



Australian Academy of Science

Ian Potter House, Gordon Street, Canberra ACT 2601

31 January 2018

Contact Officer, Migration Policy
Department of Home Affairs
6 Chan Street
Belconnen ACT 2617

By email: migration.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Departmental consultation on managing Australia's migrant intake.

The Australian Academy of Science welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Home Affairs' consultation on managing Australia's migrant intake.

The Academy's interest in immigration issues relate to the skilled migration program, specifically the ways in which this program allows and supports Australian research institutions to recruit world leading scientists and researchers to further Australian science.

Australia has a diverse scientific workforce, with 35 per cent of our Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) qualified workforce born overseas. In the case of both natural sciences and information technology, Australia is particularly reliant on skilled migrants with 44 per cent and 49 per cent of the respective workforces born overseas. International researchers have been integral to many Australian innovations, and will without question be instrumental in solving many of the critical challenges facing Australia in the future.

Australia derives enormous benefit from the ability to leverage significant international research programs to focus on Australian priorities, as well as benefiting from Australian scientists' ability to train and work in international research institutions and bring back critical knowledge and skills. To protect the benefits of Australian researchers engaging with international research organisations, it is important for Australia to facilitate mobility of international researchers visiting and working in Australia.

Migration of researchers is an essential mechanism for maximising the benefits from migration. It is imperative Australia has a skilled migration system that allows Australian R&D-intensive businesses, universities and research organisations to identify and recruit the best scientists, researchers, lecturers, technical specialists and knowledge workers to participate in Australia's industry, culture and economy. Such a system must not only enable Australian employers and training institutions to engage those highly-skilled international professionals looking to work in Australia, it must also reinforce Australia's position as an innovative, attractive and exciting employment destination.



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[Australia's National Science Statement](#) recognises the international nature of science and stresses the importance of international links. The responsibilities of government are listed in the Statement, including “[Government will] encourage and support collaboration across disciplines, across sectors and across international borders.” The Academy recommends that Australia’s migration program reflects and supports the government’s science, innovation and technology policies.

The Academy recommends any update to Australia’s migration system must protect and enhance the following characteristics:

- Dedicated visa and migration pathways for scientists, researchers, higher-degree research students and technical research workers to visit and work in Australia for periods up to five years.
- Migration pathways that accommodate individuals at all stages of scientific and research careers from postgraduate study through to world-leading researchers.
- Clear and reasonable pathways to permanent residency, with sufficient flexibility to account for changes in career direction. This includes support for the migration of the families of researchers with permanent residency, to improve the wellbeing of those researchers and the desirability of Australia as a research career destination.
- Cooperation between Departmental and institutional processes to ensure research institutions’ requirements are met.
- Published data on Australia’s immigration processes, including linking where possible the outcomes of migration under the skilled migration processes.

The Academy strongly supports the [International Council for Science \(ICSU\) Statute 5](#) on the Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of science which states:

The Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of Science: the free and responsible practice of science is fundamental to scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being. Such practice, in all its aspects, requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for scientists, as well as equitable access to data, information, and other resources for research. It requires responsibility at all levels to carry out and communicate scientific work with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency, recognising its benefits and possible harms.

In advocating the free and responsible practice of science, ICSU promotes equitable opportunities for access to science and its benefits, and opposes discrimination based on such factors as ethnic origin, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

Freedom of association is a central principle of academic freedom and the Universality of Science. Scientist-to-scientist engagement should transcend racial, cultural, political and religious beliefs, and provide continuing opportunity for nations to engage in harmonious dialogue and co-existence. Scientists should not therefore be restricted in their international mobility or their associations with fellow scientists.



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

Yours sincerely,

Professor David Day FAA
Secretary, Science Policy
Australian Academy of Science