

By email: [jscfadt@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscfadt@aph.gov.au)

8 July 2024



**Australian Academy of Science submission on the inquiry into Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region**

The Australian Academy of Science (the Academy) highlights the important role of science in Australia's response to priorities determined by Pacific Island communities:

- The inquiry should assert the role of science in supporting development and capacity-building, including the value of strong people-to-people links built through scientific collaboration.
- Australia should support scientific capability building to drive science priorities and science systems that are determined by and for Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region.
- The Australian Government should recognise and support the establishment of the Pacific Academy of Sciences as an important scholarly institution to create scientific networks, elevate voices of Pacific scientists into scientific dialogues, and inform regional and international decision-making.

Scientific capability and mechanisms for science advice to inform decision-making are vital to support economic, environmental, and social development.

Pacific Island nations are particularly vulnerable to climate-related hazards among other challenges, but their involvement in scientific research remains limited due to various historical and structural factors.

Through scientific engagement and exchange, Australia can support Pacific Island states and territories in the following ways:

- Support scientific priorities when determined by and for Pacific Island communities, based on a deep cultural and scientific understanding of the Pacific region
- Build capability and people-to-people links through scientific research collaboration and partnerships to meet science and development priorities, and to respond to pressing local and regional challenges such as climate disaster management and resilience.
- Raise the perspectives of scientists from Pacific Island countries in global scientific dialogues.

Australia's engagement with Pacific Island nations through the International Science Council Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific

The Academy leads the International Science Council Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific (ISC RFP-AP), which is supported by a \$10.5 million Department of Industry Science and Resources grant for the period 2023-2028. The ISC RFP-AP serves as a platform to coordinate and elevate the Pacific region's active participation in science globally.

Australia's engagements in the Pacific region through the ISC RFP-AP align with the priorities of Pacific Island nations, as outlined by organisations such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Program ([SPREP](#)) and The Pacific Community ([SPC](#)). Another example of collaboration guided by Pacific priorities is the establishment of a [Federation of Oceanic Nutrition Societies](#),

formed in extensive consultation with Oceania stakeholders from nutrition, dietetics, public health, government, and private practice.

The ISC RFP-AP is elevating Pacific Island nation priorities, facilitating strong networks and building capability through science engagements including: working with the global Science Media Centre Network to provide workshops and training to boost capability for science to inform policy and to engage with the public via media; delivering the [Asia-Pacific Academic Mentoring Program](#) for young academics to boost their scientific networks and academic leadership skills; and, supporting the International Network of Governmental Scientific Advice (INGSA) to expand their network and science policy training into Pacific Island countries.

#### *A Pacific Academy of Sciences*

The ISC RFP-AP aims to ensure that the unique needs and priorities of the Pacific region are integrated into the global scientific dialogue. The region has not previously had a scholarly institution of its own to support science and science practitioners to convene and to promote Indigenous Knowledges and an evidence-based Pacific scientific voice in international fora.

The ISC RFP-AP is bridging this gap by supporting the establishment of the [Pacific Academy of Sciences](#). The Pacific Academy of Sciences will be a mechanism to inform regional and international decision-making, drawing on the knowledge of local scientists, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

This marks a significant shift in the pursuit of knowledge for a prosperous and thriving Pacific region. It empowers local experts and scientists from Pacific Island nations to be part of solutions driven by Pacific communities rather than recipients of decisions made about them without them.

The Australian Government should recognise and support the foundation of the Pacific Academy of Sciences as an important scholarly institution to create scientific networks, elevate voices of scientists from Pacific Island nations into scientific dialogues, and inform regional and international decision-making.

To discuss or clarify any aspect of this submission, please contact Mr Chris Anderson, Director Science Policy