

**Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies
(The Middle East and Central Asia)**

Research School of Social Sciences | College of Arts and Social Sciences

MINUTES

MEETING: Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies Advisory Board Meeting
DATE/TIME: Tuesday 27 November 2018, 12:30-2:30pm
VENUE: Meeting Room, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Present:

Professor Brian Schmidt (Chair)
Professor the Hon. Gareth Evans (arrived at 2pm)
A/Professor Royston Gustavson (for Professor Rae Frances)
Professor James Piscatori
Professor Amin Saikal
Professor Geoffrey Wiseman (for Professor Michael Wesley)
Professor Catherine Waldby
Mr Tom Harley

In attendance:

Ms Rachel Larobina, CAIS Centre Administrator

Apologies:

HE Mr Mirza Al-Sayegh
Professor Deane Terrell
Professor Adam Shoemaker
The Hon. Thomas Pickering
The Hon. Sussan Ley, MP (due to parliamentary sitting)
Dr Anne Aly, MP (due to parliamentary sitting)
Ms Gai Brodtmann, MP (due to parliamentary sitting)
Mr Richard Gibbs

The Chair, Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Schmidt, opened the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 14 December 2017 were accepted unanimously with the following amendment:

Section 5: "...Professor Wesley suggested looking to the Diplomatic Institute for further consultancies" replaced with "Professor Wesley suggested looking to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Diplomatic Academy for further consultancies."

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Nil

4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The CAIS Director, Professor Amin Saikal, welcomed all present and thanked the VC for chairing the meeting. He said that the last year had been very successful and rewarding, and

the Centre had done extremely well in the areas of research, teaching, outreach and public policy. He noted that these achievements were outlined in the Annual Report, which was circulated to all Board Members, but also summarized them for the meeting:

- In 2018, student numbers did well; approximately 1,000 undergraduate and 90 postgraduate students enrolled in CAIS courses, and the Centre maintained a cohort of 20 HDR research scholars.
- The academic staff of the Centre expanded with two new appointments. Dr Jessie Moritz, who was appointed as Lecturer in July 2017 and following her post-doc position at Princeton University, joined the Centre in July 2018. Her area of research is the Political Economy of the Middle East. Ms Stephanie Wright also joined the Centre in July 2018 as an Associate Lecturer and HDR research scholar. She completed her Masters (PhD-track) at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 2018. Her thesis will focus on Social Life in Lebanon in the late 19th century.
- Academic staff remained very active through this year. Three manuscripts have contracts, and are due to be published in the upcoming year: A. Saikal, *Iran Rising: The Survival and Future of the Islamic Republic* (Princeton University Press); J. Piscatori and A. Saikal, *Islam Beyond Borders: The Umma in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press); A. Saikal and K. Nourzhanov, *The Afghanistan Threat: Security of Central Asia* (I.B. Tauris). Dr Raihan Ismail has an advance contract with Oxford University Press for a manuscript due to be completed by 2020. The VC suggested that a number of Saikal's book be purchased to be presented to distinguished figures visiting the ANU.
- Outreach and Public Policy also continued. The Centre provided short courses to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Attorney General's Department, Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Department of Defence.

Professor Saikal noted that the three main areas of discussion for the meeting would be:

1. Building Space (Section 8)
2. Leadership Succession (Section 10)
3. Research in the Middle East (Other Business)

Prof Saikal was asked to make a comment on the outcomes of the ANU's withdrawal from negotiations with the Ramsey Centre. He noted that the barrage of criticisms from segments of the media caused discomfort for both the Centre and himself personally. He felt that CAIS was subjected to unwarranted collateral damage. Prof Saikal is very grateful to the VC for speaking out against the false accusations regarding payments and endowments. He clarified these payments for the Board: In 2000, the Centre received a one-off donation of \$2.5 million from the [REDACTED], \$650,000 from [REDACTED] and \$430,000 from [REDACTED]. These donations were matched by the ANU dollar for dollar and enabled the Centre to construct a dedicated building and to endow four academic positions in the areas of Arab and Islamic studies, and Persian and Turkish languages. None of these donations has strings attached, particularly in regards to the Centre's appointments or curriculum.

