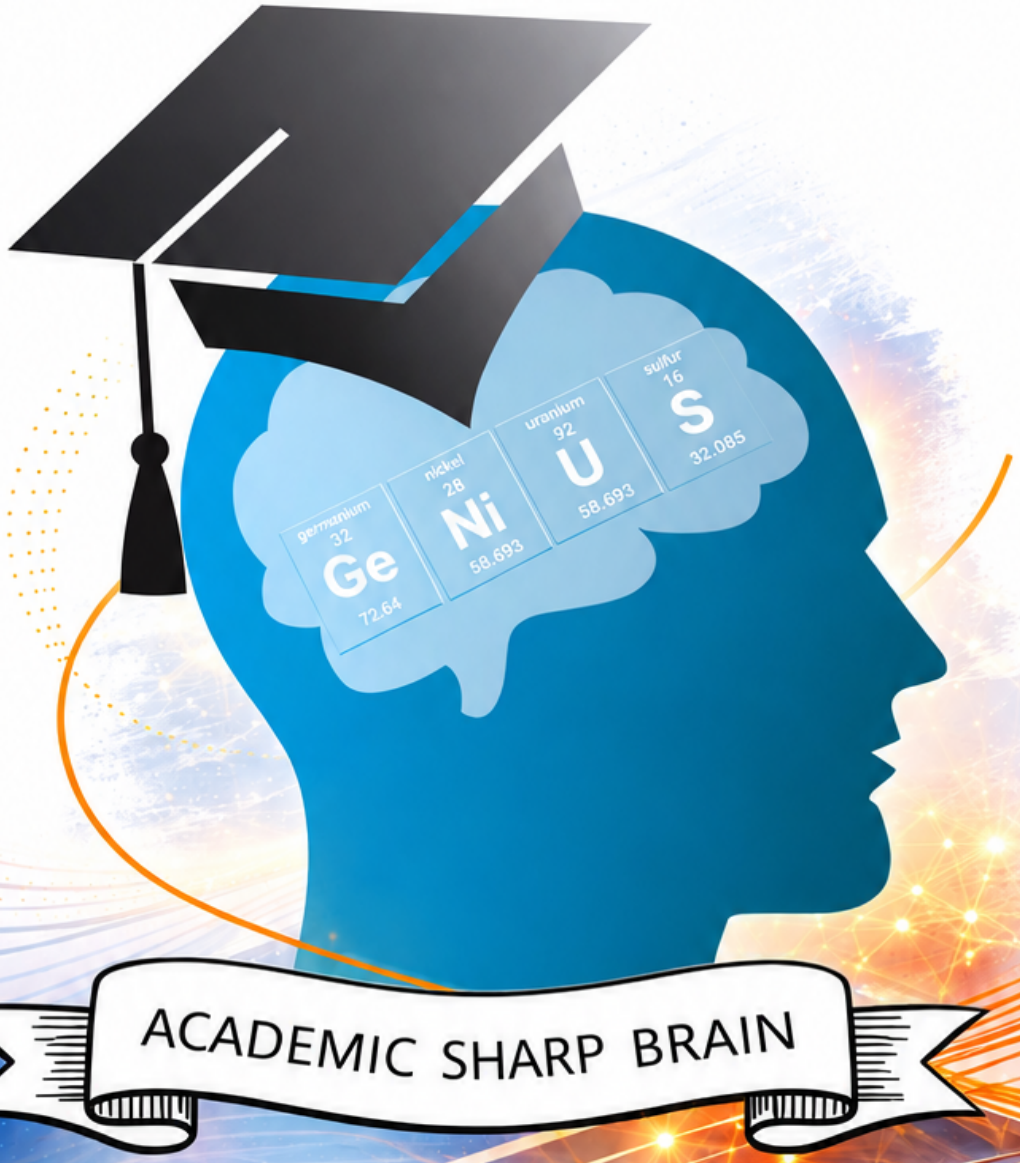
RMIT UNIVERSITY



RMIT–AcSiR

JOINT RESEARCH PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

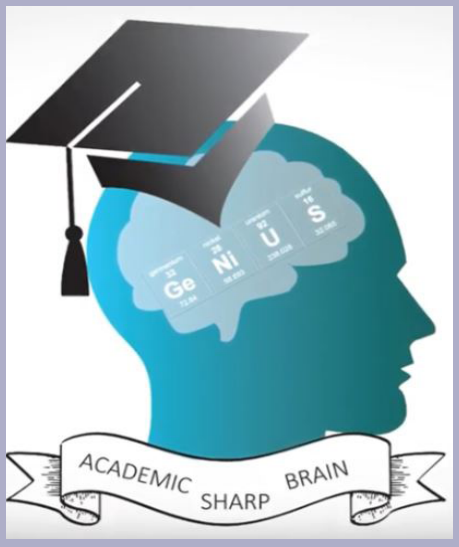
From *Translation* to *Transformation*

Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business - Artwork 'Sentient' by Hollie Johnson, Gunaikurnai and Monero Ngarigo woman from Gippsland who graduated from RMIT with a Bachelor of Arts (Photography) in 2016.







Cover Image

Science alone won't take us very far if scientists can't take their ideas into production. Academic Sharp Brain, hosted as part of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute Centenary Congress in July 2017, was envisioned as a way for academics to pitch their innovations to a panel of investors, in order receive feedback on the viability of their innovations and ultimately have a chance to secure funding to bring their idea into a reality.

In this brief summary video of the event, you can hear from some of the academics who took part, as well as the opinions of formidable personalities such as Dr Alan Finkel, Australia's Chief Scientist, Nobel Laureate Professor Brain P. Schmidt, and Distinguished Prof. Suresh K. Bhargava AM.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS_vQ0ObqaY

OUR MISSION

At RMIT, we are committed to building an inclusive, globally connected research and education ecosystem that celebrates diversity and drives transformative impact. Through initiatives like the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program, we are empowering a new generation of scientists, innovators, and leaders from diverse cultural, academic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Our mission is to provide equitable access to world-class mentorship, cross-cultural collaboration, and cutting-edge research opportunities. By fostering an environment where all voices are valued and every talent is nurtured, we equip our students with the critical thinking, technical excellence, and entrepreneurial spirit needed to solve complex global challenges.

At RMIT, we craft the future with intent, discipline, and impact.

RMIT UNIVERSITY | AcSIR ACADEMY OF SCIENTIFIC AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Progra

Global research collaboration | Innovation across Australia and India



GLOBAL COLLABORATION
Uniting two leading research ecosystems

JOINT PHD SUPERVISION
Shared expertise, dual guidance

STUDENT MOBILITY
Opportunities across Australia and India


INDIA
AcSIR NETWORK
ACROSS INDIA
RESEARCH
EXCELLENCE
Driving innovation with
global impact


RMIT



Contents

RMIT Overview 08
AcSIR overview 09
Our strategy 10

ORGANIZATION

Vice-Chancellor 12
PSA to the Govt. of India 13
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (R&I) and Vice President 14
Director's Statement 15
Founding Chancellor of AcSIR's Statement 16
Director AcSIR's Statement 18

OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

PhD Enrolments 20
Phd completion growth 23
Connecting through Science & Technology 26
Distinguished Professors' Prize 29
Distinguished Professors' Prize 2025 31
Covering RMIT Research Ecosystem 34
RMIT Industry-PhD Program 36
AcSIR 9th Convocation 38
2025 AcSIR delegates visit to RMIT 40
CSIR-NEERI visit 42
Student welcome at RMIT 44
CSIR-IMMT Visit 46
Program Discoveries 48
Diwali 2025 50
Voices of our RMIT Family 52
Holi 2025 54
Student Experiences 56
Student Satisfaction 64
Supervisor's Comment 68
How leaders Perceive the Program's Impact 70

RMIT UNIVERSITY | AcSIR

RMIT Overview

RMIT University ranks 119th globally and 10th in Australia in the QS World University Rankings. RMIT is a global university of technology, design and enterprise, with more than 104,000 students and 13,000 staff worldwide. Through applied, inclusive and industry-relevant education and research, RMIT empowers people and communities to adapt, thrive and make a positive impact.

RMIT offers undergraduate, postgraduate, vocational, foundation and online programs across campuses in Melbourne, Vietnam and Spain, and through partners across Asia. With strong global industry links, a community of 560,000+ alumni in over 153 countries, and a reputation for employability, creativity and inclusion, RMIT prepares graduates to succeed in a changing world.

Respect, diversity and inclusion are central to RMIT's identity. The University values multicultural and multifaith communities and is committed to respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, strengthening understanding and connection across all communities in which RMIT operates.



For more information, visit rmit.edu.au/about

AcSIR Overview

The Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR), established in 2011 as an Institution of National Importance, is dedicated to developing future leaders in science, technology and innovation. AcSIR is consistently ranked among the top research institutions in India. It holds the 11th position in the Research Institutions category in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF Ranking) and is ranked 11th among Indian universities in the Nature Index Rankings. Through its research-intensive curriculum, advanced pedagogy and rigorous evaluation, AcSIR provides specialised education and research opportunities in areas not commonly addressed by traditional universities in India.

AcSIR operates through 78 affiliated research institutes across 38 cities, supported by world-class faculty, infrastructure and state-of-the-art facilities. Its recent partnership with the Indian Council of Medical Research further expands its academic and research network by recognising 28 ICMR institutes as AcSIR Research Institutes under a new Faculty of Medical Research. With a strong focus on advanced science, engineering and medical research, AcSIR prepares students to address real-world challenges and contribute to the evolving needs of society, industry and the nation.



For more information, visit https://acsir.res.in/about

OUR **Strategy**

Learning through research and mobility
The program provides students with access to world-class research environments in India and Australia, enabling them to learn through advanced research, international exposure and cross-cultural academic experience.

Research and innovation for impact
By focusing on areas of national and global importance, the program supports high-quality research in science, engineering, technology, health, sustainability, materials, critical minerals and emerging areas of innovation.

Serving communities through partnership
The RMIT–AcSIR partnership strengthens research capability, builds international networks and contributes to the broader India–Australia education and innovation relationship.

The RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program was formalised in 2018 through an agreement signed by the late Dr Baldev Raj, former Chancellor of AcSIR, who named the initiative the "SB Model" in recognition of Distinguished Professor Suresh K. Bhargava AM, under whose leadership it was developed. Since its inception, the program has become a benchmark for international doctoral education by integrating dual-institutional engagement, global supervision, research mobility and access to world-class research infrastructure.

The success of this model has inspired adoption by six other Australian universities, including Deakin University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Western Australia, Queensland University of Technology, Murdoch University, and Curtin University. It has also attracted growing international interest, demonstrating its value as a scalable and impactful framework for global doctoral education, research collaboration and long-term institutional partnership.

RMIT–AcSIR
Joint Research Program

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

RESEARCH & EXCHANGE

IMPACT & OUTCOMES

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

RMIT has emerged as the **leading international partner of AcSIR** in global research collaborations, consistently surpassing other institutions in both the scale and impact of its engagement.

Through strategic initiatives such as the **RMIT–AcSIR Research Partnership**, RMIT has enabled extensive joint research, academic exchange, and capacity building across a network of premier Indian research laboratories.

This collaboration has facilitated access to a vast ecosystem of over **7,000 PhD scholars**, strengthened industry-linked research outcomes, and established a benchmark for international academic partnerships.

For more information, kindly scan this

Vice-Chancellor RMIT University



Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor and President
RMIT University

RMIT's enduring purpose is to empower people and communities to adapt, thrive and create positive change across generations.

The RMIT–AcSIR partnership continues to exemplify this purpose in action. Since its establishment in 2017, this pioneering collaboration has evolved into one of the most successful international research partnerships in our region, bringing together talented researchers, leading institutions and world-class laboratories across Australia and India.

The partnership has created opportunities for doctoral researchers to work across borders, disciplines and cultures while addressing challenges of global significance. Through this collaboration, we are not only advancing knowledge but also strengthening our regional people-to-people connections.

I am particularly proud that the innovative model pioneered by RMIT and AcSIR has become a benchmark for international research collaboration. What started as a vision to jointly develop research talent has developed into a truly integrated approach to doctoral education and global research engagement. Today, it is gratifying to see this model adopted by nine universities around the world.

This year marks another important milestone as the partnership expands through collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Building on the strong foundations established with AcSIR and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), this broadens our collective capacity to address some of the world's most pressing challenges in health, science and technology.

Importantly, our shared ambition extends beyond research excellence. Through a commitment to Translational Science and Innovation, we are increasingly focused on ensuring that research delivers meaningful outcomes with commercial, societal and global impact – from advances in cancer therapeutics and vaccine development, to innovations in medical technologies, advanced manufacturing and sustainability.

Together, and under the auspices of the RMIT–AcSIR partnership, our students, graduates, supervisors and research leaders are building a highly motivated and globally connected community; well-equipped to contribute in ways that benefit both our nations and the broader global community.

Principal Scientific Advisor to the Govt. of India

अजय के. सूद
भारत सरकार के प्रमुख वैज्ञानिक सलाहकार
Ajay K. Sood
Principal Scientific Adviser to the Govt. of India

सत्यमेव जयते

कर्तव्य भवन 3, जनपथ, नई दिल्ली - 110001
Kartavya Bhavan 3, Janpath, New Delhi-110001
Tel. : +91-11-24011867, 24011868
E-mail : sood.ajay@gov.in, office-psa@nic.in
Website : www.psa.gov.in



Message

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings for the RMIT–AcSIR Research Partnership Annual Report 2025.

The RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Research Program represents an important example of how trusted international partnerships can strengthen research training, foster innovation and create meaningful opportunities for young researchers. By connecting RMIT University with AcSIR, CSIR laboratories and emerging links with ICMR, the program engages with one of India's largest and most dynamic national research ecosystems, where translational research can be meaningfully advanced from scientific discovery to societal benefit.

I am particularly pleased to note the program's continued emphasis on student success, joint supervision, research excellence and people-centred collaboration. Such initiatives are vital for developing globally connected researchers who can contribute to national and international priorities in science, technology, health, sustainability, advanced manufacturing and translational innovation.

I congratulate Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, AM for initiating and nurturing this unique partnership, which has now grown into a model for others. Its success has helped inspired other international research partnerships with AcSIR, further connecting India with the world through the talent, ambition and achievements of young Indian researchers and students.

