



Australia-Indonesia Youth Association
(AIYA)

Submission to the “Australia in the
Asian Century White Paper”

Acknowledgments

This submission was researched and written by Arjuna Dibley, Fe Donaghue and Nicholas Parsons. Thanks also for input from Rachelle Cole.

This submission is based, in part, on an online survey conducted by AIYA during January-February 2012. Thanks to all those who took time to respond to this survey. Special thanks also, to the Australian-Consortium for In-Country Indonesia Studies (ACICIS) for posting our survey to their email-list and Facebook page.

Endorsements

AIYA has tried to focus this submission to areas over which it has developed some expertise. For other areas of Asia-Australia policy, AIYA would formally like to acknowledge and support submissions made by:

Dr. David T. Hill – “Indonesian Language in Australian Universities Strategies for a stronger future”. National Teaching Fellowship: Final Report. February 2012.

Finally, AIYA would like to formally recognise the work of the Australia-China Youth Association, and endorse their submission.

Executive summary

The focus of this submission is on the Australia-Indonesia relationship, and particularly on the aspects of this relationship that affect young people in the people-to-people and business-to-business relations of the two countries. In particular the submission responds to the following questions, with corresponding recommendations, as below:

Have Australia's social and cultural links with Asia kept pace with our economic integration? How could such links be developed? For example, could more be done through networks of Australians living and working in Asian countries?

Australia and Indonesia have strong government-to-government links, and reasonably well-developed social and cultural links. Yet Australia's economic integration with Indonesia is lacking. There are a number of barriers that affect young people and stymie greater Australia-Indonesia economic integration. To reduce these barriers, AIYA recommends the following steps:

Recommendation 1: The Australian Government should lobby the Government of Indonesia to improve the existing Work and Holiday visa scheme for Australians going to Indonesia. In particular, the Australian Government should clarify what the limitations on the visa are, and push for greater recognition of the visa amongst the Indonesian Directorate General of Immigration.

Recommendation 2: The Australian Government should use their good-offices in Indonesia to identify what visa, if any, Australians can use to complete internships in Indonesia, and publicise this information on the Australian Embassy website.

Recommendation 3: The Australian Government should restart or provide financial and other in-kind support for events and initiatives that link Australians in Indonesia with Indonesian alumni of Australian universities.

How important is Asian cultural literacy? What could Australian governments, business and wider community be doing to enhance their Asian cultural literacy?

Indonesian literacy is important to improve the quality of economic engagement with Indonesia, and to combat Australian misconceptions about the country (which may inhibit greater economic and interpersonal connections). Although there a number of Indonesia-literate graduates in Australia, Australian businesses and the Government need to do more to capitalise on these human resources, and to further develop Indonesian literacy, as follows:

Recommendation 4: The Australian Government and private sector, particularly those in Australia, should better recognise Indonesia literacy skills in recruitment processes. This could include, for example, creating graduate programs with a special 'Asian stream' – with special opportunities for postings or secondments in Asian countries, including Indonesia, and listing 'Asian Studies' and/or 'Indonesian language' on job applications.

Recommendation 5: The Australian Government needs to better match employees with Indonesian cultural literacy skills to Indonesia related work and/or posts.

Recommendation 6: The Australian Government should make small funding grants (less than \$10,000) available to both Australians interested in completing short-term work experience in

Indonesia, and Indonesians interested in doing the same in Australia. These small grants should be open to placements in all sectors – not just development.

Recommendation 7: The Private sector and the Australian Government with offices in Indonesia should make more internships/secondments or other short term work-placements publically available.

How well positioned is Australia to connect productively with Asian countries in relation to innovation, research and development, including transfers and collaboration of knowledge and skills?

Australia is well positioned to connect with Indonesia in research, given our proximity, and Australia's strengths in this area. However, there are a number of regulatory barriers preventing greater collaboration. To combat these barriers, AIYA recommends:

Recommendations 8: The Australian Government should reconsider the current level of travel warnings to Indonesia. Given the size of the country and the variations in security conditions across it, the Government might consider creating regional specific travel warnings.

Recommendation 9: The Australian Government should lobby the Indonesian Director General for Immigration to create a faster, more streamlined process for research permits.

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Introduction

The Australia-Indonesia Youth Association (AIYA) aims to improve the Australia-Indonesia bilateral relationship by providing greater opportunities for Australians and Indonesians to connect to each other and to Indonesia-related opportunities. Accordingly, the focus of our submission is on aspects of the 'Australia in the Asian Century Issues Paper' (the 'Issues Paper') that relate to the Australia-Indonesia relationship specifically. The focus of our organisation is on young people, and hence this submission mainly outlines suggestions for improving this aspect of the Australia-Indonesia relationship, particularly in relation to developing people-to-people and business-to-business links between the two countries.

