

Gateway Office Melbourne Newsletter

Part I: Australia

As we approach the final stretch of this academic year, we are thrilled to share a massive milestone for our research network: The EU and Australia have successfully concluded negotiations for Australia's official association to Horizon Europe starting January 2027.

This landmark agreement will allow Australian institutions to fully participate and lead project consortia under Pillar II of the €93.5 billion programme. For the University of Bayreuth and our active collaborations in Melbourne, this creates a unique window of opportunity to align our joint research agendas in fields like climate, digital technology, and health well ahead of the launch.

Thank you all for the immense energy and commitment you have brought to our community this year—we look forward to using the coming months to strategically prepare for these exciting new funding pathways together!

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September 2025

Research Funding Workshop

The Gateway Office Melbourne and the Research Support Office at the University of Bayreuth held a 90-minute information session entitled “Meet your next match in Australia” on September 24, 2025, in an online format.

Fifteen participants from different universities joined this event presented by Irina Herrschner, Melbourne, and Annette Götz, Bayreuth, to learn more about funding opportunities and on how to apply to open calls bringing Australian and German researchers together. In addition, this format facilitated exchange and networking in a very pleasant atmosphere around the globe – with an 8-hour time difference for Bayreuth an early morning coffee, for Melbourne the afternoon cup. Definitely worth a repeat!

October

German Science and Innovation Day

The tenth German Week in Brisbane, hosted at Griffith University, provided an important platform to strengthen academic and research connections between Queensland and Germany. The event brought together representatives from universities, government, industry, and the research sector to showcase ongoing collaborations, highlight emerging opportunities for international engagement, and foster new partnerships across a range of disciplines.



It was also an excellent opportunity to engage directly with researchers and institutional leaders involved in Queensland–Germany collaborations and to gain insight into the breadth of joint research activities currently underway. Together with the Science Grants Team from the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), we presented the latest developments, funding opportunities, and strategic priorities of the Bavaria–Queensland Alliance. The session highlighted the growing importance of international research cooperation in addressing shared global challenges and supporting innovation, researcher mobility, and long-term institutional partnerships between Queensland and Bavaria. Particular attention was given to new grant schemes, collaborative funding initiatives, and opportunities for early-career researchers and PhD candidates to engage in international exchange and joint research projects.

A key highlight of the event was hearing directly from current grant recipients, who shared insights into their collaborative projects and reflected on the practical and scientific benefits of working across institutions and countries. These presentations demonstrated the diversity and impact of Queensland–Germany partnerships, ranging from advanced technologies and sustainability research to health, engineering, and applied sciences.

The discussions also underscored the value of sustained international collaboration in building research capacity, facilitating knowledge transfer, and creating pathways for future innovation and industry engagement.

The event further strengthened connections between universities, government agencies, and German partners, while reinforcing the role of the Bavaria– Queensland Alliance as a catalyst for international collaboration and long-term research engagement between Australia and Germany.

Inaugural AHK Australian Parliamentary Showcase in Canberra

On 26 November 2025, the University of Bayreuth (UBT) and Swinburne University of Technology (SUT) had the privilege of jointly representing their ongoing research collaboration at the inaugural AHK Australien Parliamentary Showcase, held in the iconic Mural Hall at Parliament House in Canberra.

The event, organised by the German-Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, was designed to connect German-Australian partnerships directly with senior politicians, policymakers, and industry leaders, highlighting the important role these collaborations play in supporting Australia's economy.



Our joint delegation comprised the two doctoral candidates of the Hy-BaCoM project Mohammed Irfan Shemer Rasool Thasin (University of Bayreuth) and Manashaa Madhavan (Swinburne University of Technology) alongside Dr. Irina Herrschner, Gateway Officer Melbourne from the University of Bayreuth, and Gordon Chakaodza from the Victorian Hydrogen Hub at Swinburne.



At our dedicated exhibition stand, we represented the ongoing joint research collaboration between the University of Bayreuth and Swinburne University of Technology. The stand drew interest from attendees, including parliamentarians and senior officials, giving us a valuable opportunity to introduce our collaborative work to policymakers and engage in meaningful exchanges with representatives from other participating organisations.

Beyond our stand, the event provided an excellent platform to connect with leading German organisations active in Australia including Siemens, Merck, Bayer, and SAP as well as Australian players such as PGS, CO2CRC and other key industry representatives, opening promising avenues for future collaboration.

