

## Cultural relations

### Introduction

- 5.1 In initiating this inquiry, the Committee wished to examine all aspects of the Australia-RoK relationship to better understand the nature of the relationship and the ways in which it might be improved. While it is clear that Australia and the RoK have a strong trading partnership, it is also clear that there is potential to strengthen our cultural relations.
- 5.2 This chapter will highlight existing cultural interaction between Australia and the RoK and explore the potential for further cross-cultural understanding. It will focus on:
- cultural understanding in the Australia-RoK business relationship;
  - the role of sport and the arts in building cross-cultural understanding; and
  - the activities of Koreans living in Australia.
- 5.3 Due to the integral role education plays in the advancement of cultural understanding, it will be dealt with separately in the next chapter.

## Cultural understanding in the business relationship

### Local representation in the Republic of Korea

- 5.4 The need for local representation in the RoK to cultivate good working relationships is a theme raised by governmental and private business representatives on several occasions. As one witness observed:

We say that you have to do business differently in Asia. You do not. To conduct business in Australia, you have to be just as much aware of the person you are dealing with. You have to have trust; you have to have an understanding of the person you are trying to sell your product to. It is quantified in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

- 5.5 The AEEMA's submission advised the Committee that in a 'Korean cultural context ... good relationships can play a key role in facilitating successful business transactions.'<sup>2</sup> A representative of the Queensland Government told the Committee that 'having someone in the market is a huge advantage.'<sup>3</sup>
- 5.6 The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has a locally engaged staff member who believed that without his ability to speak Korean and therefore reach out to potential customers, the ABC would have had a 'very difficult time distributing [its] services in Korea.'<sup>4</sup>
- 5.7 The Committee was pleased to note that the Commonwealth Government has sought to maintain a high level of local representation. The work of Australian embassy staff in Seoul, and their ability to cultivate and maintain good personal relationships with their RoK counterparts, was noted by representatives from MLA, Oceanis Holdings Ltd and the NWSLNG.
- 5.8 The NWSLNG stated in its submission that:

Australia's Government and diplomatic representatives have excellent personal relationships with their South Korean counterparts, and this level of support and access is important to Australian energy and resource companies,

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1 Mr Stephen Doszpot, *Transcript 1 September 2005*, p. 31.

2 AEEMA, *Submission No. 4, Vol. 1*, p. 32.

3 Mr Malcolm Letts, *Transcript 31 August 2005*, p. 72.

4 Mr Eliot Lee, *Transcript 20 September 2005*, p. 49.

given that South Korea's energy sector is dominated by State-owned enterprises.<sup>5</sup>

- 5.9 In addition to utilising the services of the Commonwealth Government in the RoK, some Australian companies and state governments have chosen to maintain their own local representation. They include:
- the Government of Queensland;
  - the NWSLNG; and
  - Hamersley Iron.
- 5.10 Hamersley Iron believed that it needed to be close to its customers to better understand their needs. Its successful trading relationship with POSCO (the RoK's principle steel manufacturer) was based, in part, on this philosophy. Since 1998, Hamersley Iron has maintained a representative office in Seoul which manages their supply relationship with POSCO.<sup>6</sup>

### Committee comment

- 5.11 The Commonwealth Government, through its embassy and Austrade officials in the RoK, has successfully established local connections which have facilitated business connections on behalf of Australian companies and governments.
- 5.12 This, in addition to the success of Australian enterprises which have established local representation in the RoK, suggests that personal relationships are an important cultural component to conducting business in the RoK.
- 5.13 The Committee encourages Australian entrepreneurs to either utilise the services of Commonwealth Government representatives in the RoK or, if feasible, establish their own local representation.

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5 NWSLNG, *Submission No. 14, Vol. 1*, p. 188.

6 Rio Tinto, *Submission No. 31, Vol. 2*, p. 437.

## Building cultural relations through sport and the arts

5.14 Both the Commonwealth and RoK governments noted their support for cultural exchange during this inquiry. Information received by the Committee has shown that a variety of exchanges have occurred between Australia and the RoK in the sporting and arts fields. While it is expected that these will continue, judging by the irregularity of various cultural visits and exchanges, it is clear to the Committee that there is room for more cultural exchange to occur between the two countries.