The questions this submission addresses from the Issues Paper are:

- Have Australia's social and cultural links with Asia kept pace with our economic integration? How could such links be developed? For example, could more be done through networks of Australians living and working in Asian countries? (p14)
- How important is Asian cultural literacy? What could Australian governments, business and wider community be doing to enhance their Asian cultural literacy? (p14)
- How well positioned is Australia to connect productively with Asian countries in relation to innovation, research and development, including transfers and collaboration of knowledge and skills? (p14)

AIYA urges the White Paper to consider the issues of youth-engagement between Australia and Asia, and particularly Indonesia, seriously. As this submission demonstrates, the pathways which currently exist for young people to study with and in Indonesia have played a major role in developing a small pool of Indonesia-literate graduates in Australia. On the other hand, several barriers exist which make it difficult for these people to continue their engagement with Indonesia and their Asian-literacy in a way that benefits Australia. Addressing these barriers will help ensure that the Australian Government and private sector are better equipped with young people who understand Indonesia, and can use this knowledge to serve Australia's strategic and economic interests.

Methodology

This submission is based on an online survey carried out by AIYA between January and February 2012, bibliographic research and on AIYA's informal discussions carried out with Australian and Indonesian tertiary students and graduates, businesses and the Australian Government in Indonesia and Australia between August 2011 – February 2012.

The AIYA online survey comprised 10 questions sent around to a mailing list of around 1000 Australians who have taken part in an in-country study/internship program run by the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies (ACICIS). A link to the survey was also posted on our Facebook page (around 230 members, both Australians and Indonesians).

“Have Australia’s social and cultural links with Asia kept pace with our economic integration? How could such links be developed? For example, could more be done through networks of Australians living and working in Asian countries?”

Well-developed social and cultural links between Australia and Indonesia

The Australia-Indonesia relationship is widely regarded as having strong government-to-government links.¹ The Australian government cooperates with its Indonesian counterparts in a number of regional forums on issues as diverse as terrorism and people smuggling, to trade and investment. Part of the Australia-Indonesia government program includes initiatives to improve the social and cultural links between the countries. Particularly, the Australia-Indonesia Institute (AII) runs a number of social and cultural programs, such as arts and education programs for Indonesians and Australians.²

In addition to government led social and cultural programs, there are also non-government initiatives which aim to create stronger social and cultural links between Indonesia and Australia. For instance, a well-known initiative to connect students of Australian universities to opportunities to study in Indonesia is the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies (ACICIS). ACICIS run a number of semester long in-country study programs for Australian tertiary students.³ There are also several organisations which aim to connect Australians with a personal interest in Indonesia to one another, such as the Australia-Indonesia Association.⁴ Finally, there are also Indonesian-related cultural activities in Australia, such as Adelaide’s *Indofest*, which celebrates Indonesian arts and culture.⁵

Australia’s lagging economic integration with Indonesia

Despite reasonably strong government-to-government and social and cultural links, Australia’s integration with the Indonesian economy is underdeveloped. Indonesia is currently a member of the G20 and its growth has been strong recently with a 6.5% growth rate for 2011. According to a recent report Indonesia is expected to become the world’s fourth-largest economy (PPP) by 2040.⁶ As a consequence foreign direct investment into Indonesia grew last year (2011) by 20% to its highest rate ever of USD\$20 billion, and such growth is likely to continue following improvements in Indonesia’s investment grade ratings by some major ratings agencies.⁷

1 Fergus Hanson, "Indonesia and Australia: Time for a Step Change", Lowy Institute Policy Brief, March 2010, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1245>

2 Australia Indonesia Institute, *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aai/>

3 Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies, accessed at <http://www.acicis.murdoch.edu.au/>

4 The Australia Indonesia Association of NSW, accessed at <http://australia-indonesia-association.com/>

5 Indofest, accessed at <http://www.indofest.com.au/>

6 Arjuna Dibley, "How to Improve Australia’s Asia Literacy", *East Asia Forum*, 29 October 2011, accessed at <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/10/29/how-to-improve-australia-s-asia-literacy/>

7 Farida Husna and Andreas Ismar, "Indonesian Economy Grows at Top Clip Since '90s", *Wall Street Journal*, 7 February 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204136404577206020099626342.html>

Despite the large and growing economic opportunities in Indonesia, Australian business is not as well integrated with it as it could be. Indonesia comprises only 2.3 per-cent of Australia's total trade in goods; it is therefore only our thirteenth largest partner in goods.⁸ Australia's export of services to Indonesia is 2.4% of our total export of services, and our import of services from Indonesia comprises 3.6% of Australia's total import of services.

Our key economic activities with Indonesia are also largely limited to the resources sector, although Australia-exported education and travel to Indonesia (mostly Bali) are reasonably significant contributors. The focus on resources is particularly apparent in our imports from Indonesia, for which the top three in 2010-11 were crude petroleum (AUD\$2,925m), gold (AUD\$433m), and refined petroleum (AUD\$191m). This is markedly different to our imports from China. While our key exports to China remain in the resources sector, the profile of our imports from China is much more diverse, and includes trade in clothing, telecoms and computers. Our trade profile with Indonesia naturally reflects the nature of Indonesia's own economy. However, Indonesia's growing middle class presents economic growth opportunities in several areas to which Australian companies are not heavily invested, including consumer goods and the services sector.⁹

As one respondent to an online AIYA survey summed up:

"The Australian government can help Australian businesses develop their presence in [Indonesia]... Not just mining, banking and construction who seem to already have a foothold, but industries such as processed food, sports management, media, who may not realize that there is huge potential for them in Indonesia."