We were also pleased to be featured in the Accelerate magazine, which spotlighted German-Australian partnerships in trade, industry, and research.

Importantly, participation in the Parliamentary Showcase has already led to further engagement with AHK Australien and several industry partners, including Siemens Energy and PGS. These conversations are helping to identify new opportunities for collaborative research, industry-linked training, and future joint initiatives focused on clean energy innovation and sustainable industrial development.

The event was a reminder of the strength that research-industry-government dialogue can bring and of how collaborations like ours between Bayreuth and Swinburne contribute to that broader bilateral relationship.

January 2026



AI Workshop at UBT

The workshop “AI in a Fragmented World: Navigating Trade-offs Across Disciplines and Cultures” at the Speinshart Scientific Center for Supertech and AI (speinshart.ai) brought together international scholars in early February to discuss central tensions in contemporary AI design and AI governance. The workshop was organized by researchers from the University of Bayreuth and the University of Melbourne; the Gateway Offices in Shanghai and Melbourne were also involved in the international coordination and networking. This institutional constellation already reflected the workshop’s broader ambition: to approach AI design and governance not merely from a local or disciplinary perspective, but as a transnational and interdisciplinary field of research. Participants came from countries including Germany, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, South Africa, the United States, and China, bringing together perspectives from philosophy, computer science, and law.

At the heart of the workshop was the idea that many debates about AI design and governance cannot simply be resolved by maximizing individual values. Instead, conflicts often arise between different normative, technical, and societal goals, and these conflicts need to be made explicit and addressed productively. Particular attention was given to trade-offs such as transparency versus performance, human control versus AI autonomy, innovation versus fundamental rights, and regulation versus market logic.



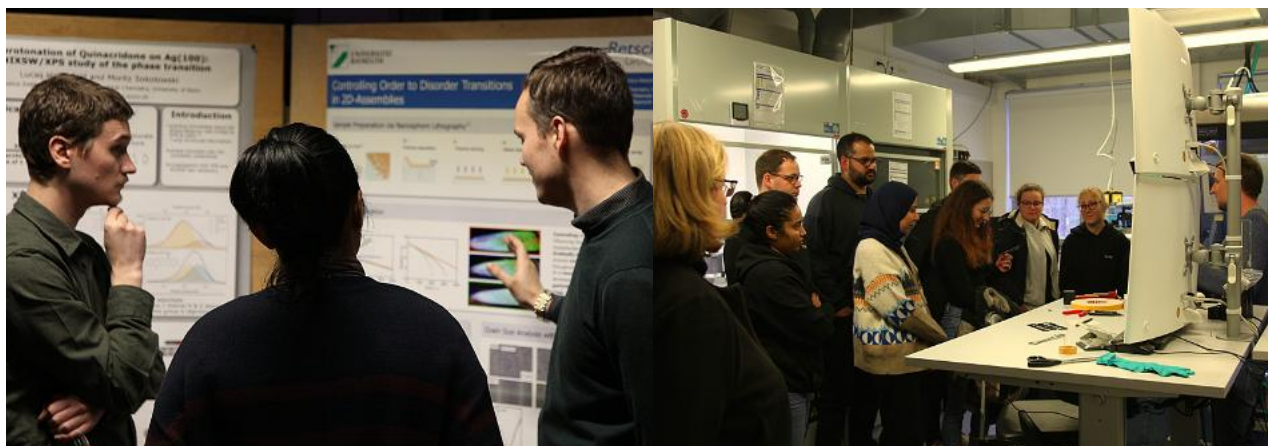
These tensions were not treated as simple either-or questions, but as starting points for more nuanced analysis. The workshop examined when such tensions are genuinely unavoidable, when they are merely asserted, and which institutional, technical, or normative strategies might help mitigate them.

The format combined short impulse talks with intensive discussions and breakout sessions, allowing different disciplinary and cultural perspectives to become visible. Overall, the workshop represented an attempt to understand AI governance not only as an abstract debate about principles, but as a structured engagement with real-world conflicts of goals. Its central contribution was to make trade-offs productive as an analytical tool for the responsible and socially reflective design of AI systems.



