



17 APR, 2024

## New call for open research evaluation

The Australian, Australia



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### TIM DODD

An international group of universities and research funding bodies has backed a new call for openness and transparency in the systems used to evaluate research, warning of the dangers posed by closed, proprietary information.

In a statement, more than 30 signatories of the Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information said “too often, decision-making in science is based on closed research information” that is “locked inside proprietary infrastructures, run by for-profit providers that impose severe restrictions on the use and reuse of the information”.

The declaration warned that “black box indicators and analytics” that were not publicly reproducible were playing a larger role in deciding the worth of particularly pieces of research, which in turn influenced decisions about hiring and promoting researchers, research funding and the future of research organisations.

“Errors, gaps and biases in closed research information are difficult to expose and even more

difficult to fix,” the statement said.

One of the academics behind the declaration, Curtin University professor of research information Cameron Neylon, said a key aspect of the statement was its call for universities and research groups to use their procurement decisions and purchasing power to build greater openness and transparency.

He pointed to a recent decision by Sorbonne University in France to stop using the proprietary and closed data about research papers sold by Web of Science in favour of similar, but openly available, information from OpenAlex.

However, the global norm in the research evaluation continues to be proprietary information sources, which universities and research organisations pay handsomely for, and which restrict public access and open dissemination.

Signatories include 25 European universities and research bodies and eight funding bodies and governments, also all European except for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which also signed.