



Asialink

The University of Melbourne



**ASIALINK'S SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO
THE NATURE & CONDUCT OF AUSTRALIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
2007**

**A Response to Request for Practical Initiatives for Enhanced Engagement
April 2007**

The following is a development of Section 4 of Asialink's Submission

1. *Media Exchanges*

Asialink ran The Medialink Fellowship Program from 1999 until 2004 to contribute to the strengthening of Asia - Australia understanding and relationships and to the professional development of the media in Australia and the region. The program assisted up to 10 mid-career journalists each year from Australia, Indonesia, India and China, to live and work for up to 12 weeks in another country and culture.

Past Medialink fellows praised the program for the quality and depth of opportunity to understand the host country and culture but the program was not able to attract sustainable funding to continue.

Asialink's work in this sector is now limited to managing the SEAMEO-Australia Press Award in partnership with SEAMEO, DEST and the Australian Embassy in Bangkok. This award recognizes excellent coverage of education issues by journalists in Southeast Asia and offers a short term placement for one Fellow annually at a media organization in Australia.

A final evaluation of the Medialink program suggested the following ideas for a new Medialink program should new funding become available. A re-branded Medialink program funded through DFAT's Public Diplomacy initiatives could offer:

- i) A highly-prestigious, one-off annual national scholarship or award for mid level to senior journalists modelled along the lines of the current Fulbrights, or Knight International Press Fellowships promoted in such a way that it has the standing and promotional reputation of the current Walkley Awards.
- ii) Short-term visits or tours to Asian countries by mid-career working journalists from Australia. The program could take up to six journalists on a two to three week tour of one Asian country and the focus would be on increasing cultural and political understanding of that country, with perhaps one specific issue in mind.

Funding: \$500,000

2. *Re-instating the Asialink Literature Program*

The Asialink Literature Program, funded from 2002 to 2006 by the Australia Council, is the only program in Australia dedicated to the promotion of Australian literature in the Asian region. This program has delivered significant benefits in touring 34 authors including Geraldine Brooks, Tim Winton, Peter Carey and Doris Pilkington Garimara in Taiwan, China, Korea, Japan, Singapore and India. It promotes Australia through book fairs and other touring opportunities including the major country focus at the 2007 Calcutta Book Fair and through direct rights sales; it establishes relationships and increases understanding of Australian culture and history in the region, with, to date, over 135 media interviews and 210 events attracting over 320,000 people.

In 2007, the future of this highly successful program is in jeopardy. Without government support Australian literature is at risk of not being promoted in Asia, despite the increasing interest in this market from Europe and the USA.

We need to build on current achievements to ensure that there is a continued profile and presence of Australian literature in the region as part of the broader vision and interest of Australia in Asia. Government support is essential in this area.

Funding: \$500,000

3. *More Support for Second Track Initiatives*

Events such as the Asialink Conversations play an important role in public diplomacy by providing a significant opportunity for leaders in business, government and the community to share open and creative conversations with their counterparts around the region. Inaugurated in 2002, the Conversations have taken place in Australia, Malaysia and in 2006, in Vietnam where Prime Minister John Howard addressed the closing dinner.

Asialink has also developed an important second track initiative in conjunction with the APEC Conference in September this year, to which DFAT has agreed to contribute seeding funding. This Conference, APEC 2020, is aimed at current to mid-career leaders from all APEC countries coming together to discuss issues facing the region.

In addition, Asialink has been requested to deliver the Coolum Forum in Thailand this year – a high level dialogue between East Asian young leaders in government, politics, academia and for the first time in 2007, also involving senior business leaders.

Second track initiatives are extremely important in facilitating exchanges and building relationships across the region. Government support both financially and in-kind greatly assists organizations such as Asialink to deliver these vital events.

