



Asia Education Foundation



An Australian Government Initiative



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For immediate release

## **BRIDGE to understanding: Australia and Indonesia learn together**

Sixty-four Indonesian and Australian school teachers from two very different worlds today embark on a groundbreaking intercultural understanding project aimed at building a permanent bridge between our two cultures.

The online BRIDGE project - **B**uilding **R**elationships through **I**ntercultural **D**ialogue and **G**rowing **E**ngagement – currently involves 184 teachers from 93 schools, and connects 90,000 Indonesian and 30,000 Australian students.

Today's group, the third delegation of Indonesian teachers to join their Australian partners in less than a year, will undertake a three-week face to face training course in Melbourne and Sydney, then on site around Australia, developing real and virtual connections between their schools.

Indonesia's Ambassador to Australia, HE Primo Alui Joelianto says “the BRIDGE Project reflects the solidarity between Australia and Indonesia. This friendship is not only between governments, but also, and more importantly, it is between the people of Indonesia and Australia. This is the first step...in strengthening the people-to-people links between Indonesia and Australia.”

The BRIDGE teachers represent a broad range of communities including remote and disadvantaged schools in Indonesia, rural and city schools across Australia, and religious and government schools in both countries. Nine of the Indonesian schools are part of the Australian Government's Basic Education Program. Through this program, Australia is providing AUD\$387 million to build more than 2000 schools and basic education services in Indonesia, especially in disadvantaged areas.

Participating Australian schools report many positive outcomes from their involvement in the BRIDGE, including higher Australian student participation in language education and better performances.

One teacher, Vicki Richardson of Tranby College, says the benefits for her students have been “just overwhelming”. She has discovered students far more positive about learning a second language because of the enthusiasm engendered by the BRIDGE program.

Executive Director of the Asia Education Foundation, Ms Kathe Kirby, says BRIDGE builds permanent networks, supported by ICT training and hardware provision, and opens the door to two neighbours getting to know one another.

“School education needs to equip our young people to resolve global issues like climate change. To do this we need to work with our closest neighbours, speak each other’s languages, understand our similarities and differences. BRIDGE aims to go beyond the classroom into communities and families, developing long-lasting connections.”

The BRIDGE Project helps create a better understanding of Indonesia in Australian school communities through positive engagement.

The Australia-Indonesia Institute is currently exploring opportunities to grow the BRIDGE Project in 2010 and beyond.

Initiated by the Australia-Indonesia Institute, the schools partnership project is funded by The Myer Foundation and the Australian Government, through AusAID. Asialink’s education arm, the Asia Education Foundation, is delivering the program with Australian Education International and Kang GURU Indonesia.

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