



Australian Government

Department of Education, Science and Training

**Submission by the Department of Education,
Science and Training**

**to the
Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade**

**Inquiry into the nature and conduct of Australia's
public diplomacy**

1. Introduction

The Department of Education, Science and Training is pleased to contribute to the Senate's *Inquiry into the nature and conduct of Australia's public diplomacy*.

International education is gaining increasing recognition for the significant role it plays in contributing to Australia's global engagement and the perception of Australia around the world. There are now many business, political and cultural leaders in the Asia-Pacific region counted among the alumni of Australian universities and colleges. Many of these leaders came to Australia under the highly successful Colombo Plan of the 1950's. A new generation of scholars are now building on this tradition with some 318,000 international students studying in Australia in 2006, drawn not just from the Asia-Pacific region but from over 200 countries around the globe.

These students are gaining a first-hand experience of Australian people, institutions and our way of life. The experiences gained and friendships formed provide the basis for the goodwill in the personal, business and political relationships of the future.

International education and training is also now Australia's fourth largest export industry, contributing over \$10 billion to the Australian economy in 2005-06 and sustaining over 50,000 jobs in the sector.

2. Australian Education International

Australian Education International (AEI) is the international education arm of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and is the lead government agency in Australia's international education and training engagement. AEI provides its services through the national office in Canberra and the DEST International Network, which has a presence in 26 locations across 18 economies.

AEI aims to encourage and facilitate Australia's international education and training engagement in line with the national interest to realise the intellectual, social, cultural, economic and security benefits of internationalisation. AEI works to create an environment for a successful sector through government-to-government cooperation; underpinning the quality of education and training services delivered to international students; achieving greater diversity of students, modes of education delivery and subjects offered; and coordinating government support in partnership with the Australian education and training industry.

AEI provides a range of services and products to the international education and training industry. These include international marketing and promotion of Australian education and training, the provision of market information qualifications recognition services.

Further, AEI recognises the important role of education and training in the development of human capital. We are committed to assisting students to reach their full potential, both academically and personally, so that they may become the global leaders of tomorrow. AEI underpins this work through administration of the *Education Services for Overseas Students* (ESOS) Act. The ESOS Act protects the quality of the education offering to international students and ensures they receive the knowledge and skills to prepare them for their future careers.

3. DEST International Network

The DEST International Network comprises a combination of A-based and locally engaged staff with coverage across the Asia-Pacific, the Americas, Western Europe and the Middle East.

DEST's international staff work to enhance Australia's profile with relevant government and private organisations, prospective international students, as well as reporting relevant market information for all education sectors within Australia. AEI develops Memoranda of Understanding and facilitates dialogue on the issues of education, science and training with governments around the world, as well as managing Australia's education interests in major international and regional strategic fora.

DEST counsellors are actively engaged in the public diplomacy as it relates to education and training. They work collaboratively with other agencies particularly with DFAT, AusAID and Austrade in promoting the social and cultural benefits of education engagement.

The DEST International Network works alongside DFAT Public Affairs Officers at post cooperating in major promotional events such as Australia Week. AEI also works in partnership with Austrade in specific regions. For example, Austrade represents AEI throughout Western Europe. AEI and Austrade collaborate in many educational promotion activities throughout the world and in regions where AEI has no presence, Austrade takes a lead role in the promotion of education and training. This collaboration is articulated in a Memorandum of Agreement between both organisations.

4. Promoting Australian education and training

Study in Australia

In 2002 the Government established Study in Australia which operates as an umbrella brand for the promotion of Australian education internationally. Study in Australia promotes Australia as the country of choice for potential students to develop both themselves and their careers through Australia's special balance of lifestyle in conjunction with high academic standards. An independent evaluation of the Study in Australia brand undertaken in 2006 found that the brand successfully communicates the quality of Australian education and training. Eighty per cent of students surveyed who are currently studying in Australia expressed satisfaction with their Australian education experience. More than 80% of current students also agreed that Australia offers quality education.

The Evaluation concluded that Study in Australia is the third strongest national education brand globally, behind those of the United States and the United Kingdom. The major tool for communicating the brand is the Study in Australia website. This website now averages more than 210,000 unique visits per month and provides a comprehensive portal to Australia's offerings to potential international students.

Brand Australia provides leverage for Study in Australia and AEI works with Tourism Australia to ensure consistency of messages across the two brands.

One of the strongest areas of growth in international education and training is transnational delivery, that is, where Australian providers deliver their programmes offshore, either directly or with local partners. It is estimated that at least 100,000 students are undertaking Australian programmes in this manner.