Prof Saikal noted that CAIS has a lecturer in Persian Language, Dr Negar Ardakani, who was chosen by CAIS through the Iranian Ministry of Education (and paid for by the Ministry) to assist with the Persian Language and Iranian Studies program during 2018-2019. However, from October 2018, all international Persian lecturers were recalled to Iran due to economic constraints. To maintain the Persian program on solid grounds, the Centre will employ Dr Ardakani as a casual sessional in 2019; the Centre has enough funding to cover this, but this is a temporary measure only. If CAIS cannot have two lecturers, it will be increasingly difficult to maintain Persian Language at Major level. But, given that the ANU is the only Australian university to teach Persian, it is in the strategic interest of the ANU and CAIS to ensure that

there is a second lecturer.

The VC stated that the ANU still receives some negative feedback from the fallout of the Ramsey Centre withdrawal, and he noted that it is important to prevent CAIS being the target again. He suggested that a 'Friendship Group' could be formed, which could be mobilized and cultivated if/when needed in support of CAIS. Mr Harley said that he was happy to vocally support the Centre whenever required. Professor Waldby said that there were sides of the media which, if briefed, could defend CAIS. Prof Saikal noted that he does have close connections within the media, but in the case of the Ramsey negotiations he left statements/comments to the ANU Communications team.

Mr Harley asked the VC if the ANU had a Terms of Reference (ToR's) for money donations. The VC answered that there are no official ToR's. However, there are three underlying principles when it comes to accepting money:

1. Academic integrity needs to be upheld.
2. Academic autonomy needs to be retained.
3. Academic freedom cannot be restricted.

Professor Wiseman noted that the jointly written op-ed piece by the VC and Chancellor on the Ramsey negotiations was very effective, as it provided a guideline for the staff to defend the University.

It was agreed that the VC will meet with Ms Jane O'Dwyer and Prof Saikal about the formation of the 'Friendship Group'.

5. BOARD'S MEMBERSHIP

Prof Saikal proposed the following new members to be invited to join the CAIS Advisory Board:

- The Hon. Ed Husic MP, who would replace the Hon Warren Snowden (whose term on the Board ended in 2017).
- The Hon. Julie Bishop MP has been a strong supporter of the Centre, having participated in several of its activities, including opening a conference supported by a grant from DFAT, launching a book, and being guest of honour at a dinner, hosted by the Director of CAIS, attended by regional ambassadors and ANU officials.
- Ms Gai Brodtmann MP will continue to serve on the Board, despite retiring from parliament.

The Board agreed unanimously. Prof Saikal will draft the invitations and send them to the VC for his endorsement.

6. ENDOWMENTS

Prof Saikal noted that the Centre's endowments are doing well and growing. They currently amount to \$11 million. They either partly or wholly fund a number of academic positions at the Centre. These include:

- Level A Turkish Lecturer;
- Level B Persian Lecturer;
- Level B Lecturer in Arab and Islamic Studies;
- Level E Professor.

CAIS also offers support to early career researchers (to attend conferences etc.) through a staff-research support endowment.

CAIS receives around \$171, 000 from the NIG.

The VC encouraged Prof Saikal to think strategically in terms of future, and Prof Saikal noted that he is aware of the sensitivities around who can be approached for more donations/endowments.

7. CONSULTANCIES, TRAINING COURSES, PUBLIC POLICY AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Prof Saikal stated that the Centre is doing well in this area, and will continue along similar lines depending on resources available. He noted that two staff will be on OSP (both from the Arabic Program) in 2019, and two casual sessional lecturers/tutors (one for each in the Arabic and Persian programs) will be employed for that year. There are also provisions in the budget to make another senior appointment (level D).

8. BUILDING SPACE

Prof Saikal reported that space in the CAIS building is currently limited due to the expanding staff (11 academic and three administrative staff) and HDR student numbers (20 students, of whom several are currently housed in the demountable next to the Beryl Rawson Building). The Centre now needs an extension to its building. Professor Saikal circulated architectural plans for an extension, which were received favourably.

The VC noted that the Advancement Team could, potentially, scout for the funding. As an alternative, the VC suggested that some of the HDR students may be able to make use of some spots in the new RSSS building. Professor Waldby said that some may be able to be accommodated in the short term, but not many; the RSSS building could be a holding space. However, an extension would be better (and more aesthetically pleasing).

The VC discussed the new building projects on campus, including Kambri and the proposed AD Hope upgrade.