The growing engagement between Australia and India in research and innovation provides significant opportunities for both countries. Programs such as RMIT–AcSIR demonstrate the value of long-term institutional trust, shared purpose and capacity building in addressing global challenges.

I congratulate RMIT University, AcSIR, the participating CSIR and ICMR research communities, supervisors, professional teams and, most importantly, the students whose achievements give meaning to this partnership. I wish the program continued success as it expands its impact across disciplines, institutions and nations.

[Ajay Kumar Sood]

Place: New Delhi
Date: 13.07.2026

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (R&I) and Vice President



Distinguished Professor Calum Drummond AO

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation and Vice-President

The AcSIR–RMIT Joint Research Program continues to exemplify the strategic value of sustained international collaboration in delivering research excellence, talent development, and global impact. Since its establishment in 2018, this flagship partnership has evolved into a distinctive model. It links RMIT with India's largest research ecosystem and positioning our institutions at the forefront of transnational doctoral research training.

A defining strength of the program is its scale and connectivity. Through engagement with AcSIR's vast network of research institutes, the program brings together complementary capabilities, infrastructure, and expertise, enabling interdisciplinary research that addresses complex global challenges while strengthening Australia–India research ties.

In 2025, the program achieved important milestones. Current enrolments reached 92 candidates, contributing to 189 enrolments overall, with 79 PhDs awarded to date. The completion of 32 candidates this year reflects the program's maturity and the strength of its joint supervision model.

Research performance remains a key indicator of success. With more than 1,200 publications produced by students and graduates, including over 130 from current candidates in 2025, the program continues to deliver high-quality outputs and build momentum in research translation and impact.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on further growth and diversification, including expansion into priority areas such as health and medical sciences through collaboration with ICMR. This next phase will deepen our impact and extend opportunities for our researchers to contribute to global priorities.

This program remains central to RMIT's commitment to research with purpose of delivering excellence through partnership and shaping globally connected research leaders.

Director RMIT-AcSIR Partnership



Distinguished Professor Suresh K Bhargava AM

Director CAMIC, STEM College, RMIT University

It has been one of the great privileges of my academic journey to have initiated the RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Research Program and to see it grow into a proven model of trust, inclusion and opportunity for young researchers from Australia and India.

What began as a bold international vision has matured into a people-centred global research partnership, reflecting the true spirit of RMIT as a university of technology, design and enterprise. Built on shared purpose, cultural understanding and institutional trust, the program places students at the centre of its success.

The year 2025 stands out as one of the strongest in the RMIT–AcSIR journey, marked by outstanding research outputs, strong student satisfaction and the continued success of a people-centred model built on trust, care and shared excellence. The introduction of the unique Distinguished Professors' Award has added a powerful new dimension to the program, recognising students who demonstrated excellence, resilience and courage while navigating significant challenges.

Equally important is the human impact. Our students are gaining not only a PhD, but also confidence, resilience, global exposure and the ability to contribute as future researchers, innovators and leaders. Strong student satisfaction, successful completions and excellent career pathways show that the model works because it is delivered with care, mentoring and shared responsibility.

The success of this program is driven by people: dedicated students, committed supervisors, supportive professional teams and visionary institutional leadership. Together, they have created a partnership where young researchers feel valued, supported and empowered to succeed across borders.

As the partnership expands into medical research, translational innovation, advanced materials, sustainability, energy and technology, it will create even greater opportunities for talented young researchers from both countries to address global challenges.

In a world where international partnerships are often measured by agreements and numbers, the RMIT–AcSIR Program shows that lasting impact comes from trust, care, shared purpose and the success of people.

The greatest achievement of this program is not only what we have built, but the futures we are helping our students to build. Through them, the impact of RMIT and AcSIR will continue to grow across disciplines, borders and generations for many years to come.



Dr Raghunath Anant

Former President of Global research Allia

R. A. Mashelkar, FRS

Formerly:

- Director General, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research
- Secretary, Department of Scientific & Industrial Research, Govt. of India
- President, Indian National Science Academy
- Chairman, National Innovation Foundation
- President, Global Research Alliance
- Member, Science Advisory Council to Prime Minister
- National Research Professor

Message from Dr R. A. Mashelkar

The RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program occupies a very special place in my heart.

As the founding Chancellor of AcSIR, I had the privilege of witnessing the birth of this visionary initiative and of signing the Memorandum of Understanding with RMIT Universit 2017 2018. Initiated and championed with extraordinary conviction by Distinguished Professor Suresh K. Bhargava AM, this partnership was built on a simple yet transformative belief: **that the future of research excellence will belong to institutions that collaborate across borders with shared purpose, mutual trust and global ambition.**

From the beginning, this was never intended to be merely another doctoral program.

It was conceived as a bold experiment in reimagining research education itself—bringing together the strengths of a world-class university and India's unparalleled national research ecosystem; creating opportunities for young scientific talent; and building a partnership whose impact would extend far beyond students to supervisors, institutions, industry and ultimately to society and both nations.

Over several decades, I have had the privilege of serving in scientific leadership roles across the world, including as President of the Global Research Alliance, which brought together leading research and technology organisations from multiple countries, including Australia. Viewed through that global lens, I can say with complete conviction that the RMIT–AcSIR partnership stands among the most distinguished and innovative examples of international collaborative doctoral education that I have encountered.

Its significance lies not simply in being international, but in the way it has been imagined, nurtured and sustained.

This partnership has combined scientific excellence with human values: academic rigour with cultural sensitivity; institutional discipline with warmth, mentorship and care. From admission and research training to international mobility, residence in Australia and the transition into global careers, students have been supported not merely as scholars but as individuals with aspirations and potential.That is what transforms education into empowerment.That is what transforms a doctoral program into a life-changing journey.

.....2

3rd Floor, Adams Court, Above Bank of India, Baner Road, Pune - 411 045, India
+91-20- 4692 5703 ram@mashelkar.com www.mashelkar.com @ramanmashelkar

t Mashelkar, FRS, FAA, FTSE

ances and Founding Chancellor of AcSIR India.

R. A. Mashelkar, FRS

Formerly:

- Director General, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research
- Secretary, Department of Scientific & Industrial Research, Govt. of India
- President, Indian National Science Academy
- Chairman, National Innovation Foundation
- President, Global Research Alliance
- Member, Science Advisory Council to Prime Minister
- National Research Professor

Through AcSIR, RMIT has built a powerful bridge into India's premier CSIR and ICMR laboratories—the largest publicly funded research ecosystem in the country—creating exceptional opportunities across chemistry, materials science, engineering, energy, environment, biotechnology, biomedical sciences and health technologies.This breadth matters.

The program has enabled young researchers to access advanced laboratories, benefit from joint supervision, engage with international academic networks and experience diverse research cultures across India and Australia.

I must offer special recognition to Distinguished Professor Suresh K. Bhargava AM.

His appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia rightly recognises contributions that extend far beyond institutional leadership. His work has advanced science, education, innovation and international engagement in a truly exceptional manner.In India, Professor Bhargava is regarded not only as a distinguished representative of RMIT University but as a trusted and deeply respected ambassador of Australian science.

His enduring association with AcSIR, CSIR and ICMR, together with his unwavering belief in young researchers, has helped create what is now increasingly recognised as the **"SB Model"**—an influential framework for collaborative doctoral education that demonstrates how universities and national research systems can work together through trust, ambition and shared purpose.Its influence is already extending beyond RMIT and offers an inspiring blueprint for the future of global research education.

As we look to the future, the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program reminds us of an enduring truth: the greatest discoveries of the twenty-first century will not emerge from isolated excellence, but from connected excellence—where institutions, nations and young minds come together in pursuit of knowledge that advances humanity.

After all, there is a profound truth. Science connects minds. Collaboration transforms futures.

R. A. Mashelkar

3rd Floor, Adams Court, Above Bank of India, Baner Road, Pune - 411 045, India
+91-20- 4692 5703 ram@mashelkar.com www.mashelkar.com @ramanmashelkar

Director AcSIR's Statement



Professor Manoj Dhar
Director AcSIR

The RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Program holds a special place in the international journey of AcSIR. It was the seed from which AcSIR's global collaborations began, and it has since grown into a powerful model for international doctoral education. What began as a pioneering partnership with RMIT University has helped transform the landscape of AcSIR's international engagement. Today, using a similar model, AcSIR is connected with six Australian universities and three European universities, demonstrating the wider influence and scalability of this initiative.

This achievement reflects the vision, leadership and sustained commitment of Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava AM, whose efforts helped turn a bold idea into a successful and trusted international platform.

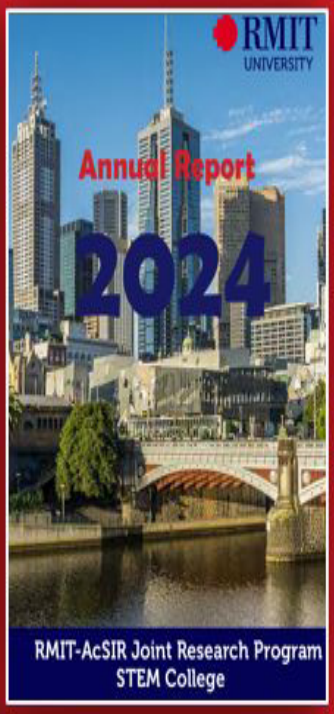
The impact of the program is clear and deeply meaningful. For many young Indian students, it has been life-changing. Through joint supervision, international exposure, access to advanced research environments and the confidence gained from working across two countries, students have grown into globally connected researchers. This impact is strongly reflected in the feedback I have personally received from students both in India and in Australia.

The success of the RMIT–AcSIR program lies not only in its concept, but also in its careful and committed implementation. It has moved beyond an agreement on paper to become a living, student-centred and impactful partnership.

Today, the RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Program stands as a flagship example of how visionary leadership, institutional trust and committed implementation can transform doctoral education. It has strengthened Australia–India academic relations, opened new international pathways for AcSIR, and created lasting opportunities for the next generation of Indian researchers.











RMIT UNIVERSITY | AcSIR

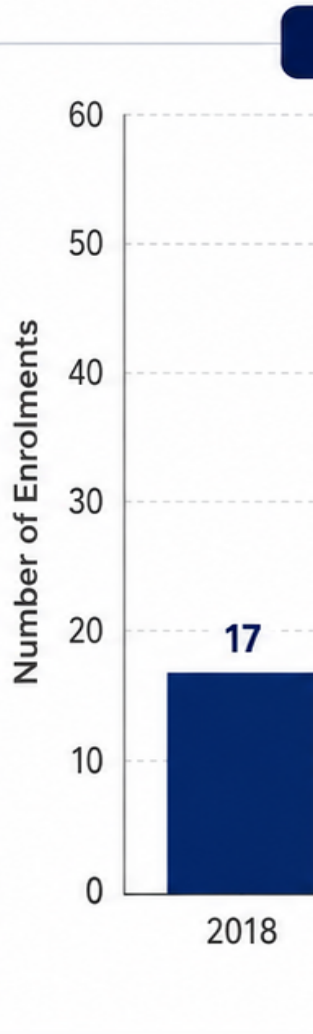
Research | Mobility | Innovation | Impact

Global Research IMPACT

RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Prog

Enrolment trend over time

The chart highlights the growth trajectory of the RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Program. Following an initial intake of 17 students in 2018, enrolments dipped to 7 in 2019–2020, before rising strongly to 35 in 2021–2022. The program reached a peak of 47 enrolments in 2023, remained high at 45 in 2024, and recorded 38 enrolments in 2025. Overall, the trend demonstrates strong and sustained demand for the program and reflects its growing reputation and impact.



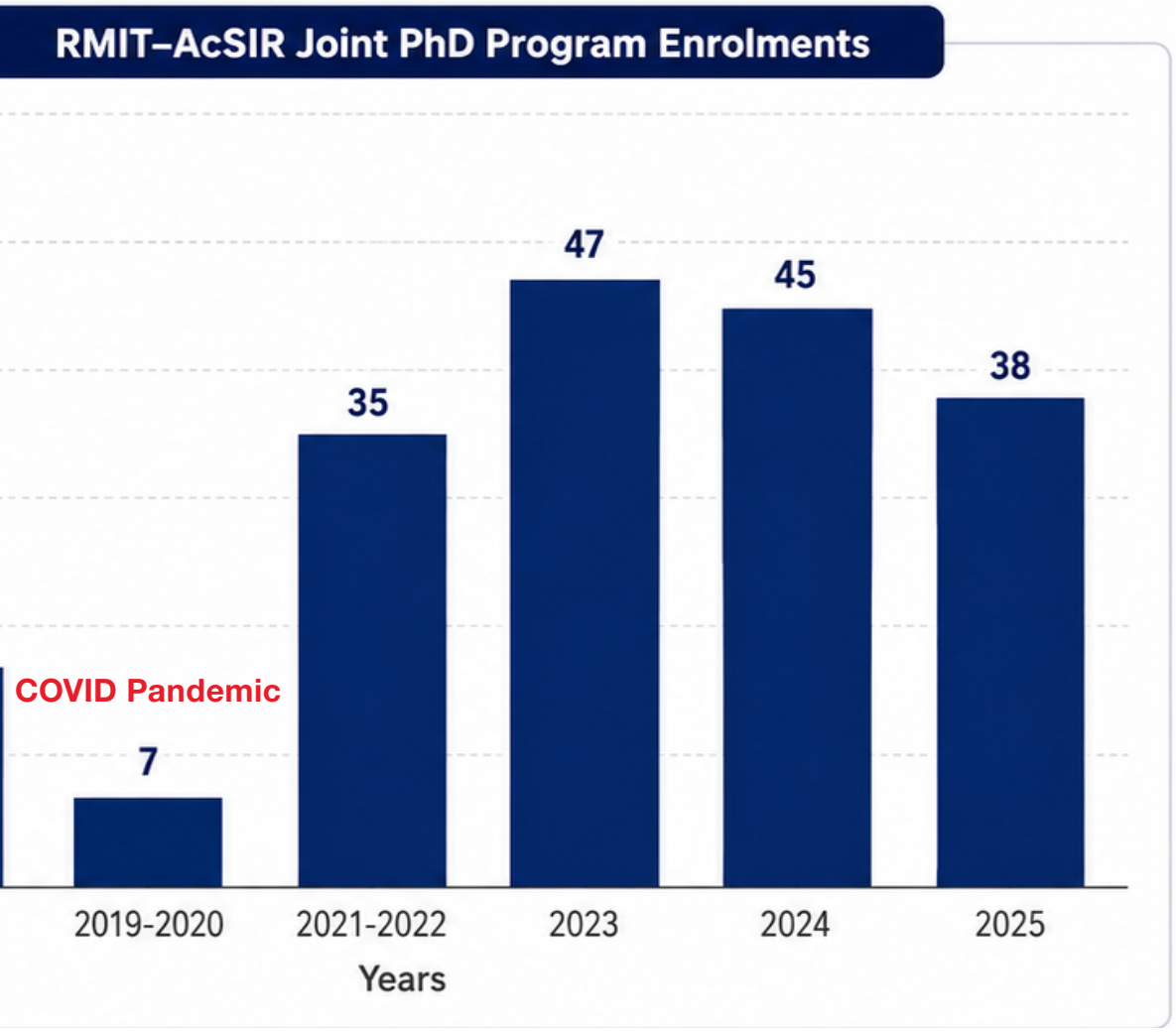
Peak enrolment: 47 in 2023

2025 enrolment remains more than double the 2018 intake.

