

CAUL response to the Chief Scientist's *Advice on open access models*

Transcript of verbal response presented by CAUL Executive Director, Jane Angel, at a webinar hosted by the Chief Scientist on 12 September 2024

CAUL welcomes Dr Foley's focus on open access. We support the overarching aim to unlock knowledge for the national benefit and to put publicly funded research into the hands of all Australians. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the considerable work in Dr Foley's *Advice on open access models*.

CAUL does not support the Public Access Model outlined in the Chief Scientist's proposal, because it is not a strategy that will drive the transformation of academic publishing towards an open future. The Model would build upon CAUL's work negotiating read and publish agreements to extend read access and publishing rights to all Australians, however it will facilitate increased open access publishing only up to the limit of caps imposed by publishers. This will not constitute open access to all of Australia's research. It will allow Australians to read paywalled research published in journals at no direct cost to the reader, but it will not allow these to be shared or reused, activities that are core to the definition of open access. While Australians would have access through the national subscription, the rest of the world would not. This is at odds with the principles of open access. A national Public Access subscription model is not an open access model.

For all the reasons noted in Dr Foley's proposal, the global scholarly publishing industry requires urgent reform. CAUL has a deeper understanding of the nuances associated with negotiating and managing read and publish agreements than any other stakeholder in Australia. We contend that the Public Access Model will entrench the existing issues, which see enormous profit margins derived from free academic labour. CAUL-negotiated read and publish agreements have significantly increased open access publishing in Australia and Aotearoa, with more than 45,000 open access articles published since 2020. But read and publish agreements are not the end goal. They were always intended to be an interim measure to drive the transformation of publishing models. Internationally, there is recognition that read and publish agreements are not accelerating the transformational change needed and that a broader strategy is required.

The open access models articulated in the Advice are presented as mutually exclusive yet national strategies elsewhere typically employ multiple pathways to open access, facilitated by various mechanisms, including repositories and community-led journals, and incentivised through mandates and transformed reward and recognition frameworks, as noted in the Addendum to the Advice. It is not only possible to apply multiple approaches in a coordinated way, it is essential.

The additional costs associated with the Public Access Model cannot be offset by reduced expenditure on repositories as they are essential infrastructure for making non-traditional research outputs, including creative works and software, open access, for maintaining

complete records of institutions' research outputs, and for bridging the gaps in universal open access to Australian research. Repository infrastructure must be maintained and needs renewed investment.

CAUL cannot support the recommendations as they have been articulated. We do not support further investment to develop the Public Access national subscription model because it is not open access and does not address the well-documented issues associated with the current for-profit scholarly publishing industry. A national strategy must aim higher, adopting multiple approaches to truly advance open access. It must not be based on the principle of ensuring the sustainability of publisher business practices that are designed to advance commercial rather than community interests.

CAUL advocates for and is ready to engage with the development of a progressive open access strategy that supports a diverse publishing ecosystem and multiple pathways to open access; one that prioritises equity and will facilitate the quality, usability and sustainability of Australia's research, putting Australian research outputs into the hands of global citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Advice.