
Asialink:

SHAPING THE
FUTURE.

AN UNCOMMON
HISTORY.

1989 — 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Asialink’s continuing focus is building knowledge and networks for deeper Australia-Asia engagement. This work is buoyed by the long-standing support of our founding partners and boards, and the many others who give of their time and financial resources so generously. Since 1989, Asialink has done uncommon things, it’s time to tell that story with gratitude and joy...



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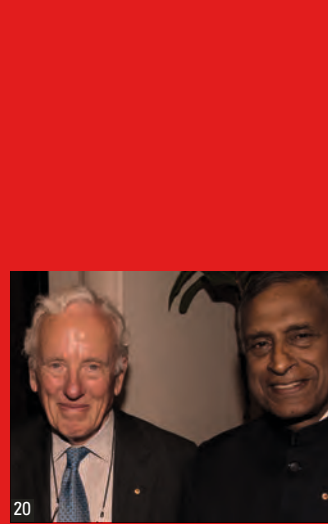


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01 THE HON MALCOLM TURNBULL MP, PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA; 02 ALICE WONG, HEAD OF ASIA AND MIGRANTS MARKETS, WESTPAC; 03 MARTYN MYER AO AND LOUISE MYER, THE MYER FOUNDATION; 04 THE HON MALCOLM FRASER AC, PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA; 05 PROFESSOR TIM LINDSEY AO, DIRECTOR, ASIAN LAW CENTRE, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE; 06 PETER VARGHESE AO, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE; 07 THE HON CHRIS BOWEN MP, SHADOW TREASURER; 08 PENNY BURTT, VP, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ASIA PACIFIC, VISA; 09 THE HON GOUGH WHITLAM AC, PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA; 10 JOHN YU AC, CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NSW; 11 SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO, PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA; 12 BAILLIEU MYER AC; 13 GERALDINE DOOGUE AO, JOURNALIST; 14 THE HON JULIE BISHOP AO, PATRON, ASIALINK; 15 MUHAMMAD YUNUS, NOBEL ECONOMIST; 16 PHILIP FLOOD AO, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE; 17 NEILMA GANTNER, THE MYER FOUNDATION; 18 THE HON JOSH FRYDENBERG MP, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY; 19 FRANCES ADAMSON, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE; 20 PROFESSOR EMERITUS DAVID PENNINGTON AC, VICE CHANCELLOR, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE WITH PROFESSOR EMERITUS BRUCE SINGH AM, ASSOCIATE DEAN, FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND HEALTH SCIENCES, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE; 21 PROFESSOR ROSS GARNAUT AC, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY; 22 THE HON GARETH EVANS AC, FOREIGN MINISTER; 23 WALEED ALY, MONASH UNIVERSITY; 24 THE HON PENNY WONG MP, SHADOW MINISTER, FOREIGN AFFAIRS; 25 SID MYER AM, CHAIRMAN ASIALINK, HILARY CLINTON, SECRETARY OF STATE USA, JENNY MCGREGOR AM, CEO ASIALINK; 26 PETER YATES AM, BOARD DIRECTOR; 27 PROFESSOR WANG GUNGWU AO, PATRON, ASIALINK; 28 NAZRIN SHAH, RAJA NAZRIN SHAH, THE CROWN PRINCE OF PERAK (MALAYSIA); 29 PROFESSOR SUSAN ELLIOT AM, DEPUTY PROVOST, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE; 30 MIKE SMITH CEO, ANZ; 31 CARRILLO GANTNER AO, CHAIRMAN ASIALINK, DAME ELIZABETH MURDOCH AC; 32 SUSAN MANN, CEO, EDUCATION SERVICES AUSTRALIA; 33 JOHN SO AO, LORD MAYOR OF MELBOURNE, PROFESSOR PETER MCPHEE, PROVOST, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE; 34 CHARLES GOODE AC, CHAIRMAN ANZ; 35 THE HON TIM FISCHER AC, TRADE MINISTER WITH ASEAN AMBASSADORS; 36 THE HON JIM CARLTON AO, SECRETARY GENERAL, RED CROSS; 37 DR MARLENE KANGA AM, PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF ENGINEERING ORGANISATIONS; 38 ROWAN CALICK, JOURNALIST



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28 YEARS ENGAGING ASIA

Asialink’s history spans close to three decades.

Over that time Australia, and Australia’s relationships with Asia, have changed dramatically in many ways – and endured, sometimes obstinately, in others. This timeline identifies key turning points in Australia’s engagement with Asia that have influenced Asialink’s work across education, the arts, health, diplomacy and business.

The chronological timeline of major Asialink events and milestones is not all-encompassing. Rather, the points on the timeline are intended to be illustrative of Asialink’s deep and diverse work engaging Australians with Asia. Many milestones link to articles in this book that describe their richness and importance in greater detail. We hope this survey provides a compelling understanding of the uncommon reach and impact of Asialink’s work.

1989	1992	1994	1997
<div>Myer Family proposed a focus on Australia’s engagement with Asia to The Commission for the Future.08</div> <div>Garnaut Report on Australia and the North East Asia Ascendency10</div> <div>Asialink established as a joint initiative of the Australian Government’s Commission for the Future and The Myer Foundation11</div>	<div>Carrillo Gantner AO appointed Chairman of Asialink</div> <div>Establishment of Asia Education Foundation30</div> <div>Keidanren Roundtable. Japanese Australian roundtable on corporate giving in Australia with Japan’s most powerful business group</div>	<div>Creative Nation. First Australian government cultural policy released50</div> <div>Asialink Circle launched by Premier Jeff Kennett AC52</div> <div>Eyes on ASEAN exhibition with Marina Mahathir toured Australia and South-East Asia</div>	<div>Inaugural AEF offshore conference Linking Latitudes: Indonesia attracted 300 teachers64</div>
1990	1993	1995	1998
<div>Ken Myer AC DSC appointed Chairman of Asialink and Jenny McGregor AM appointed CEO</div>	<div>Arts Exhibitions Touring Program launched36</div> <div>Death of Sir Edward “Weary” Dunlop38</div>	<div>Access Asia series of school curriculum resources launched53</div> <div>The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Strategy (NALSAS) commenced55</div> <div>Prime Minister Howard delivered Fifth Asialink Lecture</div>	<div>First Mobilising Asia Skills Conference66</div> <div>Access Asia website launched for schools</div>
1991		1996	1999
<div>Asialink became a Centre of The University of Melbourne under an agreement between The Myer Foundation and the University</div> <div>Advance Yourself: Advance Australia. Asialink’s first schools program launched16</div> <div>Launch of Asialink Corporate and Public Programs17</div> <div>Asialink Arts commenced22</div> <div>Asialink Sponsorship Program commenced24</div>	<div>Establishment of Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Awards38</div> <div>National Policy Statement on Studies of Asia in Australian Schools endorsed by states42</div> <div>Asialink Lecture Series launched43</div> <div>First Korean Studies Workshop Program for Australian teachers held in Seoul48</div> <div>Ticket to Asia primary curriculum materials produced with Macmillan Publishers53</div> <div>AEF In-country Study Programs to Asia commenced48</div>	<div>Australia-Asia Perceptions Project of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia56</div> <div>Asialink Leaders Program commenced58</div> <div>600 Access Asia Schools joined up nation wide30</div> <div>1996 – 1999 saw fractured relationships with the region: Pauline Hanson, Australia as “US Deputy Sheriff” and East Timor conflict62</div> <div>Arts Management Residencies established22</div>	<div>Asia skills training for business began. 1000 people trained in first year66</div> <div>Inaugural Asialink Arts National Forum67</div> <div>Asia Ednet virtual network for teachers went live</div>

2000	2003	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2017
Medialink launched72	Melbourne Asia Policy Papers launched with Melbourne Asia Institute92	Ground-breaking Australia-Japan Arts Leadership Meeting106	AEF invited to join Global Education Leaders Program112 First Asialink Index released113	Asialink’s 20th Anniversary celebrations	Launch of Asialink’s Singapore Chapter131	Asialink represents Australia: Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India154	The Hon Andrew Robb AO appointed Chairman of Asialink and Asialink Business
Asialink held over 100 public events in Australia and Asia	Inaugural AEF National Forum: Engaging Young Australians with Asia93	Confucius Institute established at The University of Melbourne108	AAMH responded to mental health needs of people suffering the effects of disasters116	Asialink opened an exhibition in Asia “every 23 days for 20 years” 1992–2002124	National Statement for Asia Literacy in Australian Schools agreed by all states42	Asialink Conversations: Japan84	Australia-ASEAN BRIDGE program launched by Foreign Minister Bishop118
2001	2004	2007	2009	2011	2013	2016	
Move to Sidney Myer Asia Centre74	Asia Australia Mental Health launched in Hong Kong94	A Night of Stories with Vikram Seth108 Asialink Conversations: Vietnam84	Australia – Indonesia BRIDGE School Partnerships Program launched118	58 peak Education, Business and Community organisations supported AEF’s National Action Plan for Asia Literacy126	30 professional development programs delivered for mental health leaders, officials and NGOs in Indonesia, India, China, Japan, Pacific Islands and Qatar94 First ANZ Services Report released136	AEF commissioned to research languages in Years 11 and 12155	ASEAN Australia Young Leaders Program delivered by Asialink Diplomacy164
Inaugural Asialink National Forum, Australia’s Future: Asia?76	Linking Latitudes attracted 350 Australian teachers to Vietnam64	AAMH Training Program commenced. Beijing, Hong Kong and Melbourne became key training locations for China’s mental health reform101	<i>The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians called for Asia literacy for all Australians</i> 120	Third Asialink National Forum: Mapping our Future in the Asian Century identified key role of business in leading greater engagement with Asia127	<i>Australia in the Asian Century White Paper released</i> 138	Major Asia Free Trade Agreements signed156	Ten Japan Arts Exchanges165
Linking Latitudes China64	Second Asialink National Forum: Australia’s Engagement with Asia – A New Paradigm?	Leading 21st Century Schools Program for School Principals commenced110	14,000 school educators participated in AEF professional development programs30	AEF published milestone report on the current state of Asian languages in Australian schools127	Australia Myanmar Business Taskforce formed137	Australia-India BRIDGE program launched by Education Minster Pyne in New Delhi118	Match Fit: Shaping Asia Capable Leaders report released165
Foundations of Gold Travelling Exhibition77	Asialink Conversations in Malaysia. Closing dinner with Prime Minister Badawi84				Bookwallah: a train journey in India with five writers and a pop-up library140	Asialink Conversations Singapore: Women in Leadership84	Asialink Leaders alumni surpassed 800 members58
September 11, 2001 and the Bali bombings 200279	2005	Australia headlined the Kolkata Book Fair with 11 writers participating112	2009	First Asialink Commission took place In Kuala Lumpur128	Australia-Asia BRIDGE expanded to China, Thailand and South Korea118	Asialink Arts Touring programs attracted audiences of 1 million36	Six Country guides published by Asialink Arts166
2002	Sid Myer AM appointed Chairman of Asialink	Linking Latitudes India took 350 Australian school educators to New Delhi64	Generation 21 held in Jakarta121	Partnerships in Community Mental Health launched in New Delhi129		2016	
Launch of Asialink Diplomacy: first Asialink Conversations, Lindenderry, Victoria85	Doris Pilkington Garimara launched <i>Rabbit Proof Fence</i> at Beijing International Book Fair100	APEC 2020: An Asialink Conversation for Leaders. Keynote by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhono	AEF commissioned by Australian Government to deliver the Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools program122	High-level taskforce established to drive Asia Capable Workforce Strategy130	Asialink Business established as National Centre for Asia Capability146	Launch of Asialink Business China Practice launched157	
SARS epidemic87	Indonesia-Australia Arts Management Program established100		Asialink and Asia Society collaboration commenced122	Asia Literacy Business Ambassadors launched123		AEF Go Global Student Programs launched160	
	China’s Ministry of Health appointed AAMH as Foreign Advisers to China’s new mental health program94		Deputy Prime Minister Gillard appointed Sid Myer Chairman of National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Advisory Group	Asialink Lecture by Prime Minister Gillard announced Asian Century White Paper138	AAMH co-hosted international conference and training program in Beijing with WHO94	AAMH first Australian University based consortium to win prestigious grant from Shenzhen Government, China161	
	12,000 people attended Asialink events at the Sidney Myer Asia Centre		Business Alliance for Asia Literacy formed123		First of 10 AEF research reports on Asia literacy in Australian schools published148	<i>Asialink Business launched Bennelong New Colombo Plan Pre-Departure Training</i> 162	
			Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia was designated a priority in Australia’s first national curriculum120		<i>On the Ground and in the Know</i> arts research published149	Lisa Roet: Golden Monkey installation in Beijing attracted audience of one million onsite and 23 million on social media163	
					Asialink Sydney office opened by Premier Barry O’Farrell149		



ASIALINK ACROSS ASIA

- Asialink Business
- Asialink Arts Residencies
- Asialink Arts Touring Exhibitions
- Asialink Conversations
- Asialink Literature Programs
- Asialink Singapore Chapter
- Australia-Asia School Bridge Program
- AEF Linking Latitudes Conferences
- AEF Study Programs
- Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program
- Australia-Asia Mental Health Partnerships
- Endeavour Language Fellowships

ASIALINK REACH

Asialink was established in 1989 as a joint initiative of the Australian Government’s Commission for the Future and The Myer Foundation, one of Australia’s oldest and at the time largest philanthropic foundations. For nearly 30 years Asialink has continued to evolve in response to changing Australian and global contexts. Even after three decades a sense of urgency prevails for Asialink’s staff and supporters. Perhaps now more than ever, Australia’s security and prosperity depends on a population comfortable with its geography and sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled to engage effectively with Asian peoples and cultures. Asialink’s mission and point of difference has always been to create an Asia literate Australian community and to help build and maintain Australia’s role and influence in the Asian region. Asialink has prioritised working with, listening to and learning from our Asian counterparts. The voices of Asian colleagues and Australian collaborators provide the bedrock for all our programs in Business, Education, The Arts, Health, Applied Analysis and Track 2 Diplomacy. To bring about the large-scale change required, Asialink provides advocacy, leading edge projects, training and development programs, research and thought leadership for policy makers.

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The Right Hon Sir Ninian Stephen KG AK GCMG GCVO KBE QC
Mr Carrillo Gantner AO
Mr Sid Myer AM

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From 1990, Asialink has been guided by our Patrons and Boards. Outstanding individuals, drawn from corporate, philanthropic, university and government sectors, who contribute countless hours of their own time at meetings, officiating at Asialink events, supporting program delivery, opening doors, advising on strategy and supporting fundraising. Over this time Asialink has been honoured to have four dedicated Chairmen in Ken Myer, Carrillo Gantner, Sid Myer and The Hon Andrew Robb.

BEYOND
EXPECTATIONS

ASIALINK
PATRONS AND BOARD
1990 — 2017

1989

LOOK BEYOND AUSTRALIA

// One of the most enduring themes of Myer philanthropy has been Australia’s engagement with Asia.”

MICHAEL LIFFMAN, A TRADITION OF GIVING, 2004

Liffman writes that the study of Asian languages, and the creation of the Department of Oriental Studies at The University of Melbourne, were all deliberately crafted initiatives of Myer Family philanthropy. These stood alongside a commitment to the development of a ‘multicultural Australia’ which ensured the rights, and recognised the positive influence, of immigrants and refugees – many of whom were from Asia, especially after the conclusion of the war in Vietnam.

In the closing years of the 1980s the personal passions of Myer family members, including Ken Myer, his brother S Baillieu Myer and nephew Carrillo Gantner, led to the creation of Asialink. Their intention was to drive Asian engagement and the value of personal exposure to the world beyond Australia. This became one of the highest priorities of The Myer Foundation.

A fluent speaker of Japanese, Ken Myer agreed to become the inaugural Chairman of Asialink in 1990. Sadly, Ken and his beloved wife, Yasuko Hiraoko Myer, were killed in a plane crash over Alaska on 30 July 1992.

Carrillo Gantner, newly returned from a diplomatic post in Beijing, and a Chinese speaker, agreed to take on the role of Asialink’s Chairman in 1992 and then Patron in 2005. In 2004 Sid Myer, after establishing a number of businesses in Malaysia over the previous five years, was appointed to the Board and became Chairman in 2005. Baillieu Myer kindly agreed to be the foundation Patron of Asialink in 1993 and Louise Myer was appointed to the Board in 1996.

Ken Myer with Yasuko Hiraoko Myer.

1989

GARNAUT REPORT

ON AUSTRALIA AND THE NORTH EAST ASIA ASCENDANCY

During the 1980s many Australians still did not acknowledge that our future depended on our capacity to relate to the countries of Asia. Asialink was established to help harness the opportunity of our geography.

Despite the pioneering 1957 Trade Agreement with Japan, the Holt Government's focus on Asian engagement, Prime Minister Whitlam's dramatic visit to China, and the Fraser Government's declared intention to "be in harmony with ASEAN," many in the Australian community continued to be captive to our history. Asialink was established to help harness the opportunity of our geography.

The Garnaut Report sought to be a turning point in the way Australia perceived North East Asia. It locked in place the connection between domestic and international policy realignment, and recognised Australia's future lay very much to the north.

Professor Ross Garnaut argued that the recent rapid and sustained growth, especially in Japan, Korea and Taiwan had shifted the centre of gravity of the global economy away from Europe and North America to the Asia Pacific region. Australia therefore had to prepare itself to take a significant part in what was then being called the coming "Pacific Century."

To identify and grasp these new opportunities would require, Garnaut argued, radical economic reforms, especially the dismantling of tariffs and other methods of protection. At the same time, economic measures needed to be matched by major changes in Australian research, education policy and curriculum development to make Australians more aware of the languages, cultures and economies of the region.

In the final analysis, the report stressed that Australians should not fear the continued success of Northeast Asia. There was so much to be gained by building up a wide range of mutually beneficial relationships of great depth and texture with countries in the region.

According to historian Nicholas Brown, the cabinet used the Garnaut Report as a manifesto around which many priorities in micro-economic reform gained coherence, from industry policy to trade liberalisation, education and immigration.

"The political context of the report's release was shadowed by events in Tiananmen Square – requiring some tweaking to Garnaut's central message of working with the distinct processes and strains of modernisation in the economies that defined Australia's future," he said.

A COMMISSION FOR THE FUTURE



Asialink was created as a partnership between the Australian Government through the Commission for the Future and The Myer Foundation. In 1991 Asialink became a centre of The University of Melbourne.



CARRILLO GANTNER AO

Asialink, Chairman

	1992 — 2005
Asialink, Patron	2006 — Present

// I think the broad goal was to help Australians understand our own region; understand that we were part of the region and that the engagement in both directions was very important. Particularly important for Australia, because we were no longer a sort of outpost of the British Empire.”

CARRILLO GANTNER AO

Ali Moore: Carrillo Gantner, let’s go back to the very beginning for Asialink, to where the seeds for this organisation came from.

Carrillo Gantner: In 1988 I was travelling in many countries of Asia just at the time when Australia was attracting some very negative media attention about our immigration policies. We were being described as racist and colonial, when I had always thought we were rather a charming, enlightened, multicultural society.

At that time, I don’t think most Australians had any idea that anyone was out there in Asia, let alone listening or taking any notice of what was happening here in Australia.

As I said, I was quite profoundly disturbed by how Australia was being spoken about, in what I had always taken to be our own neighbourhood. So as a Director on The Myer Foundation Board, I came back to its next meeting and spoke about how we urgently needed to do something about how Australia was being perceived in Asia. Ken Myer, the Chairman of the Foundation at the time, and an enthusiastic Asianist, agreed.

We decided to call together many of the people who were working in the Asian-Australian space at the time. People like Steve FitzGerald who was then Chairman of the Asian Studies Council, Jenny McGregor who was at the Commission for the Future, and others in public affairs, media and academia, to help us search for a workable idea. Out of those search conferences came the origins of a program for The Myer Foundation to fund Jenny at the Commission for the Future, with Steve FitzGerald and some others on an Advisory Board. And that’s where it all began.

AM: And was there any question in any of your minds about the importance of Asia to the future of Australia?

CG: No, I was brought up to think that. I was surrounded by people like Ken Myer who had a Japanese wife and was an ardent Asianist, Steve FitzGerald, Ross Garnaut, all sorts of important people that I admired. One of my mentors was Myra Roper, a Sinophile who taught courses at Melbourne University and was warden of what was then called Womens College – it’s now University College. Asia was just part of the furniture as far as I was concerned. But it wasn’t then for a lot of the country. It still isn’t for some the country, but we are getting there.

AM: And when you joined forces with Jenny McGregor, when Asialink was born, in those very early days were there a core set of principles? Was there a very clearly defined goal?

CG: I think the broad goal was to help Australians understand our own region; understand that we were part of the region and that the engagement in both directions was very important. Particularly important for Australia, because we were no longer a sort of outpost of the British Empire. We were an ally of the United States of course but they were a very long way away and they didn’t live here. I think it was Gareth Evans who talked about us being part of the East Asia Hemisphere. I mean that longitudinal slice of the orange is very much our slice of the world and how we engage with it in a positive way, was always the driving force.

This is why school education, which is where we all start, was so important to Asialink in the early years. There was also a degree of opportunism because the government at the time was looking to “Asianise” the curriculum and acknowledge its importance. We bid for that first Asia Education Foundation contract and miraculously won it. That gave the organisation a foundation and a stability on which it’s built so successfully.

AM: So education makes enormous sense, get people while they are young. Art, why the involvement with art? How was that a key?

CG: Well it’s key because artists are very influential people in society. Artists make great ambassadors into the region. They have a voice that is beyond their numbers, a visibility. Spending time in Asia, artists will include those new influences into their work, sometimes very subtly, sometimes very overtly, but it is there. We thought that if you could influence a generation of artists, then people who experience their work would start perceiving the world differently. Artists bring bits of the region back into their work and therefore into our lives.

AM: So from the very beginning, what in your mind did success look like?

It was a never ending series of mirrors. We thought we were getting closer to success with Keating. Keating espoused it, talked brilliantly about Asia and arts and indigenous issues, managing to weave them together into a fantastic narrative for this country.

The Howard years were harder, at least the first two terms. When, despite great success in many ways, increasing numbers of Asian students, tourism and business connections, he was never prepared to speak about our engagement with Asia. I think he didn’t think there were votes in it.

It was Howard and Brendan Nelson as Minister for Education who in fact withdrew the bipartisan support for the NALSAS Program. That had a disastrous impact on the next generation of young Australians and their capacity and opportunity to study Asian languages and cultures. My generation didn’t know any of that existed. In most Australian schools we were only taught Latin, French and German. So to see that opportunity delayed again was really heartbreaking for everyone associated with the Asian agenda in Australia.

AM: That’s just one of the challenges that Asialink has had to face. I know that there have been many. What do you see is the underlying core, the thing that has not changed, and the thing that continues to make Asialink a successful presence?

CG: Well the partnership of The Myer Foundation with The University of Melbourne in the delivery of Asialink became a very potent force. It meant that the core of the organisation had support, so it wasn’t always chasing its tail to pay its own salaries, but could go out and develop their programs very successfully, whether it was in the arts, education, in public affairs, in mental health, in business, in a whole range of areas.

AM: What about how Asialink changed? Because while we talk about continuing core principles obviously you had to change for the times, adjust to new challenges. What were some of the key changes that you saw?

CG: Well first the need to develop a national presence. The arts program was a national program from the beginning, selecting visual artists, performing artists, writers and arts managers from around the country.

We delivered public affairs events, first of all in Sydney and then in other capital cities.

And then, because in Australia we deliver primary and secondary school education through the states, our Asia Education Foundation people needed to form close relationships with state education departments across the country.

We opened up Asialink chapters nationally and then in the region. They were usually led by alumni from the various Asialink programs like the Leaders program. So that presence gave us strength.

We responded always to the political changes that were happening in this country and sometimes they were positive changes and sometimes they made our lives more difficult. But always Asialink rose to those challenges. For example, Pauline Hansen was one of the negative challenges that we and anyone else working in Asia or education faced. How do you counteract those sorts of negative stereotypes?

I think we have done well but, as I say, it’s often an ever receding horizon. Because just when you think you are doing well, something else falls out of bed and you have got other challenges to work on.

AM: How do you see the role of Asialink in 2018, and I don’t mean its education or increasing awareness program which is where it really started. But more now as a voice of reason and a voice of knowledge and a voice of balance in the Asia Australia relationship?

CG: It has a very important voice but it also provides a platform for all sorts of voices and that’s more important than being a singular voice. People don’t come to Asialink necessarily for a definitive comment about what’s happened in the Chinese leadership situation, or what’s happened in Indonesian politics, or natural catastrophes, but they look to this organisation to open all sorts of doors to the issues.

Asialink has never been a platform for a particular point of view. It provides a diversity of voices to give people the opportunity to learn, to elicit interest that might encourage further study or travel or discussion or however it may be expressed... to help people come to their own opinions.

AM: Is that diversity of voices in fact the reason why Asialink has endured and endured so successfully?

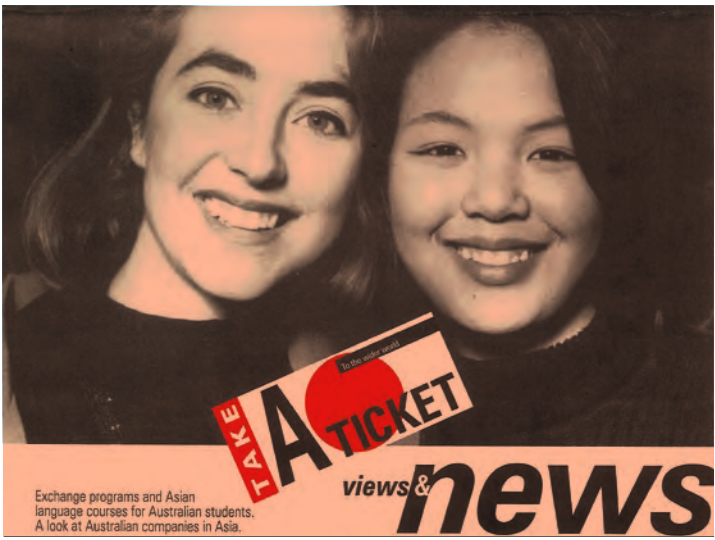
CG: I think it is a very important element of it. The public affairs program over the years has brought in some brilliant speakers, both Australian and international, mainly Asian but occasionally from Europe or North America who are talking about Asian issues. Heads of State, foreign ministers, including our Australian foreign ministers. I think particularly of Gareth Evans, Alexander Downer, Bob Carr, Julie Bishop, people from both sides who have been prepared to use Asialink as a platform to deliver their message. That’s been very influential.

AM: What was your toughest decision when you were chair?

CG: I think to keep the Board and organisation focused on the wider Australian and regional community. It’s very easy when you have a university partner to be naturally sucked back in to teaching and research, the normal functions of the university. But I think the tough job was always to remind people that our job wasn’t to look into the university, it was to look out from the university and deliver a much wider perspective. Now that’s had benefits for the university, it’s had benefits for the Myer Family in terms of credibility and the enormous pride that we all take in this organisation now. But it’s not any one single moment. I think there have been so many wonderful happy moments and moments where we have all had a sense of achievement in what this organisation has done.

