



British High Commission
Canberra

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Mrs Maria Vamvakinou MP
Chair
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation
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Dear Mrs Vamvakinou,

Thank you for your letter to Baroness Amos on 10 February 2010 seeking the British High Commission's input into the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation inquiry into Australia's International Research Collaboration.

The UK sees international interaction as essential to ensure that the UK retains its position at the cutting edge of world science and that we further develop an internationally competitive and innovative knowledge-based economy.

Over the last ten years the UK Government has developed a number of international science strategies to enable us to keep our leading position in research excellence and to build a stronger economy. To help deliver our strategic policies, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 2000 established the Science and Innovation Network (SIN), a network of attaches based in British embassies and high commissions overseas. The UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) assumed responsibility for the network in 2008, in line with that year's "Innovation Nation" White Paper.

The SIN Network has four broad objectives. These are to:

- promote access to and sharing of scientific expertise, resources and facilities through international scientific collaboration and exchange;
- strengthen the UK's capacity to innovate through international research and development (R&D) investment, R&D partnerships and technology transfer;
- inform effective domestic and international policy making and leadership based on the best available science; and
- use science and innovation to influence in an increasingly globalised world and to forge strategic alliances.

The Network comprises around 90 staff in 40 cities in 25 countries, all located in British diplomatic missions. I am part of this network as the Australian Science and Innovation Officer at the British High Commission in Canberra. The Network staff are located in all the major scientific nations, and also in several key rapidly growing economies such as Brazil, China and India. SIN officers work closely with UK Trade and Investment, the British Council, and the Research Councils.

(http://www.dius.gov.uk/dius_international/science_and_innovation/science_and_innovation_network).



Engaging science internationally is also fundamental for meeting the challenges of diplomacy in this changing world. The British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, reaffirmed this relationship recently when, addressing over 100 eminent scientists, he called for a convergence between Science and Diplomacy. Miliband said ‘these two disciplines – science and politics – the future of the planet depends above all on politics. But I also know that the lives of millions depend on developments in the physical and natural sciences. Politics and science need to come closer together – not for politics to smother science, but instead to be informed by its potential’.
(<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/speeches-and-transcripts/speeches/>)

The Royal Society, the UK’s national academy of science, following Miliband’s speech published a report which investigates the valuable role that science can play in international policy making and diplomacy (<http://royalsociety.org/New-frontiers-in-science-diplomacy/>). The report highlighted the role of science, technology and innovation in three dimensions of policy: conveying foreign policy objectives with scientific advice; facilitating international science cooperation; and using science cooperation to improve international relations between countries.

The links between Australia and the UK in the field of scientific research have traditionally been strong. This is in part due to Australia’s historical ties with the UK, perceived cultural similarities, the lack of language barriers and the similarities in national scientific research priorities and intellectual property regimes. With one third of all Australian scientific publications having at least one overseas co-author, I view Australia as very outward looking. Hence, a strategic approach to how Australia internationalises its science - one which recognises the difficulties of international collaboration and provides measures to overcome these challenges - would further strengthen cooperation between our two countries.

The UK depends on a world-class science base for economic success. International collaboration is fundamental to this endeavour. The UK Government needs to be able to access the best science in order to convey its own policies, while the emergence of global threats such as climate change demands the ability to work with other Governments based on science.

The British High Commission appreciates the opportunity to support the Committee’s Inquiry into promoting international cooperation in the area of science and innovation. I hope this account of the UK’s experience is helpful, and would be happy to provide further information on request.

Kind regards,

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