

# THE 2008 AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AWARDS REPORT ON FINAL ASSESSMENT EDUCATION

19 December 2008

## **OVERVIEW**

Seven research proposals totalling \$2,443,705 over three years were reviewed by the Education Research Selection Committee (RSC). RSC decisions were informed by peer reviews and comments from AusAID program areas. Available funding from the Agency is \$1,000,000 over three years.

The Research Selection Committee (RSC) comprised:

1. Dr Ralph Rawlinson, International Consultant - Education (Chair);
2. Ms Charlotte Blundell, Education Adviser, AusAID; and
3. Ms Paula Henriksen, Program Manager Education Thematic Group, AusAID.

No potential conflicts of interests were identified within the RSC.

A meeting was held on 3 December 2008 to finalise the funding decisions. Dr Rawlinson participated via teleconference from Sri Lanka.

## DECISIONS

(A) The following application is recommended for funding:

Code Number	Proposal Title	Administering Organisation	Principal Investigator	Country/Region of Focus	Funds 2009	Funds 2010	Funds 2011	Funds Total
261	Randomised cluster control trial evaluating the impact of an Early Childhood Education and Development initiative across Indonesia	Centre for Developmental Health, Curtin University & Telethon Institute for Child Health Research	Sally Brinkman	Indonesia	\$197,100	\$197,500	\$199,100	\$593,700

(B) The following proposals were considered suitable for funding. However, any final recommendation for funding was subject to the concerns identified below being addressed to the satisfaction of the Chair of the RSC. The issues discussed below were communicated to the relevant Principal Investigators by the Manager of the ADRP who forwarded the responses to the RSC for final assessment.

The information provided was accepted as satisfactory by the Chair on behalf of the RSC and recommendations for funding are to proceed.

Code Number	Proposal Title	Administering Organisation	Principal Investigator	Country/Region of Focus	Funds 2009	Funds 2010	Funds 2011	Funds Total
213 <sup>1</sup>	Creative Industries, Development & Timor-Leste: A Case Educational Innovation	Griffith University	Anthony Hart Fry	East Timor	\$124,003	\$122,997	\$81,799	\$328,799
114	Identifying strategies to sustain professional learning communities for teachers in remote primary schools in Papua New Guinea	The University of Queensland	Eileen Honan	Papua New Guinea	\$113,209	\$126,935	\$98,005	\$338,149

<sup>1</sup> The RSC requests it be made clear to the applicant that approval for funding applies only to Phase 1 of the proposal and there is no commitment by AusAID to support Phase 2 of the work.

Proposal Number 213 - Creative Industries, Development & Timor-Leste: A Case Educational Innovation

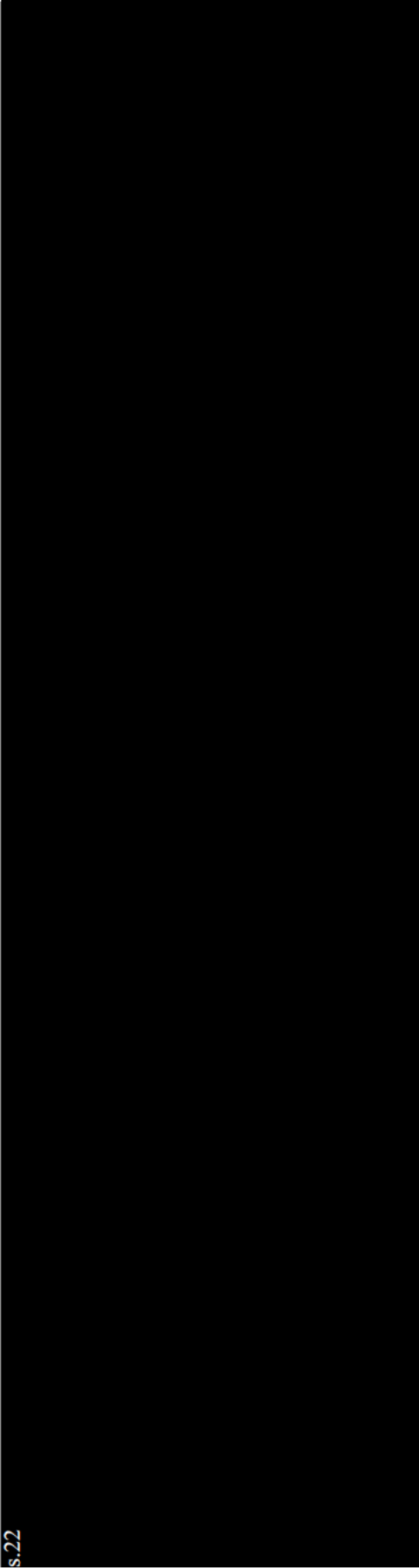
The following concerns were clarified prior to funding being recommended:

1. There was a concern that the proposal goes beyond research on the viability and scoping of a creative industries training program to actual development of full-fledged curriculum, without any guarantee of funding for associated institutional development or national commitment to meet the recurrent costs of the same.

It was suggested that the study should be split into two phases, with a pause after the first phase. The first phase would involve the cultural audit and feasibility/scoping study for development of the Creative Industries course at the new institution – including transformation of an existing non-formal volunteer-based organisation into a polytechnic. Progression to the next phase (curriculum development) should be conditional on local commitment to proceed with the institutional development program. Otherwise, considerable time, effort and resources would be expended on curriculum/course development for a program without an institutional home.

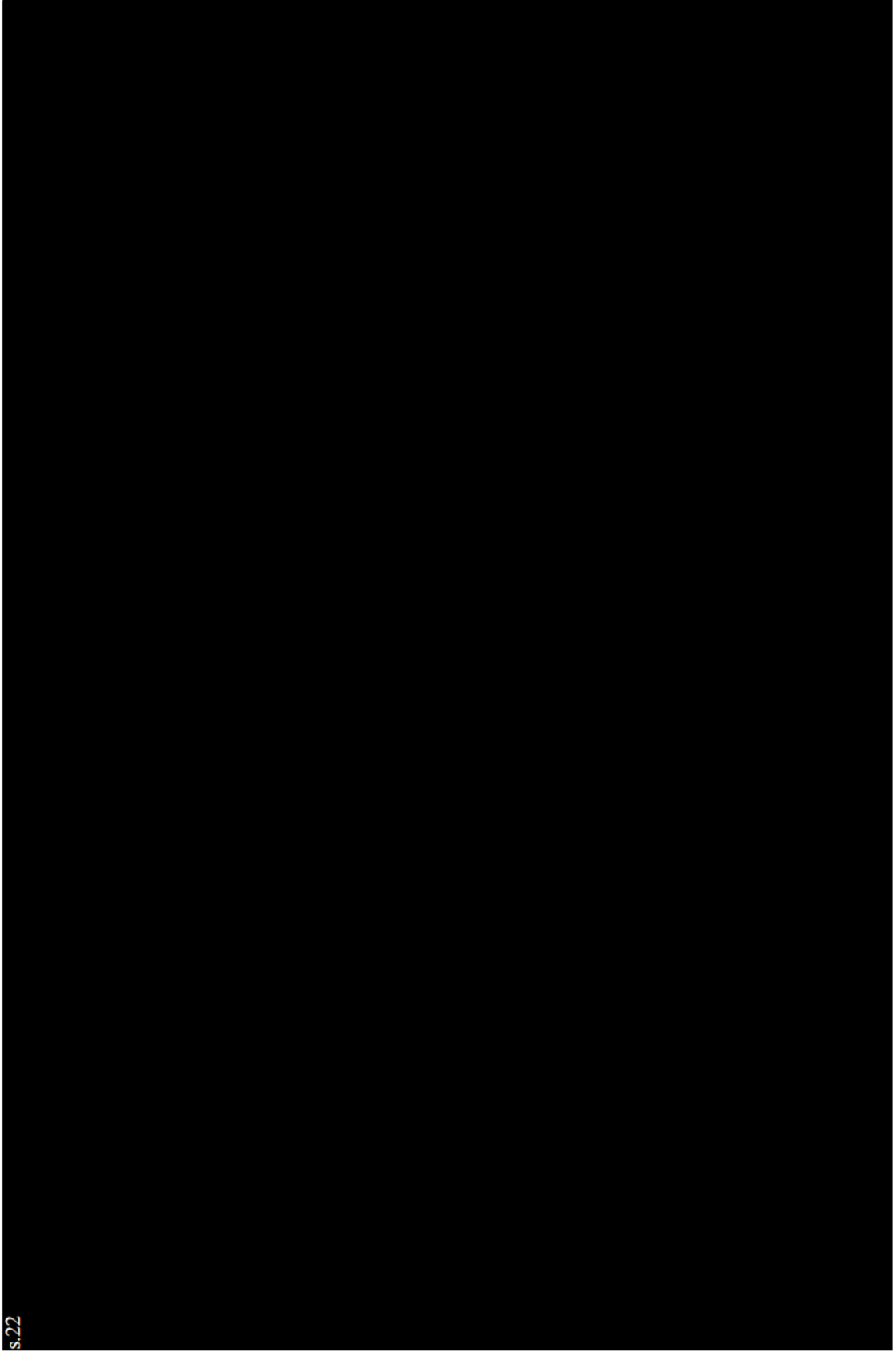
Thus, it was proposed that the research study be reframed accordingly: Funding would be recommended for first phase only of the research (the cultural audit and feasibility/scoping study) and it is expected that the budget would be reduced as a result. It is not assumed that the time frame for the research will necessarily be shortened, given the ambitious nature of the work proposed. A subsequent application would be required in relation to funding for the second phase of the work.

