 (1382-1577)	44 (2209-2521)
Hum & Soc Sci	11 (311-350)	16 (474-533)	73 (2155-2425)
Law & Mgt	20 (658-743)	25 (796-899)	55 (1769-1986)
Sci, Tech & Eng	10 (416-467)	23 (926-1029)	67 (2761-3099)

Table 2 shows research productivity for this investment. The entries in the table are staff FTE, weighted publications and productivity is weighted publications per FTE per year.

**Table 2 - Productivity**

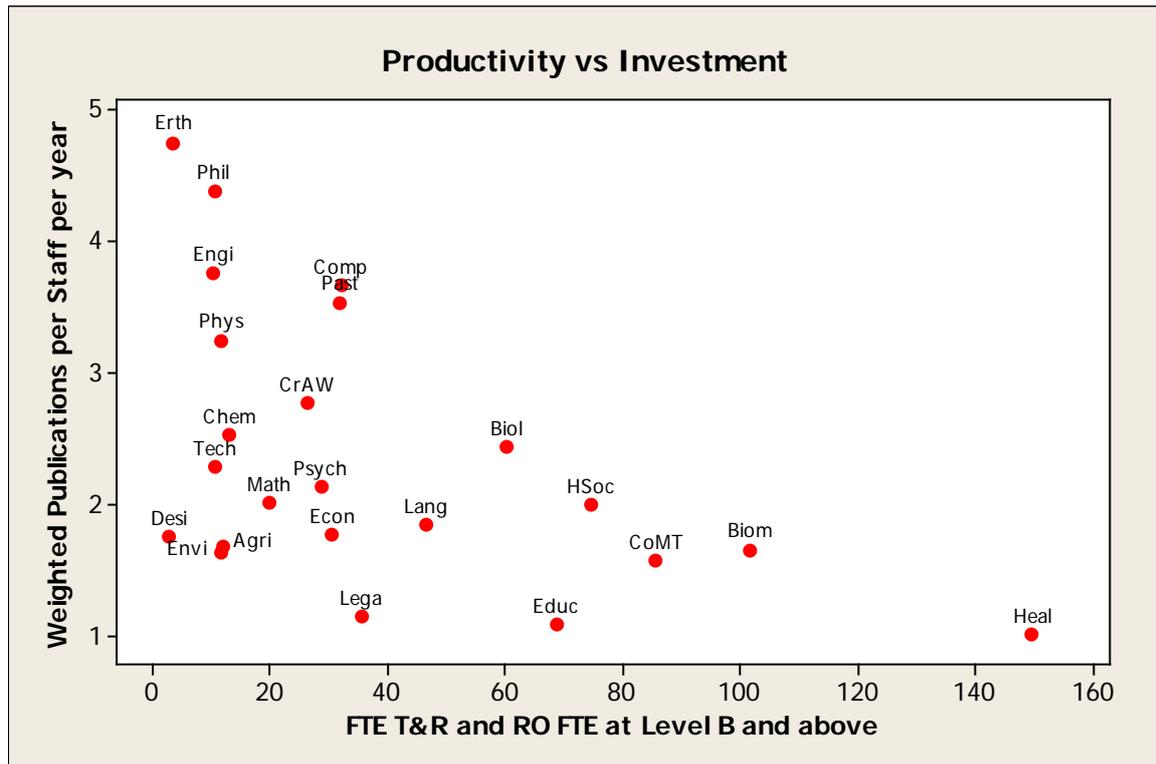
Area	Staff FTE	Weighted Publications	Productivity
AgriBio	9	328	12.1
Central	7.5	22	1.0
Education	54.8	352	2.1
Health Sciences	276.9	2303	2.8
Hum & Soc Sci	153.2	1883	4.1
Law & Mgt	169.9	1758	3.4
Sci, Tech & Eng	210.9	3123	4.9

**Indicators in Fields of Research**

The purpose of this section is to advance discussion of the outcomes of the ERA submission by the 22 (2 digit) fields of research evaluations that will be given to La Trobe.

