

Inquiry into Australia's International Research Collaboration

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation

Submission from Flinders University

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The comments below focus on the five key areas of the inquiry.

1. The nature and extent of existing international research collaborations.

- Key Strategy 5 in Flinders University's Strategic Plan 2010-2014 is to 'sharpen and support our focus on international research opportunities'.
- Strong research ties with China and India and more recently Indonesia, which build on strong traditional ties with Europe, UK and USA.

2. The benefits to Australia from engaging in international research collaborations.

- Bolstering fields of research strength or emerging/potential strength.
- Securing a significant and sustainable niche within the rapidly evolving global knowledge economy.
- Enhancing our research via facilities that are not available in Australia.

3. The key drivers of international research collaboration at the government, institutional and researcher levels.

- Enthusiasm and ambition of individual researchers within universities and research institutes, to place their research in an international context.
- Availability of time and funding from both international and national sources.
- Limited Australian funding.
- Institutions wanting to develop an international presence and buy into the global knowledge economy.
- Develop Australia's research strength.

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

- The cost of overcoming our remote location.
- Scale of Australian activity.
- Fragmented government approaches to international research collaboration.
- Access to limited funding both ways.
- Australia needs to buy into international research.

5. Principles and strategies for supporting international research engagement.

Principles and strategies

- Australian universities third wave internationalisation strategies
- Seeking leverage in building strong, productive, collaborative links
- Connect different threads of internationalisation (staff links and mobility; PhD students; student exchanges; international students in Australia; TNE programs)
- Aim for long-term, sustainable collaborations that reflect Australia's strengths and weaknesses (eg wealthy country, but relatively small, and somewhat isolated)
- Long-term interest is to build collaborative links with researchers and institutions in new and emerging countries, such as China and India. Both have significant intellectual resources, and, in the China case, a growing appetite for investment in research.
- High level delegations, with targeted research workshops and seminars.

Government needs:

- A more strategic approach to international research collaborations.
 - Elements might include:
 - More and better use of funding support
 - More partnerships between government, industry and research institutions
 - Easing/changing restrictions on the use of Australian research funding
 - Expanding the Endeavour scholarships
- Build a strategic alignment between Australia's aspirations as a leading knowledge economy and its immigration strategy. This nexus is currently at risk. (see also Cutler Review Recommendation 5.2).
- Benchmarking against good international practice. Eg the United Kingdom India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI).
- Strategic government funding linking Australia's national research priorities with other countries national priorities.