



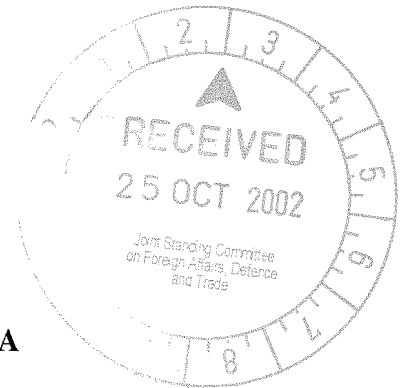
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The Hon David Jull MP
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

FAXED

Dear Mr Jull



ENQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONS WITH INDONESIA

In light of the tragic incidents of 12 October on the island of Bali, the terms of reference for this enquiry are particularly timely.

In the days following the tragedy, it has become clear that there is a great deal of strength in the bilateral relationship between the Republic of Indonesia and the Commonwealth of Australia. It is therefore an excellent time to be reviewing this relationship in a positive light.

In this submission I would like to focus on the aspect of second-track diplomacy and suggest ways in which people-to-people contacts can be strengthened and extended. I make this submission as a member of the Board of the Australia-Indonesia Institute and as an academic in the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australia National University with over thirty years' experience of contact with Indonesia, Australian students studying Indonesia and Indonesia postgraduates studying in Australia.

It should be recognized that the bilateral relationship as it is currently expressed and experienced is not equal. By this I mean that there is more interest in Australia about Indonesia than vice-versa. When Indonesians are questioned about ways in which greater interest could be generated about Australia they invariably replied that the answer lies in greater person-to-person contact. In particular, they mention the success of European cultural organizations such as the Alliance Francaise or the Goethe Institute which have apparently had a very positive influence in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta. Indonesians suggest that if Australia cannot establish similar cultural centers in Indonesia, then greater investment might be made in sister-city links, sister-school links and family homestays.

While these suggestions from Indonesians might appear somewhat naive and simplistic, they do reflect what Indonesians perceive as practical ways to improve understandings between our nations. The projects supported by the Australia-Indonesia Institute have made valuable contributions to improved understanding between small groups of people but in a nation the size of Indonesia, the impact is really quite minimal. For this reason it is important that serious consideration be given to taking up some of the suggestions Indonesians themselves are making about deepening the relationship.

Indonesian universities have already established formal links with universities in Australia which are reflected in Memoranda of Understanding. These links are greatly valued by Indonesian universities but are underutilized. My suggestion would be that the International Development Program (IDP) be mobilized to develop exchange programs in consultation with those Australian universities which already have links in Indonesia. For the past ten years, my Australian colleagues and myself have been trying to establish sandwich programs at the postgraduate level under which Indonesian students could spend up to one year at Australian universities being supervised on their research topics and then returning to Indonesia to write them up at their home universities. This is a program which all Indonesian colleagues I have spoken with strongly support and for a relatively small budget would give handsome returns. I would be happy to discuss details of such a scheme with the Committee if requested.

Through bodies such as the Australia-Indonesia Institute, ongoing relationships have been forged between journalists in both nations. It is perhaps time to review those relationships in the context of the next generation of journalists who are currently in fairly junior positions. While senior editors seem to know each other, up and coming journalists are not yet in direct contact with each other. The press institutes in both nations could be asked to identify younger journalists with a view to establishing exchange arrangements between them so that they spent an extended period working with organizations in the other country. This may help both sides understand particular challenges that are posed by the different press regimes in each nation.

The opportunities for professional exchanges are almost unlimited. The impact and benefits to be derived from several months of practical experience in the other nation would be manifold. One can think of exchanges of medical staff, lawyers, bankers and insurance agents, police (as has already begun in the aftermath of the Bali tragedy), school teachers and so on. The problem to date has been that it is relatively easy to send Australians to Indonesia where the costs are not very great but much harder to select Indonesians to come as exchangees to Australia. Nevertheless, there does exist a strong network around Australia which could now be called upon to identify Indonesians who would benefit from an extended period in Australia and feed their experiences back into the community.

It is important to mention that the domestic turmoil which Indonesia has been experiencing since the economic crisis of 1997 and which has existed in specific areas such as Aceh for much longer has resulted in the need for urgent trauma counseling for many, many people. It would be of particular benefit if it were possible to identify Indonesians who could receive special training so that they could counsel the victims of extreme social change and violence in communities across Indonesia.

I wish the Committee well in its deliberations and strongly urge that ways of strengthening people-to-people linkages become an integral part of future relations with the Republic of Indonesia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "V. Hooker".

Professor Virginia Hooker
Professor of Indonesian and Malay

23 October 2002