To Whom it May Concern,


Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the changes proposed to refresh the Australian Government’s National Research Priorities (NRPs) arising from the Focussing Australia’s Publicly Funded Research Review (2011).

With respect to the NRPs appropriateness as “a broad, overarching framework for signalling the Australian Government’s aspirations in relation to public research” the University of Sydney supports the proposed refinements and additions proposed in the consultation paper.

I believe Australia’s NRPs should provide the scope for a research sector befitting an advanced OECD country; that is a sector with a broad and vibrant base of high-quality, investigator-driven, deep, disciplinary research. Universities should be encouraged to contribute to NRPs in ways that engage their research strengths and meet their strategic needs. Areas of research excellence should be known and acknowledged, and gaps identified and addressed. From this base complementary strengths can be selected and targeted to complex and pressing societal problems.

In this context, we note our support for the following:

- “Enhancing Society, Culture and Communities” – the expansion and strengthening of the National Research Priorities through the additional NRP recognises the valuable and unique contribution the Humanities and Social Science disciplines make to the national research endeavour. It is critical we understand ourselves and harness our capacities for adaptation and creativity in the context of social change and technological innovation.

- “An Environmentally Sustainable Australia” – the broadening of this NRP to new technologies in all industries, beyond just resource-based ones.

- “Promoting and Maintaining Good Health” – the inclusion of mental health and indigenous health and introduction of scope for medical innovation.

- “Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australia” – removal of examples from this NRP’s priority goals for consistency across the NRPs, and the inclusion of institutions and services as users of innovative technologies.
“Safeguarding Australia” — inclusion of food security and capacity to respond to extreme events. Events over the last few years nationally and internationally leave no doubt these should be national priorities.

Finally, we believe that the NRPs should be a living document reflecting current opportunities and challenges, and recommend they be reviewed on a regular basis, say annually, and are updated as required.

Please get in touch if you would like to discuss this response, or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature removed for electronic distribution]

Professor Jill Trewhella
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)