



*Submission: Inquiry into National Security Risks Affecting
the Australian Higher Education and Research Sector*

The Australian Academy of Science (the Academy) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (the Committee) inquiry into national security risks affecting the Australian higher education and research sector. The Academy provides independent, authoritative, and influential scientific advice, promotes international scientific engagement, builds public awareness and understanding of science, and champions celebrates and supports excellence in Australian science.

The Australian Academy of Science promotes Australian science internationally. Fellows of the Academy are elected for their contribution to Australian science. It is this distinguished Fellowship that allows the Academy to provide independent scientific advice, and to represent Australian science in international fora. The Academy's international activities include interactions with scientists and officials from other academies of science, research organisations and governments to increase awareness of Australia's capabilities in science and technology and to create opportunities to engage in, influence and contribute to international research agendas and policy development activities. The Academy is also responsible for Australia's representation on the International Science Council, as well as relevant international scientific unions and interdisciplinary bodies that convene scientists across disciplinary boundaries to coordinate research to address issues of global significance.

The Academy's 2019 report *Benefits of Australian membership of the International Science Council and International Scientific Unions* found Australia benefits as a member of global science organisations by:

- receiving a direct economic return—estimated at \$118 million from 2000 to 2017—through hosting scientific union meetings in Australia and other activities
- receiving indirect benefits such as the opportunities for Australian scientists, especially young scientists, to collaborate with international leaders in ways that greatly accelerate delivery of the long-term economic benefits of scientific progress for Australia
- providing Australia a “place at the table” to be at the forefront of unfolding global scientific advances through international collaboration
- providing opportunities for Australian perspectives to contribute efforts to use science to solve global challenges
- enhancing Australia's international scientific profile and reputation.

The practice of science is an international endeavour. Science has time and time again proven itself to be an effective and powerful soft power asset playing an important role in building strategic partnerships between countries. In addition, the exchange of scientific ideas, methods, infrastructure and outcomes allows researchers to amplify their efforts. In particular, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, free exchange of research data is critical for research to progress rapidly, effectively and efficiently.

Australia benefits from an international environment of free intellectual inquiry, and it is not in Australia's interests to restrict international knowledge exchange. Australia's strength in a

wide range of scientific fields and its respectable proportion of global publications – around [4.2% of the world's published research](#) - is heavily dependent on international research collaborations. Indeed, a recent analysis by the Institute for Scientific Information notes Australia's rising output, and attributes it directly to Australia's "[exceptional international collaboration](#)". Maintaining such collaborations allows scientists to leverage their knowledge, data and resources to the benefit of all participating researchers, institutions and countries. It is essential, therefore, that Australia's national security framework does not disrupt this international engagement.

The Academy has no cause to believe Australia's national security framework is inadequate

The Academy is aware of the framework of national security legislation and other policy mechanisms. The recent report of the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Legislation Committee on *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020* notes, for example:

- *Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector* (2019) and the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT)
- the establishment of an Integrity Unit within the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency to manage UFIT recommendations and their implementation
- the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018*
- the *Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011*; and
- the *Defence Trades Control Act 2012*.

The Academy has no reason to believe this legislative and guidance framework is ineffective or inadequate. The Academy is not aware of, for example, significant violations of the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012* that would point to a concerted attempt to subvert Australia's sovereignty *via* academia.

It is essential, however, that the framework remains proportionate and evidence-based, and that it continues to encourage positive scientific engagement with other nations' researchers. A national security apparatus that hinders international scientific exchange would have severe impacts on national productivity and prosperity.

The Academy is committed to academic freedom and the international science community

The Academy is strongly committed to the principles of scientific freedom, as articulated in the International Science Council's Principle of Freedom and Responsibility in Science (Statute 7). Scientist-to-scientist engagement should transcend racial, cultural, political and religious beliefs, and provide a continuing opportunity for nations to engage in harmonious dialogue and co-existence. For this reason, we refer the committee to the Academy's attached [position statement](#) on international science, which articulates the importance of these freedoms and the reason they should be protected and maintained.

The Academy recommends a charter be developed between scientists and the Australian Government. Such a charter would articulate the expectations and obligations of each to the Australian people. Such a charter would provide clarity regarding the obligations of scientists

to respect the mandate of government to identify national priorities including the requirements of national security, as well as the obligations of government to respect the right of scientists to pursue further understanding of our physical and natural world free from political interference and censorship. Such a charter is a key recommendation of the Academy's platform, [Earning our Future](#).

To discuss any aspect of this submission, please contact [REDACTED]
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Attachment: Australian Academy of Science Position Statement on International Science Collaborations.