

March 31, 2011

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear _____,

As business leaders concerned about Australia's ability to compete in the new "Asian Century", we write to express our strong support for the teaching of Asian studies and languages in our schools.

We believe the Australian Curriculum should achieve a balance that prepares students for the modern economy by developing increased cultural literacy, with a particular focus on Asia, while still recognising the importance of European roots in modern democracy, our Australian culture and our system of government. Australia's future depends on a bipartisan approach to our understanding of and relationship with Asia.

Australia's top four export markets are in Asia. Our top three investor partners are all Asian. According to the PwC Asialink Index, Australia's engagement with China has multiplied 16 times in the past two decades. The world's wealth is moving to Asia - and we ignore this fact at our peril.

Leaders around the world have identified that the world will be transformed by mid-century, and predict that by 2050 Asia's share of global GDP will be double that of the major western powers. Our children need to be fully aware of all the historical, political and geographical imperatives contributing to this global shift and to the Australian story itself. We do our children a deep disservice if we fail to equip them with knowledge of the cultures and the languages of not only the fastest growing region in the world, but the region that is on our doorstep.

We face many challenges in the coming century, many of which we cannot foresee. But if we do not take up the challenge of equipping our children effectively for the changes we do know are imminent, we fail as leaders, we fail as parents, and we risk Australia's wealth, harmony and security.

As active supporters of the Asialink initiative, the *Business Alliance for Asia Literacy*, we urge you to encourage the study of Asia in our schools, and to support all State and Federal Ministers of Education in their commitment, through the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* and the Australian Curriculum, to include Asia as a priority across the curriculum and at all levels of schooling.

ASIALINK PATRONS

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The Rt Hon Sir Ninian Stephen
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This requires young Australians to gain knowledge, skills and understandings of the histories, geographies, literatures, arts, cultures and languages of the diverse countries of Asia by the time they leave school.

Ms Jenny McGregor, CEO of Asialink and the Asia Society in Australia, and Ms Kathe Kirby, Executive Director of the Asia Education Foundation, are able to meet with you to discuss further, at any time that is convenient to you. Please contact them on 03 8344 4800.

Yours sincerely

Sid Myer, Chairman, Asialink and the Asia Society, Australia

Sir Rod Eddington, Chairman, Australia and New Zealand J.P. Morgan

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