Successive Federal governments have pursued a national agenda of building high quality research activity and dissemination. This is against a backdrop of shrinking public funding for research oriented to new discovery. Researchers have willingly co-operated to build the research status and reputation of Australian universities and to address important issues in the national interest. It is counterproductive and financially detrimental that quality processes are then undermined by exercise of a veto.

In addition, action undermines the fundamentals of assessment, namely robustness and fairness, and similarly the values and principles of equity and inclusiveness.

Peer review ensures that decisions about the merit of research proposals are led by specialists and subject to rigorous scrutiny and consideration from multiple perspectives. Government plays a vital role in setting and implementing broader strategic goals and national programmatic priorities and experts make informed decisions about the quality, significance and benefits of specific research projects. This is the process reflected in the internationally respected Haldane Principle which respects the autonomy of research

While peer review may not be a perfect system of evaluation it has been refined over the years and is honoured by generations of scholars worldwide. That the forensically careful and considered review of research undertaken by academic experts is demeaned by the snap judgements or biases of ministers makes a mockery of holding academic research to account on the grounds of quality.

One of the most worrying messages conveyed by veto is that excellence in some disciplines or fields is more worthy of support taken others. This is basically