

Annual Report

2024

**RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program
STEM College**

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



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.





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Global Impact 2024+

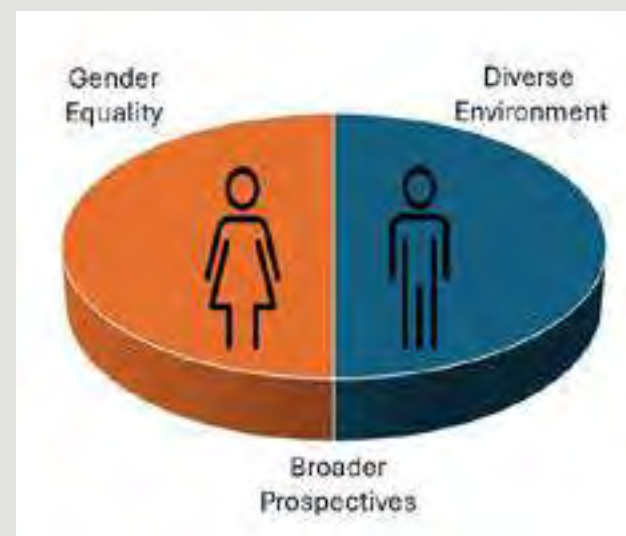
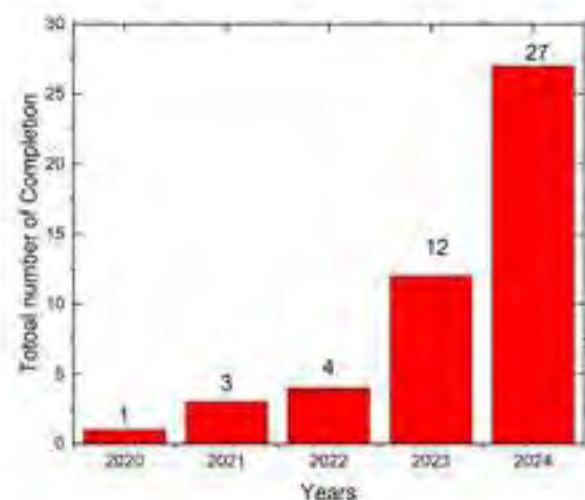


Demonstrating Impact in 2024: Translating Strategy into Outcomes



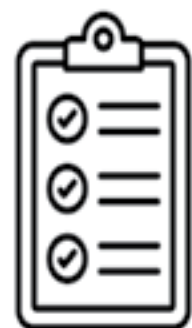
Completion Rate
47 graduated

Current Gender Ratio
50:50



Patents and Awards

> 5 patents
> 20 awards



1000+ Journal Articles

Total 151 Enrolments

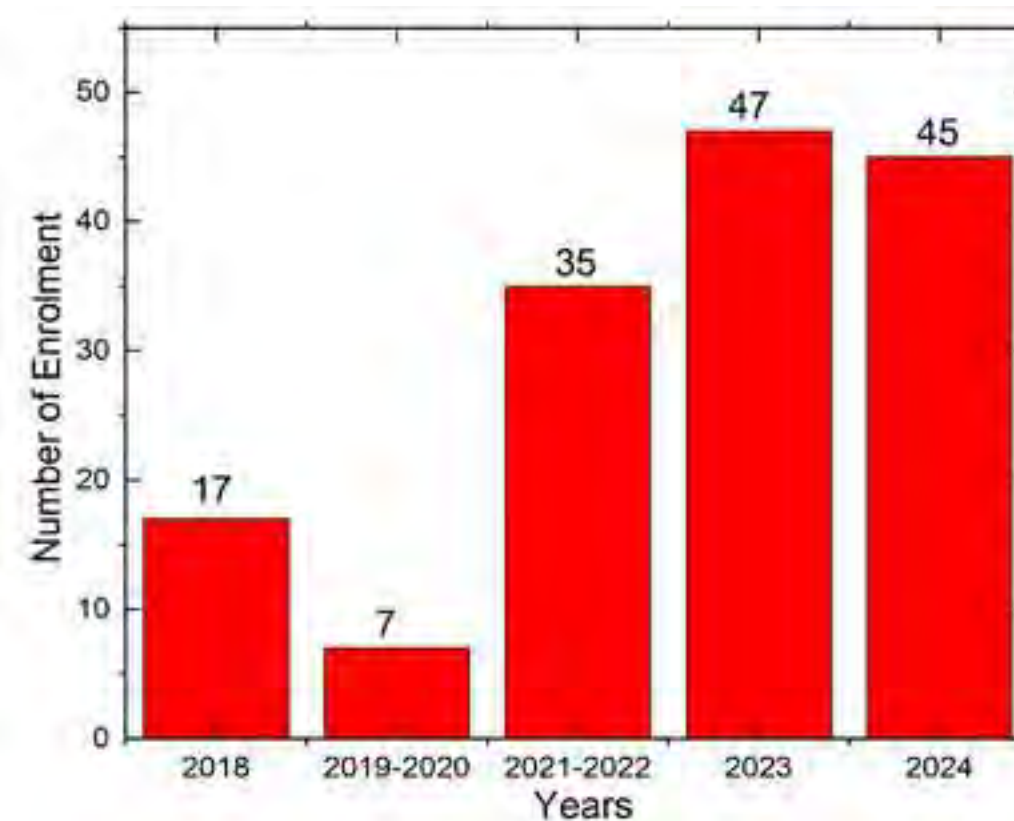
>40 conference article

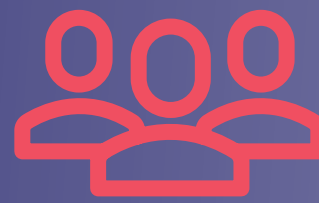
Ref: RMIT-AcSIR(2020-2024)

RMIT-AcSIR Joint PhD Program



Look at the scoreboard





"RMIT stands as the leading partner of AcSIR in global research collaborations, significantly surpassing other institutions."

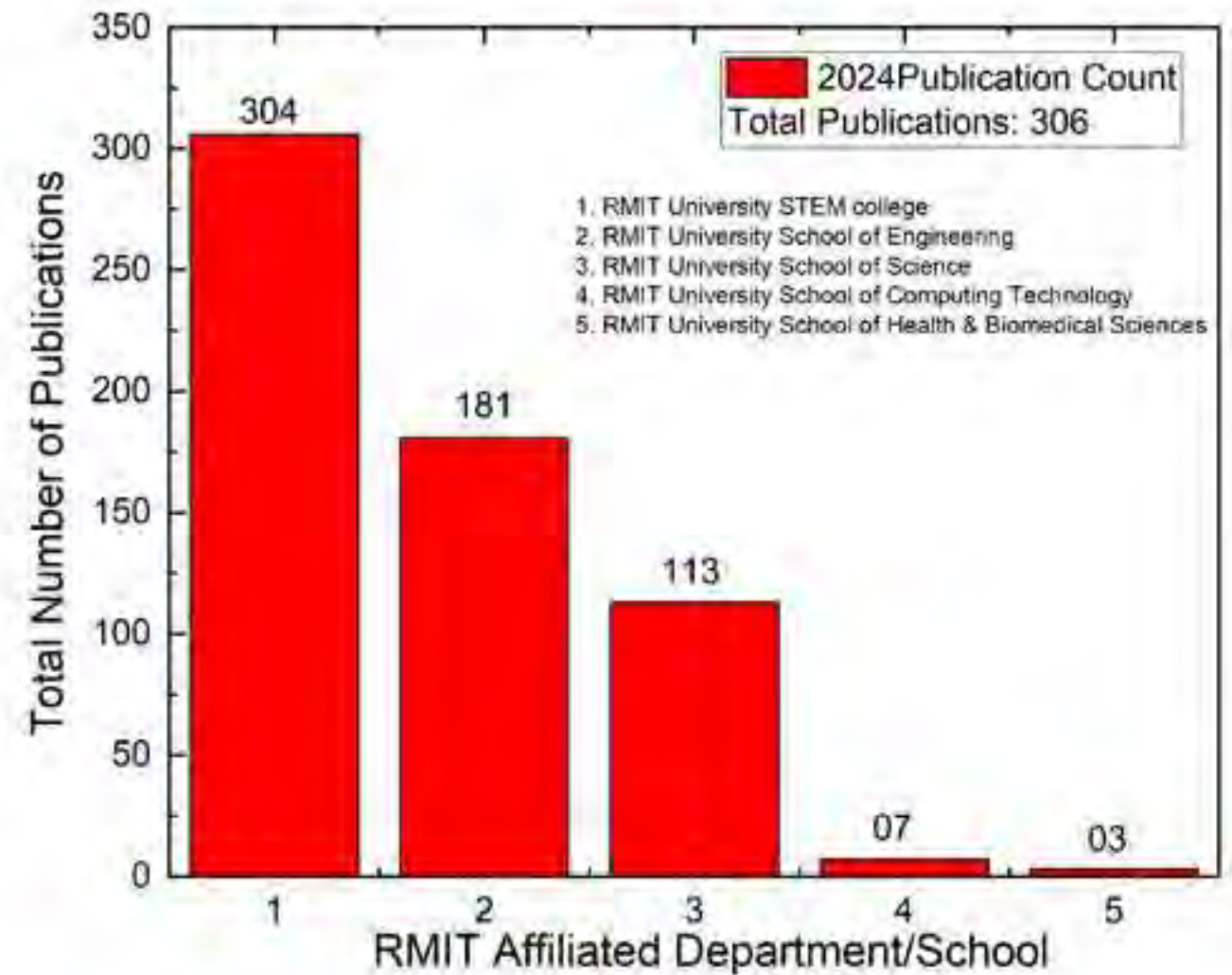
AcSIR@STEM

Schools Breakdown: RMIT-AcSIR Cohort

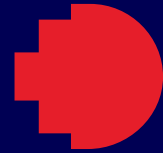
The majority of the RMIT-AcSIR cohort have been enrolled within the Schools of Engineering and Science, with 59 and 43 students respectively.

