

24 February 2017

A submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade *Foreign Policy White Paper* 2017 Taskforce

I welcome this opportunity to provide input into the development of the DFAT *Foreign Policy White Paper*. In the interests of brevity, I endeavour to keep my points succinct, but provide references with supporting evidence. This submission focuses on several inter-related themes, but is premised on the belief that Australia's relationship with Indonesia is one of, if not, *the* most significant bilateral relationship, and will remain so into the foreseeable future. A deterioration in this relationship would have a potentially disastrous impact upon our relationships with Southeast Asia, Asia as a whole, and the broader global community.

To ensure the maintenance of a productive collaborative relationship with Indonesia over the next century, this submission asserts the White Paper should take account of the following:

- 1) Indonesian language in Australian universities is in crisis.
 - a. A comprehensive, multi-faceted community-to-community relationship between Australia and Indonesia is important in weathering the occasional tensions which emerge in government and business affairs. The nature of people-to-people relations is that they are multi-focal and diverse. One key factor in facilitating such dispersed community relations is a deepening appreciation within each society for the other.
 - b. While long assumed and asserted, recent research now demonstrates that the experience of learning Indonesian language (usually at school or university) inclines an Australian to take a more positive view towards Indonesia, compared to those who have not studied the language.¹
 - c. It is of great concern that during 2000-2009 enrolments in Indonesian language in Australian universities declined nationally by 37%. This occurred despite total student enrolments in Australian universities increasing by approximately the same percentage over that same period.² Thus, the decline in Indonesian enrolments was doubly alarming.

¹ David T. Hill, 'Language as 'soft power' in bilateral relations: The case of Indonesian language in Australia', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 36:3, September 2016, pp.364-378 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2014.940033>)

² David T. Hill, *Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a stronger future*, Australian Learning and Teaching Council National Teaching Fellowship Final Report, Murdoch University, Perth, April 2012 second edition (with corrections),
<http://altcfellowship.murdoch.edu.au/Docs/ALTC NTF Indonesian in Australian Universities FINAL REPORT.pdf>

- d. Between 2009-2014 enrolments in Indonesian language in Australian university degrees remained flat.
- e. During the period 2000-2014 the number of universities offering 'full-service' Indonesian language programs (that is, taught by their own staff rather than contracting materials from another provider), declined from 20 to 14.³
- f. Significantly, during 2009-2014 the proportion of students who were enrolled in Indonesian language courses as part of their Australian degrees but who were, in fact, going to Indonesia to take their language component 'in-country' was increasing. As a percentage of Indonesian language's total student load in Australian universities, the proportion actually studying in-country increased from about 11% in 2010 to 17% in 2014.⁴ Thus, evidence suggests that, when given the opportunity and encouragement, Australian undergraduates will choose to study Indonesian but increasingly they prefer to do so *in Indonesia* rather than in Australian classrooms.

2) Australian students studying in Indonesia

- a. The Australian Government is to be commended for implementing the New Colombo Plan (NCP) to encourage and support Australian university students to study in universities in Asia and the Pacific. In the case of Indonesia, this support from the NCP is essential if Australia is to continue to benefit from an increasing flow of Australian students into Indonesian universities, given the substantial impediments unsupported Australian students face if seeking to study in Indonesia.⁵
- b. Until the early 1990s virtually no Australian students enrolled in Indonesian universities. There were several programs offered during Australian university vacations when students could study Indonesian in Indonesia, but it was virtually unknown for an Australian student to actually enrol (for a semester or more) in an Indonesian university.
- c. The establishment of the Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) in 1994, dramatically changed this by encouraging and enabling Australian undergraduates to enrol in Indonesian universities where they study for academic credit back to their home university degrees. The first ACICIS cohort in August 1995 had 29 Australian students from seven universities.⁶

³ Hill, 2012, Appendix A

⁴ David T. Hill, 'Facing the Twenty-First Century: Indonesian in Australian Universities' in Paul Thomas, ed. (forthcoming) *Talking North: history, literacy and policy in Australia's first Asian language*. Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing.

⁵ *Higher Education Internationalisation in Indonesia: Inbound Australian Student Trends*, August 2011, pp. 33-34, and Appendix II: Visa and Immigration Details.

⁶ In the interests of transparency, I acknowledge a role as founder and Consortium Director of ACICIS. The initial sending universities were Murdoch, UWA, ANU, Curtin, Monash, UWS and Griffith.