AM: So if Ken Myer was alive today, how would you think he would view Asialink?

CG: I think he would be going “Yay team! Keep it up!” There’s a lot more to be done. I think he would be very proud and very happy.



ADVANCE YOURSELF: ADVANCE AUSTRALIA

Graduates and business representatives with expertise working with Asia spoke to hundreds of students from 33 metropolitan and country Victorian schools as part of Asialink’s first school education initiative, Advance Yourself: Advance Australia. Speakers encouraged students learning Asian languages to maintain their study and to explore opportunities for experience in Asia.

1991



“Closer regional relationships should provide the main thrust of our search for security through this century. We all need to work at it.”
THE RT HON MALCOLM FRASER AC CH

ATTRACTING AUDIENCES FROM RIGHT ACROSS THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY, ASIALINK HAS BEEN A LEADING FORUM FOR INSIGHT AND DEBATE ON TOPICAL REGIONAL ISSUES. SINCE 1991, GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SECTOR LEADERS, ASIA SCHOLARS, JOURNALISTS AND PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS FROM AUSTRALIA AND THE REGION HAVE PRESENTED ON A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS. THESE EVENTS REMAIN AN ONGOING PART OF THE ASIALINK CALENDAR. THE EVENTS TEAM HAS DELIVERED AN AVERAGE OF 100 EVENTS ANNUALLY FROM 1991 THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA AND THE ASIA REGION.



ASIALINK CORPORATE AND
PUBLIC PROGRAMS BEGIN

A CENTRE FOR IDEAS



JENNY MCGREGGOR AM

Asialink Group,

Chief Executive Officer

1989 — 2018



Australia is growing in population, but our influence, power and wealth are actually diminishing when compared to our regional neighbours. We are going to have to work even harder than we have up until now to remain prosperous, to remain peaceful, and to remain healthy in this region.”

JENNY McGREGOR AM

Ali Moore: Let’s go back to the very beginning to the late 1980s. What was the driving purpose behind Asialink?

Jenny McGregor: The driving purpose was to make Australians comfortable in our own neighbourhood. We had just had some very difficult times with the Howard immigration issues and there was a degree of discomfort about our region in our community. There was also a significant amount of ignorance and lack of interest. A number of leading Australians were separately thinking that we really needed to do something to prepare Australians for a new world, one that we didn’t seem to be all that conscious of at the time.

AM: Was it less about the politics, growing an understanding, educating so that people could judge for themselves?

JMcG: Yes, absolutely it was about that. We got very good advice in the early years from extremely wise people: a coalition of people from the Commission for the Future, like Peter Ellyard, Carrillo Gantner from The Myer Foundation and also from the Asian Studies Council, Stephen FitzGerald. He was our first ambassador to China and head of the Council. He spent many years writing and talking about the need for Asia to be a fundamental part of Australian life. He advised that we needed to start working with children in schools, because we might as well give up on the current generation. He was a bit cynical but it proved to be a very important piece of advice because that is where we did focus most of our early attention, on school education.

AM: And if you look at that really very broad context of Australia’s place in the region back in the late 80s and you compare it to today, how much has changed?

JMcG: Well it’s an entirely different world, now we live globalisation every minute of the day. Challenges to free trade, China starting to exercise its recovered power, there’s quite a lot of tension at the moment. There wasn’t the tension in those days but also there wasn’t the interest.

In the early 90s we used to keep a press clippings file about Asia. We now laugh about just how small that press clippings file was at the end of each year. One of our complaints was that journalists were not interested in the region. In fact we implemented a number of strategies to gain more interest from journalists.

Now our media thankfully is full of commentary on China. What we try to do now is to diversify that commentary to include important content from other influential countries like the ASEANs, Japan, India and Korea for example.

AM: You talked about some of the political difficulties you faced in the early days. Perhaps more than ever now you face the same, but different political difficulties don’t you? I mean the debate is still mired in so very many strong opinions. Is that one of the ironies, even though there is now enormous print and electronic coverage, perhaps more than ever, a role of an independent rational voice is even more important than it was in the early 90s?

JMcG: It certainly is. It’s become extremely polarised; you are either pro-China or anti-China. You are either pro-America or you’re anti-America.

One of the things that I think has always been fundamental to our work is that we have always tried to be an independent voice and give an airing to all sides of the argument. We have also tried extraordinarily hard to be bipartisan, so with just about everything we do we want to make sure we are hearing from all sides.

AM: Have the priorities of Asialink changed over the decades?

JMcG : Definitely. So when we first started, as I said, we were very much focused on school education in order to build future generations. We certainly were very conscious of the importance of the business community but we didn’t have enough resources to significantly influence the workforce. More recently we worked very hard to establish Asialink Business so we could really have the scale needed to make a difference.

I don’t think we ever imagined being this big but as you know it requires a lot of resources to change a community profoundly.

Paul Kelly talked about how the relationship with Asia is actually an enduring national project that has no end. I originally pitched to The Myer Foundation saying we can get this done in three years. So somewhere between three years and forever, maybe we will get it right, but we are still a long way from getting it right now.

AM: Do you think that’s the biggest challenge going forward and looking beyond the first three decades is how do you grow that influence and perspective into a really broad community.

JMcG: I think that is the really big issue. Australia is growing in population, but our influence, power and wealth are actually diminishing when compared to our regional neighbours. We are going to have to work even harder than we have up until now to remain prosperous, to remain peaceful, and to remain healthy in this region. We have to skill all our students, all our workers, not just those we happen to now be able to reach.

AM: Are you still an optimist? Do you feel if you got from zero to ten, are you somewhere around seven? Are you really making significant progress? Are you optimistic about the future?

JMcG: I’m very optimistic about the future but I think we are more about a five to six rather than seven or eight, just because of the scale of the challenge.

But we also have some extra resources now. The Asian Australian community is growing. That’s fantastic, a source of such great expertise and networks. Asialink has always tried to remain close to the Asian Australian community, but Australia more broadly needs to do a better job. We need to celebrate Asian Australian leaders in our community, listen to them and ensure that we leverage the enormous strengths and the extraordinary skills on offer.

I think we have learned a little bit about humility, and that if we take the time to listen, to work with regional neighbours with humility and in collaboration, then we have so much to learn. I’m optimistic because I think that lesson is starting to come through. There is nothing that gives us greater joy than to hear people who have been through our programs telling others how important those lessons are.

I also learned pretty early how incredibly generous most people are. With just about anything we are going to do, we find we don’t know enough about it. Our approach was to always ask other people with expertise. What we found was that people are so generous in sharing their knowledge. As long as you thank them and acknowledge what they have done, it’s a really virtuous circle.

AM: That brings us to the various Board members, Advisory Committees, sponsors and supporters, founders. How important have they been to shaping Asialink in 2018?

JMcG: Fundamentally important, and there would be no Asialink without that extraordinary coalition of people. The people who have been there right from the beginning. Members of The Myer Foundation who have been exceptionally generous with their funding. But actually, the funding wasn’t the most important thing, it was the way they were always present with their wise advice and encouragement, their networks and their moral support. Very often after a successful event, flowers would arrive to say you did really well here, the organisation has kicked goals. Just those little things make such a difference. They would always be thinking about what other opportunities were out there. Could we get into sport? Could we get into science? What could we do in these communities where we weren’t active.

The University of Melbourne, such an extraordinary and accessible well of intelligence, networks and creativity. Just so generous. And our corporate sponsors, many of which have been with us for nearly 30 years, and again providing not just money but ideas and expertise.

AM: It’s not always of course smooth sailing, it almost goes without saying, let me ask you about some of the toughest times you had.

JMcG: I try to forget the toughest times, but I suppose the toughest times are often when you worry that we haven’t ticked all the boxes on something really important. For example, a particular report that was going to be fundamental to a significant bid. At the eleventh hour I got a call saying we were not there yet. Those are the incredibly stressful times but we got there in the end.

It’s been a number of times like that, because anything you do of any substance and scale requires a lot of collaboration from a lot of people, so you keep asking yourself, have you been true? Have you been equitable with all of those people? They are always the stressors.

AM: I guess that’s the key for an organisation like this. You are not out there dictating how things should go, you are out there drawing everyone together to make something happen.

JMcG: Exactly. One of the toughest ones was preparing for the Conversations in Myanmar. We were in Myanmar when there were barely any computers and the mobile phones usually didn’t work. It was extraordinarily difficult just to get on to people.

I was working with Myanmar’s head of Foreign Affairs and we would get constant changes. After days spent trying to connect, a phone call finally arrived telling me that her Foreign Minister advised that we now had to relocate the program from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw, with just a few days out. And then key people weren’t getting visas. It was a high wire act but it delivered critical mutual understandings and long-term relationships.

AM: Is there another 30 years in Asialink?

JMcG: Certainly there’s another 30 years in Asialink. Hopefully it’s going to be very different and very exciting with all that we are seeing now in innovation and technology, and in the massive changes in the countries around us. It’s going to be a different organisation but it’s going to be one that does, as Paul Kelly says, have an everlasting future.

AM: Can I briefly explore something different with you. I know that no CEO wants to shadow the next CEO but what do you think should happen differently?

JMcG: I am sure that Asialink will move into areas that we can’t even contemplate. With the expansion of artificial intelligence and the pace of innovation, we don’t even know what people will be like, let alone the international relations implications of space.

What we have always done is tried to adapt to new challenges and grasp new opportunities and I am sure that’s what Asialink will continue to do. The thing that I hope will stay the same is that we have really always tried to give everyone in the team as much room to fly and the support they need to deliver on our mission.

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In 1990 it was a real opening up in the region. People in Asia were hungry, not necessarily for Australian things, but for things from elsewhere... and so we happened to be there at the right time."

DR ALISON CARROLL
FOUNDING DIRECTOR, ASIALINK ARTS

The Asialink Arts program was designed to promote Australian culture as sophisticated, open, diverse and innovative. Creative people in Australia – and increasingly the countries of Asia – were given the opportunity to experience different contemporary cultural expressions and new ways of thinking. At the same time this expanded audiences for contemporary Australian and Asian arts collaborations.

Asialink Arts develops the Asia capability of the cultural sector based on the principles of partnership and collaboration. The Arts program appointed outstanding advisory committees from the very first days. Key people ensured that processes are transparent surrounding who contributes, selects and confirms the program. They have included bureaucrats, artists, curators, theatre practitioners, writers, musicians, arts managers and funders.

Over time Asialink received strong financial, organizational and collegiate support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australia Council for the Arts, state and territory arts departments, The University of Melbourne, The Myer Foundation and philanthropic funds, as well as an impressive list of partners in Asia.

RESIDENCIES

Asialink Arts Residencies allow creative professionals to initiate projects, work with new colleagues and develop ideas which flow back to Australia and to new audiences in their host country. Increasingly Asialink Arts supports arts practitioners from the region to come to Australia and work with Australian hosts. The idea of artist residencies was virtually unknown in Asia when Asialink Arts launched the idea to our first collaborators from universities in Thailand and Indonesia. In 1991, there were four visual artists on Asialink exchanges. By 2004 Asialink Arts Residents had spent a combined 35,000 days in 10 countries of Asia. By 2017 Asialink Arts had awarded 830 residencies across the Asian region. The program started with visual arts, adding performing arts and literature.

In 1996 Arts Management residencies, were launched – initially with a focus on Indonesia – and developed to build stronger links with the emerging arts management industry in Asia. Arts Management residencies were an initiative of Asialink Chairman, Carrillo Gantner AO, and the Head of the Ford Foundation's Arts program, Jennifer Lindsay. They were launched to develop links into the emerging arts management industry in Asia, with the Australians frequently providing management support to new ventures there and laying the ground for long-term peer networks.

TOURING PROGRAMS

Asialink Arts operates Australia's largest and longest running international visual arts touring program. In the 20 years between 1992–2002 there was an Asialink exhibition opening in Asia every 23 days. Over 27 years, there have been more than 200 exhibitions and projects in 70 cities working with a network of over 100 partners in Asia. The program partners with Asian cultural institutions, major events and biennales to deliver exhibitions and collaborative projects. Beginning with touring Australian art to various countries of the region, the exhibitions program became bilateral, and at times multilateral, encouraging institutional and individual partners in Australia and Asia to work together on mutually developed and often large-scale projects.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Asialink Arts undertakes outreach projects and publications that disseminate evidence-based information and analysis, engage Australian and Asian audiences and explore the intellectual and artistic dimensions of cross-cultural interaction and collaboration. These initiatives encompass ground-breaking research, public forums, roundtables, workshops, international visitor programs and outbound cross-artform delegations.

CREATIVITY
& COURAGE

Anne Zahalka, *Santa's Kingdom*, Fox Studios, Sydney, 2003 (from *Natural Wonders*) Type C photograph, 115 x 145 cm (Supernatural Artificial)

1991

ASIALINK SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM BEGINS

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Within the disparate and languishing range of organisations concerned with Asian-Australian relations, Asialink is recognised as the most successful, which is mainly attributed to its continuing support from core funders.”

REVIEW OF ASIALINK
LINDSEY FALVEY, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
DECEMBER 2000

Asialink has been generously supported by the corporate, philanthropic, education and government sectors.

Support for Asialink’s work from the corporate sector grew with the Mazda Foundation joining The Myer Foundation in 1991, providing funding, expertise and in-kind support to help secondary students sustain their Asian languages study. In the first five years Asialink secured 20 corporate sponsors, 12 government funders, five foundations and three education sponsors, and brought in a total revenue of \$4 million.

In 1993 the Australian Financial Review front page featured Prime Minister Keating delivering Asialink’s inaugural Sir Edward Weary Dunlop lecture. The managing partner of Freehill, Hollingdale and Page, Paul Montgomery, contacted Asialink the same day and a sponsorship and subsequent Board membership developed. Paul Montgomery later mentored the drafting of Asialink’s first Strategic Plan.

Corporate sponsorship often came with offers of use of in-house hospitality, access to the highest-level expertise and provision of advisory services and advocacy support at critical times. Other heritage sponsors included PricewaterhouseCoopers, ANZ, Boston Consulting Group and Singapore Airlines. Many corporate partnerships endured for decades and helped create major projects like AEF In-country Study Tours and the Asialink Index and were critical in advocating for new developments including Asialink Business.

From 2002–2018 The University of Melbourne provided core funding to Asialink totaling \$7.42 million. Generous and substantial in-kind support has also been provided by the University since 1992 including office space and corporate services.

Government support is essential in delivering social change at scale. Asialink’s strategy is to contribute to the policy making process, including through delivering consultations for White Papers, creating alliances of business and education to advocate for government action, and piloting projects and partnerships where success can generate funding. From 1992–2016, Asialink received core funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education for the AEF and from 1991 Asialink has received funding for the Arts program from Australian federal, state and territory governments in addition to private donors.

From 1990 – 2017 Asialink has received \$11.4 million in funding from The Myer Foundation, The Sidney Myer Fund, Carrillo Gantner and Neilma Gantner, The Yulgibar Foundation, The Sarah and Baillieu Family Foundation, the Sid and Fiona Myer Foundation and the Louise and Martyn Myer Foundation. Myer family philanthropy has had an extraordinary impact on Asialink’s capacity to drive change in Australia. Over the same period, Myer family funding helped Asialink leverage \$117.2 million in Australian federal, state and territory government funding.

Ian Renard AM, Chancellor, The University of Melbourne and Lady Marigold Southey AC, The Myer Foundation, Asialink Chairman’s Dinner, 2005

ASIALINK SUPPORTERS



THE MYER FAMILY’S \$11.4 MILLION FUNDING SUPPORT OVER 27 YEARS HELPED ASIALINK TO LEVERAGE \$117.2 MILLION FROM AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

DR ALISON CARROLL AM

Asialink, Arts Director

1990 — 2010



Culture underpins our thinking and the way we view the world, the way we interact and the way we do a whole lot of things in society. Understanding those things is really central."



DR ALISON CARROLL AM

Ali Moore: Alison Carroll, if we can go back to the very beginning, why was an arts program so important to what Asialink was trying to achieve?

Alison Carroll: It wasn't that the arts itself was important; it was part of a wider picture of possibility. This goes to what I think was really fantastic about Asialink. The way that it started was organic. It started because we were all interested in the whole idea of engaging with Asia. There were so many opportunities, so many possibilities in so many ways. I am an art historian. I'd found, through serendipity really, that the arts of Asia was so interesting. I've always thought of it like a treasure trove. And we in the arts community in Australia had mostly ignored all those exciting possibilities that I personally had experienced. I thought we can offer that through Asialink, in a much broader way that fits in with a whole wider cultural agenda.

AM: What were your priorities when you set this up? How did you go about setting benchmarks, if you like?

AC: It was very small. I was just trying to see if we could make some projects that were really going to engage people in Australia and certainly in Asia; to say that, yes, Australians, the arts community here, can work together and make some terrific things.

AM: What was the operating environment like? Was there a welcome mat? Were people willing in the Asian region to partner with Australians?

AC: That's, as they say, a good question. I'd worked as a state gallery curator so I had a lot of experience understanding and working within an institutional framework in Australia. At the time, the Australia Council provided some money for me to tour parts of Asia to see what people there wanted from Australia. Were there things that they wanted to see that we could engage with in some way; that could be interesting and of use to them? They all said "contemporary art".

Because that's my background, Asialink could immediately step into the region to set up some contemporary art exhibitions to engage Australia and people in the countries of Asia, and we never looked back. The Australian government had some funding for the Arts to allow us to engage and involve other people and it went from there.

This was 1990; people in Asia were hungry, not necessarily for Australian things, but for things from elsewhere. It was a real opening up in the region. I remember going to Indonesia and people saying to me we want to see things from elsewhere. And so we happened to be there at the right time.

And no, I have never had people not interested, never... you know it's really been one of the wonderful things.

AM: Over the 20 years, did you change how you did things? You said with contemporary art you never looked back. I assume the mission might have stayed the same, did the way you acted on that change over time?

AC: I think it got more complex. Certainly when we were originally engaging it was a very small arts international community in the Asian region. It sounds ridiculous to say it now, but it was true. You could get to know people pretty quickly, especially if you were interested in them, being curious and inviting were key.

Over the next couple of decades, the arts environment in Asia became a lot more sophisticated. Governments stepped in with large important institutions, universities started to do things and a lot of programs started to happen. We in Australia had an incredible opportunity in the early 90s to be a really important partner in all of that but I think we missed the boat... they took off without us.

AM: You worked hard to set up high profile advisory committees. How important were they to help shape what you did and to support what you did?

AC: We had advisory committees in the performing arts, visual arts and literature. The members were Australians and were all very well positioned across Australia. We always included someone with an Asian background. It sounds tokenistic but it was very important to have the diversity of viewpoints. We were centred here in Melbourne but we needed to have a national overview, so committee members came from all states including the Northern Territory and Western Australia. They brought in their knowledge more than anything, and their networks. I think one of the reasons we were successful in the way that we were, is that those networks in Australia, and in turn in Asia, were and continue to be phenomenal.

AM: You talk about some of the things that made the arts program successful, but what about Asialink more broadly? You worked inside the organisation from its very beginnings, why do you think Asialink endured, and so successfully?

AC: I think it's the people. Jenny McGregor has been incredibly important. Her skills are really extraordinary. She provided an umbrella for all of us to do what we wanted to do. She respected our professional backgrounds. She stepped in when things were needed and mostly stayed out of it other than that. You couldn't ask for something better.

In the beginning there were four or five of us ... and we were all women. We were all from different backgrounds that we brought to this central melting pot, full of energy, keenness and desire to make what we were doing successful. I think that was quite unusual. Arts, Business, Education, Leadership, and later Health, brought in such diversity of understandings and ideas about how Australia could engage with the Asian region, and I think that was really very healthy.

AM: When you look back at your time with Asialink Arts; do you think Asialink was successful with the aims that were set up in the late 1980s?

AC: How do you measure that? On one level we were incredibly successful; I mean the program is still going a long time later. We were sort of set up with an idea of a sunset clause. We were going to do this and then everyone in Australia is going to understand the cultures of Asia, and then we could finish, but that's never going to happen, there's still so much to do.

AM: Do you see art as crucial to our Asia engagement in the years ahead?

AC: I think it can be much broader than art by itself. I would like to see culture being prominent. Because culture underpins our thinking and the way we view the world, the way we interact and the way we do a whole lot of things in society. Understanding those things is really central; the arts are one expression of that of course.

AM: Do you have a most memorable moment of your two decades?

AC: I have lots of memorable moments. A few disasters that we all laughed about afterwards. The Asialink office was always a centre for a lot of laughter and I think that was really important. I also remember the friendships made in the region. People always remember a good project and they are eager to do something else. It's the fact of people who are thinking in a similar way, that's the highlight for me.

Focused on fulfilling its mission of creating a new generation of Asia-skilled Australians, the newly formed Asialink identified education as its first priority. Asialink's education program began in 1990 with a national 'Asia in schools' conference, the development of Ticket to Asia curriculum resources, and the Advance Yourself: Advance Australia campaign, a program to encourage and support secondary school students studying Asian languages.

This work positioned Asialink, in collaboration with the national education body, Curriculum Corporation, to win a \$3.5 million contract from the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training to establish the Asia Education Foundation (AEF). Launched in September 1992 by The Hon. Kim Beazley MP, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, AEF was a joint activity of Asialink at The University of Melbourne and Curriculum Corporation – which later became Education Services Australia – an organization owned by all Australian Ministers of Education.

AEF's brief was to introduce studies of Asia across the curriculum in schools throughout Australia. Evidence-based best practice in driving significant change in school systems required a multi-faceted strategy focused on both grassroots action in schools and top-down policy.

For 26 years AEF has been Australia's peak organisation to support the school education sector to build intercultural capability, global competence and world-class education.

AEF developed productive partnerships with all Australian state and territory education departments, non-government school sectors and peak education, curriculum and professional bodies. It formed national and international collaborations with the business sector and provided award-winning curriculum resources and professional development for entire school communities.

The compelling case for so-called 'Asia literacy', and guidelines for its introduction into schools, was initially articulated through a series of 'National Statements on Studies of Asia in Australian Schools', drafted by AEF in consultation with all Australian education jurisdictions and continually updated from 1995 to 2012.

In 2009 a new set of national goals for education – the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for all Young Australians – was agreed to by Australian education ministers. The goals included the 'need for Australians to be Asia literate'. This was a milestone policy achievement advocated by AEF and it resulted in the 2012 introduction of the new Australian National Curriculum with a priority of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia in every subject from Foundation to year 12. By this act, national policy to promote Asia literacy for all was firmly established and replaced the need for a separate Asia literacy policy statement.

AEF was a strategic partner of the Australian Government in the implementation of two major initiatives to build Asia literacy in schools. The National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools program (NALSAS), spanning 1995–2002, and the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), from 2009–2012, injected substantial funding to expand Asian languages learning and broader Asian studies. However, while significant progress was made during these periods, the momentum was not sustained by successive governments.

The Access Asia series of curriculum resources provided innovative learning experiences for primary and secondary school students designed to be integrated into existing curriculum. Over time AEF curriculum resources moved from books to online curriculum units and interactive 'tool boxes' of teaching and learning ideas all housed on the AEF website and tailored to achieve the Asia priority of the Australian Curriculum.

In its first two years, AEF secured partnerships with all state and territory education departments to establish the Schools Development Program, a national network of 276 Magnet Schools. These demonstration schools across Australia were resourced to pilot the introduction of the study of Asia in all curriculum areas. AEF Advisors in each state and territory were located in, and jointly funded by, education departments to manage the schools' network. In 1997 AEF's Schools Development Program was renamed the Access Asia Schools Network and grew to include over 3000 Australian primary and secondary schools.

The majority of the Australian education workforce had little or no formal education themselves about the countries or cultures of Asia. The AEF Partnerships Program developed strategic alliances with Asian and Australian philanthropic, corporate, government and university bodies to provide a broad range of professional development opportunities and incentives in Australia and the Asian region for Australian teachers and school leaders. **Since 1993 AEF's offshore learning programs in Asia have given over 4000 Australian school educators direct experience to learn about and resource the subject content they were planning to teach.**

Forging partnerships between Australian businesses and school communities has been a key strategy throughout AEF's history. These partnerships have influenced government policy and have been essential to stimulating student and community demand for Asia capability. Programs were developed to link Asia-skilled and experienced professionals with schools to provide inspiration and demonstrate to students how knowledge of the Asian region can enrich life and career.

AEF led the way in exploring the use of emerging technologies to support the inclusion of contemporary Asian themes and content into school curriculum. Early initiatives were frontrunners for the flagship Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships program (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement), which continues to grow as one of AEF's most highly acclaimed programs. This initiative partners schools, teachers and students to collaborate across borders on curriculum projects using technology.

A focus on school principals as the key agents to instigate and sustain change in schools became a priority for AEF from 2007. A range of programs equipped leaders of primary and secondary schools with the knowledge, networks and resources to develop globally competent and Asia-ready students.

Most recently, AEF has developed a suite of programs for school students named Go Global. This initiative directly engages students in practical activities that explore local, regional and global issues.

EDUCATION: THE FIRST PRIORITY



Good neighbours learn to speak each other's languages...

Good neighbours learn to respect each other's religious and cultural beliefs.

Good neighbours learn to allow for differences and to be inclusive.

Good neighbours spend time with each other.

Good neighbours understand that contentious issues should be resolved through negotiation."

GENERAL PETER COSGROVE
IN THE NATIONAL STATEMENT FOR ENGAGING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS
WITH ASIA IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS, 2005

Federal Education Minister The Hon Kim Beazley MP launches 'Open a door to Asia', the AEF's first national event for schools, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1993.

PROFESSOR KWONG LEE DOW AO

Asialink Executive, Chairman

	1991 — 1996
Asia Education Foundation, Chairman	1992 — 2004
Asia Australia Mental Health, Advisory Committee Chairman	2010 — 2014

// Asialink's people were very good at identifying key leaders for our projects in Asian countries, getting them on side by visiting them on their home turf and bringing them to Melbourne and having them do major presentations at the University. That's something that is not easy to sustain."



PROFESSOR KWONG LEE DOW AO

Ali Moore: Professor Kwong Lee Dow, you have been involved with Asialink for such a very long time. You have been on the Board, you have also been the chair of the Asia Education Foundation Board and the Asia Australia Mental Health Advisory Committee. What is it about the organisation and its many arms that has kept you so engaged?

Kwong Lee Dow: Initially I was very engaged because I suppose there weren't many people of Asian background in the university at that time. An interest in Asia was starting to grow with new professors of Chinese and Japanese appointed, and Asian Law was being developed. So when Asialink came from the Commission for the Future it was a great opportunity, but the question of how to cement an entity with Asialink's broad vision into the university was not straightforward. The university had research centres linked to every faculty and nook and cranny, but Asialink was not just wanting to do things with language departments or in arts or in social sciences. However it was done, linked to the Vice Chancellor's office: it has worked.

What kept me going was the fact that we had such terrific people leading Asialink, Jenny and Julia Fraser and Kathe Kirby. People who understood that you had to network and partner. Knowing that it was not enough just to be with academics, though you had to do that, but you needed to be linked to government, to industry and then sustain those links. Not just blow in for a few years and then wander off and hand it to somebody else. The fact that this organisation has such depth in the core people that spearheaded it and sustained it was one of the really important things for me.