FIRST ENROLMENT	TOTAL ENROLMENTS	PHDs AWARDED	CONNECTED RESEARCH LABS
2018	189	79	78

ram Enrolments

GROWING MORE, ACHIEVING MORE




1200+
Total Publications
5+
Patents
40+
Conference Articles
20+
Awards
RMIT
UNIVERSITY
AcSIR

PhD Completion: 2020–2025

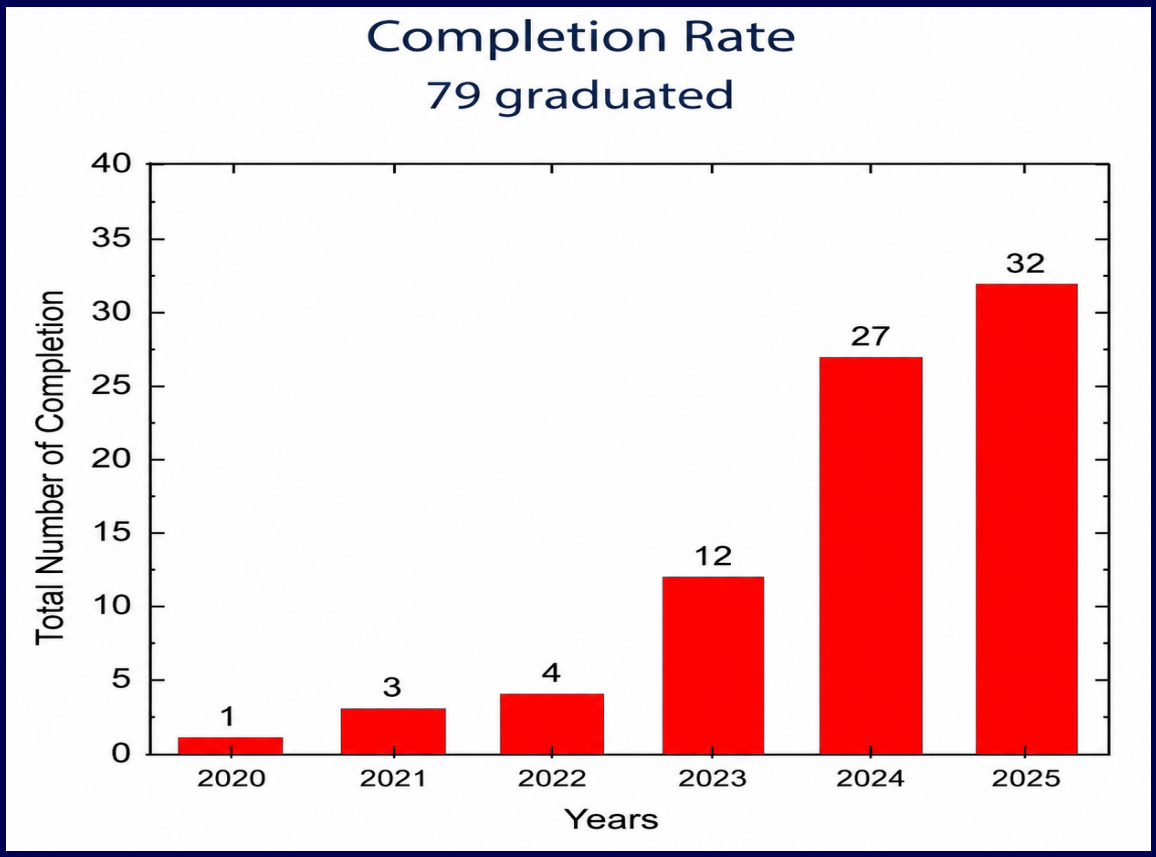
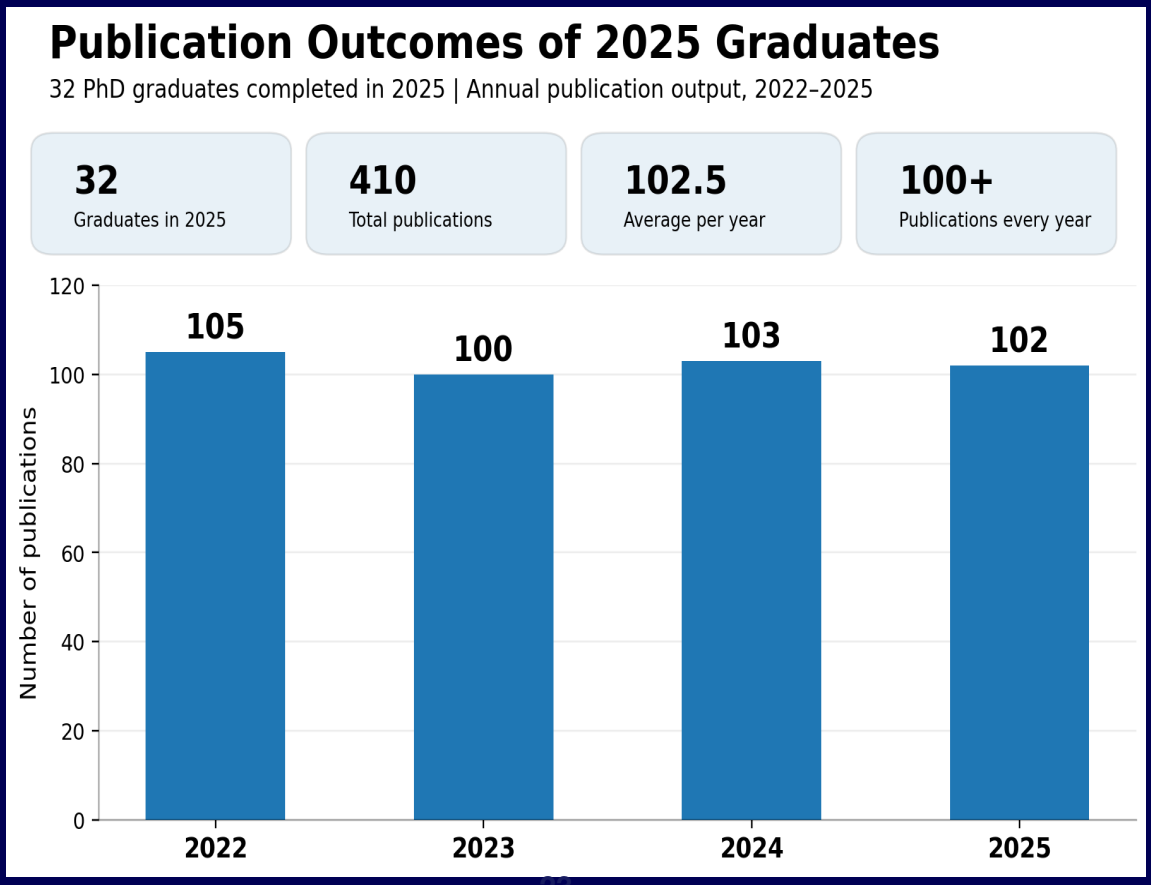
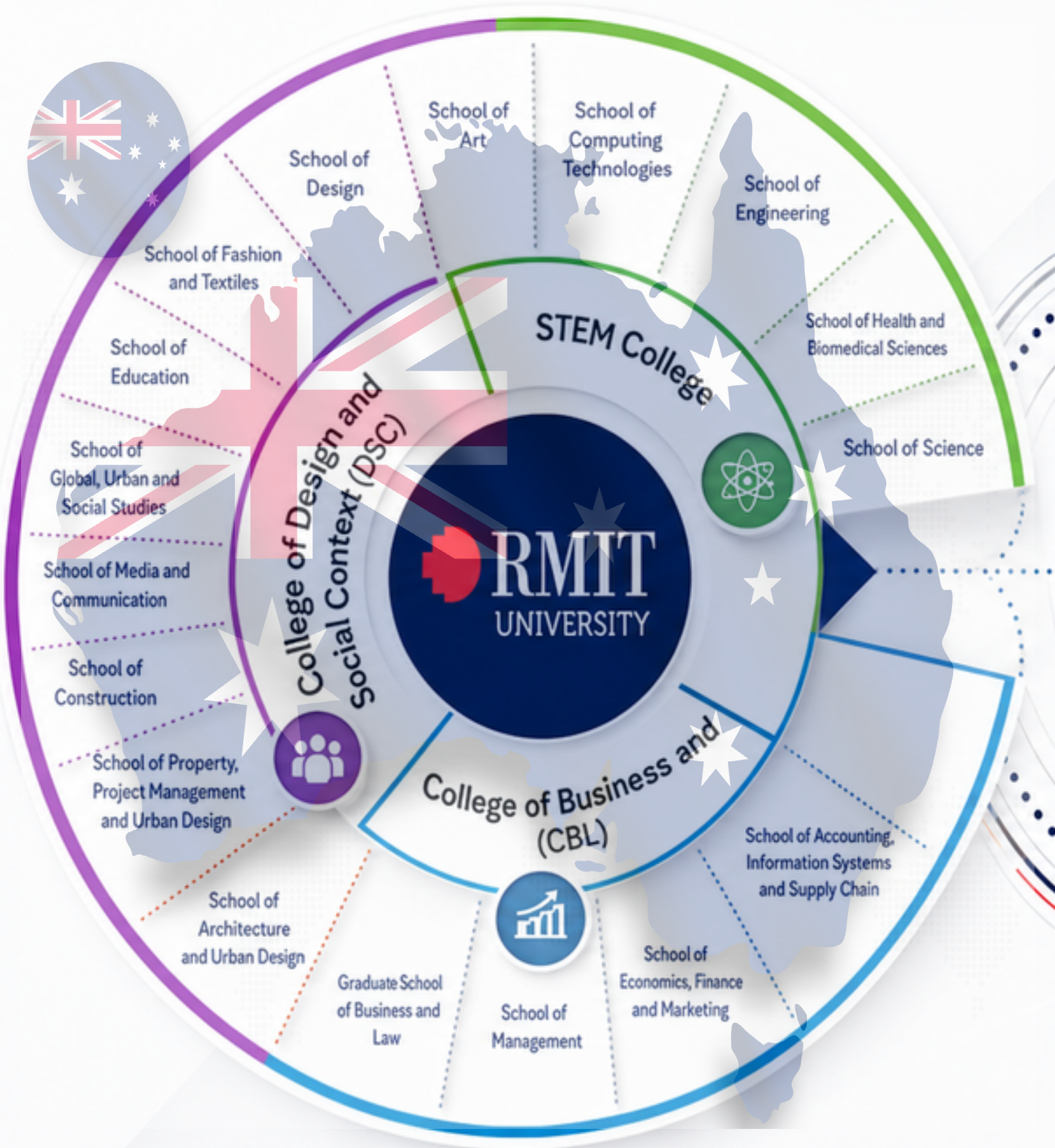
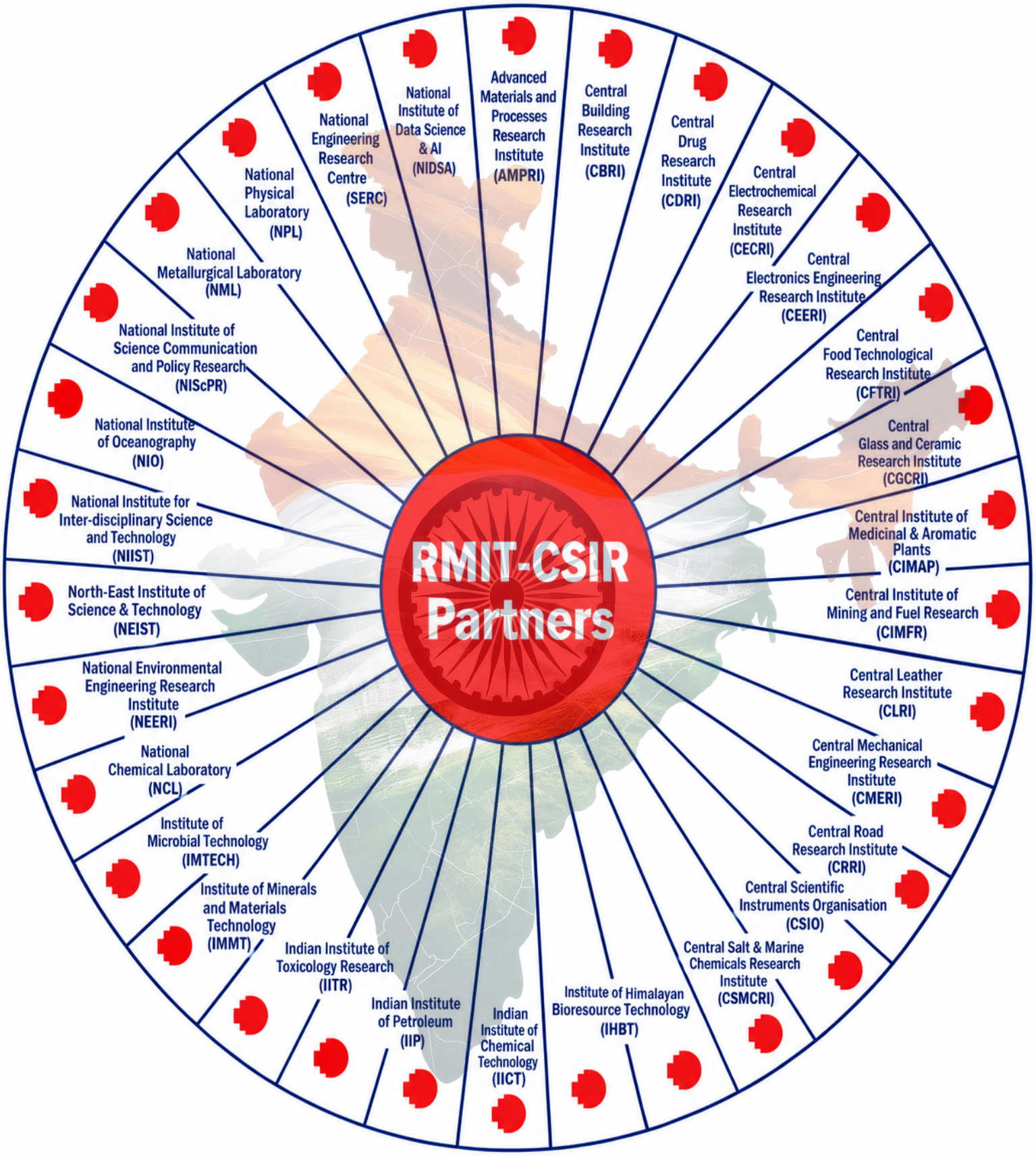


Figure: Annual PhD completions under the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program increased from 1 in 2020 to 32 in 2025, bringing the total number of graduates to 79 and demonstrating the program's strong growth and research training impact.