Figure 1 shows productivity versus research time investment, as measured by FTE. It can be observed that there is an inverse relationship between productivity and investment.

**Figure 1**



The quality indicators used by RECs vary across disciplines. Nevertheless some are common, such as competitive grants per full-time equivalent staff member, profile in journal rankings of places of publications and citations were they are used.

Multivariate analyses across the two digit fields of research of the following variables showed interesting results: productivity, investment, percentage of A\* and A articles, citations per paper competitive grant dollars per FTE, total research income per FTE, number of competitive grants per FTE and percentage of weighted publications which are journal articles. Note that size has been factored out of most of these variables apart from investment. The first principal component (ie the sum of weights of the variables across fields of research) gives most weight to number of competitive grants per FTE, total research income per FTE and competitive grant dollars per FTE. These are closely followed by percentage of articles in A\* and A journals, and then by percentage of publications in journals and citations per journal article. There is a very small negative weight given to productivity but almost none to investment. Broadly, this component could be interpreted as a measure of overall quality but it would be unwise to use it as such in a numerical fashion, not least because it hides disciplinary differences between publication and citation practice. Nevertheless it gives important pointers to how to define strengths in the University.

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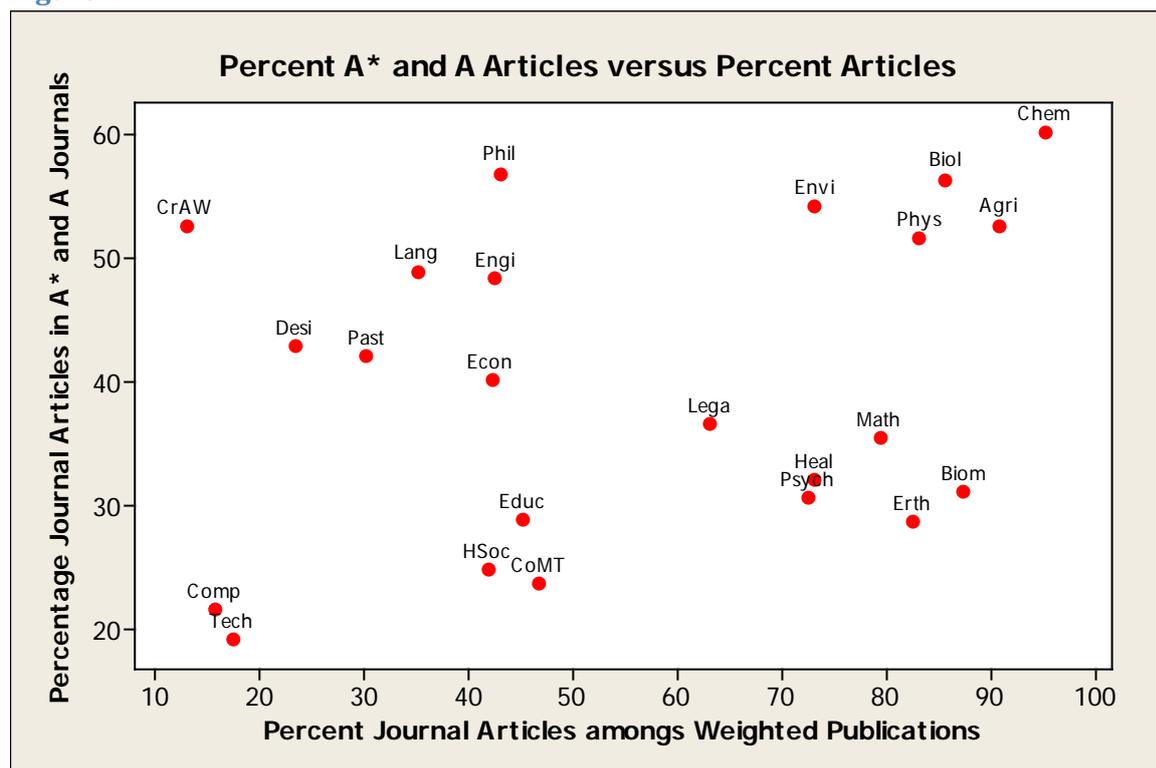
However, these remain pointers at this stage. The important comparisons for ERA are between universities in the same discipline but there is not yet access to the data to allow these comparisons so conclusions now must be tentative.

