
Indonesian Language in Australian Universities

Strategies for a stronger future

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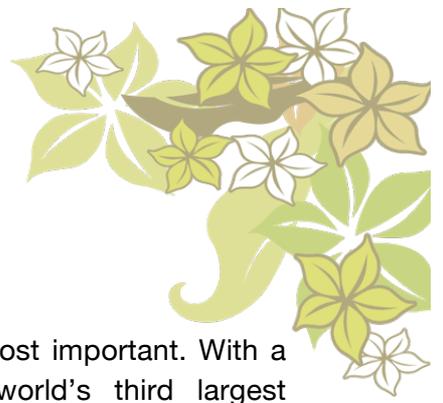
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia's bilateral relationship with Indonesia is arguably our most important. With a population of approximately 240 million, Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy, fourth most populous nation, and is home to both a rapidly expanding middle class and the largest Muslim community of any country in the world. Given Australia's proximity to Indonesia and our environmental and security inter-dependence, a healthy working relationship with our northern neighbour is vital to both our present and future national interest.

By some measures the relationship between Australia and Indonesia is strong. Jakarta hosts Australia's largest embassy, our second largest defence representation and a substantial Australian Federal Police presence. Trade between the two countries has, historically, been modest – \$12.9 billion in 2010 – with Indonesia ranking as only our thirteenth largest trading partner. However, it is a trade relationship that has been showing recent signs of vibrancy. Since 2006 two-way trade between the two countries has grown by an average of 9.7 per cent p.a. and, given Indonesia's maintenance of respectable real GDP growth (6.1 per cent in 2010), trade between Australia and Indonesia is likely to continue to intensify in the years ahead.¹ The International Monetary Fund projects Indonesia will achieve one of the fastest growth rates of the world's 18 largest economies during 2009-2015, outstripping even the powerhouse economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China.²

Recognising the advantages of intensified economic relations with Indonesia, the Australian government has been paving the way for greater economic collaboration between the two countries via a series of trade agreements – namely, the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement and the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. If Australia is to make the most of the new opportunities that these agreements open up, being able to communicate and conduct business with our Indonesian counterparts in their own language is going to be of critical importance. This report recommends strategies to strengthen Australia's Indonesian language skills.

Australians' preparedness to learn the Indonesian language is a key indicator of the perceptions of Indonesia that exist within the Australian community. It is a quantifiable measure of Australians' interest in, knowledge of, and engagement with Indonesia. It is also a measure of the community support for the idea of closer ties between Australia and Indonesia – support without which government policy efforts are unlikely to succeed. Our ability to communicate comfortably and confidently in the Indonesian language is essential if we are to continue to enhance mutual understanding and respect, facilitate the exchange of ideas and boost productive collaboration in all aspects of the bilateral relationship, including – but certainly not limited to – our economic partnership.

Over the past 15 years a series of troubling political events in Indonesia, compounded by negative coverage of these events by the Australian media, has unnerved Australians

and discouraged them from learning Indonesian. These include: the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis undermining Indonesia's economic growth; instability surrounding the 1998 resignation of former president Suharto; the levels of violence during Indonesia's presence in East Timor prior to its independence; bombings in Bali and Jakarta since 2002; the imprisonment of several Australian drug smugglers in Bali; and the elevated Travel Advisory maintained by DFAT for nearly a decade.

Australians lack accurate knowledge of Indonesia. A 2011 Lowy Institute survey indicates that, while 77 per cent of Australian respondents believed that it was "very important that Australia and Indonesia work to develop a close relationship", 69 per cent still believed erroneously that Indonesia was "essentially controlled by the military". Only 52 per cent were aware that "Indonesia is an emerging democracy".³

Indonesian language learning in Australian education is in crisis. In schools, there were fewer Year 12 students studying Indonesian in 2009 than there were in 1972.⁴ In universities, during the decade from 2001 to 2010, enrolments in Indonesian nationally dropped by 37 per cent, at a time when the overall undergraduate population in universities expanded by nearly 40 per cent. In Australia's most populous state of New South Wales, Indonesian language enrolments during this period plummeted by more than 50 per cent. If this rate of decline continues, and assuming all other factors remain constant, by 2022 – in only 10 years' time – Indonesian will have virtually disappeared from universities in all states and territories except Victoria and the Northern Territory.

In 2003 the Australia-Indonesia Business Council declared that "Reducing the funding [for Indonesian in Australian education] sends the signal that we are not interested in communicating with our neighbours. It also places us at a disadvantage if other countries are better able to communicate with them."⁵ Yet between 2004 and 2009, autonomous Indonesian programs closed in six Australian universities. Only 15 of Australia's 40 universities now have autonomous Indonesian language majors, with five others offering Indonesian majors using staff and/or materials provided by another university.

Yet Australia needs cadres of specialists in all fields of endeavour who have the linguistic ability to work productively with Indonesians, just as the majority of Australians need some understanding and appreciation of the importance of sustained bilateral collaboration. Unless Australia reinvests in Indonesian studies, we risk losing the comparative advantage provided by linguistic expertise, and the consequent economic, political and strategic benefits from our relationship with Indonesia.

