

The below text was prepared as a snippet to aid others in their thinking about the timeline and urgency of the process described in the green paper. As I've thought more about it, I feel that it is worth submitting on its own. My experience working on teams developing submissions has been that a significant number of early-mid career researchers have dedicated significant amounts of their own time in the hopes that they help manifest a system in which they will have a future. Thus I think it is only fair that the RSI system as it stands today should repay these efforts by supporting these researchers until change can be made. As I have said in consultation sessions, a key need to build resilience in our RSI system is to fund people, not projects.

### **The Case for Urgency**

The Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways green paper lays open for consultation ideas intended to drive system-level transformation in our research, science and innovation system. Consultation has been opened to a broad swath of participants from both within and outside the current system, with specific encouragement to engage for early-career researchers and those who are underrepresented at the current time. I understand that system-level change is an overwhelming process that requires significant time to implement well-thought out, achievable changes, and that these changes will also require time to become real. During an early consultation session, it was stated by facilitators that this process has a realistic timeline for change of seven or more years. Still, it is important to consider those who are in the system now. Many hundreds of early-career staff, including those bearing the extra burden for the underrepresented, cannot wait seven years. A key aspect missing in the current thinking is urgency. While it is important to aim for long-term and lasting change, we must implement short-term bridges for our early-career workforce so that they will be part of the research system they are working to help improve.

In 2021 MBIE funded a one-off cohort of thirty Whitinga Fellowships, a programme designed to bridge early-career researchers through the impact of COVID-19. While praiseworthy for its progressive selection process and the opportunity it provided, this fellowship scheme was small in scope. Due to the restrictions on eligibility, and funding distribution many who would otherwise be considered early-career researchers were excluded from application. When considering how many early-career researchers are in precarious positions, thirty fellowships is almost a rounding error. The funding period is only two-years which is simply shifting a burden down the road.

In order for early-career research workforce, who are spending countless unpaid hours contributing to Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways, to have stable research career pathways during the process, I suggest further fellowship rounds based on the Whitinga Fellowship model. Improvements can be made to fund those in the later stages of their early-career by doubling the maximum funding available per-fellowship (\$620,000). The number of fellowships offered should also be increased to reflect the number of people in this career stage, and this figure may be determined using data from the MBIE RSI Workforce surveys. Fellowship rounds should be offered annually until they are no longer needed. While it is true that this would cost money, it is the result of decades of underinvestment in pathways for our research workforce.

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