



## Josh Frydenberg MP Federal Member for Kooyong

3 March 2012

### 90 Second Statement Learning Asian Languages In Australian Universities

**E&OE** .....

**Mr FRYDENBERG** (Kooyong) (13:48): I rise to raise the important issue of foreign language training in our schools and universities, and, in particular, the rapid decline in the number of Australian students learning an Asian language, including that of our largest and most important near neighbour Indonesia.

In 2005 6.6% of year 12 students were learning an Asian language, in 2009 it was 5.8%. In fact in 2009 there were fewer Year 12 students studying Indonesian than in 1972.

In the years from 2001 to 2010, enrolments in Indonesia across the country fell by 40% and in NSW by 70%, when at the same time the undergraduate population increased by nearly 40%.

If this trend continues over the coming decade, Indonesian will only be found on university syllabuses in one state and one territory, Victoria and the Northern Territory.

This is clearly not good enough.

We need generations of Australians who can speak Asian languages, understand their culture and our familiar with their people. These generations of Australians will become a vital national asset, opening doors and paving the way for a constructive and productive bilateral relationship.

I would like to pay tribute to Murdoch University's Professor David Hill for his recent study of Indonesian language teaching in Australian Universities. His valuable and comprehensive report makes 20 specific recommendations, requiring limited new funding, as to how we can improve the current state of affairs.

I commend this report to the House and say to the Government we need urgent action on this issue before it is too late.

**End.**