



Submission No 34

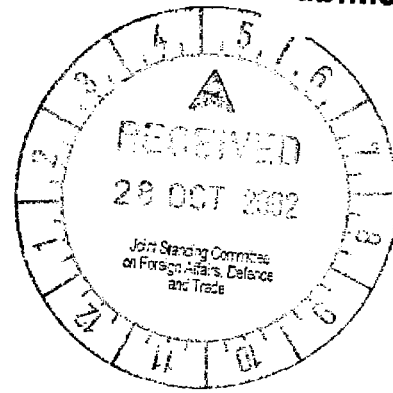
Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

Name: Ms Julie Jackson

Address: 216 Wattle Street
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25 October 2002

Committee Secretary
JSCFADT
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Sir / Madam,

OBJECTION TO CESSATION OF NALSAS FUNDING

I am writing to register a **strong objection** to the proposed cessation of this important language program.

I am currently the Indonesian language teacher at two Bendigo Primary Schools, and have had the enjoyment of teaching Indonesian language and culture to students at 7 other schools over the last 6 years.

Here are the reasons why I believe you should reconsider the proposal.

1. Importance of Supporting Language Programs

Students learning a second language often receive unexpected benefits. For example they are often exposed to grammar for the first time and are forced to think more widely in their own language when required to translate into the second language.

2. Importance of Asian languages to Australians

Indonesia is our nearest Asian neighbour. Australia, now more than ever, needs to embrace a collaborative and welcoming approach to building the relationship. This will only happen if this approach is embodied in Government policy settings / communication / actions and the way in which Australia develops as a multi-cultural nation during this century.

I studied French in school and university for a total of 9 years and learnt about the French language and culture but it is of limited use to me and most other Australians. I did not realize Indonesia existed until Form 4 when I was 16 years old and was shocked to realize that in many ways it is a third world country.

Building a relationship between our countries is (undoubtedly) part of the triple bottom line that Governments promote. The relationship needs to address economic, environmental and social goals.

For example, when I was in Bali, I was amazed to see the number of Australians operating businesses with Indonesian partners. The Indonesian authorities told us that the Indonesian Government is considering an alteration to its existing laws to permit Australian businesses to operate without an Indonesian partner. This opens up so many possibilities that could have mutually beneficial outcomes for both countries.

3. Recent Tragic Events in Bali

Recent events reinforce more than ever the importance of a good relationship and scientific, educational and cultural exchanges.

This was clearly demonstrated in the recent Bali bombings where the hospitals were shown to be sub-standard. If we are to promote Indonesia as a place for our citizens to visit, they have a right to be aware of such things as standards of medical care in the event of an accident or illness.

It is still of great concern to me to hear adults express surprise when they discover that Bali is actually part of Indonesia. It is probably to be expected in many cases as Indonesian has become a study area for schools only in the last 15 years.

I have turned around the negative attitude of many parents and some fellow teachers with the result that LOTE is well respected in both schools by parents, teachers and students.

Each Australian is an ambassador for Australia but how many visit Indonesia with an awareness of polite behaviour eg which hand must not be proffered or why you must not touch an Indonesian person on the head.

4. Enrichment of Our Youth

The cancellation of the project grants is disturbing. Bendigo is a regional centre, situated 165 kilometres from Melbourne. The Bendigo community does not have access to the range of facilities and services that capital cities have. ABS data demonstrates that regional communities are generally not as well off as communities in larger centres.

It is an expensive exercise to bus or train the students to Melbourne where the majority of cultural exhibitions are held. This is beyond the means of many families. Government support through grants is vital in helping to bridge the disadvantage of regional communities.

For example, I have in the past found a visit to the CERES environmental park in Brunswick a very valuable learning experience for my students but the cost of this day out from Bendigo is \$25 per child. Even a visiting cultural group such as Sarjana Bumi costs the school \$900 for a single day of only 4 hours.

The cancellation of your program will deny our youth an enriching experience that they fully deserve.

5. Investment in Existing Resources

It was with great dismay that I learnt that NALSAS funding of Indonesian studies would cease, and as a result the Indonesian program would no longer have access to grant funding to support an established program.

My two schools have managed to build up an excellent set of resources, and we are in the fortunate situation of being able to use the resources across both schools.

I am aware this is also the case with other Bendigo Schools (primary and secondary) that have invested significantly in Indonesian language programs for over a decade.

In closing, I urge you to reconsider the cessation of NALSAS funding.

Yours sincerely

Julie Jackson

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