



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

# Chancellery International 2020 India Engagement: Year in Review

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*Professor Ashokkumar meeting with the Hon Prime Minister of India during a virtual international research summit in October.*

### ***A message from Assistant Deputy Vice-Chancellor International – India, Professor Ashokkumar***

Dear colleagues and friends

2020 has been a year like no other. Our communities across Australia and India have worked tirelessly to contend with the unprecedented and unpredictable impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite significant disruption, the University of Melbourne has continued to forge ahead in 2020, working hard to develop and expand our engagement with India, as together we tackle the challenges of *our shared future*.

This year, we draw inspiration from all our staff and students who have supported the University's vision to strengthen our collaboration and cooperation with India. While the year has not been without interruption, Chancellery International has once again delivered a strong annual program of activities, events and engagements, which we are immensely proud of.

I am delighted to share our *2020 India Engagement: Year in Review* with you, offering a brief snapshot of the University's activities throughout the year, as we continue to build bridges between the peoples of Australia and India.

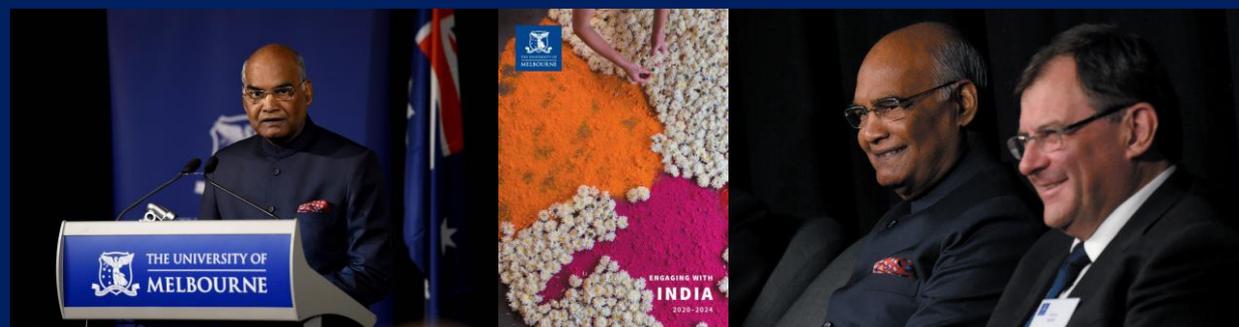
Finally, I wish to extend a special acknowledgement of our Indian student communities, who have supported each other, encouraged each other, and displayed tremendous resilience in adapting to the challenging circumstances presented throughout 2020. You continue to make our University a vibrant and exciting place to be.

Warm regards

Professor Muthupandian Ashokkumar

# The University of Melbourne's relationship with India

The Australia-India relationship continues to be one of the most important international relationships for the University of Melbourne, with significant opportunity for collaboration and cooperation. Since last year's launch of our first-ever bilateral engagement plan, *Engaging with India 2020-2024*, the University remains deeply committed to developing our partnerships with India, building capacity across both our societies and shaping the opportunities of a *shared future*. We continue to strengthen collaborations of mutual interest to address global challenges, increasing joint research projects and fostering a growing cohort of students and researchers.



## 2020 Delegations, Events and Webinars

Early in 2020, University of Melbourne representatives participated in several two-way delegations prior to the restrictions on international travel. This included sending a delegation to the **Australia India Youth Dialogue** in New Delhi in January, where University staff were able to partake in the track-two young leader's dialogue between Australia and India. The University also extended its support to the Dialogue, becoming an official 2020 Dialogue Partner alongside the Victorian Government.



Later in January, the Assistant Deputy Vice-Chancellor International – India, Professor Ashokkumar, and the Dean of the Melbourne School of Engineering visited the **R-JIO Institute in Mumbai**, along with Australia India Institute



*University of Melbourne representatives, Cassie Gardiner and Jayani Nadarajalingam at the AIYD in New Delhi in January.*

(Aii) Director, Professor Craig Jeffrey, to discuss new areas for collaboration.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor International, Professor Michael Wesley, hosted a delegation from the **Government of India's Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD)** for a two-day program in February with the Melbourne Disability Institute and the Nossal Institute for Global Health. The Indian delegation was led by the DEPWD's Joint Secretary Tarika Roy and Under Secretary Sanjay Singh. This important visit advanced a number of collaborations with the University of Melbourne, including a co-designed community-based disability course. The Joint Secretary and Under Secretary participated in a series of roundtables with University experts in public health, disability and education, before attending an official reception hosted by Professor Michael Wesley.

Initiated by the **Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment**, the Hon Thawar Chand Gehlot, the DEPWD has invited the University of Melbourne to be an expert partner for their new national institute on mental health rehabilitation and ongoing research in this field.

# Indian delegation in Melbourne to strengthen ties on community-based disability

Melbourne: Joint Secretary Tarika Roy and Under Secretary Sanjay Singh from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD) in India are visiting the University of Melbourne this week to advance a number of collaborations, including a co-designed community-based disability course.

