

From: Bob Mesibov <mesibov@southcom.com.au>
To: "Excellence Research Branch" <era@arc.gov.au>
Cc: margaret.sheil@arc.gov.au
Subject: Re: FW: Msg for Leanne Harvey
Date: Thu, 22 Apr 2010 16:30:00 +1000

Dear Ms Harvey,

Thank you for your response.

I understand that you are entirely satisfied that ERA did everything it could to produce a robust journals ranking. I also understand that you are unwilling to accept that you have made a mistake, and that in any case you have no mechanism in place to correct errors when they are pointed out to you.

Further, neither you nor Prof Sheil have suggested when, if ever, the rankings will be revisited, which leads me to understand that those rankings, mistakes and all, will be with us as long as the ERA program endures. Personally, I see that as unfortunate, because it devalues ERA in certain sections of the scientific community, where it will be known as 'the Commonwealth program that gave *Zootaxa* a C ranking'.

The ERA exercise has also reinforced in my mind and in the minds of many SASB members the belief that ARC does not recognise systematics as high-value science. Systematics sits within the 2008 ANZSRC classification as items 060301, 060302, 060309, 060310 and 060311: a subset of Evolutionary Biology, itself a subset of Biological Sciences. It is lumped with a whole range of research areas with completely different standards of excellence and productivity, and competes with those areas at a significant disadvantage.

It is fortunate for systematists, then, that for the past 35+ years the Commonwealth has offered a small stream of systematics research funding through the Australian Biological Resources Study. It is most unfortunate that another Commonwealth body has produced a journals ranking that devalues the research done with ABRS support.

Regards,
Bob Mesibov
President, Society of Australian Systematic Biologists