

Australia-India Ministerial Dialogue on Education Cooperation

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

Between the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education of the Government of Australia and the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India

**12 July 2013
Sydney, Australia**

The annual Australia-India Ministerial Dialogue on Education Cooperation was held at Sydney on 12 July 2013. Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and Minister for Higher Education, Government of Australia, and the Hon Dr MM Pallam Raju, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India, discussed the flourishing Australia-India knowledge partnership.

The Ministers acknowledged education as a central pillar to the broader Strategic Partnership between India and Australia and committed to further strengthening and expanding collaboration in education, skills and research. Both Ministers reflected on the crucial role education and skills development play in realising both individual and national aspirations to build a skilled and productive workforce.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to activities under the **Joint Statement** of 17 October 2012 agreed by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, the **Joint Communiqué** of 1 August 2011 agreed by the former Education Ministers, Senator the Hon Chris Evans MP and Minister the Hon Kapil Sibal, and the **Joint Ministerial Statement** of 8 April 2010, signed by the then Ministers for Education, the Hon Julia Gillard MP and the Hon Minister Kapil Sibal.

Both Ministers noted the critically important education and training projects undertaken by Australia and India through the **East Asia Summit** (EAS), which are supportive of building quality, capacity and mobility in the region. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the EAS education agenda.

The Ministers agreed that strong and expanding people-to-people links are at the heart of the bilateral relationship and acknowledged the importance of continuing to nurture student and staff mobility, joint research and knowledge exchange. The Ministers recognised the range of enhancements to the international student experience in Australia and committed their Departments to continue activity in both countries under the 2012 **Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Student Mobility and Welfare**. Minister Carr related the work Australia has undertaken to date with education agents in India under the *London Statement of Principles for the Ethical Recruitment of International Students by Education Agents and Consultants* signed on 16 March 2012 by the UK, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.

The Ministers Co-Chaired the **Australia India Education Council (AIEC)** meeting on 12 July and agreed to continue to build the reputation and profile of the Council as the principal body for driving the Australia India education, training and research agenda. The Ministers acknowledged the value of the AIEC in bringing together senior Australian and Indian education, training and industry representatives with Government to guide the strategic direction of the knowledge partnership.

Both Ministers commended the members of the AIEC on substantial progress across the key areas of skills, higher education and joint research, student mobility and welfare, and quality assurance and qualifications recognition. The Ministers reaffirmed their support for the Council with a total **joint commitment of AUD900,000**.

The Ministers welcomed the release of four reports produced by the AIEC, available on the Australia India education links website (www.australiaindiaeducation.com):

- *India-Australia Institutional Collaborations in Higher Education: Potential, Problems, Promises*
- *Strengthening the Australia-India Knowledge Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities*
- *An Issues Paper: Aligning Qualification Recognition between India and Australia*
- *Australia India Education Council Activity Report*.

The Ministers commended the signing of **Memoranda of Understanding between Australian and Indian Industry/Sector Skill Councils** in agriculture, mining, retail and telecommunications, with media and entertainment working under an agreed engagement plan. Both Ministers acknowledged these collaborations as pivotal to developing quality occupational, training, accreditation and information standards to support the building of skilled and productive workforces, aligned to the needs of industry. The Ministers welcomed the inaugural **Australia India Industry/Sector Skill Council Workshop** in Sydney on 11 July.

The Ministers welcomed the **2nd Australia India Skills Conference: Training and Industry – Bridging the Skills Divide** to be held in New Delhi on 7-8 November 2013, building on the successful **Australia India Skills Conference: Partners for Prosperity** in Perth in July 2012. The inaugural Conference brought together over 200 delegates from across Australia and India to share best practice models of VET delivery in India and to facilitate new partnerships in skills development. Over 150 business matching meetings were held and six memoranda of understanding signed at the conference.

The Ministers also welcomed work by the AIEC on a feasibility study to establish a **Vocational Teacher Training Centre of Excellence** in India.

The new **Australia Awards Endeavour Australia India Education Council Research Fellowships**, launched by former Prime Minister Gillard in New Delhi in October 2012, were acknowledged by both Ministers as innovative to building short-term research exchange opportunities for postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows in areas relevant to the AIEC.

Both Ministers committed to enhance student mobility between Australia and India. They acknowledged the innovative work of the AIEC in developing a new database of credit transfer arrangements between Indian and Australian universities, to be hosted on the Australia India education links website (www.australiaindiaeducation.com). Minister Carr announced in 2013-14 Australia would support 29 higher education institutions to send 300 students to India for a study experience under the new **AsiaBound** program. Minister Raju announced the opportunity for Australian students to visit India for short term visits through the 'Connect to India' program.

The Ministers welcomed the new **Australia India Knowledge Partnership Grants** under the AIEC to fund projects in prioritised higher education thematic areas, including support to universities to develop credit transfer arrangements between Australian and Indian institutions.

The Ministers welcomed the establishment of a joint Australia India taskforce to enhance **qualifications recognition** between the two countries.

The Ministers acknowledged the continued success of the jointly sponsored **Australia India School Leaders' Professional Learning Program**, which has supported the exchange of more than 180 Indian and 250 Australian school leaders since 1998. The program, administered by the Asia Education Foundation, continues to build leadership, mutual understanding and cooperation between our respective school sectors.

The Ministers recognised the successes of 2012 pilot programs aimed at encouraging greater vocational and higher education leader exchange. These included the **Australia India University Shadowing Pilot**, the **Australia India College Principals' Exchange Program** and the **TAFE Directors Australia Vocational Education Leadership Training Program**. Building on these pilots, Minister Carr announced a new **Australia India Education Leaders' Exchange**, to be administered by the Australia India Institute. The new exchange program will support high calibre education leaders from both countries to develop new and innovative sustainable knowledge partnerships at the institutional level. Minister Carr also announced a **2nd Australia India Vocational Education Leadership Training (VELT)** program for Indian community college leaders, to be facilitated by TAFE Directors Australia.

The Ministers commended Universities Australia for hosting the **2nd Australia India Vice Chancellors' Workshop** in Sydney on 11 July, in collaboration with the University Grants Commission, to expand and strengthen engagement between Australian and Indian universities. Engagement has grown to over 390 active collaborations between 29 Australian and 250 Indian universities. The Ministers acknowledged the depth and breadth of university engagement in areas such as joint teaching and research and student and staff exchange, and committed to continue to encourage initiatives that support strong and sustainable partnerships and mobility between the two countries.

Both Ministers acknowledged the significant contribution made by the **Australia India Strategic Research Fund** since 2006 in building partnerships between our higher education and research institutes. The AISRF has supported over 100 joint projects and workshops, Grand Challenge projects in food security, health and energy, and over 80 fellowships for Australian and Indian researchers.

The Ministers agreed Australia and India are enriched through high quality, innovative and sustainable education, skills and research partnerships. These partnerships support mutual efforts towards greater economic and social progress, modern cultural understanding and people-to-people connections.

The Ministers looked forward to meeting again in India in 2014 for the next Australia India Ministerial Dialogue on Education Cooperation and Australia India Education Council meeting.