

Inquiry into Australia's International Research Collaboration

Submission to the Standing Committee on
Industry, Science and Innovation
Parliament of Australia
By (Name Withheld)

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

This topic is better addressed by educational institutions. I am submitting my comments as an individual researcher.

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

a) Australian researchers can get access to experts in other parts of the world and collaborate with them by working on projects under bilateral arrangements with other countries.

b) Exchange of new ideas with researchers overseas only enriches Australian researchers' ability to find innovative solutions to complex problems in all fields including social and physical sciences.

c) Australian graduate students would tremendously benefit by the knowledge of international scholars.

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

a) Quality of current research in Australia.

b) Willingness of Australian researchers to engage in multidisciplinary research projects.

c) Social awareness of intellectual and economic value that is created by research.

d) Presence of international scholars in Australia and their willingness to work with Australian researchers.

e) Tax incentives to companies for funding research projects in Australia.

f) Flexible immigration policy.

g) Australian government's interest in signing bilateral agreements with foreign governments to promote joint research with other countries.

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

a) Australian immigration policy is insensitive to Australia's research needs. For example, if a permanent resident goes overseas to work on a research project for a few years, he or she will risk losing her permanent resident status. It will delay his/her path to citizenship. Australia pays more importance to real estate ownership, bank accounts and employment but ignores the importance of research for a society. It is quite interesting that employees of shipping companies and sportspersons get a special treatment under the immigration law and researchers find no mention. If an Australian permanent resident child goes to a medical school overseas and passes the age of 25 years, he or she will risk losing her permanent resident status unless he or she stays in Australian long enough to become a citizen before going to medical

school. Australia's immigration policy is fundamentally flawed as it only recognises the importance of employees and ignores intellectuals and scholars.

b) There should be a special research visa for people who are doing PhD or want to come to Australia on a post doctoral research work. These people should be given flexibility of working overseas as long as they are associated and/or affiliated with an Australian research institution or university. The citizenship law should treat researchers at par with sports personalities and shipping company employees. Continued association with an Australian research institution or university should be considered favourably for citizenship. Citizenship cements ties between a person and a country. Australia should do its part in cementing its ties to PhD scholars.

c) New scholarships should be created for PhD students and faculty members who are engaged in collaborative research with foreign institutions.

5. Principles and strategies for supporting international research engagement.

a) Government's role is to facilitate research and not impede it or limit it by eliminating funding.

b) Immigration law should be amended to support research activity.

c) A taskforce should be setup to study how other countries attract researchers.

d) Instead of hiring consulting firms like KPMG to conduct studies for the government and do other work, Australian researchers and faculty should be engaged in helping the government make wise public policy decisions.

e) Australian parliamentary committees should invite Australian and foreign faculty members and researchers to give their views on important public policy issues.