



Submission No 16

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with the Republic of Korea; and Developments on the Korean Peninsula

Organisation: Australian Research Council

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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUB-COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA; AND
DEVELOPMENTS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL SUBMISSION

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Alexander Downer MP, has referred an inquiry to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for examination and report to the Parliament. The terms of reference require the Committee to inquire into and report on Australia's relationship with the Republic of Korea; and developments on the Korean peninsula. The Committee will review political, strategic, economic (including trade and investment), social and cultural issues; and consider both the current situation and opportunities for the future.

The Australian Research Council (ARC)

The ARC's mission is to advance Australia's research excellence to be globally competitive and deliver benefits to the community. This entails activities in three broad areas: (i) supporting the best research which is most likely to contribute to innovation; (ii) brokering partnerships among researchers, industry, government, community organisations and the international community; and (iii) providing policy advice to the Australian Government on investment in the national research effort.

The National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is the primary vehicle by which the ARC pursues its mission. Funding for the Program – over \$480 million in 2004–05 – accounts for approximately nine per cent of the Commonwealth Budget for science and innovation. Support provided through the NCGP dominates competitive funding for university research and is one of the principal avenues for direct support of pure and strategic basic research in Australia's R&D system, as well as fostering university-industry collaboration in research.

ARC support for international research collaboration

A 2003 report by The Allen Consulting Group¹ – the most recent comprehensive study of Australia's international science and technology policies and programs – estimated that, under 1,452 grants, the ARC supported 2,725 international collaborations with researchers in 56 countries in 2002.

Collaborations with researchers in the US, the UK and Germany represented one-half of all collaborations (27 per cent, 14 per cent and nine per cent, respectively). Collaborations with researchers in France, Canada and Japan ranked next, each with a five per cent share of all collaborations. Collaborations with researchers in the Republic of Korea ranked equal seventh, with a two per cent share of all collaborations.

The Allen Consulting Group report noted that the ARC is an important source of funding for Australian researchers involved in international activities. Of those international science and technology expenditures characterised in the study, those of the ARC accounted for about 25

¹ *A Study of International Science and Technology Policies and Programs*, The Allen Consulting Group, August 2003.

per cent of the estimated total Commonwealth Government expenditure, the highest of any Department or Agency.

The ARC has memoranda of understanding with 12 overseas research agencies in 11 countries, including two with agencies in the Republic of Korea. The ARC also has research fellowship agreements with four overseas research agencies, one of these in the Republic of Korea.

Formal agreements with the Republic of Korea

The ARC has entered into two broadly-based memoranda of understanding – with the Korea Science and Engineering Foundation (KOSEF) in May 1996, and with the Korea Research Foundation (KRF) in June 1996. KOSEF is a grant funding agency for science and engineering under the Ministry of Science and Technology. It focuses particularly on mathematical and physical sciences, engineering and life sciences. The KRF is under the Korean Ministry of Education and provides financial support to researchers in all fields of science including the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

The ARC entered into a reciprocal research fellowship agreement with KOSEF in March 1992. The agreement also has as partners the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. The agreement facilitates exchange visits by scientists between Australia and the Republic of Korea.