



Australian Academy of Science

Ian Potter House, 9 Gordon Street, Canberra ACT 2601

Foreign Secretary: Professor Cheryl Praeger AM FAA

23 May 2018

The Hon. Stuart Robert MP
Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Robert,

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL FOR COOPERATION ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The Australian Academy of Science is writing in support of the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and The Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil for Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation*, tabled in Federal Parliament on 8 May 2018 and currently under consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

Science is critical for Australia and its partners to understand and act on the challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. Science diplomacy is a powerful mechanism for advancing solutions to multi-national problems, and to enhancing economic productivity and competitiveness through innovation and collaboration. Australia's national interest depends on maintaining close engagement with other countries on matters of science and innovation.

Australia is a priority country for the Brazilian government in its strategy of internationalization of universities and research. Brazil has sent more than 7,000 higher education students to Australian universities under the Science Without Borders program; Australia was Brazil's 5th largest destination of students under this program. Under Brazil's new program of internationalization of research, the PrInt program, Australia has been listed as one of the priority countries. The second largest institution for scientific research programs, FAPESP (Sao Paulo Research Foundation), will be organizing a conference with the Australian National University and the University of Queensland in 2019.

Brazil is Australia's largest partner in Latin America for joint research publications, and the Department of Education and Training has had a Counsellor (Education and Science) posted in Brasilia since 2014. Brazil is a priority country in the Commonwealth Government's Global Innovation Strategy of the National Innovation and Science Agenda. A Science, Technology and Innovation Agreement with Brazil will deliver benefits to Australia in several key areas, including tropical environment agriculture, bioenergy and other renewable energy research, biodiversity, and sustainable mining and agriculture. Brazil also has a strong culture of engagement between business and academia, and offers a number of models for building innovative capacity and leadership in end users, especially small- to medium-sized enterprises.

The Academy is involved in several research exchange activities with Brazil, supported by the Australian Department of Education and Training. In 2015 a delegation of Australian researchers



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delivered a series of seminars in Brazil on innovation, agriculture and energy to showcase Australian research excellence and higher education opportunities. Organised by the Academy, the delegation was made up of Professor Michael Barber FAA, Professor Robert Henry from the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation, University of Queensland, and Dr Muriel Watt from the School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering, University of New South Wales.

The program of visits to government departments, universities and research institutes in Brasilia, Cuiabá, Campinas and São Paulo was organised by the Counsellor (Education and Science) Latin America, at the Australian Embassy, Brasilia. The visits provided opportunities for the Australian scientists to initiate or consolidate international collaborations as well as highlight educational possibilities for young Brazilian researchers in Australia. The Australian Ambassador to Brazil, His Excellency Mr Patrick Lawless, hosted a reception for the Australian delegates on 23 November 2015 in Brasilia. This provided an opportunity for the delegates to network with Brazilian researchers and officials from government departments.

The Australia-Americas PhD Research Internships and previous cooperative activities managed by the Academy and funded with Brazil and the Department of Education and Training, have provided Brazilian PhD students a first-hand research experience in Australia, orientation in Australian culture, and an introduction to the science and research infrastructure of Australia. The program involves an orientation in Canberra, which introduced the students to Australian culture through visits to Parliament House, the National Arboretum and the National Gallery of Australia. Despite the students' relatively short time in Australia, some important outcomes have been achieved such as multiple papers drafted and submitted to relevant journals for publication, students presenting their research at public seminars, and the establishment of a multi-centre, multilateral project on transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). The collaboration will enable TMS technology created at Harvard University to be shared with Australian and Brazilian research institutions.

From the experience of these collaborative activities, the Academy considers Brazil to be an important partner for Australia, and there is potential to greatly enhance the level of scientific collaboration to the great benefit of both countries. A science, technology and innovation agreement with Brazil will facilitate international knowledge exchange, the transfer of researchers and students, and mutual access to research infrastructure and landmark facilities, and will enhance an already strong tradition of scientific collaboration between the two countries.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this submission or to arrange an appearance before the Committee, please contact Dr Stuart Barrow at stuart.barrow@science.org.au or 02 6201 9464.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Praeger AM FAA
Foreign Secretary