IRTG Springschool

From February 9–11, the University of Bayreuth and the Helmholtz-Institut Erlangen-Nürnberg für Erneuerbare Energien (HI-ERN / FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg) hosted a joint Spring School. The event brought together Principal Investigators (PIs), Early Career Researchers, and coordinators from two Research Training Groups funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG): the University of Bayreuth's IRTG OPTXC and the RTG TIDE, a collaboration between the University of Cologne and the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.



The event commenced with a welcome address to the PhD researchers and PIs by Anna Köhler (IRTG OPTEXC) and Klaus Meerholz (RTG TIDE). These opening remarks led into the first interactive session of the agenda: a vibrant poster session that provided participants with opportunities to explore shared research interests, exchange interim results, and initiate potential collaborations. The evening program featured a guided tour and dinner at the local venue *Liebesbier*, offering insights into the tradition of Franconian brewing and the historic underground cellars.

The subsequent academic sessions included engaging talks by Anna Köhler, Markus Lipitz, Klaus Meerholz, and Arne Lützen, who provided valuable insights into the respective research areas of OPTEXC and TIDE. In the afternoon, members of the OPTEXC PhD program traveled to the FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg to visit the Institute of Materials for Electronics and Energy Technology (iMEET) and HI-ERN, which included a comprehensive lab tour showcasing innovative research in action.

The final day opened with additional perspectives presented by Larry Lürer (FAU), Klaus Meerholz, and Daniele Fazzi (Cologne). Together, the participants reflected on shared challenges, future directions, and the broader potential of interdisciplinary collaboration.



BayING and PESBA – A Doctoral Bridge between Bayreuth and Australia

The University of Bayreuth's engineering partnership with Australia now rests on firm institutional ground. In 2026, the Bayreuth Graduate Centre for Engineering Science (BayING) and Deakin University signed a cooperation agreement for binational doctorates, putting a long-standing ambition into a signed framework.

BayING, which opened in 2025, brings the Faculty of Engineering Science's doctoral support together under one roof. Its programme with the strongest international reach is PESBA, short for Engineering Science Bayreuth–Australia, which links Bayreuth with partner universities in Australia. Doctoral researchers in PESBA are jointly supervised on two continents, spend at least twelve months at each university, and write a single thesis examined under both institutions' rules. Upon completion, they earn doctoral degrees from Bayreuth and their Australian partner.

The agreement with Deakin sets out exactly how this works in practice, from supervision and residency to examination and the conferral of degrees. It took shape through close collaboration with the Gateway Office Melbourne, whose groundwork connected the right people across the distance and helped turn a shared idea into a working partnership.

For Australian colleagues, PESBA offers a concrete route into joint supervision with Bayreuth's engineering researchers; for candidates, it is a rare opportunity to build a doctorate across two research cultures.

PESBA doctorates are tied to funded research projects rather than an open call (e.g., see the "IRTG [MB]2" article below). Australian partners and prospective candidates interested in a joint supervision are therefore encouraged to approach the PESBA steering committee directly. Find out more at <https://baying.uni-bayreuth.de>.



LTU Exchange Students



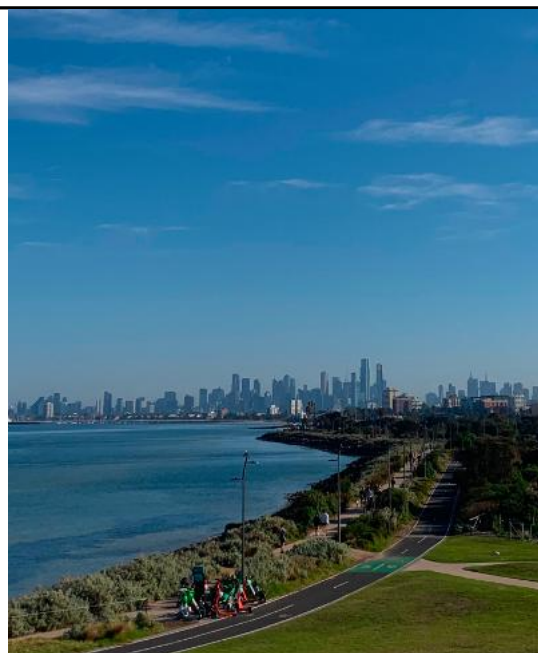
We are Eric and Magdalena and study Sports Economics and Teacher Education at the University of Bayreuth. In the summer semester of 2026, we completed a semester abroad at La Trobe University in Melbourne. The time in Australia was a special experience for us that has shaped us positively, both academically and personally.

