



Joint CAUL-AOASG Election Statement

Developing a strategic approach to open scholarship in Australia

Australia needs a national strategy for open scholarship.

We are at a stalemate in improving access to scholarly research because of the tension between the needs of research institutions, which want to disseminate their research outputs as widely as possible, and commercial publishers, who dominate academic publishing, and who primarily serve the needs of their shareholders.

Australian universities alone pay more than \$280 million each year for access to academic research publications, yet that access is limited to only those who work in universities. In the 2018 Excellence for Research Australia (ERA) exercise universities reported that only 32% of articles submitted for ERA evaluation are openly available.

The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) and the Australasian Open Access Strategy Group (AOASG), which are led by experts in access to knowledge, have been advocating for many years for open scholarship: making the outputs of publicly-funded Australian research openly available in alignment with the F.A.I.R. (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles to ensure that anyone can find, read, use and reuse research outputs.

Widening access to academic research increases opportunities for collaboration among researchers¹ and industry, especially internationally; increases the pace of discovery²; increases the trust of the public and their engagement with research; and supports a stronger evidence base for the development of policy³.

Over the past ten years Australia has gone from being a world leader in widening access to research outputs, mainly through the establishment of a national set of institutional repositories, to lagging behind international initiatives in open scholarship policies and practices.

Plan S, a relatively new initiative, initially from a European-led coalition but now global in scope, intends to make research from coalition partners open by 2020. Plan S offers the opportunity to catalyse a

¹ <http://opensourcemalarialia.org/>

² <https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/guidance/open-access-policy>

³ <https://apo.org.au/>

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discussion on how Australia can match the rest of the world — a discussion that would involve Australian researchers, research funders, industry partners, government and academic publishers.

A re-invigorated commitment to open scholarship will help ensure that Australian researchers can continue to collaborate with international colleagues, access international funding programs, and contribute to major global projects.

To achieve these goals, Australia needs a national strategy for open scholarship.

In its 2018 inquiry into the Australian Government Funding Arrangements for non-NHMRC Research, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training recommended “that the Australian Government develop a more strategic approach to Australia’s open scholarship environment”. CAUL and AOASG supported this recommendation⁴.

It is now time to implement that approach through the establishment of a cross-sectoral body charged with developing and implementing, within three years, a national action plan for open scholarship – a plan that would include recommendations on changes to the policy and funding framework for Australian higher education. Open scholarship should also be included in the terms of reference for any post-election reviews or inquiries on Australian higher education and research.

Achieving fair and open access to Australian research outputs would be a realistic and significant accomplishment for a new or re-appointed Minister after the election, and should be a priority for government. CAUL and the AOASG are ready to offer their experience, expertise and knowledge to the goal of open scholarship.

More information on open scholarship, the F.A.I.R. principles, and CAUL and AOASG can be found in our joint background briefing.

10 May 2019

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⁴ <https://www.caul.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/media/open-scholarship2018joint-statement.pdf>