AM: How important do you think it was and has been, and continues to be part of a university and not being outside it?

KLD: I think it's probably been critical to have been part of a university but at the same time given enough room to manoeuvre, so it wasn't constrained or in any way limited. The university people, like David Penington, the Vice Chancellor at the time, who were managing these things were sophisticated enough to see that, and because the Asialink leadership was so alert to maximising the benefits and minimising the difficulties, it's actually worked through almost 30 years.

Asialink's people were also very good at identifying key leaders for our projects in Asian countries, getting them on side by visiting them on their home turf and bringing them to Melbourne and having them do major presentations at the university. That's something that is not easy to sustain.

AM: You were the inaugural chair of the Asia Education Foundation. At the beginning, what was Asialink proposing in terms of education reform that was not being done elsewhere?

KLD: Well the Asia Education Foundation was particularly concerned with building an understanding of Asia thorough teachers and principals in schools. It was a Commonwealth government funded project. The Minister, everyone in Canberra, could see all the potential benefits. But education is a state matter, a whole series of state education departments, each controlling its own curriculum. You've got Catholic Education in every state, and independent schools. How do you start interacting with schools and teachers in that mix?

The Asia Education Foundation did it by being very careful about three areas. One was the curriculum. They made sure they had exciting fresh new materials that would excite kids and teachers and that fitted in with existing curriculum priorities and interests.

A second thing was that we needed to train the teachers. But you can't do that en masse in any reasonable period of time, so a series of lighthouse schools – we called them Access Asia schools – were identified largely through the enthusiasm of particular individual teachers right across the country. A number of these teachers and principals were given in-country experiences during summer vacation periods.

And then as well as the curriculum and teachers, you had to convince a number of these authorities that something real was happening in schools and that it was always developing and evolving. That required the AEF and Asialink making sure that they were able to convince leaders in government, leaders in business, the influencers in the Australian community, that this was worth not only supporting but continuing to support.

AM: Is there one thing that sticks in your mind as the biggest challenge you faced? Or was it everything put together?

KLD: Well in the end it comes down to funding and the funding was Commonwealth. The funding was done, for the first nine years anyway, in three triennia. So you got funding for the first triennium. Then you had to convince people, through independent evaluations that this was worth continuing to support.

AM: But the challenge is that these are not short term projects, these are projects that take a long time.

KLD: Absolutely, and this would never have worked if the Head of AEF, Kathe Kirby, had suddenly disappeared. But she was there right from the beginning and she stayed there. This is about building trust in a whole series of communities.

AM: Of course you were also Chair of Asia Australia Mental Health's Advisory Committee. That project obviously broke new ground, spending a lot of time building up the relationships in places like China. What do you think the learnings are from the experiences of the consortium?

KLD: At the time we started in the mental health area, the importance of mental health and well-being was just beginning to be solidified in a number of countries. Our psychiatry department and other colleagues at our mental health services were leading in this area. Other countries who were less advanced were watching this with some interest. We were able to take the innovation and development that was going on in Australia through to these countries. China's a great example. There were people in Beijing who were wanting to move from the old style mental asylum, hospital-based settings that Julia and I saw when we visited there. They were wanting to start and engage with community mental health. They were also people who had long term commitments.

AM: And were they people who looked on Australia as a good partner?

KLD: They looked on anyone as worthwhile initial partners, but then they needed to test out the ground to see if they were genuine. We found that with the Beijing group, and it was later replicated to different extents in other parts of Asia. They saw that we were genuine, we saw that they were genuine. And you know that kind of real bonding and trust actually counts for a lot. In the next couple of decades I believe that sort of thing is going to be extraordinarily important. We ask where the jobs are going to be for all these graduates if everything is going to be done using artificial intelligence and robots. But the things that I'm talking about, the linkages that Asialink was making in a whole series of ways, in a whole range of fields and professions and industries, that's all about people and human trust and understanding and that's got to keep going. The young people who are coming in to universities today, if they are getting skilled in some of the things that Asialink is best at, they're going to have good futures.

AM: I guess the work goes beyond the specifics if you like. It may have been a mental health project but that trust expands to the broader relationship.

KLD: Yes, it does and we found that because when we had more formal events celebrating the partnerships, things that people do in these global interactive environments, both sides bring to the table as it were, a range of people with lots of different involvements and commitments. By itself, a handful of people can't do it when, as you say, the scope of what's involved. A relatively small organisation like Asialink working along with a whole raft of entities in government and industry can actually make a sustained contribution. You actually have a ripple effect, a ripple that has rolled on for nearly three decades. You are absolutely right, one thing leads to another and it does open it up.

AM: It's been such a long period but I wonder if you can draw on one highlight or two of your time. Something that does underpin what you see as the core values and principles of the organisation.

KLD: It's not easy. There are a lot of big things that you could point to and major developments. But one of the things that stands in my memory was when Brendan Nelson was federal Education Minister. He was under pressure and was really wondering about whether he should be continuing to fund the AEF. Kathe Kirby and I went up to talk with him and we showed him some of the things that had been happening and things that we had done. In front of his minders he said, "Kwong I'm going to support this because I can see that this is very important, I've got a son who is part-way in the early years of secondary education, this is exactly what I think he needs." And I thought, look a penny has dropped and something's clicked. That sort of event, that kind of circumstance happens all the time to people who are partnered and connected with Asialink. So in a sense I've sort of answered your question, why have I stayed engaged? There it is.



It’s only through listening to what is happening in the region, having those real conversations with peers in the arts community that we can be sure our shows will resonate.”

SARAH BOND
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL PROJECT SPACE, ASIALINK ARTS, 2017–PRESENT
DIRECTOR, EXHIBITIONS TOURING, 2005–2016

Asialink Arts launched Australia’s first dedicated Asia-focused visual arts touring program in the early nineties supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Exhibitions are curated to be conceptually rigorous with relevance for contemporary Asian and Australian audiences.

A great example of the work we do is *Selectively Revealed*, which toured Seoul, Taichung and Bangkok in 2011–12. This exhibition investigated the blurry line between the public and the private.

The artists were presented as voyeur, muse, subject, performer and social commentator, using a variety of screen-based practices. The exhibition opened on the cusp of the emergence of what we now call “selfie culture” across the globe. It incorporated film, photography, VR and animation, just at the time that animation courses were beginning to be taught in places like Bangkok. It was a transferable idea, so audiences related to it. The amount of energy around the show, audience numbers, the sorts of questions and lively discussion and ongoing positive feedback from our partner museums, told us the show was on the money.

It’s only through listening to what is happening in the region, having those real conversations with peers in the arts community that we can be sure our projects will resonate and enable future planning. For example, we knew from various conversations that more ‘high-tech’ art forms would be well received in Singapore, but maybe not in Pakistan, where there was an interest in contemporary perspectives on paintings. Often the exhibitions toured a number of countries in the region, so the ideas needed to be transferable across the region, adding to the complexity. We need to work with curators who are open to responding and changing their ideas.



We rely on so many partners to move the artworks from door to door. Freight is always a concern. Will the works turn up at the right place at the right time? Will the venue be what we had hoped? From 2006 to 2009 we toured a ceramics exhibition called *The Secret History of Blue and White* through Australia and the region. I had mapped out the show for a gallery in southern China, but when we arrived, we found that the gallery space had changed completely, and another venue was allocated. Instead of being open to the public, as Asialink and the curator had wanted, the artworks were being housed proudly in large glass wall cabinets. We found a creative solution and everyone saved face.

Other times it’s about understanding that no matter how much you plan, things change on the ground resulting in unexpected situations. Just after I first started with Asialink, I went to Kuala Lumpur with a large group show at the National Visual Arts Gallery. We had worked up all elements of the exhibition with the gallery curator, been through due diligence, and expected the process would be straight-forward. However, when we arrived in KL, a new gallery director had been appointed who had concerns about one of the works. He wanted to shut down the entire show on the day of its opening. After much negotiation, and with assistance of the Australian High Commission, the show was able to continue.

The same sort of thing has happened elsewhere. Even when we think we have ticked all the boxes, sent everything for approval beforehand, been careful about the selection of works – it’s not a guarantee that all will be fine when we arrive to set up the work.

So often we go into situations where we don’t know the venue, or we need to read different and often unexpected cultural cues. I think we have been successful because we have learned to let go of certain things and work with the positives. The space is great, the lighting is fantastic, so what if there is something that needs to be accommodated? It’s not about giving up, it’s about opening up. You may sometimes not get to the bottom of it, but there is always a valid reason that things are being done and suggested in a certain way.

We’ve learned to go with that.

ASIALINK ARTS EXHIBITIONS TOURING PROGRAM

OPENING UP THE WORLD

Pip & Pop, *Seeing forever*, Kuandu Biennale, Artist in Wonderland at Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (KdMoFA), Taipei, 2012



The people in these emerging nations are going toward what they want. They have their star to win, and they let nothing stand in their way. It uplifts you to find that spirit.”

WEARY DUNLOP, 1907–1993

IN WEARY’S FOOTSTEPS...

As a prisoner of war, Weary Dunlop was tortured, beaten, and three times sentenced to execution. He spent every day attempting to save the victims of insane cruelty. He wrote in his diary on 9 May 1943 that the sight of men “broken into emaciated, pitiful wrecks” produced in him a “searing hatred” of the Japanese.

Yet he later overcame his hatred. He opened his heart and his household to his old enemies and widened his perspective, even so far as to adopt elements of their philosophy and culture.

He was proactive in promoting Australian–Asian relations, as opposed to showing hate and regret leading from the war. A hallmark of a great leader is the ability to change gears and adapt to changing circumstances. Dunlop went on to heal the wounds of war and rise above the natural inclination to feel hate and regret.

Dunlop was heavily involved in the Colombo Plan, and he taught and undertook surgical work in Thailand, Ceylon and India. Apart from encouraging reconciliation with the Japanese, he promoted the training in Australia of Asian medical personnel and was an active member of the Australian-Asian Association of Victoria.

He did not see his experience in Asia as confirmation of Australia’s old prejudice towards these countries, but as proof of our necessity to understand and engage with them not as colonisers but as colleagues. The war convinced him that our future depended on learning to live in Asia, and he never doubted that we could do this and be enriched by it, and still carry on those best traditions which he exemplified.”

PRIME MINISTER THE HON PAUL KEATING MP
FIRST ASIALINK WEARY DUNLOP LECTURE, 8 DECEMBER 1993

1993



Gabi Hollows AO
Professor Stephen FitzGerald AO
with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai

SIR EDWARD ‘WEARY’ DUNLOP ASIA AWARDS

In 1993, Asialink, in association with the Order of St John of Jerusalem, joined with The University of Melbourne to establish the Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Awards – a trust fund to provide recognition and support for outstanding Australians committed to excellence in both their vocations and their contributions to Australia-Asia relations. Asialink administered the awards under the guidance of an Advisory Board chaired by The Rt Hon Sir Ninian Stephen KG AK GCMG GCVO KBE QC.



SIR EDWARD ‘WEARY’ DUNLOP ASIALINK MEDAL

The inaugural recipient of the Dunlop Asia Medal was Professor Francis Billson AO, an ophthalmic surgeon who dedicated much of his career to alleviating the suffering caused by blindness in Bangladesh and elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia.

DUNLOP MEDALLISTS:

1994	Professor Francis Billson AO
1995	Professor Peter Drysdale AO
1996	Dr George Tippet AM
1997	Professor Walter Taylor OAM
1998	Professor John Pearn AM, RFD
1999	Professor Stephen FitzGerald AO
2000	Bill Armstrong AO
2002	The Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC and Mrs Margaret Whitlam AO
2003	Dr John Yu AC
2004	Dr Harold Clough AO, OBE FTS
2005	Paul Kelly
2006	Sister Mary Theodore OAM
2007	The Hon Tim Fischer AC
2008	Richard A Woolcott AC
2009	Professor Nancy Viviani AO
2010	Professor Ross Garnaut AO
2011	Geraldine Cox AM
2012	The Hon Alexander Downer AC
2013	John So AO, JP
2014	Gabi Hollows AO
2015	Professor The Hon Gareth Evans AC, QC
2016	Professor Heather Jeffery AO
2017	Sir Rod Eddington AO

ASIALINK LECTURE

On 8 December 1993, Prime Minister Paul Keating delivered the inaugural Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Asialink Lecture at the Victorian Arts Centre. The lecture attracted an audience of 325 and was also broadcast into southeast Asia and southern China by Australia Television International. Since this inaugural lecture, the Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Asialink Lecture has taken place annually, consistently attracting high profile speakers, and is the occasion for awarding the Dunlop Asia Medal.



Prime Minister The Hon Paul Keating MP

LECTURES

1993	Inaugural Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Asialink Lecture The Hon Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia
1994	Senator The Hon Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Minister
1995	The Honourable Ung Huot, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Cambodia
1996	HE Mrs Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
1997	The Hon John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia
1998	Professor Wang Gungwu, Director, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore
1999	Lieutenant General John Sanderson, Former Chief of Australian Army
2000	The Hon Malcolm Fraser AC CH, Chairman, CARE Australia, Former Prime Minister of Australia
2002	The Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC, Former Prime Minister of Australia
2003	Ian Macfarlane, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia
2004	Dr Harold Clough, AO, OBE FTS, Founder, Clough Engineering
2005	Paul Kelly, Editor-At-Large, The Australian
2006	Sister Mary Theodore OAM, Australian missionary
2007	The Hon Tim Fischer AC, Former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Minister of Trade and Chairman of Tourism Australia
2008	Richard A Woolcott AC, Former Ambassador and Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
2009	Michael L’Estrange AO, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
2010	Professor Ross Garnaut AO, Economist
2011	The Hon Malcolm Turnbull, Member for Wentworth
2012	Senator The Hon Bob Carr, Minister for Foreign Affairs
2013	The Hon Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of Australia
2014	Terry Moran AC, Former Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
2015	Andrew Mackenzie, CEO, BHP Billiton
2016	Andrew Penn, CEO, Telstra
2017	Shemara Wikramanayake, Head of Macquarie Asset Management, Macquarie Group

ASIALINK FELLOWSHIPS

The Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Fellowships provided up to \$25,000 annually to young Australians committed to making a lasting contribution to Australia-Asia relations. In recent years they provide financial support to participants of the Asialink Leaders Program from the not-for-profit sector. The inaugural 1994 Fellows were Sophie McIntyre, who undertook language study and research into contemporary art post-1980 in Taiwan, and Jenny Ann Lee, who undertook an epidemiological study of smallholder pig production in The Philippines. Subsequent Fellows conducted projects in the fields of environmental science, veterinary science, peace-keeping, public health, journalism and the arts.



Dunlop Fellow, Anna Helme, receives her award from Asialink Patron, The Right Honorable Sir Ninian Stephen, 2008

ASIALINK FELLOWS

1994	Sophie McIntyre, Jenny Ann Lee
1995	David Kilkullen, Peter Bartu
1996	Kate McGregor, Dave Burrows
1997	Robyn Clarke, Sue Downie
1998	Hazel Lang, David O’Brien
1999	John Dore
2001	William Young
2002	Michael Crestani, Lauren Bain
2003	Brendan Ross, Sangeetha Chandra Shekera
2004	Lia Kent, Brendan Boucher
2005	Jeni Crump
2006	Olivia Lavis, Tanzi Smith
2007	Ben Saul, Hugo Moline, Jonathan Ehsani
2008	Lucinda Hartley, Anna Helme
2009	Sam Prince
2010	Benjamin Gilmour
2011	Zena Kells
2012	Martin Potter
2013	Jennifer Jamieson, Kumari Middleton, Stephanie Watson
2014	Julian O’Shea, Jennifer Croes
2015	Tamara Harrison, Louise Partos
2016	Sally Hasler, David Sweeting
2017	Georgie Meagher, Khai Ngo

A BOLD STATEMENT

“A deeper understanding of the underpinning ideas and values of Asian societies will make it much easier for us to handle those occasions in the future when political, strategic or economic tensions arise between Australia and the countries of the region.”

PROFESSOR COLIN BROWN
STUDIES OF ASIA: A STATEMENT FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS, 2000



STUDIES OF ASIA: A STATEMENT FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

AEF developed the first policy position statement to assist Australian schools and education systems to include studies of Asia in the curriculum. Developed in consultation with education systems and a national reference group, and funded by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training, the Statement advocated practical approaches to teaching and learning about Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia from Foundation to Year 12.

The Statement took the position that in all learning areas, including history, geography, literature, The Arts and science, contemporary and historical studies of Asia deserved a status comparable with studies of other nations and cultures traditionally included in the curriculum.

The 1993 Statement was updated four times with the 2012 National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools agreed to by the Secretaries of all federal, state and territory Education Departments. After that time the priority to include studies of Asia in Australian schools was embedded as policy in Australia's first national curriculum and that remains the case today.

1993



ASIALINK LECTURES LAUNCHED

“Our relations with Asia will be the fulcrum of our foreign policy for many years to come and the potential two-way benefits are greater than they have ever been.”

THE HON JOHN HOWARD
PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA
FIFTH ASIALINK LECTURE
5 APRIL 1995

The Asialink Lecture series provided a forum for prominent Asians and Australians to present their visions for the region in the 21st century. In April 1993, the inaugural Asialink Lecture was given at the Victorian Arts Centre by Khun Mechai Viravaidya, a prominent Thai anti-AIDS campaigner and member of three Thai governments. Khun Mechai addressed the topic, “What Australia needs to do to build a basis of trust and credibility in the region.”

The Lectures were designed to encourage and stimulate debate across Australia and the region and provide insights into the views of those in leadership roles from national governments, academia, international organisations, the media and business. Lecturers have included heads of state, chief ministers, foreign ministers and business leaders from Australia and Asia.



KATHE KIRBY

Asia Education Foundation,
Executive Director

1993 — 2017



Globally, there is now such an emphasis on the sort of competencies that young people need to be able to thrive. There's enormous opportunity in that for us to continue our in schools, co-designing programs that work to help our students be resilient in our globally connected and challenging world."

Ali Moore: Kathe Kirby what brought you to Asialink?

Kathe Kirby: An absolute commitment to equipping our children for their future, something I have always been interested in as an educator. What skills, capabilities, and understandings will our young people need to be able to thrive? I saw that Asialink was leading that sort of work.

AM: Did you see a big gap in how we were preparing a younger generation for communicating and dealing with the Asian region?

KK: It was a chasm, not just a gap. There was a big problem in Australian schools. The curriculum in our schools was largely Eurocentric. Students were learning almost nothing about the Asia region. Fewer than six per cent of year 12 students were studying any languages of the region in which we lived.

AM: 25 years later how much has changed? Because developing or changing school curriculum is so difficult.

KK: It’s enormously difficult and actually what it’s about is not just shifting an Australian curriculum, it’s shifting how we see ourselves as Australians, our national identity. There are those people who say our schools need to focus on teaching Western histories and the Anglo-Celtic world because that’s what formed our public institutions. Others point to an Australia that has changed with growing numbers of Asian-Australians. These people also talk about how work for our children will be engaging with the region in which we live, either in, or with, as part of global companies, teams and markets. The tension between these points of view keeps significantly stalling progress.

AM: So what does that mean for a organisation like Asialink and the Asia Education Foundation, do you keep doing what you are doing... redouble your efforts? It would seem that the task just keeps getting bigger and bigger as you go along.

KK: The task has never been easy because what we have had to do is not just change the curriculum but build the capability of teachers. Most teachers in Australian schools did not study anything about the Asian region themselves at school or university, so we have had to implement programs to build their Asia knowledge and skills.

We have had to work closely with school principals, to say kids are going to have to be globally competent, they have to be Asia capable to cut through in the 21st century and beyond.

AM: So working across that full spectrum of change has been a really long term project?

KK: I’m still amazed that we haven’t made that profound change we needed to make. But we have progressed. I think one of the AEF’s greatest achievements was building a commitment for all students to gain Asia literacy through their schooling into Australian national education policy. The 2008 Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians, was agreed to by all states and territories, and was a major policy platform that led to the new national curriculum. That curriculum has three national cross curriculum priorities, and one of them is Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia. So that’s really significant progress at a policy level.

At various times through the life of the AEF, when we have had the level of funding that is required to make the change, we’ve really built up a grass roots movement in schools. In 2000, we had one third of Australian schools signing up to be Access Asia schools. We have also created partnerships with most Australian education peak bodies, from our national curriculum bodies to our national agencies for teachers and principals and subject associations.

The AEF Advisory Board has been simply critical to gaining this support. Since 1992 we have had extraordinarily committed Board members representing the many stakeholders in Australian education - from parents to principals and education systems. We have been fortunate to have three wise and long-term Chairs in Professors Kwong Lee Dow, Brian Caldwell and Field Rickards, all Deans of Education at The University of Melbourne. Tony Mackay is our longest serving Board member. He led all ten AEF national forums that brought together educators from across Australia to build that Asia literacy movement.

In 2008, we worked with the business community to establish the Business Alliance for Asia Literacy. Together we crafted a compelling case for school leaders and government, arguing the absolute necessity for why young Australians needed to have intercultural understanding, Asian languages and really just basic knowledge about the region in which we all live.

Actually we have never been better placed than where we are right now. In 2018 the OECD PISA international tests of the effectiveness of school systems are going to be testing for global competence for the first time, alongside literacy, numeracy and science. Well, the AEF has been driving that global competence agenda for the last 25 years. That’s really working for us.

We have been able to build a movement. A movement that has included teachers, principals and parents. We’ve been influential with government and acknowledged by the entire education community. We now have favourable government policy and much progress in building a curriculum that is definitely more fit for the future.

AM: And that’s really, I guess, how the global context of education has changed and made what you do now so incredibly relevant and in some ways more relevant to people that it was 25 years ago.

KK: It’s definitely more palpably relevant now because people can now see the rise of Asia. It’s very difficult to ignore that.

AM: Is it easy? I mean if a principal comes to you and says I want an Asia-capable student base. A lot of people might be daunted by the prospect, but is it easy with the right support and the right tools?

KK: About 2000 Australian principals have worked with us to do just that. So yes I think it’s absolutely achievable. One of the first things a school might do is audit what they are already doing. Do they have existing strengths in this area? Are there teachers here who have experience in Asia, who have undertaken Asian studies? How can we partner with our community and with business? The Australian Curriculum absolutely supports the integration of knowledge and content about Asia – right across the curriculum.

Educators can now see massive shifts in curriculum priorities that have been stimulated and driven by new technologies, new economies, and now pressing global issues like the environment, like people movement, like security. Our kids are going to need to be able to solve the pressing global issues of our time. They are going to have to have new solutions to be able to do that, and they are not going to be able to do that in isolation. The one thing that we know is that to solve these issues they are going to have to collaborate, with people from different cultures, to co-create and co-design solutions.

AM: And also compete. The rest of the world is cottoning on to this, education systems globally are changing.

KK: Absolutely, it’s a time of massive change in education and many countries are recognising that young people need to know the world and to be able to successfully fit in. If you look at Singapore, for example, with one of the highest performing education systems in the world. Global awareness is one of their top education goals.

AM: What has been your biggest challenge?

KK: To bring about this sort of reform in schools, you need long term bipartisan political leadership and consistency of funding.

When the Asia Education Foundation started 25 years ago around six per cent of young people studied an Asian language in year 12. There was about eight years of huge investment in the mid 90s to improve that figure. During that time we managed to double the number of young people studying an Asian language in our schools. But then the government changed, the policy changed, and funding dropped away dramatically. Nothing much happened for the next eight years, and we lost a decade’s worth of work. We find ourselves today in much the same position we were in right back in 1993 because there are still only six per cent of young Australians studying an Asian language in year 12.

AM: And the future for the Asia Education Foundation?

KK: We are not equipping kids for a long term future like we did in 1993, we are equipping them for now. Globally, there is such an emphasis on the sort of competencies that young people need to be able to thrive today. There’s enormous opportunity for us to continue our work in schools, co-designing with schools programs that help our students thrive and be resilient in our globally connected and challenging world.



Australian teacher visits a Chinese elementary school on an AEF Study Tour, 1999

EXPERIENCE, THEN TEACH

Being immersed in Singapore and Shanghai schools allowed me to appreciate the strong educational narrative behind each school.

As I identified similarities with our Australian schools, I developed a concept for how our classrooms could connect and collaborate with each other.”

HELEN JAMIESON

PRINCIPAL, CORINDA STATE HIGH SCHOOL, QUEENSLAND
PARTICIPANT, WORLD CLASS EDUCATION STUDY TOUR, 2017

In-country experience for educators facilitates better learning outcomes. AEF has been running in-country professional development in Asia for Australian school educators since 1993. By 2017 AEF had sent 4000 educators to 10 countries in the Asian region on programs tailored to support Australian curriculum and present a contemporary view of the countries visited. Programs are developed in partnership with Australian and Asian education systems, professional teacher associations and various education institutions across Australia.

AEF offered its first offshore program in June 1993, sending 20 Australian educators to participate in the Korea Foundation’s Korean Studies Workshop Program in South Korea. For the first time Australian teachers gained first-hand knowledge to inform the teaching of Korea in Australian schools. 500 Australian educators have since participated in this highly-acclaimed annual study program to Korea.

Study tour programs take teachers to different places physically, but also in their thinking. Teachers can read and watch videos about places, but it’s only when they go and experience them for themselves that they can share accurate and authentic information with their students and colleagues.”

SUPREYA BLYTH

AEF IN-COUNTRY STUDY PROGRAMS MANAGER
2000 – PRESENT

TAKING TEACHERS ABROAD

Of course, travel is very accessible now. You can go anywhere using online information and web bookings. It’s the professional learning programs that the AEF offers – the high-level meetings, academic lectures and the school visits – that are very special for school educators. The programs are always about building deeper understanding of a particular place in Asia and making connections to the local school systems. Each program is led by someone with expert knowledge of the target country and also a strong understanding of the Australian school system and curriculum. There is often a strong academic component to the study tour, with lectures delivered by eminent professors and other experts.

Australian Embassies and High Commissions are important for the establishment and running of each tour. They are always helpful with high-level linkages, introducing us to relevant government education departments and respected universities to partner on the delivery of lectures and workshops. Originally the programs were funded by the Commonwealth Government, but over time the programs have been funded by a number of state education jurisdictions and peak teacher professional bodies - as well as by the participants’ themselves. And they always occur during teachers’ school holidays.



We work in partnership with education organisations to tailor in-country programs to meet their objectives. For example, we ran a special history program to China commissioned by The History Teachers Association of Australia, and last year we were funded by the Queensland Department of Education and Training to take their Director General and twenty leading school principals to Shanghai and Singapore to study the high performing education systems there.

We also work with the Confucius Institute at The University of Melbourne to offer a study program associated with a prominent school principal forum in Hangzhou, China and a formal professional learning course in Nanjing. Out of that partnership, we are now running study tours for Chinese educators to Australia, including one for early childhood educators and another for English language teachers.

It’s hard to teach about a country or culture if you don’t know much about it. AEF study programs aim to fill that gap for Australian educators.

