

MEDIA RELEASE**La Trobe strengthens Australia–India innovation ties with key research leadership appointment****2 June 2026**

Melbourne, Australia- India is playing an increasingly important role in La Trobe University's global research and doctoral training network, spanning artificial intelligence, climate resilience, mobility and sustainable infrastructure.

To strengthen research collaboration between **Australia and India**, **La Trobe University has appointed Professor Aniruddha (Ani) Desai as Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) India**, a newly created leadership role focused on advancing joint PhD training, industry-linked research and institutional partnerships across India.

The appointment builds on La Trobe's established India-facing research ecosystem led by the **Asian Smart Cities Research and Innovation Network (ASCRIN)**, founded by La Trobe University in collaboration with Indian institutions including **IIT Kanpur, BITS Pilani and Tata Institute of Social Sciences**, supporting joint doctoral training and **collaborative research critical to both India and Australia**.

ASCRIN is La Trobe's largest international research initiative, actively engaging **more than 180 researchers** across La Trobe and partner universities in India and supporting **over 100 approved joint PhD projects**, with **more than 70 doctoral candidates** recruited to date and further recruitment underway.

ASCRIN focuses on applied research at scale, with an impact-based approach to solving problems of communities through joint investment of La Trobe and Indian partners, industry engagement, and implementation-led innovation.

ASCRIN is designed to translate international research into scalable outcomes across artificial intelligence, sustainable infrastructure, climate resilience, mobility, energy transition, and digital health.

Current collaborative research projects include:

- AI and sensing-enabled dairy supply chain solution to improve health, safety, and productivity in India's dairy supply chains
- AI-enabled transport systems to improve mobility, traffic flow and congestion management in rapidly growing cities
- Data-driven urban planning tools designed to support sustainable infrastructure and smart city decision making
- Climate-resilient agriculture and water security research focused on resource management and environmental sustainability
- Energy transition and sustainability projects supporting cleaner and more efficient urban and regional systems

- Digital and data-driven health technologies aimed at improving scalable healthcare delivery and access

Professor Ashok Kumar, Director, IIT Kanpur–La Trobe Research Academy, said the collaboration reflected the growing role of India–Australia partnerships in building long-term research capability and advanced talent across both countries.

“The IIT Kanpur–La Trobe partnership demonstrates how Indian and Australian universities can work together at scale on joint doctoral training and applied research in areas that directly impact urban sustainability, infrastructure, climate resilience and future technologies,” Professor Kumar said.

Professor Aniruddha Desai, Founder Director, ASCRIN, said the next phase of collaboration would focus on research with practical outcomes and long-term impact for India and Australia.

“India is central to how major research and talent pipelines are being shaped globally, and the Australia–India relationship is increasingly focused on building joint capacity rather than traditional academic exchange alone. This means training researchers together and developing applied solutions in areas like cities, energy transition, climate resilience and health that are now shared strategic priorities,” Professor Desai said.

Professor Desai is a La Trobe Research Professor and Director of La Trobe’s Centre for Technology Infusion, where he leads industry-linked research across transport, energy, health, and agriculture. He has led large-scale collaborative research programs involving universities, government and industry partners in both India and Australia.

About La Trobe University, Australia

La Trobe University is a top 1% globally ranked, research-intensive Australian university with more than 30 years of sustained engagement with India across education, research, and innovation. Its India engagement is supported by long-standing institutional relationships and a network of more than 12,000 India-born alumni, reflecting deep and continuing academic collaboration between the two countries.

Its partnerships in India include a NEP 2020-aligned Joint Bachelor of Civil Engineering (2+2) program with Mahindra University, an Accelerated Juris Doctor partnership with OP Jindal Global University and a long-standing academic relationship with Lady Shri Ram College established in 1995. These collaborations focus on joint teaching, academic mobility, and cross-border higher education engagement with leading Indian institutions.

In research and innovation, La Trobe spearheads the Bio Innovation Corridor with BIRAC and the Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre to support India–Australia research translation and collaboration. The University also supports the Shah Rukh Khan La Trobe University PhD Scholarship for women researchers from India.

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