



Media Announcement

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Double blow hits Indonesian Language in New South Wales

Students and teachers of Indonesian language in NSW were dealt two separate blows recently.

The announcement this week that the University of New South Wales will close its Indonesian Language program from 2013 follows the NSW Department of Education announcement it will axe the Indonesian curriculum support officer in schools.

A Commonwealth Government-funded report released earlier this year revealed a 52% decline in annual Indonesian enrolments at the tertiary level in NSW during the decade 2001-2010. This rate of decline was sharper than in any other state in Australia.

The number of students learning Indonesian in government schools across NSW has significantly declined since 1996, when 44,973 students were undertaking Indonesian language studies in schools. That figure was only 6,029 in 2011.

Murdoch University Chair of Southeast Asian Studies, Professor David Hill, author of the report *Indonesian Language in Australian Universities*, cites unsustainable staffing arrangements as a contributing factor endangering university Indonesian courses Australia-wide. The report reveals that, in most of the fifteen universities offering Indonesian, staffing levels have been greatly reduced in recent years. The report finds that in five out of fifteen universities a single tenured staff member is responsible for providing Indonesian language instruction across three (and often four) year-levels.

“The closure of the Indonesian program at UNSW is a reflection of the ‘endangered’ status of Indonesian in many Australian universities and the embattled position of teaching personnel who are working under quite adverse conditions. Single-staff Indonesian programs are highly vulnerable”, said Professor Hill.

“At a time when the importance of Indonesia for Australia’s future is growing steadily these recent announcements are of great concern. Urgent action from governments – both state and Commonwealth – is needed reverse the decline of Indonesian language studies in Australia”, he added.

Included among the twenty recommendations in the Hill Report is a call for targeted Commonwealth funding of up to fifteen new lectureships to teach Indonesian in Australian universities. In addition to this, the report urges universities to offer a ‘language entitlement’ for students across all disciplines, promoting languages as a valid and important component of any degree, discipline, or profession.

The Hill Report is also being considered by the Henry Review on Australia in the Asian Century.

For a full copy of the Hill Report visit: <http://altcfellowship.murdoch.edu.au/finalreport.html>

For media comment, Professor David Hill can be contacted on +7 962 953 712 (until 24th September), +44 79 3702 6366, or at dthill@murdoch.edu.au.