



**Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society Inc.**

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**An Open Letter to:**

*Professor Brian P. Schmidt, Vice Chancellor & President of Australian National University,  
Professor S. Bruce Downton, Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University,  
and Australian Neuroscientists and Cognitive Neuroscientists,*

The Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society (ACNS) is Australasia's leading professional body representing researchers in the field of cognitive neuroscience: a discipline concerned broadly with understanding the biological basis of human cognition and how brain structure and function map onto behaviour. Our members primarily undertake experimental research and include cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, psychologists and behavioural scientists.

We write here to respond to the proposals recently put forward by the executives of the Australian National University (ANU) and Macquarie University (MU), to close or merge the Eccles Institute of Neuroscience at the ANU and the Department of Cognitive Science at MU. These radical changes are in response to financial difficulties faced following the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposals will lead to an unprecedented loss of specialised knowledge and skill to the Australian neuroscience and cognitive science communities. We are also very concerned about the cost to people's lives that these restructures will lead to, such as those associated with loss of jobs and opportunities in the sector. We urge the ANU and MU to reconsider their positions.

The Eccles Institute and Macquarie Department of Cognitive Science are highly specialised in fundamental discovery and applied science, and they have contributed strongly to Australia's long-enjoyed status as international leader in these fields. While the path to translation of scientific discoveries can be a long road, truly revolutionary advances can only occur due to fundamental discovery science and methods development. Examples of such advances brought about by Australian cognitive scientists and neuroscientists that have their genesis in discovery research include: the cochlear implant, the bionic eye, neuropsychological assessment tools like CogState, diagnostic brain imaging protocols for conditions such as epilepsy and Alzheimer's disease, and theoretical development, intervention and advocacy for reading in neurotypical people and those with reading difficulties (e.g., dyslexia). This type of timely and groundbreaking research can only be achieved with a dynamic and highly skilled cognitive science and neuroscience workforce. Australia's position as an international leader in these fields, which has taken decades to establish, is now at risk.

To reduce psychological and brain sciences research during a post-COVID-19 mental health crisis, with an ageing population, and at a time where brain disorders already cost over \$74 billion a year in Australia, is short-sighted at best. We hope that you reflect on the petitions and the multiple public statements from relevant individuals and professional societies, and abandon plans to close or merge the ANU Eccles Institute and the MU Department of Cognitive Science.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Carlson', written in a cursive style.

Associate Professor Thomas Carlson, PhD  
President, Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society  
**On behalf of the Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society Executive Committee**