Additionally, there have been:

2 candidates in the School of Health & Biomedical Sciences, 1 candidate in the School of Computing Technologies, and 1 candidate in the School of Property, Construction & Project Management (under the College of Design and Social Context).



Vice-Chancellor's Statement



Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor and President
RMIT University

RMIT's perennial purpose is to empower people and communities to adapt and thrive across generations. We see applied research as a practical path to address shared challenges and opportunities. We also know that our greatest achievements are always the result of our collaborative endeavours.

The RMIT-AcSIR partnership is an outstanding example of partnership in action, and it continues to ensure the success of a diverse array of talented scientists from right across India. Together, we've built a model grounded in mutual respect, inclusivity, and national reach, connecting RMIT with over 20 CSIR laboratories across India, and a vibrant network of scholars and innovators working across borders to address real-world challenges.

The work of our students has contributed to groundbreaking research, generated innovative patents, and helped shape a globally connected research community. The satisfaction and success of our candidates reflects the strength of this partnership and its ability to foster both academic excellence and personal growth.

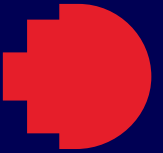
Looking ahead, we're excited to expand the program into the health and medical research space, forging new ties with ICMR laboratories across India. This next chapter will tackle pressing global health issues and reinforce our commitment to impactful, socially-relevant research.

We believe our region is best served when everyone can flourish. Our prosperity is linked to that of our neighbours, and our progress is linked to how effectively we empower quality research and innovation.

RMIT celebrates our friends of Indian heritage wherever we operate around the world, and we're grateful for the opportunity to work together for the betterment of all.



Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Statement



Professor Catherine Itsiopoulos
Vice-President and Deputy vice
Chancellor, RMIT University

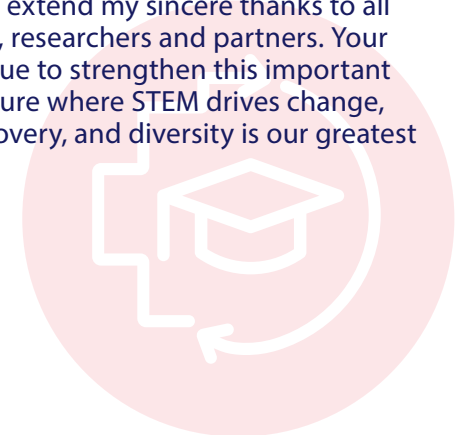
STEM at RMIT has always stood for more than science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It is underpinned by a commitment to applied research, global partnerships and education that delivers real-world impact. Over a decade ago, guided by these values, RMIT initiated a research collaboration with the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT-CSIR) in Hyderabad. What began as a focused partnership has grown into a program that now connects us with all 38 CSIR laboratories across India.

This evolution has been shaped by a shared commitment to collaboration, inclusion and scientific excellence. The RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program has become a leading example of how institutions can work together across borders to deliver high-quality research training. It has enabled RMIT researchers and students to work alongside some of India's brightest minds, co-creating solutions to complex global challenges through sustained, meaningful engagement.

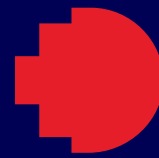
The achievements of the program speak to its strength: more than 1,000 publications, seven joint patent applications, 151 enrolled PhD candidates and 47 graduates. These outcomes have been delivered through co-supervision, cross-cultural learning and genuine partnership between our academic communities.

We are now expanding this model into health and medical research through the Indian Council of Medical Research. This next phase will create new opportunities for students to contribute to research that addresses global health challenges, while continuing to support the development of future research leaders.

I'd like to acknowledge Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava for his leadership in establishing and advancing this collaboration. I also extend my sincere thanks to all candidates, supervisors, researchers and partners. Your collective efforts continue to strengthen this important alliance and shape a future where STEM drives change, collaboration fuels discovery, and diversity is our greatest strength.



Deputy Vice-Chancellor (R&I) and Vice President's Statement



**Distinguished Professor Calum
Drummond AO**

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

AcSIR-RMIT Joint Research Program: Shaping Tomorrow's
Global Research Leaders

Since its inception in 2018, the AcSIR-RMIT Joint Research Program has supported research excellence, a value-adding partnership. More than just a PhD cotutelle arrangement, this program embodies a shared vision: to empower exceptional Indian scholars with world-class training, global research opportunities, and a platform to tackle the grand challenges and capture the emerging opportunities of our time.

What truly distinguishes this initiative is its inclusive reach across the vast scientific and cultural landscape of India. By connecting RMIT with over 20 CSIR National Laboratories nationwide, the program creates a rare fusion of intellectual diversity, academic depth, and cultural richness, a model for transnational collaboration.

The results are extraordinary. With over 1,000 peer-reviewed publications and 7 patent applications, our student researchers are not just contributing to knowledge, they are progressing research translation. These achievements speak volumes about their creativity, passion, and determination to undertake pathway to impact journeys.

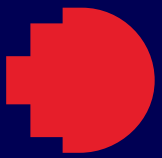
To date, 151 brilliant minds have enrolled, with 47 already graduated, each becoming an ambassador for this special collaboration. Their journeys span disciplines and continents, united by a commitment to excellence, curiosity, and shared purpose. High levels of student satisfaction confirm that this is not just an academic program, it is a transformative experience.

And we are only beginning.

Looking ahead, we are set to expand into frontier domains such as health and medical sciences, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). This next chapter will open new pathways for students to engage in bold, high-impact research that address critical global health challenges.



Director's Statement



**Distinguished Professor Suresh K
Bhargava AM**

Dean R&I (India) STEM College,
RMIT University

Advancing Global Impact through Collaboration, Translational
Innovation, and Human-Centred Research

Another remarkable year marks our enduring journey of research partnership with India, one that continues to be strengthened by the deep trust and collaboration we've cultivated with AcSIR. As we proudly step into the sixth year of the RMIT-AcSIR Joint PhD Research Program, I am filled with immense pride and renewed optimism. What began as a bold and aspirational vision has matured into a vibrant, world-class platform for academic excellence. With momentum building, the program is poised to surpass 180 enrolments and 60 successful completions by the close of 2025: an extraordinary testament to the power of shared purpose, innovation, and global partnership.

This program is more than a series of academic milestones; it is a dynamic vehicle for translational research that delivers full commercial and societal impact. It is proof of what is possible when institutions come together across borders to transform ideas into real-world solutions. Our joint supervision framework, spanning 37 CSIR laboratories across India, has enabled scholars to conduct impactful, cross-disciplinary research under the expert mentorship of both RMIT and AcSIR academics.

This year, our collaborative ecosystem has taken a bold new leap forward through a strategic expansion with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), enabled via AcSIR. This landmark step brings the TSI (Translational Science and Innovation) model to the forefront, a powerful approach that places real-world relevance and implementation at the core of research. By reversing "ME" into "WE," we are now committed to tackling some of the world's most urgent medical and technological challenges: developing new cancer therapeutics, advancing malaria vaccine research, innovating in immunology, and applying 3D printing for medical applications. These efforts are not just academic, they are designed to create scalable, commercial solutions with measurable social benefit.

What continues to inspire me is the profound human impact of this program. The voices of our PhD candidates echo a shared experience of support, belonging, and purpose. This is where the ethos of "RMIT Cares" becomes tangible where academic excellence is matched by compassion, and where international collaboration is grounded in community and care.

In keeping with our mission to foster excellence, we have proudly introduced the Distinguished Professors' Prizes for RMIT-AcSIR students, offering elite mentoring from esteemed academic leaders across India and Australia. Alongside the highly regarded Baldev Raj Award, these initiatives ensure that our brightest minds are not only recognised but also deeply supported in their journey toward global leadership.

Looking ahead, I am more committed than ever to the growth and success of this extraordinary partnership. Together, we are not only advancing science we are translating research into solutions, shaping innovators into global citizens, and making a lasting difference in the world.

The journey continues, and the impact we are creating has only just begun. The best is truly yet to come.

Director AcSIR's Statement



Professor Manoj Dhar
Director AcSIR

Looking back at the journey of the RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Program fills me with immense pride. What began as a visionary collaboration has now evolved into one of AcSIR's flagship international academic initiatives, distinguished not only by academic excellence, but by the deep trust, mutual respect, and cross-cultural exchange it fosters. For our students, this program offers more than just a PhD: it offers two academic homes, united in purpose and global in outlook.

The year 2024 marked a significant milestone. We proudly celebrated the graduation of 27 scholars, bringing the total number of PhD graduated till date to 60. These graduates are now contributing meaningfully across national and international academic and research ecosystems, a testament to the strength and global relevance of the training they received. Encouragingly, more than 45 students enrolled in each of the past two academic cycles, the highest annual intake since the program's inception in 2017. This continued growth reflects the enduring confidence placed in the program by students, faculty, and research supervisors alike. What makes this partnership truly exceptional is that it is no longer just a collaboration, it has become a global model. Since its inception, several other leading universities around the world have adopted this structure for international partnerships and advanced skills development. Rooted in the values of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, the RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Program is setting new standards for doctoral education globally. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the visionary behind this initiative, Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, for bringing this transformative concept to life of young Indian graduates. However, the long-term sustenance of this initiative has become possible due to the continued support and patronage of the University's academic and administrative leadership.

