

Gateway Office Melbourne Newsletter

Part I: Australia

To provide insights into the Bayreuth Network in Australia, we aim to provide a snapshot of visits, projects and people involved. The first six months of 2025 have been busy in Melbourne with large group workshops taking place and visitors visiting their collaborators or spending time here to network and make new connections. Thank you to everyone for contributing to this newsletter and for your commitment and energy you bring to the Bayreuth-Oceania community!

As always - for any questions, ideas and thoughts, feel free to contact me at: melbourne@uni-bayreuth.de

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Graduation from Joint PhD in Biomedical Engineering

I recently completed a joint PhD in Biomedical Engineering between the University of Bayreuth and the University of Melbourne in Australia. My research focused on developing advanced biomaterials inspired by natural systems, with the aim of creating novel protein-based materials for biomedical applications. The joint program gave me the unique opportunity to combine the strengths of both institutions: Bayreuth's expertise in polymer and process technologies with Melbourne's world-class biomedical research environment. Beyond the science, this experience has truly shaped me on a personal level. Living and working across two continents opened my horizons far beyond the lab. I built strong collaborations, but also friendships that will last a lifetime. I built strong collaborations, but also friendships that will last a lifetime. Melbourne in particular has become a second home for me – I keep coming back, not only for academic and professional opportunities, but also to reconnect with the people and community that made my time there so special.



The joint PhD was a life-changing journey: it challenged me academically, enriched me culturally, and created a network of colleagues and friends around the globe. It also prepared me for my transition into industry, where I am now working as a pharmaceutical consultant on some of the largest international pharma-projects. In this role, I lead teams in designing facilities and processes that will deliver next-generation medicines to patients worldwide.

Sportmanagement at La Trobe University

As part of my two-month research stay in Melbourne at the beginning of 2025, I was able to gain a wide range of highly rewarding experiences. In numerous conversations with representatives of La Trobe University, Deakin University, the Australian Catholic University, as well as with Dr. Martin Schlegel from the Australian Sports Innovation Centre of Excellence, I was able to establish promising contacts on behalf of BaySpo and further strengthen existing collaborations.

Beyond the academic exchange, the city of Melbourne—with its more than five million inhabitants and many cultural highlights—left a lasting impression through its openness and diversity. Its strong international orientation also fosters a willingness for interdisciplinary cooperation.

On a personal level, the stay was an equally enriching experience. I had the opportunity to attend sporting events across various disciplines—such as the Australian Open—and to experience firsthand the unique atmosphere of this globally renowned tournament. Equally unforgettable were the many impressions of this remarkable country and the inspiring personal encounters that shaped my time in Australia alongside the professional activities.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the alumni association Sportökonomie Uni Bayreuth e.V. for their generous financial support, as well as to my colleagues Dr. Irina Herrschner from the University of Bayreuth's Gateway Office in Melbourne and Melinda Herfet from BaySpo, who were invaluable contacts both in preparation and on site, and who made this research stay in Melbourne an exceptionally rewarding experience in every respect.



Sportpsychology: Joint PhD research group meeting

Within the framework of the Co-tutelle PhD rotation of Melinda Herfet, research was conducted at Deakin University, Australia. From February 14–22, 2025, Prof. Dr. Susanne Tittlbach visited the university in this context.





Her stay was shaped by three distinct roles. In her role as doctoral supervisor, numerous in-person meetings were held to brainstorm, refine, pilot, and strategically plan the doctoral project. In her capacity as Chair of the Department of Social and Health Sciences of Sport, a guest lecture was delivered at Deakin University, and a range of cooperation discussions were organized with colleagues from Deakin University, the University of Melbourne,

and the Australian Catholic University. Finally, in her function as Vice President for Innovation, Digitalization, and Sustainability, UBT representation was given at the IRTG Annual Meeting together with Vice President for Internationalization, Gender Equality and Diversity, Prof. Dr. Nina Nestler, in exchange with colleagues from the University of Melbourne and Monash University.