How could economic integration between Australia and Indonesia be improved?

The Australian Government has taken some important steps to try and reduce the barriers to trade and investment between Australia and Indonesia, including the commencement of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership (IA-CEPA) negotiations.¹⁰ We urge the government to consider the following factors in addition to the IA CEPA negotiations.

Immigration issues

AIYA's research has revealed that a major barrier for Australians in the pursuit or continuation of work in Indonesia is the country's immigration policies.

In the AIYA online survey (with 83 respondents) several people reported that they were seeking or had previously worked in Indonesia. Over 50% of respondents who had worked in Indonesia (25 people) said the most significant challenge associated with moving to the country for work was the Indonesian visa system. The following are some of the statements made by respondents to our survey:

⁸ Trade data taken from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's factsheet on Indonesia, accessed at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/indonesia/index.html>

⁹ Indonesia Country Brief, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed at http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/indonesia/indonesia_brief.html

¹⁰ Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Negotiations, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed 23 February 2012, at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/iacepa/index.html>

“Challenges [to moving to Indonesia for work]: obtaining the appropriate working visa...If I had the opportunity and the correct visa to work there [in Indonesia] again, I would definitely do it again.”

“The financial challenges of acquiring an appropriate visa is very difficult, particularly as working visas require the applicant to enter, leave and then re-enter the country. There is also very little visa information available which means paying for assistance from an agent is required.”

Immigration has long been a thorn in the side of the Australia-Indonesia relationship. For example, the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesia Studies (ACICIS) was established in the 1990s in large part to help Australian students overcome the bureaucratic hurdles associated with arranging student visas for Indonesia. These bureaucratic hurdles have not gone away for students, business people and young people who want to spend time in-country. Of particular concern for young people are the following visa issues:

Ineffective Work-and-Holiday Visa¹¹

In 2009, Indonesia and Australia signed a reciprocal visa arrangement allowing people under the age of 30 with tertiary degrees to work and holiday in each other’s countries. This scheme was developed to encourage more young Australians to spend time in Indonesia and young Indonesians in Australia. Upon launching the scheme, Australia’s Minister for Immigration Chris Evans, said that “this new arrangement is an investment in future relations with Indonesia”.¹² Despite its lofty ideals, however, the scheme is beleaguered by serious limitations and bureaucratic problems surrounding its implementation.

Firstly, the scheme is limited to only 100 visas from each country per year. This contrasts starkly with the 32,500 places allocated to Australia under the United Kingdom’s equivalent program, the Youth Mobility Scheme.¹³

Secondly, the visa scheme has a number of limitations on the sectors that Australians are allowed to work in. Information about the scheme published on the Indonesian Embassy website states that under the scheme Australians are not allowed to work “as an English teacher in an English Course institution”.¹⁴ Additionally, the page states that “successful applicants are allowed to work in the areas of tourism, education, art and culture, health, sport, and social work”.¹⁵ However, it is unclear whether these limitations are indeed part of the original Work and Holiday Visa agreement between

¹¹ This section of the submission is adapted from an op-ed written by Rachelle Cole, AIYA Co-founder and Director (Operations), which appeared in the Jakarta Post (10 December 2011): <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/10/12/letter-lift-barriers-young-ri-aussie-ties.html>.

¹² Work and Holiday Visa Arrangement with Indonesia, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Media Release, 3 March 2009, <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2009/ce09024.htm>

¹³ Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme), Home Office UK Border Agency, accessed at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier5/youthmobilityscheme/>

¹⁴ Work and Holiday Visa, Embassy of Indonesia in Australia, accessed at http://www.kbri-canberra.org.au/consular/visa/visa_workhol.htm

¹⁵ Ibid.

Australia and Indonesia. The Indonesian Directorate General of Immigration has published, for instance, information about the visa scheme that does not include any of the limitations above.¹⁶

Thirdly, the visa is not well known or recognised amongst Indonesian bureaucrats. AIYA carried out a survey in December 2011, among more than 1,000 former and current Australian students who have or are studying in Indonesia through the ACICIS program, to find out whether others had successfully obtained a Work and Holiday visa. Amongst the surveyed respondents there were only 3 who had successfully applied for and got the visa. Several respondents reported that they had tried unsuccessfully to obtain the visa. For example, respondents reported that inquiries about the visa were met with confusion by officials in the Indonesian Embassy and Consulates in Australia and Immigration in Indonesia. One respondent reported being hung up on repeatedly when making enquiries about the visa.

Other applicants were told incorrect information about the visa's application requirements. One student who managed to arrange the work and holiday visa in Australia arrived at Yogyakarta airport and was confronted by immigration officials who had never heard of this type of visa. They held his passport at the airport and took 10 days to officially validate the visa. AIYA heard stories of a similar nature occurring at Bali airport from another successful applicant.

The Work and Holiday visa scheme potentially provides an avenue for more Australians to work and travel to Indonesia. Therefore, it is important that the serious flaws with the scheme are corrected.