We feel extremely grateful to Prof. Alec Cameron, Vice Chancellor & President and Prof. Calum Drummond, Deputy Vice-Chancellor R & I & Vice-President, RMIT University for constantly supporting this program. We are equally grateful to the leadership of AcSIR, particularly, Prof. P. Balaram, Hon'ble Chancellor and Prof. N. Kalaiselvi, Director General CSIR for their encouragement and guidance in taking AcSIR to new heights of excellence.

Adding further momentum to this collaboration, I am pleased to share that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) laboratories have now formally joined the AcSIR ecosystem. This opens exciting new avenues for RMIT to collaborate with some of India's most respected medical research institutions. I am confident this will elevate our partnership to new heights, preparing future graduates who will serve the scientific needs of both nations for years to come. In 2025 and beyond, we also look forward to welcoming RMIT graduates to India, where they will gain invaluable experience working in these world-class laboratories. This program continues to exemplify the power of meaningful global collaboration. The volume of high-impact publications, patents, and sustained research engagement between AcSIR and RMIT faculty, even beyond graduation, attests to the enduring academic value and innovation this partnership cultivates. As we look to the future, we remain fully committed to strengthening and expanding this alliance with RMIT. Together, we are not only shaping world-class researchers but also building a lasting legacy of academic excellence, innovation, and international cooperation.

The journey ahead is bright and we are proud to lead it, together.

Dr RA Mashelkar's Statement

Former President of Global research Alliances and Founding Chancellor of AcSIR India.



Dr RA Mashelkar,
FRS, FAA, FTSE, FNA, FNAE,
FNAS, FTWAS, FR Egg

It is with immense pride and admiration that I reflect on the remarkable journey and continued success of the AcSIR–RMIT Joint Research Program: a visionary collaboration that exemplifies the very best of international academic partnerships and skill development.

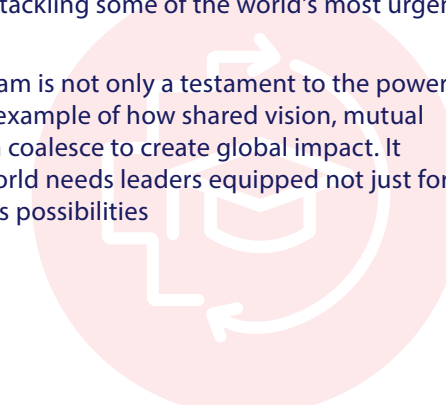
What began as a seed of an idea during my visit to RMIT in 2017 has since evolved into a globally recognized, Victorian award-winning model of research leadership. In just five years, this program has produced nearly 44 outstanding young graduates, now contributing to some of the world's foremost institutions and industries including MIT, Monash University, CSIR, Indian Oil, CNRS (France), and through prestigious awards such as the Humboldt Fellowship.

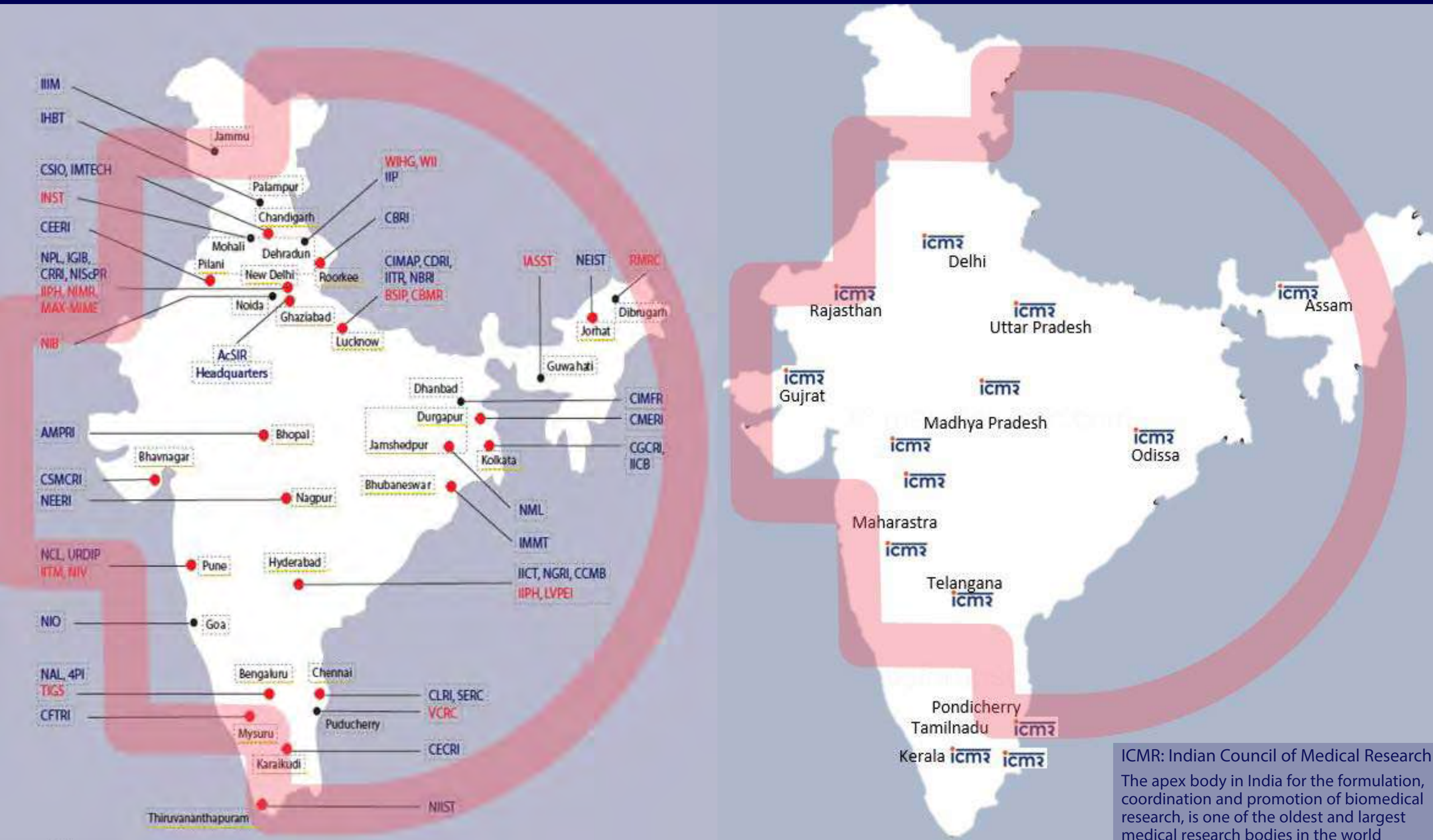
This is not merely a program. It is a game-changer and a life-changer. Built upon the pillars of excellence, equity, and innovation, it proudly upholds nearly 50% gender balance, creating a rare and inspiring platform that is as inclusive as it is impactful. The program establishes a dynamic intellectual infrastructure, combining cutting-edge facilities, top-tier scientific expertise, and global training. It prepares emerging scholars with advanced skills, deep knowledge, and an entrepreneurial, international outlook.

None of this would have been possible without the visionary leadership of Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, AM at RMIT whose unwavering commitment to global research excellence has set a new benchmark for global collaboration. The late Dr. Baldev Raj, former Chancellor of AcSIR and one of India's most revered scientists, captured the essence and vision of this initiative when, during a welcome meeting hosted by Former Victorian Governor Linda Dessau AC at the imperial Hotel, Delhi, he referred to it as the "SB Model." I wholeheartedly echo this sentiment.