The week proved to be highly productive, and the University of Bayreuth presented itself strongly while expanding its network. Sincere thanks are extended for the many opportunities provided.



IRTG Optexc workshop in Melbourne

On February 17, the OPTexc Annual Meeting 2025 took off at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Under clear blue skies our IRTG PIs, Early Career Researchers and guests from the University of Bayreuth, the University of Melbourne and Monash University came together to connect and exchange the latest OPTexc results. After official addresses from university representatives and the IRTG spokespersons Anna Köhler, Paul Maulvaney and Chris McNeill, participants enjoyed an insightful methods tutorial and engaging presentations by OPTexc PIs and ERCs alike. Networking continued over drinks at the Yarra River.

Day 2 of the OPTexc Annual Meeting saw a captivating invited keynote by Paul Shaw from the University of Queensland, promising progress presentations by doctoral researchers from IRTG projects P01 „Controlling decoherence in the singlet fission process“ and P03 „Controlling exciton delocalization by shear-induced alignment“, and a lab tour at the University of Melbourne.

For the second leg of the OPTEXC Annual Meeting, our consortium changed sites to Monash University to continue the discussion of intriguing PhD progress reports and enjoy engaging guest lectures by Johannes C. Brendel, Wallace Wong, Nikhil Medhekar, and James Hutchison. Also at Monash, our group was delighted to visit excellent research facilities during a lab tour that also included extended stops at the Australian Synchrotron from the McNeill working group and the Melbourne Centre for Nanofabrication, MCN. To top off this truly enriching IRTG meeting in true Australian fashion, our local IRTG speakers and hosts Chris McNeill and Paul Mulvaney themselves took great care of feeding all OPTEXC researchers at the closing BBQ.



Gateway Office: Engagement in the Region

The Gateway Office in Melbourne is engaged in national and international networks representing the University of Bayreuth, establishing contacts, forming institutional relationships and always aiming at offering a diverse, interesting and informed portfolio of contacts and opportunities to UBT's researchers and students.

For this, I travelled to Queensland to follow the invitation of UniSQ for its strategic global partners and overseas staff to engage with researchers onsite. The group consisted of global engagement and research managers from Vietnam, Indonesia, India and Germany (the University of Bayreuth) and we visited UniSQ's campuses in Brisbane, Springvale, Ipswich and Toowoomba. There we met with research centres, the Graduate Research Office and Global Engagement and discussed the potential for joint research projects, possibilities for junior researchers and students. UniSQ particularly highlighted its strengths in Sport and Health Sciences, Material Sciences and Food Sciences, making the University a strong partner for UBT.





In March, Dr Heinemann and Dr Herrschner attended the annual conference of the Asia-Pacific International Education Association in Delhi. The event attracted over 2,500 delegates from more than 68 countries and over 400 organisations under the theme of 'Cultivating Global Citizens for the future'. The University of Bayreuth was represented as part of 'Research in Bavaria'. APAIE is the flagship international education conference of the region and offers a unique opportunity to meet with colleagues from the entire region in one place and to discuss the most recent developments in institutions and geopolitics, as they affect the higher education landscape. As part of this trip, I also had the opportunity to attend the opening of the new office of the University of Melbourne in Delhi and meet with local staff of the presence of Deakin South Asia. Deakin has been present in India for 30 years and has a large network of alumni and industry with New Delhi as its hub for operations across the region including in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Mauritius, Myanmar and Nepal.

FIM visiting the University of Melbourne

In February and March 2025, Doreen Schick, a doctoral candidate at the Chair of Information Systems and Digital Society of Prof. Eymann, spent an exciting research stay at the University of Melbourne, more specifically at the School of Computing and Information Systems. The impressive Melbourne Connect building not only offers a beautiful view of Melbourne's CBD (see photo) but also provides an inspiring environment for research.



Together with her supervisor, A/Prof Daniel Capurro, Doreen worked on an interesting project in the field of Clinical Decision Support Systems. She also had the opportunity to attend numerous engaging presentations by other doctoral candidates at the University of Melbourne as well as invited international scholars. These experiences opened up new perspectives and insights for her in the field of Digital Health.

