

---

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# **Australia's International Research Collaboration**

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation

June 2010  
Canberra

---

© Commonwealth of Australia 2010

ISBN 978-0-642-79376-8 (Printed version)

ISBN 978-0-642-79377-5 (HTML version)



# Contents

Foreword .....	vii
Membership of the Committee .....	ix
Terms of reference .....	xi
List of abbreviations .....	xiii
List of recommendations .....	xv
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background to the inquiry.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Structure of the report.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Benefits of collaboration.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Benefits.....	5
<b>3 Impediments to outbound researchers.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Distance and culture.....	9
Lack of funding to establish or develop collaborations .....	10
Committee comment.....	12
<b>4 Impediments to incoming researchers .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Trends and benefits .....	15
Committee comment.....	19
<b>Visas and immigration difficulties .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Committee comment.....	28
<b>Additional costs for incoming researchers .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Committee comment.....	33

---

<b>5</b>	<b>Access to domestic and bilateral research grants .....</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>Early career researchers .....</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>The ARC and NHMRC .....</b>	<b>36</b>
	Committee comment .....	38
	<b>Centres of Excellence .....</b>	<b>39</b>
	Committee comment .....	40
	<b>International Science Linkages program .....</b>	<b>41</b>
	Committee comment .....	47
	<b>Small grants programs .....</b>	<b>49</b>
	Committee comment .....	50
	<b>'Blue-sky' research .....</b>	<b>50</b>
	Committee comment .....	52
	<b>Spending Australian grant funds overseas .....</b>	<b>52</b>
	Committee comment .....	56
	<b>Bilateral funding schemes.....</b>	<b>56</b>
	Committee comment .....	58
<b>6</b>	<b>Access to overseas-based grant schemes.....</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>US funding schemes.....</b>	<b>62</b>
	<b>European funding schemes .....</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>Funding from overseas philanthropic organisations.....</b>	<b>65</b>
	Committee comment .....	66
<b>7</b>	<b>Strategies and Opportunities .....</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>Research Support .....</b>	<b>69</b>
	Committee comment .....	70
	<b>Science counsellors .....</b>	<b>71</b>
	Committee comment .....	73
	<b>Technology .....</b>	<b>75</b>
	Committee comment .....	76
	<b>Joint agreements .....</b>	<b>76</b>
	<b>A national approach.....</b>	<b>77</b>
	An overarching body .....	79

Support for applications to foreign funding bodies .....	81
Committee comment.....	82
<b>Appendix A – List of Submissions.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Appendix B – List of Exhibits .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix C – List of Public Hearings .....</b>	<b>95</b>





## Foreword

This Committee began the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament with an inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian Universities, culminating with the report *Building Australia's Research Capacity*. This inquiry sought to build on the first research inquiry, focusing on our ability to engage in research at an international level. In particular, this inquiry examined the impediments to collaborating internationally and ways to address those impediments.

Several key issues were raised in a large number of submissions to the inquiry and these are examined in this report.

The International Science Linkages program was described as being of immense value to international collaboration, yet the program is said to be winding down and is not funded beyond June 2011. The Committee is seeking clarification on the status of the program and the implications for international engagement if it does indeed cease.

Visa issues were raised with the Committee. It is unfortunate and regrettable that problems with visa applications have prevented effective international collaboration. It is deeply embarrassing to our research institutions to have researchers suffer through immigration bureaucratic processes or, at worst, be refused entry to Australia.

Australian researchers are highly regarded around the world. The appointment of science counsellor positions in strategic locations around the world should strengthen our reputation as an effective research partner and promote the benefits of engagement with Australian researchers.

The Committee recognises that international collaboration is driven at the individual researcher level, through one-on-one contact, or engagement between research groups, schools or institutions. The Committee also recognises that we are indeed very distant from most of our research partners and that face-to-face collaboration is expensive. Rather than setting a particular direction or providing prescriptive guidelines on how to collaborate, the Australian Government should

continue to provide assistance to encourage and facilitate international collaboration.

It is hoped that the measures recommended in this report will help facilitate our continuing engagement in research at the international level.

