




Centre for
**Australia
India**
Relations

Strategic Plan

2023-2026



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> Forewords



**Senator the
Hon. Penny Wong**
Minister for Foreign Affairs

In a contested region, Australia and India are both facing the implications of strategic competition, the climate crisis and economic disruption. Our relationship has never been closer, or more consequential.

Australia and India have a shared interest in a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, where sovereignty is respected.

Our deep ties are growing stronger through the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the Quad.

The momentum in the bilateral relationship comes from our people. That includes the dynamic Indian-Australian community, our fastest growing diaspora. It includes the business community driving trade and investment between our

countries. And it includes almost a million Indian tourists and students that visit Australia each year.

The Government is proud to invest in the Centre for Australia-India Relations and invest in these people at the heart of bilateral ties. I welcome the Centre's ambitious agenda to contributing to this important relationship.



Swati Dave
Advisory Board
Chair

It is an honour to present the Centre's first three-year Strategic Plan which lays the foundations for its vision to be a trusted partner in the Australia-India relationship.

At the core of the Strategic Plan is an imperative to bring diverse stakeholders together to solve challenges that are important for both countries and will help shape the future of the region. It's about people – our political and business leaders, scientists, academics, artists and Indian Australian communities putting in hard work to realise the transformative opportunities

represented by India's growth now and for years to come. It's also about reframing how both countries see each other and the immense potential that flows from that.

The Centre builds on the important legacy of the Australia-India Council and the dedicated work of the many individuals and groups engaged in an ambitious bilateral agenda.

Real change takes time and concerted effort. While the Centre has bold ambitions, these will be achieved through a focus on delivering initiatives, programs and

grants that will over time, further encourage Australia and India to see each other as natural partners in which to invest for the long-term. Our vibrant Indian Australian communities are the "living bridge" between both countries and the Centre will provide a platform to enable them to contribute more of their know-how and connections to the relationship.

With the support of the Advisory Board, and concerted delivery by the CEO and the management team, the Centre is well positioned to becoming an enduring asset for the Australia-India relationship.

Context and Purpose

The relationship between Australia and India is more important than ever. We share perspectives, challenges and a democratic heritage. We are collaborating, through our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and as Quad partners, to shape a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

However, despite our unprecedented strategic convergence, contemporary India is not well understood in Australia. Many Australian businesses do not have strong familiarity with Indian economic opportunities, business environments and culture. Likewise, contemporary Australia is not well understood across India, and many Indian businesses are not aware of the economic opportunity Australia presents.

Our trade and investment with India lacks diversity and significantly lags potential. Demand for studies in Indian society and languages is low across our educational institutions. Coverage of India remains underdone in Australian newsrooms and boardrooms.

At the same time, Indian Australian communities – the “living bridge” between our countries – are an enduring strength for the relationship through their entrepreneurship, expertise and networks, and their contributions need to be further supported.

The Australia-India relationship has benefited from a network of active domestic organisations, with diverse objectives and capabilities.

The Centre for Australia-India Relations is a bold Australian Government initiative to add renewed vigour to Australia-India engagement. The Centre is a significant addition to the bilateral architecture and will serve as a national centre of gravity for the relationship, working with the wide range of existing organisations.

The establishment of the Centre was confirmed in the October 2022 Budget. In May 2023, the Prime Minister announced the launch of its operations during the visit to Australia of Prime Minister Modi. The Centre has been established as a Secondary Australian Government Entity in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Centre’s headquarters will be in Parramatta, with a satellite presence in the Sydney CBD.

The Centre’s Charter outlines that the mission of the Centre is to promote and coordinate enhanced co-operation and exchange between Australia and India. The purpose of this inaugural Strategic Plan is to set out where the Centre will focus its efforts over its first three years of operation. This has been informed by extensive consultations with stakeholders across Australia and in India, including a written submissions process, as well as a rigorous mapping of the current landscape of organisations that support Australia’s trade, investment and innovation relationship with India.



➤ Strategy on a Page

Mission

To promote and coordinate enhanced co-operation and exchange between Australia and India.

Long-term Strategic Aspiration

Transforming economic engagement between Australia and India, underpinned by mutual understanding and deep people to people ties.

Four Pillars >

Catalyst for business

Spark collaboration between Australian and Indian businesses to address bilateral and global market opportunities

Promoter of policy translation and public discourse

Translate whole-of-government policy initiatives for industry, convene forums for dialogue and elevate informed public discourse

Short Term Outcome >

Increased business interest in bilateral trade and investment and new partnerships across key sectors

Greater coverage of Australian and Indian perspectives in each other's mainstream media and policy communities

Long Term Outcome >

Australia and India consider each other as a proven destination for profitable investment

More informed public debate and community sentiment about both countries and the relationship

Cross-cutting Enablers

Knowledge partnerships

Inclusive stakeholder engagement

Maitri initiatives

First Nations engagement

Vision

By 2026, the Centre will be a trusted partner for key stakeholders in the bilateral relationship across its four pillars: catalysing business engagement, promoting policy translation and public discourse, engaging the diaspora to support the relationship and facilitating cultural connections.