1994

CREATIVE NATION: THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CULTURAL POLICY

As an Australian cultural policy document, Prime Minister Keating’s Creative Nation was a game changer in the way Australians saw themselves and the arts. The cultural policy was also an economic policy. The document argued that culture creates wealth and “is a valuable export in itself and an essential accompaniment to the export of other commodities. It attracts tourists and students. It is essential to our economic success.”

Australian national identity could no longer be rigidly defined through a British colonial past. Culture was now an economic concern and the arts were for all Australians.

Perceptions of Australian identity had been gradually shifting over two decades prior to publication of Creative Nation. Significant milestones prompting new ways of thinking included the introduction of the Colombo Plan in the 1950s (bringing many Asian students to Australia), the dismantling of the White Australia Policy (particularly by the Holt and Fraser Governments), the emergence of the term ‘multiculturalism’ in 1973 (under Labor) and the growing public discussion about the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in our historical narrative.

Creative Nation reflected those shifts. The opening preamble to the document described Australian culture as “now an exotic hybrid,” and Creative Nation made repeated reference to the importance of Indigenous and migrant cultures in creating a national cultural identity.

The Keating policy document sought to fund cultural projects that represented “the nation’s diversity.” Creative Nation helped to change the very language used to talk about Australia, its culture, its artistic expressions. It gave an alternative and compelling narrative of Australian identity, one which sought to include non-white Australians in the national project.

Keating’s passionate advocacy of his vision, however, was almost counterproductive in certain sections of the Australian electorate. In a number of cases the causes he supported seem to have slipped backwards following the electoral defeat of his government.

Deirdre Feeney, *I thought I saw you there again* (detail) 2008, glass and digital projection, 24.4 x 18.4 x 30 cm, *White Hot: Contemporary Australian Glass* touring exhibition 2008

Creative Nation helped to change the very language used to talk about Australia, its culture, its artistic expressions. It gave an alternative and compelling narrative of Australian identity, one which sought to include non-white Australians in the national project.



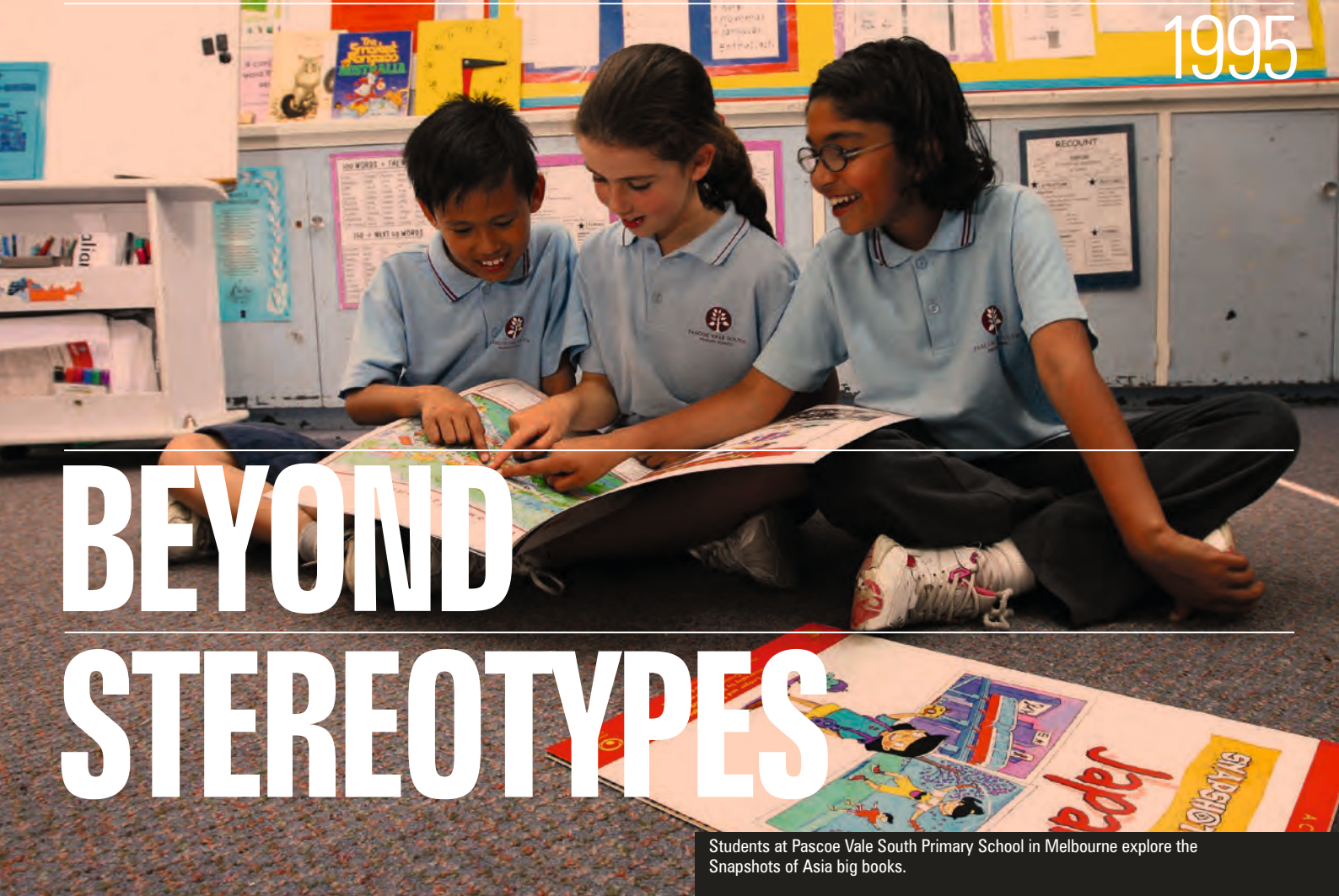
GUIDING A NEW GENERATION
THE ASIALINK CIRCLE



Launched in November 1994 by Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett AC (pictured), the Asialink Circle was a dynamic organisation of Asia-focused young professionals and tertiary students committed to using and improving their Asia skills. Circle members represented key organisations within the business, education and cultural communities across Australia and Asia, and were linked to the issues, information and leaders of the Asian region. Membership offered bi-monthly forums providing information and guidance on opportunities and careers in the region; access to the Asialink Circle database of young Asia-skilled Australians within Australia and the region; networking opportunities; and opportunities to hear eminent speakers from the region and to meet government, corporate, community and academic leaders.

The foundation of the Asialink Circle represents a generational change, which will contribute significantly to the building of a closer relationship between Australia and Asia. We will educate a new generation of leaders and skilled specialists with a regional culture and marshal them as Australia’s Asia force.”

THE HON JEFF KENNETT AC
PREMIER OF VICTORIA, 1994



BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Students at Pascoe Vale South Primary School in Melbourne explore the Snapshots of Asia big books.

ACCESS ASIA SERIES

An early audit by AEF showed that most existing Asia-related curriculum resources were limited to stereotypical topics like origami, emperors and colonial history.

The Access Asia series of 85 books, CDs and websites for primary and secondary school students and their teachers have received 17 national awards and sold more than 100,000 copies nationwide.

Resources were developed and published by Curriculum Corporation for primary and secondary school students to fill the huge gap in Asia-focused education materials in the market.

The most popular title in the Access Asia series was Snapshots of Asia, a set of nine big books for children in their early years of schooling. Each book focused on the life of children living in a different Asian country and also helped children build their literacy skills through Asian themes.

Most titles in the Access Asia series were accompanied by a national teacher professional learning program, to enable teachers to explore how to integrate the resource into classroom practice. AEF was an early innovator, providing digital tools to support teachers introducing Asia-focused content in their classrooms. AEF’s first website went live in 1998, and in 1999 Asia Ednet was launched, becoming one of Australia’s first online networks of teachers.

The Access Asia series built on early work by Asialink in partnership with Macmillan Education Australia. The Ticket to Asia primary school curriculum materials were published in 1993 and included teacher resource books on China, Japan, Indonesia, India and Korea accompanied by a story book that followed Australian children visiting each of these countries.

In 2015 AEF launched a vast new website containing thousands of curriculum resources aligned to support teaching of the new national Australian Curriculum. Resources are searchable by year level, subject and country and support the Curriculum’s cross-curricula priority of Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia.



... removing attitudinal and perceptual impediments to exports by equipping firms with future employees for whom the countries, languages and cultures of the region are not foreign, but in fact, familiar... is critical to Australia securing its economic future in the region and in the world."

ASIAN LANGUAGES AND AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE, COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS, 1994

1995

NATIONAL ASIAN LANGUAGES AND STUDIES IN SCHOOLS

The National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools strategy was the first national attempt to establish the study of Asian languages and cultures in the Australian school education system. It was based on the recommendations of a report commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments in December 1992, *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* (1994). The report revealed that Australians were not learning languages fast enough to fill the demand in the community for 'Asia-literate' Australians.

In response to the Report, the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools strategy (or NALSAS for short) was developed in 1994, to be implemented over the next ten years, with the aim of introducing Asian languages and studies in all school systems. The strategy aimed to improve Australia's capacity and preparedness to interact internationally, in particular, with key Asian countries. Four key languages and cultures were targeted, in line with regional economic forecasting made by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. These were Japanese, Indonesian, Korean and Mandarin.

NALSAS was introduced in 1995 by the Keating Government and supported by the Howard Government until 2002.

AN ASIA LITERATE AUSTRALIA



THE AUSTRALIA— ASIA PERCEPTIONS PROJECT

The Perceptions Project, which examined the role of values in Australia-Asia relations, was proposed by Stuart Harris (Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade under the Labour Government) and its report launched by Coalition Foreign Minister Downer in 1996. A national project of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, it was supported in part by an Australian Research Council grant.

1996

Asialink Patron, Professor Wang Gungwu AO CBE and The Hon Alexander Downer MP

Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser, *Colour Blinded* Installation, lightjet prints from orthochromatic film negative, golliwog dolls, polystyrene and perspex cubes, low-pressure sodium lamps, video with sound, dimensions variable, *Shadowlife*, touring exhibition, 2012

Noting earlier significant reports had examined Australia’s economic and strategic challenges, Harris urged an investigation into our cultural and historical positioning in the Asian region. The resulting project, run over three years, tackled the way differences in values and world view cause misunderstanding and sometimes tension in Australian interaction with Asian societies.

Led by ANU’s Professor Anthony Milner, and involving over 100 researchers, the project produced three volumes with Oxford University Press and an ABC radio series. Professor Milner summarised the findings in the Academy’s Cunningham Lecture in 1996.

The research involved “comparative perceptions studies” – which identified and examined the significance of specific master ideas operating in Australia and the different countries of the region. Intensive workshops – bringing together key analysts from Australia and Asian countries – examined conflicting values and perceptions in such critical areas as business ethics, education, labour relations, expectations of government, national security, the role of media, human rights and democracy. The resulting publications, discussed widely in the media and public seminars, drew attention not only to differences between Australia and Asian societies, but also to radical variation between Asian societies – underlining the cultural complexity of the region.

Importantly the project helped identify the structure of ideas and values that underpins Australian approaches to the world. Australia’s largely liberal identity, it argued, was likely to become sharper as Australians worked more closely with Asian societies – and this could become an obstacle in our engagement with Asia.

The project had an influence on a range of Asialink endeavours, including education, diplomacy, leadership and business programs.

COMPARING PERCEPTIONS

THE ENTIRE PROJECT CHALLENGED THE PREVAILING, COMFORTABLE ASSUMPTION OF THE TIME – THAT AS CIVILISATIONS MODERNISE THERE WOULD BE A CONVERGENCE OF VALUES AND CONCEPTUAL SYSTEMS.

THE PROJECT QUESTIONED THE PREDICTION THAT WESTERN WORLD VIEWS WOULD BECOME THE NORM, FACILITATING A COMPARATIVELY RELAXED INTEGRATION FOR AUSTRALIA WITH THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION.

ASIALINK: SHAPING THE FUTURE. AN UNCOMMON HISTORY.



The Asialink Leaders Program was launched in 1996 with ten participants, eight from the business community, one from the Arts sector and one representing The University of Melbourne. Then called the Asialink Dunlop Leadership Program, the program was inspired by the philosophy and achievements of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop. Drawing on the model of Victoria's highly esteemed Williamson Community Leadership Program, the year-long, part-time program featured presentations from eminent Asia scholars and public intellectuals and prominent business and community leaders.

1996

EQUIPPING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

The inaugural Leaders Program opened with a week-long retreat at the Australian National University. Led by Professor Tony Milner, then Dean of the Faculty of Asian Studies, the retreat was based on the Australian-Asian Perceptions Project. Participants were exposed to the expertise of ANU Asia experts, including Professors Ross Garnaut and Peter Drysdale, and the insight and experience of senior government members and Ambassadors from Australia, Asia and the USA. The retreat also drew on the resources of the national capital with a visit to Parliament House and the National Gallery. Professor David Williams, Director of the School of Art at ANU and Carrillo Gantner addressed the participants on the complex issues involved in the exchange of art and culture in the region. More than twenty years on, the Canberra Retreat (now Canberra Intensive) remains a highlight for Asialink Leaders program participants, continually evolving to address new issues. Leadership program participants meet with politicians, ambassadors, academics, public sector leaders, journalists and heads of peak bodies, intensely discussing and debating policy issues and exploring the making of Asia-focused policy in our national capital.

Another enduring and valued feature of the annual program is the workplace project. The project allows the participants to put the knowledge and skills learned during the program into practice in their workplaces. By 2002, Asialink had an expanding national footprint and the program launched in Sydney that year. 2013 saw the program further expand to include Brisbane with a total of around 60 emerging leaders participating in the program annually. The Levi Strauss Foundation provided scholarships for participants from the not-for-profit sector from 2001–2004 and the Ian Potter Foundation provided part scholarships for 66 participants from across all sectors in 2008–2010.

Numerous evaluations of the program stressed the value of cross sectoral participation. Alumni reflected on the way that people from other sectors so often approached problems in unexpected and different ways, giving them an expanded repertoire to draw on and help solve complex problems back in the workplace. In 2017, the alumni has grown to 800, many of whom are now in very senior positions and remain connected with each other and Asialink. The stellar list of high profile national and international speakers that the program continues to attract is testament to how highly the program is viewed in the Australian community.



LINDLEY EDWARDS

CEO, AFG VG GROUP,
PROGRAM MENTOR AND ASIALINK
BOARD DIRECTOR

I was attracted to the depth and breadth of Asialink expertise, experience and its approach; based in scholarship, its focus on practical application. My engagement with Asialink came at a time when I had been working with Asian investors in the region and I realised that I needed some different skills to navigate and understand cultural differences.

I was eventually asked to facilitate aspects of the program, and so began an incredible adventure that meant that not only did I get to meet interesting emerging leaders but also to greatly expand my own ideas and knowledge. I found myself in a symbiotic relationship, the best kind – I was contributing and leading and at the same time learning and growing.

Asialink has been an incredibly important influence for me and helped me navigate cross border transactions and relationships with more intelligence, flair and wisdom.

It was a real pleasure to witness our participants as they began to use the knowledge and skills from the program to make decisions, take action and start to unlock their creativity and potential. The great thing about a program with such history is to be in a position to view the early versions of our participants and then be able to see them as their more mature selves, recognised externally as key experts and influencers in their field.

In 2005, I moved from facilitating the leadership program to being an Asialink Board Director. I see that from the Board's perspective I bring insights on what it is to be an SME involved in the region, facilitating business relationships and transactions. I particularly like the way in which Asialink marries academic content with practical application. Asialink is not just about the idea or the concept or a person talking, it's about mobilising things to happen, taking action and supporting change.

Asialink's real strength lies in its long term relationships in the region built by everyone at Asialink across all its programs areas and in so many different ways that include thought leadership, training programs, regional dialogues and delegations, utilising the full array of soft diplomacy tools.



DORJEE SUN

DIRECTOR OF WHO GIVES, CARBON AGRO,
AND CARBON CONSERVATION.
LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, 2002

In 2002 I was 24, very young and starting a new technology company in Melbourne. I had just moved from Sydney and I was alone. Asialink and the Leaders Program provided me with a great community of phenomenal friends, valuable lessons on leadership and a network of mentors who have guided me for years. Many remain dear friends today some 15 years later. I was introduced to so many luminaries, from Alexander Downer to Kevin Rudd, especially at the Canberra retreat. Just truly great people both in my program and guiding the program.

My career has been a series of startups, and my diverse group of friends and mentors have aided my various endeavours enormously. In fact I still often will ask for advice and seek out my Asialink friends and contacts. A particularly memorable lasting benefit was that Asialink nominated me for an Australian satellite event for the World Economic Forum event at Hayman Island in 2003 and today I am a regular WEF participant as a Young Global Leader.

In 2009, a particular thrill was to be nominated by my peers to receive one of two inaugural Leaders Alumni Awards for my carbon conservation work, particularly in Indonesia.

I eventually decided to move from Melbourne to Asia, so the Asialink Leaders program and ongoing contact was a great preparatory platform. Living in Singapore, I have spoken at events in Asialink and in the region. One memorable event was the Generation 21: Asia-Pacific New Leaders' Dialogue in Jakarta. I was one of 56 young leaders from across the region who were brought together with some of the biggest names in politics, business and academia. The Dialogue was televised on an Indonesian network to millions of viewers. It was amazing.

On return visits to Australia, I attend alumni functions and just visited old friends and staff at the brilliant Asialink Centre at the University of Melbourne.

Asia literacy is critical. From history to culture to economics to networks to languages, Asialink is this bridge for young Australians to help access this critical knowledge and network. Without this diversity Australia is at a loss – and Asialink adds this value to our society, country and business community.



DEAN SMITH

SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA
LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, 2005

After a very successful and fulfilling decade working in politics in a range of positions, including chief of staff in the Howard government, I took up a position in a large multinational insurance company. But by 2005, I was feeling constrained and my curiosity wasn't being satisfied. I had a long-term interest in Asia and Asian matters. I studied Asian politics at university and went to Indonesia in the early 1980s, which was quite unusual at the time. It was almost by chance that I discovered an ad in the Australian Financial Review for the Asialink Leaders Program.

When we first gathered as a group it was clear that there were so many bright and accomplished people – and I felt a bit out of my depth. Then a pattern started to emerge. We all had a deep interest in the countries and cultures of Asia and each of us were in some way asking what we could be doing with our lives that would give us greater purpose.

I learned that the Asialink program was not about how to lead others; rather it was giving us the skills to lead ourselves. Conversations were about authenticity and values and the multiple layers of meaning in dealing with Asia. People like Professor Tony Milner helped us to see that what we thought were obvious answers to our questions were often only the beginnings of our understanding. We learned to unveil what we were seeing and hearing, to understand that there were many perspectives; and that the answers could only be found by considering the impacts of these perspectives. Sometimes we found that we may not ever arrive at a final answer, only a realisation of the complexity of the perceptions that are present.

The Asialink Leaders program has been an important part of my career trajectory. I went on to a much more fulfilling role with SingTel Optus, and then to my present role representing my West Australian electorate in the Australian Parliament.

Ultimately the program helped me be comfortable with uncertainty and to trust and embrace my own judgement when it comes to making decisions that may seem a little unusual or at times unpopular with Australian colleagues.



MAHA SUKKAR

LEADING SENIOR CONSTABLE, VICTORIA POLICE
LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, 2008

Back in Lebanon I had a career as a graphic designer, and I was a volunteer ambulance paramedic during the war there. After migrating to Australia I decided that I wanted to give something back to my new country, so I joined the Victorian Police.

About three years into the job I was encouraged by some of my friends to apply for the Asialink Leaders program. Surprisingly I was accepted with a half scholarship from the Ian Potter Foundation. The Chief Commissioner at the time, Christine Nixon, agreed to pay the other half.

It was intimidating at first. I was sitting alongside such a high calibre of people on the program, so I just sat in the back of the room not saying anything, fulfilling all the stereotypes of a Muslim Middle Eastern woman, I suppose.

We spent three days learning about cultural norms and values and negotiating difference; how to adapt our own behaviours to achieve our goals in Asian markets and with people from Asian backgrounds. I realised that I was already doing that as a migrant; I was adapting my behaviour as an officer in an Australian organisation. The awareness was definitely unexpected, but it started to empower me – I did have something to contribute.

The Asialink program's workplace project was my beginning point. I was inspired by the ways that my fellow participants were helping take their corporations and organisations into Asia. I thought – 'if these corporations from the big end of town are seeing the value of working cross-culturally, why couldn't the police force improve on what it was doing?' I developed a project supporting police to deal with cultural difference in our community. I wasn't working in the police's multicultural unit at the time, but I built up the courage to take my project to the boss of the unit. They loved it and fairly quickly gave me a job there. I ended up staying for ten years.

I was recently inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll for Women for my work in multicultural policing, most particularly in the areas of forced marriages and family violence. We have introduced a new approach to these very complex issues, listening and working collaboratively with all of the people involved. The Asialink Leaders Program contributed 100% to my award.



ROSS MILLER

GENERAL MANAGER, ST GEORGE BANK
LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, 2009

In 2009 the timing was perfect for me as a participant. St. George Bank had merged with Westpac in December 2008, and as the new Head of Human Resources for a 25,000-strong workforce that was vastly changed, I saw the huge commercial and employment opportunity that the merger presented for Australia and our region. It so happened that Westpac had been focusing on building cultural competency within its workforce, with a distinct focus on Asia. St George Bank, by comparison, was more 'local' in outlook and still had a way to go to match Westpac's understanding of the importance of Asia to the Australian financial services market.

As an Asialink Leaders Program participant, I frequently felt like I was out of my comfort zone, but in a positive way. A real highlight was comparing the different ways artists bring landscapes to life in their work – kind of a window to see their different cultural values through.

My biggest personal 'light bulb' moment from the program (which continues to this day) was coming to the understanding of the business opportunities brought by our Asian-Australian population. The prevailing view – that Australia needed to look off-shore to benefit from the Asian economic boom – was transformed for me as I started to see the importance of our new migrant market and the growing dependency on Asia for many of our small-to-medium enterprise and commercial customers. I came to realise very quickly that in my career in finance, understanding different cultural and socio-economic contexts is an absolute imperative.

I draw on my experience all the time, and now on reflection more than a decade later, it has been particularly beneficial for me as General Manager at St George Bank. I have honed my ability to see how these nuances play out in communities, particularly in south west and western Sydney.

On a personal level, and much closer to home, I had hoped that the program would help me understand my own son; the culture, traditions, customs that are part of his story. My experience was an incredibly significant life moment for me and my family in that it helped us all comprehend his cultural heritage, and that of his birth family.



CLAUDINE OGILVIE

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, JETSTAR
LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, 2012

In 2012 I was managing the Consumer Industrial Markets practice at KPMG, an interesting and dynamic portfolio that ranged from agribusiness, retailing and automotive businesses. The work was very Asia focused and I spent over a year working in China, but the more time I spent working in the region, the more I realised what I didn't know.

So when somebody told me I should apply for the Asialink Leaders Program I did, the fit was right for me at that stage in my career.

There were so many impactful moments. The art challenge, helping us understand the ways various cultures perceive and portray similar landscapes and what is appreciated and valued in various cultures, was very powerful. There were many different and challenging practical exercises like that helping us understand and decipher different perceptions of the same situation. We also prepared and rehearsed difficult conversations that we might have with people in our multicultural and transnational teams. In theory we often know what we should say and do, but when under pressure it's easy to revert to previously held habits and approaches that are simply not effective. The structured role plays allowed us to practice more constructive conversations in a supportive and safe environment.

Previously most of my professional development was with people in similar fields as myself. Generally my academic and professional training has been founded on a particular framework for thinking, with a specific way of approaching complex issues. The Asialink Leaders program was so different, I found myself in the same room as a dancer, scientists, bankers, human rights lawyers, NGO directors, doctors, school educators and small business owners, as well as professional service people like myself. Such an interesting and intelligent group, and people I would not normally have had the opportunity to meet. They shared unique ways of approaching different and difficult situations. I keep in touch with many of them and other program alumni, a rich source of ongoing learning and growth.

I would say overall the program provided brilliant foundations that drive me to continue to challenge and apply so many facets of the program in both my professional and personal life.

PAULINE HANSON, AUSTRALIA AS “US DEPUTY SHERIFF” AND EAST TIMOR

1996 saw the meteoric rise of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party. In her maiden speech she targeted Asians as the source of her immigration anxiety, with a warning – “I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians.”

An AC Nielsen-McNair poll questioned 200 business leaders across the region to gauge Asian leaders’ attitudes to Ms Hanson. 30 per cent of Malaysians interviewed said the Hanson agenda had been a negative influence on their attitudes towards Australia as a “very favourable” business partner. Comments such as “the racist problem now makes people think twice about going there” raised concerns for tourism and the education markets. In 1998, the South China Morning Post wrote: “The sudden resurgence of support for Australia’s obnoxious One Nation Party is disheartening but should not come as a surprise. In times of economic difficulty, populist calls by such as One Nation leader Pauline Hanson for curbs on immigration, are always vote-winners.”

In 1999 – faced with the crisis in East Timor – Australia organised and led the International Force East Timor (INTERFET), a multinational peacemaking taskforce assigned to East Timor from 1999–2000. The taskforce was established in accordance with United Nations resolutions to address the humanitarian and security crisis on the island until the arrival of UN peacekeepers. The campaign in East Timor understandably strained relations with Jakarta, but Australia was successful in assembling a multi-national force, including Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea.

Also in 1999, a journalist in the Bulletin magazine suggested that the Prime Minister saw Australia as a “deputy sheriff” for US security interests in Asia. The phrase aroused suspicion in influential quarters in Indonesia. It also provoked a snappy response from then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir: “If you take the position of being a deputy sheriff to America, you cannot very well be accepted by the countries of this region,” Mahathir said.

Malaysian Deputy Defence Minister Shafie Apdal added at a summit of Islamic nations in Malaysia. “I suppose America wants a puppet of its own in this region that they can trust who will do whatever they wish. America can appoint anyone to be their representative or their agent, or their puppet in this region, but we will never recognise them.”

The Coalition government worked hard to improve relations with the region in the following years. In 2005 the Government signed ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (but on condition that it had no bearing on bilateral defence agreements). In that year Prime Minister Howard and Foreign Minister Downer negotiated Australia’s entry into the East Asia Summit as a founding member. Although India and New Zealand also joined the Southeast and East Asian countries, the United States was not a member.

If you take the position of being a deputy sheriff to America, you cannot very well be accepted by the countries of this region.”
MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER MAHATHIR, 1999

DIFFICULT RELATION— SHIPS

LINKING LATITUDES

In July 1997 AEF launched its first international conference for school educators – Linking Latitudes: Symposium and Fieldwork Program in Bali and Indonesia, in partnership with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture.

The three-day symposium challenged participants to consider issues affecting Indonesia. 10 four-day fieldwork programs across Indonesia followed, offering teachers the opportunity to focus intensively on curriculum interests, such as endangered species in Kalimantan, the history of Jakarta, or the arts of Bali.

Linking Latitudes conferences and field work programs subsequently took place in China 2001, Vietnam 2004 and India in 2007. Each attracted over 350 Australian teachers and principals. Linking Latitudes China was the largest conference of Australians ever held in China at that time.



