

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000198

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing

HERI - Boosting international research engagement

Question

Is the Department participating in any government process aimed at boosting international research engagement?

- a) If so, please provide details of any such process(es)?
- b) What is the Department's role?
- c) Which other Commonwealth agencies are involved?
- d) Has there been, or is there intended to be, any external consultation? If so, who will be consulted and what form will that consultation take?
- e) What is the timeline for completing the process(es)?

Answer

The Department of Education and Training supports international research engagement through a number of activities.

The Australia Awards-Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships aim to build Australia's reputation for excellence in the provision of education and research, support the internationalisation of the Australian higher education and research sectors and offer high-achieving individuals from overseas and Australia opportunities to increase their productivity and expertise in their field. The awards are administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Education and Training and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR),

Since 2007, a total of 4481 Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships have been awarded to internationals and 1330 have been awarded to Australians to undertake research, study or professional development across 127 eligible countries. The program offers short-term fellowships or research placements (valued up to \$24,500) to full postgraduate degrees (valued up to \$272,500). Australians receive support to undertake targeted research and professional development overseas. Annual application and assessment processes determine the recipients of Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships.

No external consultation on the Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships program is planned. The program is subject to periodic monitoring and evaluation.

The *National Strategy for International Education 2025* highlights the importance of strengthening Australia's partnerships abroad to open new opportunities for students, researchers and providers, including through research collaboration and researcher mobility.

The National Strategy supports the *National Innovation and Science Agenda* which will further enhance Australia's global reputation as a leader in research and education into the future.

The new Council for International Education will continue to consult with stakeholders, supported by the department in implementing the National Strategy.

The department also funds international research engagement through the Australia-APEC Women in Research Fellowship. The program, which is managed on behalf of the department by the Australian APEC Study Centre at RMIT, provides financial assistance for high-achieving female researchers from developing APEC economies to pursue short-term (up to four months) research opportunities in partnership with Australian education and research institutions. Under annual program rounds, up to 10 fellowships, each valued up to \$23,000, have been awarded over the period 2015–2019.

The department is not participating in any consultation process as part of the APEC program.

The Research Training Program (RTP) is a scheme administered by the department under the Research Block Grants (RBG). It provides over \$1 billion in 2017 to universities to undertake Higher Degree by Research (HDR) training. The funding available for supporting international HDR students was recently increased from four to 10 per cent of the RTP under new arrangements that commenced on 1 January 2017. Allocations to universities are determined each calendar year based on the programs performance metrics.

The department consults with external stakeholders on RBG and RTP on an ongoing basis, through a range of mechanisms, including University Australia's Deputy Vice Chancellors – Research Working Group.

The department administers the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), with operational funding of \$150 m (indexed) per annum. The program supports domestic and international research collaboration by providing access to critical national research infrastructure. As announced in the National Innovation and Science Agenda in 2015, the funding for NCRIS is ongoing.

The department is not, through NCRIS, participating in any consultation process.

The Australian Research Council (ARC) considers opportunities to promote international research engagement through their programs on an ongoing basis, providing funding opportunities that bring together Australian and international researchers and organisations. Relevant activities include:

- International researchers are eligible to apply for all ARC schemes (via an eligible Australian organisation), and international organisations are eligible to be partner organisations under the Linkage Projects scheme.
- The ARC Centres of Excellence are prestigious hubs of expertise attracting researchers of high international standing and promising research students, both from within Australia and abroad.
- Discovery International Collaboration Awards provide support for travel and subsistence costs, and are available under the Discovery Projects scheme.
- The Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities scheme fosters cooperative use of national and international facilities.
- Details of the timing of grant rounds is available on the ARC websiteⁱ.
- The ARC reviewed its international research engagement in 2014–15. The ARC conducted a targeted consultation as part of the review.
- There are no plans to undertake any further reviews at this time.

ⁱ <http://www.arc.gov.au/important-dates>