

## NOTEBOOK

### *Boots on the ground*

Asialink CEO Jenny McGregor on the *Engaging Asia: Getting it Right for Australian Business* report released yesterday with Ai Group.

The real test of an understanding of the Asian region, and really knowing what the opportunities are, is when companies put people and money there – when they put people on the ground.

Australia still invests more in

Europe and the United States than we do in Asia, by a significant margin, despite the growth opportunities.

There's a kind of disconnect – we want to get more out of Asia but are we willing to put more in?

With this survey, we wanted to know what the business community felt about Asia and what they felt about the skills and knowledge they had.

Companies told us very clearly that experience at senior management level

could be much better. It is not just about languages – the report found that these are a bonus – but about understanding the local culture, the legal and political hurdles, what has been termed “Asia literacy”.

These are what gives investors confidence.

Supporting Asia studies at school – and then providing skills development in the workforce – these are vital. They're huge investments in our future.