Recommendation 1: The Australian Government should lobby the Government of Indonesia to improve the existing Work and Holiday visa scheme for Australians going to Indonesia. In particular, by clarifying what the limitations on the visa are, and pushing for greater recognition of the visa amongst the Indonesian Directorate General of Immigration.

Lack of clarity over correct visa for internships

AIYA research with a number of businesses (including major Australian banks with operations in Indonesia), Australian Government agencies in Indonesia, and educational institutions in Indonesia, reveals that there is some uncertainty about what visa Australians can use to complete internships in-country. In part, there is confusion about whether the Work and Holiday visa (discussed above) can be used for this purpose, because of the lack of clarity over what restrictions apply on this visa.

AIYA has been actively trying to promote Australian businesses in Indonesia to provide internships to Australian students, but is frequently told that a significant problem in reaching this objective is that there is lack of clarity on what visa interns can use.

Recommendation 2: The Australian Government should use their good-offices in Indonesia to identify what visa, if any, interns can use, and publicise this information on the Australian Embassy website.

¹⁶ Work and Holiday Visa, Direktorat Jenderal Imigrasi, http://www.imigrasi.go.id/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=367&Itemid=1

Support more forums for Indonesian-alumni of Australian universities to connect to one another, and to Australians

Another concern raised by AIYA members is the lack of linkages between Australians and Indonesians, particularly Indonesian student alumni of Australian universities. There are indeed some initiatives such as the Australia-Indonesia Business Council (AIBC) and its Indonesian equivalent the Indonesia-Australia Business Council (IABC) which play an important role connecting Australian business people in Indonesia to each other and to Indonesians.¹⁷ However, these non-government initiatives have tended to attract more non-Indonesian membership and have not targeted young people or alumni of Australian universities. Linking Australians and Indonesians—particularly those who have studied and had experiences in Australia – would serve to build the professional networks required to develop stronger economic integration.

The Australian Government in Indonesia – through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) - used to run programs aimed at alumni of Australian universities. DEEWR established a Web 2.0 website (the same platform as Facebook, LinkedIn and others) called OzMate (www.ozmate.org) to engage with Indonesians who had studied in Australia and since returned to Indonesia. DEEWR also established an annual Australian Alumni Awards scheme to recognise outstanding talent, achievements and contributions by returned alumni. DEEWR's broader alumni strategy covered monthly get-togethers, regular social gatherings (in Jakarta and a dozen cities across the country), and special events, such as a short film festival showcasing alumni talent in film-making. While there is a 2012 Alumni Award event being organised the broader Alumni engagement strategy seems to be largely non-operational since 2010, as indicated by the lack of publicised events on the Ozmate website.¹⁸

AIYA runs a regular networking event in Jakarta called the Australian Indonesia Young Professionals (AIYP) initiative, which aims to connect young Australians and returned alumni of Australian universities. At the first AIYP event held in Jakarta in January 2012, returned Indonesian alumni of Australian universities provided feedback that they would like to have more social and networking activities to connect with Australians after they return to Indonesia. Returned alumni are a highly skilled, intelligent pool of Australia-friendly Indonesians and encouraging links with this community would be an excellent resource for both Australian business and government.

Recommendation 3: The Australian Government should restart or provide financial and other in-kind support for events and initiatives that link Australians in Indonesia with Indonesian alumni of Australian universities.

¹⁷ Australia Indonesia Business Council at <http://www.aibc.com.au/> and Indonesia Australia Business Council at www.iabc.or.id/

¹⁸ OzMate: Australian Alumni Network accessed at <http://www.ozmate.org/NewsInfo/tabid/73/Default.aspx>

How important is Asian cultural literacy? What could Australian governments, business and wider community be doing to enhance their Asian cultural literacy?

Defining 'Asian cultural literacy'

The Issues Paper does not directly define the term 'Asian cultural literacy'. However, it does make reference to this concept as the skills and knowledge needed for Australians to build "mutual understanding and respect, to encourage the exchange of ideas and to boost productive collaboration with regional partners" including the learning of Asian languages (p14). AIYA will refer to the term 'Indonesian cultural literacy' to include both the language and non-language skills required for Australians to engage productively with Indonesia.

How important is Indonesian cultural literacy?

Indonesia-literacy is useful for economic engagement

It is important for Australian companies and the government to resource themselves with individuals who speak and understand Indonesia and Indonesian. A survey that AIYA conducted with 83 Indonesia-literate Australians, who have studied and/or worked in Indonesia, reported that several Australian organisations, but particularly the private sector, are lacking in cultural competence in Indonesia. This lack of Indonesian cultural competence is often to the detriment of these Australian organisations. Below are some responses from the survey:

"In my previous job (financial auditing), I was embarrassed by colleagues who at times would show excessive aggression to clients. Inevitably, the clients would then put up the barriers making our job even harder."

