

Call to Action: Asia literacy for every young Australian

Australia's Asia Literacy Alliance

Asia Education Foundation Board

Australian Council of Deans of Education

Australian Council of State School Organisations

Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities

Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations

Australian Parents Council

Australian Primary Principals Association

Australian Secondary Principals Association

Curriculum Corporation Board

Independent Schools Council of Australia

National Catholic Education Commission

Asian Studies Association of Australia

Asialink Board

The University of Melbourne

Peak Organisations

Asia Education Teachers Association

Australian College of Educators

Australian Council for Educational Leaders

Australian Curriculum Studies Association

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations Inc

Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and Environment

Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council

Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

Business Educators Australasia

Catholic Secondary Principals Australia

Professional Learning Institute, WA

“It is impossible to conceive of a future Australian education system that does not take the study of Asia seriously.”

Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, AEF Forum, May 2008

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd wants Australia to become “the most Asia literate country in the world.” The *National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools* (MCEETYA, 2005) sets out the skills and knowledge required to equip young Australians to:

- *boost productivity* through working with the world's largest economies including China, India and Japan
- *collaborate* with our neighbours in Asia to resolve global issues including environmental sustainability and poverty
- *strengthen our social capital* through understanding Australia's rich, diverse heritage and what it means to be Australian today.

Urgent action is required by Australia now to achieve Asia literacy for all.

- No education system explicitly requires schools to teach about the Asian region. Data indicates that 50% of our schools are not equipped to teach about Asia.
- Less than 25% of our students have the opportunity to study an Asian language. Only 5.8% of Year 12 students choose to study an Asian language - this decreases to 3% at University.
- The majority of our teachers have had no opportunity to learn about Asia in their own education. There is no plan to ensure the Asia literacy of new teachers.
- No education system monitors student learning about Asia.

Achieving Asia literacy requires increasing the cohort of students who can study an Asian language, combined with embedding studies of Asia as a core element in Humanities and Social Sciences, English and The Arts for *all students*.

The Asia Education Foundation has formed *Australia's Asia Literacy Alliance* of peak education stakeholders who call for:

1. **The Council of Australian Governments** to act by December 2008 to develop and resource a **National Action Plan** to implement the *National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools* and to monitor improvements in Asia literacy through system **progress measures**
2. The **National Goals for Schooling** to state the necessity to equip every young Australian with Asia skills and knowledge
3. The **National Curriculum** to embed studies of Asia as core elements in English, History and Geography
4. The **National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program** to designate funds to enhance Asian languages teaching and to increase studies of Asia in Humanities and Social Sciences, English and The Arts
5. **Digital Revolution** initiatives to connect teachers and students with schools in Asia and provide Asia resources on-line
6. **Quality Teaching** initiatives to develop teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching Asian languages and teaching about Asia
7. **Teacher Education** initiatives to equip new graduates with knowledge and skills to teach about Asia and provide incentives to attract Asia-literate graduates, including those with Asian languages, to teaching
8. **School Leadership** initiatives to expand the *Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia* principals' program
9. **Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau** to promote the need for Asia knowledge and skills for every young Australian and promote support from parents to achieve this
10. **Business** to support Asia literacy for all students.

This Call to Action is an initiative of the AEF Advisory Board, endorsed by representatives of peak education bodies at the AEF National Forum, Adelaide 19-20 May 2008. www.asiaeducation.edu.au