



Submission No 71

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

Name: Mr Fred Scholten

Address: 8A Ranley Grove
PADDINGTON QLD 4064

-----Original Message-----

From: Fred [<mailto:fredsch@ugconnect.net>]
Sent: Friday, October 18, 2002 1:47 PM
To: Committee, JSCFADT (REPS)
Subject: Australian Relations with Indonesia

I wish to submit to you that, following the recent shocking events in Bali, the Australian government is finally are coming to the realisation that we are definitely part of a global world society which involves much more than conduction some trade, pampering Asian military and overseas holiday trips. Our very security and order depends on fostering and maintaining intensive working relationships and communication with not just the English-speaking Western nations, but in particular our neighbour countries in the region.

I read last week (in the Washington Post) that if the CIA-FBI had had more staff able to understand and process monitored telephone conversations in Arabic, they would have obtained three-day advance warning of what was going to happen on 9/11. It is not cynical if we refuse to rely basically on our 'friends' in Washington and London for warnings about terrorism and what in general is going on in the region - the Bali killings have shown that we must be far more active and alert ourselves. More Australians must be capable to understand and communicate with the Asian societies, not just to go on trade missions and diplomatic parties which has been until now the shortsighted focus of the current government.

In order to achieve more comprehensive understanding and communication with our neighbours in the region, I believe that it is essential to facilitate professional, high quality education in Asian languages and culture to our youngsters in Primary and Secondary schools. In the seventies' a conscientious, though poorly managed effort was made to develop such facility. The efforts petered out and resources almost dried up.

I have learned now that the Commonwealth Government intends to

23/10/2002

discontinue the last support under the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) programme. This programme allocated \$ 30 million annually to schools for teaching, resources and project development in the field of Asian languages and culture - a miserable subsidy when compared to the sums that are wasted on trips of government officials to the region.

I submit to you that there are strong arguments, including of national security, in favour of increasing this investment and to rationally planning and organising how these scarce resources are to be used to meet our priorities. Educating our future generations to live safely and participate actively in a global society demands a serious strategy and adequate resources and should not be treated as if it were a hobby class.

The traditional approach of handing out aid dollars to corrupt Asian politicians and government officials and training military in the use of modern warfare (which they will gratefully use to suppress internal movements for greater justice and autonomy) has proven unbeneficial and even counterproductive to Australian interests (overall, no doubt some circles benefited). A far broader focus is needed to achieve a comprehensive understanding and effective communication with the Asian societies (not just a few 'elite' sectors like the businessmen, military and politicians of the day). Supporting the preparation of our youngsters in this focus is a responsibility of great importance and urgency.

Thank you for your attention.

Fred W Scholten

8A Ranley Grove
Paddington Qld 4064
fredsch@uqconnect.net

--
Fred Scholten

'But I don't want to go among mad people,' Alice remarked.
'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all mad here.'