

ARMS 2025 Melbourne Conference Report

Agnes Low, The Kids Research Institute Australia

The 2025 Melbourne ARMS Conference was the first for me and I was honoured to be awarded the 2025 Melbourne Conference Grant. Being in the midst of over 820 research management professionals from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and around the world made me appreciate that we are not alone in the challenges we face at work. Across the globe, many others are doing the vital work of supporting researchers – sharing in both triumphs and trials in this life-changing field. The conference fostered a strong sense of camaraderie and, at times, even offered a safe space to vent. I felt validated and uplifted by the collective support of the research management community.

I was especially inspired by AFL legend Kevin Sheedy, who spoke about leadership, resilience, and nurturing potential and Juliet Gerrard, former Chief Science Advisor to the New Zealand Prime Minister, who shared powerful insights from her experience navigating science and policy during national crises, including the Christchurch terror attack, Whakaari eruption and the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also interesting to be introduced to the evolving role of research professionals in what is referred to as the 'third space'—a concept describing boundary-spanning roles that bridge academia and professional services.

My selection of talks includes topics on succession planning, mentorship, building operational efficiencies through tools like researcher dashboards, identity management systems, the streamlined NHMRC application processes and the importance of culturally informed ethics and community engagement.

Since the conference, and in conjunction with Research Administrators Day on 25 September 2025, I have initiated an institute-wide communication piece to encourage all staff to take a moment to recognise research management professionals and let their team members know how much they are valued, appreciated and essential to the success of research. I have used the learnings and thought processes during the conference to contribute to the conceptualisation of ideas for a Stan Perron Programs grant application. I have recently been successful in a competitive 'Expression of Interest' to attend the ARMS Project Management Master Class. I am excited and it's in the pipeline for me to present my learnings to my team and also the local WA chapter (WA – SA Chapter online event).

I hope ARMS continues their vision and sharing of the message that Research Managers/ Professional are not just enablers of process but **pathkeepers** who drive real-world impact. Being recognised will empower our profession, elevate our contributions, and inspire a new generation of research leaders to embrace the transformative role we play in shaping knowledge and outcomes.