"During an internship with a major commercial law firm in Jakarta, I saw first-hand how a lack of Indonesian linguistic and cultural skills can really impact businesses operating in the country. I worked with an Australian senior lawyer [who had no Indonesian language] during my internship, and sat in on meetings they had with local staff and with Indonesian clients and government officials. As an intern, I was simply an observer in these meetings, and so never revealed I could speak/understand Indonesian pretty well. On several occasions during these meetings, the Indonesian speakers would switch over to Indonesian and have private conversations right in front of this Australian lawyer – at times even complaining about his/her management style, expressing uncertainty about issues which they later said in English they were certain about, and discussing negotiating strategies in the middle of meetings! At meetings where an Indonesian [sic] lawyer from the same company was present this obviously wasn't a problem, but it meant that this Australian lawyer had to have one person accompanying him/her all the time...."

"I have also seen an NGO worker assigned to the Jakarta office of a large, Australian AID agency having absolutely no knowledge of Indonesia or the language. Although she was a lovely person, she had an uphill battle working in Indonesia."

Australian companies which are led by or resourced with individuals who have lived in Indonesia are far better equipped to prosper in new ways in the rapidly expanding Indonesian market – as the text box below demonstrates.

How social and cultural links can lead to greater economic integration

Jessica Dunn came to Indonesia in 2007 as a student on the ACICIS program, having studied Indonesian language and industrial design as a university student in Sydney. Jessica, eager to continue her engagement with Indonesia, came back to Jakarta in 2009 and worked as a volunteer at a local NGO. During her time in Indonesia, Jessica noticed that Indonesian motorcycle riders faced a problem; every time they wanted to enter a shop or public event, they had difficulty in securing their helmets. Using her skills as an industrial designer, Jessica designed and developed a prototype of a safe foldable motorcycle helmet able to be safely carried around in a small personal bag. In 2011, the folding helmet project earned a finalist place in the James Dyson student category of the Australian International Design Awards. Jessica believes that her experience in Indonesia played a crucial role in her development of an innovative solution to a unique problem and she is considering commercialising the design in Indonesia's enormous motorcycle riding market.

Indonesian literacy can directly and indirectly improve economic and interpersonal links

Directly improving Australia-Indonesia people-to-people links

Studying about Indonesia or Indonesian at pre-tertiary level also encourages Australians to develop an interest in Indonesian, and in some cases have more meaningful people-to-people exchange with the country. AIYA's online survey shows that 33 per cent of respondents continued to undertake some tertiary education related to Indonesia because they had studied Indonesian at high school or primary school. Several of these respondents went on to participate in Indonesian study and/or volunteering programs and to work in or on Indonesia.

Indirectly improving people-to-people and economic links

At a general level, Indonesian literacy is also important, because through the process of studying Indonesian language, students can develop general knowledge about Indonesia, its culture, society, politics and economic situation.

Developing greater basic-level knowledge of Indonesian language, politics and history is useful because it will help create an Australian society more knowledgeable about Indonesia, and less likely to develop misconceptions about the country. Australian public perceptions of Indonesia are highly flawed, as demonstrated by a 2011 Lowy Institute Poll about Australian public opinion on foreign policy issues.¹⁹ As the Lowy document reports:

“Presented with six statements about Indonesia and asked to say ‘how much you agree or disagree with each one, using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly disagree and 10 means you strongly agree’, the mean response to the statement ‘Indonesia is a dangerous source of Islamic terrorism’ remained stable at 6.5 (the same recording as 2006). Some 39% of Australians agree rather strongly, choosing a number from 8 to 10....Australians also agree that ‘Australia is right to worry about Indonesia as a military threat’ (with a mean of 6.1 also

¹⁹ The Lowy Institute Poll 2011: Australia and the World Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Lowy Institute, accessed at <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1617>, pg 15-16

little changed from 2006 when it rated 6.2). One-third (33%) of Australians agree quite strongly, choosing a number from 8 to 10.”²⁰

The very poor light within which Indonesia is held likely has an impact on the willingness of Australians to travel, to do business in, or to study in country, and is therefore detrimental to the bilateral relationship.

What could Australian Governments, business and other organisations do to enhance their Indonesian cultural literacy?

Australian Governments and business need to better recognise the value of Indonesian-literacy in recruitment and human resourcing processes

In our research AIYA has found that there are limited professional incentives for individuals to pursue studies in Indonesian language, culture, politics, history and society. AIYA surveyed 83 individuals with a background in Indonesian studies (90 per cent had taken their studies to the tertiary level). While some people found their Indonesian backgrounds directly useful and used on a regular basis in their current employment, this appeared to be specific to the fields of Indonesian-related academic research, translation, and Indonesian language teaching. As would be expected, individuals in these fields found their background in Indonesian directly relevant and useful for gaining employment.

When asked whether Indonesian was valued by employers in Australia, 27 per cent of respondents replied that they had not found Indonesian knowledge and language skills to be valued. In fact, some of the responses from this part of the AIYA survey seemed to suggest that some employers, rather than valuing Indonesian skills, found them quite unusual:

“...I have applied for other jobs where the employers were more puzzled by my background in Indonesian studies rather than impressed by it or seeming to value it.”

