



ARMS Conference 2025 report

The 2025 Australasian Research Management Society conference in Melbourne provided a rich and diverse view of the research environment in Australasia. Talks from across sessions and streams reveal a dynamic and multifaceted research landscape, with a number of overarching themes that reflect both institutional priorities and broader societal shifts.

Transforming Research Culture

One prominent theme was the transformation of research culture within institutions that are increasingly focused on reshaping internal cultures to elevate research. This transformation involves moving from passive support to active strategic engagement. Examples include the South Metropolitan Health Service's journey from research-invisibility to executive-level engagement. Monash University's focus on PhD student wellbeing and belonging underscores the recognition that a supportive academic environment is essential for fostering success.

Strengthening Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Another recurring theme was the expansion of collaborative networks across sectors and borders. Universities are building partnerships with industry, government, and communities to co-create impactful research. The University of Queensland's HERA initiative and Rural Health Mission exemplify interdisciplinary and community-driven models. Meanwhile, the University of Auckland's partnership with Universidad de los Andes showcased the potential of international collaboration to amplify research outcomes and global relevance.

Advancing Health and Medical Research Translation

Several talks focused on bridging the gap between research and clinical application. Institutions are investing in translational pathways to ensure discoveries lead to tangible health outcomes. Therapeutic Innovation Australia's Pipeline Accelerator supports translational therapeutics, and the STARFISH project integrates Indigenous governance and interdisciplinary research to address pressing public health challenges, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Embracing Data, Technology, and Automation

Digital transformation is also reshaping research management with institutions adopting AI, automation, and robust data governance frameworks to streamline operations and enhance decision-making. RMIT's use of AI tools and La Trobe University's PRIME platform for tracking research impact reflect a growing emphasis on technological innovation to support strategic goals and improve efficiency.

Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Affirmation

Equity and inclusion are central to many initiatives, with a focus on supporting under-represented groups and fostering affirming research environments. The University of Melbourne's Neurodiversity Project promotes neuro-affirming practices, while structured consumer and community involvement in the University of Queensland's HEalth Research Accelerator initiative in rural and remote health research ensures that diverse voices are embedded in the research process.

Enhancing Strategic Research Support and Governance

Strategic research support and governance play a crucial role in enabling research success. Agile governance models, risk management strategies, and streamlined processes are being implemented to accelerate multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Impact-Focused Research

Finally, the emphasis on impact-driven research is unmistakable, with a clear shift toward measuring and communicating the societal, economic, and cultural impact of research, and institutions are developing tools and systems to track and showcase these outcomes, reflecting a broader commitment to ensuring that research delivers real-world benefits and aligns with strategic priorities, and other strategic planning efforts to ensure that research delivers tangible outcomes beyond academia.

Innovating in the third space

One presentation that particularly resonated for me was the panel session, “Innovating in the third space – boundary spanning roles supporting research innovation and impact”. I had never heard of the third space until this session, but the idea that in my role as a research manager I draw on diverse experience in both the professional and academic space in way that do not fit the binary of ‘academic’ versus ‘professional’ was particularly compelling. The concept of ‘third space roles’ or ‘blended professionals’ is challenging for universities and makes developing a career difficult. In an increasingly complex research landscape, universities need to take more innovative approaches to building capability, such as dual academic/professional appointments, and recognition of the third space as a valid career path would be an important step along this path.

Summary

The ARMS conference illustrated a research sector in transition, embracing transformation, collaboration, and innovation to meet the evolving demands of research management. Institutions are not only reimagining their internal cultures and governance structures but are also forging new pathways for impact through inclusive practices, translational health initiatives, and strategic use of technology. What has emerged is a commitment to making research more visible, more connected, and more meaningful.

Whether through affirming diverse voices, leveraging automation, or deepening community engagement, these initiatives reflect a shared vision; research that is not only rigorous but also responsive societal challenges. As the research management community continues to navigate complexity and change, these themes offer a blueprint for building resilient, forward-thinking systems that empower researchers and enrich society.

Highlighted Presentations

Transforming the culture of health service research: highs, lows, and lessons. Wright M. South Metropolitan Health Service

From Resistance to Readiness: Towards AI and automation in research management. Harvison E. RMIT University

Fostering impactful research: A model for catalysing research capability for health and medical innovation. Devaney M, University of Queensland

Accelerating the establishment of complex, multi-stakeholder major initiatives: A strategic framework for success. Smith A, La Trobe University

How to show success in research impact. Slaney H, La Trobe University

Supporting neurodivergent researchers: Building inclusive and affirming research environments. Arbour K, University of Melbourne

From Auckland to the Andes: Building a Cross-Border Partnership for Research Engagement and Impact. Welch F, Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland

Bridging the Gap: Strategies for Effective University-Health Research Partnerships, Chivers P, Edith Cowan University; Giles N, WA Health; Wright M, South Metropolitan Health Service

Regional, rural and remote health research mission: Mobilising research expertise at scale to meet community-identified research priorities. Shewan A, University of Queensland

Coordinating ambitious research that supports interdisciplinarity and embraces innovation. Poore A, The Kids Research Institute Australia