

ARMS 2025 Conference Travel Grant Report – Brittany Bennenbroek

In 2025, I was fortunate to receive an ARMS Travel Grant to attend the ARMS Conference held in Melbourne (Naarm). This support enabled me to participate in what was a highly valuable professional development and engagement opportunity at an important stage in my early career.

Prior to the conference, I made the (slightly daunting) decision to submit an abstract to present on the development of our Research Impact Framework at Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland, drawing on insights from a recent research impact study tour to Australia. My abstract was accepted, and therefore I applied for the travel grant to support my attendance. This decision was driven by a desire to reconnect with colleagues I had met during the study tour, build new professional relationships, present at my first conference, and deepen my engagement with the ARMS community.

Presenting to a room of peers was both nerve-wracking and incredibly rewarding. I received thoughtful and encouraging feedback following the presentation and had a number of meaningful conversations that continued beyond the session itself. Presenting at ARMS felt like a significant personal milestone and helped build my confidence to contribute more actively to sector-wide conversations around research impact. It also reinforced the value of sharing practical, reflective insights across institutions and borders, and creating space for open dialogue with colleagues across the sector.

The conference itself was full of variety, including individual presentations, panel sessions, and keynote speakers. The breadth of sessions made it challenging to choose which to attend, reflecting the depth and diversity of expertise within the ARMS community. A particular highlight was seeing colleagues from Waipapa Taumata Rau present their work, which helped to deepen my understanding of how different parts of our research and innovation ecosystem connect. It was also interesting to see the popularity of sessions focused on artificial intelligence, which reinforced that research management professionals across institutions are navigating similar challenges and opportunities in this rapidly evolving area, particularly around how to use AI ethically, thoughtfully, and efficiently.

The keynote sessions were another highlight. Hearing from Kevin Sheedy offered a uniquely Australian perspective, and his reflections on leadership, influence, Indigenous representation, and the importance of dialogue clearly resonated with the audience. It was also a privilege to hear from Professor Dame Juliet Gerrard, who shared insights from her time as New Zealand's Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor and reflected on the relationship between research, policy, and public trust.

One of the most thought-provoking sessions for me was the panel titled *Innovating in the third space – boundary spanning roles supporting research innovation and impact*. The discussion prompted reflection on what it means to work in these in-between spaces within academic institutions, and how this shapes professional identity and career pathways. It strongly resonated with my own experience and reinforced my belief in the value of more flexible, innovative roles within complex organisations like universities.

Beyond the formal programme, one of the most valuable aspects of the conference was the strong sense of camaraderie. Sharing experiences, challenges, and insights with colleagues, both within the research impact space and across the broader research management profession, was immensely energising. The Research Impact SIG session in particular was a highlight, providing a collegial environment to connect with peers and continue building a network that I know will be invaluable going forward.

Overall, I left the conference with a renewed sense of purpose and a strong reminder of the importance of engagement and relationships in advancing the work we do. I also came away feeling connected to a wider community of research management professionals who are all working towards similar goals: creating more effective, people-focused systems and services that support researchers and enable meaningful research impact.

I am very grateful to ARMS for the Travel Grant support, which made this experience possible, and I look forward to continuing my engagement with the ARMS community in the years ahead.