

National Strategy for International Education

Draft National Strategy for International Education questionnaire

Professor Louise Edwards, ASAA President

Please outline your (or your organisation's) interest in Australian international education. Add any other relevant content.

Response: The Asian Studies Association of Australia (est. 1976) is the peak body of university educators and experts on Asia in Australia. For nearly 4 decades the ASAA has promoted and supported the study of Asia in Australia. Our membership has long term interest in (1) promoting Australian student mobility into Asia, (2) attracting top quality research students dedicated to studying about Asia to Australian universities from around the globe, (3) the delivery of top quality Asian language courses throughout the Higher Education sector, (4) the production of world-leading research on Asia with an Australian perspective.

Does the vision statement in the draft strategy represent Australia's aspirations for international education?

Response: The Draft Strategy represents Australia's aspirations for international education well. We are particularly heartened by (1) its commitment to increased support for research capacities of the university sector—this is vital to our international competitiveness; (2) the recognition that increased support for foreign language teaching and learning is integral to successful internationalisation; (3) the importance of building partnerships within the Asia-Pacific. We commend the report's commitment to achieving excellence in international education.

Are any significant goals for international education not adequately covered?

Response: There is no mention in the report of how international education can enhance the opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The development of Asia expertise among these communities is vital to their capacity building and economic and cultural benefit. Specific programs (vis. travel and/or study scholarships) enabling ATSI students to engage with Asia and Asian Language Learning would be an important new venture.

Can you identify the strategic actions which best support your goals for international education?

Response: We recommend that additional funding for the teaching of foreign languages be provided to support strategically important languages—even though they are frequently deemed uneconomical in the current funding models operating in universities. Universities would benefit from Commonwealth encouragement to support languages of the (1) South China Sea (Indonesian, Vietnamese, Tagalog)—an area of strategic importance to our economic prosperity; (2) South Asia and Central Asia (Persian, Pashto, Arabic and Hindi-Urdu)—areas that are continuing to provide economic opportunity but also significant security challenges. Building a phalanx of locally-trained experts in these strategic languages will ensure Australia's prosperity by equipping our future policy makers, business leaders and entrepreneurs with the linguistic and cultural knowledge to be effect international operators.

We also recommend the introduction of a targeted scholarship scheme to support Australian students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in overseas exchange experiences.

What are the best measures of success for international education?

Response: The measures outlined in the report are comprehensive and well balanced.

What would you like to see progressed as a priority for the strategy in the first year?

Response: Our first priorities are (1) for additional support for the teaching of strategically important (but small enrolment) Asian languages in Australian universities and (2) the extension of current scholarship schemes to enable students of disadvantaged and ATSI backgrounds to study in the Asian region.