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Mr Russell Chafer
Secretary
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Submission to the Inquiry into the effects of the ongoing efficiency dividend
on smaller public sector agencies**

Dear Mr Chafer

I understand that, as a consequence of the ‘efficiency dividend’ that the Rudd government has placed on all government agencies, the National Library of Australia is intending to make major cutbacks in its Indonesian Acquisitions Project. This has grave implications for the future of Indonesian Studies in Australia, and places our capacity to maintain world-class research in this nationally-strategic area in jeopardy. I urge your committee to ensure Indonesian Studies is not undermined as an unintended consequence of the ‘efficiency dividend’.

By way of background, the Indonesian Acquisitions Project (IAP) has enabled Australian and other universities to acquire the broadest range of current publications in Indonesia, for use in teaching and research. There are nine participant institutions besides the National Library of Australia (NLA), namely Murdoch, Monash, Flinders, and Melbourne universities, the British Library, the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), the National Library of Singapore, the ANU and ADFA. Participants pay an annual fee for the service according to a budget, which covers the costs of monographs and serials, freight/diplomatic bag and management of the service. An Australian acquisitions librarian is based in Jakarta to run the Project. If the efficiency dividend cutbacks are implemented, the NLA's representative in Jakarta would be replaced by local staff and collecting on behalf of other Australian libraries will cease.

As an Australian academic whose area of research and teaching in Indonesian Studies is central to the country's national strategic interest in the Southeast Asia region, I would dispute at any suggestion that the IAP is not vital to our national capacity in Indonesian Studies. The IAP is the bedrock upon which Australian research on Indonesia is built.

Murdoch University Library is one of the original members of the IAP, involved since its inception in 1973. Murdoch relies heavily on the cost-effective IAP in building up our Indonesian language collection. We have increased our funding to the IAP this financial year. If the IAP was down-graded or cancelled, not only would the intensity of buying for the national collection decline, but my own university library (along with other universities

around the country) would lose the capacity to collect contemporary Indonesian material in any consistent and effective manner.

Given the collaborative nature of the IAP any alternative to the NLA system would be both more expensive and less effective. For example, the IAP catalogues all acquisitions immediately in Jakarta and makes these records available in Libraries Australia for copy cataloguing. This reduces costs and enhances the efficiency of all participating libraries.

I stress that there are no cost-effective alternatives to the IAP since, unlike some other southeast Asian countries, there is no commercial vendor in Indonesia able to provide an acquisitions service for overseas customers. In the past, Murdoch ordered books from Australian suppliers but they are often not able to meet our requests. In fact, we still have orders in our library system that were placed two to three years previously which Australian suppliers have been unable to source. By comparison, the IAP officer in Jakarta has always been extremely helpful in obtaining materials for us. Through them we also get first hand information regarding broader developments in the publishing industry in Indonesia. As a researcher I have been greatly assisted in the past by IAP officers in Jakarta, who were aware of my specific research projects and attentive to those needs in their acquisitions.

Given that many new Indonesian publications go out of print very quickly, the closure of the IAP would result in Australia not acquiring much of the limited edition, locally-produced short-run publications, including government publications and regional material. We also subscribe our Indonesia newspapers and journals through IAP. They are delivered to us regularly every week, ensuring our holdings are always current. Staff in our Serials section confirm that we get a more realistic and reasonable price subscribing through IAP compared with other commercial suppliers

If participating universities did not have the IAP both academics and students would largely lose comprehensive access to contemporary Indonesian print materials. The research value of all Australian Indonesian collections (other than the NLA's) would decline significantly since they would not be kept up to date with new publications and could not continue to be developed in accordance with research and teaching needs.

Researchers such as myself and my colleagues in Western Australia, along with others living at some distance from the NLA, would be particularly disadvantaged by cancellation of the IAP. We would have to rely on the NLA for expensive document delivery and interlibrary loans, substantially increasing our research costs, and putting more strain on staff both at the NLA and our own library, as all Indonesianists around Australia struggled to use the single NLA Indonesian collection.

In conclusion, I urge your committee to take all possible action to ensure that the 'efficiency dividend' does not result in an erosion of this nationally-significant Indonesian Acquisitions Project. It is a vital resource for fundamental and advanced research and teaching on Indonesia, right across Australia.

Yours truly,



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