In addition to her research, Doreen built numerous international connections, not only at the University of Melbourne but also at other universities in Melbourne and Brisbane. For example, she exchanged ideas with researchers at ACU Melbourne, La Trobe University in Melbourne, as well as Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the University of Queensland (UQ) in Brisbane. These encounters sparked interesting discussions on shared research interests and potential future projects.

It was not only the University of Melbourne that impressed Doreen – the city itself, with its many cafés, international restaurants, museums, beach trips, encounters with wildlife, and new friendships, including those made at the Graduate House of the University of Melbourne, also contributed to a highly successful stay.



Collaborative Research AI & Ethics

During March and early April, I had the privilege of spending time as a short-term visiting researcher at the Centre for AI and Digital Ethics (CAIDE) at the University of Melbourne. My stay, hosted by Marc Cheong and Simon Coghlan, offered an inspiring environment for intensive research exchange and reflection on some of the most pressing challenges in AI ethics.



Our conversations revolved around explainability and trust in AI, particularly the ways in which these concepts are understood and operationalized across different disciplines and cultural contexts. What became especially clear was that technical, philosophical, and policy perspectives often frame problems in distinct ways: sometimes in tension, sometimes in complement. Exploring these trade-offs provided valuable insights for my own work on explainability and underscored the importance of cross-disciplinary dialogue in shaping responsible AI practices. Based on these discussions, one outcome of my stay was first ideas for a collaborative workshop with colleagues at CAIDE. This initiative will aim to bring together perspectives from philosophy, computer science, and the social sciences to examine how disciplinary and cultural differences shape approaches to AI design. While still in its early stages, the prospect of building such a platform for exchange illustrates the long-term value of my time in Melbourne.



As part of my visit, I also presented my talk “Making AI Understandable: The Goals, Methods, and Open Challenges of Explainable AI” at CAIDE. The audience engaged with the topic in a constructive manner, raising questions from perspectives that I previously did not account for. The subsequent discussions extended beyond the formal talk, highlighting the vibrant intellectual community at CAIDE.

Joint Research on the Governance of generative AI – Insights from a BACU funded project

In March and April 2025, Dr. Laura Watkowski from the University of Bayreuth completed a funded research stay at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane.



Together with Professor Michael Rosemann and Professor Eymann, she is working on a joint project exploring the governance of generative AI in organizations. The project, funded by the Bavarian-Queensland Research Alliance, seeks to provide comparative insights for German and Australian industries navigating the rapid rise of generative AI. As part of her visit, Dr. Watkowski engaged directly with local industry partners, conducting expert interviews and deepening practice-oriented insights for the project.

The stay also offered valuable networking opportunities beyond the immediate project scope. Early-stage ideas for PhD research tandems between the University of Bayreuth and QUT were explored, further strengthening the potential for long-term collaboration between the two institutions. These efforts complement ongoing discussions about future joint funding applications and broader research engagement.

Dr. Watkowski also visited the University of Melbourne, where she connected with Professor Ofir Turel and Professor Julian Marx to explore complementary research themes, and with Dr. Irina Herrschner to identify further funding opportunities to strengthen the current collaboration. Her visit exemplifies the importance of international research mobility in shaping globally relevant insights and reflects the strong partnership and growing collaboration between Bavarian and Queensland institutions in addressing complex questions.

MAY

Hydrogen Workshop in Bayreuth

Hydrogen has emerged as a key focus area in the pursuit of sustainable energy. As the global transition accelerates, integrating hydrogen technologies into transportation, chemical processing, and the energy sector has become more crucial than ever. In this spirit, the Center of Energy Technology (ZET) hosted a German-Australian workshop on Integration of Hydrogen Technologies into Regional Energy Systems at the University of Bayreuth from May 6th to 8th.



The workshop is part of the project HyBaCoM – Design and Optimization of Hybrid Hydrogen Battery Energy Systems for Community Microgrids, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Research and Technology. It brought together a group of industry experts, researchers, and partners from Germany and Australia to share insights on the latest developments in hydrogen research and technology.

