



Australian
National
University

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White Paper Task Force
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Dear Mr Hayhurst

ANU was created to serve the nation and we are proud of our continuing public policy partnership with the national parliament and a shared interest in the development of policy excellence. Our research strengths go beyond pure and applied research. We are a leading contributor to public policy formation and debate, addressing the major issues confronted by government, business and society. ANU uses its strategic national and international partnerships to expand its reach and impact beyond our local borders.

The founding mission of ANU included a strong focus on our region. ANU fundamentally understands the importance of Asia and the Pacific to the future of Australia, and for more than half a century has been the pre-eminent centre for research on the region. It houses the only centre in the southern hemisphere dedicated to research and education on transnational diplomacy, hosting the largest number of Indonesian experts outside of Indonesia and the largest group of Pacific experts in the world. Strong connections to governments and communities in the Asia Pacific region ensure this focus extends beyond pure research and addresses cultural, political, economic and social issues.

Australia in the region

Since its inception, ANU has been an internationally-renowned centre of study of Australia's nearest neighbours. Complementing our emphasis on the Asia Pacific region, our centres and schools host expertise in supporting disciplines important to Australian development, culture and economy.

ANU continues to play an important role in strengthening links with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, educating many of Asia's current leaders and innovative thinkers. This represents a key element in developing institutional capacity and economic futures in our zone of influence. ANU is proud to count many of our alumni and former staff as leaders in our region including past Indonesian Vice-President Boediono (2009-2014), Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr Raden Natalegawa (2009-2014) and Dr Cheong Choong Kong, Chief Executive Officer of Singapore Airlines from 1996 to 2003. Within our Higher Degree Research (PhD and Masters) and postgraduate coursework programs we target young academics and policymakers from strategically important universities and government agencies in the region. The significance and value of this soft diplomacy must be encouraged, banking Australia's international education efforts and building enduring people-to-people links.

New Colombo Plan

ANU supports the continuation of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) as an important part of Australia's international engagement strategy. We also support broadening the scope of the NCP to allow all Australian students, both undergraduate and postgraduate (short-term coursework), to participate. A further change that allows NCP grant recipients to receive the same type of scholarship more than once will deepen students understanding of our region—its history, society, culture, politics, economics and language—knowledge critically important to Australia.

Whilst the NCP has proved to be very valuable for enabling young Australians to educate themselves about countries in Australia's Asia-Pacific region, the scheme could become far more rewarding if it is transformed to accommodate 'two-way traffic'. This was one of the important virtues of the Colombo Plan that bears consideration in a modern context – an important initiative of the Menzies government.

Reviving the spirit of the Colombo Plan will add to the hundreds of students and researchers that benefited from this scheme from Asian and Pacific countries by receiving quality education in Australia and familiarity with Australian democracy and way of life. Most of them returned to their countries and assumed important positions in the service of their nations, as well as serving as ambassadors of goodwill for Australia. Some of them either remained in or returned to Australia and made valuable contributions to this country.

For example, Professor Amin Saikal, Director, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, was a recipient of an in-bound Colombo Plan scholarship and fellowship that enabled him to do his Bachelor of Arts and PhD in Australia. Without the opportunity that the Colombo Plan provided him, he would have not been able to receive the quality education that he needed in order to launch his academic career and eventually build the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the ANU. The Centre is a flagship entity for the University, the policy impact of which has publicly been acknowledged by the Foreign Minister the Hon. Julie Bishop.

Boosting the strategic long-term Australia – China relationship

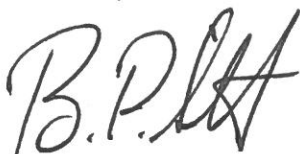
The Australia-China Joint Economic Report (ACJER) was the first major joint study of the economic relationship between Australia and China, led by ANU Emeritus Professor Peter Drysdale of the East Asian Bureau of Economic Research (EABER) and Mr Zhang Xiaoqiang, Executive Director of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE). The study recommended a framework and new model for economic collaboration that requires the Australian and Chinese governments to elevate the Australia–China relationship to a unique, higher level, in a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Change.

The high-level capacities necessary to this engagement should be promoted through the establishment by both governments of an independent and well-resourced bi-national Australia–China (Ao–Zhong) Commission to boost the level and range of political, scientific, official, business and community exchanges between the two countries.

ANU is supportive of this transformational idea and would like to play a lead role in delivering it to fruition, drawing on our deep multidisciplinary expertise on China.

ANU looks forward to a close association with Government as the new foreign policy white paper takes shape.

Yours sincerely



Professor Brian P. Schmidt AC
Vice-Chancellor and President