

A National Research Integrity Commission

An article in The Sydney Morning Herald on 23 November reported that a top medical research scientist had been referred to the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission over alleged research misconduct. Some of the key matters covered in the report, that have relevance to other fields of research include:

1. The institute declined to detail the specific allegations made as the matter is now before the commission, but *The Age* understands they centre on data manipulation.
2. A second independent review, to be headed by Bruce Lander, South Australia's former Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, had also been commissioned into what the institute called a "broad range of issues" arising from the initial investigation, the institute said.
3. Professor Smyth is one of Australia's foremost scientists and has received millions of dollars in government and commercial funding. The investigation is likely to have wide-ranging fallout across the research sector.
4. He is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, which lists him as the "the most highly cited immunologist in Australia"
5. Professor Smyth is listed as a [reviewing editor](#) at *Science*, one of the world's top scientific journals, and an honorary professor at the University of Queensland.
6. In a statement, QIMR director and chief executive Fabienne Mackay said: "QIMR Berghofer is introducing a new robust research integrity framework under which all staff will be expected to operate, in consultation with leading research integrity experts.
7. "QIMR deserves kudos for handling this rigorously and properly," he said. "Generally, things like this are swept under the rug in Australia because here, research integrity is self-regulated, which means conflicts of interest inevitably arise as people investigate their own colleagues.
8. "Twenty-three European countries, the US, Canada, Japan and China have national offices to handle research integrity. Australia is being left behind."

When will the Australian Research Council (ARC) take a hard look at the quality of fire and ecological research being funded out of the total 2021-22 research budget of over \$864 million? The ARC Engagement and Impact Assessment report 2018-19 rated the University of Tasmania (UTas) Environmental Research program as HIGH across engagement, impact and approach. One of the highly rated "challenges affecting society" listed was improving bushfire management. The UTas had to retract a fire research paper in September 2020.

To ensure fire, biodiversity and other research funding is not squandered, the ARC must recommend to the government that a National Research Integrity Commission (NRIC) be established, to oversee research accountability and integrity standards.

If improved accountability and integrity is to underpin future research in Australia, the NRIC must have staff who are not part of the growing clique of academics and behind closed doors peer reviewers, who ignore the Scientific Method and use flawed research findings to drive political and other covert agendas.

<https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/EI/Web/impact/ImpactStudies#/20/1/bushfire/>