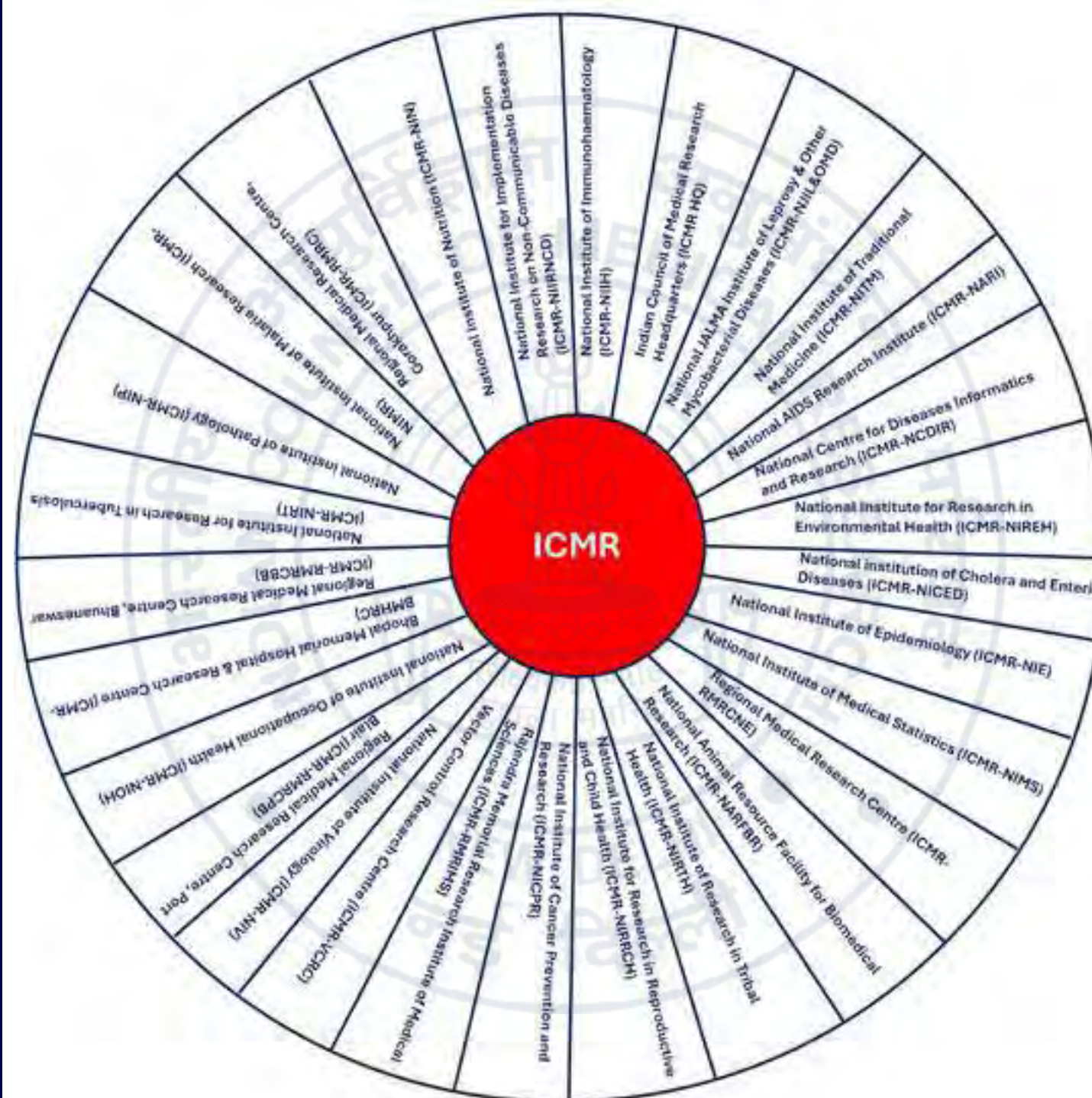
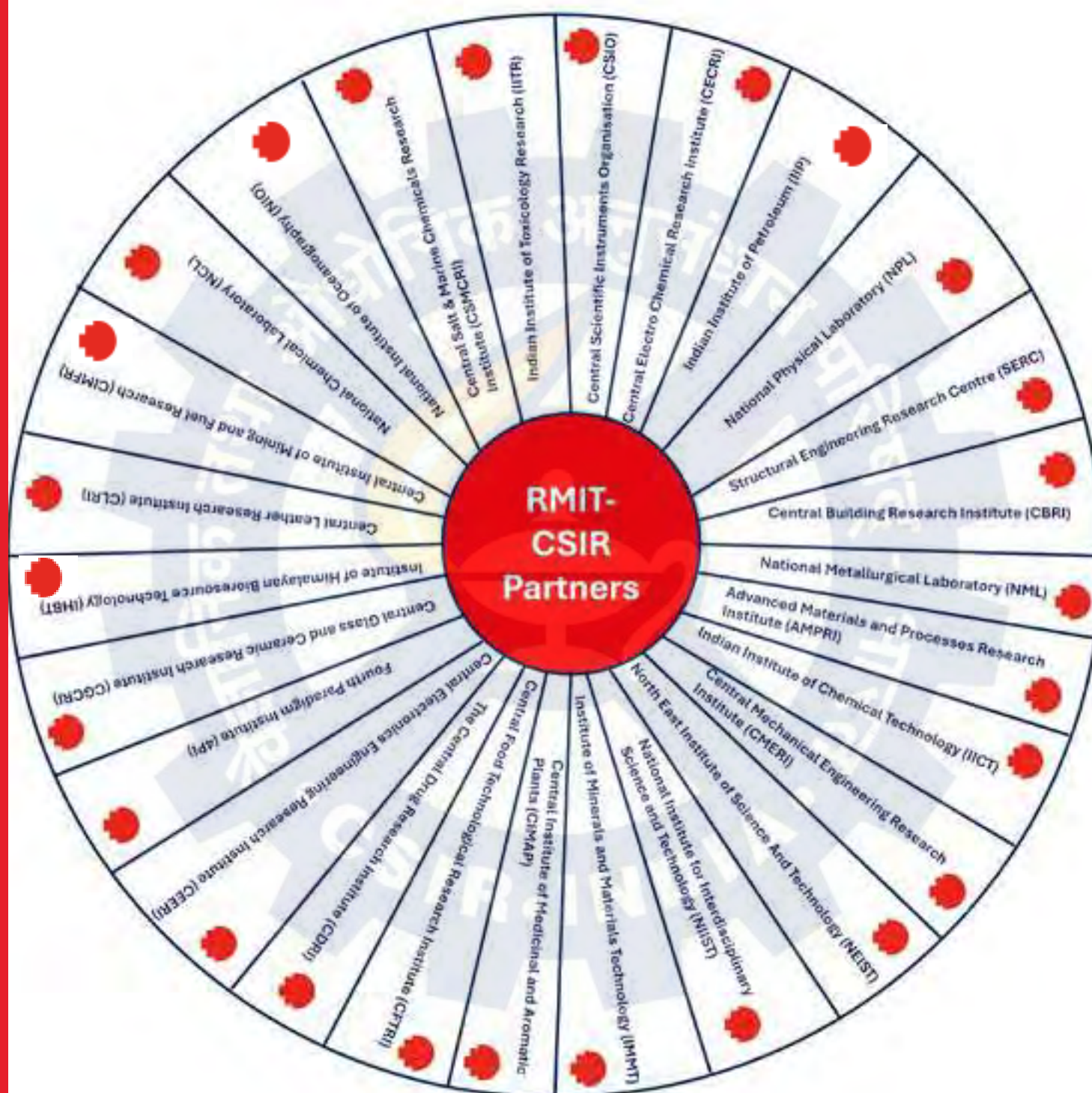
The model's influence has transcended RMIT, catalysing adoption by four top Australian universities including the University of Melbourne and UWA and two leading European institutions, affirming its status as a benchmark for global research collaboration. In its latest and most transformative phase, the program unites RMIT with India's entire research ecosystem through strategic ties with ICMR and CSIR Laboratories. This powerful expansion positions the partnership to drive breakthrough innovations in tackling some of the world's most urgent health and scientific challenges.

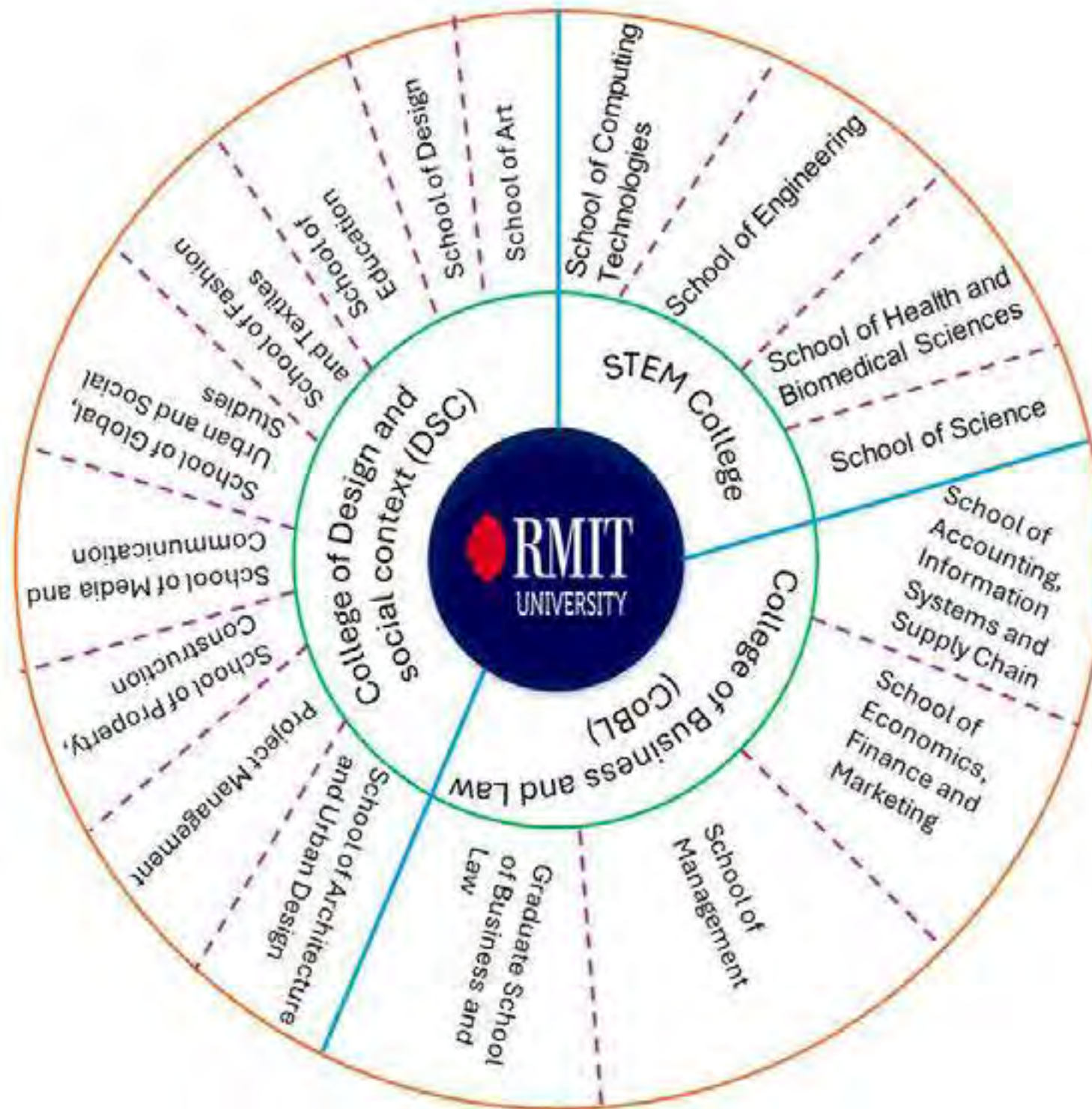
The AcSIR–RMIT Joint Research Program is not only a testament to the power of partnership, it is a bold, enduring example of how shared vision, mutual respect, and academic excellence can coalesce to create global impact. It continues to shape the leaders our world needs leaders equipped not just for today's challenges, but for tomorrow's possibilities