Noting this, the second principal component contrasts productivity with investment and gives small negative weights to variables that appear most in the first principal component. Broadly, it measures the contrast seen in Figure 1.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the journal ranking of publications and the percentage of publications in journals. It should be noted that the percentages of journals in A\*, A, B and C ratings quite closely follow at 2 digit level the nominal percentages of 5,15,30 and 50. Hence, if articles were randomly distributed across outlets, it would generally be expected that 20 percent would be A\* and A journals – of course, they are not but this gives a benchmark on which to judge percentages in A\* and A journals.

The percentage of articles in A\* and A journals is of most interest in cases where there is a high volume of publications in journals. It is more likely to an indicator of relativities between 2 digit areas in these cases.

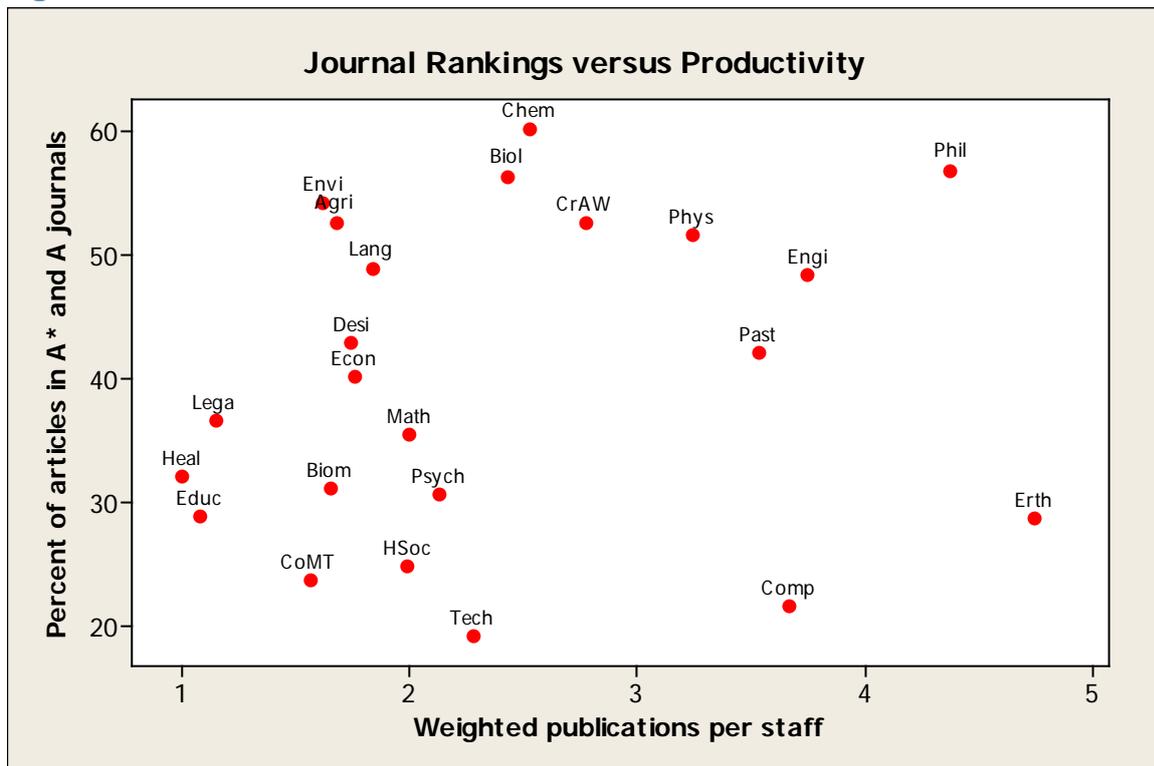
Figure 2



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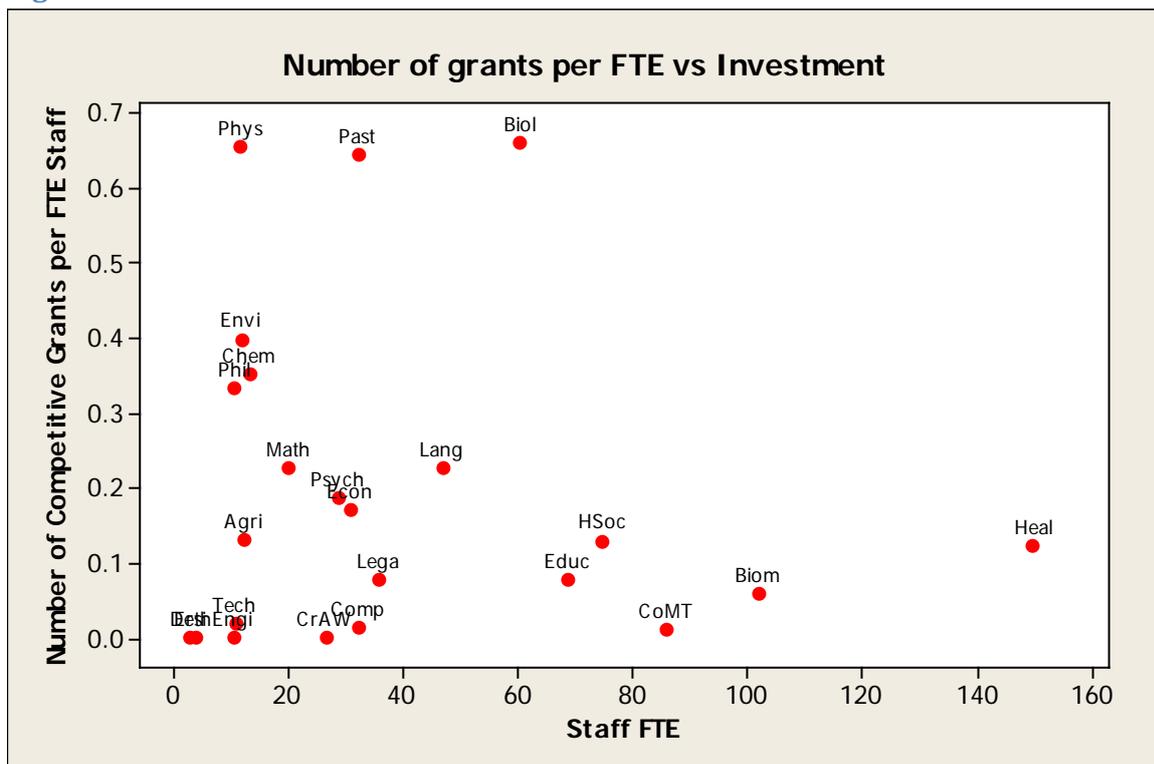
Figure 3 shows the percentage of articles in A\* and A journals and productivity.

Figure 3



Number of Australian competitive grants versus investment is shown in Figure 4. The low level of investment in staff time for high return in competitive grants per staff member is particularly evident in Physics, History and Archaeology and Biological Sciences.

Figure 4



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Figures 5 and 6 show the relationships between citations per paper and percentage of publications in journals as well as productivity.