Other promotional activities implemented by AEI include familiarisation visits to Australia for senior officials, education leaders, journalists and other target groups; public lectures by eminent Australians, collaborative research symposia and support for international alumni networks.

Media Activity

A media service developed by AEI provides a capacity to showcase achievements by Australian education and research institutions. AEI packages media releases from Australian providers for an international audience and distribute them directly to international media outlets through our international network. These are also shared through the DFAT and Austrade networks while DFAT also provides its media summaries for distribution throughout the DEST network. The DEST International Network works with DFAT Public Diplomacy Officers at post to collaborate on media events and activities such as Australia Week.

5. Brisbane Communique

The Australian Government initiated the Brisbane Communiqué with Ministers and senior officials from 27 countries, to discuss actions on education and training to be undertaken in concert, in order to strengthen good relations in the broader Asia-Pacific region and to increase international mobility of students and academics.

The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Australia's Minister for Education, Science and Training convened the inaugural Asia-Pacific Education Minister's meeting in Brisbane in April 2006. The Brisbane Communique, a statement emerging from the meeting, sets out the framework for cooperation on education and training matters in the region.

Ministers agreed to actively encourage and facilitate regional student and academic mobility and exchange in the region, and address barriers to these activities. Student and academic mobility and exchange are seen to provide the basis for friendship, mutual respect and understanding, just as education is the key to prosperity, security and peace in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The Ministers agreed to continue the Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting as a biennial meeting that will become a new forum to consider common education issues at ministerial level, throughout this extended region. The Minister's also agreed to establish an Official's Working Party led by Australia to take the work of the meeting forward to the next meeting in 2008.

6. The Endeavour Programme

The Endeavour Programme aims to strengthen linkages between Australia and the region through education by bringing high achievers from around the world to Australia for study, research, vocational training or professional development in a broad range of disciplines.

The Endeavour Programme is open to applicants worldwide. A significant component of the Programme is embraced by *Australian Scholarships*; an initiative of the Australian Government that combines relevant aspects AusAID's and DEST's education programmes in the Asia-Pacific under a single umbrella.

The Programme also offers Australians the same experience abroad. In particular the Programme:

- furthers Australia's foreign policy and development agendas;
- furthers engagement with the Asia-Pacific region;
- builds Australia's reputation as an outward looking country; and
- counters perceptions that Australia only has commercial interests in the region.

In 2006, Endeavour received a large injection of funding bringing the total value of the Programme to \$276 million over five years. The increase included Official Development Assistance money, allowing the number of scholarships to increase to 9,000 over five years. Much of the additional funding was contingent on effective use of official aid expenditure and the Programme's contribution to good governance in the Asia-Pacific.

Strategic connections with international Australian alumni have until recently relied on serendipitous contact between students and acquaintances. For example, the Colombo Plan produced statesmen in the region including Senior Ministers from Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam as well as key reform leaders in the Pacific. Through an awardee network, Australian Scholarships and consequently the Endeavour Programme will develop enduring linkages with former Endeavour Programme awardees ensuring that influential and strategic relationships with Australia are maintained.

The Endeavour Programme showcases Australian research through its Research Fellowships, Postgraduate Awards and Postdoctoral Research Fellowships. Research Fellowships are available to postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows from participating countries to undertake four to six month's research in Australia and are valued at up to \$25,000. Equally, the Fellowships are available to Australians to do the same in participating countries, extending Australia's international research network and reputation for high quality research and facilities. Postgraduate Awards and Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are only available to international students and are valued at up to \$195,000.

Between 2003 and 2006, 72 Research Fellowships worth \$1.7 million were awarded to international students. In 2007, this was expanded to 78 International Research Fellowships, 28 Australian Research Fellows and 69 Postgraduate Awards.

The Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholarships exists outside of Australian Scholarships and also contributes to building Australia's research networks and reputation. Valued at around \$300m annually, it is a DEST funded programme administered through participating universities. These scholarships are available to international students world-wide on individual application to participating universities.

Endeavour also provides opportunities for private sector engagement in these activities. An example is the Endeavour Cheung Kong scholarships whereby the Australian Government and the Cheung Kong Group of companies, through Powercor Australia Limited, are each contributing \$3.75 million over five financial years, commencing 2004/05. The \$7.5 million in funding will support the participation of up to 856 undergraduate students in institution-to-institution student exchanges and will fund up to 132 postgraduate/post doctoral fellowships. These awards will be split evenly with half being available to Australians proceeding to study in Asia and half to Asian scholars studying in Australia.

While Australia is a very successful net exporter of education services, the Australian Government and Australian education providers are keen to increase the number and proportion of Australians who undertake an international study experience.