Funding: \$250,000

4. Engaging Youth: Utilising New Technologies

A 2005 Report by the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy found that "in today's world, it is not enough for public diplomacy practitioners to say they have a presence on the Internet. Practitioners need to constantly engage appropriate technologies that will reach key audiences and think ahead in technology and embrace innovations"¹.

Given Australia's geographic isolation, new technologies could provide an innovative way to leverage our public diplomacy efforts through new media and delivery systems such as blogs, interactive digital channels, wireless technologies which enable users to access web content via their mobile phones, podcasting etc.

For example, communication technology is now integrated into teaching and learning in all Australian schools and in many schools across Asia. This provides multiple opportunities to connect school students and their teachers in Australia and Asia using new technologies. Mutual knowledge and understanding can be substantially enhanced through Australian government investment in international electronic curriculum projects focused on shared interests including climate, identity, migration, youth culture, family etc. Priority countries could be identified - eg trade priorities including China, India and Japan and Islamic countries including Indonesia and Pakistan.

In order to involve young adults, new technologies are also proving highly successful through the development of collaborative virtual communities. In these virtual spaces like-minded people congregate, communicate and collectively build projects and enterprises. For example AsiaGroove.com, a virtual village for people interested in Asian pop culture, receives 120 million page hits a month with 3,000-4000 young people registering daily.

The potential for public diplomacy engaging young people via this use of technology is limitless. A virtual open space could be established aimed at building Asia-Australia engagement and catering for a range of interest groups and purposes.

Funding: \$2,000,000

¹ The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, Washington, 2005 Report, www.state.gov/r/adcompd

Asialink Funding Analysis - for the period 2003-2006

Funders/Income	2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Amount \$	%	Amount \$	%	Amount \$	%	Amount \$	%
Commonwealth	4,159,862.00	67%	4,972,577.76	72%	3,855,305.09	64%	3,652,781.50	55%
State & Local Government	292,966.00	5%	362,810.91	5%	364,883.09	6%	537,560.43	8%
Myer Foundation	300,000.00	5%	401,000.00	6%	400,000.00	7%	767,000.00	12%
University of Melbourne	302,858.00	5%	433,330.00	6%	506,234.62	8%	499,956.00	8%
Other Philanthropic Funders	125,173.00	2%	86,492.66	1%	0	0%	322,506.07	5%
Donations & Sponsorship	276,835.00	4%	189,729.71	3%	263,405.54	4%	219,529.19	3%
Fees & Services	707,247.00	11%	397,406.35	6%	570,316.35	9%	482,017.68	7%
Investment	73,951.00	1%	92,962.22	1%	111,703.86	2%	161,066.91	2%
Total	6,238,892.00	100%	6,938,309.61	100%	6,081,848.55	100%	6,642,487.78	

