

Introduction

Interdependence is now so deeply rooted in the organisation of human affairs that no business, no economy, no research team, no organisation, no society can operate independently of the needs, priorities, resources and policies of its counterparts elsewhere in the world. In our present interconnected world, it is no longer possible to pursue one's interests without due regard to the interests of others. This fundamental insight must inform innovation policy and research collaboration.¹

- 1.1 Australia is a key player in research at the international level. Collaboration at the international level is not only desirable, but an absolute necessity.
- 1.2 This inquiry aimed to identify the impediments to engaging in research internationally, and this report suggests measures to overcome those impediments.
- 1.3 Our research abilities were explored in the Committee's first report for the 42nd Parliament, *Building Australia's Research Capacity*. That report fed into the Cutler Review report *Powering Ideas: an innovation agenda for the 21st century*, the Australian Government's innovation policy agenda to 2020.
- 1.4 It is hoped the measures outlined in this report will facilitate Australia's ability to engage in research internationally.

1 Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University, *submission 66*, p. 1.

Background to the inquiry

- 1.5 The Committee agreed on 25 November 2009 to conduct an inquiry into international research collaboration. The inquiry was referred to the Committee by Senator the Hon Kim Carr, the Australian Government Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- 1.6 The Terms of Reference called for the Committee to inquire into and report on Australia's international research engagement, with particular reference to:
- The nature and extent of existing international research collaborations
 - The benefits to Australia from engaging in international research collaborations
 - The key drivers of international research collaboration at the government, institutional and researcher levels
 - The impediments faced by Australian researchers when initiating and participating in international research collaborations and practical measures for addressing these
 - Principles and strategies for supporting international research engagement.
- 1.7 The inquiry was advertised in the Australian Financial Review on 5 December 2010. The Committee sought submissions from relevant Australian Government ministers and from state and territory governments. In addition, the Committee sought submissions from all of Australia's universities and a wide range of university and research peak and representative bodies, industry peak bodies, and embassies and high commissions.
- 1.8 The Committee received 85 submissions, and three supplementary submissions. These submissions are listed at Appendix A.
- 1.9 Submissions were received from many Australian universities and research institutions. Key submissions were received from university and academic representative bodies. Valuable submissions were also received from individual academics, reflecting personal experiences.
- 1.10 The Committee received 20 exhibits to the inquiry, which were provided in addition to written submissions, received during public hearings or sent to the Committee by other parties. These are listed in Appendix B.

- 1.11 The Committee held nine public hearings across Australia, in Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. The Committee called 62 witnesses. These witnesses are listed in Appendix C.

Structure of the report

- 1.12 The inquiry covered a wide range of collaborative research issues.
- 1.13 Chapter Two provides a brief discussion on the benefits of international collaboration.
- 1.14 Chapter Three examines several key impediments to Australian researchers seeking to go overseas to commence or support collaborative research.
- 1.15 Chapter Four examines the role played by researchers coming to Australia from overseas, and the impediments faced by those researchers.
- 1.16 Chapter Five discusses access by researchers to domestic and bilateral research grants.
- 1.17 Chapter Six discusses access by researchers to overseas-based grant schemes.
- 1.18 Chapter Seven examines strategies for supporting research collaboration and opportunities for the Australian Government to provide assistance for the Australian research community.