Student mobility, through the Endeavour Student Exchange and University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) Programmes provides opportunities for Australians to establish international connections which may develop into significant international relationships. The personal ties and networks formed in periods of study abroad have potential to contribute to international understanding and goodwill. These programmes also contribute to making Australia a more outward looking society, enabling Australia to develop a workforce with an international perspective in an increasingly competitive, open economy.

7. Science

Science is an intrinsically international endeavour, with Australian scientists working on a collaborative basis with colleagues in many countries around the globe. International collaboration provides multiple benefits to Australia and provides opportunities for Australia to extend its global influence.

Integration of Australia into the global science and innovation system

Although Australian research accounts for approximately 3% of the world's scientific output, Australia must be engaged with international partners to access the other 97% of research that occurs beyond our shores. Supported by the Australian Government, the Australian scientific community already has effective avenues through which it engages with international partners.

These include:

- Collaboration through *partnerships and networks*—Australian researchers routinely collaborate with international partners in research of mutual interest and benefit. Roughly one-third of all Australian co-authored papers are co-authored with a foreign collaborator¹.
- Participation in '*big science*' projects, that typically aim to answer fundamental questions, is an increasingly important form of international collaboration. Such projects often require knowledge across many disciplines and expensive infrastructure that no single country can develop on its own;
- Participation in *multi-lateral fora*—Australian participation in intergovernmental fora including committees within the OECD and APEC and professional organisations raises international awareness of Australian expertise and allows Australia to influence global science policy.

The Australian Government plays an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of these collaboration mechanisms by:

- promoting awareness of Australia's science and innovation capability and providing intelligence on opportunities for collaboration that are aligned with Australia's strategic interests;
- seeding collaboration with emerging countries or emerging areas (e.g. the Australian Government has established funds to build research collaboration with China and India, which have not been traditional partners for Australian scientists);
- supporting collaboration with Australia's traditional partners in research; and
- removing impediments to effective collaboration (e.g. by facilitating the passage of scientists in and out of Australia) or establishing high-level commitment to collaboration with Australian scientists.

Further integration with the global science community will provide opportunities to leverage and adapt foreign knowledge to provide domestic benefits, such as by addressing national challenges or by supporting innovative industries.

Using science to extend Australia's global influence

Australia's engagement with the global science community provides broader national benefits beyond important scientific outcomes. Scientific collaboration often provides an opportunity to establish or strengthen relations that may be otherwise under-developed or sensitive. Close ties with international partners allows Australia to contribute to meeting global challenges such as climate change; clean energy production; access to water and fighting disease. These are challenges which will depend on major contributions from new science and technology and which are of a scale that no one country can solve alone. Examples include:

- The *Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate Change* which includes Australia, the US, China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea and aims to develop innovative clean energy technologies to [substantially] reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ According to the US National Science and Foundation *Science and Engineering Indicators*, in 2004 36.3% of Australian science and engineering publications included contributions from at least one international collaborator.

- Australia is collaborating with regional partners, including the US, to develop a tsunami monitoring and early warning system. This will help prevent the terrible loss of life caused by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.
- Australia participates in the *Global Earth Observation System of Systems* (GEOSS), an ambitious project to create a whole-of-earth monitoring capacity with application in health, energy, climate change, sustainable agriculture, and water management.

By helping to address these global challenges, Australia has the capacity to influence solutions to take into account Australia's unique circumstances and strategic interests.

Key international partners and allies are also looking for science to play a greater role as a foreign policy tool. The UK recently added a Chief Scientific Advisor to their Department for International Development to ensure science forms an important part of their foreign aid programme. The US State Department has a policy mandate to include science and technology in their foreign policy process. This decision was informed by a report that concluded the 13 of 16 international strategic goals encompassed science issues.

Opportunities to improve the effectiveness of science diplomacy

There are opportunities to improve and increase the extent to which Australia can use science to identify and implement foreign policy objectives. A recent independent working group on global engagement commented in a report to the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) that:

"There is a perception amongst Australian scientists that Australia can make more use of science and technology as a foreign policy tool."

Recent reviews of its international science strategy and reports, such as those submitted by PMSEIC working groups, have identified three key mechanisms by which science could make an impact on foreign diplomacy in the short-term:

Expanding Australia's international science network—boosting Australia's science representation in key countries such as the UK, the US and China would increase awareness of Australian science and innovation and provide intelligence on opportunities to collaborate in initiatives consistent with Australia's strategic interests. The availability of intelligence has been identified as a limiting factor in Australia's participation in international activity.