CORPORATE TRAINING

1997

Asialink commenced training programs to build Asia capabilities for corporate Australia in 1999, delivering over 50 tailor-made cultural intelligence and country specific training sessions to more than 1000 employees using its network of business, government and university experts. Corporate training programs were delivered to businesses including Hella Asia Pacific, Shell Australia and Bonlac Foods.



MOBILISING ASIA SKILLS

1999

The inaugural Asialink Circle careers conference Mobilising Asia Skills – Your Investment in the Future attracted 750 Asia focused young delegates.

The program featured speakers from across all sectors of Australian professional life from IT to banking and the arts, who gave delegates information on career opportunities and strategies to market their Asia skills. The Federal Minister for Sport and Tourism, The Hon Andrew Thompson MP, delivered the keynote closing address, inspiring delegates with his own experience of Japan.

CREATING THE FUTURE

1999

Australian and Japanese curators have never had a closer professional relationship than now, working together very easily on all sorts of exhibition and exchange projects. These relationships are growing before our eyes. They range from the largest, most prestigious institutions working together on very experimental and often risky programs to very small artist-run projects."

DR ALISON CARROLL
FOUNDATION DIRECTOR, ASIALINK ARTS

The inaugural Asialink Arts National Forum plotted future directions for Asia-Australia relations in cultural exchange. Sixty of Australia's leading arts practitioners who worked in the Asian region attended the forum held at The University of Melbourne. The Forum invited practitioners from diverse art forms across Australia and the region to share and discuss contemporary trends and issues affecting regional arts practice.

The 2005 Forum, *Sun Rising: Japanese Culture Today*, brought together leading arts practitioners from Japan and Australia, with sessions led by Akiko Miki, Chief Curator, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, performing arts authority Tadashi Uchino of the University of Tokyo and Stephanie Johnston, publisher, Wakefield Press.

Japan was again a focus of the 2008 Forum, *Hello Tokyo*, held in collaboration with the Sydney Biennale.

The *Indonesia Calling* Forum in 2008 on Indonesian visual arts, performing arts and literature brought together leading speakers and practitioners from Indonesia and Australia focused on contemporary practice, including discussion on the developments leading to the creation of contemporary culture in Indonesia.

Last held in 2009, Forum themes have encompassed community arts, international residencies, cross-cultural collaboration and specific country engagements with China, Japan, Korea and Indonesia.

Rosemary Miller, Director Salamanca Arts Centre, Tasmania, speaking at the 2006 National Arts Forum 'Blind Dates & Foreign Affairs'.

PAUL BRASHER

Asialink, Board Member

1997 — 2001

// The people at Asialink understood the region and they could convey it. They could act as intermediaries to allow us to actually give a much more realistic perspective to our clients and the people we deal with... Asialink makes people conscious of what's going on and capable of dealing with the Asian region."



Ali Moore: You were managing partner at Price Waterhouse when you became a board member of Asialink in the mid-90s and also that’s when the company became one of the earliest corporate sponsors of the organisation. For you, personally, why get involved, why was it important?

Paul Brasher: It was important to me personally because my work meant that I was travelling quite a lot, spending time in Asia, working on stints in Hong Kong and elsewhere. From a company point of view we had a federation of Price Waterhouse firms throughout the Asian region, doing business with them on a regular basis. We needed to be able to work with each of the Asian firms throughout the region. We also had clients working up there and looking for opportunities. We were trying to form relationships so there was this constant, I am not sure what the right word is, perhaps intermingling of things that meant that Asia was really important to us as a firm and to me individually.

AM: And what were you seeing that you thought Asialink could play a role in? The region was very important, what were you seeing about how Asialink might help?

PB: If I had to boil it down, it would be a sense of reality. At the time I think people’s views, including some of our own in the firm, were a bit naive about Asia. To begin with, people thought that Asia was just a single entity, when in fact Asia is obviously a number of different cultures and countries. Secondly I think there was this unbridled optimism probably in the late 80s early 90s that then turned into a kind of deep pessimism. I think both of those feelings were unrealistic. Let me explain that, the unbridled optimism was around this theory that the population base is so great that if you just went up there, sheer numbers would guarantee your success.

AM: That was always the saying, one sale to the Chinese and you were set for life.

PB: Yes, one can of Fosters every year to each Chinese person and you could forget about the rest of the world. Of course things didn’t quite work out that way.

So people had problems with the expectation they had of the markets. They had problems with relationships, they didn’t understand how to go about developing them, and then this led probably more towards the pessimism, often based on mistrust and lack of understanding of how things worked very differently in the region. So it did swing between this massive optimism to pessimism – both unrealistic – and we felt that Asialink presented a much more realistic view of the world. The people at Asialink understood the region and they could convey it. They could act as intermediaries to allow us to actually give a much more realistic perspective to our clients and the people we deal with.

AM: Is that why the company was involved? Why Price Waterhouse thought that it was something worth putting some money into?

PB: Pretty much, as I said, the fact that we do operate throughout the region. I still use the word “we” and I’ve been gone now for a number of years, but PwC operated throughout the region so we as a firm needed to have that understanding. Beyond that our people were going up there on a regular basis to different countries throughout the region. We were a highly skilled professional services firm. There were big opportunities with our different firms throughout the region and we needed to bring those things together.

There was also a staff training and education element to it. We put some of our best people through different Asialink courses, the leadership program. Some of our people who did that are now partners in the firm. It was about giving them a greater ability to operate throughout the Asian region. Finally you couldn’t understate how much we needed to work with our clients as they went into the region. So it was a combination of things.

AM: Do you think Asialink met the goals? I don’t know what success looks like for an organisation like Asialink. What would you say it looks like and did it meet the goals?

PB: Well I think it’s always difficult to know to whom to attribute success or failure, so you know Asialink could do everything possible and still we wouldn’t achieve all the goals I mentioned. I think we achieved most of them. In terms of education, did a lot of our good people become educated? Yes, that was a measurement, and it was certainly the case. And in terms of just relationships and knowledge of the region, for some of our key senior people I think they achieved that. Were they translatable to absolutely clear results of financial deals? I couldn’t say they were, but on reflection that was never going to be the measure of success.

AM: Was it more about perhaps changing a culture within the company? If your senior leaders, and your people who were dealing with the region, knew more, knew more about how to approach it, what to expect, that changed the thinking.

PB: Yes I think that’s probably right, and I think that Australia was changing at the same time. I think it probably did change the thinking within the company.

We used to find that our young graduates would join us and they would work for two to three years and then go overseas and it would always be to London or to New York. That’s just the way it was. I think what we were trying to say to people was ‘just think about this, we’re involved as a firm, you should think about working in Asia, different parts of Asia’. And a number did, probably not as many as I would have liked to have seen, but certainly a number did.

AM: How much change have you seen in the corporate landscape? If you can think back to early and mid 90s and today, how much more engaged is the corporate world?

PB: I think that question of reality is much more emphasised now. People do understand a lot more about Asia. To the extent that’s part of Asialink’s mission, that’s been achieved. And they form relationships and they understand cultures to a greater extent. They do understand it’s just not one culture and they do know that each country needs to be understood in its own right. They do understand that either through formal partnerships, or more informal relationships, it’s just essential to doing business throughout the region.

So I think it’s come a very long way, it’s just a much more cohesive business environment.

AM: What about how Asia is viewed in terms of its importance for expansion and for growth? Once upon a time they would have just ignored it and thought of other markets, western markets.

PB: I think it probably varies a little bit from company to company but it’s hard to think of too many who would not be affected directly through opportunity or indirectly through other people’s opportunities. Indirectly, you see so many other companies depend upon companies with entrees into Asia so, for example, people supplying the mining industry, sales into Asia have clearly been fundamental to the success of the suppliers to the mining companies. So there is a secondary need to understand and be able predict things through the future.

AM: Is there a project, an event, a person or something that for you stands out as highlight and really underpins and illustrates what Asialink is all about?

PB: At the risk of embarrassing her. I think that Jenny McGregor is just everything that Asialink is all about because whenever I dealt with Jenny, she epitomised that feeling about understanding of cultures and Asia. So she and Carrillo Gantner, they were ones that asked me to join the board. It was impossible to say no to either of them, but particularly to Jenny. So that stood out.

In terms of events, the business and economic side of it was really important, but the thing I really enjoyed was some of the geopolitical discussions. Asialink was a great facilitator of that. I can think of a number of private dinners and large group functions with interesting people, ambassadors and representatives of governments of various countries throughout the region. All providing an access that I wouldn’t have had, if it had not been for Asialink.

Asialink makes people conscious of what’s going on and capable of dealing with the Asian region and that’s always going to be important.



The Asialink media exchange program, Medialink, was established to improve the quantity and quality of reporting on the region by the Australian media and to change perceptions of Australia within Asian media.

The program offered fellowships for up to ten mid-career journalists each year from Australia, Indonesia, India and China to live and work for 12 weeks in another country.

Medialink was developed on the premise that one Asia-literate media representative could improve the Asia understanding of thousands of Australians. Equally, the multiplier effect would potentially work even more dramatically with one better informed Asian journalist being able to represent Australia more accurately to millions of people.

Attached to an Asian newsroom, the Australian journalists were exposed to Asian politics and contemporary culture, and similarly the Asian Medialink fellows were given the opportunity to develop new perspectives on Australian society and government processes. The journalists returned to their home organisations with more highly developed professional and personal skills, in addition to more nuanced perspectives of Australia – Asia relations.

Immediately following their Medialink Fellowship, two of the Australian alumni worked as foreign correspondents and one was promoted to Foreign Editor at the Sydney Morning Herald. All cited their fellowship as a key factor in their ability to gain these positions. Upon return, 100% of the Australian alumni immediately greatly increased their reporting on Asian affairs and a Fellow from The Age stated that she was sent to cover the Bali Bombings court hearings as a direct result of her fellowship in Indonesia. As a direct result of his fellowship, one of the Indonesian Fellows was engaged as a special correspondent for Radio Australia's Indonesian language service in addition to his full-time role with the ANTARA newsagency in Jakarta.

In its first five years, Medialink was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Myer Foundation, The University of Melbourne and Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. By 2005, Australian mainstream media had increased its coverage of the region with more focus and accurate reporting. At the same time staff numbers were being squeezed in newsrooms as the internet was disrupting journalism and it became difficult to release journalists from their positions.

Medialink founder, Sue Downie (front row, third from left), with Medialink Fellows 2000.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

2001

SIDNEY MYER ASIA CENTRE

Asialink moved to the purpose-built Sidney Myer Asia Centre in 2001. The building was launched by The Hon Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on 22 July 2002.

The Centre was intended to be a catalyst for Australia's understanding and engagement with contemporary Asia, and to foster awareness of the importance of civilisation to the diverse Asian cultures, both ancient and modern.

A generous grant from the Sidney Myer Centenary Fund, and a personal donation from Carrillo Gantner, secured Asialink a permanent home on The University of Melbourne campus, sharing the building with the Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies.

The building was designed by Bob Nation of Nation Fender Katsalidis and won the Master Builders Association of Australia Award in 2002.

Spirit Wall – a large installation made of rusted Corten steel by acclaimed Japanese-Australian sculptor, Akio Makigawa makes this building truly unique. Many of its symbols were used repeatedly by Makigawa in his work and signify birth, beginning, growth, life, heaven and the five continents.

Asialink acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, the traditional owners of the land on which the Sidney Myer Asia Centre is located.

A NEW HOME

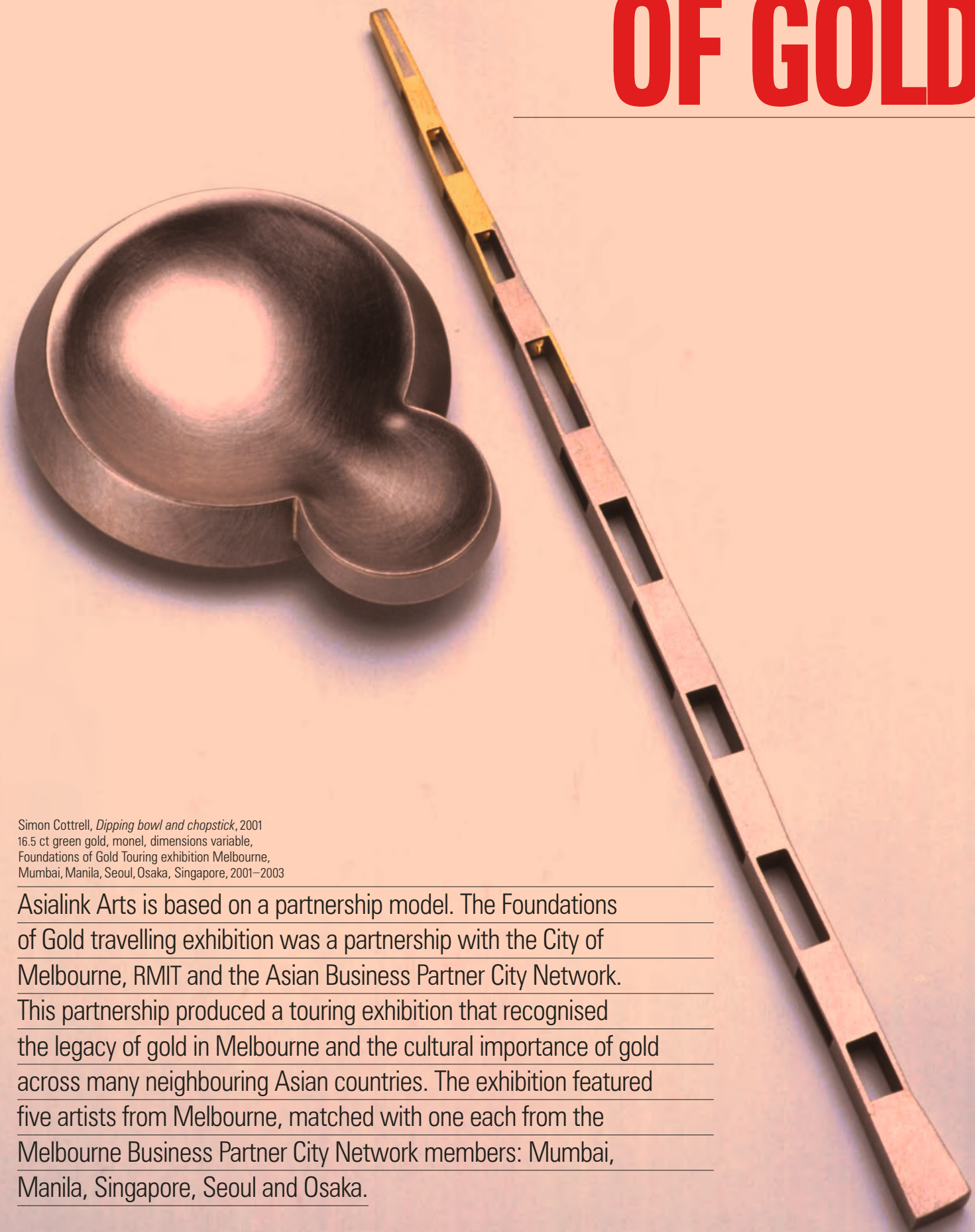
2001



AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE: ASIA?

HELD AT THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ANU, THE INAUGURAL ASIALINK NATIONAL FORUM ADDRESSED THE ISSUE OF 'ASIA FATIGUE' IN THE 1990s. 45 LEADERS FROM DIVERSE FIELDS AROUND AUSTRALIA REACHED CONSENSUS THAT "POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH ASIA IS VITAL FOR THE FUTURE WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA" AND "THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO BUILD THE NATIONAL CONSENSUS TO SUPPORT THIS COMMITMENT." ALL FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE SENT A REPORT ON FORUM PROCEEDINGS. THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER AND SHADOW MINISTER, THE HON LAURIE BRERETON WERE BOTH BRIEFED.

FOUNDATIONS OF GOLD



Simon Cottrell, *Dipping bowl and chopstick*, 2001
16.5 ct green gold, monel, dimensions variable,
Foundations of Gold Touring exhibition Melbourne,
Mumbai, Manila, Seoul, Osaka, Singapore, 2001–2003

Asialink Arts is based on a partnership model. The Foundations of Gold travelling exhibition was a partnership with the City of Melbourne, RMIT and the Asian Business Partner City Network. This partnership produced a touring exhibition that recognised the legacy of gold in Melbourne and the cultural importance of gold across many neighbouring Asian countries. The exhibition featured five artists from Melbourne, matched with one each from the Melbourne Business Partner City Network members: Mumbai, Manila, Singapore, Seoul and Osaka.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 AND THE BALI BOMBINGS, 2002



This was the equivalent of planes flying into the Sydney Harbour Bridge or the Opera House."

PRIME MINISTER JOHN HOWARD

Prime Minister John Howard reported from Washington DC on the morning of 11 September 2001. It was an attack, he later told the Australian Parliament, not only on the US but also on Australia under articles IV and V of the ANZUS Defence Treaty.

On 12 October 2002, two night clubs in Bali were bombed. Among the 202 people killed were 88 Australian tourists. These bombings were frequently reported as evidence that terrorism had arrived on Australia's doorstep.

Launching the Government's Foreign Policy White Paper in 2004 Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, said Australia was engaged in a "struggle to the death over values" – fighting against "Islamofascists" who were "convinced that their destiny was to overshadow the democratic West" and whose ultimate goal was to "destroy our society by waging a version of total war."

The Commonwealth Government swiftly passed a raft of anti-terrorist legislation in 2002. In 2003, Australian troops, including a special-forces task group, warships and a number of F/A-18 Hornets, were committed to the initial invasion of Iraq.

Although the government's counterterrorism law and policy laws were expressed in ethnically and religious-neutral terms, there was perception among Australian Arabs and Muslims that they were targeted. Almost overnight, many Australian Muslims began to struggle with prejudice, discrimination and vilification in the post-9/11 context.

"Muslims were coming to an understanding that they needed to emphasise to fellow citizens a sense of shared values. They needed deeper and more regular dialogue instead of the occasional fending off of criticism" wrote Hanifa Deen in Caravanserai for the Fremantle Arts Council in 2003.

Bali Bombings memorial service, Bali.
Photographer: Scott Maxworthy

PROFESSOR TONY MILNER AM

Asialink, International Director and Board member

2006 — Present



Asialink doesn't take a political position. We are always trying to get some research done, serious research where we listen. Trying to get Asian perspectives and capture those views, not bow to them but make sure they are there in the arena of discussion in Australia."



PROFESSOR
TONY MILNER AM

Ali Moore: How did you start working with Asialink?

Tony Milner: In the early nineties I was running a three year project with the Academy of Social Science looking at the role of culture, perspectives, and values in the Australia-Asia relationship.

Asialink was looking at the hard issues of how we relate to the region, what are the factors in our history – in our culture and values – that sometimes make it difficult, and sometimes give us an advantage. Jenny McGregor and others here at Asialink saw the potential of the Perceptions Project as being something quite useful, a very sensible marriage of interests actually.

A couple of years after the Perceptions Project, I ended up as Dean of Asian Studies at the ANU. Our initial ANU and Melbourne University Asialink collaborations were with Asialink’s Leadership Program, particularly the retreat in Canberra in a way that was based upon, the sorts of issues the Academy project had been looking at. And then, with the Asia Education Foundation, working with school teachers to examine broad Australia Asia engagement issues.

I became increasingly involved in an initiative to develop a Track 2 regional dialogue in the region. It was a difficult time in Australian-Asian relations, and the idea of doing something like this actually came from Asialink’s Patron Baillieu Myer. Our engagement in Timor had created problems with Indonesia and right across the region. There were a lot of comments saying that Australia was turning its back on the Asian region. Bails Myer was keen that Asialink be part of an effort to show that this was by no means so and discussed his ideas with John Howard, the Prime Minister at the time. Jenny and I jumped at this opportunity and travelled with Bails around the region getting ideas about what we could usefully do from various important local people and think tanks and from Australia’s ambassadors based in the region.

As soon as we returned, we met with the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer and his staff member Josh Frydenberg, now a minister himself, and had a lively discussion about what we might do. In the end we decided that we needed to focus on Southeast Asia. Australia had a long track record in South East Asia, but it was mainly Southeast Asian countries that felt we were not engaged as we had been, say at the time of the Fraser government or the Whitlam government.

We decided that we needed to build a network of contacts and friendships around Southeast Asia. We would have a series of meetings. We called them the Asialink “Conversations” because we wanted to bring out the idea that you listened as well as spoke. Conversations seemed to capture that.

With the help of the diplomatic community and our own networks, we put together names of people in Australia and Southeast Asia. People who we thought would sort of bounce off one another and explore creative ideas about ways to do things. Picking up the themes of the day, we held Conversations in Australia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Japan and Myanmar at the very beginning of the reform process there. We also tried to make sure that there were a few people who continued to be involved along the way so that there was some sense of building a community.

We began to plan the Malaysia one when Mahathir was still Prime Minister, and there was a pretty negative attitude towards Australia. When we actually held the Conversations there, a front page news article appeared in The Australian noting a breakthrough in Australian-Malaysian relations. We certainly got a lot of publicity for our meeting in Myanmar.

Helping with a Dialogue relating to the Australia ASEAN Summit in March 2018 in Sydney, I realised just how useful this whole process was. A tough job but we were succeeding slowly, gradually, in building up a network of relationships around the region just as Bails Myer had hoped.

Pre-Australian general elections, we put a lot of effort into the Asialink National Forums. They were an attempt to focus both government and opposition on Asian issues and tell us what they wanted to do on Asia. We made sure that the audience were not just people who were supporters of Australia-Asia engagement. We had leaders of industry, academia, security, arts and health. Hard work, but very enjoyable and rewarding. In fact so much of what I have done with Asialink has been like that.

I thought it was excellent to have the considerable Asia expertise at ANU collaborating with Asialink. It meant that their expertise was being focused on issues that really matter in Australia’s Asian engagement. At times it was tough but I think it worked quite well.

AM: What does Asialink represent for you?

TM: I suppose all my adult life, I was concerned with the quality of Australia’s Asia engagement but to me Asialink was doing something different. Every dimension of Australia’s Asia relationship was of interest to Asialink but always placing it in what I would call its historical framework, its civilisational framework. Positioning Australia in the region as a country with strongly western liberal values needing to have a constructive relationship with its neighbours. That is challenging, and Asialink represents the institution in Australia that is most diligent in handling that issue.

AM: Asialink challenges?

TM: The overall mission of Asialink is a pretty difficult one. Australia has been much shaped by those Western values, much shaped by its commitment to the United States alliance and the adaptation to our region is a mighty struggle. For many Australians I fear the rise of Asia, as it’s put, particularly the success of China, but earlier the success of Japan, leads them to become in some ways more closed. So looking at all of our tasks, the slowness in the schools really to expand Asian languages, Asian knowledge. The resistance we found even in the writing of school curriculum, it’s very frustrating. It’s got to be done and thank goodness Asialink is in there doing it.

We would like to think that when we have major guests from the Asian region, significant public intellectuals, that mainstream media such as different discussion programs on radio and TV would be interested. We are pushing these things but it’s hard because Australia finds it far more easy, I suppose, to deal with Americans and English visitors. It is so much harder to get influential Australians engaged in serious intellectual exchange about politics, economics, important issues with people from the region. It’s hard to get them to open up to Asian perspectives, and to get Australians to think themselves into a new mental framework to handle this region, a more open framework. That’s very hard work and it covers every aspect of Asialink’s activities.

AM: How has Asialink over time maintained its relevance?

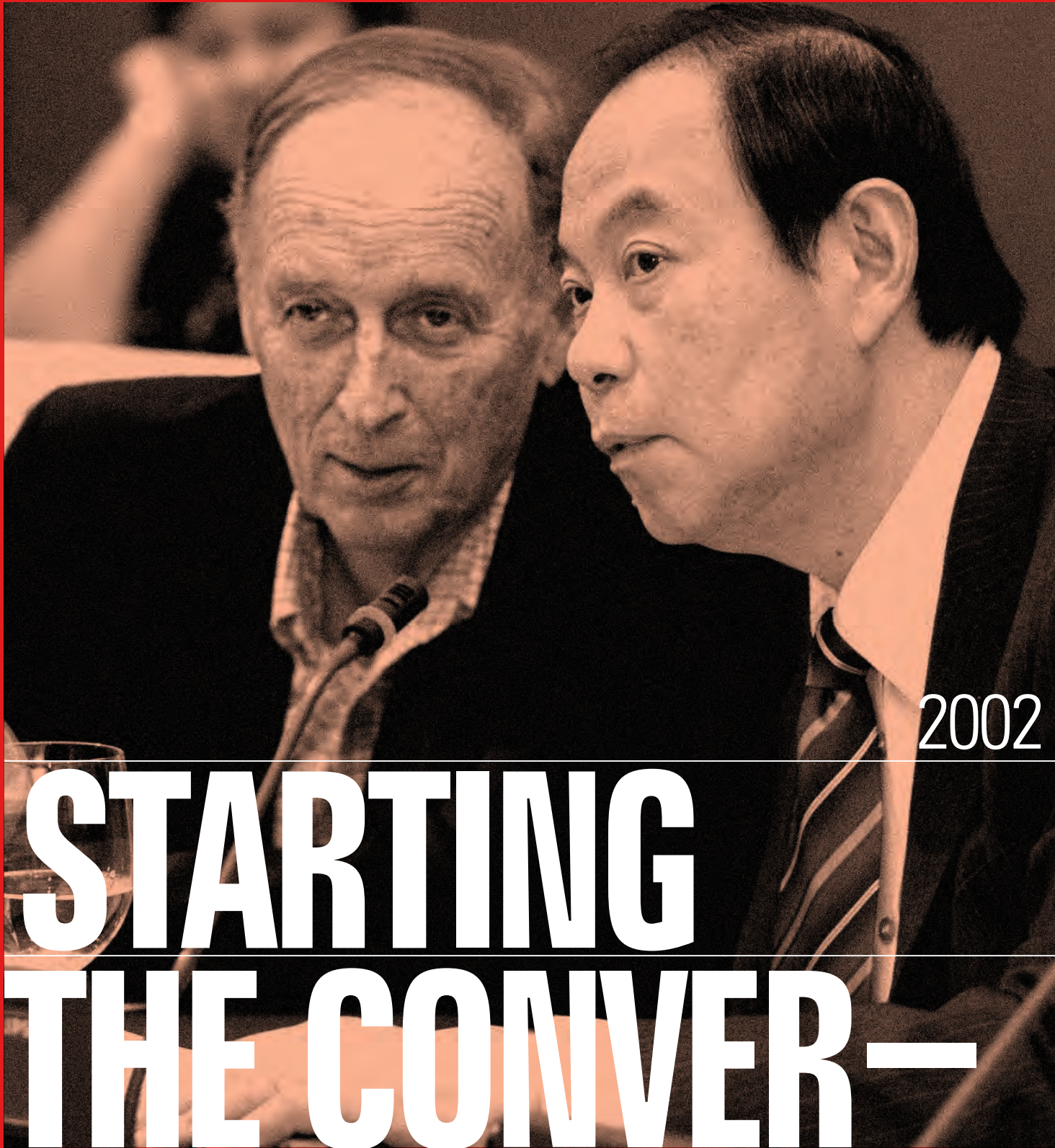
TM: I think Asialink goes on maintaining its relevance through doing projects which are important for the time. The establishment of Asialink Business is a good example. At one level, of course, we are doing a lot of trade with the region but we are very poor investors in the region compared with others. Asialink recognised that much work needed to be done with Australian business. Clearly both sides of Australian government see that this is important.