### Sport

#### Australia–Korea Foundation activities

5.15 As noted in chapter two, the AKF funds programs intended to increase interaction between Australia and the RoK. In the past, the AKF has supported sporting exchanges between Australia and the RoK because ‘exchanges through sport ... contribute to a better understanding of the others culture and customs.’<sup>7</sup>

5.16 For example, in 2001 the AKF sponsored an Australia–Korea volleyball coaches exchange program between the RoK and North Queensland. The program successfully initiated contact between schools, coaches and teams, which the AKF expects will continue.<sup>8</sup>

5.17 The AKF also financially supported Australian teams visiting the RoK and visits by Korean sports scientists to Australia.<sup>9</sup>

5.18 Sports exchanges and visits have occurred in the areas of:

- baseball;
- basketball;
- taekwondo;
- archery;

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7 <[http://www.dfat.gov.au/akf/program\\_activities/ci\\_volleyball\\_coaches.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/akf/program_activities/ci_volleyball_coaches.html)>, 12 January 2006.

8 <[http://www.dfat.gov.au/akf/program\\_activities/ci\\_volleyball\\_coaches.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/akf/program_activities/ci_volleyball_coaches.html)>, 12 January 2006.

9 Australian Sports Commission, Exhibit No. 17, *Summary of Australian Sports Commission Relations with Korea*, 13 September 2005.

- volleyball; and
- sports science.<sup>10</sup>

### Australian Sports Commission

- 5.19 While the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) did not provide the Committee with a submission, the Committee understands that the ASC has had contact with RoK sports teams, coaches and officials in the past.
- 5.20 Contact between the ASC and the Korean Ministry of Culture and Sport began in 1993 when the AKF brought the two bodies together. An MoU was signed and a number of exchanges were initiated, predominantly in the mid to late 1990s. That MoU was terminated by the ASC in 2005 due to a lack of activity.<sup>11</sup>

### Cultural engagement through sport

- 5.21 The Committee heard from Mr Stephen Doszpot, who advocated sport as a method of relationship building in Asia. Mr Doszpot believed that soccer, in particular, had the ability to bring Australian and Koreans together in a manner which would facilitate closer political, trade and cultural relationships.
- 5.22 Mr Doszpot shared several anecdotes with the Committee which suggested that soccer had the ability to bring the two countries closer together:
- We have a very good opportunity to establish closer links within football [soccer], in particular, with Korea. The former ambassador to Australia, Ambassador Song, is now tied up with the football association in Korea ... these contacts are very valuable to gain a better understanding of each other's cultures.<sup>12</sup>
- 5.23 Mr Doszpot did note, however, that soccer was not the only sport that Australia and the RoK share an interest in. Basketball, volleyball, archery and taekwondo were also mentioned.

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10 DCITA, *Submission No. 22, Vol. 1*, p. 325.

11 Australian Sports Commission, Exhibit No. 17, *Summary of Australian Sports Commission Relations with Korea*, 13 September 2005.

12 Mr Stephen Doszpot, *Transcript 1 September 2005*, p. 29.

## Committee comment

- 5.24 The Committee encourages the AKF to continue funding sporting exchange between Australians and Koreans and the ASC to review the potential for a renewed MoU with the RoK.
- 5.25 During the inquiry, the Committee noted that most of Australia's close relationships with other countries are based, to some extent, on sport. Australia plays rugby and cricket with countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, Britain, and India. The link between closer relationships and sport is clear; therefore, closer sporting links between Australia and the RoK will only help strengthen our understanding of each others' countries.
- 5.26 The Committee looks forward to Australia playing regularly in the Asian soccer competition. This will raise the profile of Australia in various Asian countries and the profile of Asian countries in Australia.
- 5.27 In addition to soccer, the exchanges which have occurred between the ASC and the RoK in the sports of basketball, volleyball, archery and taekwondo in the past suggest that there are opportunities for cultural exchange in a number of sporting areas.
- 5.28 The need to raise the profile of the RoK in Australia is particularly important. It is clear to the Committee that few Australians have had exposure to the RoK and its culture. The Committee agrees with Mr Doszpot that sport has the ability to attract local attention onto a country. For example, the 2002 World Cup drew world attention to the RoK.<sup>13</sup>

## The arts

### Australia–Korea Foundation activities

- 5.29 The AKF supports artistic exchange between Australia and the RoK in a variety of ways. Recent initiatives include:
- an art exchange between the National Art School in Sydney and the Hong IK University, College of Fine Art in Seoul;
  - funding for three Koreans from the LATT Children's Theatre of Korea to attend the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's *Out of the Box* Festival;

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13 Mr Stephen Doszpot, *Transcript 1 September 2005*, p. 31.

- an Australian children's literature touring program in the RoK;
- funding for RoK film makers to attend the 51<sup>st</sup> Sydney Film Festival and the 52<sup>nd</sup> Melbourne International Film Festival; and
- the book production and exhibition of Australian George Rose's 1904 photographs of Korea.

### Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

- 5.30 The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) website states that one of its key activities is the promotion of Australia through international and regional cultural agencies and organisations.<sup>14</sup>
- 5.31 The Committee expected that DCITA would have been more actively involved in promoting cultural understanding between Australia and the RoK, but was advised that:
- ... the general approach of the department is to support and facilitate ... cultural opportunities between the cultural agencies and Korea but very much within the need for those agencies to pursue their own strategic directions and priorities without interference from the government.<sup>15</sup>
- 5.32 The Committee was told by DCITA representatives that it had no particular initiatives for the promotion of cultural understanding between Australia and the RoK. DCITA added, however, that portfolio agencies such as the Australia Council and the National Library of Australia had programs which encouraged cross-cultural understanding between the two countries.<sup>16</sup>
- 5.33 In its submission, DCITA referred to a 1972 cultural agreement between the Commonwealth and RoK Governments which it believed represented the strong cultural ties between Australia and the RoK.<sup>17</sup>
- 5.34 The Committee expressed its view that, based on submissions received during this inquiry, 'Australia could be doing more and getting more in terms of Australian citizens learning from cultural exchange' between Australia and the RoK.<sup>18</sup>

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14 For a list of DCITA's key activities see, <[http://www.dcita.gov.au/home/department/what\\_we\\_do](http://www.dcita.gov.au/home/department/what_we_do)>, 13 January 2006.

15 Mr Colin Lyons, *Transcript 31 August 2005*, p. 47.

16 Mr Colin Lyons, *Transcript 31 August 2005*, p. 47.

17 DCITA, *Submission No. 22, Vol. 1*, p. 322.

18 Committee, *Transcript 31 August 2005*, p. 47.

- 5.35 The Committee asked DCITA if there were any plans to re-evaluate the 1972 agreement. DCITA responded that there was currently no work being done on reviving the agreement.<sup>19</sup>

### The National Library of Australia

- 5.36 The National Library of Australia (NLA) has maintained a Korean collection since the 1950s, and since that time, the collection has grown to become the largest Korean collection in Australia.<sup>20</sup>
- 5.37 The NLA actively purchases material and receives donations from institutions such as:
- the Korea Foundation;
  - the Korea History Compilation Committee; and
  - the Academy of Korean Studies.<sup>21</sup>
- 5.38 The NLA has exchange programs with the National Assembly Library and the Central National Library in Seoul. It also actively promotes its collection through participation in events such as the biennial Korean Studies Association of Australasia conference.<sup>22</sup>
- 5.39 The Committee was interested to learn that in addition to the NLA's connection to institutions in the RoK, the NLA receives material from the Korea Publications Export & Import Corporation in Pyongyang and has an exchange program with the Grand People's Study House in the DPRK.<sup>23</sup>

### The Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- 5.40 The ABC Asia Pacific channel gives television viewers in the RoK the opportunity to access Australian cultural, entertainment, children's and language programming. In Seoul, the ABC Asia Pacific channel is available to almost 100 000 homes with an audience of 16 000 per month.<sup>24</sup>

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19 Mr Colin Lyons, *Transcript 31 August 2005*, p. 47.

20 NLA, *Submission No. 9, Vol. 1*, p. 64.

21 NLA, *Submission No. 9, Vol. 1*, p. 64.

22 NLA, *Submission No. 9, Vol. 1*, p. 64.

23 NLA, *Submission No. 9, Vol. 1*, p. 65.

24 ABC, *Submission No. 7, Vol. 1*, p. 51.



- 5.41 Programs such as *Bananas in Pyjamas* have proven to be popular, as well as Australian documentaries, news and English language learning programs.<sup>25</sup>
- 5.42 The Committee was advised by ABC Asia Pacific representatives that the Korean cultural drive to learn English makes the RoK a very important international market for the ABC. It also provided the basis for a strong focus on English language training programs on the channel.<sup>26</sup>

### The English Village

- 5.43 The establishment of an ABC Asia Pacific room in the English Village in Seoul is an extension of this focus on English language training by the ABC.
- 5.44 The English Village is a Seoul city government initiative designed for Korean students to learn a higher standard of English through immersion. Three hundred randomly picked elementary school students a week visit the village where Australian, Canadian, British and American teachers conduct programs in English.
- 5.45 The ABC Asia Pacific is the only foreign organisation to sponsor a room in the Village. It is a digital room with computer and televisions, where children write emails, watch Australian education programs or study an interactive Australian map.<sup>27</sup>
- 5.46 Feedback on the Village and the Australian room has been very positive and the Committee was pleased to note that Korean school children have the opportunity to learn about Australia and its culture through this initiative.<sup>28</sup>

### The Australian Film Commission

- 5.47 Information provided to the Committee by the AFC highlighted the strength of the Korean film industry and a relatively substantial cultural trade which occurs between the RoK and Australia.
- 5.48 Korean films have been enjoying growing success domestically and internationally since the 1990s. As a result, eight Korean films have been distributed in Australia since 2002 – the most well known being

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25 ABC, *Submission No. 7, Vol. 1*, p. 53.