9. NEW INITIATIVES

Prof Saikal reported that there is space in the budget for an appointment of an Associate Lecturer, which could be in the field of Human Rights and Palestinian Issues. The VC suggested that such a position could be a joint appointment as it could be financially appealing and good for cross-college collaboration.

10. LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

Prof Saikal raised the question of leadership succession and reported that a position at the senior academic level (D) is included in the Centre's budget for this purpose. The VC and Prof Saikal have identified a potential candidate overseas, but arrangements will need to be put in place for a double appointment.

11. RSSS REVIEW

Prof Waldby discussed the upcoming RSSS Review, originally proposed for September 2019 but postponed until June 2020. The postponement is due to the completion of the new RSSS Building, which is due for completion in the third-quarter of 2019. The Provost and CASS Dean are in full support of this change of date.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

a) **Research in the Middle East**

Prof Saikal raised the issue of increased difficulty of researching in the Middle East in the light of growing political restrictions in the region. Accordingly, staff and students need to be more conscious of the risks involved in travelling to the region.

Professor Piscatori raised the issue of the student to academic ratio in relation to the Applied Arabic course, which is taught in an Arabic-speaking environment in the Middle East. It requires support staff in addition to the Arabic lecturer teaching the course. This means further costs, and the VC noted that CAIS could think about providing a senior student with the relevant training as a 'back up' person. This year 22 CAIS students are doing Applied Arabic in Amman, Jordan, and CAIS has employed an additional support staff.

The VC and Prof Waldby will look into this additional cost to see how the College could assist, and consult with the General Manager of the College.

b) **Online Courses**

Prof Piscatori raised the issue of whether online Persian could be offered through the Open University. He noted that CAIS has received 33 inquiries since October from people who want to study Persian and Arabic online, but students cannot enroll due to both the high ANU fees and the lack of access through the Open University. The VC agreed to look into this matter and proposed that CAIS could offer micro-crediting courses.

c) **Academic Appointments**

Prof Saikal noted that the field of Middle Eastern Studies is very tight, and it is hard to find highly qualified multi-skilled academics at leadership level. The VC suggested open recruitment rounds as the best way to achieve the desired results.

The VC thanked the members and expressed his appreciation. He closed the meeting at 2:30pm.

CENTRE FOR ARAB AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

(The Middle East and Central Asia)

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ANU COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

MINUTES

MEETING: Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies Advisory Board Meeting

DATE/TIME: Wednesday 1 June 2022, 11:00-12:30pm

VENUE: Meeting Room, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present:

- Professor Brian Schmidt (Chair)
- Professor Catherine Waldby
- Professor Greg Fealy
- Professor Talal Yassine
- Professor Karima Laachir
- Mrs. Azra Khan
- Mr. Roland Jabbour
- Mr. Yasser Shahin

In attendance: Ms. Janja Peric (Senior Centre Administrator)

Apologies:

- The Hon. Julie Bishop
- Professor Rae Frances (on an overseas trip)
- Professor Jim Piscatori
- HE Mr. Mirza Al-Sayegh
- Dr. Anne Aly, MP (due to government business)
- Mr. Shahyar Roushan (on an overseas trip)

The meeting was officially opened by the Chair, Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Schmidt, who warmly welcomed all participants and acknowledged the apologies received, highlighting the broad geographical reach and diverse commitments of the board members.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes from the meeting held on 27 November 2018 were reviewed in detail and were accepted unanimously by all present, reflecting a collective agreement on the accuracy and completeness of the recorded discussions.

3. Membership of the CAIS Advisory Board

The Chair expressed sincere gratitude to the previous Board Members whose dedicated three-year term concluded at the end of 2021. These esteemed members included:

- Professor the Hon. Gareth Evans
- Professor Deane Terrell
- Professor Michael Wesley
- Professor Adam Shoemaker
- The Hon. Thomas Pickering
- The Hon. Sussan Ley, MP
- Ms. Gai Brodtmann, MP
- Mr. Richard Gibbs
- Mr. Tom Harley

The Chair then extended a warm welcome to the new Board Members who commenced their term in January 2022, highlighting the diverse expertise they bring to the Board. These new members are:

- The Hon Julie Bishop, ANU *Chancellor*
- Emeritus Professor Gregory Fealy, *Department of Political and Social Change, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, College of Asia and the Pacific*
- *Professor Jim Piscatori, Honorary Professor of Islam and Muslim Societies at CAIS, ANU and Emeritus Professor of Middle East Studies at Durham University, UK.*
- Mr Yasser Shahin, *Executive Chair, Peregrine Corporation*
- Professor Talal Yassine OAM, *Managing Director, Crescent Wealth*
- Mr Roland Jabbour OAM, *Chairman, Jabbour Holding Group and President and National Chairman, Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry*
- Ms Azra Khan, *Senior Director, ACT Government*
- Mr Shahyar Roushan, *Human Rights Lawyer, Senior Member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, and NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal*

The Centre is actively seeking a replacement for The Hon. Sussan Ley, MP from the Liberal Party who concluded her term as an Advisory Board member. Additionally, the Centre is on the lookout for a new Advisory Board Member from the Gulf region, ideally a female leader and intellectual who can significantly contribute to the Centre's initiatives in that region.

4. Terms of Reference Review

The Chair reminded the Advisory Board Members of the Terms of Reference, which comprehensively outline the Board's objectives, authority, composition, tenure, roles, responsibilities, and administrative arrangements. The Terms of Reference, reflecting the foundational guidelines for the Board's functioning, were unanimously accepted by all attendees.

5. Director's Report

CAIS Director, Prof Karima Laachir, expressed her profound appreciation to all present, extending a special thank you to the new members of the Advisory Board. She also thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his leadership in chairing the meeting. Notably, she acknowledged the continuous support of Prof Catherine Waldby, the Director of RSSS, especially during the challenging times of COVID-19 and the subsequent Change Management phase that CAIS navigated through in late 2020 and early 2021.

The Director conveyed her heartfelt gratitude to Dean of CASS Prof Rae Frances for her unwavering support of the Centre and its staff, noting that this meeting would be Prof Frances's last in her current role due to her upcoming retirement from the Deanship of CAIS in September 2022.

Prof Laachir highlighted the extraordinary support received from the Vice-Chancellor for CAIS and its role within ANU and broader Australia as a leader in Middle East and Central Asia Studies.

The Director reflected on the challenging period during which she assumed the Directorship of CAIS in January 2020, immediately followed by the devastating bushfires of the summer of 2019/20, the global pandemic, and the ensuing financial crisis at ANU. She paid tribute to the resilience and tenacity of CAIS staff, who overcame these adversities to emerge even stronger.

A detailed presentation of the Centre's collective vision and strategy was given, developed in close consultation with all CAIS staff, encompassing education, research, government and community engagement, and outreach. The Director sought feedback on this strategy, which was discussed at length by the Advisory Board Members, all of whom were unanimously supportive of this direction.

Summary of the Strategy:

- In Education: Streamlining and consolidating all CAIS undergraduate and postgraduate offerings to:
 - Teach less but more effectively, maintaining and enhancing the quality of student education
 - Creatively reduce workloads using co-teaching and intensive semesterisation
 - Maintain high SELT results and excellent student satisfaction
- In Research: Transitioning towards a research-intensive unit involving all CAIS academic staff by offering:
 - A research-intensive environment and support for CAIS ECRs, enabling reduced teaching loads
 - Increased quality and quantity of research outputs and publications in Q1 journals and reputable university presses
 - Enhanced funding in categories 1-4
 - Strengthened national and international collaborations, utilising these partnerships for grant applications and publications
 - Enhanced public engagement and outreach through high-impact public lecture series, international conferences on the Middle East and Central Asia, and media interventions informed by grounded research and expertise
- In Outreach, Impact, and Engagement:

- Continued government and private sector consultancies and Executive Education
- Strong media and public presence
- Community outreach through events and collaborations

CAIS Finances and Endowments:

Prof Laachir noted the Centre's excellent financial health, with endowments currently amounting to \$11 million, partly or wholly funding various academic positions at the Centre. These positions include:

- Level B Turkish Lecturer for Dr. Burcu Cevik-Compiegne
- Level C Persian Lecturer for Dr. Zahra Taheri
- Level B Lecturer in Arabic Studies for Leila Kouatly
- Level E Professor (paying the full salary of the Director of CAIS)

CAIS also supports early career researchers through a staff-research support endowment, assisting in attending conferences and conducting fieldwork. The director also discussed future endowments for CAIS, seeking advice from new members on this matter, and outlined plans to secure additional endowments to ensure the expansion and financial viability of the Centre.