Platform for diaspora champions

Mobilise Indian Australians to provide their networks and know-how to advance engagement with India

Greater awareness of the value the Indian diaspora can bring to our bilateral relationship

Indian Australians collaborating with industry and other stakeholders navigating bilateral opportunities becomes business as usual

Facilitator for cultural connections

Create mutual understanding through stronger cultural exchange and collaboration between creative industries and through sport

New cultural exchange programs and institutional collaborations

India and Australia become familiar partners for each other's cultural practitioners and creative industries

Values

Inclusive and collaborative

Bold and ambitious

Innovative and adaptive

Impact and outcomes driven

➤ Who we want to be

The Centre for Australia-India Relations aspires to be a trusted partner for key stakeholders in the bilateral relationship across its four pillars of work:

- catalysing business engagement
- promoting policy translation and public discourse
- engaging Indian Australian communities in support of the relationship
- facilitating cultural connections and understanding.

Rather than a policy formulation role, the Centre will play a convening and connecting role, supporting a shared understanding of bilateral opportunities.

The Centre is committed to:

- offering a source of trusted and current advice on engagement between Australia and India
- providing added value rather than duplication
- being inclusive, collaborative and impartial
- fostering a positive culture of integrity and innovation
- being flexible and adaptive in a changing environment
- being impact and outcomes driven
- focusing on the delivery of high-quality programs

- working ethically in an open and accountable way
- reflecting the diversity of Australian society and considering our social impact
- upholding Australia's interests and values, including our commitment to democracy and human rights.



Centre Pillars

Catalysing business engagement

Many Australian businesses lack the confidence to enter the Indian market or are unaware of the extent of the economic transformation underway. Some have formed outdated perceptions of risk and narrowly view Australia and India in the prism of buyer-and-seller, rather than as collaborators to address global opportunities.

Over the period of this Strategic Plan, the Centre's business engagement will focus on the following sectors: education and skills, energy transition, critical minerals and advanced manufacturing, agribusiness and food, infrastructure, technology-enabled services and creative industries. These sectors offer the most potential for greater economic engagement between Australia and India.

To increase business engagement, the Centre will seek to:

- encourage greater coordination in the bilateral economic architecture, across business chambers, academia and initiatives such as the Australia-India CEO Forum
- establish groups of university, private sector and government actors to focus on Indian economic opportunities – convening the right players to collaborate in the right combinations where Australia's economic offering is fragmented
- engage directly with corporate executives and convene roundtables to lift the India capability of boards, CEOs and executives
- amplify case studies demonstrating how businesses have navigated entry and expansion in the Indian market
- encourage use of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement and the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, once concluded
- connect awardees of the *Maitri Scholars and Research Grants* programs with industry networks.

Promoting policy translation and public discourse

The Australian government has invested significantly in policy initiatives to strengthen the Australia-India bilateral architecture. But awareness of these policy settings and broader public discourse on India has not kept pace with the growth of the bilateral relationship.

There is no dedicated India position at any Australian think tank and limited senior professorships at Australian universities. Only one Australian media organisation has a correspondent currently based in India.

To elevate the conversation about opportunities for engagement, the Centre will seek to:

- use media and other outreach opportunities to translate policy settings in the bilateral relationship to a wider audience
- support policy dialogue bringing together policy makers, thinkers and industry, and advance India capability of Australian federal and state policymakers
- explore best practices in sub-national engagement with states and territories, including by helping them identify and leverage their unique value proposition
- commission research exploring shared policy priorities
- promote stronger Australian media representation in India and informed coverage of Australia in India
- facilitate exchange between Australian and Indian think tanks - the *Maitri Fellowships* will support fellows to work in Australian education and research institutions, building expertise and institutional relationships
- leverage high level visits and delegations.

Engaging Indian Australian communities in support of the relationship

Indian Australian communities have made rich contributions to Australia's national story, and almost a million people claimed Indian ancestry in the 2021 census. They now represent Australia's fastest growing large diaspora group and people born in India are the second largest overseas-born group. India remains Australia's largest source of skilled migrants and the second largest source of international students.

Australia's Indian diaspora communities have been central in driving trade and investment with India. In 2022, DFAT produced the report *Australia's Indian Diaspora: A National Asset* highlighting the vital role that Indian Australians can play

in assisting Australian businesses with the connections and insights to navigate the opportunities and challenges in India. This is particularly important in the SME sector, where Indian Australians have demonstrated their know-how in India.