Following the welcome address from Professor Dr.-Ing. Dieter Brüggemann, Director of the ZET, Dr.-Ing. Matthias Welzl, Senior Research Associate and Coordinator of Hydrogen Research and Technologies, presented hydrogen research, development and testing opportunities at the ZET. Several presentations followed, covering topics such as optimised electrolysis plant operation, digital twins, and hydrogen storage options.



The workshop also benefited from different perspectives on hydrogen integration in Australia, presented by Dr Steven Percy and Professor Dr Mehdi Seyedmahmoudian from the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne. One particular highlight of the workshop was the visit to the UBT Future Energy Lab Wunsiedel and the Wunsiedel Energy Park. As one of the largest operational electrolysis plants in Germany, the site tour provided an excellent opportunity to explore the large-scale application of hydrogen technologies.

Research Trip to Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra

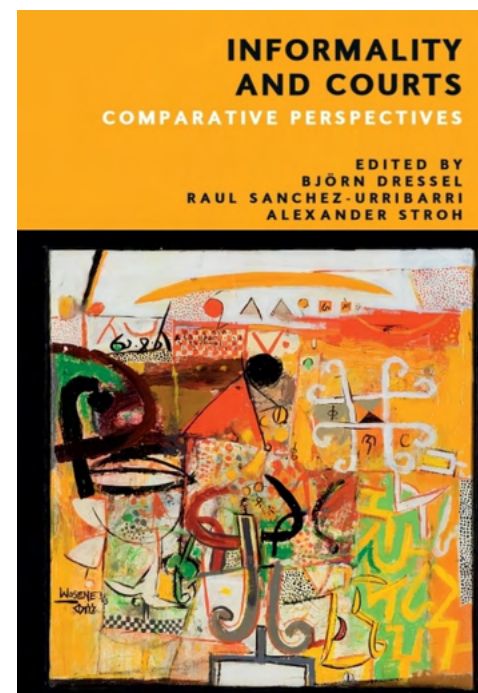
During my research sabbatical, I had the opportunity to participate in an exchange with colleagues in Australia in May 2025. My three-week trip began in Toowoomba and took me via Brisbane and Melbourne to Canberra. In total, I was able to visit colleagues at 10 partner universities of the UBT and discuss our current research work. The focus was on two of our current research areas: the circular economy for electromobility and additive manufacturing of functionally graded materials. Thanks in no small part to the excellent organization and support provided by our Gateway Office in Melbourne, it was a very informative trip and a fruitful exchange with a large number of colleagues.



The numerous insights into the teaching and research of our Australian colleagues were also extremely interesting. Motivated by my trip, we submitted a DAAD application and an application to host a strategic workshop at the Bayreuth Humboldt Center on short notice in order to deepen our refreshed and new contacts. In addition, we are already pursuing various concrete ideas for joint research projects with Australian partner universities.

Joint publication: Informality and Courts

Informal dynamics and personal relationships shape the work of courts everywhere. This is the central insight of *Informality and Courts: Comparative Perspectives* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024) – a book that represents the outcome of a major collaboration between La Trobe University Melbourne, the University of Bayreuth and the Australian National University. Edited by Björn Dressel (ANU), Raul Sanchez Urribarri (LTU) and Alexander Stroh (UBT), the volume brings together leading scholars to explore how formal rules, informal institutions and relational informalities intersect under diverse context conditions.



The book's comparative scope is strikingly broad, spanning Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. By reframing courts as embedded in webs of informal relationships, the contributors show how mapping those webs—comparatively and empirically—yields a more realistic account of judicial power and reform than institutionalist and formal approaches alone. While theoretical traditions often treat relational and institutional perspectives as antagonistic, the editors argue they can in fact be complementary. The combined approach pays particular attention to networks and ties that connect actors on, off and between court benches with other actors in various informal ways, but also with structurally inscribed historical conditions.

