

20 May 2022



**Submission from the Australian Academy of Science
To the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the establishment of the
Centre for Australia-India Relations**

The Australian Academy of Science (the Academy) would like to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Department), for the opportunity to put forward a submission in relation to the establishment of a Centre for Australia-India Relations. The submission is made from the perspective of the Academy's work in science and international collaborations.

The Academy congratulates the Department on this important initiative and on identifying four relevant focus areas of work.

The Academy:

- Congratulates the Australian government on establishing the Centre for Australia-India Relations as a soft power asset to support stronger links with India and in the region.
- Is of the view that the research and higher education relationship between Australia and India is an important one, and one that should continue to be encouraged and strengthened.
- Recommends that the activities of the new Centre for Australia-India Relations should complement and build on existing activities, such as the research projects and fellowships already supported by the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF).
- Suggests that it would be valuable for the Centre to include a funding program to support visits by Indian students to Australian universities and research institutions.

As reported by the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, India was Australia's highest publication partner over 2017-2019. Australia was India's 7th highest collaborator over the same period. DFAT's own [An Update to an India Economic Strategy to 2035](#), recently released, notes (page 42) that 'Almost 1 in 5 overseas students in Australia are from India'. The accompanying graphic indicates that 'As at December 2021, Indian international students made up the largest group of overseas students in Australia' (19%).

Since 2012, the Academy has administered, on behalf of the Australian government, the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF) Early- and Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) Fellowships. The EMCR fellowships provide financial support for Australian researchers to travel to India and work with leading researchers at major Indian science and technology organisations for a period of between 1 and 3 months. The fellowships are intended to facilitate long-term science, technology and innovation collaboration between Australia and India by:

- developing researchers' expertise in international collaboration and fostering long-term relationships between Australian and Indian researchers
- increasing Australian researchers' understanding of Indian culture, particularly science and research practices and systems
- developing researchers' leadership skills as future 'science ambassadors' for Australia
- providing a catalyst for future Australia-India research collaborations.



Australian astronomers note that Australia and India are partners in the global Square Kilometre Array (SKA), and have many collaborations, both scientific and technical, in the field of radio astronomy. Australia currently hosts many young scientists from India working on SKA-related projects in Australia.

A number of universities in Australia, such as the University of Melbourne's Australia India Institute, already actively support bilateral activities across the academic, political, business and community sectors that have helped to shape engagement with India among Australian decision makers, change perceptions about Australia in India, promote trade and investment and activate bilateral networks.

The Academy's new President, Professor Chennupati Jagadish AC, FAA, FTSE, who arrived in Australia from India in 1990, has just returned from visiting India to, among other things, promote his own Jagadish Endowment scholarships and the Future Talent Program of the Australian National University (ANU) College of Science. Both provide summer internships for Bachelor's and Master's students to visit the ANU for up to 3 months. Professor Jagadish has noted that there is interest for PhD students from India to visit Australia for 6 months to 1 year to carry out joint research with Australian universities. This can strengthen research linkages between institutions and open doors for the younger generation of researchers.

The Academy is aware that the China Scholarships Council of the Chinese Ministry of Education has a program that supports Chinese students to visit Australian universities. India has no such program, and perhaps this is an area that the new Centre could explore.

Another area that could be explored is a Summer Internship program, in which Institutions in Australia would host for 3 months Indian students undertaking 4-year Bachelor's or Master's degrees to carry out research and gain exposure to Australian universities. Professor Jagadish notes that most of the top undergraduate students from India study in the US or the UK/Europe. Exposing students to Australia may help them to choose to undertake their PhDs and other higher degrees in Australia. This will strengthen linkages between the countries.

Some of the above examples demonstrate that there is already much activity to promote collaborations mainly in science and research, but also culturally and in industry, commerce and trade. The Australia-India Council has also run a grants program for many years that has been largely complementary to the AISRF, and it would be practical for a similar arrangement with the new Centre.

To discuss or clarify any aspect of this submission, please contact Nancy Pritchard, Director International at Nancy.pritchard@science.org.au or Mr Chris Anderson, Director Science Policy at Chris.Anderson@science.org.au.