**Maria Vamvakinou MP  
Chair**





## Membership of the Committee

Chair Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP

Deputy Chair Hon Fran Bailey MP

Members Mr James Bidgood MP  
(until 22/10/09)

Hon Duncan Kerr SC MP  
(from 30/11/09)

Mr Nick Champion MP

Mr Rowan Ramsey MP

Mr Darren Cheeseman MP

Ms Amanda Rishworth MP

Dr Dennis Jensen MP

Mr Mike Symon MP

Mr Michael Johnson MP

## **Committee Secretariat**

<b>Secretary</b>	Mr Russell Chafer
<b>Inquiry Secretary</b>	Mr Anthony Overs
<b>Senior Research Officer</b>	Mr Shane Armstrong



## **Terms of reference**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation shall inquire into and report on Australia's international research engagement, with particular reference to:

1. The nature and extent of existing international research collaborations.
2. The benefits to Australia from engaging in international research collaborations.
3. The key drivers of international research collaboration at the government, institutional and researcher levels.
4. The impediments faced by Australian researchers when initiating and participating in international research collaborations and practical measures for addressing these.
5. Principles and strategies for supporting international research engagement.





## List of abbreviations

AARNet	Australia's Academic and Research Network
AAS	Australian Academy of Science
AATSE	Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACU	Australian Catholic University
AINSE	Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering
AMSI	Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute
ANSTO	Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation
ANU	Australian National University
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARMS	Australasian Research Management Society
ASSA	Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
CAMS	Centre for Antimatter-matter Studies
COSA	Clinical Oncological Society of Australia
CQU	Central Queensland University
CRCA	Cooperative Research Centres Association Inc
DECCW	Department Environment, Climate Change and Water

DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
Go8	Group of Eight Ltd
IODP	Australian Integrated Ocean Drilling Program Consortium
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
JCU	James Cook University
JDRF	Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
NCA	National Committee for Astronomy
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
UNE	University of New England
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UoA	University of Adelaide
UoM	University of Melbourne
UoN	University of Newcastle
UoW	University of Wollongong
USYD	University of Sydney



## List of recommendations

### 3 Impediments to outbound researchers

#### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research investigate the viability of a small grants scheme to be established to support the travel expense of Australian early-career researchers who win time on foreign instruments and facilities that are unavailable in Australia.

### 4 Impediments to incoming researchers

#### Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship make formal contact with the human resources sections of all relevant universities and research institutions explaining the most appropriate visa that should be used for visiting researchers.

#### Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship remain in close contact with the human resource departments of universities and research institutions that are responsible for visa applications, reporting to these bodies monthly on the progress of active visa applications.

#### Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship streamline the visa application process for visiting researchers by replacing the section that requires applicants to detail the benefits to Australia of their planned visit with a simplified section consisting of check boxes containing common reasons for academic visits.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that the federal Minister for Education formulate a proposal for consideration through COAG recommending that visiting researchers that have an Australian tax file number and are contracted to work on research projects for more than six months be eligible to receive public education for all school age children.

## **5 Access to domestic and bilateral research grants**

### **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government implement a quota of 10 per cent of ARC and NHMRC successful grants to be allocated to early-career researchers who are first-time awardees.

### **Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government specify that competitive grants, in particular all National Health and Medical Research Council grants, fund the full cost of research in each program to which a grant has been awarded.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research announce a successor program to the International Science Linkages program as soon as practicable to address the concerns of the research community.

### **Recommendation 9**

The Committee recommends that the successor program to the International Science Linkages program has its budget increased and indexed, and, pending proven success of the new program, that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research seek to have funding increased further in future budgets.

### **Recommendation 10**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research investigate the operation of the Canadian small grant scheme and report on its effectiveness and the potential benefits to Australia of duplicating the scheme in its review of the International Science Linkages program.



**Recommendation 11**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council allocate a fixed percentage of research funding to 'blue-sky' research.

**Recommendation 12**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council relax the restrictions on researchers spending funding overseas on a trial basis for the next two funding rounds, and that the organisations review the impacts of this policy to determine whether it should be a permanent feature of research funding.

**Recommendation 13**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research propose to Australia's bilateral funding scheme partners a streamlined application process consisting of both countries setting aside a defined total amount of funds, with each country separately administering the granting process.

**Recommendation 14**

The Committee recommends that the Australia-China Science and Technology Program has its funding increased and indexed, and that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research seek to increase funding to the scheme as its budgetary situation improves.

**6 Access to overseas-based grant schemes****Recommendation 15**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research familiarise itself with the grant application requirements of the US National Institute of Health and the US National Science Foundation and make this information available to Australian universities and research institutions.

**7 Strategies and Opportunities****Recommendation 16**

The Committee recommends that the science counsellor program be revitalised, initially on a smaller scale than the previous program, with full-time science counsellor positions for the European Union, United States, China, and India. Additionally, the Department of Innovation,

Industry, Science and Research should seek to expand the program to other relevant areas of significance to Australian research as is necessary.

**Recommendation 17**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research be given full ministerial responsibility for supporting international research collaboration.

**Recommendation 18**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research seek the funding to establish an International Research Collaboration Office to consult with stakeholders in Australian research and to act as a conduit between Australian researchers and overseas research organisations and funding bodies.