



Asia Education Foundation



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2023-2024 Pre-Budget Submission



"We find ourselves in the fastest growing region of the world in human history. There are enormous opportunities for Australia. I'm very optimistic about our future, but we need to seize those opportunities."

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister, June 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Case for Asia Literacy in Australian Schools

The case for Australians to understand Asia is more compelling now than ever before. As well as finding ourselves in the fastest growing region of the world in human history, Australia faces the gravest set of challenges since WWII. We are grappling with an increasingly contested region, a weaker global economy, climate emergencies and the shattering impact of COVID-19. Young Australians will need knowledge and skills to navigate this uncertain world if they are to create a thriving future for us all.



To create the future we want, young Australians need schools to equip them with:

- skills they need for the jobs of the future in a globally connected world
- knowledge and capabilities to navigate complex global challenges
- intercultural understanding to contribute to an inclusive Australia
- people-to-people relationships to build a shared future in Asia and the Pacific.

Traditionally Australian school education has been Eurocentric with low levels of Asia knowledge and even lower Asian languages uptake. It's time our school education better reflected who we are.

Over half of Australians are now born overseas - or have at least one parent born overseas. The top five countries of birth outside Australia include China, India and The Philippines.



"I think it matters that Australia speaks to South-East Asia in a way that recognises that we are part of this region and that our futures are shared. These are challenging times in the world, we're all seeking to navigate these challenging times and we do it best when we do it together."

Senator The Hon Penny Wong MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, June 2022

As a result of commitment by Australia's Education Ministers in 2008, the Australian Curriculum includes Asian studies and languages as core curriculum in every school for every student. This is not another add-on to a crowded curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum has:

a cross-curriculum priority to acquire knowledge, skills and understandings of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

intercultural understanding as a general capability for every student

Asian languages are part of the Languages learning area.

However, it is clear that achieving the intention of the Australian Curriculum won't happen without investment in building the Asia capability of Australia's education workforce. Many Australian educators have not had the opportunity in their own education to gain knowledge of Asia histories, geographies, cultures and languages or of Australia's engagement with Asia. There has been little or no investment in building the Asia capability for Australia's teaching workforce for over a decade.

Momentum built by Federal Governments to scale up Asian languages and studies in schools from 1995 to 2002, and again from 2008-2012, has stalled with no investment for 10 years. In 2012 we knew that five-year-olds starting school would enter the workforce at the time China and India became major global economies. With no national investment post 2012 to build studies of Asia and Asian languages in our schools we have failed to equip those five-year-olds for their future.

A decade of neglect for Asian Studies and languages in our schools was clear in the 2018 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Report. 15-year-old Australians reported a low level of interest in learning about other cultures and are consistently outperformed by peers in Canada and Singapore in the global competence stakes. Only 8% of Australian students indicated they are learning two or more foreign languages, compared to 50% of students across the OECD. 64% of 15-year-old Australian students reported language learning was not part of their lives compared to only 12% of their OECD peers.

The Australian Government's investment in building Asia Capabilities in young Australians at the university level, through programs such as the New Colombo Plan and incentives to learn languages at university, are important. In order to engage students and drive demand, the foundation for whole-of nation Asia Literacy must start in schools. Australian students start thinking about and preparing for their university entrance and career trajectory in year 10; when they are 15 years old. If they do not engage with Asian studies and languages at school, they are less likely to engage with them at university or the workforce.



INVESTMENT

Past Labor Governments have recognised the value of building whole of nation Asia literacy through schools, and invested in the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy (1996–2002). NALSAS provided Australian Government funding to primary and secondary schools to establish language and wider cultural studies programs in four priority Asian languages: Japanese, Mandarin, Indonesian and Korean. NALSAS targeted 3.1 million children enrolled in primary and secondary school in Australia and had an overall investment of \$206.6 million, or \$30 million per annum. An investment of approximately \$18 per school student per annum.