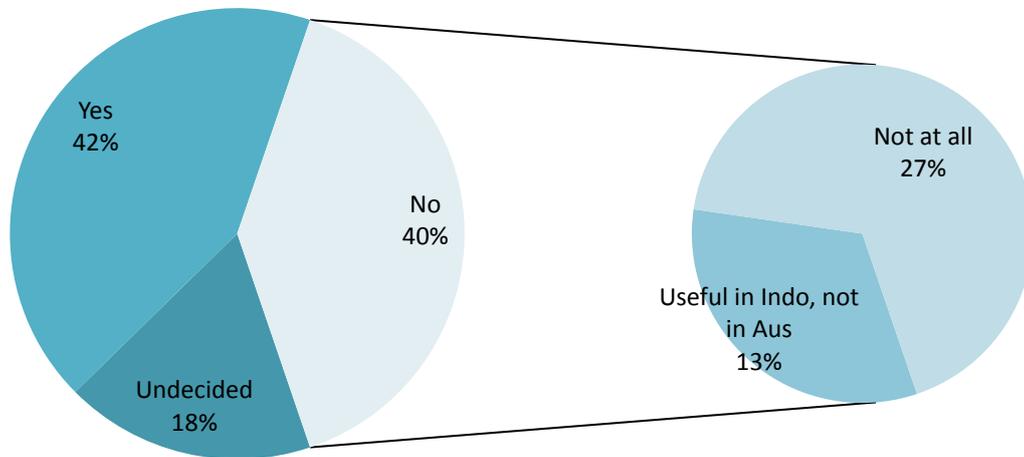
“Frankly, my experience in the private sector is that people consider you a bit of an odd ball for taking an interest in Indonesia.”

In addition to the 27 per cent who thought Indonesian literacy was not valued, an additional 13 per cent of respondents also believed these skills were highly valued in Indonesia but not in Australia. In total 40 per cent of those surveyed did not think that their Indonesia-related skills were valued in Australia, although they are more valued in Indonesia.

The fact that 40 per cent of respondents found that employers did not value Indonesian studies is particularly surprising given more than 50 per cent of respondents to the AIYA survey are from sectors where Indonesian literacy is central to their work, including Indonesia related academia (33%), and pre-tertiary teaching (18.5%).

²⁰ The Lowy Institute Poll 2011: Australia and the World Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Lowy Institute, accessed at <http://www.loyyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1617>, pg 15-16

Is Indonesia-literacy valued by employers?



Indonesian-literacy is valued mainly as a secondary skill

An interesting trend from the results of this survey was that, while many respondents felt that their background could be helpful in gaining employment, they also felt that it was a largely secondary consideration for employers in Australia and that their Indonesian backgrounds were useful in a rather round-about way. Many respondents indicated that their Indonesian backgrounds were mostly useful for reasons such as providing them with confidence and endowing them with 'cultural credibility'. Some respondents noted that the experience they had gained in Indonesia (particularly their ability to demonstrate that they were able to manage diverse situations) was valuable in job interviews, as it allowed them to differentiate themselves from other candidates. For these situations the relative rarity of having a background in Indonesian studies was an asset. This observation was particularly prevalent for those working in the public sector, although a few private sector employees noted the same thing. The response below demonstrates this mindset:

"Yes - in a roundabout way. My Indonesian (cultural & language studies) background allowed me to have a unique qualification combined with my design degree, which allowed me to take on a very unique AYAD volunteer position, which allowed me to gain immeasurable real-world experience as a fresh graduate, which helped me to gain my current Australian job (where I don't actually apply my Indonesian skills but I use my cultural understanding & adaption skills to allow me to gain customer insights in my field area)."

Cross-cultural skills gained from Indonesian studies, however, are not necessarily more valuable than those possessed by individuals who have gained similar skills through other means (such as, for example, studying French). Respondents also noted that employers often regard Indonesian studies as a strange choice. One respondent commented that:

“Australian employers are on the whole good people. They are however profoundly ignorant of the economic opportunities to the north. Unless I am applying to Southeast Asia specific, or developing world specific employment, my education is viewed as a curiosity, much as if I'd studied medieval Europe.”

Australian Government employers mismanage Indonesia expertise

Several respondents reported to AIYA that there is still misallocation of Indonesia-expertise within some Australian Government departments. As a result the Government is not capitalising on Indonesia expertise that currently exists within staffing structures, creating additional and unnecessary costs:

“While Australian government agencies/ departments do a good job of hiring people with Indonesian language skills, I find they're very rarely used at senior positions in country. Ambassadors, cultural attaches and other senior in-country DFAT staff have little or no Indonesian language skills and this reflects incredibly poorly not only on the government's choice of staff in country, but also in painting Australia (again) as a monolingual country, unable to communicate with our neighbours.”

“...government departments have major issues in skills matching, for example posts to Indonesia may not be filled with Indonesianists but general development/foreign affairs staff from other backgrounds. This means that much of the time someone spends in an Indonesia related position they would be learning the basics about Indonesia and not focused on issues that really matter- wasting time, relationships and money.”

Declining rates of Australian students studying Indonesian at all levels is not assisted by the lack of recognition given to graduates who develop Indonesian expertise, to link their backgrounds into employment. Greater recognition of Indonesian literacy would be helpful for improving the retention rates for students throughout their degrees. Further research and thinking on ways to entice students to these disciplines is also needed and would be worth exploring.