ICMR: Indian Council of Medical Research
The apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research, is one of the oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world





Source: 2023-24 AcSIR annual report

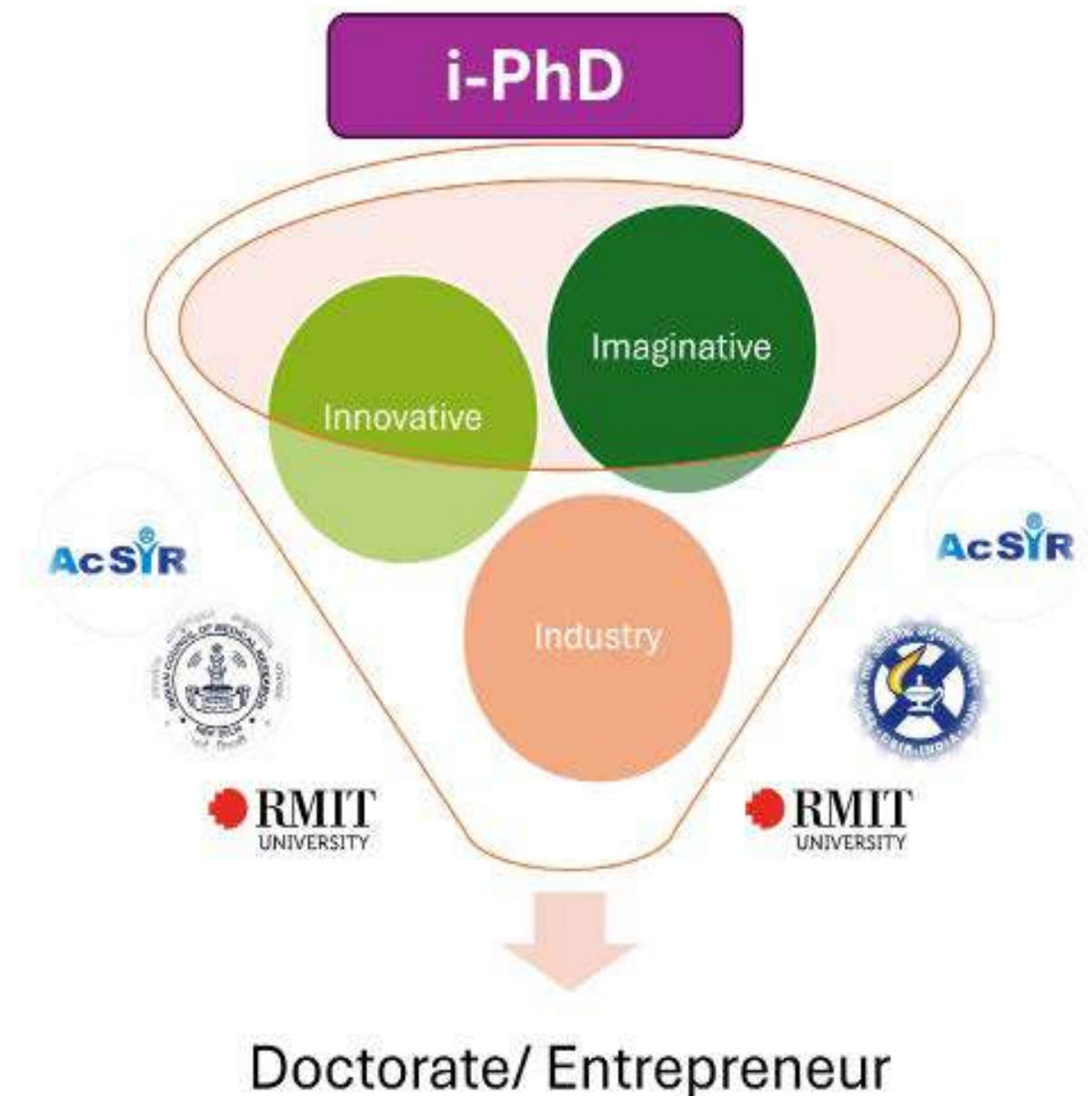
AcSIR Connecting India

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

The Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) 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.





Mind to Market place

An exclusive mentoring session to transform your research into a commercially viable product.
Application of AM in solving inter-disciplinary problems.
Brainstorming session on the industrial challenges in adopting AM technology.



Dist. Prof. Milan Brandt

Director, RMIT's Centre for Additive Manufacturing &
Technical Director, Advanced Manufacturing Precinct



Dist. Prof. Suresh Bhargava

(Member of the Order of Australia)
Director
Centre for Advance Materials and Industrial Chemistry (CAMIC) Centre,
School of Science, RMIT University



Meet the Team



Prem
(NCL-RMIT)



Abhradeep
(AMPRI-RMIT)



Vishal
(AMPRI-RMIT)



Yoshit
(CMERI-RMIT)



Amrit Raj
(CMERI-RMIT)



Shashank
(AMPRI-RMIT)

Timely Completion

RMIT–AcSIR Collaboration: Achievements and Recognition

Since the establishment of the collaborative partnership between RMIT University and the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR), a total of approximately 151 research scholarships have been awarded by RMIT to students enrolled under this initiative. This significant investment reflects RMIT's continued commitment to fostering high-impact research and nurturing emerging scientific talent through international cooperation.

To date, the collaboration has successfully produced 47 PhD completions, underscoring the strength and productivity of this joint effort. Notably, in the calendar year 2024 alone, 27 PhD degrees were awarded under this partnership, as per official AcSIR convocation data, indicating continued momentum and academic excellence within the program.

In recognition of his outstanding leadership and pioneering contributions to science, education, and global research collaborations, Professor Suresh Bhargava was conferred the esteemed Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa by AcSIR during its 8th Annual Convocation, held on 23 November 2024 at the iconic Bharat Mandapam Convention Centre in New Delhi, India. The honorary doctorate was awarded by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Honourable Minister of Science and Technology, Government of India.

This prestigious convocation event was broadcast live across 37 CSIR laboratories throughout India, further highlighting the national and international significance of the recognition bestowed upon Prof. Bhargava and reinforcing the profound impact of the RMIT–AcSIR partnership on advancing global research and innovation.



RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program

Bridging Borders Through Research: The RMIT-AcSIR Joint PhD Program

On 27 July 2017, RMIT University and the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) launched a groundbreaking joint PhD program, connecting top research talent from India with global opportunities. Under this dual-enrolment model, candidates are enrolled at both institutions, conducting most of their research in India and spending up to 12 months at RMIT in Melbourne. Admission to AcSIR is highly competitive, with only 1% of applicants selected. Graduates receive dual PhDs from RMIT and AcSIR advancing a globally influential research model that drives innovation, scientific excellence, international collaboration, and cultural exchange.



For more information, kindly Scan this





RMIT cares



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.

The Distinguished Professors' Prizes for RMIT-AcSIR's PhD Students



For More Information
Scan here



Visit from the RMIT-AcSIR Executive Team: 2024



AcSIR PhD supervisors and the School of Graduate Research team with Prof Manoj Dhar and Prof Ajay Dhar

The AcSIR delegation started their visit at RMIT's Bundoora campus. Professor Catherine Itsiopoulos, ADVC and Head of Bundoora Health Precinct and Dean of School of Health & Biomedical Sciences, led the roundtable meeting with the AcSIR program supervisors and AcSIR students. The roundtable was an opportunity for Dist. Prof Suresh Bhargava introduced the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program, Prof Manoj Dhar introduced AcSIR, and the RMIT Dean and Associate Deans introduced their research work. This visit with core members from the School of Health & Biomedical Sciences comes at a time when AcSIR has recently partnered with medical centres across India. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), run by the government of India, has entered into a strategic partnership with AcSIR to establish a Faculty of Medical Research. There was also discussion about how AcSIR and the School of Health & Biomedical Sciences could collaborate further in future.

After the meeting, the AcSIR delegation were taken on a tour of the facilities of the Bundoora campus before the team had lunch with key members of the School of Health & Biomedical Sciences including Prof Catherine Itsiopoulos, and Associate Deans Professor Ross Vlahos, Professor Doa-El Ansary, and Professor Jonathan McQualter.



Prof Manoj Dhar and Prof Ajay Dhar on a tour of the laboratory and training facilities in the School of Health & Biomedical Sciences



Distinguished Prof. Suresh Bhargava with AcSIR team



NCL Director, Dr. Ashish Lele visited the RMIT University in 2024



AcSIR onshore students with Prof Manoj Dhar and Prof Ajay Dhar

"The support and guidance provided by AcSIR, RMIT, and all involved have been invaluable in shaping my academic journey and research endeavors. I am sincerely thankful to all AcSIR and RMIT faculty for their unwavering support and guidance during my Ph.D. studies. Your mentorship and encouragement have been instrumental in my growth and success.

I am sincerely thankful for the opportunities afforded to me and for being part of such a dynamic and inspiring academic community under the joint AcSIR-RMIT Ph.D. program.

I am committed to continuing to strive for excellence in my research and academic pursuits, and I look forward to contributing positively to the field of materials science. Together, let us continue to push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation."