This has been recognised by the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade which recommended in 2004 "that Indonesian Studies be designated a strategic national priority and that the Australian Research Council and the Department of Education, Science and Training be requested to recognise this in prioritising funding for both research and teaching."⁶

Since 2006, Indonesian has been designated a "Nationally Strategic Language" in the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funding agreements with universities. Yet no accompanying funding has been provided to

support this “Nationally Strategic Language”. Instead, universities are closing Indonesian programs.

This report recommends specific strategies for the strengthening of Indonesian language in Australian universities. It proposes an over-arching National Indonesian Language in Universities Program (NILUP), puts forward 20 specific recommendations, and suggests staged implementation priorities.

Of these 20 recommendations, nine require no particular additional Commonwealth funding, drawing only on resources already allocated within the higher education sector. Several others could be managed and funded by allocations under existing Commonwealth funding schemes. Major recommendations will require specific, though modest, government allocations. The cost of funding the recommendations in this report that directly relate to universities is only \$98 million over the next decade. This average annual expenditure of \$9.8 million equates to less than 0.3 per cent of the value of Australia’s current (2010) stock of direct investment in Indonesia and just 0.08 per cent of the value of current (2010) annual two-way trade between the two countries.⁷

Such calls upon the Commonwealth Budget at a time of stated fiscal restraint would be outweighed by the cost of permitting Australia’s expertise in Indonesian to ebb away at precisely a period of renewed economic growth in Indonesia. Now, more than ever, there is a need for collaboration and partnership across all aspects of the bilateral relationship. This investment in Indonesian language in our universities needs to commence now.

¹ *Indonesia Fact Sheet*, DFAT, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fs/indo.pdf>, sighted 12 December 2011. Unless otherwise noted, all dollars are Australian.

² *World Economic Outlook Database, September 2011*, International Monetary Fund, query generated for nine selected countries using database subject “Gross Domestic Product, current prices, U.S. Dollars” for years 2009-2015.

³ Fergus Hanson, *Australia and the World: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 2011, p.15, Figures 21 & 22, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1617>, sighted 22 September 2011.

⁴ 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 (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).

⁵ AIBC submission to Australian Government inquiry into Relations with Indonesia, by Eric de Haas, AIBC President, 1 November 2003, <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/jfadit/indonesia/subs/subindo111.pdf>, sighted 22 September 2011

⁶ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT), *Near Neighbours – Good Neighbours: An Inquiry into Australia’s Relationship with Indonesia*, Canberra, May 2004, p.xxii, <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/jfadit/indonesia/report/fullreport.pdf>

⁷ *Indonesia Fact Sheet*, DFAT, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fs/indo.pdf>, sighted 12 December 2011.



RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That both Government and Opposition make an explicit public commitment to supporting Indonesian language in Australian universities until 2020, and that they indicate the level of financial support they will provide for this.

FUNDING: Non-specific.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the Governments of Australia, through the Ministers of Education, establish a National Taskforce on Indonesian Language:

- to coordinate, advocate for, promote, and stimulate Indonesian language teaching and learning across all sectors of the education system; and
- to oversee and coordinate the implementation of a National Indonesian Language in Universities Program (NILUP), including monitoring annual enrolment data for Indonesian in schools and universities as a measure of the performance outcomes of NILUP.

FUNDING: Approximately \$750,000 p.a., funded by all member governments.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

- That the Government undertake a review of the wording and impact of the DFAT Travel Advisory for Indonesia, with a view to making it more nuanced, and noting explicitly that the advice is not intended to be interpreted as a ban upon educational exchanges with Indonesia; and
- that the Government collaborate with the insurance industry to assist those educational institutions wishing to travel to Indonesia to gain access to appropriate insurance cover.

FUNDING: Non-specific.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (at least for Indonesian) be maintained and extended, with a government commitment until at least 2020, at a funding level at least equivalent to, and preferably higher than, the initial triennium.

FUNDING: \$20 million p.a.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

- That, in responding to the Final Report of the Higher Education Base Funding Review, the Commonwealth increase the level of base funding per place and support “nationally strategic languages” (Indonesian and Arabic) by including them in the funding cluster with an indicative relativity of 2.0, so as to better meet the actual costs of teaching nationally strategic languages in the contemporary university setting.
- That, if the Commonwealth accepts the Base Funding Review’s recommendation for a uniform 40 per cent HECS contribution across the board, the targeted compensation scholarship program (see below) be adjusted to avoid the negative impact of this HECS increase upon Indonesian language enrolments.

FUNDING: Non-specific.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

That an Indonesian Specialist Scholarship Scheme be established to support undergraduate students undertaking a major in Indonesian which includes a year of in-country study; and that the value of the scholarships be sufficient to cover the full HECS costs of the Indonesian component of a recipient’s degree.