Between 1995 and 1997, the NALSAS investment increased the number of government schools in Australia offering a priority Asian language by 44% and the number of students at government schools studying a priority Asian language jumped by 60%. The impact of this investment can still be felt today as Japanese remains the most popular foreign language at studies by Australian students in year 12.

Further investment was made in whole-of-nation Asia literacy through schools in the 2008-9 budget in which \$62.15 million was committed, over four years for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP). The languages and cultures of China, Korea, Japan and Indonesia were prioritised to achieve the Australian Government's aspirational target that by 2020 at least 12 per cent of Year 12 students graduating from school would be fluent in one of the four target languages.



NALSSP ceased at the end of June 2012, and there has been no Australian Government funding to support Asian languages or studies in schools since 2012, stalling progress made.

Significant, long-term investment of \$245 million dollars (49.1 million per year), will be required to lay the foundation for Asia Literacy in schools in order to achieve the Albanese Government's aim of whole-of-nation Asia expertise.

Whole-of-Nation Asia Literacy is integral to Australia's future in the region. The first step to this is to set a solid foundation in schools, equipping the next generations of Australians with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to thrive in a safe, prosperous and region.

Whole of nation Asia Literacy: The next five years



To seize the Prime Minister's opportunities, we must improve whole-of-Nation Asia literacy through our schools. This will ensure that Australia has a globally competitive workforce, an inclusive and outward looking Australian society and a whole-of-nation commitment to a shared future with Asia.

In the next five years, three key strategic interventions need to be funded to build whole-of-nation Asia expertise through our schools:



National Leadership

Ensure National coordination of strategies to increase student knowledge of Asia and participation in Asian languages at school and identify a coordinating authority to lead the National Asia Literacy Plan.



Education Workforce Capacity

Build the Asia Capabilities of Australia's education workforce to ensure the goals of the Australian Curriculum and Teacher and School Leader Professional Standards are met, supporting the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan priority areas of *strengthening initial teacher education* and *supporting teachers we already have*.