School of Art
School of Computing Technologies
School of Design
School of Engineering
School of Fashion and Textiles
School of Health and Biomedical Sciences
School of Education
STEM College
School of Science
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies
College of Design and Social Context (DSC)
RMIT UNIVERSITY
School of Media and Communication
School of Construction
School of Property, Project Management and Urban Design
College of Business and (CBL)
School of Accounting, Information Systems and Supply Chain
School of Architecture and Urban Design
School of Economics, Finance and Marketing
Graduate School of Business and Law
School of Management

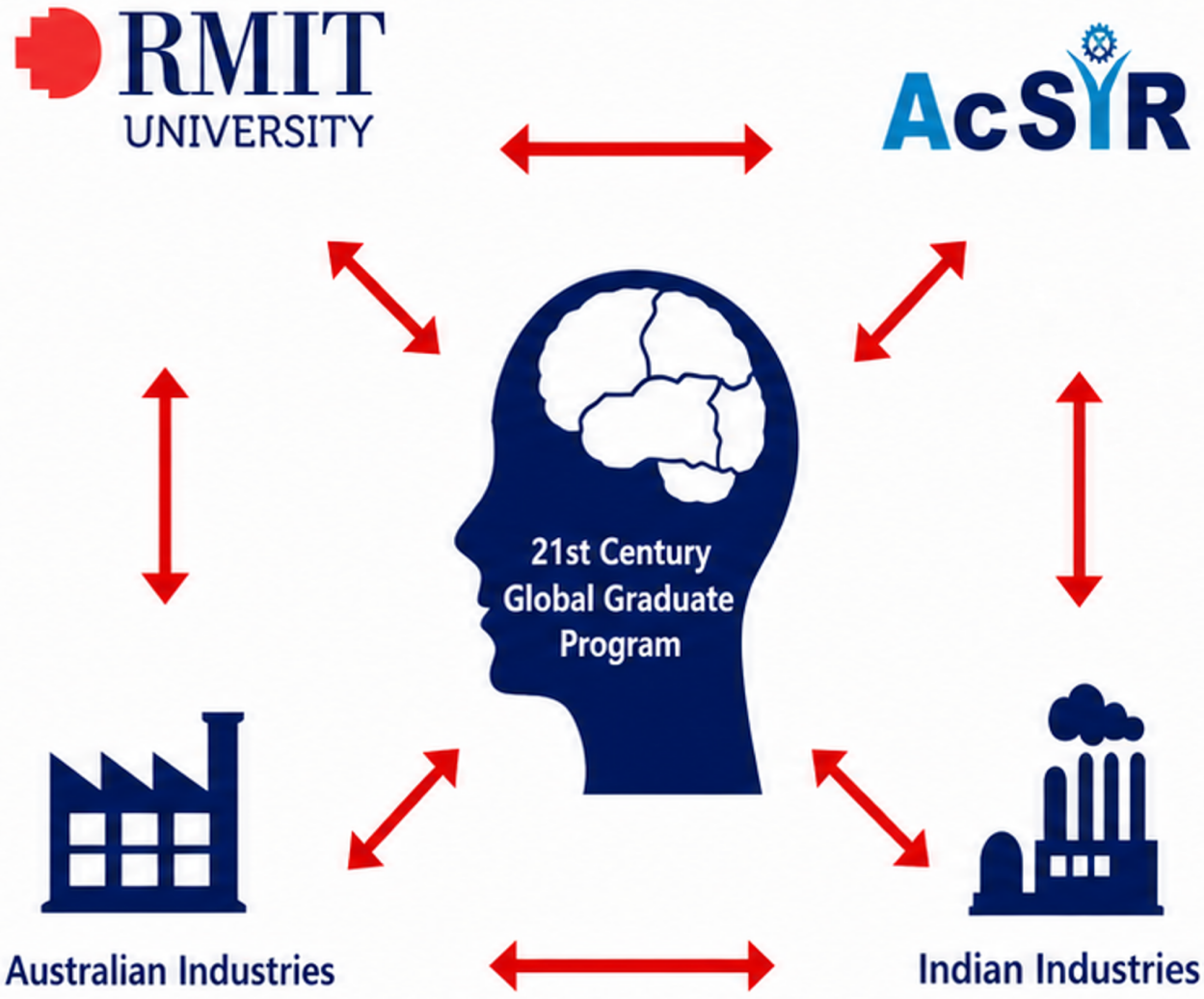


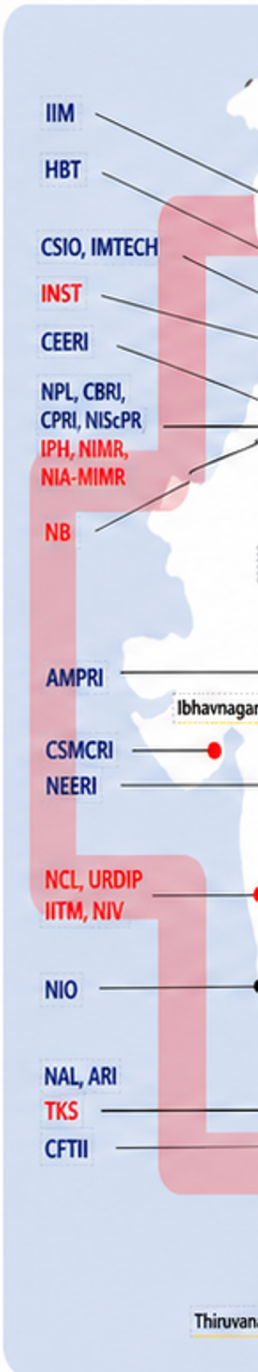

RMIT-CSIR Partners
National Institute of Data Science & AI (NIDSA)
Advanced Materials and Processes Research Institute (AMPRI)
Central Building Research Institute (CBRI)
Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI)
Central Electrochemical Research Institute (CECRI)
Central Electronics Engineering Research Institute (CEERI)
Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI)
Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute (CGCRI)
Central Institute of Medicinal & Aromatic Plants (CIMAP)
Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CIMFR)
Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI)
Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI)
Central Road Research Institute (CRRI)
Central Scientific Instruments Organisation (CSIO)
Central Salt & Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI)
Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT)
Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT)
Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP)
Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR)
Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT)
Institute of Microbial Technology (IMTECH)
National Chemical Laboratory (NCL)
National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI)
North-East Institute of Science & Technology (NEIST)
National Institute for Inter-disciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST)
National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)
National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR)
National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML)
National Physical Laboratory (NPL)
National Engineering Research Centre (SERC)

Connecting through Sc

RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research

A Unique mod



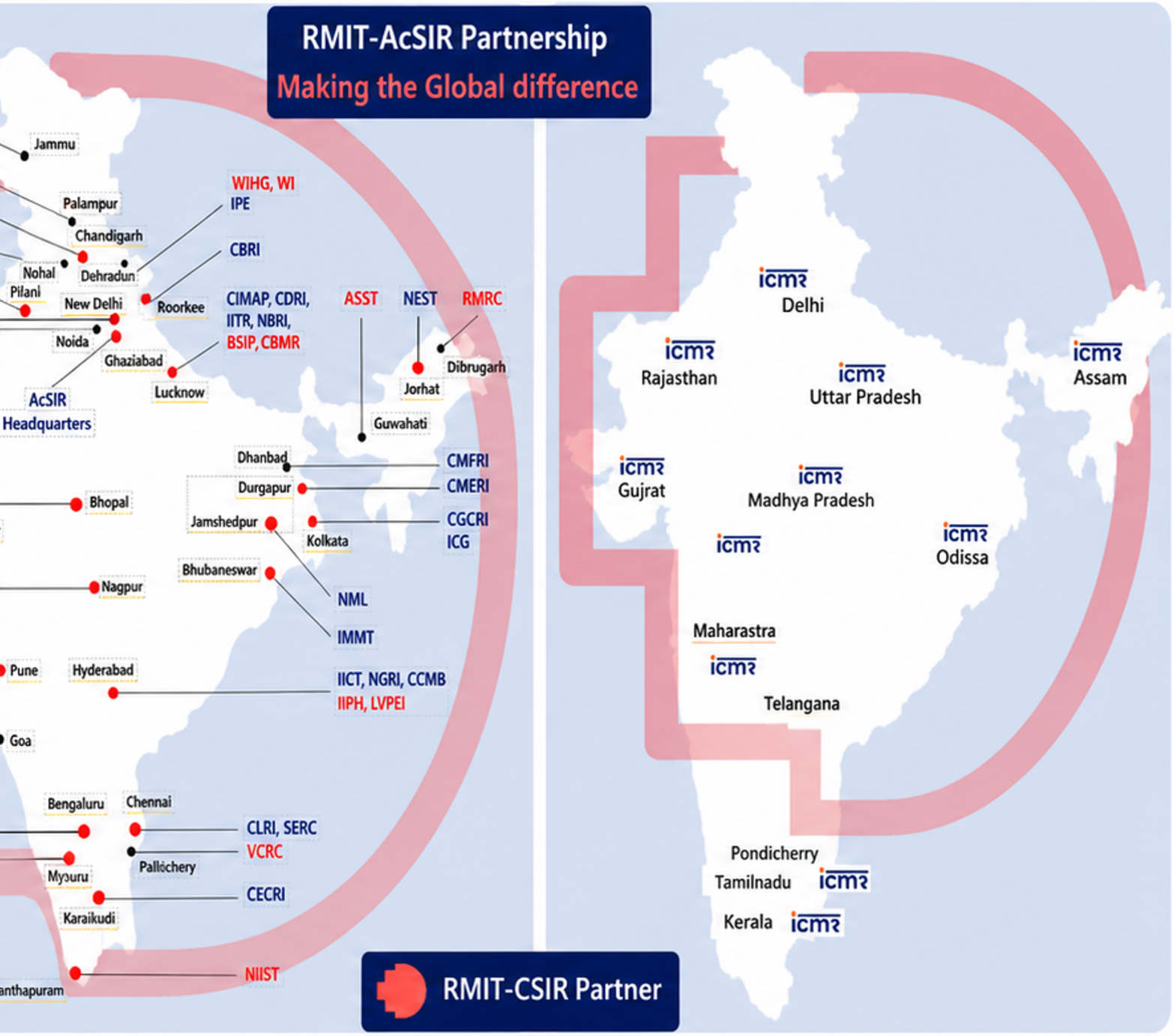


RMIT-AcSIR relies on a four-pronged approach with industry collaborations across India and Australia.

ience and Technology

Program - RMIT University

el in the world

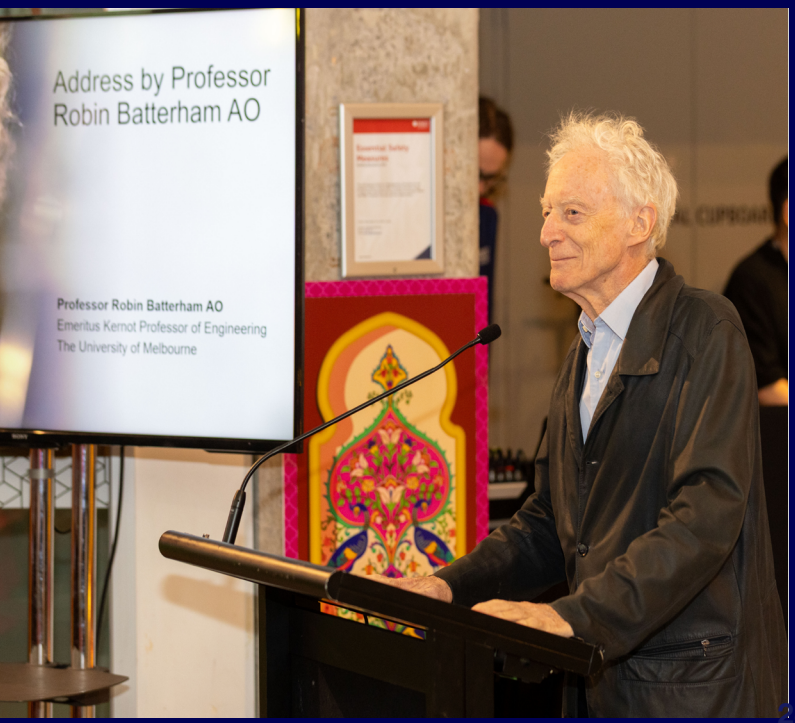



Video Message from Dr Megan Clark AC
Chancellor-Monash University


Video Message from Dr R A Mashelkar,
(Padam Vibhushan) Former president of
Global research alliances
RMIT
UNIVERSITY


Happy
Diwali


Video Message from Prof Goverdhan Mehta
FNA, FNASc, FRS, FTWAS
Former President of IISc Bangalore


Address by Professor
Robin Batterham AO
Professor Robin Batterham AO
Emeritus Kernot Professor of Engineering
The University of Melbourne


Prof. Lakshmi Kantam

THE DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORS' PRIZES

FOR RMIT–AcSIR PHD STUDENTS

We are excited to announce a new initiative supporting resilient scholars in the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program. Since 2017, this cotutelle PhD program has fostered academic excellence among India's brightest minds. In 2024, Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava AM established a fund at RMIT University to recognise students who demonstrate exceptional resilience and academic achievement.