2. There was a need to be more specific about how the work addresses 'reaching disadvantaged groups'. For example:
  - How will the proposed course/institution reach and include unreached/disadvantaged groups?
  - What pre-requisites will be required for entry to the course (what are the alternative entry possibilities enabling admission of students without basic education qualifications)?
  - How will the course be made as inclusive as possible?
  - Will satellite centres be possible? and
  - Will the curriculum go beyond basic literacy/numeracy to include broader Life skills?
3. There was a need to clarify the division of responsibilities between the researchers, as well as provide a more explicit breakdown of the budget in relation to research staff.



(C) The following applicants were not successful:

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## **PROCESS**

### **Process Used for Final RSC Meeting**

Prior to the Committee commencing work, the Manager of the Australian Development Research Program (ADRP) advised that deliverables from the RSC meeting were to be a list of suitable applications recommended for funding and a list of those applications not suitable for funding. The suitable applications were to be ranked to determine which can be funded with the available budget.

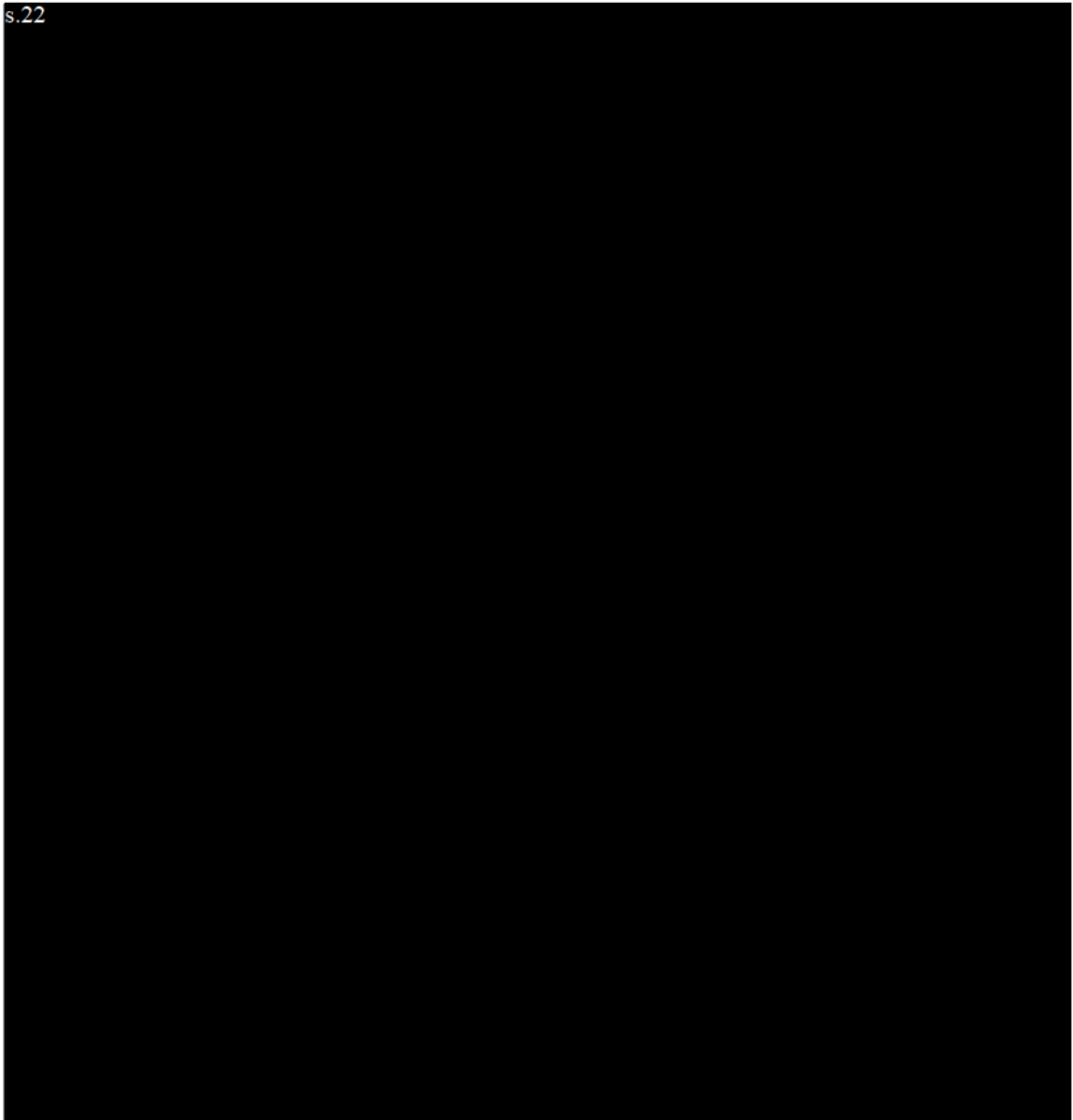
It was recognised that some applications considered suitable might require additional clarification or justification, for example regarding budget items or methodological aspects. These proposals would be recommended for funding once the concerns in question are addressed to the satisfaction of the Chair.

In addition, it was acknowledged that RSC discussion might highlight relevant issues that could strengthen the proposed research and thus enhance outcomes for the Agency. The RSC agreed that, where appropriate, the Manager ADRP would provide these comments through informal communication channels to the researchers for consideration.

The RSC adopted the following process for the meeting:

- The Chair invited RSC members to provide updated ratings on all short-listed proposals following consideration of peer review comment and feedback from the Agency posts;
- The RSC reviewed the updated order of merit and evaluated the contribution of feedback from peer reviewers and staff from in-country posts;
- Based on the updated assessments, two proposals with average ratings of 2.67 were clearly differentiated from the rest of the field and dropped from the short-list;
- The RSC discussed the remaining five proposals in detail, in the light of all the available information;
- After their deliberations, the RSC reviewed the results against available funds and agreed that:
  - one application would be recommended for funding based on the submitted proposal;
  - two proposals would be recommended for funding subject to additional information being provided that would address the concerns discussed;
- The RSC then clarified the specific issues to be raised with successful applicants;
- Subsequent to the meeting, additional information was provided by Principal Investigators for Proposals 213 and 114; and
- Following a final review by RSC members, the Chair confirmed the RSC decisions.

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## ***ACTIONS FROM HERE***

The following actions were to occur:

- The scribe to submit a consolidated report to the Chair and the Manager ADRP to confirm as an accurate transcription of the RSC deliberations;
- Regarding Proposals 213 and 114, the specific issues noted above are to be followed up with the Principal Investigators before final confirmation with the delegate that these should proceed;
- Manager ADRP to implement formal decision making internally;
- Manager ADRP to advise all short-listed applicants of decisions; and
- Manager ADRP to review comments from all RSCs and to undertake the following:
  - Send the current TORS for chairs to each RSC Chair to seek their views about changes that could be made in the light of their experience; and
  - Review the process to date in its entirety and to determine the most appropriate approach for the next round.