– Prashant Kumar (Senior RMIT supervisor: Dr Ylias Sabri;

Associate supervisors: Dist. Prof Suresh Bhargava, Dr Ylias Sabri, Dr Selvakannan Periasamy and Dr Paramita Koley)

"I am immensely proud to be part of the AcSIR RMIT joint Ph.D. program, which not only provides exceptional academic training but also empowers us to explore entrepreneurial opportunities and make a difference in the world. Thank you, AcSIR and RMIT, for providing such invaluable platforms and guidance throughout this journey."

- Sunil Luhar (Senior RMIT joint supervisors: Assoc Prof Samuel Ippolito and Dr Ylias Sabri; Associate supervisor: Dr Selvakannan Periasamy)

"Excited to share that our AcSIR (India) Vice Chancellor Prof. Manoj Dhar and Deputy Vice Chancellor Prof. Ajay Dhar, along with Senior Managers Ms. Arpita Sanguta and Ms. Arti Katoch, recently visited RMIT University for a progress review of the AcSIR-RMIT Joint PhD Program. It was an honor to present my ongoing joint PhD research and share my experiences at RMIT with them. I'm grateful for the presence of RMIT's Distinguished Prof. Suresh Bhargava (the mastermind behind this program), Prof. Samantha Richardson, Mr. Tae Kim, Ms. Chaitali and AcSIR-RMIT Joint PhD students."

- Billu Abraham (Senior RMIT supervisor: Prof Benu Adhikari; Associate supervisors: Prof Nitin Mantri and Prof Charles Brennan)



Dinner at the Melbourne Marriott Hotel with the RMIT executive team: (left to right) Prof Ajay Dhar (Associate Director, AcSIR), Saskia Loer Hansen (DVC International & Engagement), Prof Catherine Itsiopoulos (ADVC and Head of Bundoora Health Precinct), Distinguished Prof Suresh Bhargava AM (Founder of RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program), His Excellency Mr Gopal Baglay (High Commissioner of India, Canberra), Prof Alec Cameron (Vice-Chancellor, RMIT), Prof Manoj Kumar Dhar (Director, AcSIR), Prof Calum Drummond (DVC R&I), Dr Sushil Kumar (Consul General of India, Melbourne), Prof Denise Cuthbert (ADVC Research Training and Development), Distinguished Prof Sujeewa Setunge (ADVC R&I).



Prof. Manoj Dhar with Prof. Alec Cameron



Prof. Manoj Dhar with Prof. Sujeewa Setunge

The 8th AcSIR Convocation



The 8th Convocation of the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) was held on 23 November 2024 at Auditorium 2, Bharat Mandapam Convention Centre, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. The event was presided over by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of Science and Technology, and was broadcast live to audiences across 82 CSIR laboratories nationwide. During the convocation, Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) degrees were conferred in recognition of groundbreaking contributions to science and technology to **Prof. Suresh Bhargava for contributions to chemical sciences and engineering.**

In his address, Dr. Jitendra Singh highlighted India's transformation into a global leader in science and technology, attributing this progress to visionary leadership and initiatives like AcSIR. He emphasized AcSIR's role in fostering interdisciplinary research, promoting industry-academia collaboration, and contributing to India's ascent in global science rankings. The Minister also noted AcSIR's collaborations with world-renowned institutions such as the University of Western Australia and AIST Japan as benchmarks of its academic excellence. The convocation underscored India's commitment to fostering a knowledge-driven economy and its ambition to achieve the vision of a "Viksit Bharat 2047."



Professor Suresh Bhargava was conferred the esteemed Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa by AcSIR

EMPLOYMENT

RMIT-AcSIR student experiences

Our Ambassadors' Stories from Across the Globe

Dr. Yogesh Kumar

Graduated: 2023, Current Position: Lawrence Berkeley
National Laboratory in California, USA



My academic journey has been deeply shaped by the unique opportunity to pursue a joint PhD under the RMIT-AcSIR Research Program, which I completed in December 2023. This collaborative program enabled me to work in leading research laboratories across India and Australia, providing access to state-of-the-art facilities and expert mentorship. My time at RMIT University was transformative, it not only elevated my technical skills and research confidence but also helped me build a strong international network. The program laid the foundation for collaborations with global experts, significantly enriching my understanding of quantum materials and advancing my research capabilities. Guided by supportive supervisors, I published extensively and made significant contributions to the field, including being awarded a certificate by the International Centre for Diffraction Data (ICDD) for my contributions to the Powder Diffraction File.

Currently, I am a postdoctoral fellow at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California, USA, working on quantum materials and their emergent phenomena. This role allows me to explore new directions in condensed matter physics, pushing the frontiers of spin and charge dynamics in low-dimensional systems.

Reflecting on this journey, I am grateful to all my mentors, particularly at RMIT, whose guidance helped shape my career. The joint PhD program was more than just a degree, it was a launchpad into a vibrant international research community. I encourage future scholars to fully embrace such opportunities; they have the potential to redefine one's scientific path.



Dr. Neelam Yadav

Graduated: 2024, Current Position: Post Doctoral Researcher,
LTE, Observatoire de Paris, France



The RMIT–AcSIR Joint Ph.D. program has played a very important role in shaping both my academic career and personal development. This collaboration provided me with the opportunity to undertake a one-year research stay at RMIT University, Melbourne, during my doctoral studies. The experience proved to be transformative in multiple ways.

During my time at RMIT, I had access to world-class research infrastructure and a globally respected academic environment. In particular, the RMIT Library's support services especially the dedicated research assistant staff—proved to be immensely valuable in improving my academic writing skills. Personalized assistance in thesis writing, journal publications, and referencing methodologies greatly enhanced the clarity and impact of my scientific communication.

In addition to research, I benefited from a series of professional development workshops focused on resume and cover letter preparation, interview skills, and academic writing. These sessions played a critical role in preparing me for the post-Ph.D. career phase. The experience not only boosted my confidence but also directly contributed to securing my current role as a postdoctoral researcher at the Laboratoire Temps-Espace (LTE), Observatoire de Paris.

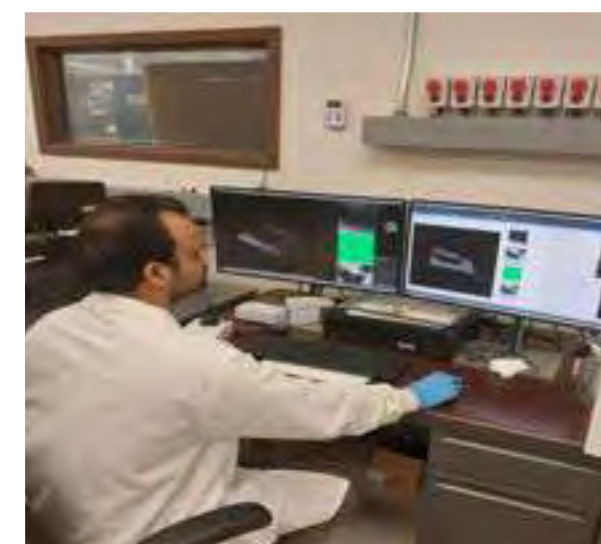
I successfully completed my Ph.D. in April 2024, with deep appreciation for the dual academic environment provided by CSIR–National Physical Laboratory in New Delhi and RMIT University in Melbourne. Both institutions offered exceptional mentorship, resources, and encouragement throughout my Ph.D. journey.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Ph.D. supervisors, Dr. Subhasis Panja (CSIR–NPL) and Prof. Kandeepan Sithamparanathan (RMIT), for their expert guidance and unwavering support. Their mentorship has left a strong influence that continues to benefit me over time on my research capabilities and professional outlook. I am also deeply grateful to Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, whose vision and leadership established the RMIT–AcSIR partnership, making such international academic experiences possible for Indian scholars like me.

A special note of thanks to Mr. Tae Kim, Senior Officer Offshore HDR Program Support, for his dedicated assistance throughout my Ph.D. candidature. I also appreciate the help and support from fellow AcSIR–RMIT students, who made my transition from India to Australia smooth and enriching.

Dr. Pargam Vashishtha

Graduated: 2024, Current Position: Postdoctoral fellow at
the University of Wisconsin–Madison, United States



I, Pargam Vashishtha, graduated in 2024 from the RMIT–AcSIR Joint PhD Program in STEM, researching III-Nitride and 2D material heterostructures for optoelectronic devices at CSIR–National Physical Laboratory in New Delhi.

My time at RMIT was very opportunistic and learning. I spent hours fabricating and testing 2D material devices, celebrating breakthroughs with my team, and presenting at international platforms. The lively Melbourne campus and its MNRF & RMMF sparked my enthusiasm, while Prof. Sumeet Walia's guidance sharpened my skills.

I have published in top journals, built novel device arrays using MBE and CVD, and refined them with tools such as AFM, XPS/UPS, & Photo-lithography. As a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, United States, I study quantum material-based electronic devices, utilising RMIT's training to showcase my work globally and guide students.

The program's focus on device fabrication and teamwork prepared me to handle tough challenges with confidence. Beyond academics, RMIT taught me resilience and adaptability, enabling me to form lasting friendships and establish a worldwide research network. The diverse perspectives I encountered expanded my outlook, and those connections remain precious.

To future students, I say: embrace challenges, seek mentors, and make the most of RMIT's resources to push scientific limits. This program not only shaped my career but also influenced how I approach problem-solving and building relationships, setting me up for a rewarding research journey. I'm thankful for RMIT's opportunities and urge students to seize every chance to grow, innovate, and connect.