Each year, selected scholars will receive a **$1000 prize** and a mentorship opportunity with prominent scientists from Australia and India. This initiative celebrates perseverance, diversity and the transformative power of mentorship, empowering students to overcome challenges and make meaningful contributions to their fields and communities.

1

Dr Megan Clark – Dr Lakshmi Kantam

Award in
Industrial Chemistry

2

Dr Alan Finkel – Dr RA Mashelkar

Award in
Engineering Innovation

3

Professor Robin Batterham – Professor Goverdhan Mehta

Award in
Green Energy

★ TWO NEW AWARDS INTRODUCED THIS YEAR ★

4

Professor David Beanland – Professor G D Yadav

Award in
Translational Engineering Research

5

Professor Martin Bennett – Professor CNR Rao

Award in
Chemistry

Celebrating excellence.
Driving impact. Strengthening communities.

For more information scan here



Distinguished Professor Prize 2025



Dr Alan Finkel and Distinguished Prof. Suresh Bhargava presenting award to Dr Sachin Yadav

Dr Alan Finkel -

Dr R A Mashelkar Award in Engineering Innovation

Award Winner

Dr Sachin Yadav

Dr Megan Clark -

Dr Lakshmi Kantam

Award in Environmental Science

Award Winner

Dr Ashakiran Maibam



Dr Ashakiran Maibam

Distinguished Prof. Sujeeva Setunge presenting award to Dr Ashakiran's friend



Prof. Robin Batterham and Distinguished Prof. Suresh Bhargava presenting award to Dr Chitra Sulkan

Professor Goverdhan Mehta-Professor Robin Batterham Award in Eco-Sustainability and Impact

Award Winner

Dr Chitra Sulkan



RMIT–AcSIR Collaboration

Achievements and Recogniti



on

The number of PhD completions has increased significantly over the past five years. Annual completions grew from 1 in 2020 to 32 in 2025, reflecting a strong expansion in research supervision capacity.

Overall 79 PhD students successfully completed their doctoral studies between 2020 and 2025, demonstrating sustained research leadership and mentoring impact.

The program has achieved a 100% employment outcome for its graduates.



RMIT–India Strategic Research Engagement Network

Strengthening partnerships. Enabling impact. Advancing research together.

RMIT University is strengthening its research engagement with India's premier national research organisations, including the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Under the leadership of Distinguished Professor Suresh K. Bhargava AM, a regional engagement framework has been developed to identify collaborative research opportunities, build strategic institutional partnerships, and support translation of co-developed technologies in areas of mutual interest.

LEADERSHIP AND REGIONAL COORDINATION

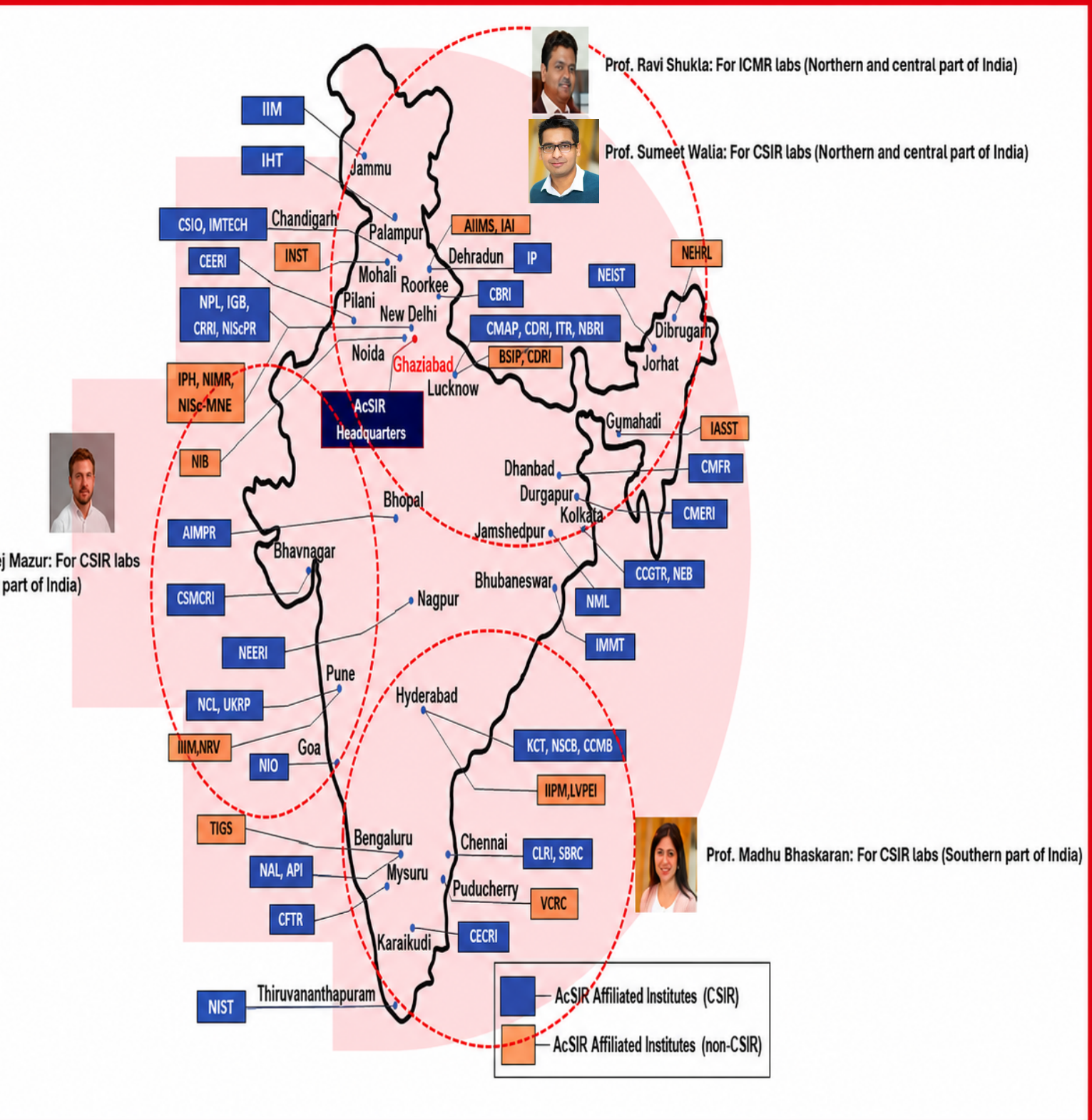
Lead	Regional Focus	Engagement Focus
Distinguished Prof. Suresh K. Bhargava AM	Overall Leadership	Strategic direction, institutional engagement and partnership development
Prof. Ravi Shukla	Northern and Central India	CSIR and ICMR research engagement
Prof. Sumeet Walia	Northern and Central India	CSIR research engagement
Dr. Maciej Mazur	Western India	CSIR research engagement
Prof. Madhu Bhaskaran	Southern India	CSIR research engagement

OBJECTIVES

1. **Strengthen strategic collaboration** between RMIT University and India's leading research organisations, including CSIR and ICMR.
2. **Identify high-impact joint research opportunities** across science, engineering, health, technology and translational research.
3. **Foster innovation-driven partnerships** between RMIT researchers and Indian national laboratories.
4. **Explore pathways for commercialisation**, industry engagement and technology translation from co-developed research outcomes.

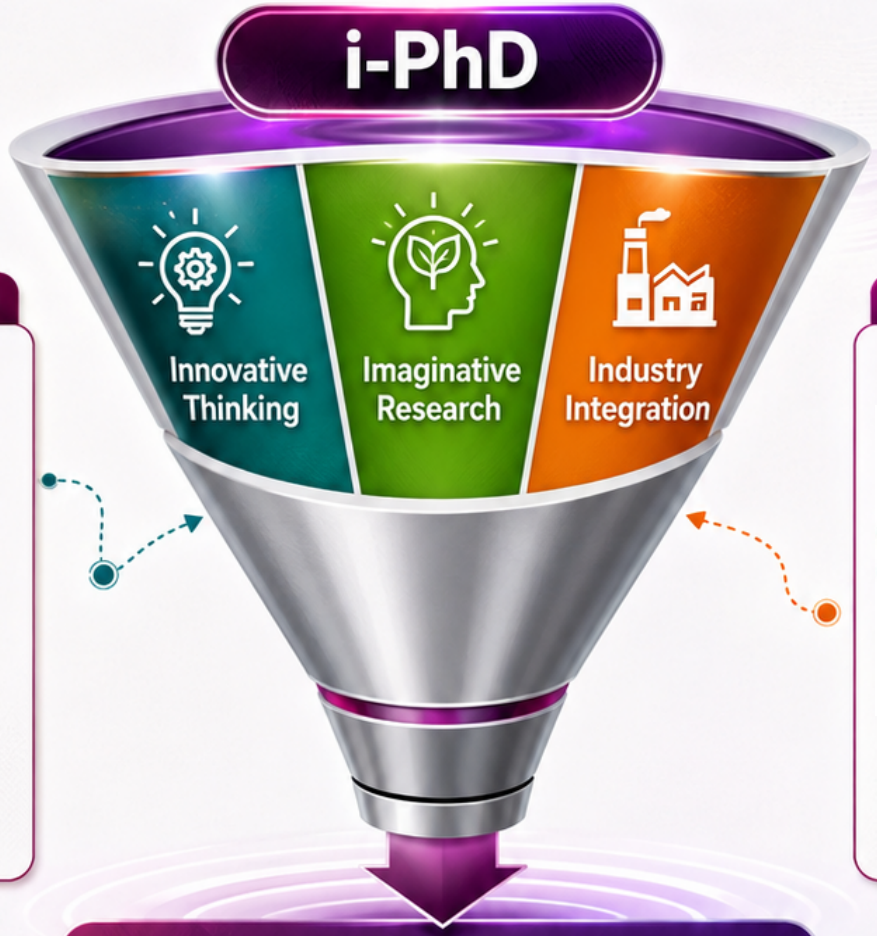
Dr. Macie
(Western

al Research and Innovation Ecosystem



RMIT Industry-PhD Program

From Innovation to Industry Transformation



PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

AcSIR

Academy of Scientific & Innovative Research

PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research

Real-World Impact

Translating research into scalable industrial and societal solutions

1. INNOVATIVE THINKING > **2. IMAGINATIVE RESEARCH** > **3. INDUSTRY INTEGRATION** > **4. PARTNER ECOSYSTEMS** > **5. REAL-WORLD IMPACT**

01	02	03	04	05
Sparks curiosity and creativity to generate new ideas and possibilities.	Transforms ideas into robust research and discoveries that advance knowledge.	Bridges academia and industry to address real-world challenges and drive innovation.	Leverages leading networks and expertise to strengthen collaboration and co-create value.	Delivers scalable industrial and societal solutions that create lasting positive change.

"The RMIT i-PhD Program empowers researchers to innovate, collaborate, and create lasting impact—from ideas to real-world transformation."

RMIT-AcSIR Launches Pioneering i-Ph.D. Program



The Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) and RMIT has launched a first-of-its-kind iPh.D. Program, where the “i” stands for innovative, imaginative, and industry-linked. The program was officially inaugurated by the Hon’ble Union Minister of Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh, during the 7th Convocation of AcSIR held on November 7, 2023.

This unique doctoral program is designed to nurture a new generation of researchers and entrepreneurs. It features a curriculum grounded in innovation and entrepreneurship, strengthened by active industry collaboration, mentorship by leading experts, and access to world-class research infrastructure.

The iPh.D. Program aims to provide a dynamic ecosystem that unlocks students’ innovation potential, enabling them to develop impactful products and technologies. The overarching goal is to contribute meaningfully to national development and societal advancement.

Celebrating Excellence. Inspiring Futures.

9th AcSIR convocation

2025

The **9th AcSIR Convocation 2025** marks a milestone in our journey of nurturing innovation, advancing research, and empowering the next generation of scientific leaders.

Knowledge | Innovation | Collaboration | Impact

The 9th AcSIR Convocation 2025 was graced by Honourable Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, as the Chief Guest, alongside distinguished leaders from academia, government and industry, celebrating the achievements of AcSIR's graduating researchers.







2025 AcSIR Delegates Visit to RMIT

RMIT UNIVERSITY



The 2025 AcSIR delegates visit to RMIT provided a valuable opportunity for meaningful interaction with students, supervisors and research leaders. The visit encouraged open and engaging discussions on research progress, academic exchange and future collaboration, strengthening the long-standing RMIT–AcSIR partnership and reinforcing our shared commitment to research excellence and innovation.

FOSTERING MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

The delegation met with AcSIR PhD candidates, early-career researchers and supervisors from RMIT and partner organisations. The sessions provided a platform to exchange ideas, share experiences and explore new perspectives on research methodologies, challenges and opportunities across a wide range of disciplines.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT

- **Research Exchange:** Delegates engaged with AcSIR scholars to learn about their research progress, innovative outcomes and impact.
- **Academic Discussion:** Productive conversations with supervisors and research leaders on strengthening mentorship and enhancing doctoral research quality.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** Exploration of future joint projects, industry partnerships and knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- **Campus Experience:** Delegates toured key research facilities and learned about RMIT's research ecosystem and industry collaborations.

> “The visit reaffirmed the strength of the RMIT–AcSIR collaboration and our shared vision to nurture world-class researchers and drive impactful solutions for global challenges.



STRENGTHENING OUR PARTNERSHIP

This visit reinforces the RMIT–AcSIR commitment to academic excellence, innovation and global collaboration. By working together, we continue to create an environment where research thrives, knowledge is shared and future leaders are prepared to make a difference.

The 2025 AcSIR delegates visit was a valuable reminder of the power of collaboration and the importance of building long-term partnerships that advance research, education and innovation for a better future.

TOGETHER, WE RESEARCH. WE INNOVATE. WE IMPACT.





