



Committee Secretary

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the AsiaPacific by funding multi-partner activities that facilitate greater science, research and innovation collaboration in delivering innovative solutions to shared regional challenge.

## Science is a strategic national capability

Science has a critical role to play in fostering and upholding sovereignty, stability, security, and prosperity of the Pacific. Timely science-informed action is key to securing Australia's long-term leadership in the region, by addressing imminent and ongoing effects of climate change and natural disasters, improving health and wellbeing, and developing sustainability and resource management in the unique Pacific context. Such actions have broad ranging impacts. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Pacific Step-up Priorities and Australia's overarching objectives in the Pacific

Science diplomacy has great potential to enhance the impact and realisation of the Pacific Step-up priorities and Australia's soft power diplomacy in general.

guided by an Advisory Committee on International Matters (ACIM), which comprises Fellows of the Academy with extensive international expertise and advises the Academy's President, Foreign Secretary and Executive Committee on international activities.

Enhancing Australia's international science engagement is a pillar of the Academy's International Engagement Strategic Plan (2022) and overarching [Strategic Plan](#). Key objectives include contributing Australian expertise and leadership in regional and global science networks; facilitating Australia's access to global science and technology; and promoting strategic partnerships between Australian and overseas researchers. The Pacific region is a key focal point of the Academy's international engagements.

The Academy is a champion, practitioner and proactive facilitator of science as a soft power asset. As articulated in the Academy's [submission](#) to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Soft Power Review, science should be leveraged as a soft power asset and can play a much broader, deeper, and systematic role in allowing Australia to exercise influence, enhance leadership, and build strategic partnerships to advance Australia's prosperity and security.

The Academy will soon initiate a new Strategic Plan for international engagement that reflects pressing national, regional and global challenges for science and society, advance strategic capabilities, such as Science Diplomacy and science as soft-power. The Academy welcomes opportunities arising through the Inquiry for further engagement with government and sector stakeholders as part of our strategic planning.





## Exploring prospects to strengthen and broaden Australian

In partnership with IUNS, The Academy's National Committee for Nutrition is leading the establishment of the Federation of Oceanic Nutrition Societies (FONS) to support and bolster nutritional health in the Oceanic region.

Currently in the scoping phase, the National Committee is identifying, working with and seeking direct input from regional stakeholders to develop a framework which is tailored to and directly addresses the unique needs and challenges of the region. Lessons learnt through the FONS scoping process can provide valuable insight, ensuring Stepup initiatives reflect the priority needs of the governments and people of Pacific island countries, and potentially identify synergies.

#### x Long term strategic leadership through science diplomacy

Modern science is built on partnerships and collaborations surpassing national borders in pursuit of innovative solutions to pressing global challenges. This can be clearly seen in the international research effort in response to the COVID challenge currently facing the globe. Beyond immediate health challenges, science-informed solutions are an important contributor to economic and societal resilience in the longer term, by enhancing economic productivity and competitiveness through innovation.

Future global challenges including climate change, poor sustainability, health threats and emerging diseases, energy and food security challenges and natural disasters, will have a potentially profound impact on the long term prosperity of Pacific nations unless they can be identified and effectively addressed. Australia has the potential to broaden and deepen the role of our scientific sector as a soft power asset, to be a producer of world-leading science through strengthened links with established partners and as a facilitator of science-informed solutions.

Australia's unique position in the Oceania region presents ample scope in the Stepup priorities to capitalise on opportunities to participate in and facilitate science and innovation in the Pacific region. This includes harnessing the scientific expertise and resources of independent bodies such as the Academy to support both immediate and ongoing Australian efforts on critical and potential issues such as emerging diseases and disaster management in the Pacific.

In its role as an independent provider of authoritative science advice, together with robust global linkages, the Academy is uniquely positioned and equipped to facilitate science diplomacy. The Academy has the capacity to maintain dialogue between nations in the presence of diplomatic challenges, fosters diplomatic links, hosts scientific delegations from regional and Asian neighbours and supports participation in events and conferences that provide professional development to young researchers from the region.

Science diplomacy has great potential to enhance the impact and realisation of Stepup priorities and the Academy welcomes further discussion on leveraging its assets, capabilities and experience.

The Academy's position on the role of science as a soft power asset was articulated in submission to the [soft power review](#)

#### x Long term strategic leadership in government science advice

In demonstrating scientific leadership and enhancing the nation's presence and leadership within the Oceania region through Pacific Stepup and beyond, Australia must work in a globally unique

geopolitical context which is shaped by the regional socioeconomic landscape that affects scientific and technological development and innovation, particularly in the Pacific Island nations.



## Measures to ensure Step-up initiatives reflect the priority needs of the governments and people of Pacific island countries.

Maximising the impact of Pacific Step requires identification and balancing of regional priorities and needs coupled with sustained and effective implementation of Stepup priorities. This likely requires resources, including cash funding and expertise, which may not be easily accessible to some nations in the Pacific region.

To that end, it is important to remain aware of and coordinate actions with other representative groupings, networks and stakeholders which are key actors in the Pacific region ensure limited resources are spent as efficiently as possible.

As the representative for Australian science on the international stage, combined with the national convening power through the National Committees for Science and Fellowship, the Academy is