Recommendation 4: The Australian Government and private sector, particularly those in Australia, should better recognise Indonesia literacy skills in recruitment processes. This could include, for example, creating graduate programs with a special ‘Asian stream’ – with special opportunities for postings or secondments in Asian countries, including Indonesia, and listing ‘Asian Studies’ and/or ‘Indonesian language’ on job applications.

Recommendation 5: The Australian Government needs to better match employees with Indonesian cultural literacy skills to Indonesia related work and/or posts

Create more opportunities for young people to participate in Indonesian-focused work

A key way that Australians can develop cultural competency, language and professional skills which will benefit Australian business engagement in Indonesia is to increase the number of regular work interactions through internships for both Indonesian and Australian individuals, particularly young people.

The Australian Government currently funds a few initiatives to try and increase study, and some limited work-related interactions between Australian and Indonesia. For instance, the newly created Prime Minister’s Australia-Asia Endeavour Award provides generous funding (of up to \$56 000 AUD)

for young Australians to study in Asia (including in Indonesia). The program is aimed at undergraduates, and is currently open to 20 undergraduates from Australia per annum. The undergraduate Award requires candidates to complete an internship of between 2 and 12 months. A similar program is available for doctoral candidates from Indonesia to Australia with optional funding for an internship. The Australian Government also funds volunteer programs in development related sectors – such as the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program.

While these programs are useful, they are restricted to a very small number of people (that is, tertiary educated, and interested in development work).

Recommendation 6: The Australian Government should make small funding grants (less than \$10,000) available to both Australians interested in completing short-term work experience in Indonesia, and Indonesians interested on doing the same in Australia. These small grants should be open to placements in all sectors – not just development.

Creating opportunities for young people to continue their engagement with Indonesia during the formative professional years after university is important to ensure that students who develop Indonesia-literacy are able to use it in a professional capacity.

Gateway entry-level positions in Indonesia are not that accessible, and navigating the immigration system is difficult (as discussed above). For people making their first foray into professional lives, moving to Indonesia can be risky. It is likely that many people interested in moving to Indonesia and pursuing a career there find the lack of support and the risk too much to overcome, and instead seek jobs closer to home. Many of these people will ultimately not spend significant time in Indonesia, and will not have the opportunity to develop the Indonesian networks that have the potential to benefit Australian business and Government. In fact, the AIYA online survey reveals that many Indonesian-speaking Australians are not utilising their Indonesian language abilities. Less than 50 per cent of respondents reported that they used their Indonesian language skills in their current employment

As one respondent to AIYA's survey noted:

“After graduating, though, I didn't know how to use my Indonesian, or where it could be used next. This is a really important time for a lot of graduates and I think more needs to be done at this point - the entry into the workforce - to help more young Australians pursue their interest in Indonesia/ Asia, and not just remember it fondly as a 'great year away in their undergraduate years'. More internships, more pathways, more bridging programs between universities and organisations, more places on programs like the Australia Indonesia Youth Exchange Program (or run it twice a year), more funding for Indonesians to come to Australia to work here in organisations on one year post-study internships. Reciprocal year long internships that teach about each country would be incredibly beneficial in giving recent graduates a taste of where they might want to end up.”

AIYA supports more internships and short-term work assignments (such as secondments, or international postings) as one way of increasing the opportunities for young people to engage their Indonesian skills in a work context. Some Australian Government agencies in Indonesia do offer internships. AIYA members, for instance, have undertaken internships at the Jakarta office of the

Australian Trade Commission and Australian Aid offices. Some Australian businesses too offer internship placements with their offices in Indonesia. However, AIYA research amongst its members who have completed such internships report that these opportunities tend to be informally arranged and developed through contacts within these institutions.

Recommendation 7: the private sector and the Australian Government with offices in Indonesia should make more internships/secondments or other short-term work-placements publically available.

“How well positioned is Australia to connect productively with Asian countries in relation to innovation, research and development, including transfers and collaboration of knowledge and skills?”

Three major barriers to productive collaboration

Australia has the potential to connect productively with Indonesia in relation to innovation, research and development. However, to realise this potential, Australia must facilitate more person-to-person and institution-to-institution relationships between Australia and Indonesia. AIYA has identified three primary barriers Australia must overcome to connect productively with Indonesia in relation to innovation, research and development, including transfers and collaboration of knowledge and skills.

Language

English proficiency in Indonesia is low. English is a compulsory subject in the Indonesian national curriculum for students in junior and senior high school (ages 12 - 18). It is also taught at many individual primary schools. However, Education First's *English Proficiency Index* (2011) rates Indonesia's English proficiency as 'very low', with an index of 44.78. This is likely due to poor quality of English instruction in schools (both public and private) due in turn to insufficient and inefficient allocation of resources in this sector.

It is the experience of members of AIYA that even among the more educated, English proficiency remains low. Experts often lack the advanced and technical vocabulary necessary for productive collaboration with English speaking colleagues. Again, in the experience of members of AIYA, senior academics and other prominent staff in government departments, think tanks and research institutions in Indonesia often desire to collaborate with international colleagues, but feel unable to do so due to language barriers. Indonesian speaking Australians (as with English speakers from other countries) are highly valued in Indonesia as they provide, through their ability to translate and interpret, one of the few gateways into international exposure and collaboration for Indonesian researchers.

