

**International Research Collaboration Inquiry conducted by the House of Representatives
Industry, Science and Innovation Committee**

Submission from
Professor Jane Kenway and Dr Johannah Fahey
Monash University
Jan 28th 2010

Australia invests a lot in training and developing researchers. Although it cannot stop them leaving, it can more creatively and generously consider how best to benefit from the researchers who leave for good, those who return and those who move back and forth. The effects of their mobility on them, on the knowledge they produce and distribute, the connections they sustain, and the ways these connections operate in countries and institutions abroad are of interest to a wide range of communities within Australia and internationally.

These interests coalesce in the research policies Australia adopts. The Australian government needs to be well informed about researcher mobility issues around the world, and, given its geopolitical location, at the forefront of researcher mobility policy inventiveness in the global context.

On the basis of our ARC funded Discovery project called *Moving Ideas: Mobile Policies, Researchers and Connections in the Social Sciences and Humanities - Australia in the global context* (2006-2009)¹ and more specifically, our conference called *Moving Ideas and Research Policies: Australian Intellectuals in the Global Context* we are well placed to comment on the inquiry to be conducted by the House of Representatives Industry, Science and Innovation Committee into Australia's international research engagement.

¹ Jane Kenway & Johannah Fahey, Chief Investigator & Research Fellow, ARC Discovery Grant project, 'Moving Ideas: Mobile Policies, Researchers and Connections in the Social Sciences and Humanities — Australia in the global context' (2006-2009). This project explored the ways that ideas travel and how knowledge transforms through travel. One aspect of the study was the critical examination of various research policies around the world that are associated with moving ideas and moving researchers. These are often coupled with notions of 'brain drain-gain/mobility' and 'diaspora'. A second focus was on the mobility biographies of senior globally mobile intellectuals with various links to Australia and on the implications of their mobility for their ideas, politics and national and trans-national identifications. It is our view that the actual experiences and insights of such people have the potential to enhance researcher (academic) mobility policies.

From the outset we wish to acknowledge that it is our contention that researcher mobility is instrumental to facilitating and fostering ongoing relationships between Australian researchers and their colleagues in other countries. More particularly, our focus is on the issues confronted by, and the strategies suitable for, mobile social science and humanities researchers. At the conference we discussed and debated the diverse benefits and difficulties of the international mobility of researchers and explored how research related policies, networks, institutions and bodies could best support and harness the benefits. A range of eminent mobile Professors with connections to Australia raised a number of considerations for policy and for mobile researchers themselves.

The main purpose of this submission is to provide a collation of the policy considerations that emerged from the conference and some of the thinking that lay behind these ideas. In the following comments that we respectfully submit below, we refer to selections of our report from the conference called *Brain Drain or Mind-shift?: Reconsidering Policies on Researcher Mobility* (attached). These selections are only those that relate to the inquiry's Terms of Reference, predominantly addressing key principles and strategies that we believe are necessary for supporting international research engagement.

- **The benefits to Australia from engaging in international research collaborations**

These times are characterised by growing sensitivity to cultural, social and political issues in the region and globe. Internationally mobile researchers in the social sciences and humanities are centrally involved in contributing to Australia's image abroad through their research on economics, society, culture, politics and human behaviour. Crucially, such researchers are also involved in interpreting the rest of the world to Australia. Researchers' interpretations are mediated through the cross border and cross sector connections they foster.

Please refer to 'Mobile Researchers' section 1.2 and 1.5 of the Report

- **The key drivers of international research collaboration at the government, institutional and researcher levels**

Please refer to 'Institutional Practices' section 3.2 of the Report

- **The impediments faced by Australian researchers when initiating and participating in international research collaborations and practical measures for addressing these**

Please refer to ‘Institutional Practices’ section 3.4 and ‘Institutional indicators, metrics and funding’ section 4.1 and 4.2 of the Report.

Please also refer to our article called ‘Academic Mobility and Hospitality: the good host and the good guest’ (attached)

- **Principles and strategies for supporting international research engagement**

Many of Australia’s most inventive researchers are on the move around the globe and in the future their numbers will grow. The questions thus arise: is our national interest best served by trying to attract them back or, is it better served if we think more creatively and generously about this issue?

In relation to these questions, Australia is missing the mark — not because many of our high calibre researchers are on the move, but because our institutions are often rather unimaginative in dealing with researcher mobility. As researchers increasingly address the big global issues of our times, their mobility is crucial. So too is challenging narrow versions of ‘the national interest’.

The perspectives evident in this report on researchers’ international mobility involve a mind-shift away from simple equations of loss and gain and territory and identity — notions still perpetuated in policy conceptions of ‘brain drain-gain/mobility’ and ‘diaspora’. Further, this report goes beyond narrowly defined understandings of national and regional interests. It moves the mind towards a more nuanced, generative and generous perception with regard to national reputation and relationships and considers the ways in which researchers might contribute to such a perception. It understands reputation in a cooperative as well as a competitive sense that includes inviting a genuine concern for the interests of other nations and regions and for the ‘global public good’.

Social science and humanities researchers are well placed to address these issues. This therefore means the nation-state engaging specifically with the content of social science and humanities knowledge and research practices, rather than remaining content with the focus on techno-scientific knowledge that dominates brain drain-gain/mobility /diaspora policy discourse.

Please refer to ‘Mobile Researchers’ section 1.3 and 1.6 of the Report.

Please refer to 'Networks and Collaboration' section 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 of the Report.

Please refer to 'Institutional Practices' section 3.1, 3.3, 3.5 of the Report.

Please refer to 'Institutional indicators, metrics and funding' section 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 of the Report.