FUNDING: \$2.1 million p.a. (Assuming cluster HECS-HELP of \$6,756 p.a., with 300 EFTSL p.a. opting to take a major including in-country study).

RECOMMENDATION 7:

That direct, targeted Commonwealth funding be provided for (up to) 15 new lectureships to teach Indonesian language, for a minimum of five years.

In order to maximise the benefit of such re-investment:

- universities seeking such funding must be currently offering an Indonesian language program;
- the lectureships must be in addition to any current continuing/tenured position(s), and not used to replace or fund existing positions;
- universities must agree to continue funding the lectureships for at least a further five years after conclusion of Commonwealth funding; and
- universities agree to allocate a minimum of 20 per cent of the lecturer’s workload/time for advocacy and promotion of Indonesian into schools and the community, and for the development of school “feeder” programs to encourage students to continue with Indonesian from schools to university.

FUNDING: (Up to) \$10 million in total. (\$2 million p.a. for five years.)

RECOMMENDATION 8:

That the government support the development of a set of contemporary university-level Indonesian teaching and learning materials.

FUNDING: \$350,000 p.a. for two years, totalling \$700,000.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

That the Commonwealth Government provide funding for the establishment and maintenance of an Indonesian tertiary teaching resources bank.

FUNDING: Salary and associated costs for administrative officer: \$200,000 p.a. for three years, totalling \$600,000.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

That the Commonwealth Government provide recurrent funding for the Australian Consortium for “In-Country” Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) to increase the number of Australians studying in Indonesia for one or two semesters by expanding quality accredited study programs in strategic fields.

FUNDING: \$1.5 million p.a.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

That funds be provided for the development and maintenance of in-country programs to provide intensive Indonesian language training for postgraduate research students, and that such training be funded as part of their postgraduate program.

FUNDING: \$1 million p.a., assuming \$25,000 per semester for 40 students.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

That the governments of Indonesia and Australia agree on a scheme whereby:

- AusAID and the Indonesian Higher Education Directorate (DIKTI) identify from their scholarship programs up to 20 recipients annually with expertise in second-language acquisition to assist in the teaching of Indonesian in Australian universities while being mentored as part of their postgraduate experience; and
- the scholarships of these “Australia-Indonesia Postgraduate Scholar-Instructors” be extended by AusAID and DIKTI for an additional period of up to two years to support such teaching.

FUNDING: \$1 million p.a. (approximately \$50,000 p.a. per student at 20 students).

RECOMMENDATION 13:

That the Government (through the National Taskforce on Indonesian Language) provide a framework to encourage business support for Indonesian programs by:

- working with the relevant peak business associations to promote corporate support for the teaching of Indonesian in Australian universities; and
- including, within the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA) negotiations, consideration of new reciprocal working visa provisions which would allow for a freer flow of university-qualified professionals between the two countries and would eliminate the current impediments encountered by companies wanting to employ Australian staff with Indonesian language skills.

FUNDING: No specific government funding required; achievable within the framework of current ongoing bilateral negotiations.

UNIVERSITY-BASED STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDATION 14:

That universities provide incentives for Indonesian-language teaching staff to build strong links with schools in their catchment area; and recognise such duties in the calculation of staff workload.

FUNDING: Moderate university allocation required.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

That universities consider establishing specific Year 12 pathways for Indonesian along the lines of the University of Tasmania's Colleges Language Program, to strengthen Indonesian at both senior school and university level.

FUNDING: \$2.25 million to establish (Assuming \$150,000 x 15 universities). Maintained by recurrent university funding for Commonwealth Supported Places.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

That universities without a Languages Other Than English (LOTE) bonus adopt one and that such LOTE bonuses be standardised across the sector and simplified.

FUNDING: No additional funding required. Initiative could be promoted by universities individually or collaborating within each state/jurisdiction.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

That universities adopt a Language Policy and promote the principle that students have a "language entitlement".

FUNDING: Minimal; manageable within existing university budgets.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

That universities not currently doing so make concurrent Indonesian language qualifications available to students.

FUNDING: Not required. Individual universities to implement.

RECOMMENDATION 19:

That those universities that are not yet doing so maximise the visibility and effectiveness of their Indonesia-related capacity by:

- undertaking a census of staff with links to Indonesia;
- establishing an “Indonesia Interest Group” and emailing list to:
 - ensure all relevant staff are informed about Indonesia-related developments in the university;
 - maximise the cumulative benefits of their Indonesia-related expertise in teaching and research; and
- developing a specific “Indonesia window” webpage which highlights the range of their Indonesia-related activities.

FUNDING: Minimal; manageable through established university budgets.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

That, in their staff practices and policies, universities:

- ensure that faculty and departmental structures provide appropriate representation for (Indonesian) language teaching staff, with equal opportunities for professional development, academic study leave and financial support to maintain an active scholarly and research career; and
- ensure that administrators provide teaching staff with accurate information on the funding model as it relates to Indonesian teaching, and pass on the full cluster weighting to Indonesian language teaching units.

FUNDING: Minimal; manageable within existing university budgets.

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