26 Mr Jim Styles, *Transcript 20 September 2005*, p. 43.

27 Mr Eliot Lee, *Transcript 20 September 2005*, p. 50.

28 Mr Eliot Lee, *Transcript 20 September 2005*, p. 50.

*Old Boy*, a Cannes Film Festival entry. A much larger number of Australian productions have also been sold to the RoK.<sup>29</sup>

- 5.49 Australia has proven to be a popular destination for Korean film makers to shoot or more commonly post-produce their films. Seven Korean films have been shot or post-produced in Australia since 1996, as well as a number of Korean television commercials.<sup>30</sup>
- 5.50 In addition to cultural trade, the Committee was advised that the RoK and Australia actively participate in local film festivals. Australian films screened at the 2004 Pusan International Film Festival and Korean films screened in Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne as part of the 2004 Sydney Asia Pacific Film festival's Korean Film Festival.<sup>31</sup>
- 5.51 The Embassy Roadshow, an AFC sponsored event, has travelled to the RoK twice to screen Australian films and has been well received on both occasions.<sup>32</sup>

### Committee comment

- 5.52 The Committee would have liked to receive more submissions from Australian cultural agencies involved in promoting cross-cultural understanding between Australia and the RoK. It is unclear to the Committee whether or not this lack of submissions reflects a lack of actual activity that is occurring in this area. If that is the case, then Australian cultural institutions need to do more to encourage cultural interaction between Australia and the RoK.
- 5.53 While the Committee recognises DCITA's role as a coordinating agency, it encourages DCITA to actively promote the RoK to the agencies they have contact with in an effort to raise the cultural profile of the RoK in Australia.
- 5.54 The Committee commends agencies such as the AKF, ABC and AFC for actively promoting Australian culture in the RoK and hopes that Australia's cultural profile will continue to rise in the RoK.

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29 For complete lists of Korean films distributed in Australia and Australian films distributed in the RoK see, AFC, *Appendix C and D, Submission No. 29, Vol. 2*, pp. 415-20.

30 Miss Lynn Gailey, *Transcript 20 September 2005*, p. 54-55.

31 AFC, *Submission No. 29, Vol. 2*, p. 408.

32 AFC, *Submission No. 29, Vol. 2*, p. 408.

## Republic of Korea Government cultural activities in Australia

5.55 Throughout the course of this inquiry, it has been suggested that in order for the Australia-RoK relationship to deepen, a greater understanding of each other's cultures was necessary. It has been noted that Australians have only a limited interest in the RoK, while Koreans tend to be much more aware of Australia. This may be due to their desire to learn English and their view of Australia as a preferred travel destination. The RoK Embassy advised the Committee that:

... a great many Koreans have a basic knowledge and a good image of Australia through their school education ... In a recent poll commissioned by one Korean daily, Australia ranked second as the most favoured country following the US.<sup>33</sup>

5.56 In contrast, the RoK Embassy believes that Korea is:

... fairly alien to Australians or often carries a negative image originating from past eras ... Australians seem to feel modest interest in travelling to Korea, much less in learning the Korean language.<sup>34</sup>

5.57 The Committee endeavoured throughout this inquiry to understand how Australians might become more interested in the RoK and how Australian institutions might assist in raising that interest level. As part of this process, the Committee queried the RoK Embassy on what activities it has undertaken to promote Korean culture in Australia.

5.58 The RoK Embassy has promoted the RoK in Australia through the following activities:

- Korean cultural performances during Korea week 2004;
- Chamber music, Korean opera and traditional Korean music performances;
- distribution of books on Korean culture, history and economic development to Australian primary and secondary schools;
- development of an educational website in conjunction with the Asia Education Foundation of Melbourne; and
- financial contributions to the study of Korean language in Australia.

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33 Embassy of the RoK, *Submission No. 44, Vol. 2*, p. 536.

34 Embassy of the RoK, *Submission No. 44, Vol. 2*, p. 536-7.

## Committee comment

- 5.59 This chapter has shown that there continues to be cultural engagement between Australia and the RoK on many levels and notes areas where further cross-cultural engagement can develop.
- 5.60 The Committee recognises the benefits of cross-cultural understanding between Australia and the RoK and supports all attempts to deepen cultural relations between the two countries so that that an already strong relationship can be further strengthened.