Already at the beginning of the semester, a highlight was offered: the Orientation Week. The university organized many events and activities where you could quickly get to know other international students. This made it easy to make new contacts and settle in on campus.

However, our daily study routine differed significantly from Germany. Overall, the courses were much more familiar, and there were many submissions during the semester. Regular assignments, presentations, and group work ensured that you had to stay on track continuously. We remember the interaction with the lecturers particularly positively. The professors were very friendly, helpful, and approachable at all times.

We also really liked the free week in the middle of the semester. This so-called Mid-Semester Break offers the perfect opportunity to travel to other places without missing lectures. Our recommendations for this are New Zealand, Tasmania, or Sydney.

In addition to our studies, there were also numerous sports offers, student events, and regular activities on campus. Often, even free snacks or meals were offered. Overall, our semester abroad in Melbourne was an absolutely unforgettable time that we can only recommend to everyone.



Bavaria-Queensland Research Alliance: 3 Years of Successful Partnerships

The Bavaria Queensland Research Alliance has been operating for a little over 3 years now. The major focus of this Alliance is to facilitate grants that foster research relationships between Bavarian Universities / Universities of Applied Science (Hochschulen) and institutions of higher education in Queensland. The two types of grants are the Seed Grant, running for 12 months with a funding amount of €10.000, and the Development Grant, which covers a period of 24 months and carries a €70.000 grant award.



Currently, development grants of the first round are in their final stages of research, with some already reporting remarkable success and the creation of combined PhD programs. The first round of Seed Grants came to their conclusion at the end of last year, with across-the-board successful results and noted desire to continue their projects with additional grant funding. Many of the Bavarian Development Grant recipients also incorporated industry partners, a requirement on the Queensland side but optional in Bavaria. More often than not, these Industry Partners are a critical part of the research and bring real life applications to the projects, and are thus very important to the success of the undertaking.

In addition, the overall consensus among all the researchers is, that to have a successful project, cooperation and communication is key. Meaning the travel to the partners is as important as any research and a fundamental aspect of a productive cooperation.

At present, the applications for the seed and development grants of the third round just closed and the selection process is ongoing. One thing that can already be said is that, there are again a number of Seed Grant recipients that are hoping to continue their research with their Queensland partners and further the cooperation between Bavaria and Queensland. It is great to see that the program has been received with enthusiasm on both sides and can be seen as noteworthy example of flourishing research collaborations across two different parts of the world.



Accelerating Industry Innovation Roundtable with the Energy and Health Cluster of AHK

Together with the Leads of the Health and Energy Clusters of the Australian-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (AHK), the GO organised and chaired a roundtable focused on strengthening collaboration between industry and academia across Germany and Australia. The AHK plays a key role in fostering bilateral economic and innovation partnerships, connecting businesses, researchers, and institutions to facilitate international collaboration and knowledge exchange. Bringing together representatives from industry, higher education, and research organisations, the event provided a platform to explore shared priorities and identify new opportunities for strategic cooperation.



Despite the event taking place on a German bank holiday, the roundtable attracted strong engagement from leading experts, including Prof. Eymann, Prof. Brüggemann, Dr Matthias Welzl, and Dr Arnim Heinemann. Participants presented ongoing collaborative projects spanning areas such as health innovation, digital technologies, and sustainable energy solutions, while also outlining their interest in expanding partnerships with Australian universities, research institutes, and industry stakeholders. Discussions highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary and international cooperation in addressing global challenges and accelerating innovation outcomes.

Particular attention was given to opportunities for joint applications under Horizon Europe, which were recognised as an important pathway for building long-term international research consortia and increasing the global competitiveness of collaborative projects. In addition, the well-established joint PhD programmes between UBT and Australian universities were showcased as successful models for fostering researcher mobility, developing early-career talent, and creating enduring institutional partnerships between the two countries.

IRTG [MB]²



The IRTG [MB]² captures cutting-edge biomaterials research concepts made accessible by a unique set of interdisciplinary expertise that has been brought together from the University of Bayreuth and three Melbourne-based universities, namely the University of Melbourne, Monash University, Swinburne University of Technology, as well as the associated CSIRO Biomanufacturing group, Deakin University, the Melbourne Centre for Nanofabrication (MC^N), the Victorian Medtech Skills and Devices Hub (VMH), and the brand new Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD) for translational science in the field of biomedical engineering.