The Centre will seek to:

- promote and highlight the success of Indian Australian leaders across business, academia, science, the arts and civil society and draw them into mainstream national conversations
- develop a strategy to engage with Indian Australian business leaders and entrepreneurs to contribute to the economic relationship and deepen SME business links, drawing on international experiences of engaging diaspora communities
- provide a platform for Indian Australian business champions to offer Australian business the connections and confidence to seize new opportunities
- convene networking opportunities for Indian Australian and non-Indian Australian leaders
- provide mentorship opportunities for young Indian Australians to support the relationship.

Facilitating cultural connections and understanding

There is great potential to lift Australia's creative and sporting sector connections with India, which play a key role in deepening the relationship. Major Australian cultural organisations do not tend to look to India as a viable market for productions, live performances or exhibitions and there are few institutional links or agreements. Although India has the biggest film industry in the world, film industry links also remain thin.

India's burgeoning middle class and the recently concluded Australia-India Audiovisual Co-production Agreement offer significant opportunities for Australian creative industries in the Indian market.

Australia's world-renowned sports, event and venue management capabilities provide further opportunities for partnership.

To grow cultural connections and understanding, the Centre will seek to:

- leverage the *Maitri Cultural Partnerships* program to foster on-going creative industries collaboration with a focus on building institutional links, First Nations engagement and awareness of Indian Australian and multicultural communities
- convene and support cultural and sporting sector dialogue bringing together Australian and Indian federal and state agencies
- support two-way cultural industry delegations and visits
- facilitate Indian Australian organisations' collaboration with major Australian cultural institutions
- work with Australian creative industry promotional organisations to provide opportunities for Australian cultural product to be showcased to Indian producers.



Cross-cutting Enablers

There are a number of enabling factors that cut across each of the Centre's pillars:

01

Knowledge partnerships

Collaboration in academic research and the commercialisation of research will help unlock key opportunities across the Centre's pillars.

02

Maitri grants programs

The Centre will deliver Maitri grants programs (Maitri means friendship in Sanskrit) to support each of the Centre's pillars:

- the *Maitri Scholars* program will bring top-performing Indian graduate students to Australia's universities focusing on STEM;
- the *Maitri Fellowships* will fund the placement of experts working on foreign and trade policy issues in Australian and Indian academic and research institutions, lifting the coverage of the Australia-India relationship
- the *Maitri Research Grants* will promote the India capability of Australian business, including by disseminating case studies and other research about Indian markets; and the *Maitri Cultural Partnerships* program will support innovative collaboration between Australian and Indian creative industries.

03

Inclusive stakeholder engagement

The Centre has an imperative to engage the very best of Australia's diverse society. The Centre will be inclusive across each of its pillars to ensure a wide range of Australian stakeholders are engaged in its work. The Centre will develop strategic partnerships that uplift the effectiveness of its partners' efforts.

04

First Nations engagement

First Nations Australians have been trading and engaging with the peoples of our region for millennia. The Centre will develop a First Nations strategy on how to embed Indigenous perspectives into all the Centre's work and activities, including how to incorporate this across the Maitri grants programs and how the Centre can support First Nations businesses to increase trade and investment with India.





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Measures of Success

The Centre is committed to ensuring on-going monitoring and evaluation of its programs and activities. It will conduct annual reviews to ensure the quality and impact of its programs.

A comprehensive national community sentiment survey will be commissioned to measure attitudes towards India and the relationship. Stakeholder engagement will be tracked to gauge the quantity and quality of engagement with the Centre's programs and activities.

What success looks like:

The Centre is seen as a trusted and accountable partner in Australia and in India for promoting across the relationship, having contributed to:

- enhanced understanding of the Indian market among Australian business and the Australian market among Indian business
- increased business interest in bilateral trade and investment
- better alignment of national and sub-national economic engagement
- the development of new partnerships across key sectors
- amplified platform and profile for Indian Australians as agents of change in the bilateral relationship
- greater public coverage of the relationship in the policy community and media
- increased links between our cultural institutions
- quality Maitri grants and scholarships programs, founded on robust processes.

Strategic Risks

Identifying and managing risk is an integral part of the Centre's governance framework. To make a difference, the Centre will need to embrace a fresh perspective and offer new ideas. In parallel, the Centre will need to carefully manage the following strategic risks:

- given the many existing institutions in the bilateral relationship, defining the Centre's role in relation to others will be critical. The Centre will work with peripheral vision to harmonise its efforts with DFAT and its India network and with other entities, including Austrade, Australian states and territories, and business chambers.
- the Centre will need to focus on encouraging momentum and resilience when the broader relationship is being tested.
- Centre staff and the Advisory Board will undertake regular outreach to states and territories, consider geographic diversity in grants and program activities, and over time, other means to ensure truly national reach.
- the Centre will emphasise inclusivity in engaging the complex stakeholder landscape, where continued outreach will be integral to its success.
- maintaining rigorous grants management processes will be pivotal to the impact of the Maitri initiatives.
- securing and maintaining strong staffing capacity and fit-for-purpose capabilities will be key to delivering on outcomes.



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