Figure 5

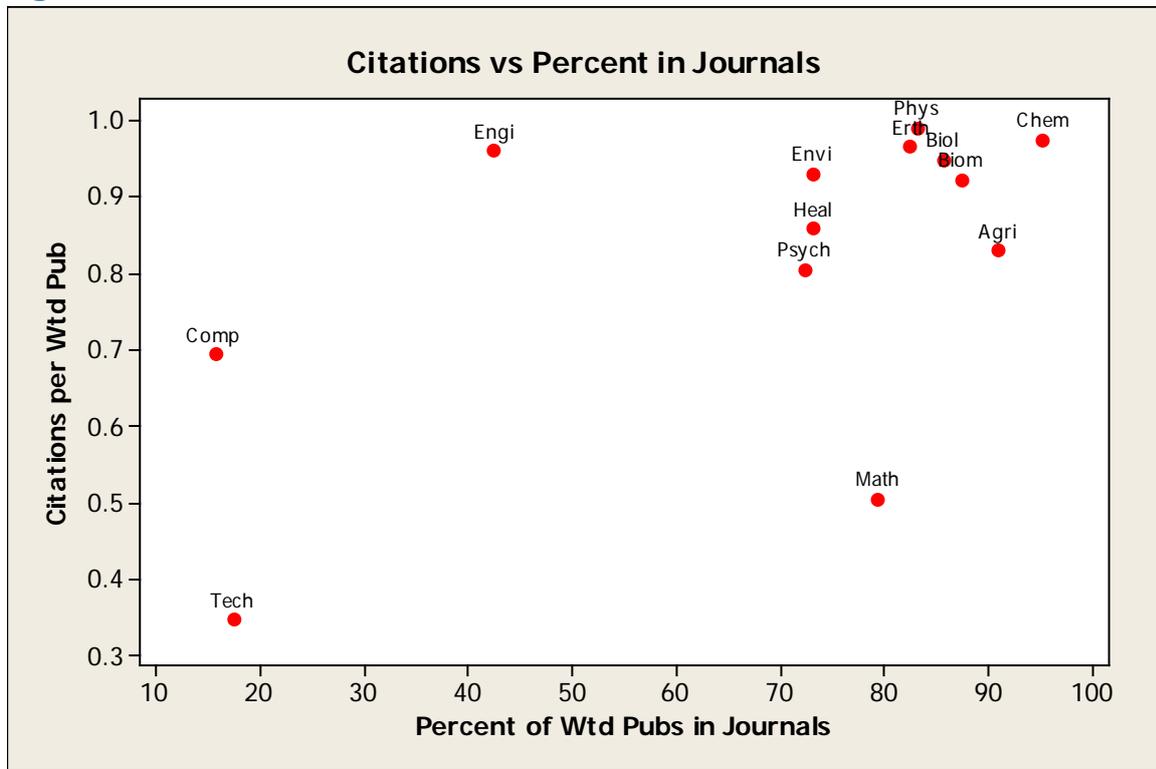
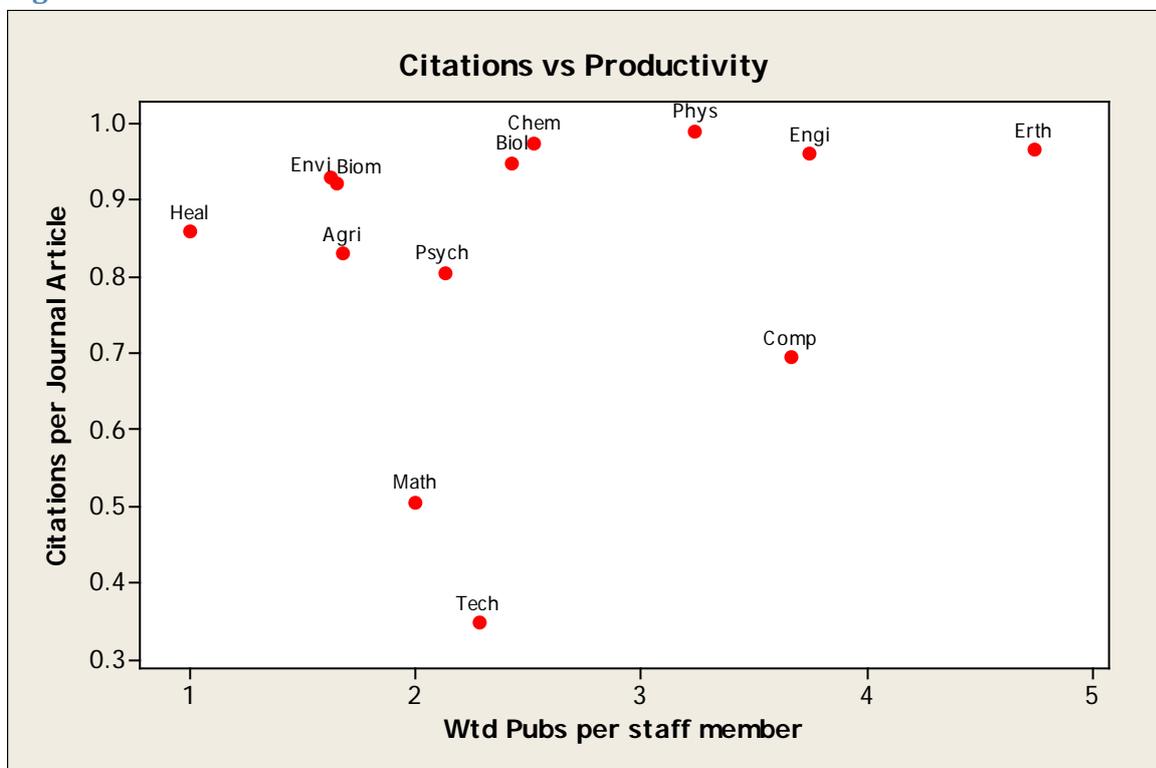


