

Submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper

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Issue 1: Australia's foreign policy needs to be grounded in a clear-eyed assessment of our national interests.

How should we define Australia's national interests in a changing world? How should our values underpin Australia's foreign policy? What should we do differently? How can we do better?

Abstract: My argument is that we need to redefine, or reorganise, our values to take in to account Aboriginal Australia. It is my opinion that we cannot present ourselves in a changing world without acknowledging Australia's true, complete history and recognising that *all* of that has to be part of our future. It is a crucial cultural re-evaluation that will in turn impact upon Australia's national interests.

Submission: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] My interest, consequently, lies in promoting dialogue and cultural exchange between China and Australia, particularly between youth.

As a fairly well-travelled young Australian, I have had some important insight in to the Australian identity. Some of this is self-reflective, and some of my insight comes from talking to people from around the world about how they perceive Australia. When I travel, I see people who are rooted deeply to their own culture. They carry on traditions that were taught by their parents and grandparents, although some may choose to reject those traditions. I see Aussie tourists marvelling over thousand-year-old relics, relishing in the fact that they had never seen anything that *old*. In fact, they have seen something that old. They were born there, and grew up upon its sunburnt plains.

Up until recently, I was also among the large majority of Australians who would label our country as "young". Comparing Australian history to Chinese history, I would often pore over accounts of the Tang, Song and Qing Dynasties, resenting the fact that *my* history was just a couple of English guys on ships and a gold rush. That's what I was taught in school.

Only now do I understand that I was misinformed. It was when I started university [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I realised Australia is not a young country, and it didn't begin when the ships landed in Botany Bay. Now, I recognise that Aboriginal Australians were living in Australia for thousands of generations and are still living here today. The fact that it took me this long is shameful.

I am still learning and I, as a non-Indigenous Australian, have realised how little I know about the land I live on. I want to know about the history of my country, just as much as I am interested in the history of the Forbidden Palace in Beijing, China. In fact, I'm more interested in what happened here, because if I can call myself Australian, I want to know what that means.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] I've always tried to avoid labelling a typical 'Aussie' as someone who loves a meat pie, a tinny and a game of backyard cricket. Of course, there's nothing wrong with that, I just reckon we could do better. We cling on to these Aussie stereotypes because we don't know anything else. But all the things we are interested in about other cultures - food rituals, spirituality, family structure, stories, festivals - do exist in Australia. Why can't we incorporate Indigenous stories and knowledges in to 'modern' culture? Why do I hardly know anything about it?

In my opinion, Australia is very globally-focused. We are interested in what is happening outside our own country. We love to travel. We're proud of this. However, I am forever shocked that Australia can continue to define its values in the way it does: by, largely, leaving Aboriginal Australia out of the picture. In fact, I have spoken to Chinese international students who are under the impression that Aboriginal Australians don't exist any more. Is this the kind of Australia that we want to present to the rest of the world?

It is more important than ever that Australia actually knows what it is and what its values are. I don't believe that we have truly found them yet. It seems to me that most people know something about Aboriginal Australia - it exists, or existed, depending on who you talk to. However, why is it that we have not reconciled these two Australias? I sometimes imagine a future where every single person knows what Aboriginal lands they are living on, a future where street names are named after those who first walked there, not those who took them and marked them as their own.

We are shocked by countries like China that alter their history books and censor their citizens' speech. But we're not far off. The Australia I want to show the rest of the world is one that can own up to its past. Our foreign policies need to take in to account the values of *all* Australians and *all* of Australia. I'm still figuring out what it means to be Australian, and I think most of us are. In order to work it out, we need to recognise Indigenous Australia.