Student Satisfaction

Dhiman Kalita

CSIR Laboratory: Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology
AcSIR Supervisor: Dr. Manju Unnikrishnan
RMIT Supervisors: Associate Professor Joel van Embden
Professor Daniel Gomez

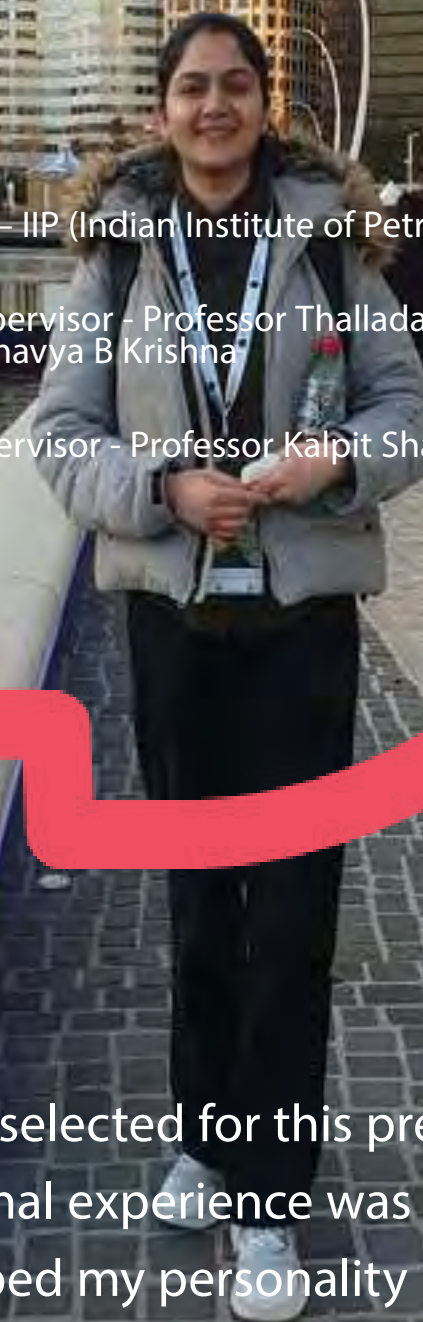
"This opportunity has been a pivotal chapter in my academic journey, blending the rich research ecosystem of the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) with the global perspective and cutting-edge facilities of RMIT University. Being a part of this program has not only broadened my scientific horizons but has also profoundly enriched my personal and professional growth beyond my wildest dreams"



CSIR Lab – IIP (Indian Institute of Petroleum)

ACSIR supervisor - Professor Thallada Bhaskar and Dr. Bhavya B Krishna

RMIT supervisor - Professor Kalpit Shah



//

I feel privileged to be selected for this prestigious AcSIR-RMIT program. This international experience was a transformative journey in my life which has shaped my personality

RAMANDEEP KAUR



Kinjal at Yarra River



Student ambassador at Prime conference, Hawaii



Neelam at the conference in Singapore



Poster Presentation at International NanoMedicine Conference 2024, Sydney



Kinjalben Patel

CSIR Laboratory:

Central Salt & Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSIR-CSMCRI)

RMIT Senior Supervisor: Professor Ivan Cole and Associate Professor Xiaobo Chen

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr Divesh N. Srivastava

"The RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program has shaped my growth, broadened my perspective, and empowered me to make a meaningful impact in research"

RMIT's commitment to student development, through platforms like Research Plus and Thesis Boot Camp, has helped shape my career path. Attending the PRIME-2024 conference in Honolulu, USA, with support from the HDR Support Funds provided by the STEM College at RMIT and the Electrochemical Society, allowed me to connect with global researchers and broaden my work. Volunteering at RMIT Open Day and discovering Melbourne's landmarks have been valuable parts of this journey. The RMIT-AcSIR partnership has truly enriched my academic experience, offering diverse experiences and a global perspective that empower me to make a meaningful impact in my field. I am deeply grateful to Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava and Tae Kim for providing this incredible platform, making this journey one of the most memorable and impactful parts of my PhD.

Growing up with parents who are teachers, I learned that education is more than personal growth or monetary success; it is a way to give back to society. This belief inspired me to pursue research, not just to learn, but to contribute meaningfully to the world. Being part of the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program has fostered my growth as a researcher and professional. The exceptional resources at RMIT, including cutting-edge equipment, workshops, and expert mentorship from Professor Ivan Cole and Dr Paul White, have been pivotal in enhancing my skills and confidence.

Neelam Viswakarma

CSIR Laboratory:

Central Scientific Instruments Organisation (CSIR-CSIO)

RMIT Senior Supervisor: Professor Sharath Sriram

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr Suman Singh

Moving from a small city to a vibrant global hub like Melbourne was both exhilarating and overwhelming. I am incredibly grateful to the RMIT-AcSIR Joint Research Program for giving me this opportunity and for making it possible for students like me to turn our aspirations into reality.

RMIT's academic and professional environment was unlike anything I had experienced before. The emphasis on innovative research, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary collaboration reshaped my approach to science. My supervisory team, led by Professor Sharath Sriram, played a crucial role in this transformation by providing consistent guidance, constructive feedback, and the encouragement to explore new ideas with confidence.

One of the most memorable milestones of my stay was presenting my research at the International NanoMedicine Conference (ICN 2024) at Sydney Harbour and the 18th International Conference on Biomedical Engineering (ICBME 2024) in Singapore. Engaging with leading experts and exchanging ideas provided valuable insights that refined my work, further expanding my professional network and reinforcing the global significance of my research.

Beyond academics, Melbourne's cultural diversity was an enriching experience. The city's vibrant traditions, diverse cuisines, and welcoming atmosphere made the transition seamless. I got to meet many new friends who quickly became like family and my go-to companions for everything from random snacking to spontaneous trips.

My journey at RMIT has been both fulfilling and transformative. I deeply appreciate the unwavering support of my supervisors, the RMIT and AcSIR staff, Distinguished Professor Bhargava, and Mr Tae Kim, whose encouragement has been instrumental in shaping my growth.

Jeet SHARMA

CSIR Laboratory:

Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSIR-CSMCRI), Bhavnagar, Gujarat

RMIT School:

School of Engineering (SoE)

RMIT Senior Supervisors:

Assoc. Prof. Huacheng Zhang and Dr. Jue Hou

AcSIR Supervisor:

Prof. Vaibhav Kulshrestha

As an AcSIR-RMIT joint Ph.D. researcher, I experienced a roller-coaster of growth and endless possibilities-Escalated by self-driven exploration, diverse perspectives in science and engineering, the serene beauty of nature, and the boundless energy of cycling activities will be forever imprint on my life and academic career.

February 2024 marked the beginning at RMIT University. An opportunity that only a handful of the luckiest students avail, I was excited and curious! A new chapter with purposeful plans fueled me to explore this unique international research opportunities under the esteemed supervision of Dr. Huacheng Zhang and Dr. Vaibhav Kulshrestha. My Prof's are true inspiration!

I also believe that this journey would have been a myth without the visionary professors like Prof. Suresh Bhargava and Prof. Ajay Dhar who inspired the young AcSIR researchers to grow and emphasise on make world a better place through this AcSIR-RMIT joint degree program (JDP).

RMIT University is a globally recognised institute and hosts many international professors expertise in various fields of science and engineering. This initiative which otherwise are limited in AcSIR, completed my academic goal to meet globally recognised international professors/researchers.



Academic participation (Left: Invited talk at ICNasa 2024, Melbourne & Right: the celebration after securing the Postdoc, thanks to RMIT-AcSIR JDP).

With complimentary HDR funds, the participation at MST 2024 (USA) and ICNasa 2024 (AUS) propound as a key opportunity which uplifted my research career. Since, the next step is at UNSW, Sydney. Such a flawless career support is outcome of AcSIR-RMIT joint Ph.D program.

Beyond scientific interactions, research training and a strong team are crucial for building a successful professional career. Through the AcSIR-RMIT JDP, I received expertise training at Prof. Huacheng's team and has been instrumental in supporting this significant leap. She has inspired me profoundly, both personally and professionally, throughout this year-long program. I was also pushed to delve deeply into the scientific realm. This JDP has shaped me into an independent researcher, with the opportunity to explore and learn advanced facilities, especially, RMIT's RMMF being an incredible advantage.

Personally, through the JDP and at the traditional land of Wurrung's has gifted me rational insights and mind peace. The perspective of life and the balanced lifestyle which we wish for, I have explored natural habitats at Wilson Promontory, Philip Island and at the sides of Great Ocean Road.



Trekking at Wilson Prom (Left: Planning for a right pic & Right: Snatcher and the drone, see shadow). The Oberon Mt.

This JDP program gave me the opportunity to introduce our rich Indian culture and heritage with other international students, which is one of the key prospects of this program. I would like to show my personal gratitude to Mr. Tae Kim for being an exceptional support to AcSIR student all these years. He circuitously taught me that "Even the weak become strong when they are united".



Celebrating the Chinese Moon Cake Festival. (Prof. Huacheng's group)

I wish that this bilateral program between India and Australia cherish many researchers of both countries and create an intellectually prosperous and happy scientific society for future.

Best wishes and regards to all upcoming AcSIR-RMIT JDP fellows!

Poster Presentation in the MRS Spring Meeting 2024



Great Ocean Road Trip with Friends



Rahul Mitra

CSIR Laboratory: CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT), Bhubaneswar

AcSIR Supervisor: Dr. Manju Unnikrishnan

RMIT School: School of Engineering, STEM College

RMIT Supervisors: Prof. Yongxiang Li, Prof. Sumeet Walia, Dr. Amgad Rezk

I am incredibly grateful to the AcSIR-RMIT Joint PhD Program for providing such a remarkable platform for academic and professional growth. This unique program, spearheaded by the visionary leadership of Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava, has been instrumental in shaping my academic journey. His guidance and support have been invaluable, helping me navigate the complexities of this joint program with ease.