Figure 6



### Sustainable Research Excellence

One of the objectives of the Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) program is to 'help address an identified shortfall in the funding available to meet the indirect costs associated with ACG research. The second objective is to 'support universities to build and maintain research excellence through the implementation of best practice financial management, performance and reporting frameworks. Over 4 years 2009 – 10 to 2012 – 13, \$510 million will be allocated under this program to support universities in meeting the indirect costs of Australian Competitive Grant (ACG) research activities (Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) in Universities 2010 Guidance Paper, 2009:3).

Whilst it has been known for a long time that the indirect costs of ACG grants are high, the Government requires us to submit data on these costs at La Trobe. As a result of the excellent 80% response rate to a trial survey undertaken in February/March this year, preliminary data has shown the overall cost to the University (excluding academic salaries) of competitive grants is three times the amount awarded (i.e. indirect costs of \$2 for each \$ 1 granted). It is therefore vital that we recover as much as possible of this additional expenditure. At the moment, this expenditure is cross-subsidised from a variety of sources. It does not include the salaries of most academic staff members, which are covered from the Commonwealth Grants Scheme and international student fees.

### Conclusions

ERA is likely to have both direct outcomes on the reputation of the University influencing student choice both domestically and internationally. It will have direct impacts on the distribution of SRE, but perhaps, according to government statements, on the distribution of other block grants, for example, that for research students.

It is important therefore that the University position itself well for performance in 2012 and later reviews. Appropriate focus on clear strengths of the University will do this task best at University level.

Investment in people is the most important focus, but investment in their research, particularly their capacity to gain external competitive-grant funding is also vital. Competitive grant funding at the moment remains an area where the University has not experienced the growth of others. The budget is important and make manifest the University's plans and priorities

Optimal research performance must influence hiring decisions. There is a case that staff appointments, whilst requiring staff to be able deliver essential learning outcomes - should start from a connection with established research strengths or an accepted, explicit plan to develop new ones. Accordingly, the focus on review and renewal of curriculum is vital to the research efforts of the University. Focus in the curriculum will permit focus in research.

Optimal research performance also requires careful management of workloads. Staff teaching many small classes effectively prevents time for research so curriculum review and concentration is a vital tool for academic leaders in research. Further, allocation of research time is a scarce and precious resource. A uniform framework for workload management will permit discussion of these issues that has so far not been possible.

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The data here and the results of ERA, together with trials of University Analysis of Research Quality of applied research, mandate a careful process of change in hiring, workloads and budgets. This must occur over the next six to nine months or important opportunities for research will be lost.

The commitment in the Research Plan to review our strengths in the light of ERA data is given prominence in the data displayed here. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions in the absence of comparisons across universities within disciplines. However, there is little to suggest that the fields of research highlighted in the Plan require a drastic re-think. ERA results will be important to make more firm conclusions.

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November, 2010