STRENGTHENING RESEARCH COLLABO



RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program

Distinguished Prof Suresh K Bhargava AM, Prof. Ravi Shukla, and Mr Tae Kim welcomed Prof Saravanadevi Sivanesan, and Prof Kannan Krishnamurthi, chief scientist at CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI)





The meeting explored opportunities to deepen collaboration through the RMIT AcSIR joint research program, strengthen student mobility & support future research partnership between RMIT and NEERI

सीएसआईआर–नीरी
राष्ट्रीय पर्यावरण अभियांत्रिकी
अनुसंधान संस्थान

CSIR–National Environmental Engineering

Student Welcome at RMIT

RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program



Highlights

- Reconnected with AcSIR students in Melbourne and welcomed new arrivals.
- Students shared research progress, achievements and journey insights.
- Sapna Srivastava reflected on her transformative one-year Melbourne experience.









> “Our AcSIR students continue to make meaningful contributions across diverse areas of research.”
>
> — Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava AM



Visit by CSIR–IMMT Principal Scientist to RMIT University

Dr Aishvarya Venkataseetharaman visited RMIT University to discuss collaborative opportunities in critical minerals research and sustainable metal extraction technologies.

It was a pleasure to host Dr Aishvarya Venkataseetharaman, Principal Scientist in the Hydro, Bio & Electrometallurgy Department at CSIR–Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) and Associate Professor at the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR), during her visit to RMIT University.

The visit provided an important opportunity to explore future collaborative pathways in critical minerals research, with discussions focused on innovative and sustainable approaches for metal recovery. In particular, the meeting highlighted the potential of an integrated process combining bioleaching and chemical leaching to enable efficient extraction of critical metals from laterite ores, while supporting environmentally responsible processing and sustainable resource development.

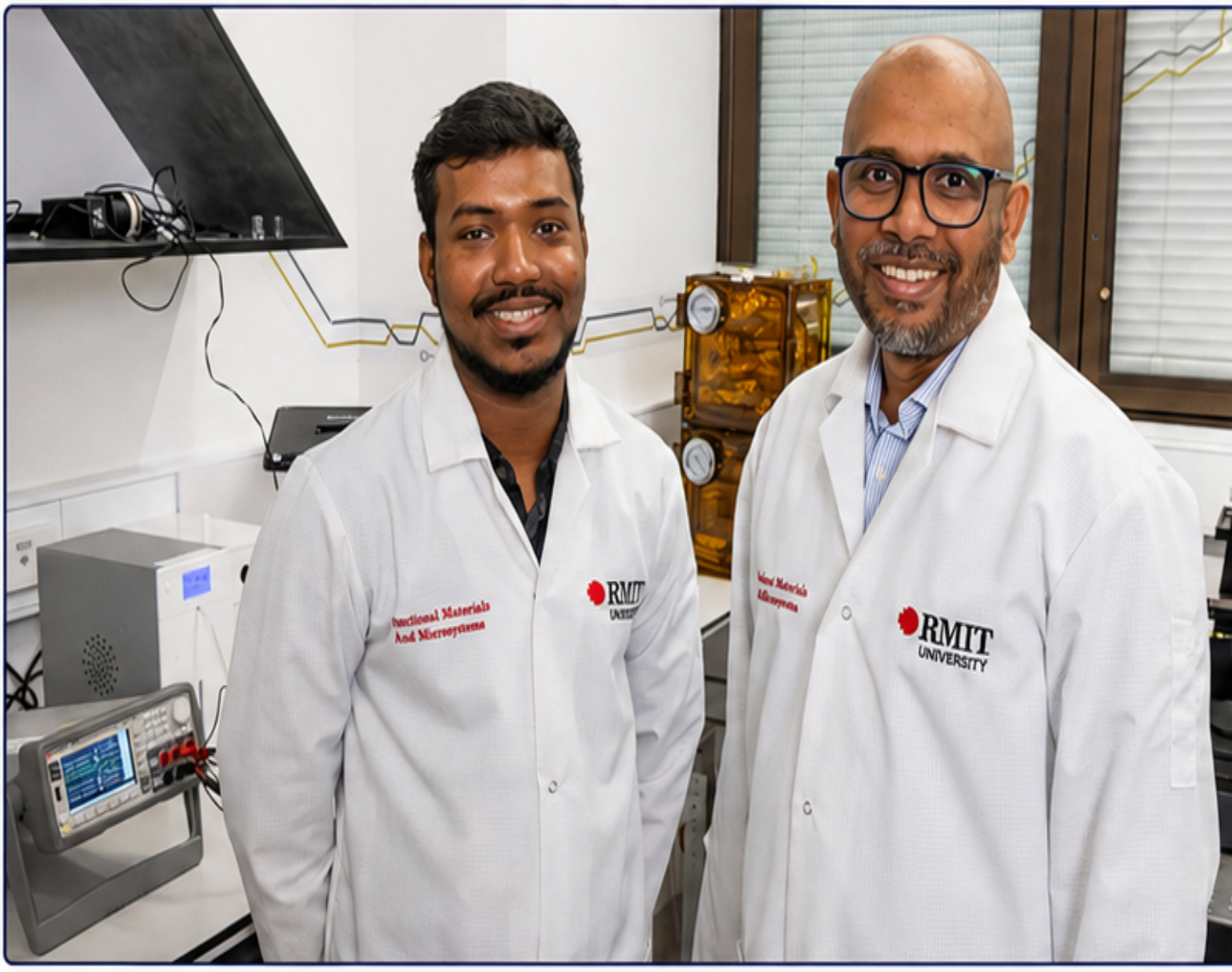
This engagement marks a valuable step towards strengthening research collaboration between RMIT, CSIR–IMMT and AcSIR.

Meeting Minds, Creating Futures



PROGRAM DISCOVERIES

RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program



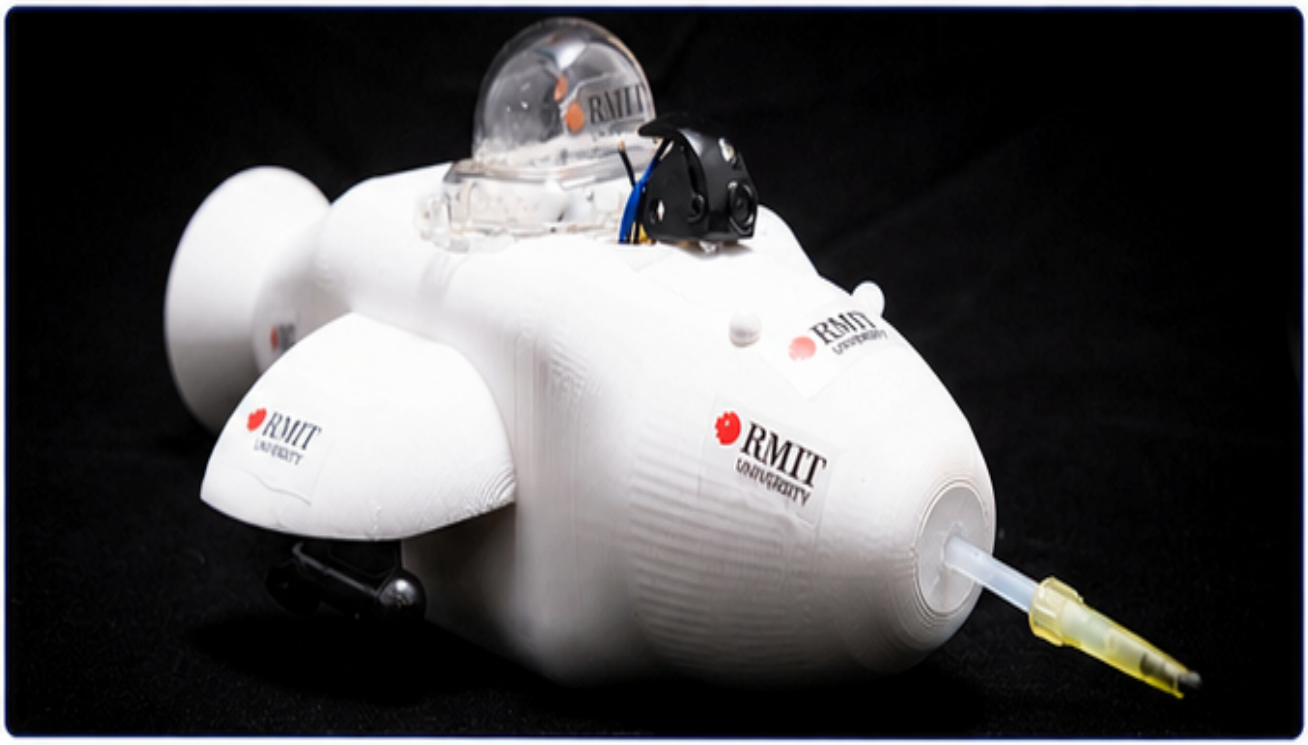
Innovative Minibot Making Real Impact

Proud to see our student Surya Kanta Ghadei and his supervisor Md. Ataur Rahman making a real impact with their innovative minibot. This work reflects the strength of the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program in translating ideas into practical, real-world technologies.

Visit Here:

RMIT UNIVERSITY | AcSIR ACADEMY OF SCIENTIFIC AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH







Student-led innovation | Supervisor excellence | Research translation

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rmit-acsir-joint-research-program_acsirjointphd-activity-7465624149437100032-uUMB?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAACIcdG0BT0OZ5JwSnglY1u-HHQnn4QEWqbY

RMIT cares

Diwali 2025

LIGHTING LIVES. INSPIRING TOGETHER.

A celebration of light, culture and community as we come together to honour traditions, share joy, and strengthen bonds across diversity.





Words that Illuminate

Inspiring reflections that celebrate heritage, values and the spirit of Diwali.



Together in Celebration

Moments of connection, laughter, and shared happiness that make our community stronger.



The Spirit of Diwali at RMIT

CELEBRATE CULTURE
Honouring traditions that connect us.

BUILD COMMUNITY
Bringing people together in harmony,

SPREAD POSITIVITY
Embracing kindness, respect and inclusion.

LIGHT THE FUTURE
Inspiring hope and creating a brighter tomorrow.

HAPPY DIWALI 2025

MAY THIS FESTIVAL OF LIGHT BRING PEACE, PROSPERITY & JOY TO ALL.

Voices of Our

Celebrating Diwali – Togeth



Nivedha Katturajan

Some days remain truly memorable in our lives, especially when we are far from home and miss the joy of festive celebrations. This Diwali celebration at RMIT made me feel right at home. It was colourful and filled with happiness as we wore our traditional dresses and enjoyed the beautiful cultural performances like Playing the flute, classical and folk dances. The fun random group dance at the end made it even more special.

It was wonderful to see our AcSIR students being recognised for their performances, it was truly motivating. Sharing our culture with international people was also a beautiful experience and hearing them greet us with "Namaste" was heartwarming.

A big thank you to Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava and you for organising such a joyful and memorable celebration for all of us.



I must say the event was well organised and it was full of entertainment with nice Indian food. It was my first event overseas and it was wonderful memories we have created that day. Thank you very much for organizing this beautiful event.

Arshad Ali

BITS RMIT scholar



Nar

RMIT Family

ner in Joy, Culture & Unity



It was a wonderful event that brought together staff and students in a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere. The cultural performances, decorations, and food were all excellent and truly captured the spirit of Diwali.
I appreciated the opportunity to connect with colleagues and celebrate diversity within the College. Overall, it was a well-organized and enjoyable event.

Asit Bayen



What a wonderful celebration it was! I truly enjoyed. The Diwali event at RMIT truly captured the spirit of joy, togetherness, and cultural vibrance. From the colourful decorations and lively music to the delicious food and energetic performances everything was absolutely amazing!
It was heartwarming to see students and staff from all backgrounds coming together, sharing smiles, dancing, and celebrating the festival of lights as one big RMIT family. The organizers (especially Prof. Suresh Bhargava) did a fantastic job creating such a welcoming and cheerful atmosphere. The awarding ceremony was inspiring, it truly motivated me to work harder and gain more knowledge through the joint PhD program
Thank you to everyone who made this event possible.

matha Sivaraman

RMIT UNIVERSITY | AcSIR

Holi

under RMIT-AcSIR Program

2025

Celebrating Colours, Connections and Community





The RMIT-AcSIR community came together to celebrate Holi 2025 with colours, joy and togetherness.
The celebration reflected the vibrancy of our community and strengthened the bonds that connect students, researchers and colleagues across cultures.

RMIT cares





RMIT UNIVERSITY | AcSIR ACADEMY OF SCIENTIFIC AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

Life in Melbourne

VIBRANT CITY LIFE | BEAUTIFUL SURROUNDINGS | CAFÉS & CULTURE | WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION | ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES



RMIT-AcSIR student experiences

Our Ambassadors' Stories from Across the Globe

Dr Amrit Raj (School of Engineering, Class of 2025)

Assistant Professor at Ajay Kumar Garg Engineering College, India



Dr Amrit Raj

My research at CSIR–Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI) was conducted under the supervision of Dr Manidipto Mukherjee and Dr Dilpreet Singh. The work focused on stainless steel aluminium bimetallic structures via additive manufacturing, addressing key challenges associated with brittle intermetallic formation.

At RMIT University, I worked under the guidance of Dr Dong Qiu, Dr Maciej Mazur, and Dr Jayshri Dumbre, with access to advanced facilities such as RMIT Centre for Additive Manufacturing (RCAM), RMIT Microscopy and Microanalysis Facility (RMMF), and Micro Nano Research Facility (MNRF). This enabled me to develop strong expertise in process optimisation and microstructural engineering, leading to high-quality research outcomes.

My research journey also included interdisciplinary collaboration on biomedical implant applications with Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, Distinguished Professor Milan Brandt, and Professor Peter Choong, resulting in a publication in Progress in Materials Science. I have also published in leading journals including Journal of Materials Science and Technology and Current Opinion in Solid State and Materials Science.

During my time in Australia, I had the opportunity to visit several iconic locations, including the Great Ocean Road, Grampians National Park, Puffing Billy Railway, and Ballarat, as well as attend a conference at the University of Queensland. These experiences enriched my time beyond the laboratory, allowing me to engage with the broader academic community and explore the country outside my research environment.

Following my PhD, I joined mPragati at IIT Delhi as a Senior Project Scientist, where I led research in additive manufacturing for biomedical applications. I am currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Ajay Kumar Garg Engineering College in India

Overall, my experience in the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program has played a key role in shaping me into a globally capable researcher and academic, with the skills and perspective to contribute meaningfully to my field.