Increasing scientific representation in high profile international delegations—there are opportunities to further emphasise science and its role in supporting friendly relations when Australian Government representatives meet with international delegations. A PMSEIC working group on Asia noted that when the Prime Minister visited India during 2006, his delegation included industry representatives but not representatives of the scientific community, despite increasing Indian interest in collaborating with the Australian scientists.

Increasing the prominence of science in foreign policy deliberations—establishing a whole-of-government approach to consider how science can be used to address foreign policy issues as they arise. This process would bring together agencies with responsibilities for research and development, agencies with an interest in using science to address specific challenges, such as climate change, and agencies with responsibility for managing Australia's foreign policy agenda. Such an approach would ensure that the contribution of science is used to its fullest potential.

8. International Centres of Excellence

In 2003 the Government announced the establishment International Centres of Excellence to showcase Australian excellence and create international linkages for Australian expertise in specific fields.

Five centres were established:

- The International Centre of Excellence in Water Resources Management
- The International Centre of Excellence in Sports Science and Management
- The International Centre of Excellence in Education in Mathematics
- The International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education
- The International Centre of Excellence in Asia- Pacific Studies.

The package also provided for a National Centre for Language Training which offers customised, intensive training in key languages and cross-cultural skills to Australian businesses. Also established was the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy to offer career training to diplomats and to foster high-level education, research and dialogue with respect to transnational diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region

These Centres are based on or around university campuses around the country and have engaged in a range of activities including establishment of the East Asia Forum to create an active dialogue on economic, political and security cooperation in the region. This initiative by the Asia-Pacific Centre is a collaboration with Harvard University and the University of California Berkeley and provides a forum for high level regional dialogue. The International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education has been selected to develop a vocational training centre in a Tsunami affected area of Thailand and the Water Resources Management Centre is showcasing Australian expertise through World Bank projects in flood and drought management. Similar examples exist across all the Centres, most of which are consortia bringing together Australian universities TAFE Colleges, and some private sector organisations.

9. Whole of government cooperation

IDC on Public Diplomacy

AEI is a member of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Public Diplomacy led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and bringing together approximately 20 agencies with an involvement in international public diplomacy.

The Committee is an effective vehicle for a coordinated and collaborative approach to public diplomacy activities. AEI has had the opportunity to brief the group on the *Study in Australia* brand and it has provided a useful forum for discussion on ensuring a consistent approach to branding across a range of government activities.

Some practical cooperation drawn from this forum include:

- AEI providing education briefings to DFAT Regional workshops for public diplomacy officers allowing greater understanding of the education role in the region and building collaboration between the agencies on public diplomacy matters
- AEI has provided the education footage for DFAT's updated generic film on Australia providing creating cost-savings and helping to reinforce a consistent education message across government
- DEST through AEI provides content for DFAT education and science elements of DFAT publications.

Working alongside DFAT, state and territory governments and education peak bodies, AEI coordinated Education week for the Aichi World Expo in 2005. The successful five day programme showcased Australian capabilities across all the education sectors and created significant dialogue and exchange on topics and issues relevant to both countries AEI is participating in DFAT discussions on the education elements of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo.

IDC on International Education

AEI as lead government agency on international education and training matters coordinates an Inter-departmental Committee on International Education. This high level policy forum contributes to the whole of government approach to international education and training drawing together DEST, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Trade Commission, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Australian Trade Commission and the Australian Agency for International Development. In 2003 all agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding clarifying roles and responsibilities of each agency. This provides a framework to facilitate cooperation and avoid duplication and outlining how each agency will contribute to achieving government goals in international education and training.

International Education Network

AEI also coordinates an International Education Network bringing together Commonwealth agencies with state and territory counterparts with responsibility for international education and training matters. An MOU was signed in 2003. Through the MOU the Commonwealth of Australia and the Governments of the States and Territories agree to work co-operatively Australia to benefit fully from the opportunities currently available in the international education marketplace through the identification of complementary capacity and the elimination of duplication.

Government Industry Stakeholder Consultations

The Government Industry Stakeholder Consultations (GISC) was jointly established by the then Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and DEST in October 2005. The purpose was to bring together the Australian Government with key industry stakeholder groups in international education and training. The forum brings together a broader range of stakeholder bodies, including those working at the operational as well as policy levels. The body also seeks to underpin our whole of government engagement through the involvement of all Australian Government agencies with responsibilities for international education.

10. Conclusion

A strong connection between, education, science, research and innovation is critical to the economic and social development of Australia. It impacts on policies and future directions in trade, foreign relations, national security and skilled migration, and, in turn Australia's international reputation as a key partner in global affairs.

International education creates a link between these areas, and as such plays an important role in supporting the Government policies aimed at raising Australia's profile with international audiences.