

CPRC Research Pathways Program 19/20 Guidelines

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**Consumer
Policy Research
Centre**

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Introduction

CPRC is Australia's first consumer-focussed policy think tank, established by the Victorian Government in December 2016. Our vision is to deliver a fair outcome for all consumers. We believe that consumer confidence when engaging with businesses and markets is central to the long-term sustainability of those markets.

We work with business, the community sector and policy markets to develop, translate and promote evidence-based research to inform practice and policy changes.

As part of the establishment of the organisation, the CPRC has been given the role of delivering a research grants program to help support its identified research objectives.

Consistent with the organisation's own research approach, the grants program will deliver research projects which:

- (i) are policy-informed, and with a view to impacting policy outcomes;
- (ii) seek to form an evidence-base for program and policy initiatives, including addressing evidence gaps;
- (iii) avoid duplication;
- (iv) are evaluative in nature, assessing and monitoring the impact of policy and programmatic interventions.

In August 2017, CPRC released the Research Priorities, or areas of focus for the organisation over the next three years. Research within these inquiry areas will be conducted internally, through external partnerships and by successful grant applicants. The Research Pathways Program is complementary to CPRC's own research and policy work.

The total funding available to project partners and applicants through the Research Pathways Program is \$210,000 annually available through three separate streams and funding rounds.

This guideline outlines the objectives, outcomes and operation of the Research Pathways Program. CPRC is committed to transparency and robust research outcomes and thus has developed the Program in line with the Australian National Audit Office *Implementing Better Practice Grants Administration, Better Practice Guide 2013*.

Objectives of the Research Pathways Program

The objectives of the CPRC Research Pathways Program are to:

- Facilitate collaborative consumer-focussed research across government, industry, community sector and academia;
- Foster high-quality research which develops a robust and timely evidence base for policy or practice changes within identified CPRC research priority areas.

Program outcomes

Potential outcomes from the Research Pathways Program include:

- Production of new consumer data and information sets;
- Cross-sectoral partnerships developing solutions to known and defined policy or practice problems;
- Behavioural trials to test the real-world consumer experience or outcomes of a proposed intervention, the results of which can assist policymakers, regulators and businesses determine effective reform;
- The production of evidence-based advice to policymakers and regulators on key reform matters.

Funding rounds and streams

Three types of funding options are available each year:

Stream 1 – Professor Maureen Brunt AO Essay Prize (\$10,000);

Stream 2 - Research Grants (up to \$100,000);

Stream 3 - Partnerships (up to \$100,000).

Streams and selection criteria

[Stream 1 – Professor Maureen Brunt AO Essay Prize \(\\$10,000\)](#)

CPRC's annual Essay Prize honours Professor Brunt, whose work had a profound and lasting impact on consumer and competition law in Australia. The Essay Prize is open to any student enrolled in the fields of consumer and competition law, human rights, public policy, consumer behaviour, privacy, ethics, economics and data science.

The winner will receive a \$7,500 cash prize, with \$2,500 for the runner up. The top 10 essays will also be published on our website and distributed to our network of regulatory, industry, policy, community sector and academic experts. The Essay Prize will be launched at the Data (R)Evolution conference on 19 November 2019 with winners to be announced in March 2020.

[Stream 2 - Research Grant \(\\$100,000\)](#)

Research area: Technology and inequality

Technology has become an inextricable part of lives. It is largely unknown what the long-term impact of this will be on our physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, and on broader issue of inequality within our markets and society.

Consumers are increasingly purchasing, using and being exposed to direct and ambient data collection through the adoption of technology by homes and businesses.

CPRC now welcomes expressions of interest from projects exploring both of the following areas of inquiry:

Analysis of emerging data collection and use technologies, products and services and their impact on equality

The deployment of data-driven technologies will have a variety of impacts across the economy. Some applications will better assist previously excluded consumers access to products and services. Other applications will advantage consumers with the capacity to pay for new technologies. We are seeking projects that will analyse new consumer technologies and their applied and measurable impact on either increasing or decreasing equality.

Examples of practices and applications include, but are not limited to: AI, machine-learning applications, Internet of Things devices, comparator and digital assistant services, smart cities, disability supports and technologies, internet search and social networks, phone applications, smart home technologies or profiling and personalisation practices.

Examples of potential areas of inquiry of equality include, but are not limited to: bargaining power, choice, consent, privacy, marginalised groups, manipulation, distribution of costs / benefits / welfare or access.

Emerging models that build greater equality, inclusion and welfare through data collection and use

For growth to be inclusive in the digital economy, new models will need to be developed that protect fundamental rights, foster data use in the public interest and better share the collective benefits of economic growth generated by data-driven technologies.

Where consumer participation in services results in the collection of personal information as an input to production for the growth of that service, there is far from widespread consensus as to how the benefits are to be shared better between firms and consumers.

We are seeking analysis from researchers on 3 – 4 emerging models that better enable equality, inclusion and improve consumer and community welfare. Examples of some of the models or concepts under active consideration in Australia and abroad include but are not limited to: data trusts, data and technology sovereignty, data ownership and payment models.

