



NITRO-Oceania

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**Response to Australia's Draft
National Science and Research
Priorities**

28 September 2023

On behalf of NITRO-Oceania, we applaud the mentions in the draft national science and research priorities report of the requirements for:

- multidisciplinary and multisector efforts
- systems approaches
- impact.

What the draft priorities report does not seem to appreciate, however, is that the Australian research community is poorly equipped to undertake research that is multi-, inter- and/or transdisciplinary, systemic and impact oriented. Discipline-based research training, while critically important, is not enough to provide the expertise necessary for the effective teamwork and stakeholder engagement required to harness the contributions of multiple disciplines and sectors to:

- understanding problems and potential actions systemically and
- supporting policy and practice improvement by government, business and civil society.

Instead, these elements of research on the complex problems that Australian society faces commonly rely on intuition, rather than expertise. While there is a growing body of theoretical and methodological scholarship that underpins teamwork, stakeholder engagement, systems thinking, multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary endeavours and effective research implementation and impact, it is hard to access and therefore generally ignored by the wider research community.

Ignoring this scholarship leads to reinvention of existing methods, being stymied by the same problems, using low-grade techniques or concepts when more sophisticated ones are available, and generally failing to advance or improve the way societal and environmental problems are addressed.

We urge consideration not only of the topics to be addressed, but also of widespread building of the requisite expertise to undertake this research. Without attention to this expertise, Australian research will fail to reap the benefits that setting new research priorities will provide.

NITRO-Oceania, the Network of Leaders of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research Organisations in the Oceania region, is the peak body for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and education in Australia and the wider region (<https://nitro-oceania.net>). Fifty-two of our more than 70 members are in leadership positions in 18 Australian research and education organisations.

This submission was prepared by Gabriele Bammer and Iain Gordon on behalf of the Executive and membership of NITRO-Oceania.