6. Other Business

Proposal for Centre name change to: Centre for Middle Eastern and Central Asian Studies.

The Director, after extensive consultation with CAIS staff, students, and both internal and external stakeholders, proposed a name change. She explained that the Centre's focus is more on Middle East and Central Asia Studies rather than traditional Islamic Studies (theology and Quranic studies), making a name change seem more appropriate. However, Advisory Board Members cautioned against the name change, emphasising the Centre's strong national and international brand. They highlighted the importance of the title "Islamic Studies" in promoting a better understanding of Islam and Muslims. The members suggested further consultation on the change and recommended that the Director might want to seek input from the formal CAIS Review Panel on this proposal when CAIS undergoes a review in 2023.

CENTRE FOR ARAB AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

(The Middle East and Central Asia)

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ANU COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

MINUTES

MEETING: Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies Advisory Board Meeting

DATE/TIME: Tuesday 28th November 2023, 11:00-12:30pm

VENUE: Meeting Room, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present:

- Professor Brian Schmidt (Chair)
- Professor Bronwyn Parry
- Professor Christian Barry
- Professor Karima Laachir
- Professor Greg Fealy
- Mr. Roland Jabbour
- Mr Shahyar Roushan
- Professor James Piscatori
- Mr Yasser Shahin
- Professor Talal Yassine

In attendance: Ms. Heather Chao (Senior Centre Administrator)

Apologies:

- The Hon. Julie Bishop
- Mrs. Azra Khan
- Dr. Anne Aly, MP
- Mr Mirza Al-Sayegh
- Ms Aysha Abdulhameed A J Al-Mudahka

The meeting was officially opened by the CAIS Director Prof Karima Laachir standing in for Professor Brian Schmidt who arrived at the meeting at 12.00 p.m. (because of a delayed flight). Professor Laachir started with the acknowledgement of the country. The Director formally welcomed all Advisory Board Members, and acknowledged the apologies received from Members who could not attend.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 1st June 2022 were reviewed and approved, reflecting a collective agreement on the accuracy and completeness of the recorded discussions.

3. Membership of the CAIS Advisory Board

The Director expressed sincere gratitude to the previous Board Members whose term concluded at the end of 2022. These esteemed members included:

- Professor Raelene Frances, who retired from her position as Dean of the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS).
- Professor Catherine Waldby, who stood down from position as Director of the Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS).

The Director then extended a warm welcome to the new Board Members who commenced their term in January 2023, highlighting the diverse expertise they bring to the Board. These new members are:

- Professor Bronwyn Parry, Dean of the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS).
- Professor Christian Barry, Director of the Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS)
- Ms Aysha Abdulhameed A J Al-Mudahka (Qatar Foundation)

The Centre is actively seeking for a new Advisory Board Member as the Liberal Member of Parliament to replace The Hon. Sussan Ley whose term came to an end. Two potential suitable candidates can be approached because of their interest in the Middle East and that include The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP and Senator David Fawcett. The Director have asked for more recommendations from the current Advisory Board Members.

4. Terms of Reference Review

The Director reminded the Advisory Board Members of the Terms of Reference and there were no comments put forward.

5. Director's Report

The Meeting focused on the discussion on the CAIS External Review which took place on the first and second of November 2024. CAIS Director expressed her appreciation to Prof Bronwyn Parry, the Dean of CASS, Prof Christian Barry, the Director of RSSS, Prof Greg Fealy, and Prof James Piscatori, for their feedback on the CAIS External Review Report before the centre submitted it to the Review Panel on 14 October 2023.

The Director reported on the centre new recruitments: Dr Mohammed Al Sudairi, Lecturer in Politics and International Relations (The Arabian Peninsula, China and the Middle East) to start on the 1st of February 2024 and Dr Andrew Hammond, Senior Lecturer in the Politics of Religion and Contemporary Islamic Studies to start on 2nd of January 2025.