At RMIT University, my supervisors, Professor Yongxiang Li, Professor Sumeet Walia, and Dr. Amgad Rezk, have been exceptionally supportive. Their mentorship and encouragement made my transition into a new academic environment smooth and enriching. The cultural diversity and inclusiveness of Melbourne have broadened my horizons, allowing me to celebrate and appreciate a wide range of cultural festivities, adding joy to my experience here. The opportunities provided by RMIT to engage in various academic and professional events have also been extraordinary. Participating in the RMIT Bridging Innovations in Health, Science, and Technology Symposium 2023 and winning the Excellence Poster Award was a highlight of my time here. I was also honored to be selected for a poster presentation at the MRS Spring Meeting 2024 in Seattle, USA, and to be a global finalist in its Science as Art competition. These achievements were made possible with the support of the RMIT Student HDR Fund.

Working in the state-of-the-art cleanroom facilities at the Micro-Nano Research Facility (MNRF) and exploring the advanced microscopy facilities at RMMF have greatly enhanced my research skills. I am deeply thankful for the extraordinary administrative support provided by Mr. Tae Kim, the HDR Officer – International and Science, at RMIT University. His assistance throughout this program has been indispensable. Finally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my AcSIR supervisor Dr. Manju Unnikrishnan at CSIR-IMMT, whose guidance from the very start of my research career has been a constant source of inspiration.

I am thankful for the learning and growth opportunities that this program has offered me and look forward to applying the skills and knowledge gained in my future endeavors.

PhD Graduates in 2024





Prof. Calum Drummond AO

Diwali 2024

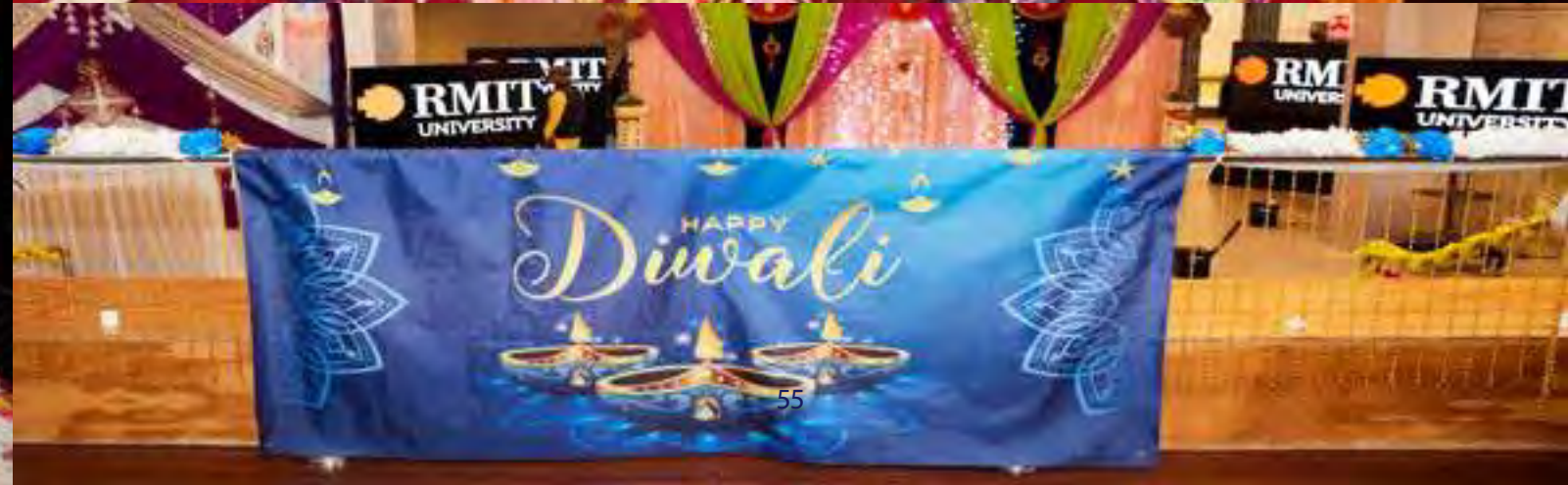
RMIT's STEM College, with significant support and coordination from Dr Ruchika Ojha from CAMIC, as well as the RMIT Indian student community, put on a spectacular celebration for Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights.

This holiday symbolises the spiritual “Victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance”, with the latter aligning with the key purpose of a university.

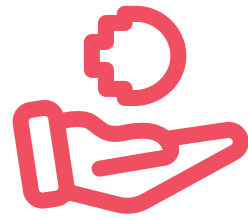
The event was held in November 2023 at the RMIT Media Portal and included activities such as the lighting of the lamps, several dance performances, Hindi music, yoga, traditional Indian food, and a raffle.

The event garnered >100 attendees and received positive feedback from students and staff, with several RMIT-AcSIR students expressing how the cultural celebration and pride in their heritage made them feel included, acknowledged, and part of a community.





Supervisor comments



Prof. Charlotte Conn
Biophysical Chemist

As a current supervisor of a joint AcSIR-RMIT PhD student, and having previously supervised three students who have successfully graduated through this scheme, I have seen first-hand the unique environment provided by this program where students are immersed in two rich academic cultures, building strong cross-institutional networks and gaining access to world-class facilities and diverse perspectives. The experience not only strengthens their research outcomes but also significantly enhances their personal and professional development.

One of my former students has gone on to receive a prestigious Vice Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, an achievement that reflects both the calibre of candidates this program attracts and the transformative impact of the joint PhD experience. I look forward to seeing this program continue to flourish and expand, enriching research capacity and fostering enduring academic ties between Australia and India.



Prof. Rajarathinam Parthasarathy
Chemical & Environmental Engg

It has been a privilege to supervise exceptional PhD students through the RMIT-IICT and RMIT-AcSIR collaborative programs. My involvement began with the RMIT-IICT, Hyderabad program, where I supervised three PhD students, all of whom successfully completed their studies and now hold academic or industry positions. Under the RMIT-AcSIR program, I have supervised two students. One, Dr. Nipon Sarmah, completed his PhD in 2024 and now works at King's College London in sustainable biotechnology. The second student is expected to complete his thesis this year. The students have demonstrated strong motivation, focus, and research excellence, contributing to top-tier publications. This program has also enriched my academic experience, including collaborative visits to IICT, Hyderabad. The RMIT-AcSIR program is a unique model fostering high-quality research, academic exchange, and enduring international collaboration. I look forward to its continued growth and success.



Distinguished Prof. Rachel A. Caruso
Applied Chemistry & Env Sci

I have supervised two RMIT-AcSIR cotutelle PhD students to completion. These two students conducted research on battery related materials, having experience in materials synthesis and characterisation, along with electrochemical analysis. Both students worked hard, publishing a number of manuscripts and attending conferences to communicate their research. They were also great contributors to our online group meetings, resulting in insightful questions and discussions. The collaboration established with their research groups led to the possibility of further research projects that were directed to other members of the department.

I am currently supervising another two students, who I am looking forward to hosting at RMIT over the next 12 months. These students are working on materials discovery for hydrogen production. Supervising the RMIT-AcSIR students brings breadth to the research that is being conducted in my group. Additionally, strong international collaboration enriches both the students' and supervisors' academic journey, as well as broadening their cultural horizons.



Prof. Sharath Sriram
Electrical and Biomedical Engg

As a supervisor in the joint AcSIR-RMIT PhD program over many years, I view this partnership as a coup for RMIT University. We get a chance to attract top tier talent from the best research laboratories in India. Given the AcSIR facilities are research-focussed, the supervisors we get to work with are experts with a wealth of experience, which creates longer-term partnerships for RMIT.

Overall, it does come down to students. They are all brilliant, passionate, and extremely motivated making them a pleasure and privilege to work with. Satisfaction is from them securing successful careers after their PhDs-seeing them win fellowships across the world in Australia, Canada, Europe, and Japan has been a source of immense pride.

This joint program is putting RMIT on the international map creating a strong alumni cohort who are our ambassadors.

RMIT cares



RMIT-AcSIR students regular catchup with RMIT supervisors

Catch-ups are generally scheduled on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, depending on the stage and needs of each student's project. Topics discussed during these sessions include: Research progress and troubleshooting Publication planning and manuscript review Thesis structure and development Skill development and training needs Conference participation and networking opportunities.



Director NCL Pune, Dr. Ashish Lele Lab Visit at RMIT

As part of the ongoing efforts to strengthen international research collaboration between RMIT and CSIR institutions in India, Dr. Ashish Lele, Director of the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune, visited RMIT University, Melbourne for a lab tour and strategic engagement session.

RMIT cares



Prof. Suresh Bhargava visited ICMR Delhi

As part of RMIT's commitment to strengthening research collaborations with India's leading scientific institutions, Prof. Suresh Bhargava recently visited the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) laboratory in New Delhi. The visit aimed to explore interdisciplinary research opportunities at the intersection of medical sciences, chemical engineering, and advanced materials.



Senior Officer of Offshore HDR Program in STEM, Mr. Tae Kim celebrates Holi with AcSIR students

In a vibrant display of cultural exchange and community spirit, Mr. Tae Kim, Senior Officer of the Offshore Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Program in STEM at RMIT, joined AcSIR-RMIT PhD students in celebrating Holi, the Indian festival of colours.



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."

October 2, 2024



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."

October 4, 2024



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."

October 1, 2024



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."

October 1, 2024



Prof. Ajay K. Sood
FNA, FASc, FNASc, FRS, FTWAS
Principal Scientific Adviser to the
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."

September 30, 2024



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

-Distinguished Prof. Suresh K. Bhargava AM



Contact us

Distinguished Professor Suresh Bhargava AM

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and Industrial Chemistry, RMIT University

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