Note: we are not seeking a project that focusses only on historic academic literature, but one which draws on theoretical frameworks - testing and exploring how these could be used to develop more effective shared benefit models for consumers and firms.

Key selection criteria

Expressions of Interest will be reviewed by CPRC staff and Board against the below selection criteria:

1. The validity of the applied research method proposed to analyse and quantify the adoption of new technologies and their impact on inequality.
2. How the project will generate new knowledge of practical application and direct relevance to policymakers.
3. The extent to which the project will draw on latest developments internationally.
4. Achievability of the project with proposed budget and timelines.
5. Qualifications of the research team.

Further information

We encourage applications from interdisciplinary teams with experience in any of the following: computer science, data science, economics, consumer law, competition policy, human rights, privacy, information law, behavioural science, marketing, cybersecurity or social science.

We encourage projects with strong international links, or academics with expert international knowledge of new and emerging models for data sharing and use.

An Expression of Interest form must be lodged by COB 20th December.

Expressions of Interest will be reviewed by CPRC staff and Board, with invitations to progress to Grant Application stage issued by mid-January 2020.

Grant Applications will be by invitation only, closing February 2020.

Successful applicants will be notified March 2020.

Stream 3 - Partnerships (\$200,000 over two years)

Our partnerships stream has been developed for research areas where the CPRC is undertaking significant internal research in a focus area and is seeking community, academic, industry and government partners to strengthen the project and create a collaboration platform.

These are often projects where there may be a shared responsibility across the sectors to address the challenge, or where no single sector can introduce reforms to improve consumer outcomes in isolation.

Project funding in our partnerships stream is contingent on co-contributions (financial or non-financial, e.g: data, modelling platforms and software, expert advice) from partners and there is an expectation that these projects adopt a collaborative approach to meet the research aims of partners and policy aims of the CPRC.

Research area: Measuring wellbeing and welfare in markets

CPRC is committed to improving transparency of trends in consumer experiences and outcomes across a range of markets. Ensuring that markets are working in the interests of consumers and the community is essential to the economy and society.

We are now seeking a partner or partners to work with us on the development of an outcomes measurement framework for consumer wellbeing and welfare across several markets. This project would be undertaken over a period of two years, with the initial stages reviewing and evaluating various performance measurement frameworks and the second stage undertaking the first round of data collection.

We would welcome Expressions of Interest from consortia exploring:

- Analysis of models of performance and outcomes measurement for consumer wellbeing and welfare
- Dimensions of consumer experience
- Methods for quantifying consumer experience and welfare
- Analysis of the role of market stewardship in the performance of markets
- Existing data collection / performance reporting and the role of Open Data to facilitate better consumer and market outcomes

Key selection criteria

Expressions of Interest will be reviewed by CPRC staff and Board against the below selection criteria:

1. Experience of the consortia in delivering high-quality, nationwide consumer research, particularly market research.
2. The validity of the proposed research method to quantify the consumer experience and welfare.
3. The extent to which the project will draw on latest developments internationally in relation to measurement of outcomes in consumer markets and the wellbeing economy.
4. Experience of the consortia with Open Data initiatives.
5. The cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary representation in the consortia.

Further information

We would welcome expressions of interest from a collaboration of researchers from across the corporate and academic sectors, particularly those experienced with conducting large-scale market research projects.

We would welcome expressions of interest from those with a strong track record and experience in but not limited to: market research, consumer experience, performance reporting, consumer law, competition policy, psychology, Open Data, social science and program evaluation.

Expressions of Interest remain open until March 2020. This Stream operates on a first-come, first-served basis. Once an EOI is lodged CPRC will contact the consortia to arrange a time to further discuss the proposal.

Should CPRC receive two applications of similar nature, CPRC will contact each applicant to discuss the interest and willingness of parties to collaborate on a joint project proposal. This will only be undertaken with consent of both parties.

Administration and governance

Research Panel

The CPRC will appoint a research panel of policy and research experts to review applications received for Stream 2 – Research Grants and make a recommendation to the CPRC Board on the successful project.

Ongoing role of CPRC

CPRC will continue to engage with successful applicants at key delivery milestones and may support promotion and dissemination of the research by:

- Making the research publicly available on the CPRC website;
- Sharing and presenting the results on social and other media;
- Sharing and presenting the results to industry, regulators and governments

CPRC may also work with successful applicants to maximise impact by translating the research produced into policy and practice reform options for business, governments and regulators and by raising public awareness about the research through media and other publicity engagements.

Intellectual property

The successful grant recipient/s retain ownership of Intellectual Property Rights in the Project Materials. In line with section four of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*¹ to promote and disseminate research findings, successful recipient/s grant CPRC a perpetual licence to Project Materials for purposes associated with CPRC's objectives to translate research into policy and practice and maximise the impact of consumer research.

Inclusion

CPRC requires consideration for each project produced via the Research Pathways Program of the impact on vulnerable consumers and those who may be disadvantaged or excluded.

Adherence to Working Together Guidelines

CPRC has developed Working Together Guidelines for our Research Grants and Partnerships. Successful applicants are expected to conduct themselves in a way which meets the behaviours and principles of these Guidelines throughout the project.

¹ Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007), NHMRC.