



Submission No 5

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the  
Countries of Africa**

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**Organisation:** University of Sydney Africa Australia Network



# The University of Sydney

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## Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

8 December 2009

### University of Sydney Africa Australia Network

#### Support for Strengthening Australia's Relations with Africa

The University of Sydney strongly supports the strengthening of Australia's relations with Africa. The government's increased allocation of overseas development assistance to the world's poorest continent is welcome and represents a significant commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The University also notes the deepening engagement by the Australian private sector in Africa.

#### The Need for Greater Engagement by the Academic Community

Despite the re-engagement and increased funds available for Africa, AusAID and DFAT's existing capacity in sub-Saharan Africa is limited. Given the lack of engagement in Africa over the past decade, existing experience and expertise in African affairs is likely insufficient to cope with the increased demands for evidence and understanding that comes with the increased focus on Africa. The increasing engagement in Africa warrants consideration of corresponding investment in developing a better understanding of legal, business and development realities of Africa. The academic community of Australia and the University of Sydney in particular – through its Africa Australia Network – is able to provide much of the required expertise to provide such information to policy makers, business community and the development community.

#### What the University of Sydney is Doing

The University of Sydney is one of Australia's leading universities with a proven track record of policy-relevant research across a range of sectors including agriculture, governance, energy, economics, business, law and health. The University hosts over 20 senior academics with significant current and recent experience in many African countries. These academics have considerable contacts with African academic, government and policy institutions. The University has made a commitment to deepening its engagement with Africa. The University is in the process of developing partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding with African universities such as the University of Nairobi, University of Cape Town and Makerere University in Kampala. Such partnerships place the University of Sydney in a strong position to build collaborative research and education agreements with African researchers.

The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) at the University of Sydney has increased its commitment and engagement in Africa by allocating internal funding for five collaborative projects in Africa totalling \$63,000 through the International Program Development Fund. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (International), Professor John Hearn, will lead an academic delegation to Kenya, South Africa and Rwanda in mid-2010 to further develop the University's relationship with partner institutions, organisations and Australian government agencies.

A significant number of University of Sydney faculties, schools and academics already have considerable African expertise, active research collaborations and ongoing partnerships across sectors including law, agriculture, government, medicine, peace studies, and veterinary sciences. These are funded by groups including the International Monetary Fund, US National Institutes of Health and AusAID. These partnerships have strong champions at the University of Sydney and in Africa. The University of Sydney will partner with other world universities and international agencies to develop effective critical mass in its research and education programs in Africa. The University of Sydney has delivered courses on strategic government to public servants in South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya and Zambia and developed the first round of the AusAID-funded Australia Africa Fellowship Program designed to address issues surrounding the management and distribution of extractive industry revenues in Southern and Eastern Africa. The Program was delivered to senior fellows from Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. The University is eager to extend this program in 2010 and has submitted three Australia Africa Fellowships in round 2 of the programme. Projects are also ongoing with the Rwandan Tax Office, the Rwandan Ministry of Education, the South African transport system, the Infectious Disease Institute in Kampala, the Ministry of Health in Kenya, the Umlambo Foundation in South Africa as well as the University of Botswana. The University's existing African experience focuses on agricultural systems, governance, sustainability, health, mining, and political and legal systems which broadly mirror AusAID and DFAT's pillars of emphasis for development assistance and for Africa.

On 19 March 2010 the University of Sydney will host an International Forum on Africa to discuss Australia's re-engagement in Africa. The Forum will include speakers from the Australian Government, African High Commissioners and leaders from government, academia and business. The Forum will increase awareness in Australia about the re-engagement with Africa and will provide an opportunity from bridges to built and specific partnerships to be developed.

Additionally, the University currently hosts more than 100 African students from 17 different African countries in a number of faculties. The University of Sydney has accepted a significant number of the total African student enrolments on AusAID scholarships (Australian Development Scholarships) – demonstrating the University's commitment to African education and the growing focus of the university on Africa. Additionally, the University has also participated in Austrade Roadshows to attract full fee paying and scholarship students in Eastern and Southern Africa since 2007. The University also funds the University of Sydney World Scholars program which provides much-needed PhD scholarships for students from developing countries including Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa (includes a travel contribution and tuition fee waiver, for any field of study). This not only provides opportunities to Africans but improves and diversifies the learning experience of local and other international students. In the School of Public Health's Masters of International Public Health program for example, the eight African students provide a different perspective on core global challenges and the quality of debate and cross-student learning is enhanced through their participation.

### **The University of Sydney Calls on the Australian Government to:**

- Continue deepening and expanding its engagement with Africa at all levels with increased funding for development assistance
- Prioritise scientific and educational relations and exchanges that will build person-to-person and institution-to-institution partnerships and linkages
- Commit to sustained capacity building efforts with African government officials and civil society with a particular focus on strengthening the tertiary education sector in Africa so that it can provide necessary intellectual, scientific and evidence-based support to Africa's development
- Expand funding for PhD and post-doctoral opportunities for African students at Australian universities especially for joint Australia-Africa supervision
- Expand student exchange opportunities that facilitate cultural and academic exchange between Australia and Africa
- Expand Australian government grants that currently focus on the Asia-Pacific region to include projects and research in Africa
- Leverage existing academic African experience to strengthen government engagement in Africa

The University would be pleased to participate in the planned public hearings and to engage its leading researchers and education in support of the Australian Government's Africa initiative.

**Director-designate of Network**

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Signature: R. Cumming

Date: 9/12/09

**Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International)**

Name: John Hearn

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Date: 9 11 09

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