We did a report on the Australia-ASEAN relationship that flowed really from the work we had done in the Asialink Conversations. We ended up with good enough personal relationships to have some very frank discussions in Kuala Lumpur about Australia-ASEAN relations. We wanted to know about what was getting in the road of further development of those relations; how we might overcome this and how we might see that Australia-ASEAN relationship as part of an overall Asia strategy for Australia. How might it help us for instancein handling China and the issue of whether we look to China or the United States.

The report was for Australia but highly informed by ASEAN views and ASEAN information. Key people from the ASEAN organisation helped along with a number of strategic studies institutes in the region. We were very pleased that Alexander Downer and Gareth Evans, two former Australian foreign ministers, wrote opening essays, to add to our argument.

The Secretary of our Department of Foreign Affairs apparently had a lot of people read the report. Australia’s Ambassador to ASEAN at the time – our first Ambassador to be actually in Jakarta – said that he was much guided by the document for the summit hosted in Sydney in early 2018. That’s a genuine Asialink contribution.

Asialink doesn’t take a political position. We are always trying to get some research done, serious research where we listen. Trying to get Asian perspectives and capture those views, not bow to them but make sure they are there in the arena of discussion in Australia.



STARTING THE CONVER— SATION

THE ASIALINK CONVERSATIONS

Co-Convenors of the 2004 Asialink Conversations,
Asialink Patron Baillieu Myer and Tan Sri Dr Noordin
Sopiee, Chairman and CEO, Institute of Strategic
and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

ASIALINK CONVERSATIONS HAVE BEEN HELD IN	
AUSTRALIA	2002
MALAYSIA	2004
VIETNAM	2006
AUSTRALIA	2007
INDIA	2008
CAMBODIA	2010
MYANMAR	2012
JAPAN	2014
SINGAPORE	2015

Governments themselves would be the first to admit that the strengthening of relations in this region cannot be entirely the responsibility of government. Nor do effective regional relations merely involve commercial or defence exchanges. Effective engagement requires the promoting of a regional conversation that extends to all manner of issues relating to human affairs.”

**ASIALINK PATRONS, BAILLIEU MYER
AND PROFESSOR WANG GUNGWU**
OPENING THE FIRST ASIALINK CONVERSATIONS
LINDENDERRY VICTORIA, 1 SEPTEMBER 2002

Inspired by Asialink Patron Baillieu Myer, the inaugural Asialink Conversations were held in Victoria in 2002. The Conversations provide a rare opportunity for leaders in business, government and the community to form lasting, respectful relationships with counterparts around the region.

Initially bringing together ASEAN and Australia and then partnering with Indian and Japanese institutions, they have become a leading Track 2 diplomacy initiative addressing political, social and economic issues of common concern. Participants have included Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers from Australia and a number of regional countries.



INSPIRING COMMUNITY

ASIALINK EVENTS



As someone from an Asian background, I see that building Asia-capability is essential for Australia’s long-term prosperity and security. A great event is a really effective way of getting that message out.”

BERNADINE FERNANDEZ
MANAGER, CORPORATE RELATIONS & PROGRAMS
1998 — PRESENT

Since joining Asialink in 1998, the mission of the organisation is what has continued to inspire me. As a first generation immigrant from Asia to Australia, I have always had a strong sense of the importance of this region to Australia’s future.

Today, many Australian businesses and the wider community are more aware of the opportunities that Asia presents. I am proud that Asialink’s events have played a role in helping to build this understanding.

Obviously, how we run our events, and the types of issues we focus on, has changed significantly over the past 20 years. Asialink has more than doubled the average number of forums it curates annually. We have progressively expanded our networks and partnerships, as Asia has become more of a ‘mainstream’ topic of discussion. And with this rising level of awareness, we have been able to drill down into issues and provide a greater depth of insight, as well as bring more regional voices, to the table.

Technology has also transformed how we manage and execute our events. When I compare a forum we held recently – which was livestreamed on social media to an audience of over a thousand viewers – to the first event I curated at Asialink, where I mailed out invitations by hand, we have certainly come a very long way.

A clear highlight for me was the Asialink Conversations in Japan in 2014. We worked with high-level Japanese partners on this prestigious event in Hiroshima at a time when foreign ministers from around the world had come to address denuclearisation. It was truly inspiring to see regional leaders working together to achieve long-term peace, in a setting that had experienced such loss and tragedy.

The launch of the National Strategy for the Development of an Asia Capable Workforce in 2012 in Sydney was another standout. Surrounded by media, the cream of Australia’s business community as speakers, I thought the messages we had been broadcasting for 25 years, had come together in this strategy document. It was clear we were having an impact, our mission was being confirmed by leaders of business and government, and our ongoing work would be cut out for us.

SARS EPIDEMIC

THE MOST NOTICEABLE
LEGACY OF SARS WAS THE
UPGRADING OF CHINA’S
PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM.



Source: Let Ideas Compete

In November 2002, a form of atypical pneumonia called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) began spreading rapidly around the world, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare the ailment “a worldwide health threat.” At the epicentre of the outbreak was China, where SARS infected more than 5300 people and killed 349 nationwide.

The SARS outbreak alerted China to the threat of the dire effects of poorly controlled infectious diseases, domestically and beyond their borders. To senior Chinese health officials, delays in identifying SARS and taking action were an embarrassment and caused significant loss of life. Further, according to the Asian Development Bank, SARS cost China US\$6.1 billion, or 0.5% of its GDP, in 2003.

China required a national health reform in order to improve its surveillance system and reorient its single-minded pursuit of economic growth – underway since the late 1970s – toward a more balanced development between economic growth and social infrastructure building.

The most noticeable legacy of SARS was the upgrading of China’s public health system. From 2003–6, the Central Government injected 25.7 billion yuan to upgrade facilities for public health emergencies and hospitals for infectious disease. Among the many projects funded in the years immediately after SARS, the only non-infectious disease project was one that focused on the treatment and management of severe mental illnesses: the ‘Central Government Support for the Local Management and Treatment of Severe Mental Illnesses Project’.

In December 2004 the project received its first financial allotment of 6.86 million RMB and was subsequently referred to as the ‘686 Project’.

A photograph of Bernice McDonald, a woman with short grey hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a light-colored top. She is standing behind a glass railing. The background is a solid red color.

BERNICE McDONALD

Asialink, Department Manager

2002 — Present

// The leadership has given people at Asialink the opportunity to run with their ideas, to allow them to initiate things. Within Asialink our people come with a passion and a desire to do their job really well and to make a difference. I think that's what makes this such a significant organisation."

BERNICE McDONALD

Ali Moore: You have been at Asialink for a few years. When you started what were you expecting?

Bernice McDonald: I probably wasn’t expecting the experience that I have had really. The exposure to so many tremendous people, so many programs and activities that keep growing and developing that are good to be part of.

AM: What is it about the organisation that made you want to be part of it?

BM: I think the people who were here at Asialink. The experience I had through my initial job interview process for example. I was interviewed by someone in the Education program who was just so passionate. It was fantastic to feel the energetic vibe around the place. I also think being a significant part of The University of Melbourne gives the organisation tremendous access to amazing academics, but also other infrastructure resources.

AM: What is it about the work of Asialink that you find fascinating?

BM: I think it’s basically how it can have an impact on so many people in both large and small ways through its great range of programs and events. To watch people’s responses to what they are listening to, to what they are learning, it’s so very satisfying.

AM: Have you seen the organisation grow and change in that time that you have been here?

BM: Absolutely, you know, just in simple things like numbers of staff but also the programs, the offerings, the different people that come through and their ideas. The opportunities that then open up because of these new ideas, so, yes, lots of change.

AM: And with all that change how do you keep an organisation true to its core, true to its original principles?

BM: I think leadership has been a significant part of that, not just within Asialink itself, but also the organisations and people we deal with, that includes the University and The Myer Foundation of course, but also all our other many stakeholders. The leadership has given people at Asialink the opportunity to run with their ideas, to allow them to initiate things which have been so wonderful to see. Within Asialink our people come with a passion and a desire to do their job really well and to make a difference. I think that’s what makes this such a significant organisation.

AM: And it’s successful because of the role you do. You keep everyone well in line and it’s vital to keep the cogs turning.

BM: Yes, well you can always try can’t you? I think you would like people to be able to concentrate on what they do best. If we can provide support to allow them to do that and concentrate on the things that can really make a big difference that’s great. The paperwork in the background doesn’t have to be something that takes over their lives.

AM: Do you have a highlight of your time here? Perhaps it’s a project, perhaps it’s an event – something you think illustrates the core principles of the organisation?

BM: I would say early on when I first started. Our then Chairman was moving on, allowing for a new Chairman to come into play. We had a farewell, a major performance really. All staff members were involved and it gave everyone the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the many years of growth and achievement under his leadership. As a relatively new staff member, I was given the opportunity to see how everybody worked so closely together. The Arts team, the people in Education, the staff across the whole organisation all involved, it was an amazing event. I think that’s what’s special about Asialink, how all the departments come together and work just like one team.

AM: It would have been unusual to see the whole organisation as one, instead of pursuing one’s own remit, if you like?

BM: Absolutely. It’s always been the case I think. I see that everyone does their own particular work but they love to be able to see, and perhaps participate, in the crossovers. The organisation is open, very open. I think even our staff meetings are like that. Everyone is given the opportunity to see what’s going on and then be able to add to other’s ideas, that’s fantastic.

AM: Obviously another way the organisation comes together is the really big headline events of the year. You have a key role in them. Things like the Chairman’s Dinner. How significant do you think they are to the work of Asialink?

BM: Significant because they allow so many of our supporters and partners, people we have worked with over the year, to come together to see and hear what the organisation as a whole has done over the last 12 months. Our guests are given exposure to all of our programs. For example business people get to see the difference that the arts area makes with their exhibitions and activities throughout the region, the difference that our education area makes with schools and the impact it has on the education for children, developing them as global people and supporting change in education on a global scale.

AM: What about sheer logistics with those sorts of events. You are dealing with prime ministers; you’re dealing with opposition leaders. It must be incredibly challenging.

BM: Yes it is. It’s a lot of time, a lot of preparation. It’s being able to adapt to change pretty quickly. One minute you may have a particular important speaker on board, you have sometimes even sent out the invitations, and for different reasons that needs to change quickly. Asialink staff members are always very resilient and take it in their stride. It is always very exciting to see that some significant Australian and international figures, such as ministers and prime ministers speaking at our events. And the fact that we have these regularly as part of what we do is amazing.



PARTNERSHIP WITH MELBOURNE ASIA INSTITUTE

MELBOURNE ASIA POLICY PAPERS

The Melbourne Asia Policy Papers aimed to strengthen Australia's engagement with Asia through publication and dissemination of a series of non-partisan policy options papers. Four times a year leading international scholars and experts were invited to present a closed door, Chatham House Rule workshop examining different aspects of Australia's current relations with the Asia Pacific region. At these workshops, business, academic and government specialists would debate a series of draft policy options prepared beforehand. Following the workshop the invited author produced a concise policy paper for publication.

Melbourne Asia Policy Papers were developed on issues ranging from Australia's Alliance with America to Cross Border Labour Flows and Regional Enforcement of International Criminal Law Post 9/11.

2003



It is my hope that by 2020, we will live in a radically different Australia. An Australia in which all students can locate China on a map; an Australia in which our children can speak knowledgeably and with respect about Islam and other cultures of the world; an Australia in which all teachers have the knowledge and resources to provide their students with an Asia-related learning experience in all curriculum areas."

CARRILLO GANTNER
CHAIRMAN ASIALINK, OPENING THE 2003
AEF NATIONAL FORUM IN CANBERRA

SETTING THE AGENDA

ASIA EDUCATION
FOUNDATION
NATIONAL FORUM

The AEF first National Forum was held in June 2003 at the National Museum, Canberra, with 130 leading Australian educators and representatives from government, academia, national education bodies and the media. The Forum provided the current context and status of studies of Asia in Australian schools to stimulate debate and discussion about the strategies to further this work.

Annual National Forums, Summits and Conferences remained a key platform to influence policy and progress AEF's work in schools. The largest AEF National Conference to date: *New World. New Thinking* was held in June 2014 in Sydney, with an optional extra half day of master classes and school visits. The conference attracted 500 national and international delegates and continued the success of the conference held in Melbourne in August 2013, resulting in a total number of 1017 attendees within a ten-month period.

Delegates included 250 Australian primary and secondary principals participating in the national Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia program, funded by the Commonwealth Government. The Sydney conference drew high profile presenters from education, business and the arts, as well as government, including Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC. Live streaming of sessions reached an online audience more than triple the size of registered delegates at the conference venue.

The Myer Foundation Health and Community Services International Residency Program was established and managed by Asialink in 1998. The program provided opportunities for people in the health and community services sectors to learn from and contribute to the professional development of international colleagues. In 2002, an independent evaluation recommended the residency program tighten its wide-ranging focus and ensure longer term sustainability.

A national reference group was established to guide this work. After an external evaluation and search conference, the reference group proposed that Asialink’s Health and Community sector program concentrate on building regional partnerships to help develop constructive solutions to prevent and manage the growing global epidemic of mental illness. The new Asialink program would be piloted in China, building partnerships between Australian and Chinese institutions and organizations.

With funding from The Myer Foundation and commitment of key individuals and organizations in China, most notably the Ministry of Health and Peking University’s Institute of Mental Health, a symposium exploring integrated mental health care for the aged was held in Beijing in 2003. The Beijing symposium drew support from a wide group of Australia-based mental health leaders and institutions, including St. Vincent’s Mental Health, whose Post Graduate Overseas Specialist Training Program had established strong institutional linkages in the Asia Pacific region.

The success of the pilot project in Beijing led to the establishment of Asia Australia Mental Health (AAMH) as a consortium of The University of Melbourne’s Department of Psychiatry, Asialink and St Vincent’s Mental Health. Since its launch in 2004 under the leadership of foundation Chairman Professor Bruce Singh, AAMH has drawn on the unique mix of skills and experience of Australian consortium partners to deliver collaborative programs aimed at reducing the global mental health burden.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE REFORM AND
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Based on culturally appropriate global best practice, AAMH works to support national mental health service reform programs in China as well as India, Japan, Indonesia, Cambodia and the Pacific Islands. Training and policy development programs are at national, provincial and individual health professional levels. The Asia Pacific Community Mental Health Development Network involves 18 Asia Pacific countries who conduct regular dialogue and develop publications on best practice in areas such as Community Mental Health, Disaster Mental Health, Mental Health Promotion and the role of Art in supporting mental health.

RESEARCH

Led by the Department of Psychiatry, AAMH is at the forefront of collaborative research programs with peak institutes in China and Japan.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND POLICY ADVICE

AAMH has worked collaboratively with government officials from the Ministry of Health in China, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in India, the Ministries of Health in Cambodia and the cities of Seoul, Chandigarh and Shenzhen to support mental health reform for their people. Recommendations from AAMH’s policy document commissioned by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) were accepted at Ministerial level in Geneva and ongoing advice to APEC’s Life Sciences Innovation Forum has seen mental health’s inclusion in broader health agendas for APEC members. Other consultancies have included those for Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar, Japan’s National Centre for Neurology and Psychiatry and the World Health Organisation.

The latest survey shows that there are five million people with dementia in China and that the average survival is three years (usually eight years in western countries). 95 per cent of mentally ill elderly people are taken care of at home. Although we encourage home-care models because they are cost saving, the fact is we have no carers at home for home-care due to the one-child policy.”

PROFESSOR YU XIN
DIRECTOR MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE BEIJING, 2002

ADDRESSING
THE
BURDEN



JULIA FRASER

AEF National Schools Program Manager

1992 — 1998

Asia Australia Mental Health, Co-Director

2004 — 2017

Associate Director, Asialink

2008 — 2018

Professor Chee Ng

Asia Australia Mental Health, Co-Director

2004 — 2017



We knew that what we did here couldn't be just transplanted in China or anywhere else. What we had to say was within our context: this is what we know, we will stand by you and help you to adapt what's appropriate to your context. I think that's been the philosophy."

JULIA FRASER

&

PROFESSOR

CHEE NG

Ali Moore: We are talking about Asia Australia Mental Health. Julia, if I could start with you, why and how did the program start?

Julia Fraser: In 2002 there was a program called the Myer Foundation Asialink Community Residency Program. The program provided residencies for people working in the community sector in Australia to build connections with similar agencies in the countries of Asia. As the new manager of the program, I saw a lot of really wonderful things happening but frustratingly the residencies were too short and there just weren’t any further resources for follow up.

I thought we needed to be able to focus whatever resources we had into one or two areas, where there might be complementarities between the countries of Asia and Australia, so we could build momentum. After quite a bit of research, we found two areas; aging and mental health. This was really before BeyondBlue had stated to make an impact here, talking about mental health was pretty much a taboo in Australia, nearly as much as it was in the Asian region – and just about everywhere populations were starting to age.

My next step was to call on Professor Bruce Singh, the Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at The University of Melbourne. Bruce was a pioneer in the promotion of our links with Asia and was encouraging about the role of Asialink and he introduced me to Chee.

Chee Ng: Yes I first became involved with the work in China through Bruce and also one of my mentors, a very respected Professor of Psychiatry, Professor Edmund Chiu, who had a long standing relationship with one of the first international psychiatrists in China, Professor Shen Yucun, the Director of the Institute of Mental Health in Beijing.

Professor Shen Yucun’s protégé was Professor Yu Xin, who as a very young psychiatrist had spent about three months working in Australia with Professor Edmund Chiu. Yu Xin happened to be in Melbourne again for a conference so I was able to introduce Julia to Yu Xin. It was really through Yu Xin that we began our 15 year partnership with China and the Institute of Psychiatry at Peking University.

AM: Clearly you come from the side of the mental health expertise, the medical side of that. What did Asialink bring to that space?

CN: I’m a trained psychiatrist, I come from an academic background and also work in a hospital. We teach students and provide services to patients: two areas that I am very familiar with. But we really had no idea about how to work internationally, how to engage partners who work in quite different cultural settings. Asialink was able to provide us with the cross cultural knowledge, connections, the linkages with key stakeholders and partners that could facilitate our work. It helped bring the mental health agenda to the forefront for important partners in government, key institutions and in the community. Asialink was really like a glue, bringing partners from Asia and Australia together so that we could work on the same vision, to improve mental health in the Asia Pacific region, particularly China.

AM: Julia, how challenging was that? Even if you did it in an Australian context one would imagine that it would have its challenges and then you take it overseas, you take it to China.

JF: I must say it was scary because I had no idea of the scale of what we were about to embark on. But I just trusted the people we were working with. I think that’s what Asialink does, we choose the best in the field to partner with and we trust them. So I felt safe with my partners.

But it wasn’t easy for any of us. However I think Chee and I and the people who we work with here in Australia, were actually in such a privileged and honoured position to be able to go hand in hand over so many years to help build a new Chinese mental health system.

AM: And the philosophy that underpinned the project?

JF: I think Chee and I have the same philosophy, and that was what bonded us. We understood that that although there are certain fairly universal principles that underpin community mental health service, they need to be adapted for each particular cultural context. We knew that what we did here couldn’t be just transplanted in China or anywhere else. What we had to say was within our context: this is what we know, we will stand by you and help you to adapt what’s appropriate to your context. I think that’s been the philosophy.

CN: I would agree, we were helping people not start from scratch, but start from where they are at, understanding their cultural situation, and then building on their strengths, building on what they can potentially do better, and then using our principles to facilitate that process. I think that’s the key in terms of our philosophy and the way we work. It’s not bringing in an unknown western model into a non-western context and expect them to adapt. Respecting their own cultures their own settings, their strengths and weaknesses and then seeing how we can pull that together for a model that works for them.

AM: And that goes way beyond mental health?

JF: Yes, well I guess it’s a kind of model for how to build trust more broadly across national and cultural boundaries.

AM: And against that background do you have a most memorable achievement? Something that sticks out?

CN: I would have to say May 2008. We were in the middle of delivering a training program in Beijing, just as of the most devastating earthquakes struck Sichuan Province causing mass destruction and loss of life. We couldn’t really focus on the training and ignore what was happening. So Julia and I decided that we had to do something and we approached the Australian Embassy in Beijing with a proposal. Fairly quickly, the Australian Government agreed to support us to bring together a team of psychological first aid leaders for Sichuan. I think we brought together the first international disaster mental health training program accepted by the Chinese Government. We were there to train local volunteers and professionals so they could more competently assist the thousands of people who were affected by the earthquake. We delivered it to around 300 people over five days. Those trainees are now leading their own teams in the area of disaster response mental health, using the knowledge that Australia had to offer to attend to other crises and other disasters.

JF: I think one of the most poignant moments was when we were delivering that initial training three months after the disaster. A siren wailed throughout the streets of Sichuan. Everyone just went out into the street and stood silently to remember. And I thought again, even though it was just so sad, what a privilege it was to be here and just how powerful that moment was.

AM: You were able to contribute quite a bit to China that was in an early stage with its own mental health programs. Can I ask what did Australia learn from China?

JF: When we started our interventions in China with the ‘686’ program, we worked with 60 sites, each of those sites responsible for around 400,00 people. We trained the leaders of those sites, who then trained others, but by the time we finished with that program in that particular way, it covered the whole country in less than ten years. So I guess what we have learned from China, is that when the Chinese Government makes up its mind that something needs to be done, it will put in the necessary resources to make sure it happens.

Also our psychiatrists here in Australia are now dealing with many more people from China and people with Chinese cultural backgrounds. So the Australian mental health professionals who go up to China, and the Chinese mental health professionals who are part of our programs here in Australia, all gain knowledge about more effective ways to deal with people from Chinese backgrounds who are experiencing mental illness. So it has definitely enriched our services.

CN: Yes, hundreds of partners and academics, clinicians and community leaders have been in contact with our Chinese partners through our various exchange programs. Australians have learned there is more than one way of doing things, tackling the same problems. It has shown us that culture actually matters in delivering successful mental health care.

AM: At its best Julia, what do you think the mental health program achieved?

JF: Well I know we have talked a lot about China, but one of our signature programs, was one that brought together 17 nations in our region into a close network to explore common issues and problems. When we are at our best we are able to bring those minds together to create new solutions and creative ways of doing things that none of us had previously thought possible. So different perspectives coming together around the same problem. Mental health is a really difficult issue and it’s always the poor relation in health budgets. Some of those people who were leading mental health for their nations - where there was sometimes less than 10 psychiatrists in their entire nation - are unsung heroes. To be able to provide a safe and non-judgemental platform for them to share their wisdom and issues with their peers, that to me is our greatest achievement.

CN: Yes I would agree. I think establishing that trust and the rapport based on an understanding of their culture and needs goes a long way. In addition to that, for me having the privilege to be working with the next generation of leaders, because they are going to be the decision makers, they are the movers and shakers in the Asia Pacific. They speak warmly of how we learned from one another to achieve the vision that we all want to create together.



RABBIT PROOF FENCE: BEIJING BOOK FAIR

The Asialink Literature Program produced tours to six countries featuring 12 Australian authors with 90 events in 10 cities, showcasing displays of 120 books to audiences totaling 34,000. A highlight of the Asialink Program was supporting Aboriginal author Doris Pilkington Garimara attend the Beijing International Book Fair to launch the Chinese edition of her novel, *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

Pilkington's novel capturing the account of her mother and aunt's forced removal from their Aboriginal family and their subsequent 1200-mile trek home, inspired Phillip Noyce's award-winning film (2002). Pilkington participated in various speaking engagements at major universities and arts venues in Beijing and Shanghai.

Asialink Literature was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Through its supporting programs writers such as Peter Carey, Tim Winton, Kate Grenville, Thomas Kenneally, Geraldine Brooks, Alex Miller and Melina Marchetta engaged with audiences across China, India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Singapore to discuss their work and Australian writing.

Doris Pilkington Garimara, launch of Chinese edition, *Rabbit Proof Fence*, Australian Embassy, Beijing, Literature Touring Program, September 2005

INDONESIA— AUSTRALIA ARTS MANAGEMENT

2005



The Ford Foundation funded a three-year Indonesia-Australia Arts Management Program initiated by Asialink Arts. The aim was to encourage Indonesian arts managers from eastern Indonesia to work with like-minded organisations in the Northern Territory, to develop models for sustainable community cultural centres. The program also included six internships for Indonesians for skills development in arts organisations around Australia.

Image by Tomas O'Brien. Taken during *Island to Island*, a partnership between the Emerging Writers' Festival and Asialink Arts, Indonesia, 2014



In 2003 more than 170 million Chinese people suffered from a mental disorder. 92 per cent of these people had never received any type of treatment. In recognising the enormous burden of mental illness, provincial and national governments in China responded with public policy initiatives aimed at addressing the problem. In September 2004, the Program for Mental Health Reform became the only non-communicable disease program integrated into China's public health policy.

Asia Australia Mental Health was the key international partner in China's national mental health reform program — known as the '686 Program'. The 686 Program had a patient-centred community approach, modelled on Victoria's mental health system. China's mental health program was managed by The National Centre for Mental Health at Peking University Institute of Mental Health and overseen by a national working group and international advisory group with experts drawn from Asia Australia Mental Health and The University of Melbourne. A ground-breaking Memorandum of Understanding formalised a relationship between The University of Melbourne and Peking University and was agreed in 2004. The University hosted Chinese delegations over the next five years, enabling hospital administrators to investigate impacts of key service developments in Australian community mental health services as well as specific project goals including the development of China's National Mental Health Evaluation and Workforce Strategy.

By 2005, 60 demonstration sites were established, with one urban and one rural area, in each of China's 30 provinces, serving a population of 43 million. The first three years of the program proved that people could be effectively treated in the community, provided they were given adequate resources. Professional development in case management was a key requirement to the success of the 686 Program. Colleagues at The University of Melbourne and Peking University joined with the Department of Psychiatry, Chinese University in Hong Kong to develop a tripartite training program in case management for mental health professionals in China.

In 2015 the program involved 250 cities, 1800 districts, and covered a population of 940 million people. AAMH worked with Chinese partners to design 55 unique capacity building programs and deliver 630 days of training to 2000 Chinese mental health leaders.



SID MYER AM

Asialink, Chairman

	2005 — 2016
Asialink Board Member	2004 — 2005
Asialink Business Chairman	2013 — 2016
Asialink Business Board Member	2017 — Present
Asialink, Patron	2016 — Present

“

There's still work to be done, there are still challenges to be met, new conversations to be had. Reinvention is a very important part of that: continuing to be new and relevant for Asialink in Australia and Asia.”

Ali Moore: Sid Myer, you became Chair of Asialink in 2006. Obviously your family has had this extraordinary connection and relationship with Asialink, but what drove you to accept the position, what made you think that it was an important job to do?