Developed in partnership with DEPWD and the University's Melbourne Disability Institute, the unique course is designed to train and equip locals to help them respond to the rehabilitation and inclusion needs of community members living with disability. It is currently being rolled out in India.

During their visit, the Joint Secretary and Under Secretary have participated in a roundtable with University experts in public health, disability and education, before attending an official reception dinner hosted by the University of Melbourne Deputy Vice-Chancellor International, Professor Michael Wesley.

The University has fostered a strong partnership with DEPWD since 2017.

Initiated by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Thawar Chand Gehlot, DEPWD has invited the University of Melbourne to be an expert partner for their new national institute on mental health rehabilitation and ongoing research in this space.

Other key initiatives being announced include the development and delivery of a joint leadership training course for the heads of national disability in Australia and India, where leaders will share their expertise and discuss challenges and opportunities.

Researchers will also undertake modelling with DEPWD to develop an economic case for increased disability investment in India.

Professor Wesley welcomed the visit, acknowledging Australia and India's mutual commitment to improving the lives and wellbeing of people with disability.

The Executive Chair and Director of the



Melbourne Disability Institute, Professor Bruce Bonyhady, said: "This visit by a senior delegation from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities provides another very important opportunity to deepen our partnership, share ideas and progress a number of key initiatives designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers."

(Media release)

In February, Professor Ashokkumar joined the Australian Minister for Trade, the Hon Simon Birmingham, for the **Australia India Business Exchange**, which included a program engaging all levels of government, as well as representatives from the higher education and private sectors. Professor Ashokkumar was invited to deliver a presentation on Australia's capabilities in research and development during a meeting in Mumbai organised by Cipla Pharmaceuticals.



Professor Wesley and Professor Ashokkumar meeting with the Indian student societies in March.

In March, Professor Wesley and Professor Ashokkumar met with the University's **Indian Graduate Students Society** and other Indian student clubs, to hear directly from the student cohorts on the challenges and opportunities experienced by Indian students at the University of Melbourne. Later in the year, the Chancellery International

leadership once again joined the Indian student societies for a special virtual **Diwali** gathering.



Professor Ashokkumar in New Delhi for the Australia India Business Exchange in February.

In June, the University of Melbourne was delighted to deliver a virtual yoga event as part of the **International Day of Yoga**, in partnership with the Consulate General of India and the Art of Living. The live event was streamed by participants across Australia and India and is now available for viewing via the Melbourne Uni Sports [site](#).



The University of Melbourne's International Day of Yoga 2020 event in June.

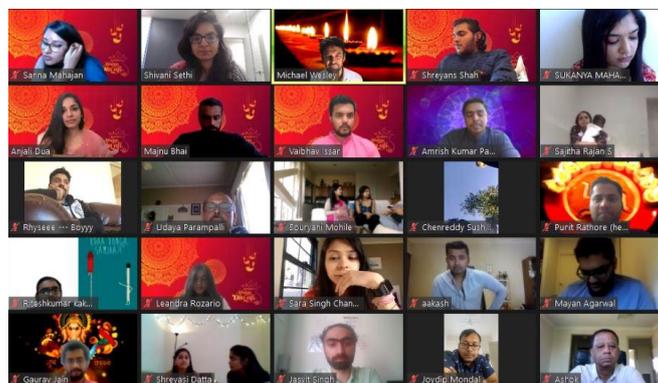
In October, Professor Wesley delivered an opening address during the virtual **International Conference on Mental Health: Looking Beyond Covid-19**. The Conference was co-hosted by the University, Aii and the Indian Government's Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and chaired by the Hon Indian Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr Thaawarchand Gehlot.



The Hon Indian Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr Thaawarchand Gehlot, during the virtual International Conference on Mental Health in October.

Also in October, Professor Wesley moderated a virtual roundtable to discuss ways Australia can continue to partner with India on research collaborations, during a Group of Eight and Aii joint-webinar on **India's National Education Policy**. Notable participants included the Australian Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan, His Excellency Mr Gitesh Sarma, High Commissioner of India and Go8 Chancellery colleagues.

Later in October, Professor Ashokkumar was invited by the Indian Prime Minister's Office to deliver a presentation to the **Hon Prime Minister of India**, His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi, during the inaugural session of VAIBHAV Summit. Professor Ashokkumar raised a number of areas to strengthen international collaboration with India across research and the higher education sector and was the only Australian selected to participate in the unique meeting.



The University of Melbourne's Indian student societies convening with Professor Wesley and Professor Ashokkumar during a virtual Diwali gathering in November.

# Indian School Communities Workshop

Through the *Equal, Inclusive and Well-Governed* pillars of *Engaging with India: 2020-2024*, the University of Melbourne has committed to exploring opportunities for educational mobility and building lasting partnerships with Indian schools and their broader communities. In June, Professor Ashokkumar hosted the University's first workshop for researchers engaging with school communities throughout India.

The workshop brought together 30+ researchers from across the University of Melbourne, and partner institutions in India, who are developing projects to enhance education outcomes in both Australian and Indian schools. Participants introduced the objectives of their respective projects and identified future

collaborative approaches. The projects highlighted the scope and diversity of work being undertaken with school communities across India, from Uttarakhand to Tamil Nadu, in a range of disciplines, such as health, education and geography.