The IRTG [MB]² is focusing on the establishment of novel multidimensional biomaterials and their processing. This innovative research field demands true multidisciplinary collaboration, since it is necessary to integrate several different disciplines. Biomaterials are substantial parts of our everyday life. The more sophisticated the application, the higher is often the complexity of the to-be-used biomaterial. It is the major motivation of this IRTG to educate early career researchers in biomaterial sciences, and education also covers translational research.

The selected research environment with access to world-class facilities is perfectly suited for this approach, since it brings together groups with deep expertise and know-how in various fields to foster an excellent educational environment, taking scientific ideas through to MedTech applications. This graduate program will pioneer true multidisciplinary teaching and thinking, along with the international mobility of the educated students between Australia and Germany.

PhD students will be enrolled in the new PhD-program PESBA of the new Bayreuth Graduate Centre of Engineering Science (see also the article "BayING and PESBA – A Doctoral Bridge between Bayreuth and Australia" above). The PhD students are also offered to obtain a joint PhD based on existing joint degree PhD agreements between the participating universities.



yAGR
and
AGR

The Australian German Research Network (AGR) was established to facilitate exchange, collaboration, and long-term support for researchers working between Australia and Germany. Since its inception in 2018, the network has developed into an important platform connecting academics, research institutions, government representatives, and industry stakeholders across both countries. AGR enables researchers to build professional connections, identify new funding opportunities, exchange knowledge and best practice, and engage with the broader Australian–German research community through workshops, networking events, and collaborative initiatives.

University of Bayreuth (UBT) has been involved as a founding member of the network and has played a central coordinating role since the network's establishment. Through its on-going engagement, UBT has actively contributed to the organisation of events, the development of new engagement formats, and the strengthening of institutional and researcher-level collaborations between Australia and Germany.

In 2023, the GO convened a dedicated forum bringing together experts in international higher education and research collaboration to discuss the sustainability of global partnerships in the post-COVID environment. The discussions focused on the challenges and opportunities facing international collaboration following the pandemic, including researcher mobility, hybrid engagement models, long-term funding sustainability, digital cooperation, and strategies for maintaining meaningful institutional partnerships across borders. The event created valuable opportunities for dialogue between universities, funding agencies, and policymakers and reinforced the importance of resilient international networks in an increasingly complex global research landscape.

Building on these activities, this year we established the Young Australian German Research Network (yAGRN) in collaboration with an early-career researcher from The University of Queensland. The yAGRN was created specifically to support PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers by providing an informal and accessible platform for peer exchange, professional development, and international networking. Through regular online meetings and interactive sessions, participants can discuss career pathways, funding and mobility opportunities, and practical aspects of international collaboration. The initiative also encourages early-career researchers to share experiences, exchange tips and strategies for working across institutions and countries and develop their own international research networks beyond their immediate academic environments.



MONTHLY VIRTUAL MEETUP

Young AGRN Meetup

 **Every 1st Thursday of the Month**

 5 PM AEST (Brisbane time) | 7 AM CET (Berlin time)

 **Join (Zoom):**
tinyurl.com/yagrnt

(no registration required)


SCAN ME



TTAP

The Think Tank Asia & Pacific (TTAP) within the SGroup Think Tank Academy sees itself as a platform for exchange, knowledge transfer, and community building around university cooperations in the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. The goal is to establish a vibrant community of practice for interested university actors and to strategically reflect on relevant developments together.

Our activities combine in-person formats within the framework of the Think Tank Academy with regular online seminars, in which experts from the region give insights into current topics such as university politics, internationalization trends, funding programs, or mobility developments. This is complemented by practice-oriented formats, for instance on partner identification, on cooperation opportunities, or on intercultural competence development.

A first highlight was the TTAP session within the framework of the Think Tank Academy 2026 in Kaunas under the title "Global Disruptions, Regional Opportunities and Responses". Representatives from Australia, China, India, and Indonesia discussed together current challenges and innovation approaches in the university sector – from digital transformation processes to new forms of international cooperation.

The TTAP is aimed at the entire SGroup community – from university leaderships via international offices to researchers and students – and purposefully involves external experts and partners. The goal is to point out concrete cooperation opportunities and to strengthen sustainable networks between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.