Sid Myer: Well there are two answers to that question. I had joined the board not all that long before in 2004. Carrillo Gantner, my cousin, had been Chairman for some 14 years before me and he tapped me on the shoulder and said it’s your turn. He didn’t have to twist my arm very much though because when I joined the Asialink team as a Director I signed on to work with a simply magnificent team of people that were doing wonderful things building the engagement of Australia and Australians in Asia. I had also just returned from nearly five years living and working in Malaysia. I’d been convinced during my time there of the need for better Australian engagement with the region and vice versa. It wasn’t very hard to say yes to Carrillo.

AM: How would you read our engagement with the region in 2004. Was it something in your view that was a work in progress?

SM: It was very much a work in progress. When Asialink started in the early 90s, I was told that when you had a lunch with an important Asian speaker you might have had only 15 to 20 people joining you. When I joined as Chairman that number might have been 50, and upon departure a couple of years ago that number would more likely be 100 to 150. So a work in progress is a good descriptor. Another is the word ‘patchy’. There were pockets of really great progress, for example with Japan, there were other areas where we had barely scratched the surface.

AM: How would you describe Asialink’s role in making Australia comfortable in its place in the region? What about the region’s perspective on Australia and the role Asialink has played in that?

SM: I’ve always said the elevator pitch is that Asialink builds the engagement of Australia and Australians in Asia. Making Australia comfortable within the region is a “time on turf” strategy. But it’s really hard, it’s days spent building relationships. So let me go to the Alison Carroll publication, Every 23 Days. It was a piece of work chronicling Asialink arts for the 20 years she was involved. The work charts the fact that for 20 years there was a new exhibition of Australian arts and culture opening somewhere in Asia, every 23 days. I recall hearing that and I called the auditors, I said that just can’t be right. But it happened because Asialink was always in the region, being a regular visitor, seeing the same people time and time again, building the relationships.

Not unlike the Asialink Conversations. A very similar notion of consistently turning up to the region, regardless of what was happening anywhere, anytime, elsewhere. So the notion of being seen, consistent, regular and working in the region is an important part of being accepted and accordingly people in the Asian region become more comfortable with our engagement with them.

We have also played a role in helping Australia become a member of some of the regional architecture. At first I admit to being very sceptical about all that. Roll forward ten or twelve years and I now see it as being absolutely critical for Australia to play an important role in the structures that help guide, direct and steer the region forward.

AM: In the period you were chair, what were some of the biggest challenges that you faced at Asialink?

SM: It’s not surprising that organisations like ours have daily funding challenges. That’s the fact of it. I wouldn’t say that’s the biggest challenge but you can’t leave that out.

Another challenge I might describe as Australian indifference. Indifference is really a terrible curse for the way in which we need to think about our role in the region, and the rate of indifference became more or less profound over time. The country during elections for example became focused very internally on matters of education, defence and security and health. That’s not entirely surprising, but it presents a challenge for us.

AM: An ongoing challenge?

SM: Yes and I suspect it presents an ongoing challenge in years to come for Asialink and government.

Another challenge for me was the notion of creating a newness about us, creating a new conversation. In the time that I was involved, we heavily committed to the Asialink Conversations, which was our engagement in the Track 2 area in Asia. For me that was one of the great initiatives that we started. Asialink Business of course came much later. Every time there was a newness to those particular angles, it created an opportunity to engage with a new constituency and an opportunity for a new conversation.

AM: Having to constantly reinvent yourself is hard isn’t it, because while Asialink is doing that, the core principles have to remain the same.

SM: The core principles and values do remain the same: building the engagement for Australia and Australians in Asia. So in order to do that I always described us as delivering that over a wide range of platforms, Education, Arts and Culture, Business, Health and Community, and there were others. So the mechanisms for delivery were in fact quite wide, sometimes I felt a little too wide. How can we possibly achieve in these wide constituencies that we were working in, but in fact we did. So working across that wide range of engagements was a key part in building that engagement.

AM: Do you have a moment, an event or project, something that stands out for you as a highlight but really underpins what Asialink is really all about?

SM: I have probably two and they are both linked to the Asialink Conversations.

One that taught me about just how important it is to craft what you say in Track 2 relations. There are things you can’t do off the cuff. You have to be so very careful about nuance and language.

We had just completed a very successful pan ASEAN Conversations in Vietnam. Diligently Tony Milner, Jenny McGregor and I had scripted a delivery that I had to give that night in front of John Howard, our Prime Minister who happened to be there at the time. We carefully crafted a series of notes, how we had gone over those last few days. We gathered in a packed auditorium, John Howard arrived and I went to the podium to begin my address. My notes were not there and I bumbled. Jenny of course worked this out and miraculously my notes appeared. I will never forget that moment. In Track 2 the word ‘crafted’ is not used lightly. It’s such an important part of the Track 2 process and an essential skill set.

The other memory, again from Asialink Conversations. Malaysia at a time when the relationship between Australia and Malaysia could have been better. We had hoped that through the Dialogue we might at least achieve one or two small things. So it was with great joy not long after that there were headlines both in Australia and Malaysia about a thawing of the relationship, with some constructive developments and bi-lateral dialogue. I don’t think for a minute that the Conversations was the pivotal thing that actually changed that dynamic, but I think there might have been some small part that we could have played, being in the right place at the right time. It reminded me of when the Conversations started, there was this notion of going to the places that were hard to go to, to talk about things that were hard to talk about.

AM: You are obviously Patron of Asialink and no longer chair. Do you miss it?

SM: Yes I do. It was a wonderful organisation and I often marvelled at the work done by a relatively small number of people across such a wide range of initiatives for such impact.

Jenny and I have talked about what success looks like. And – to us – success would mean we will not be needed anymore. We have done our job, we have achieved what we set out to achieve and everyone’s better off. But regrettably that’s not the case. In spite of great progress over our last 27 years, the job’s not done. There’s still work to be done, there are still challenges to be met, new conversations to be had. Reinvention, as I mentioned, is a very important part of that: continuing to be new and relevant for Asialink in Australia and Asia.

AUSTRALIA— JAPAN ARTS LEADERSHIP

Asialink Arts organised a ground-breaking two-day forum, Australia-Japan Leadership Meeting, in partnership with the Australia Japan Foundation, Australian Embassy Tokyo and the National Art Centre Tokyo, with support from Arts Victoria and The Japan Foundation. Held in Sydney and in Tokyo at the National Art Centre, 35 participants included directors of major museums in both countries, directors of special interest areas including new media programs, residencies and alternative art spaces, curators, funding agencies and artists. The senior level of the participants on both sides – ranging from the Director of the National Museum of Art, Osaka, the Senior Curator of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo and the Director of the Arts Department of The Japan Foundation and their equivalents from Australia – guaranteed real outcomes and future commitments that continue to this day.

Snuff Puppets, Giant Puppets performance at Noh Butai Theatre, Matsudai, Echigo Tsumari Triennale, Japan, August 2015

A 'BUSINESS' CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE



In 2006 Asialink played a key role in establishing the Confucius Institute at The University of Melbourne as a model Confucius Institute in the global network. With Asialink and the university's support, the Confucius Institute has developed into an organisation focusing on corporate sector engagement and support for Australian business. It seeks to equip Victorians with the language and cultural skills necessary for building lasting relationships with Chinese stakeholders.

Julia Gong, Director, Confucius Institute,
The University of Melbourne



A NIGHT OF STORIES WITH VIKRAM SETH

A Night of Stories about India: In Conversation with Vikram Seth, was part of an ongoing series of events in partnership with Readings Books and Music and Penguin Australia.

This evening event was also a collaboration opportunity for Asialink Arts and Asialink Corporate and Public Programs.

Seth held an audience of 450 people captive with personal stories relating to his novel *Two Lives*. Other authors in the series included readings by Colin Cotterill, Angela Savage, Geraldine Cox, Dr Sha and Alice Pung and a memorial tribute to legendary Indonesian writer, Pramoedya Toer with an evening of dance, readings and recollections.

// The strength of Asialink's relationships define us as an organisation, nationally and internationally."

SANTI TRAN

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION MANAGER
2006 – PRESENT

BEHIND THE SCENES

My work as Asialink's Finance Officer is a kind of 'behind the scenes' activity. I was also very lucky to be directly involved in the action of Asialink's major programs and events from 2006–2010. Supporting the events team, I have also been privileged to meet the first Australian female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, who was interviewed in our offices by media stars, Hamish and Andy.

In 2009 we received funding of \$7.3 million from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to run 'Becoming Asia Literate Grants to Schools' project. It was so thrilling to field the hundreds of calls from schools who were keen to apply for a grant.

The strength of Asialink's relationships define us as an organisation, nationally and internationally. My job is to grow and maintain these relationships within the University especially with the Advancement team, Chancellery support staff and most importantly University Services. These people understand the way the University systems work and are often essential to help solve complex administrative problems involving our external suppliers and clients.



At the same time, I need to build relationships with those external suppliers who often find the University systems difficult to negotiate. As part of a large bureaucracy the administrative formalities can be overwhelming. It's my role to listen to our clients' concerns, reassure them and keep them informed as to where things are at in the system.

Basically, I try to simplify the administrative burden for everyone so that they can get on and deliver their important programs.

It's been fantastic to be able to contribute my Indonesian language and cultural skills to the organisation. For example, I have 'speed trained' our staff to pronounce Indonesian names and regularly update colleagues about Indonesian culture and current issues.

2007



We aim to develop our students' capacity to cooperate and make friendships with people in Asia..."

MONIQUE CARTER

PRINCIPAL, LANSDOWNE CRESCENT
PRIMARY SCHOOL, TASMANIA

PARTNERING WITH PRINCIPALS

LEADING 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS: ENGAGE WITH ASIA

AEF designed and implemented the national Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia (L21CS) program, which supports school principals to create the policy and curriculum change required to build Asia-capable schools. This initiative was developed in partnership with all Australian peak principals' associations, along with state/territory education departments and non-government jurisdictions.

Funded by the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the initial program developed in three main stages.

In its first phase, 118 primary and secondary principals were provided with current Asia focused content and school reform toolkits through a structured professional development program and were supported to trial change strategies in their schools. In its second phase, 59 L21CS project schools won grants to deepen their focus on Asia literacy in their schools.

The programs and materials developed through the school grants program provided ideas and templates for many other schools to access.

In later years, tailored workshops and a suite of high quality online tools and curriculum resources have been developed for ongoing professional learning.

By 2017 more than 2000 school principals had participated in the program and were well on the way to reorienting their schools' priorities to include engagement with Asia and creating Asia capable school communities.



Forum Leader, Anthony Mackay AM with Rachel Dunstone, Dr Imran Lum and Jennifer Star. AEF National Forum, Adelaide, 2007

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, The Hon Julia Gillard MP launches Leading 21st Century Schools Engage with Asia, Adelaide, 2007

AUSTRALIA HEADLINES THE KOLKATA BOOK FAIR

2007



Asialink Arts sent 11 Australian writers to the 32nd Kolkata Book Fair. Authors included Thomas Keneally and Margo Lanagan as keynote speakers, Kirsty Murray and Bruce Bennett. Initiated in 1998, the program enabled 42 Australian authors including Peter Carey, Tim Winton, Kate Grenville, Geraldine Brooks, Alex Miller, Doris Pilkington Garimara and Melina Marchetta to engage with audiences, colleagues and publishers in India, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea. Many were key speakers at major book fairs and festivals and engaged schools and universities in the region, eager to learn more about Australian books. Children's literature was a strong component of the program, with writers and illustrators talking to audiences, running workshops and exhibiting in numerous countries.

Tom Keneally and Margo Lanagan,
Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, India 2007

GLOBAL EDUCATION LEADERS PROGRAM

2008



In 2008 AEF was invited to join a global network of education system leaders committed to transforming school education to equip young people for the 21st century. The Global Education Leaders Program was initiated by CISCO and later supported by the Gates Foundation and Koshland Innovation Fund. AEF played a leadership role in bringing senior education system leaders from China, India and South Korea into the network which grew to include 14 countries.

Beijing Academy, a model school for
the future – a China-GELP project.

2008



The Hon John Brumby AO, Premier of Victoria launches the Asialink Index, 2008

AN INDEX FOR ENGAGEMENT

ASIALINK INDEX MEASURES
AUSTRALIA'S ASIA ENGAGEMENT

In 2008, the inaugural PwC Melbourne Institute Asialink Index was launched, providing the first ever comprehensive, long-term measure of Australia's engagement with Asia. The Index assessed the level and rate of change across seven components: trade, investment, research and business development, education, tourism, migration and humanitarian assistance, across 25 economies. The Index was updated annually from 2008–2013, and found that from 2003–2013, Australia's overall engagement with Asia increased by 56 per cent, while engagement with the rest of the world increased by 23 per cent.

GLYN DAVIS AC

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
2006 — 2018

What does Asialink represent to you? And how has it changed over time?

I’ve always been impressed by the bold mission Asialink embodies – the idea that we, as a nation, have to reach out to Asia, and have to engage in Asia at every level: business, arts, people-to-people, second-track diplomacy. Asialink’s mission offers the whole package. And it recognises that Asia doesn’t need us, so that if Australians do not have deep links into Asia, the lives of people in Asia will carry on! As Australians, we need to find a point of contact, and Asialink has done that so well for 25 years.

The support base for Asialink is deep and diverse, and is anchored by The University of Melbourne, The Myer Foundation and the Myer family. How important has this been for Australia, and for Australia-Asia engagement?

It has been hugely important in several ways. It has helped us build personal links, often among younger Australians who will go on to play significant roles in our society, and their equivalents in the countries we reach out to. It has been important also particularly in reaching into countries that we haven’t had deep links with traditionally. I’m thinking, for example, of the work in Myanmar, where we have struggled as a nation to have strong links because of the challenges associated with Myanmar politics. The people-to-people links built through Asialink have given us a way in there. It has been very important too, I think, in exchanges in the arts. Talking about shared artistic expression and interests is a great way of opening a conversation that does not start or end with self-interest.

Asialink says of itself that the model has been focused on and characterised by cross-sectoral and respectful regional collaboration. If so, has that been particularly relevant for the University?

It is an interesting relationship between Asialink and the University. This relationship is quite different from any other part of the institution. Asialink’s focus has always been external, not internal. It does provide links and opportunities inside the university, by engaging students and staff. But this is important in another way for the University. In a sense, Asialink was a forerunner of the University’s Engagement agenda. Before we had an Engagement agenda, we had Asialink. Asialink showed in many ways what you can do: it connected the University to the broader world. In that, it really was pioneering, and it remains so. That raises interesting organisational challenges: how do you have something that is within the University but has a mission that is slightly different from the University’s? I think we have managed that tension with some skill through successive excellent Chairs of Asialink. ***When Asialink has been at its best, what sorts of things has it been doing? Where has it had its biggest impact – in its programs, its events, or publications like the PwC Melbourne Institute Asialink Index?*** I think the question captures the answer! The key thing about Asialink is breadth. It has so many programs. It has different points of contact. It consciously decides how we can be Asia-focused, and it does so at many levels. Asialink actually offers a coherent program of engagement that involves different people and interests, and yet provides lots of points of intersection and overlap. This is what makes it so clever. So, for example, the PwC Melbourne Institute Asialink Index speaks to us as Australians about what we are doing in Asia engagement; it gives an accurate, multilayered picture of what we are achieving nationally against objective indicators such as trade, investment, education, research, tourism and more. But many of the travelling Arts programs speak to Asia about us as a country, and as I mentioned before, this arts-based dialogue is uniquely important in its own way. Meanwhile the Exchanges program speaks to us about our Asian partners. It’s the multiple levels that make Asialink so impressive!



THE DEVASTATION OF THE EARTHQUAKE THAT SHOOK THIS PROVINCE ON 12 MAY WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED. BUT THE HORROR ALSO BROUGHT A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL OF US TO RETHINK WHAT REALLY MATTERS, TO REACH OUT TO OTHER HUMANS WHO ARE SUFFERING. PEOPLE ACROSS CHINA HAVE RESPONDED WITH 'ONE HEART' AND PEOPLE OVERSEAS, AS FAR AS AUSTRALIA ARE MOVED TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION."

PROFESSOR CHEE NG, CO-DIRECTOR, ASIA-AUSTRALIA MENTAL HEALTH



Participants in AAMH Disaster Response Training Program, Sichuan, China, 2008

There was an urgent need to build the capacity of mental health leaders and workers to deliver a timely and systematic psychosocial response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China.

Based on existing relationships, the Peking University Institute of Mental Health collaborated with AAMH to provide technical support and training to address this pressing need. Less than four weeks after the Sichuan disaster, AusAID partnered with AAMH and Peking University to deliver the first multi-disciplinary training program in disaster mental health in China.

The China-Australia Training on Psychosocial Crisis Intervention had 280 participants representing all thirty Chinese provinces. Conducted in Chengdu, the training was supported at the highest levels of the Chinese Government, with the Deputy Director General, Bureau of Diseases Prevention and Control, Ministry of Health and the Executive Director of China Centre for Disease Control speaking at the opening ceremony.

In 2007 AusAID's Humanitarian Aid program supported AAMH and Peking Institute of Mental Health to provide simple guidelines, key messages and other practical support for parents, teachers, care-givers and communities that protect children traumatised by disasters in China. Just weeks after the project's completion, the Sichuan earthquake claimed more than 60,000 lives and created 6000 orphans.

Within three days of the disaster, guidelines were posted on the Chinese Ministry of Health disaster response website. The Chinese team leader of the AAMH project joined the national co-ordination for the disaster relief program. 100,000 copies of the key message booklets were distributed in Sichuan for community use. The booklets reached those that medical professionals could not, and guided parents and communities on how to care for impacted children.

Following the Sichuan earthquake, the Chinese Government expanded the core team of specialists, who have since delivered the program multiple times across China and skilled more teams to participate in the work of protecting children in disasters.

RESPONDING TO DISASTER SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE

2008



NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR NEW CONNECTIONS

AUSTRALIA-ASIA BRIDGE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

BRIDGE is fostering understanding and friendship between the leaders of the future... Personal relationships transcend all others. Nowhere is that more evident than in our young people."

THE HON JULIE BISHOP MP
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Australia–Asia BRIDGE (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement) School Partnerships Program blends face-to-face teacher professional learning with online engagement that connects students and school communities.

The inaugural Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE School Partnerships Program was implemented as a pilot in 2008 by the AEF with significant funding from The Myer Foundation and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade including the Australia Indonesia Institute. With the launch of Australia-ASEAN Bridge in 2016, the program has grown to include 14 countries across the Asia Pacific region.

Now reaching more than 800 schools, BRIDGE is making an impact on thousands of school children across Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE teacher, Enik Yuniasih from SMK Negeri 2 Pangkalan Bun visits students at BRIDGE partner school, St Monica's, Epping Victoria in 2016.

DEVELOPING MUTUAL RESPECT

AARON O'SHANNESSY

DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
ASIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION
2002 – PRESENT

In 2002, after an internship at the International Education and Resource Network (#iEARN) headquarters in New York, I began working with AEF to build links between schools in Australia and Asia using the #iEARN platform for international school linkages.

Disappointingly, the pilot project floundered. The technology was still very new and many of our teachers in Asia and in Australia were not able to make it work. More importantly, they lacked any personal connection with their matched overseas schools and understood very little about their contexts.

The pilot taught us three important lessons. First, we needed to incorporate a face-to-face component to help build the human connections between teachers and schools before the online program begins. We also needed to provide intercultural knowledge and skill building so participants could better understand their counterparts' personal and professional contexts. Finally, to address wide-ranging differences in technology capacity, teachers needed to be given specific training on the relevant technology.

In response, AEF developed a teacher professional learning program, bringing teachers from Australia and the region together over four days. Importantly, during the four-day program, the teachers need to co-design a twelve-month partnership plan that shows how, when and where their classrooms are going to collaborate. Following the program, the teachers from Asia travel with their twinned Australian colleague to their homes and schools.

Where possible, a reciprocal Asia-based program is also held. This is a real eye opener for many Australian teachers. Often it's about understanding the pressures of scale. It's very different teaching in a school of a few hundred kids in regional Australia to, say, one in Delhi where there are more than ten thousand kids.

The first focus country for AEF's BRIDGE Program was Indonesia. AEF had been running teacher study tours to Indonesia since the mid 1990s, but after the Bali bombings in 2002 the Australian Government's travel advisory changed. Australian teachers and students could no longer travel to Indonesia in any official capacity.

The Myer Foundation's Beyond Australia Committee was prioritising building relationships with Indonesia and were keen to show that despite 9/11 and the recent bombings in Indonesia, Islam in Indonesia was moderate, peaceful and accessible. AEF thought that our new model of school partnerships might be a way to achieve this and, at the same time, support studies of Indonesian language and culture in Australian schools. We worked with The Myer Foundation to develop BRIDGE – an e-learning program between Australia and Indonesia.

At the same time AusAID was scoping out what they called an e-twinning program to link Australian schools with Basic Education Program schools that Australia had built across Indonesia.



AusAID agreed to partner AEF and The Myer Foundation to double the size and scope of BRIDGE, and to include a face-to-face training component for teachers. The Australia Indonesia Institute also joined the partnership under the visionary leadership of the Chairman, Professor Tim Lindsey. This public-private partnership gave our program legitimacy and strength.

The relationship with the Australian Government was very useful. It enabled us to harness practical support, connections and expertise in Indonesia. For example, the Australian Embassy in Jakarta helped us sign formal MoUs with Departments of Education in each Indonesian province – a complex task, but essential to getting things done there. Our Australian government relationship continues to be fundamental to our success ten years on.

Leongatha Primary School in country Victoria is a terrific BRIDGE success story. The school implemented a joint English-Indonesian language instruction program with their partner school in Jakarta. The partnered teachers would Skype each day for thirty minutes so that the kids could practice speaking Indonesian and English together. The school council in Jakarta funded ten of their Grade 5 and 6 students to come to Leongatha for a school exchange program. For three months in the lead up, the schools implemented a Skype-based 'get to know your host family' program.

The Australian students saw that their visitors were just kids like them. They liked the same music, liked kicking balls around; being Muslim didn't change how they saw themselves as young people and what they wanted to do in the future. They all had common aspirations. Longitudinal studies show that kids who have been involved in BRIDGE school partnerships often keep up their connections – and some go on to study languages like Indonesian in their tertiary education. Other students and teachers have moved to Indonesia to volunteer at their partner schools. This is where unexpected magic happens. We now have 180 Indonesian partnerships and an office in Jakarta. Both countries' governments, seeing examples like the Leongatha-Jakarta one, now view BRIDGE as a model vehicle for public diplomacy between our two countries.

Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE has been replicated in other countries of the region including all ASEAN countries plus China, India and South Korea. *We now have 400 active school partnerships with 13 countries in Asia. In 2017 we won Australia's International Education Award.*

Over ten years of BRIDGE one thing is constant and probably the most important factor in our success: the importance of developing mutually respectful partnerships. Every BRIDGE activity is planned collaboratively with shared goals and beneficial outcomes for each party. Working well with partners in the region, that's global competence right there!



THE MELBOURNE DECLARATION

OF EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

Australians need to become Asia literate, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia."

The Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians set the directions for Australian schooling for the ten-year period 2008–18.

It articulated nationally consistent future directions and aspirations for Australian schooling and was agreed to by all Australian Education Ministers. The Declaration's two overarching goals for Australian schooling were: "to promote equity and excellence" and for "young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens."

The Declaration recognised that major changes in the world were placing new demands on Australian education. It stated that: "Active and informed citizens are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia... Australians need to become Asia literate, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia."

The Declaration in turn inspired the new national Australian Curriculum in 2010 to identify "Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia" as one of its three cross-curricular priorities at all levels of schooling. The priority required that young Australians 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.

Gyuto Buddhist monks work with primary school students in Adelaide, South Australia.

GENERATION 21:



ASIA PACIFIC NEW LEADERS' DIALOGUE

You, Generation 21, this is your responsibility. You are the people with ideas, you are the changers."

MUHAMMAD YUNUS
NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING ECONOMIST
SPEAKING TO GENERATION 21 DELEGATES

Generation 21 brought together 52 next generation leaders from 16 countries to Jakarta, Indonesia, to share their perspectives for the future.

The participants identified the challenges and possibilities for the 21st century and reflected on the implications of global power moving from the Western to the Eastern hemisphere.

Generation 21 was hosted by Asialink, Indonesia's Modernisator and McKinsey & Co, Jakarta, and sponsored by ANZ. The interactive dialogue was broadcast on Indonesian television channel SCTV to millions of people across Australia and Asia. Indonesian Vice President Boediono, Finance Minister Sri Muliani and HE Dino Patti Djalal all participated.

Generation 21 SCTV broadcast, Jakarta

SCHOOLS BECOMING ASIA LITERATE

2009



There is significant amount of interest and commitment to Asia literacy amongst regional, rural and remote schools in Australia.

49 percent of Becoming Asia Literate grant applications came from these schools.”

SCHOOLS BECOMING ASIA LITERATE. WHAT WORKS 2013

AEF provided grants to schools across Australia to progress Asian languages and studies programs in four target countries: China, Japan, Indonesia and Korea, as part of the Australian Government’s National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools program (NALSSP).

The Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools had close to 2000 applications and AEF distributed more than \$7.2 million to 521 Government, Catholic and Independent schools over three years.

ASIA SOCIETY COLLABORATION

2009



When Harrison Young took over the chairmanship of the Asia Society AustralAsia Centre (ASAC), a collaboration agreement with Asialink was established. This saw a merger of the two boards and the ASAC staff move to the Sidney Myer Asia Centre in Melbourne. Corporate sponsors appreciated the new joint value proposition and joint events were delivered in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. In 2012 an independent review resulted in the two organisations returning to original operating models.

Prime Minister The Hon Kevin Rudd MP addresses a joint Asialink Asia Society National Forum, 2010

Heather Ridout AO, CEO Australian Industry Group, launches the Business Alliance for Asia Literacy at AEF National Forum 2009

A BUSINESS ALLIANCE

FOR ASIA LITERACY

AEF’s Business Alliance for Asia Literacy brought together Australia’s peak business organisations and 50 of our Top 100 companies to advocate for the business imperative of increasing understanding of Asian languages and cultures. The Alliance recommended strategies and incentives to build student, teacher and parent demand for Asia knowledge and skills.

AEF’s Asia Literacy Ambassadors – Partnering Businesses & Schools was supported by the Business Alliance and funded by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Asia-skilled Australians (known as Ambassadors) partnered school communities to stimulate student and community demand for Asia literacy and Asian languages.

By 2015, with support from HSBC, Asia Literacy Ambassadors were reaching over 5500 Australian students, helping them to develop global outlooks and explore new career and life pathways.

In 2016, the Asia Literacy Ambassadors Program transitioned to the new Go Global suite of AEF programs and was renamed Go Global Ambassadors.

2009

EVERY 23 DAYS: 20 YEARS TOURING ASIA

'EVERY 23 DAYS: 20 YEARS TOURING ASIA', DOCUMENTED
THE JOURNEY OF NEARLY 80 AUSTRALIA-BASED CONTEMPORARY
EXHIBITIONS THAT TOURED THE ASIAN REGION AS PART
OF ASIALINK'S VISUAL ARTS TOURING EXHIBITION PROGRAM.

2010



Artistic practice encourages dialogue between different cultures, with visual arts in particular able to transcend language barriers and create immediate and exciting rapport.