- d. The ACICIS Study Indonesia program has since produced more than 2000 Australian alumni, many of whom now occupy significant places in Australian business, government (most notably within DFAT and the Department of Defence) and academe.⁷
- e. ACICIS now offers more than 15 study programs in Indonesia, from two-week study tours and 6-week internship programs, through to semester-long programs taught in English and in Indonesian language, across a wide range of disciplines.
- f. In 2016, ACICIS enabled 100 students to undertake semester-long studies in Indonesia. In January-February 2017, 106 additional students undertook 6-week professional internship programs in Business, Journalism, Development Studies, Creative Arts and Design.
- g. ACICIS is now the largest and longest-running bilateral educational program of its kind in Australia. It is recognised as a 'successful model for in-country learning' and has been adopted as the model for a similar university consortium to support student mobility to India.⁸
- h. The ACICIS Consortium now includes 24 Australian universities (that is, the majority of Australia's universities), plus one member university each in the UK and the Netherlands. Its membership is open to other universities and it continues to expand year by year.
- i. However, despite the contribution made by the NCP student mobility grants to stimulating student interest in studying in Indonesia, the scheme currently does not provide any funds to support essential program development. (Developing a new full-semester academic program at an Indonesian university for Australian students is approximately \$100,000.)

j. This submission recommends that the Australian Government (either through the NCP or an ancillary program) provide grants to support the development of appropriate in-country academic programs for Australian students in Indonesia.

3) Support for Indonesian language teaching in Australian schools.

- a. The most recent national research (published in 2010) found that, with approximately 191,000 Australian school students studying Indonesian that year, school enrolments since 2001 had been declining annually by at least 10,000 students.⁹

⁷ Testimonials from ACICIS alumni now pursuing careers in key Australian government departments can be found at <https://vimeo.com/acicis>.

⁸ Australian Government, *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, October 2012, p.173, (http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/australia_in_the_asian_century_white_paper.pdf); and John Bayliss, *Pathways to India: promoting student mobility*, La Trobe Asia, October 2016 (commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training).

⁹ Michelle Kohler and Phillip Mahnken, *The Current State of Indonesian Language Education in Australian Schools*, ESA, Carlton South, 2010, pp.5-6.

- b. The critical state of school-level Indonesian language programs is highlighted by the alarming fact that *there were fewer Year 12 students studying Indonesian in 2009 than there were matriculating in the language in 1972.*¹⁰ That is, facility in Indonesian by senior school students in Australia has *declined* rather than increased over the past half century!
 - c. The most successful program to stimulate study of Asian languages (including Indonesian) was the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy. Established in 1994 and due to run until 2006, NALSAS terminated prematurely by the Howard Government in 2002. At a cost of \$208 million over eight years, NALSAS successfully doubled enrolments in the target Asian languages (Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean) within less than a decade! In view of the current state of Indonesian in schools a new NALSAS strategy is essential.
- d. This submission recommends that a National Asian Languages in Schools program (at least for Indonesian) be (re-)introduced, and funded for a minimum period of a decade, at a level at least equivalent to, and preferably higher than, that provided to NALSAS, in relative terms.**
- e. Such a National Asian Languages in Schools program would enable students to develop facility in the languages they need to participate fully in, and ensure optimal benefits from, the New Colombo Plan at university level.

While these educational issues may seem to be separate from core foreign policy questions, they are in fact fundamental drivers of foreign policy as they determine how the Australian community will engage with, and relate to, our region this century and beyond. The Australian Government needs a comprehensive strategy to develop and deploy such intellectual assets as part of our foreign policy strategy to engage with our regional neighbours.

I would welcome the opportunity of discussing these matters with those compiling the White Paper.

Yours sincerely,



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¹⁰ William Thomas, *Paths to Asia: Asian Studies at universities in Australia*, Working Papers in Asian Studies No.6. Centre for Asian Studies, University of Western Australia, 30 October 1974, p. 69, gives the 1972 figure of 1,190 for students matriculating with Indonesian language (see [http://altcfellowship.murdoch.edu.au/Docs/Thomas_William_\(1974\)_Working_Papers_in_Asian_Studies_No_6_Paths_to_Asia.pdf](http://altcfellowship.murdoch.edu.au/Docs/Thomas_William_(1974)_Working_Papers_in_Asian_Studies_No_6_Paths_to_Asia.pdf) , sighted 16 January 2012.