



Submission No 48

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

Organisation: ACT Legislative Assembly

Contact Person: Mr Jon Stanhope
Chief Minister

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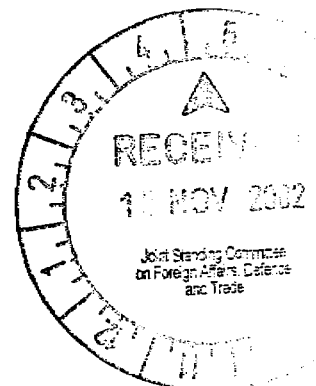
Jon Stanhope MLA

CHIEF MINISTER

ATTORNEY GENERAL MINISTER FOR HEALTH MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY AFFAIRS MINISTER FOR WOMEN

MEMBER FOR GINNINDERRA

Mr Cliff Lawson
Secretary
Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Lawson

I am writing in reference to correspondence from Mr David Jull MP dated 29 August 2002, inviting an ACT Government submission regarding the review of Australia's relations with Indonesia.

The ACT and Indonesia enjoy a strong and productive relationship. Our relationship is particularly strong in the fields of education and culture.

Overseas students are important for the ACT's educational institutions, both secondary and tertiary. Therefore, I would stress the need for a free flow of Indonesian students to Australia and the ACT. In this regard, I would urge the Commonwealth Government to continue to minimise any obstacles in achieving this goal, particularly in the granting of student visas. I understand that normal security checks will continue to be undertaken.

Culturally, due to Canberra's status as the national capital, the ACT Government has a strong relationship with the Indonesian Government through its Embassy in Canberra. In recent months, I have met with the Indonesian Ambassador and the Sultan of Yogyakarta and participated in the official opening of a Cultural Centre at the Indonesian Embassy. The Indonesian Ambassador is regularly invited to ACT Government multicultural functions.

The Indonesian community of the ACT, which has approximately 600 members, is active through a number of community organisations. Australian cultural links with Indonesia are important to the expatriate community, which has taken a lead role in proposing a formal relationship between the ACT and the Special District of Yogyakarta. The ACT Government is continuing productive discussions with the Australia Indonesia Association Inc and the Indonesian Embassy.

The Indonesian community in the ACT has been a strong supporter of the National Multicultural Festival Canberra. The Festival continues to grow in popularity and stature and attracts performers and participants from many different countries.

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Festival is a significant tourist drawcard and is an important means of promoting multiculturalism and cultural tolerance. I would urge the Commonwealth Government to increase its efforts to promote the Multicultural Festival in Indonesia as a premier tourist event.

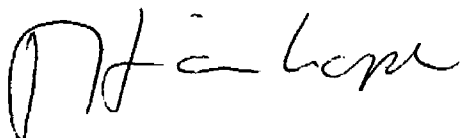
The ACT Government has also been involved in efforts to support local governments in developing countries, including Indonesia, through the University of Canberra Centre for Developing Cities Program. ACT Government agencies propose to continue this contribution to capacity building for government in Indonesia.

ACT Government policy encourages the development of overseas business opportunities for ACT businesses, and the diversification of our economy by seeking new export opportunities.

Most recently, the ACT Government is working to support the Islamic community in the ACT in case of increased tensions following the Bali bombing. As well as contacting Islamic organisations in the ACT to offer support, the Government is preparing a brochure to support members of the ACT community, particularly Muslims, who may be vulnerable following the Bali bombing. The brochure provides advice about who to contact in case of vilification or offensive media coverage. As well, the ACT Government held a Memorial Service to mark National Day of Mourning on Sunday 20 October 2002.

In sum, I would urge the Commonwealth Government to approach the review of Australia's relations with Indonesia with the aim of encouraging a free flow of people, ideas and commerce between our two nations.

Yours sincerely



Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister
12 NOV 2002