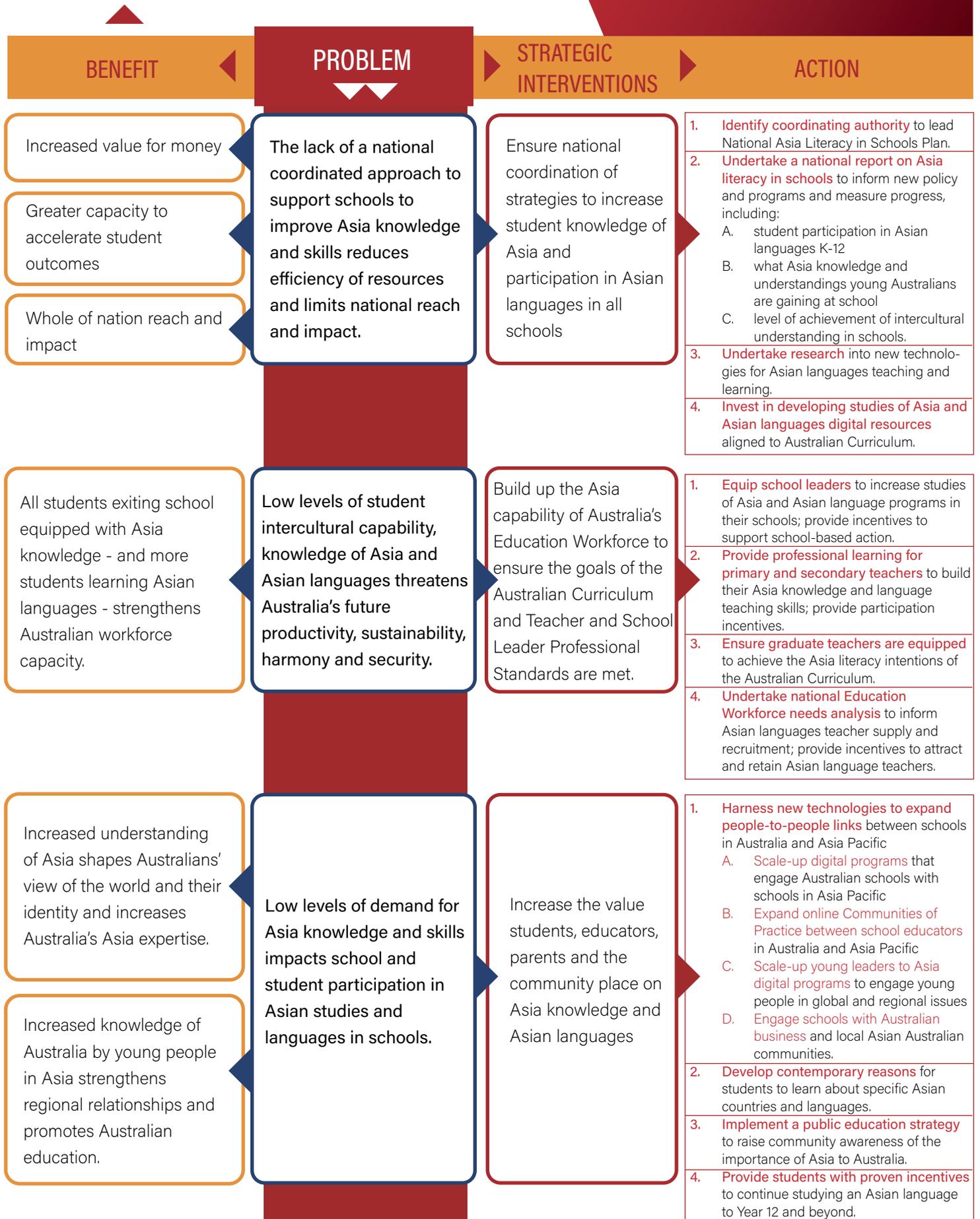
Build demand for Asia Literacy

Increase the value students, educators, parents and the community place on Asia knowledge and languages and expand people-to-people links.

Outcomes

- A globally competitive Australian workforce
- An inclusive and outward looking Australian society
- An Australian nation with a deep commitment to a shared future with Asia

Improve whole of nation Asia expertise by equipping Australians school students with knowledge of Asia and Asian languages



AEF's Unique Value

Asia Education Foundation (AEF) was established at Asialink in 1992 as an initiative of the Keating Government to lead the national coordination of Asia capabilities in Australian schools.

AEF has built active school and education networks across 23 countries of the Indo-Pacific. AEF's Advisory Council brings together Australia's peak education bodies and all State and Territory Departments of Education.



As a respected partner of the Australian Government, AEF has 30 years' experience delivering innovative and successful national and international school education programs that support Asia literacy in Australian schools, including:



Key partner of National Asian Languages and Studies initiatives working with federal, state and territory governments and school sectors, peak principal, teacher and parent professional associations, national education agencies plus philanthropy and business



Successful advocacy includes National Statements on Studies of Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, National Goals of Schooling, Australian Curriculum, The Asian Century White Paper, Australian Professional Standards for Teaching and School Leadership and a rationale for studying Indonesia



Research includes Studies of Asia in Year 12 (2009), Current Status of Asian Languages in Australian Schools (2011), Asia Literacy and the Australian Education Workforce (2013), What Works series on implementing Asia Literacy in Schools (2013-16), Senior Secondary Asian Languages Education (2016)



Published 75 award winning titles in Access Asia curriculum resources and provided 1000's of curriculum resources and lesson plans to teachers



Established Australia-Asia Pacific BRIDGE - flagship school partnership initiative. New digital school partner programs launched to build STEM capacity in PNG and vocational education in India



Professionally developed 100,000 teachers and school leaders across Australia to build Asia capability



Harnessed emerging technologies to engage 4000+ young people online in Global Youth Forums on the big issues of our times: climate change, democracy, trade, and security.

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Asia Education Foundation is a foundation of the Asialink at The University of Melbourne