Despite this, Indonesian is not widely spoken among Australians. Alarmingly, with student enrolments in Indonesian language courses steadily decreasing,²² the number of Australians fluent in Indonesian can be projected to decline.

²² David T. Hill, "Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a Stronger Future", National Teaching Fellowship: Final Report, February 2012, pg 20-25

For Australia to connect productively with Indonesia in relation to innovation, research and development, this language barrier must be overcome. Australia should aim to have more Indonesian speaking graduates in all sectors in order to connect more productively with Indonesia in relation to innovation, research and development.

On this point, AIYA supports the recommendations of David T Hill's submission "Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a Stronger Future."²³

Cultural and logistical barriers

The second set of barriers to Australia connecting productively with Indonesia on research are cultural and logistical.

Indonesia has a culture of face-to-face communication which means it is essential that Australians have in-country exposure to Indonesia in order to build productive connections for the transfer and collaboration of knowledge and skills. Indonesians are heavy users of social media; however, attempts to make contact via official email addresses or telephone numbers are typically ineffective. Moreover, slow internet speeds mean that VOIP technology such as Skype is problematic. In the words of one respondent to a recent survey conducted by AIYA:

"With the exception of just coming over and door knocking at potential employers, it is quite difficult to build connections and relations from Australia. I had the fortune of being part of a volunteer program that brought me to Indonesia, from where I developed contacts for further employment."

At present there are a number of barriers for Australians wishing to travel to Indonesia to make connections in relation to innovation, research and development.

Travel warnings

The first of these barriers is Australian Government travel warnings. Currently, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advises Australians to 'reconsider your need to travel to Indonesia'.²⁴ This travel warning is particularly prohibitive for schools, universities, businesses and other organisations who wish their students, employees or members to travel to Indonesia to build connections and collaborate on innovation, research or development. This is a significant concern as research by AIYA indicates that many Indonesia-literate Australians have built their connections with Indonesia through travelling there as part of secondary and tertiary studies, volunteer programs and vacation.

Research Visas

The second barrier for Australians wishing to build productive connections in Indonesia is Indonesia's immigration and visa policy. In addition to the visa issues discussed above, respondents to the AIYA survey also pointed out that they had great difficulty in obtaining official research visa in Indonesia.

²³ David T. Hill, "Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a Stronger Future", National Teaching Fellowship: Final Report, February 2012, pg 20-25

²⁴ Smart Traveller, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed at <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Indonesia> (accessed 17 February 2012).

“...the incredibly restrictive and frustrating immigration rules in Indonesia for visiting researchers. If research/ study visas were more flexible, a lot more research would be getting done.”

“... obtaining a research permit ...is a NIGHTMARE. Having had one of these permits (which took nearly a year to sort out, even before I got to Indonesia), I will never try to get another one. Thus my only recourse is to conduct research illegally, entering for short periods on either a tourist or SosBud [a social cultural] visa.”

Attitudinal barriers

The third set of barriers are attitudinal. As discussed above, many Australian businesses and organisations (outside the Government) assign little value to transfers and collaboration of knowledge and skills with Indonesia. Even in relation to those organisations that do value Indonesian literacy and connect with Indonesia, the connections are typically unidirectional. Indonesia is either used as a subject for research or capacity building; not as a research partner or collaborator in knowledge transfers. To the knowledge of AIYA, there are few institution-to-institution relationships between Australian and Indonesian universities or research institutions.

Recommendations 8: The Australian Government should reconsider the current level of travel warnings to Indonesia. Given the size of the country and the variations in security conditions across it, the Government might consider creating regional specific travel warnings.

Recommendation 9: The Australian Government should lobby the Indonesian Director General for Immigration to create a faster, more streamlined process for research permits.

Implementing Recommendation 6 (funding grants for short-term work experience) and Recommendation 7 (increased availability of private and public sector internships and secondments) of this submission would also assist in the development of collaborative research with Indonesia, rather than unidirectional research, as this would create more opportunities for researchers to gain cultural nous and would improve links between Indonesian and Australian research communities.

About the Australia-Indonesia Youth Association (AIYA)

The Australia-Indonesia Youth Association (AIYA) is a non-government organisation which aims to connect young Indonesians and Australians to each other, and to Indonesia-related opportunities.

AIYA has been growing since late 2011, and is now made up of an executive committee working in Australia and Indonesia, and a growing membership base in both countries.

Some highlights of AIYA's progress to date include:

- Hosting a **networking event** in Jakarta aimed at Australians working or studying in Indonesia and Indonesians who have studied in Australia. The event was attended by close to 100 people;
- Helping with the **recruitment** of a team of young Australian Indonesianists to work on a Indonesia-related project for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health;
- Establishing an **AIYA Chapter** in Canberra, and soon in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

In 2012-13 AIYA aims to continue to hold networking events in Indonesia and Australia, launch its website, grow its membership base and develop new partnerships in Indonesia and Australia, and start work on a bilateral conference.

More information:

To follow the progress of AIYA, please visit our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/AIYANational>, or get in touch with us via email: aiya.information@gmail.com