The Director reported on the centre's media outreach that has reached 8.5 million to 19.5 million audience within Australia. Since the last Advisory Board Meeting in November 2022, CAIS has organised and delivered Five major International Conferences and a series of high impact Public Lecture Series on current events in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Director Report on CAIS External Review:

CAIS's External Review took place on the 1st and 2nd November 2023 on ANU Campus and CAIS Building. The Review Panel consisted of highly respected and reputable scholars in the field of Middle East and Central Asia Studies:

Review Panel Membership

Position	Name	Institution
Chair	Professor Vedi Hadiz Director, Head of School - Asia Institute	University of Melbourne
Member	Professor Sarah Phillips Professor of Global Conflict and Development	The University of Sydney
Member	Professor Reuel Hanks Professor & Humphreys Chair of International Studies	Oklahoma State University

Following the Review Terms of Reference, the Panel members met and discussed extensively for two days CAIS's work with stakeholders within ANU and the wider community including education, research and services portfolios at ANU and a wide range of government and community stakeholders. They also met with CAIS staff and undergraduate and postgraduate students including HDR students.

The Director presented an Executive Summary of the Review Report

CAIS Strengths

- CAIS is the premier location for the study of the Middle East and Central Asia in Australia with stellar researchers and the go-to Centre for advice on the regions' affairs for government officials, policymakers, media outlets and the public.
- It boasts cutting-edge, research-led teaching for the next generation of community leaders, politicians and public service employees, equipping them with rigorous critical thinking skills and in-depth knowledge of the Middle East and Central Asia and their diasporas.
- It is inspired by collaborative research and strong relationships with international partners; dense ties with societal actors in the region; with solid partnerships with industry; and engagement with various stakeholder communities in Australia.
- It is a flagship of area studies aiming at the promotion of global knowledge and understanding across national divides. CAIS strategy is fully aligned with the ANU vision to serve the nation.

CAIS Challenges

- CAIS is small and it is punching above its weight; CAIS is developing a viable plan to increase and sustain its staff profile (e.g. via philanthropy).

- Workload issues: reducing teaching loads and enhancing research-intensive environment, especially for early career researchers (ECRs).
- Increasing grant income, across Category 1-3 sources (nationally and internationally).
- The challenge of teaching languages with small number of staff and limited resources.

The Director reported that the oral feedback of the Review Panel received at the end of the review (2nd of November) and in the presence of VC Professor Brian Schmidt was extremely positive. The Review Panel stressed that CAIS is a remarkable institution with a significant impact both nationally and internationally and that it has made a distinctive contribution to the Australian National University's mission, in all the areas of research, teaching and engagement. The panel stated that Australian stakeholders within government, business, and community – as well as international ones – uniformly praise the role of CAIS in providing deep and nuanced understanding of some of the most complex regions of the world. Its current position provides a solid basis for future development.

The panel made some recommendations to build on CAIS success and consolidate its reputation as a leading Area Studies centre on Middle East and Central Asia in Australia and globally. This involves the reduction of teaching loads in line with CASS and offering a more research-intensive environment for its Early Career Researchers; it also involves the creation of a strategy to allow ECRs to join major grant applications and build their grant profile.

The Panel stressed the importance of language teaching in the Centre and the fact that CAIS is leading in teaching Arabic in Australia and is the only institution teaching Persian and Turkish in the Country. Given the importance of these language for national security and national cohesion, the Panel recommended the teaching of these languages should be maintained and even expanded by optimising resources and offering more support to CAIS staff.

The panel stressed overall CAIS excellence in a variety of engagement and research translation activities, which contributes to the prestige of the university by projecting its expertise outward, nationally as well as internationally. They recommended the development of better ways of assessing CAIS performance in relation to staff members' overall and unique contribution to the ANU as that would be helpful in terms of responding to some staff concerns about career progression.

The VC Professor Brian Schmidt commented that that the review was exceptionally strong, and that it was one of the best reviews he attended on campus. He praised the excellent learning environment and learning experiences offered to CAIS students and the exceptionally high SELT results of all CAIS courses. He also praised CAIS's strong engagement and research on cutting edge issues related to the Middle East and Central Asia and contribution to community cohesion in Australia. The VC commented that CAIS punches above its weight given its small size, and that it would need at least another three professorial positions (level E) to deliver on its mission and goals.

6. Other Business

The Director thanked wholeheartedly the VC Professor Brian Schmidt for his continuous support of CAIS's work and for his advice and guidance and wished him all the success in the next chapter of his career as he was in the last month of his term as ANU VC. She also thanked all Members of the Advisory Board for their continuous and valuable support of CAIS and for their advice and guidance.