

ARMS 2025 Melbourne Conference – Travel Grant report

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I attended this year's ARMS conference with theme Navigating the Playing Field: Innovation in a Complex Landscape in Melbourne, supported by an ARMS Tasmanian Chapter Travel Award. As university budgets become increasingly stretched, these Travel Awards are incredibly important, particularly for small and/or remote universities, for ensuring mobility and connection between research management professionals.

I realised only while attending this conference that it had been eight years since I last attended an ARMS conference, which only made me more grateful for the opportunity and keener to maximise outcomes.

I recently attended a Tasmanian Chapter event and presented a short version of my own talk and what I learned from the conference.

There were three main highlights for me, starting with the most specific:

Professor Dame Juliet A. Gerrards Keynote talk

This was easily the best and most impactful talk for me of the whole conference. I think she would have been a brilliant speaker to open the conference (no offence to Kevin Sheedy!). Her pragmatism and insightful perspectives were incredibly valuable, and I found myself still talking about some of her comments (e.g. the matrix of values vs consensus) to colleagues when I returned to the office a week later.

Presenting my own talk on researcher development

I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk about the research leadership programs we have been running at our University and the incredible impact we have seen. I was really happy that there were lots of questions from the audience after my talk and we've also been contacted since the conference for more information about what we're doing, which is exactly what the ARMS conference should enable – sharing best practice for us all to succeed. I recognise some areas are more competitive by necessity, but we aren't a large country by population so the more we can do collectively to upskill our academics, the better our nation can perform in research globally.

Connecting/reconnecting with research management colleagues

Before the conference I knew social capital would likely be one of the most valuable aspects of attending. To be completely honest, I found it difficult in the conference meal breaks to connect with many people because attendees with dietaries (i.e. me) were sent to a different area. However, by virtue of being seated with people not from my organisation at the conference dinner, I had a great time getting to know colleagues from other universities and institutions and we've kept in touch since!