

THE PSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA

(Incorporated in New South Wales)

c/o School of Psychology, University of New South Wales, Sydney 2052, NSW, Australia

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Prof. D.R. Badcock
Univ. Western Australia.

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U.N.S.W.
Prof P. Lovibond
U.N.S.W.

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Univ. Adelaide

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Univ. Sydney.

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26 July 2012

Bruce H J McKellar FAA

Chair, Committee to Review National Committees

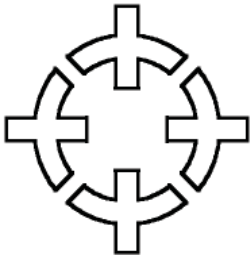
Dear Professor McKellar,

We are pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the committee structure and function within the Australian Academy of Science. The Psychology Foundation of Australia is a grouping of research-oriented university Schools of Psychology that was created to promote high standards in the education of psychologists and a scientific basis for professional practice. These goals mean that we are committed to ensuring the appropriate recognition of Psychology's role as one of the seven hub sciences (Cacciopo, J.T., Psychology is a hub science. *Association for Psychological Science Observer*, 2007, 20(8), 1-3; Boyack, K. W., Klavans, R., & Borner, K. (2005). Mapping the backbone of Science. *Scientometrics*, 64, 351-374.) and its appropriate function and engagement within Australia so that it may fulfil this supportive role for a broad range of Australian scientific endeavours.

The Psychology Foundation is most closely associated with the interests of the National Committee for Brain and Mind, although the activities of some sections of Psychology also overlap with the interests of the national committees for Medicine, Data in Science and Plant and Animal Sciences. This broad range reflects the hub science character of the discipline.

We should take this opportunity to, once again, register our disappointment that the National Committee for Psychology was disbanded prior to the formation of the National Committee for Brain and Mind. Psychological science occupies the more central discipline role in this area directed at understanding brain function, behaviour and the link between the two and we believe the previous committee reflected that role. The current committee includes other disciplines with an interest in cognition but ones that, while relevant, are less typified by a scientific approach. However, the current committee does provide an avenue for Psychology to make a contribution to the functions of the Academy and Psychology still maintains a strong, albeit less visible, presence.

The current committee confronts several difficulties in making a substantive contribution. A central issue is the difficulty in representing its views in other areas of the academy. Partly this is because there is no obvious sectional committee with strongly overlapping interests.



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Partial overlap occurs with Sectional Committee 7 (Animal Sciences) and 12 (Medicine and Public Health) but neither of these are directly concerned with the core activities of understanding brain function or the experimental investigation of behaviour. In short, neither Psychology nor the more restricted focus on Cognitive Neuroscience reflected in the current committee for Brain and Mind sit easily at the sectional committee level. A direct consequence of this is that there are very few Fellows representing this central and strong hub science. This outcome is at odds with the Royal Society of London which has a strong representation from experimental psychology among the Fellowship and also the National Academy of Sciences in the USA. In both cases this representation reflects the breadth of psychology and not just cognitive neuroscience. We encourage the AAS to review this issue to ensure that Australian scientists are able to make an appropriate contribution to the national debate.

The National Committee for Brain and Mind has a strong membership, good links with national Psychology bodies through its membership, and has focused in recent times on data gathering but does not have a prominent role. Recent decisions to more actively pursue the production of position papers and to use media outlets more energetically are to be welcomed as Psychology has a great deal of rigorously acquired science that can contribute to many aspects of national policy. The most obvious contribution comes in the area of mental health policy but this is only a small fraction of the potential contribution. A broader role is described in the FASTS position paper produced by the Psychology Foundation of Australia (Badcock, Hammond, Gillam, Brewer, & Andrews, *Psychology: the science of mind, brain, and behaviour. FASTS Occasional Paper Series*, 6, 2007, pp. 1-13.). We would also like to see a more active engagement with international Psychology and Cognitive Science bodies (e.g. the International Union of Psychological Science, The Association for Psychological Science and also the overlapping but less directly relevant Society for Neuroscience).

Currently the committee has only had a small impact but the intent is for this to grow and in our view it is critical that this rapidly advancing aspect of Australian science, represented by the committee, continues to be recognised within the AAS. We do further request that serious consideration be given to ensuring that Psychological science is adequately represented in all aspects of the Academy's function so that the Academy can facilitate the contribution of Australia's prominent psychological scientists.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the committee structure.

Yours sincerely

OFFICE ENQUIRIES

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