The workshop also showcased programs that are providing opportunities for female empowerment in school communities, at both a student and school leadership level, as well as highlighted the connections being developed between Australian schools and Indian communities, and programs being run by the University's partner institutions in India on career development and health.

## The India Engagement Working Group

In 2020, Professor Ashokkumar established and convened the very first University of Melbourne India Engagement Working Group (IEWG) meeting. The IEWG is comprised of representatives from each of the University's academic divisions, as well as the Aii and Asialink. The IEWG's main responsibility is to prioritise and implement the University's engagement activities and key projects highlighted in *Engaging with India 2020-2024*. The Group held four sessions in 2020 and will convene again in the new year.

## The India Engagement Grants

The University of Melbourne administered two separate India seed grants in 2020, the **India Engagement Seed Grants** and the **India School Education Engagement Grants**. Both grants enabled 12 new University projects, aligned with the objectives of *Engaging with India 2020-2024*, to proceed, strengthening the University's collaboration with Indian partners and benefiting both Australian and Indian societies. Examples of the projects funded include, empowering female students in the Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu regions, co-designing professional learning, which focuses on inclusive education, and empowering youth educational innovators through applied research.

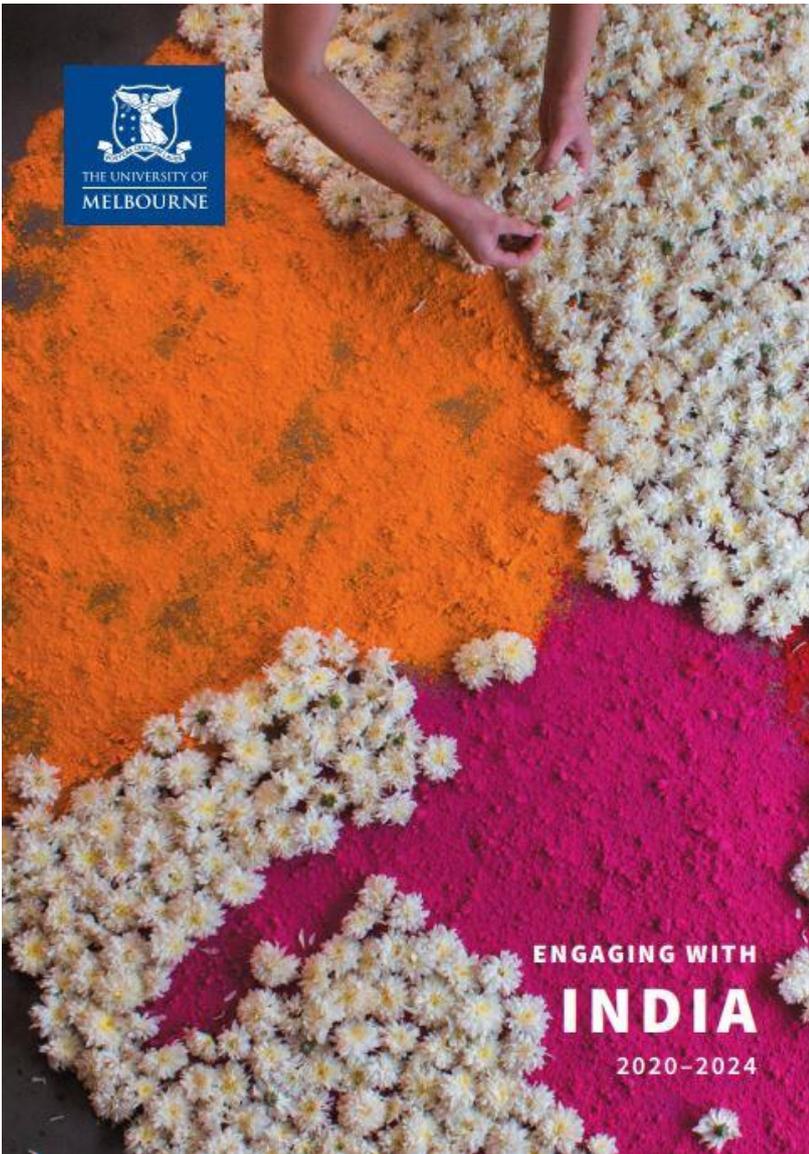
## The University of Melbourne Blended Academy



*The Bachelor of Science (Blended) Virtual Camp 2020 in December.*

The University is in the final stages of establishing the University of Melbourne Blended Academy in Pune. The Academy expands upon the strong partnership and collaboration with Savitribai Phule Pune University (University of Pune), providing Indian students with an opportunity to access University of Melbourne curricula, in-country. In 2020, the University of Melbourne also expanded our existing BSc Blended program to include GITAM

University in Hyderabad and Sri Venkateshwara University in Tirupati in 2020.



To learn more about the University of Melbourne's India engagement plans, click on the image to download a copy of *Engaging with India 2020-2024*.

## Get in touch



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