I am deeply thankful for the guidance and support of my supervisors and colleagues throughout my PhD journey, which made my time in both Australia and India highly productive and enriching.

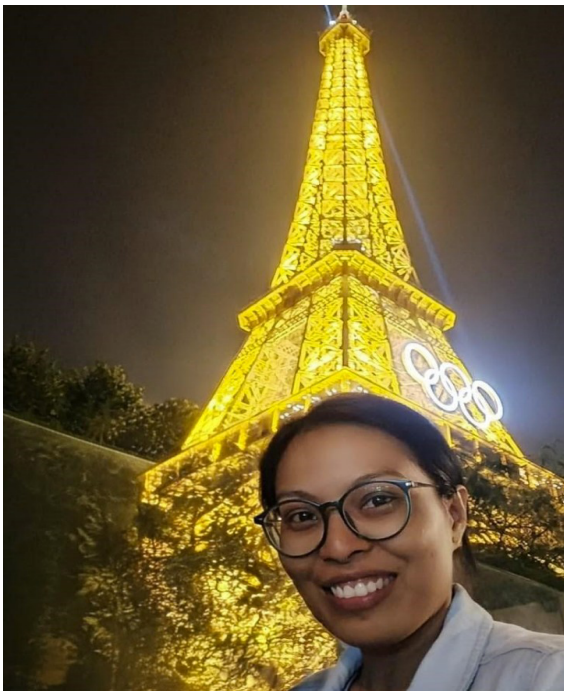


Dr Ashakiran Maibam (School of Sciences, Class of 2024)

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Cincinnati, USA

My PhD in Chemical Sciences was completed in 2024 through the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program, under the joint supervision of CSIR–National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) and RMIT University.

During my time at RMIT, I benefited from vibrant networking opportunities, excellent computational facilities, and strong research guidance from my supervisors, Associate Professor Ravichandar Babarao and Dr Sailaja Krishnamurty. Besides several scientific publications, I achieved accolades such as the HDR runner-up award in the 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition at the School of Science, RMIT, and the Thermo Fisher Best Poster Prize at the RMIT Early-Mid Career Academic Network Symposium.



My more recent achievements in the scientific community include the EU Seal of Excellence for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship and the Dr Megan Clark – Dr Lakshmi Kantam Award in Environmental Science under the RMIT–AcSIR Distinguished Professor Awards. These would not have been possible without the exposure I received through the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program.

After completing my PhD, I began my postdoctoral journey at ICGM, CNRS Montpellier, France, where I learned how to combine machine learning techniques with fundamental computational methods to study chemical reactions in porous materials. This experience helped shape my scientific path and strengthened my interest in linking detailed atomic level understanding with larger scale computational simulations.

I am currently working as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Cincinnati, USA, in the area of Computational Catalysis and Zeolite Chemistry, where I focus on developing computational frameworks to study catalysis in zeolites, building upon the foundation I established during my time at ICGM and RMIT University.



Attending Consortium meeting in Greece, 2025

Dr Ranadip Goswami (School of Science, Class of 2022)

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Florida, USA



I completed the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program in 2022 and am currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Florida, USA. Prior to my current position, I was a Postdoctoral Researcher at EPFL (École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne) in Switzerland.

My research focuses on materials chemistry, nanoscience and membrane engineering, particularly advanced porous materials and atomically thin membranes for molecular separations and energy related applications. My work focuses on next-generation membrane materials, including nanoporous graphene and covalent organic framework-based architectures.

A major milestone has been the design of ultrathin, mechanically robust membranes that operate at high temperatures while delivering exceptionally high molecular transport rates with maintained selectivity. This research addresses key challenges such as structural stability, defect control, transport regulation, and scalable integration, and contributes to sustainable separation technologies for gas separations and energy-efficient processes.

Reflecting on my journey across India, Australia, Europe and the USA, I can say these experiences shaped a broad scientific perspective and a strong international collaborative approach. The RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program played a pivotal role in my scientific and professional development. Working under the supervision of Professor Adam Lee, Associate Professor Ravichandar Babarao and Professor Subhadip Neogi strengthened my interdisciplinary mindset and adaptability. It also reinforced a global outlook that continues to define my career and impact.

Dr Nandini Bajaj (School of Engineering, 2026)

Project Research Scientist, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), India



My journey into cancer research began with a simple but powerful motivation: the desire to understand disease at a level where science can genuinely change lives. The RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program offered me something rare: the opportunity to grow as a scientist across two countries, two research cultures, and two ways of thinking.

At RMIT University, I experienced a research environment that encouraged curiosity, interdisciplinary thinking, and innovation. This experience shaped not only my scientific approach but also my identity as a researcher. I still remember standing alone in the lab late one evening, watching yet another experiment refuse to work as expected. For a moment, I wondered whether this journey was truly meant for me. Looking back now, those moments of doubt have become some of the most important milestones of my PhD. None of this would have been possible without the constant support and mentorship of my supervisors and co supervisors across DST-INST and RMIT. Their guidance taught me not only how to do good science, but also how to think critically, collaborate openly, and remain grounded through the highs and lows of research.

One of the defining aspects of RMIT is its strong support for student participation in international conferences, recognising their importance in shaping confident and independent researchers. Through this support, I had the opportunity to attend ANZSEV 2025 in New Zealand, an experience that became a turning point in my career. Presenting my work to an international audience, engaging with leading researchers in my field, and receiving constructive feedback transformed the way I viewed my research.

Beyond research, this journey transformed me personally. I learned confidence, independence, and the courage to trust my ideas. I learned that research is not only about results, but also about persistence, resilience, and the value of asking difficult questions. I am deeply grateful to RMIT, AcSIR and DST-INST for their guidance and encouragement throughout this journey.

My journey has been far more than the completion of a degree, and I hope my experience encourages other aspiring researchers to explore international collaborations and to believe in the power of interdisciplinary science to create meaningful impact.





Bhavana Shivankar

CSIR Laboratory: National Chemical Laboratory (NCL)

RMIT Senior Supervisor: Dr Andrew Hung

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr Sailaja Krishnamurty

RMIT School: School of Science

Dr Anirban Changdar, PhD (RMIT School of Engineering, Class of 2025)



A journey of academic achievement, global collaboration,













lifelong friendships and unforgettable memories at RMIT University

Student's Satisfaction





Sapna Srivastava

CSIR Laboratory: Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI)

RMIT Senior Supervisor: Distinguished Professor Magdalena Plebanski

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr Dibyendu Banerjee

RMIT School: School of Health and Biomedical Sciences

As the first student from CSIR–Central Drug Research Institute (CSIR–CDRI) to undertake this joint PhD program, I viewed this opportunity as both a bold step and a transformative milestone. Being part of an international academic collaboration required resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace new challenges. I am sincerely grateful to Dr Dibyendu Banerjee for encouraging me to pursue global research exposure and to Dr Radha Rangarajan for her invaluable support in making this opportunity possible.

My PhD research focuses on identifying novel immunotherapy targets in cancer biology, particularly immune checkpoint ligands with therapeutic potential. My time at RMIT University broadened my scientific outlook and strengthened my experimental skills within a highly collaborative and diverse research environment.

At RMIT, I had the privilege of working in the Cancer, Ageing and Vaccine (CAVA) Laboratory under the supervision of Distinguished Professor Magdalena Plebanski, together with Dr April Kartikasari and Dr Srinivasa Reddy Telukutla. Their guidance, constructive feedback, and ongoing support played an important role in shaping my research approach.

As part of my research dissemination activities, I presented my work at the Melbourne Immunotherapy Conference 2025. I was also honoured to receive the Innovative Research Award at the Bridging Innovations in Health, Science, and Technology Symposium 2025 at RMIT. These opportunities provided valuable recognition of my research and reinforced its potential translational impact.

Beyond research, living in Melbourne was an unforgettable experience. Exploring the Great Ocean Road and the Twelve Apostles was particularly memorable and provided moments of reflection alongside my academic journey. Melbourne's multicultural community, diverse landscapes, and welcoming environment made my experience in Australia even more rewarding.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Manoj Dhar and Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava for their vision and commitment to developing the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program, creating valuable opportunities for Indian researchers to engage in international research collaboration.

My sincere thanks also go to the administrative teams at RMIT and AcSIR for their continued support throughout the program, especially Tae Kim, whose dedication and behind-the-scenes efforts contributed significantly to the student experience.

The RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program has strengthened my research capabilities, broadened my global perspective, and prepared me for the next stage of my academic career. It has been a defining part of my PhD journey, shaping my professional growth and enriching my personal development.



Rahul Saha

CSIR Laboratory: National Physical Laboratory (NPL)

RMIT Senior Supervisor: Professor Xiaobo Chen

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr Parveen Saini

RMIT School: School of Engineering

I grew up in Guwahati and spent most of my academic journey in Delhi. Joining the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program and moving to Melbourne marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter in my life, filled with both uncertainty and hope.

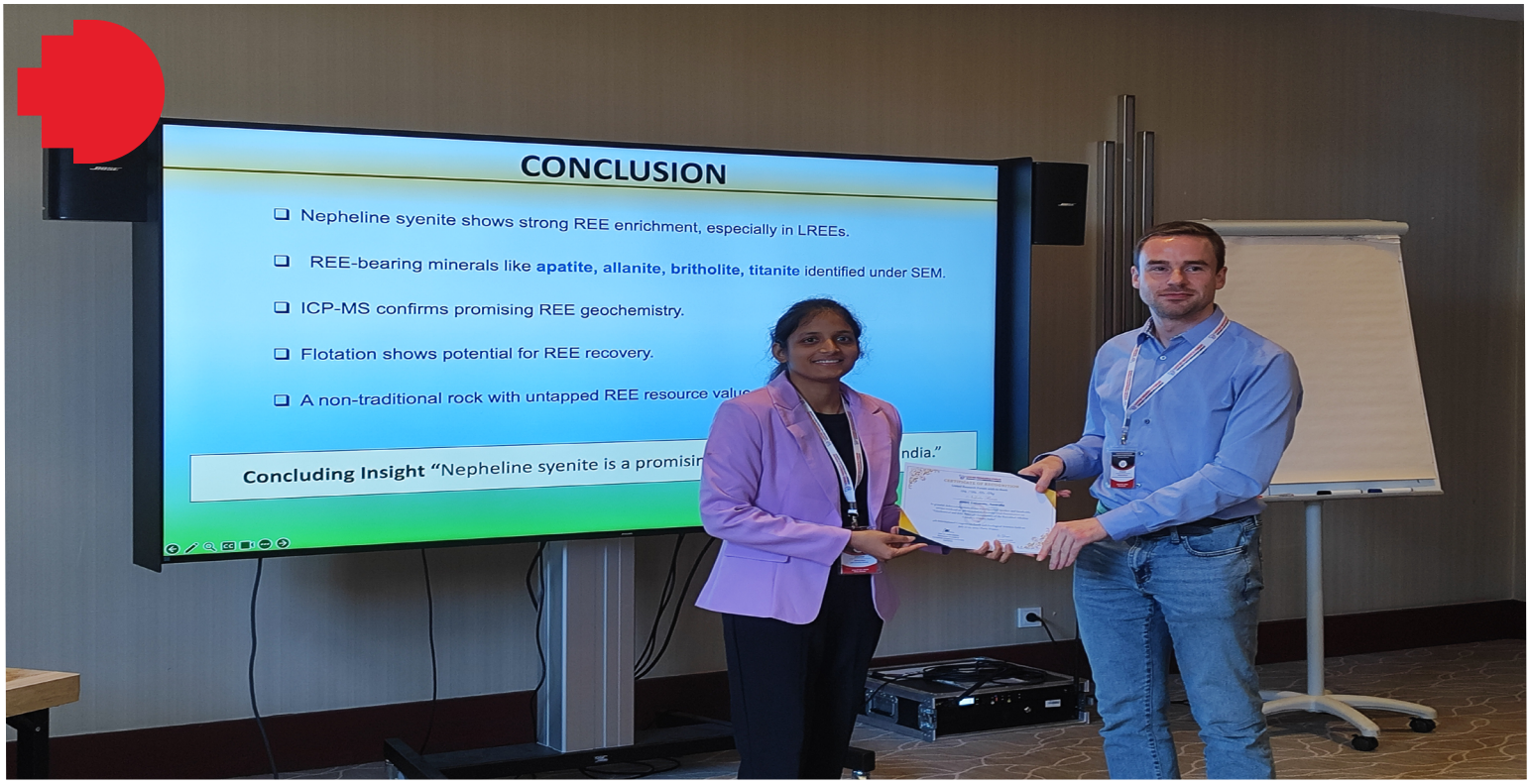
From the moment I arrived at RMIT, I felt supported and encouraged. I am grateful for the mentorship of Professor Ivan Cole, the guidance of Professor Xiaobo Chen, and the support of Dr Paul White, all of whom helped me build confidence as an international researcher. My AcSIR supervisor, Dr Parveen Saini, remained a constant source of guidance and encouragement throughout my PhD journey.

My research focused on dust accumulation, solar panel performance, and repurposing end of life photovoltaic waste into transparent superhydrophobic coatings. While my work in India was field based, RMIT provided a platform to expand its global relevance through symposiums, competitions and presentations.

A highlight of my journey was presenting at the International Conference on Resource Sustainability in Adelaide, Australia where I engaged with international researchers and recognised my growth both professionally and personally.

I sincerely thank Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava for his ongoing encouragement and support, and Tae Kim for his guidance and assistance throughout my time at RMIT. I also appreciate broader support from the academic and professional teams.

Looking back, this experience has been more than a research program. It has been a journey of transformation shaped by research, cultural experiences, and lasting connections. I am deeply grateful to CSIR-NPL, AcSIR, and RMIT for this opportunity.



Nikita Ram

CSIR Laboratory: CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT), Bhubaneswar
RMIT Supervisor: Associate Prof. James Tardio
Distinguished Prof. Suresh Bhargava
Sr. Principal Research Scientist
Mark Pownceby, Prof. Kim Dowling
Associate Prof. Hamid Arandiyan
AcSIR Supervisor: Dr. Sasmita Prusty

In my childhood, I only saw other countries on TV and never imagined that I would visit them one day. It always felt like a dream shared by many, but the RMIT–AcSIR Joint Research Program turned that dream into reality. I never thought I would come to Australia, a country often known as India's strongest cricket rival. It is incredible how this aspiration came true through such a meaningful scientific journey. This program has given me confidence that anyone can achieve great things in research and truly represents a new pathway to success.

