**PRESS RELEASE**

**2023 Australian Council of Graduate Research Excellence Award Winners Announced**

Exceptional academic staff at the forefront of Australian graduate research training have been recognised in this year’s Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) Excellence Awards.

Encompassing four categories, the ACGR Awards span key aspects of graduate research training and recognising excellence and innovation in supervision, leadership, support and industry engagement.

This year’s winners included the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training (NCGRT) at Flinders University which was recognised for excellence in promoting industry engagement in graduate research.

Professor Ben Golder from the University of New South Wales was acknowledged for excellence in graduate research supervision.

Associate Professor Tania Crotti of the University of Adelaide was announced as the winner of the 2023 ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Leadership.

Charlotte Ferrier from the University of South Australia was awarded for excellence in graduate research programs and support.

ACGR President, Professor Imelda Whelehan, praised both the high number and exceptional calibre of this year’s nominations.

“The ACGR Excellence Awards celebrates outstanding performance in higher degree research supervision, support, leadership and industry engagement,” she said.

“The dedication, professionalism and innovative practice of each of our 2023 Award recipients truly makes a difference to research cultures, HDR student experience and industry partnerships across the country.

“We offer our sincere thanks to the 21 institutions who submitted nominations for this year’s ACGR Excellence Awards.

“With 40 nominations in total, our judging panels certainly had their work cut out given the excellence and sustained commitment to graduate research on show,” Professor Whelehan said.

Established in 2017, ACGR’s annual awards celebrate the highly committed leaders and supervisors of Australia’s graduate research candidates. They recognise those who work with industry partners and end-users to foster the next generation of Australian researchers and innovators.

Nominations for each of the four award categories were assessed by an independent and expert panel comprising representatives from the ACGR, member institutions as well as a current HDR candidate and an industry representative.

Each award-winning individual or team receives a grant of $3000 as well as an invitation to attend an ACGR national meeting.

**ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Supervision sponsored by ResearchMaster**

Professor Ben Golder from the University of New South Wales was announced as the winner of the 2023 ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Supervision.

Sponsored by ResearchMaster, the award recognises exceptional and innovative supervision of graduate research candidates. It is open to individual HDR supervisors or teams of supervisors. Nominations are assessed on their demonstrated track record of achieving successful candidate outcomes as well as engagement in high quality supervisory practice and research supervision leadership.

As Postgraduate Coordinator of Law, Society and Criminology at UNSW, Professor Golder has been recognised for his student-centred, collaborative and impact focussed approach to research supervision.

The award judging panel noted that in his career as an HDR supervisor, Professor Golder has achieved exceptional supervision outcomes. To date, he has supervised 8 HDR students to completion, and a number of these candidates have gone on to achieve exceptional research careers around the world.

“For me, the most important characteristic of being a supportive supervisor is being able to help my students draw out their own argument”, said Professor Golder.

“Supervision for me is about drawing out students’ ideas - making sure that their thesis gets articulated as strongly and clearly and powerfully as they can - not in my terms, but in theirs.

“A good supervisor is the kind of supervisor who can enter into their ideas and their concepts and help them make the argument that they want to make.”

**ACGR Award for Excellence in Promoting Industry Engagement in Graduate Research**

The National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training (NCGRT) at Flinders University was named as winner of the 2023 ACGR Award for Excellence in Promoting Industry Engagement in Graduate Research. This award recognises an individual or team of HDR supervisors, coordinators or professional staff who have initiated or supported innovative and transformational engagement between higher degree research candidates and industry partners.

Established in 2009 as an ARC Centre of Excellence, NCGRT brings nearly 50 Australian and International researchers from partner organisations from government to private industry to pool their knowledge and expertise. Led by Professor Peter Cook and Associate Professor Ilka Wallis, the centre’s approach to successful and effective industry collaboration is to involve industry at all stages of project creation, development, and implementation.

NCGRT empowers its HDR researchers to design projects that have a direct application in solving the industry’s most challenging groundwater problems. For example, one of NCGRT’s HDR students is currently working on managed aquifer recharge (MAR), in a collaborative project with Rio Tinto, WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the WA Water Corporation. The student’s first paper was also sent to industry leaders in Fortescue Mining and Australian Groundwater Technologies for their interest and comment.

Through their projects, NCGRT’s HDR students gain access to a MAR users group, and gain insight into environmental and operator issues associated with the management of MAR. Their research has contributed to guidelines for wastewater treatment systems that are currently used by government and industry.

A special commendation was also announced for Professor Clive Prestidge and the University of South Australia’s Centre for Pharmaceutical Innovation.

**ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Leadership** **sponsored by Epigeum**

Associate Professor Tania Crotti of the University of Adelaide was announced as the winner of the 2023 ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Leadership.

Sponsored by Epigeum, the Graduate Research Leadership Award is conferred to an individual in a research training leadership role who demonstrates inspirational and effective local graduate research leadership at a School, Faculty or other academic unit level.

As a co-facilitator of the HDR Community of Practice and postgraduate coordinator manager in the School of Biomedicine at the University of Adelaide, Associate Professor Crotti has been a vocal champion for graduate research, making an important difference to the progression and wellbeing of many of the school’s graduate researchers.

“I believe a strong and supportive HDR community requires an open exchange of ideas and respectful questioning of research, design and interpretation, between the HDR candidates and researchers at all levels and across a range of disciplines.

“I feel that supporting students early on in their decision to embark on the journey profoundly impacts their experience and contributes to creating a strong intellectual community that is inclusive of HDRs at different stages of career and research interests”, said Professor Crotti.   
  
A special commendation was announced for Professor Anna Cowan from the Australian National University.

**ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Programs and Support**

Charlotte Ferrier, Claire Jackson, Professor Pat Buckley, Professor Susan Hillier from the University of South Australia’s UniSA*EDGE* were announced as the winners of the ACGR Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Programs and Support 2023. This award recognises an individual or team who have delivered transformational engagement or support programs or services in graduate research education.

Now embedded in HDR policy, UniSA EDGE (Enhancement of Doctoral Graduate Employability) is the University of South Australia’s approach to HDR skills development, and provides a model for institution-wide skills training for the research community beyond the research degree into academic development.

Ms Ferrier led the implementation of UniSA*EDGE* from the development of the business case through to the launch of EDGE to the UniSA community in 2019. She was the inaugural EDGE Program Manager until September 2022. Under Ms Ferrier’s leadership, engagement in EDGE grew from 59% of all HDR candidates in the first six months post-launch to 94% of candidates throughout 2022.

EDGE UniSA's unique framework presented an approach to skills development which remains novel in the Australian higher education sector for the explicit attention on career planning as part of a holistic, candidate-led approach to research and transferrable skills development. At its core, EDGE enables candidates to demonstrate PhD excellence with career-relevance.

A special commendation was announced for Associate Professor Robyn Barnacle and Ali Hall from RMIT University.

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**For further information contact**

**Tracy Sullivan**

Executive Director, Australian Council of Graduate Research Inc.

[exec@acgr.edu.au](mailto:exec@acgr.edu.au)

Ph 0418995578

**Charlotte Mitchell**

Digital and Membership Communications Coordinator, Australian Council of Graduate Research Inc.

[impact@acgr.edu.au](mailto:impact@acgr.edu.au)

Ph: 0403 599 059