Empirical chapters address themes such as political loyalty, family relations, and judicial appointments, court interactions with the public and complex international ties. Together, they highlight when informality complements or even enhances formal judicial behaviour and independence—and when it corrodes it—while avoiding the usual overreliance on Global North examples and the tendency to pathologise experiences in the Global South. Thereby, the book offers novel insights into the inner mechanisms of the judiciary and raises pivotal questions for law and courts scholars and practitioners, and about the role of informality on state institutions more broadly.



Research and collaboration for this book benefitted, inter alia, from support through the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, and the Bavarian Research Alliance. Reference: Dressel, Björn, Raul Sanchez-Urribarri, and Alexander Stroh, eds. 2024. *Informality and Courts: Comparative Perspectives*. Edinburgh University Press.

Bavaria Queensland Research Alliance



Scan me for video!

The Bavaria Queensland Research Alliance is a joint research funding program jointly created and financed by the Bavarian State Ministry for Research and the Arts and the Queensland Department of Tourism, Science and Innovation. The grant scheme awarded ten Seed Grants for the initiation of new collaborative funding ideas over 10 000Euro + 16 000 AUD and five Development Grants for the further development of collaborations over 70 000Euro + 110 000AUD. The Bavaria Queensland Research Alliance is coordinated by the Bavarian-Australian Coordination Unit hosted by the University of Bayreuth.

Apart from answering all questions about the program and managing and ensuring its smooth running, we also try to facilitate networking between researchers of the two states and industry. Two events took place this year – one in Munich, and another one online. The AHK hosted a well-attended networking event with Bavarian Industry partners in Munich that brought together researchers and industry as well as celebrating the grant recipients of the first round. The online event focused on networking for the upcoming round 2 and aimed at allowing researchers to find new collaborators in the respective other state. About 120 researchers attended and planned joint submissions and research ideas.

JULY



LLM Scholarship Program in its third round

Each year one Law alumni after their first state examination has the opportunity to apply for a fully funded scholarship to complete their Master of Laws (LLM) at the Melbourne Law School. The LLM is a one-year full-time course in Melbourne and offers students to not only engage with different aspects of law and learn from re-

nowned experts, but also to form professional networks for their future career. Students can choose from over 180 subjects in 26 specialist legal areas. A key feature of the program is our flexible format, delivered intensively over a five-day period, normally with a two-day weekend break in the middle. This format allows deep immersion in the subject and an opportunity to make close connections with your peers in the subject



This year two candidates - One commencing his course, one coming to Melbourne for graduation could meet and exchange experiences.

The next round of this scholarship will open soon and calls for applications will be distributed in the RW Faculty. For questions and queries, please don't hesitate to reach out.

GO visit in Bayreuth

Leaving Melbourne behind for a few weeks, I spent the two first weeks of July in Melbourne to reconnect with researches, projects and campus life. This year I also had the opportunity to come via London, where I attended the S-Group annual conference and gave a short presentation on Current Debates and Perspectives in Australia on Inclusive Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Context.



The conference provided a good opportunity to share the regional expertise that UBT has in Oceania with European partners and facilitated many engaging debates on the future of higher education and the internationalisation of Universities. In Bayreuth, I met with colleagues from almost all faculties, with current collaborators, the International Office, the Graduate School, the Research Office and facilitated a roundtable on the future of joint PhD programs. On my last night, the 'ECR Beergarden Chats' brought together a group of PhD students, early career researchers and Professors working with Australia and NZ. This is always an opportunity to get inspirations, ideas and plan trips and projects to Australia.

I am very excited to help turn all the ideas that were shared into reality during the next year!

COMING UP

Research Funding Workshop

MEET YOUR NEXT MATCH IN AUSTRALIA!

90MINS INFORMATION SESSION AND WORKSHOP FOR RESEARCHERS



24th September 8am (Germany)/4pm (Australia)

<https://unimelb.zoom.us/j/83909536541?pwd=geZbjPoxslyEb2WT6RfcAYtaDVYsgv.1>
Password: 553530

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