At RMIT University, my supervisors Associate Professor James Tardio, Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, Adjunct Professor Mark Pownceby, Professor Kim Dowling, and Associate Professor Hamid Arandiyan have been incredibly supportive. Their guidance helped me transition into chemistry from my background in geology, and their mentorship has been both inspiring and motivating.

I also had the privilege of working at CSIRO, one of the world-class research institutes in my field. During my program, I also had the opportunity to work at the University of Melbourne, which was a great honour. Experiencing three world-class institutions within a single program has been truly exceptional.

RMIT also provided numerous opportunities to participate in academic and professional activities. Presenting at the RMIT Bridging Innovations in Poster Symposium 2024 boosted my confidence in communicating my research to a broader Beyond research, cultural exchange and community engagement have played a vital role in my personal and professional growth. The cultural diversity of Melbourne provided a truly enriching experience. The city celebrates cultures from all around the world, and I experienced vibrant traditions including Indonesian, Chinese, Korean, African, Japanese, Malaysian, Filipino, and Sri Lankan communities. The diverse cuisines and inclusive environment made my transition smooth and enjoyable. I also learned the true meaning of weekends, where families, children, and young people fill parks, cafes, beaches, and sports fields. It has been a life-changing experience that has shaped both my academic and personal development.

audience. I was also invited as an oral speaker at the 4th International Congress on Earth & Geological Sciences (ICEGS-2025) in Paris, France, organised by the United Research Forum (URF).

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my AcSIR supervisor, Dr Sasmita Prusty at CSIR–IMMT, whose constant guidance has supported and inspired me throughout my research journey. I am also deeply thankful to Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava and Professor Manoj Dhar for supporting this incredible program, which has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my PhD journey.



Tushar Verma

CSIR Laboratory: National Chemical Laboratory (NCL)

RMIT Senior Supervisor: Associate Professor Ravichandar Babarao

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr Sailaja Krishnamurty

RMIT School: School of Science

As a PhD student specialising in catalysis and computational modelling, I had to quickly adapt to advanced research tools, deepen my understanding of density functional theory and navigate the demands of independent research. From the start of my PhD journey, each day felt like solving a new puzzle, not only academically but also personally, as I balanced research responsibilities while learning to live independently.

I was fortunate to be guided by my supervisors, Associate Professor Ravichandar Babarao at RMIT University and Dr Sailaja Krishnamurty at CSIR- National Chemical Laboratory (NCL). Their mentorship, constructive feedback, and constant encouragement played a vital role in helping me stay focused and grow through every challenge.

My time in Melbourne marked a significant period of growth in my PhD journey as a researcher and remains one of the most defining highlights of my experience in the program. What truly made this experience special was the support and kindness I received from my supervisors, university staff, and peers. Their encouragement created a welcoming environment and helped me navigate both academic and personal challenges with confidence.

Reflecting on my early days in Melbourne, the first 2 months were not easy. Adjusting to a new country, building routines from scratch and learning to call a new place home took time. There were moments of doubt and homesickness, especially during festivals when the distance from family felt most real. Celebrating Holi and Diwali away from India was deeply emotional. What had once been vibrant, family filled occasions became quieter, more reflective moments. Yet, sharing these experiences with new friends brought a different kind of joy and meaning.

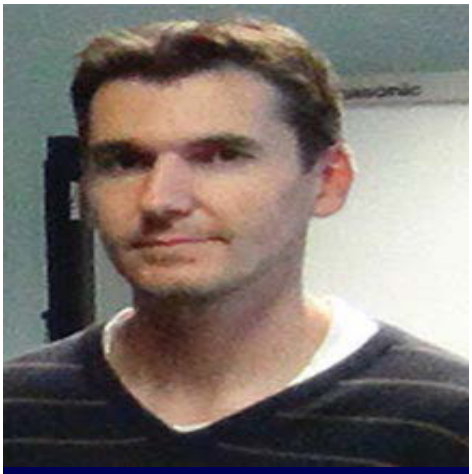
Looking back, what began with uncertainty transformed into a year of growth, belonging, and unforgettable experiences. The RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program has not only enriched my PhD journey but also supported my development into a confident and globally minded researcher.

Supervisor's Satisfaction



Dr Jang Mee Lee
CAMIC, RMIT

I am currently supervising one PhD student through the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program. The student's research focuses on the sustainable extraction of critical metals, including Co, Ni and Mn, from laterite ore. In particular, the project explores lower-impact leaching approaches that can contribute to more environmentally responsible critical mineral processing. This program provides valuable opportunities for students to benefit from the research environments and expertise of both RMIT and AcSIR. Through the joint supervision framework, the student can approach research questions from broader perspectives and develop both technical expertise and international collaboration skills. From a supervisor's perspective, I have also found the program highly valuable. It has strengthened engagement with overseas universities and research institutes, and has encouraged me to think about my own research area in deeper and more diverse ways. The RMIT-AcSIR program is an important platform for building meaningful international research collaboration and supporting research with real-world impact.



Prof. James Tardio
CAMIC, RMIT

Since its inception in 2017 I have supervised four students in the AcSIR – RMIT PhD program (two completed and two current). It has been an enjoyable experience supervising all four of these students as they have been very passionate about generating knowledge that will benefit society. They have also been very collegiate and willing to learn and it has been a great pleasure to be involved in their training to become independent researchers. The AcSIR program has also been extremely beneficial to my research pursuits. It has allowed me to become connected with Indian researchers with similar interests and helped increase my knowledge and research outputs. The AcSIR-RMIT PhD program provides an exceptional research training experience for all involved.



Prof. Nhiem Tran

Deputy Head of Department Applied Chem & Enviro Science

As an academic in RMIT and a PhD supervisor, the joint PhD program between AcSIR and RMIT has been a genuinely rewarding experience for me, and I see it as a powerful bridge between Australia and India. The AcSIR student I currently supervise is extremely hard working and has become an integral part of our group, both scientifically and personally. She is proactive, keen to learn, and has already represented our team with talks and posters at several conferences in Australia. I've also had the pleasure of working closely with her AcSIR supervisors, whose deep expertise and supportive, professional approach I value greatly. Through this scheme, I've now welcomed two more AcSIR PhD students who will visit RMIT in 2027, and our early scientific discussions show they are bright, thoughtful and very capable. I'm excited to see our research group grow through ongoing collaboration with AcSIR and their PhD students.



Distinguished Prof. Magdalena Plebanski

Director, ATRACT

I have had the privilege of supervising RMIT-AcSIR cotutelle PhD students as part of this unique international research partnership. The students not only contributed meaningfully to research activities within my group, bringing strong technical capability, enthusiasm and a willingness to engage deeply with complex scientific questions, but also brought with them commitment, independence and a strong work ethic, which inspired other students as well as staff, and though their enthusiastic participation in journal clubs, research and social meetings, actively helped create a highly collaborative and intellectually stimulating research environment.

The RMIT-AcSIR program is an outstanding platform for strengthening international research collaboration between RMIT and leading Indian research institutions. Through this engagement, students benefit from exposure to different research cultures, supervisory perspectives and scientific approaches. At the same time, supervisors and research groups gain valuable opportunities to broaden their networks, develop new project ideas and build long-term collaborative partnerships.

Supervising RMIT-AcSIR students has enriched the research environment within my group and contributed to a broader culture of global academic engagement. I very much look forward to continuing this collaboration and supporting future students through this important joint PhD program.

How Leaders Perceive the Program's Impact



Prof. the Honourable Margaret Gardner (AC)
Governor of Victoria

"The RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program is emblematic of the importance of Victoria's relationship with India – a partnership in which there are increasing opportunities for us to learn from one another and share in the benefits of knowledge exchange."



Prof. Dr Megan Clark (AC)
Chancellor Monash University

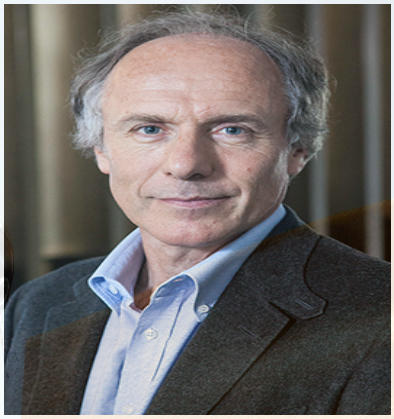
"As Australia and India look to form deeper ties the successful partnership of RMIT and AcSIR plays an important role in bringing together the very best people to strengthen our research partnership, build enduring friendships and tackle some of the most difficult challenges. Congratulations on your continuing success."



Prof. Robin Batterham (AO)
FREng, FAA, FTSE
Former Chief scientist of Australia
Former president of ATSE,
President of Institute of Chemical Engineers (2004)

"In an increasingly fragmented world, research training that is collaborative and crosses continents is vital. The RMIT-AcSIR program continues to be a shining example."

RMIT cares



Prof. Alan Simon Finkel (AC)
FAA, FTSE,Former Chief scientist of Australia
Former Chacellor of Monash University, Australia, Former President of ATSE

"Tomorrow will be shaped by the leading graduates of today. The graduates from the RMIT-AcSIR joint research program have been challenged by prominent academics to solve global problems, to build countryspanning bridges to carry the technological solutions of the future, and to build life-long bonds of friendship between Australia & India."

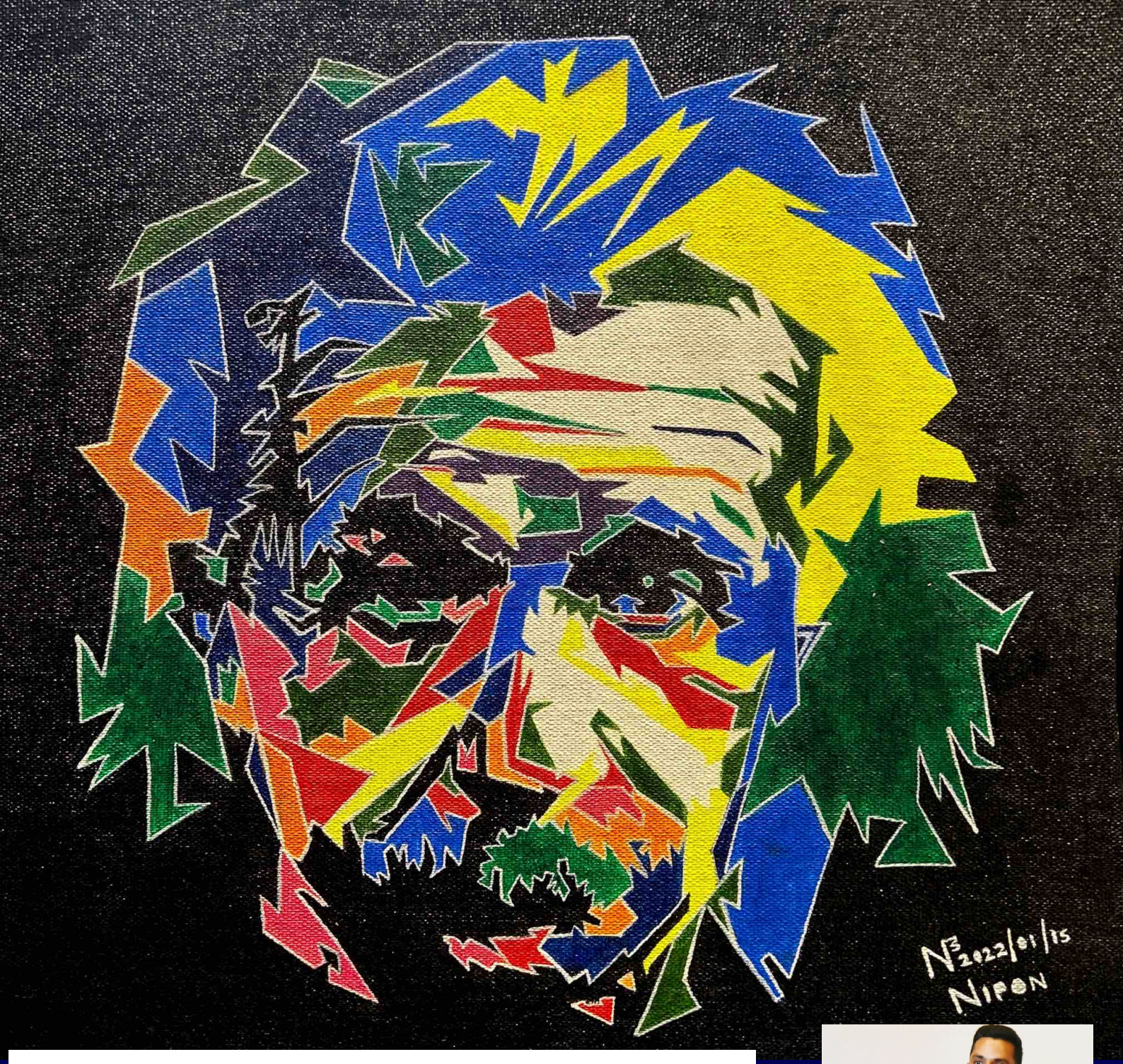


Prof. Ajay K. Sood
FNA, FAA, FASc, FNASc, FRS, FTWAS
Principal Scientific Adviser to th Government of India

"Innovation's impact extends beyond individuals in shaping society, transforming lives, and defining our future. The successful journey of AcSIR and its partnership with RMIT is commendable and exemplary in training global leaders in Science and Technology."

At RMIT, we are crafting the future with intention not with noise, but with meaningful action

-Distinguished Prof. Suresh K. Bhargava AM



Created and gifted by Dr Nipon Sarmah, an RMIT–AcSIR PhD alumnus, this artistic portrait of Albert Einstein symbolises the curiosity, innovation and perseverance that define scientific discovery.


Dr Nipon Sarmah

Contact us

Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava AM
Director of the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program, RMIT University
Director, Centre for Advanced Materials and Industrial Chemistry, RMIT University
Email: sureshdpvc@rmit.edu.au

Mr Tae Hyun Kim
Senior Officer, Offshore HDR Program Support Research & Innovation,
STEM College, RMIT University
Tel: 03 9925 1785
Email: taehyun.kim@rmit.edu.au



Dr Upasna Balyan
Project Officer,
Centre for Advanced Materials and Industrial Chemistry, RMIT University
Email: upasna.balyan@rmit.edu.au