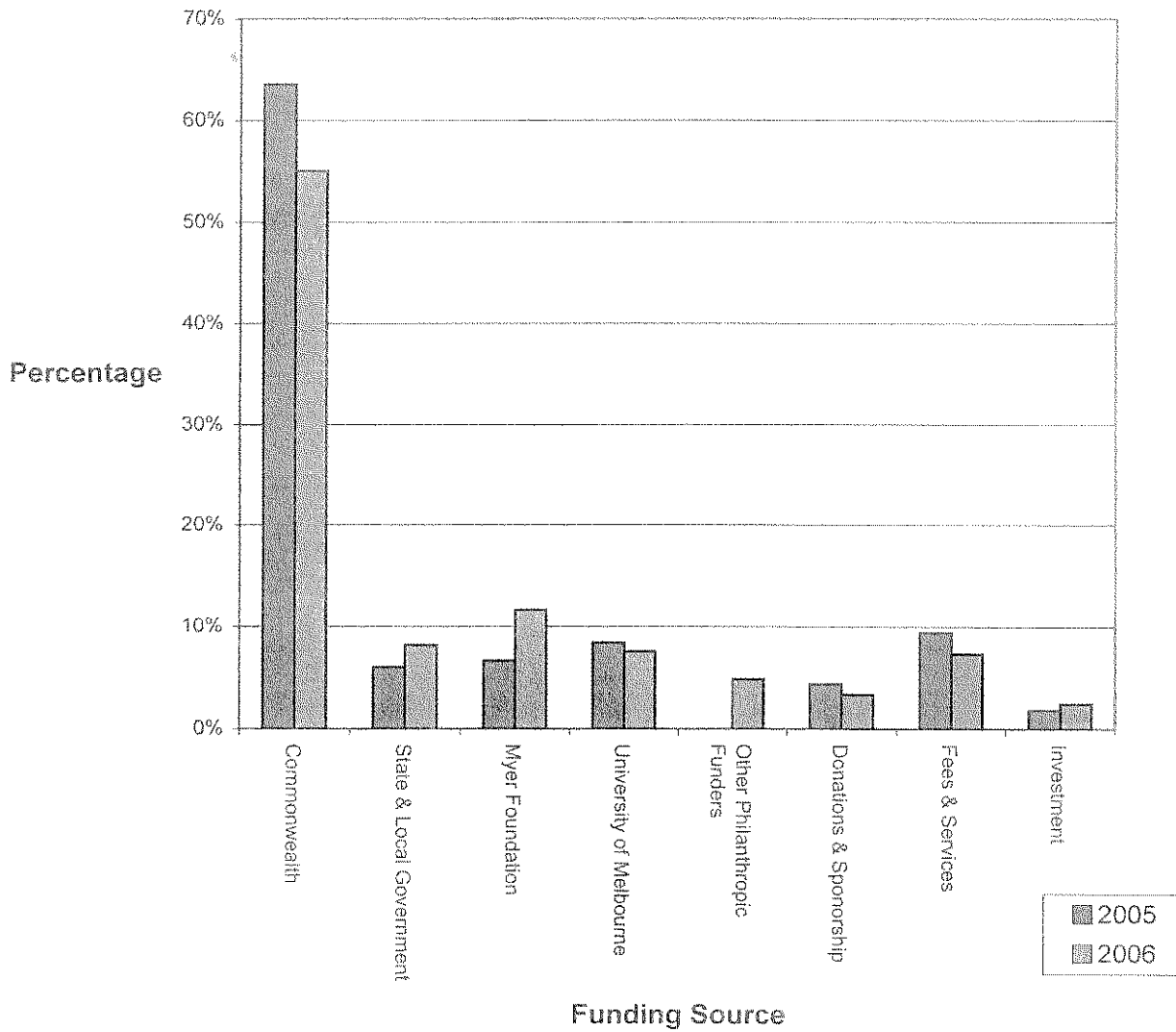
As Amount

Funders/Income	2004	2005	2006
Commonwealth	4,972,577.76	3,855,305.09	4,159,862.00
State & Local Government	362,810.91	364,883.09	292,966.00
Myer Foundation	401,000.00	400,000.00	300,000.00
University of Melbourne	433,330.00	506,234.62	302,858.00
Other Philanthropic Funders	86,492.66	-	125,173.00
Donations & Sponsorship	189,729.71	263,405.54	276,835.00
Fees & Services	397,406.35	570,316.35	707,247.00
Investment	92,962.22	111,703.86	73,951.00
Total	6,938,309.61	6,081,848.55	6,238,892.00

As a percentage

Funders/Income	2004	2005	2003
	Percentage %	Percentage %	Percentage %
Commonwealth	72%	64%	67%
State & Local Government	5%	6%	5%
Myer Foundation	6%	7%	5%
University of Melbourne	6%	8%	5%
Other Philanthropic Funders	1%	0%	2%
Donations & Sponsorship	3%	4%	4%
Fees & Services	6%	9%	11%
Investment	1%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Asialink Funding in 2005 & 2006



Note:

Commonwealth - decrease is due to a number of AEF government tenders being completed & funds of \$1.5 million for 2006 programs due to be received in 2007.