



Asia Education Foundation

Achieving the Goals of the *Melbourne Declaration**

Call for a National Action Plan for Asia Literacy in Schools

“Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging... India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. **Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’**, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia.”*

* The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008. The *Melbourne Declaration* sets a nationally agreed education agenda for Australia for the next decade.

Peak Education, Business and Community organisations call on Australian Ministers of Education to adequately invest in a comprehensive National Action Plan for Asia Literacy in Schools.

All Education Ministers agree in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* on the need for Australians to become Asia literate. In a major step towards achieving this, the new Australian Curriculum identifies 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia' as a priority across the curriculum and at all levels of schooling. Asia literacy requires young Australians to gain knowledge, skills and understandings of the histories, geographies, literatures, arts, cultures and languages of the diverse countries of Asia by the time they leave school.

Without increased investment in Asia literacy through a national plan, the intentions of the *Melbourne Declaration* and the Australian Curriculum are unlikely to be met.

Asia literacy makes sense.

Commitment to Asia literacy comes at a time when Australia's engagement with Asia in trade, investment, migration, tourism, education and humanitarian assistance is growing at a faster rate than our engagement with the rest of the world combined.¹

Asia literacy makes a vital contribution to building the social capital of our nation,

enriching Australian's creative and intellectual life and fostering social inclusion in our communities. In an increasingly interdependent world, Asia literacy equips young Australians to be active and informed citizens, able to build harmonious regional and global communities that can work together to resolve global issues that affect us all like sustainability, health, people movement and security. Importantly, Asia literacy skills young Australians to harness the opportunities presented by the economic powerhouses of Asia.

The size of the challenge to achieve Asia literacy is substantial.

Most Australian teachers have had little opportunity to formally learn about Asia in their own education and there is no plan to ensure new teachers are equipped with Asia knowledge in order to teach the Australian Curriculum.

Many Australian students currently learn little or nothing about Asia in their schooling. Only a small minority of students undertake studies with an Asian focus in Year 12 History, English, Geography or Arts. Typically, 65 per cent of Modern History students in one state chose to study Germany, 19 per cent chose Russia, and only 2 per cent chose China.²

18.6 per cent of all school students currently study an Asian language, decreasing to fewer than 6 per cent in Year 12. Student uptake of Asian languages has been in decline since 2005.³

Asia literacy is required to achieve the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

including the goals of:

- **Equity and Excellence:** ensuring that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity.
- **Successful learners:** who are able to make sense of their world.
- **Confident and creative individuals:** who have a sense of self worth and personal identity and relate well to others.
- **Active and informed citizens:** who appreciate Australia's social, cultural and linguistic diversity, have an understanding of Australia's systems of government, history and culture; who are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia and who can act as responsible global and local citizens.⁴

The National Action Plan for Asia Literacy in Schools will provide all young Australians with a realistic opportunity to gain Asia knowledge, skills and understandings.

The Action Plan would involve education jurisdictions and authorities, schools, teacher education, parents, business and the broader community.

It would identify clear goals, set measurable targets, allocate adequate resources and report on national student progress in both studies of Asia and Asian languages across the curriculum.

The Asia Literacy National Plan would set strategies to ensure provision of:

- 1 An Australian Curriculum with clear Asia literacy guidelines and formal reporting on student progress in attaining knowledge, skills and understandings related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia at each level of schooling.
- 2 Asia prepared school leaders equipped to lead Asia literacy in their schools through access to professional learning, networks and programs that provide knowledge, tools and resources to best enable schools to achieve Asia literacy for all their students.
- 3 Asia prepared teachers equipped to implement the Australian Curriculum through pre-service training and ongoing professional learning that provides teachers with access to new content knowledge related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.



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The Call for a National Action Plan for Asia Literacy in Schools is an initiative of the Asia Education Foundation Advisory Board.

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- 4 Asia focused classroom resources that support students, teachers and schools to link to their peers in Asia, embed Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia in classroom curriculum, and build up Asian languages programs.
- 5 Creative solutions to the complex issues that have historically impeded the capacity of Australian education to deliver sustainable language education programs.
- 6 Increased student, parent and community demand for Asia skills through building awareness of the national significance of the growth of Asia and partnering business, industry and community with schools.

Notes

1. *PriceWaterhouseCoopers Melbourne Institute Asialink Index 2010*
2. *Studies of Asia in Year 12*, Wilkinson and Millgate, Australian Council for Educational Research April 2009
3. *Four Languages, Four Stories: a Report on the Current State of Japanese, Indonesian, Korean and Chinese Language Education in Australian Schools*, Asia Education Foundation May 2010
4. *Goals 1 & 2: Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, 2008
5. The Business Alliance for Asia Literacy was formed in May 2009 to call on Australian schooling to deliver an Asia-ready workforce.

The following peak Education, Business and Community organisations join in supporting this Call for Action.

Peak Education Organisations

Art Education Australia
Asia Education Teachers Association
Asialink
Asian Studies Association of Australia
Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
Australian College of Educators
Australian Council for Educational Leaders
Australian Council for Educational Research
Australian Council of State School Organisations
Australian Curriculum Studies Association Inc
Australian Education Union
Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations Inc
Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and Environment
Australian Geography Teachers' Association
Australian Literacy Educators' Association
Australian Parents Council
Australian Primary Principals Association
Australian Professional Teachers Association
Australian Secondary Principals Association Inc
Business Educators Australasia
Catholic Secondary Principals Australia
Centre for Strategic Education
Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
Council of International Schools
e:lit – the Primary English Teaching Association
Independent Schools Council of Australia
National Advocates for Arts Education
Principals Australia
Social Educators Association of Australia
The University of Melbourne

Business Alliance for Asia Literacy⁵

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Australian Council of Trade Unions
Australian Industry Group
Australian Services Roundtable
Business Council of Australia
Australia-ASEAN Business Council
Australia China Business Council
Australia Indonesia Business Council
Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee
Australia Korea Business Council
Australia Singapore Chamber of Commerce & Industry Ltd
Australia Taiwan Business Council
Career Industry Council of Australia
Chinese Professional and Business Association
Committee for Melbourne

Community Organisations

Australian Multicultural Foundation
Australian Volunteers International
Foundation for Young Australians
World Vision



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The Asia Education Foundation is a joint activity of Asialink at The University of Melbourne and Education Services Australia.
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