Asialink has presented some of the best art of our time to large audiences in 18 countries across Asia through exhibition and special projects, celebrating the strength and creativity on offer in Australia and throughout the region."

THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
LAUNCHING EVERY 23 DAYS



Robin Best, *In China We Trust* 2006, seven pieces, unglazed cast porcelain, ceramic pencil, 18 carat gold leaf, 130 x 620 mm Photo: Grant Hancock

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

By 2010 Australia had the policy in place that required schools to include Asia literacy. However, if policy aspirations were to be achieved, action in schools was now required. In 2010 the AEF Advisory Board agreed on a National Action Plan for Asia Literacy in Schools in response to the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians that included the need for all Australians to become Asia literate.

The National Action Plan would provide all young Australians with a realistic opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and understandings of the histories, geographies, literatures, arts, cultures and languages of the diverse countries of Asia, and was formally supported by 58 peak education, business and community organisations. The Plan argued the need for investment in clear curriculum guidelines, equipping school leaders and teachers with Asia capability – both in schools and in training new teachers – development of Asia focused classroom resources, community engagement and creative solutions to the complex issues impeding Asian languages education in schools.

Students at Parkdale Secondary College undertook a simulation of an archaeological dig of Borobudur, Indonesia.



MAPPING OUR FUTURE

THE 2010 NATIONAL FORUM, CANBERRA

Asialink delivered the National Forum on *Mapping our Future in the Asian Century*, bringing together 130 experts from large corporations and industry groups, academia and government, the arts community, the education sector, and the health and development fields – to address the crucial question of Australia's readiness for the 'Asian Century.'

The key principles identified at the National Forum were that:

advancing Australia's increasingly complex relationships in the countries of the Asian region requires more qualified Australians – and that Governments and all sectors must invest long-term in equipping Australians with skills and understandings for the Asian Century

we must act collegially in our Asian relationships in order to solve common problems and to achieve successful outcomes. This requires greater resourcing and development of people-to-people links and an emphasis on 'networks of mutuality'

the wider Australian public still needs to be brought into a national 'conversation' about the imperative of Australia-Asia engagement.



THE CURRENT STATE OF ASIAN LANGUAGES IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

In 2009, as part of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, AEF was commissioned to research and produce detailed reports outlining the state of languages learning in Australian schools including Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and Chinese.

This was the first time that student participation, school and teacher data has been nationally collected and analysed for these languages. The report highlighted fundamentally worrying trends, including the consistent and rapid decline of Indonesian in Australian schools over the previous five years, and the fact that 94 percent of Year 12 students studying Mandarin Chinese were students of Chinese heritage.



Dr Sally Percival Wood, Khun Kavi Chongkittavorn, Dr Ron Huisken and Zuly Chudori at the Asialink Commission, Kuala Lumpur

ASIALINK COMMISSION ON AUSTRALIA-ASEAN ENGAGEMENT

Australia will build influence and effectiveness in the region if it can first and foremost consolidate itself with ASEAN. All the great powers of the world are heavily engaged with fast-growing and populous China and India. . . But for ASEAN we are a neighbour. . . That's where our regional diplomacy should start."

PROFESSOR THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER AC
FOREWORD

From 12–15 April 2011 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Asialink held its first Commission on the topic of Strengthening Australia-ASEAN Engagement, bringing together experts from Australia and Asia to explore how changed dynamics between the major powers in the region could bring about some re-casting of ASEAN-Australia engagement.

This led to the Asialink publication *Our Place in the Asian Century: Southeast Asia as 'The Third Way'*, which advocated for Australia to give its relationship with ASEAN sharp and special focus, along with the US alliance and growing economic dependence on China.

2011

2011

PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH



Asia-Australia Mental Health's Margaret Goding (centre) working with members of the The Asia Pacific Community Mental Health Development Project.

The sharing of evidence, confidence, consumer and carer experience, lessons in engaging with the media, joint training materials and events, and anti-stigma initiatives. It is a type of stock exchange in which mental health plans, implementation and operational policies are traded, to inspire all those supported by the network, to show that we are all in this together."

PROFESSOR GRAHAM THORNICROFT
INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY, KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE

The Asia Pacific Community Mental Health Development Project was established as a joint initiative of WHO's Western Pacific Regional Office and AAMH and illustrated best practice in mental health care for our region. AAMH convened a regular forum for leaders in mental health from 17 nations in the Asia Pacific for open and honest discussion about shared issues and a platform to test models and ideas. The network's structure responds to the changing needs of participants over time and evolving shared issues and trends and grew in phases, focusing on Models of Community Mental Health (2005–2008), Partnerships in Community Mental Health (2009–2011) and Art and Mental Health, Sub-Mekong Research Network, Disaster Mental Health, Mental Health Promotion (2012–2016).



A TASKFORCE FOR 'ASIA CAPABILITY'

ASIA CAPABLE WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Mark Laurie, Managing Partner PwC; Glyn Davis, Vice Chancellor, The University of Melbourne; Jenny McGregor, CEO Asialink; Nicola Wakefield Evans, Board Director; The Hon Richard Marles MP, Minister for Trade; and Baillieu Myer at the launch of the National Centre for Asia Capability, Parliament House, Canberra.

The Asialink Taskforce for an Asia Capable Workforce was formed to develop a national strategy on equipping the Australian workforce with the critical capabilities required to tap the opportunities presented by the rise of Asia. Boston Consulting Group's managing partner Larry Kamenar and Sek-Loong Tan led the development of the strategy for the Taskforce which was launched in 2012 by Mike Smith, CEO of ANZ and Taskforce Chair.

The four-part Strategy advocated initiatives to:

advocate broadly the case for developing an Asia capable workforce

accelerate the development of Asia-focused strategies with Australian business taking the lead

invest in developing Asia capability throughout the Australian workforce

more effectively educate Australia's future workforce for the Asian Century.

The Taskforce's key recommendation was the establishment of a National Centre for Asia Capability, which subsequently led to the formation of Asialink Business.

LAUNCH OF ASIALINK'S SINGAPORE CHAPTER



SIMONE LOUREY
PATRON SINGAPORE CHAPTER

My first involvement with Asialink was through the Arts Residency program as Asialink's first Arts Management resident in Hong Kong in 1998. I toured three shows under a banner of Spotlight on Melbourne to the Hong Kong Fringe Festival. We received terrific on-the-ground support back then from the Australian Consulate and Austcham and the shows were a great success."

The residency actually resulted in me living in the region for the next 18 years. My partner Will was awarded an Asia Society Under 40 Leadership Award when we were living in Hong Kong. The award featured a high-profile event, where a group of amazing young entrepreneurial recipients all met and discussed current global issues and concerns. When we came back from the event, we wondered why our own country wasn't doing the same thing, recognising the many successful innovative young Australians who were doing important and interesting things off-shore.

So that conversation sat in the back of my mind until we moved to Singapore. I realised there that many of the Australians doing remarkable work in the region were actually Asialink program alumni. We needed to bring them together, to network and share ideas. At the same time, traditional funding opportunities for organisations like Asialink were narrowing at home and in some cases completely closing off. Where funding was available, it was so closely tied to specific deliverables that there was no time or room for creativity, experimentation and growth – the qualities for which Asialink programs were known. I personally, like others working in the region, had benefitted from those less constricting programs in the past.

I thought it was timely to help create an alumni platform for in-country engagement under the Asialink banner – for the benefit of both the alumni and Asialink. All those Australians who had benefitted from Asialink over nearly thirty years could be encouraged through this networking and supportive platform to give back, to create a virtuous circle of giving that could help support Asialink from generation to generation.



As an early recipient of one of the Asialink programs, I therefore became a grateful supporter of the organisation. Together with the team in Melbourne I founded the offshore alumni 'Asialink Chapter' in Singapore and am now the Chapter's Patron. The Singapore Chapter has had so many successful events – from Chairman's Circle briefings to Next-Gen forums. All of them designed to gather those working off-shore to share their experiences and knowledge from their respective professional and cultural contexts in the region.

Most important for me was the work we did around raising the profile of women in the region, culminating in the Women in Asia Roundtable and forum. So many amazing women doing extraordinary work to influence their communities for the better. To witness how under-represented their work was in mainstream understanding was both heart-breaking and galvanising. Asialink worked very hard to raise money to make some short documentaries of their stories. Eventually these stories were launched by the Victorian Governor, HE Linda Dessau in Singapore, in The Philippines and in Australia. I would like to think these Asialink successes helped inform Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's commitment to host the Women in Asia events she held off-shore early in her tenure as Foreign Minister.

My latter life has been in the region watching its recent growth through an Australian lens. The major cultural, language, religious and economic shifts that are unfolding with the growing affluence in the region are only just beginning. Some of the innovative models for programs that were developed in the first 20 or so years of Asialink's life have been now adopted and entrenched by other countries throughout the region. Arts residencies, travelling exhibitions and collaborative long-term partnerships have all been secured and encouraged through the long-term commitments of their governments. Singapore, China, South Korea, Japan and increasingly Indonesia, are growing in power, capability and stature. They are now Australia's competition as well as our partners and without bipartisan ongoing federal government support for organisations like Asialink, they are leaving us behind.

As a nation we have only just started to work out what that rapid change means for us, how to navigate the coming world order and how best to buffer against our new reality of internet disruption, "fake news" and trade wars. Asialink is our only national non-partisan organisation focused on articulating a public set of understandings of the Asian region and the importance of Australia's multi-faceted relationships with the region for our country's long term prosperity and security. Health, education and the arts are the bridges that can help address difficult trade and political issues.

We simply cannot afford to lose Asialink and the independence of its voice.

KEE WONG

Asialink, Deputy Chairman and Board member

2011 — Present

// Asialink is the single voice that connects Australia with Asia. You can't find too many organisations that focus on building relationships with Asia, advocating the understanding of Asia to Australians, and vice versa, and having enough gravitas, to engage with Asia in an important and impactful way."



Ali Moore: You first became involved with Asialink in 2011. What brought you to the organisation?

Kee Wong: Lunch with Sid Myer. So be very careful who you have lunch with.

I had been introduced to Jenny earlier, and through a number of conversations Jenny thought it would be interesting for Sid and I to catch up. We eventually did and talked about a broad range of Asia focused issues. The conversation moved from there to see if I might be interested in supporting Asialink in some way, adding value. After doing a few things with Asialink, I received the invitation to be on the Board. I am passionate about what Asialink does, whether I am on the Board or not, being Asian by origin. I came here to Melbourne to study with no intention of staying, but I stayed. Professionally, I have always worked globally, spending quite a bit of time in Asia. So I was pleased to accept the Board invitation.

AM: So what did you see as the role of Asialink in 2011 when you joined? What was it about the work of the organisation that attracted you?

KW: It’s the single voice that connects Australia with Asia. You can’t find too many organisations that focus on building relationships with Asia, advocating the understanding of Asia to Australians, and vice versa, and having enough gravitas, to engage with Asia in an important and impactful way.

AM: Do you think that role is the same today? Do you think it has changed over the years?

KW: I would say the mindset of the Australian community has shifted from when we started, certainly from when I got involved. When Asialink was founded I think the task would have been much, much more difficult. Not long after I joined Asialink, Julia Gillard as Prime Minister launched the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, which really broadened the discussion. I think now there’s no question about the significance of Asia. Now that we are seeing China’s prominence globally in every sense, particularly economically, you cannot but not pay attention to Asia. But the understanding about Asia, the engagement process with Asia, there’s still a bit of work to be done.

AM: So in other words, the core remit for a place like Asialink remains the same.

KW: Absolutely, and if nothing else becomes more important, because now you are starting to go from awareness to execution, and execution requires skills and so it’s now more important to skill people up.

AM: What core underlying principles do you think have allowed Asialink to remain so relevant?

KW: I think there is an element of the value add that Melbourne University brings, in terms of the rigour around the academic research, and some structure around governance. I think the membership of Asialink Board, the broad spectrum of people around the Board table who are business leaders, government leaders and academic leaders actually does lead to that gravitas. The activity that we prosecute throughout the year does inform people of the significant kind of work that we do. Whether it’s engaging with our chapters overseas, like the one in Singapore, all that keeps adding to the foundations that we have built over nearly three decades.

AM: Are there experiences that you could point to as either being the most rewarding or the most challenging?

KW: I would say that the trip that we made to Myanmar before Myanmar had the independent elections. That was the most, exciting is the wrong word, perhaps significant is better. It was almost like South Africa coming out of apartheid. A small country in Southeast Asia but one that had the world’s attention, even though no experts at the time could predict whether the elections were ever really going to happen. Getting involved in that was really rewarding.

AM: What does that say more in the context of the work that Asialink does? What does it say about that work, that you were there really very early on in the development of Myanmar?

KW: I think there are a couple of dimensions to that. One is that this is what Asialink is all about, people to people links. And then Asialink has a special focus on what we call Track 2 conversations, conversations at the next level down from Track 1, the ones that are held at a government to government level. I think the Track 2 conversations help push along the kind of frank conversations the governments cannot have between themselves. For example, sharing the views of how the external world sees how the transition in Myanmar ought to occur. I can’t have any hard evidence about it, but I’m sure the shaping of what eventually happens at a government level comes through a lot of conversations, multilayer Track 2 conversations, the business to business conversations, the people to people conversations.

AM: From the very outset you were involved with Asialink Business, why was that important do you think?

KW: Well it gave us the resources to do what we wanted to do. I think Asialink Business is very focused on research, providing high quality education and then advocating the purpose of Asia engagement. I guess we might have got some similar outcomes without it, but it would have taken a very long period of time. Asialink Business built the business case around why we need things to happen now, and then secured the right resources to make it happen in a very planned and structured way.

AM: What’s the challenge for the next stage?

KW: Australia for a long time has been a western country in the same time zone as most Asian countries. It’s engagement with Asia, especially Southeast Asia, has been largely charitable, in a supporting role. For example, if you think about how Australia has educated so many people from Southeast Asia. Australia has often been seen as an honest broker in the region, earning a tremendous amount of respectability and of trust.

Now, as I have said, the world has changed and Asian countries, especially China, are prominent. So I think what is not being done particularly well is leveraging that trust, leveraging the diaspora of business and government leaders that have come and been educated by Australian universities and that have very strong links and passion for Australia. Asialink needs to understand that dynamic and be able to help take that as a good foundation for building the next stage of what the organisation needs to prosecute.

We need to continue convincing government leaders to focus their attention on the importance of Asia, not exclusively, but to understand just how people from Asia can add to our society, our business opportunity, our education and importantly how we are positioned strategically in this geographic region.



Asialink launched the ANZ Services Report at Parliament House Canberra with Trade Minister and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Asian Century Policy, The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP (pictured). The Report showed that trade in services with Asia had grown significantly faster than that with the rest of the world since 2000 – growth in exports, of nearly 42 per cent since 2000, was particularly noteworthy given there had been no growth in Australia's services exports to the rest of the world in the same time. By 2012, services trade with Asia had reached nearly 60 per cent. It was argued that increasing services trade between Australia and Asia would not only provide a direct benefit to exports, it would also deepen and diversify our relations with the countries of Asia.

BUILDING MYANMAR AUSTRALIA CONNECTIONS

AUSTRALIA MYANMAR BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

2012

Following the success of the Asialink Conversations in Myanmar in 2012, the Australia Myanmar Business Taskforce was established to foster closer economic cooperation with Myanmar and to assist with the development of its policy and legislative frameworks. The Taskforce met twice a year to identify and discuss opportunities for members across all sectors, as well as build on Australia-Myanmar networks in business, government and politics.

In 2013 Taskforce delegates spent time in Yangon and the capital Nay Pyi Taw, where they met with senior ministers and officials including President U Thein Sein, the Speaker of the Upper House, the Chairman of the Finance Committee, the Director of the Central Bank of Myanmar, and the Director-General of the Ministry for National Planning and Economic Development. Members also met with local and foreign private-sector investors and consultants. Discussion focused on the pressing challenges facing the government and the private sector as Myanmar continues to undergo significant reforms. Ministerial representatives described the government's priority areas for change and development, and how Asialink and the Taskforce could potentially contribute to and support work in these areas.

A delegation followed to Melbourne and Sydney with Asialink hosting and guests including Andrew Forrest AO. Asialink, in collaboration with DFAT, facilitated a capability-building seminar for the Myanmar Government in Nay Pyi Taw as part of Australia's assistance package for Myanmar's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. The one-day seminar, facilitated by Australia's former High Commissioner to Malaysia, Miles Kupa, was designed to generate policy ideas for the East Asia Summit. The Seminar was led by senior ASEAN experts and discussion covered regional, security, geographical, economic and institutional issues.

Professor Dewi Fortuna Anwar (left) and Dr Nicholas Farrelly (right) at The Asialink Conversations, Yangon.

// ... a road map for national success... building Australia as a more prosperous and resilient nation, fully part of the region and open to the world."

PRIME MINISTER JULIA GILLARD
LAUNCHING THE AUSTRALIA IN THE ASIAN CENTURY WHITE PAPER
OCTOBER 2012

AUSTRALIA IN THE ASIAN CENTURY WHITE PAPER

Film still, *Will Time Tell?* (2010), *Neon Rising Dance Exchange* project, Sue Healy. Cinematography shot on location in Tokyo, Mark Pugh. Performer: Shona Erskine

The White Paper, *Australia in the Asian Century*, was commissioned by the Gillard Government. It was an economically and politically-focused government document – discussing priorities and self-perception with respect to Australia's national interests in the Asian region. Prime Minister Julia Gillard described it as a road map for national success as Asia's unstoppable rise continued.

Prime Minister Gillard argued that Australians needed to "plan for our destiny," and said the measures outlined in the paper would work towards "building Australia as a more prosperous and resilient nation, fully part of the region and open to the world."

Taking over one year to complete and involving over 150 separate consultations – itself a useful process – the White Paper set out 25 objectives for Australia to take advantage of the Asian boom.

The document called for one-third of board members of Australia's Top 200 publicly-listed companies and Commonwealth Government bodies to have deep experience in and knowledge of Asia by 2025. The Paper also argued that Australian school students should have "continuous access to a priority Asian language: Mandarin, Hindi, Indonesian or Japanese."

The White Paper focused especially on economic priorities. Some analysts suggested (including in an Asialink report) that more attention should now be given to developing a specific strategy for Asian engagement. How, for instance, might one Asian relationship be leveraged to assist another? The White Paper was also criticized for stressing too much the opportunities rather than dangers in the Asian region – particularly the dangers arising from the enormous power shifts taking place.

THE BOOKWALLAH:

FIVE WRITERS, A TRAIN AND A POP-UP LIBRARY IN INDIA

2012



THE HON SIMON CREAN MP MINISTER FOR THE ARTS
LAUNCHING BOOKWALLAH, NEW DELHI, 2012

I think the concept is fantastic. It's creative. It markets, but most of all it promotes the stories about us in our words. It's about identity but it's also about using creative identity to engage with a country we have had a long association with. But most exciting is the fusion of the artists travelling together... it's those shared experiences that always lead to the best stories."

The Bookwallah tour took five writers and an ingenious travelling library across India by train. Three Indian and two Australian writers journeyed through the cities and towns of modern India in search of stories, conversations and connections. Poet Sudeep Sen, novelist and critic Chandras Choudhury, and journalist and fiction writer Annie Zaidi joined young adult author Kirsty Murray and non-fiction writer Benjamin Law.

The tour began at the Mumbai LitFest, paused in Goa at Literati bookshop, joined forces with the Bangalore Literature Festival, headed west to Chennai, then finished more than 2000 km away on the coast in Pondicherry. The writers were accompanied by unique luggage: a portable, pop-up library. Veteran Indian designer Soumitri Varadarajan and Australian designer Georgia Hutchinson created a series of exquisite custom-made suitcases that opened and transformed into bookcases, filled with hundreds of new Australian books.

Part library, part art installation, visitors could browse, sit and read, or take part in intimate library events. Books from the library were donated to universities and local libraries along the way.

Asialink Arts collaborated with the Melbourne Writers Festival to produce the Oz-Bookwallah reciprocal (Australia and India) writers tour around Australia by train in 2013 and an exhibition of the travelling book cases was exhibited at the State Library of Victoria. A documentary film was commissioned and premiered at Melbourne's Federation Square.

The Bookwallah travelling library arrives in Mumbai, India, 2012

LESLEY ALWAY

Asialink, Arts Director

2010 — 2017



The real lesson is that it's a people-to-people business. They're hard work, partnerships, but building relationships with people and organisations in Asia, while being authentic with your practice, is really key to success."



Ali Moore: When you started with Asialink and you looked back at the history of the organisation, in terms of its relations with the arts, how do you think that the cultural landscape had changed, internationally, and also within Australia?

Lesley Alway: I think it changed very much in the same way as the general landscape between the countries of Asia and Australia had started to shift. When Asialink started its first forays into Asia, it was very much more about exporting Australian art into Asia, they were really happy to accept our content. But I guess as I came in, things had started to shift. There had always been collaboration, in terms of partnerships with residency hosts and Australian artists. But now projects really had to be co-created and designed, we needed to be much more overt about it. It was very much more about collaboration, partnerships, reciprocity.

In the early days Asialink Arts focused more on Southeast Asia, partly because it was the priority of our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at that time. In recent years it was about the growth of China and India as the real power players. Both obviously incredibly fascinating, but they are complex and difficult and just because of their scale, we really had to work out ways to usefully engage with both nations.

The constant for Asialink Arts has been the importance of Japan. There has been a whole range of projects and programs over many years at a scale that others could not necessarily have done. It’s always been one of the most favoured destinations for our residents throughout the last 25 years or so, and it holds an enduring fascination for our artists and our designers. We have worked over the last few years with various cultural festivals that have occurred in regional parts of Japan, the Setouchi festival and the Echigo-Tsumari Triennales. We send performing arts companies and visual artists to work with local communities in residence and also to be part of a global community that’s helping regenerate some of Japan’s regional areas. The projects have been enormously satisfying, leaving some enduring legacies not only for the artists, but also in terms of what Australia has learnt about ways to regenerate regional areas through the arts and cultural festivals.

AM: Of course you aren’t the only ones playing in this space. It is also an increasingly competitive space for the arts.

LA: Yes exactly, as a mark of our success we have created our own competition, so that was one of the other shifts. The many people who had worked on our projects and programs over the years developed their own very strong personal relationships, which we encouraged them to do. With new and fairly cheap technology, it was much easier to maintain and keep those contacts and networks going. As a number of them took up senior positions in arts organisations, they could create their own projects. It’s had a really strong multiplier effect.

AM: So what was it that Asialink had and continues to have, that allows it to be unique in this space? What is the offering from Asialink that makes it an important partner?

LA: Well, I think the history and the networks that were built up over so many years. And now a very strong research focus, that we have purposely adopted involving many external partners. A good example was the Victoria-Asia cultural engagement research report, *On the ground and in the know*. The project gathered data and evidence of best practice strategies about what needed to be done to further develop Asia engagement and capability in the sector.

AM: This is a really difficult and complex space to play in. What are some of the key lessons about how you make it succeed?

LA: The real lesson is that it’s a people-to-people business. They’re hard work, partnerships, but building relationships with people and organisations in Asia, while being authentic with your practice, is really key to success.

You need to be constantly on the ground maintaining those networks and contacts. Of course things change so quickly, people move around, especially because of the rapid growth of the industry in the region during the past 20 years. So we are constantly trying to maintain those networks.

When you are working internationally, it’s very important to build strong networks and relationships with governments. I think because of technology and travel, the ease of all that, sometimes we find that people forget that you are actually working in someone else’s sovereign territory. Digitally it’s a borderless world, but physically it’s not. There’s often different rules and regulations to abide by. Often you need the support of Australian government departments, particularly DFAT, to help you negotiate the territory. You really need to get that right because when you do and things run smoothly, you can then have a lot of impact by working with people on the ground.

AM: Do you have a sense of the importance of art in that entire engagement process of Australia with Asia?

LA: When you are over in the country, actually seeing those projects, seeing the effect and seeing the important understanding that it builds between other peoples, you realise what you are doing and why you are doing it.

In Asia, culture is fundamental to everything. So the starting point often, whether it’s business, or sport or whether its science, in the broader sense of the word, culture is really significant. Asian countries expect that you would have some understanding of their cultures. It’s often the foundation for developing a whole range of other relationships and can come before many other things. It’s absolutely crucial.

2013

Ali Moore, Vice Chancellor's
Fellow, The University of
Melbourne interviews
Shemara Wikramanayake,
Head of Macquarie Asset
Management Group, Dunlop
Lecture, 2017



From truffle growers in Western Australia
bringing their premium produce to the tables
of Hong Kong; to Sydney advisory firms
launching into Singapore as a spring board
to Asia and top ASX firms taking on global
markets; or local tourism operators on Victoria's
Great Ocean Road getting ready for a surge
in Chinese visitors — the opportunities in
and with Asia have never been more diverse.

Asialink Business works with organisations in all sectors of the economy to help seize the potential for growth that Asia represents. Founded in 2013 with a national mandate to develop an Asia capable Australian workforce, Asialink Business was born from the bold vision of the Asialink Taskforce for an Asia Capable Workforce. This vision reflected the realisation that while Asia was integral to Australia's economic prosperity, business and industry required deep knowledge, networks and skills to engage successfully with the region today and in the future.

Based on an innovative partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, Asialink Business is the only designated centre of excellence for practical Asia business expertise in Australia and globally. Over the past five years, it has supported thousands of organisations to develop deep Asian market insights, enhance executive leadership capabilities, and distil complexity in Asian markets, through an ambitious agenda of research, training and public forums.

This unprecedented work to build Asia capabilities at a national scale has been recognised at the highest levels. Frances Adamson, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said:

"The international leadership shown by Asialink Business is a vitally important aspect of our national life. Asialink Business, as the National Centre for Asia Capability, is going from strength to strength."

Through public and bespoke capability development programs, Asialink Business trains around 4000 leaders, managers and entrepreneurs annually. These programs focus on understanding opportunities in international markets, developing and executing market entry strategy, forging long-term partnerships, and working in and managing cultural diverse teams.

BUILDING CAPABILITY

In 2015, the first participants completed Asialink Business' flagship Negotiations and Influence in Asian Contexts course in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Built in partnership with leaders from the Consensus Building Institute in Cambridge Massachusetts (who teach at MIT and Harvard), this unique and highly-practical program enables participants to master successful negotiations, anticipate cultural differences and build better relationships to achieve mutually rewarding outcomes.

In the words of one participant: *"Negotiations and Influence in Asian Contexts is one of the best training programs I have attended. The interactive program balances theory with 'real world' examples, complemented by the deep commercial experience and interest of the highly capable program facilitators"* General Manager Commercial and Transactions, RACV

In 2016 Asialink Business was appointed by the new Diplomatic Academy at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to deliver Asia literacy training to trade and foreign policy officers in recognition of its world class approach to Asia capability development.

RESEARCH

Many businesses around Australia have indicated that a lack of practical knowledge of Asian markets is one of the key impediments to pursuing international growth opportunities. By offering a digital library of practical case studies, country guides and other research products, Asialink Business has actively bridged these information gaps for thousands of Australian organisations.

In 2015, Asialink Business launched its signature Country Starter Packs, which have become the go-to-guides for businesses in all industries seeking to expand or grow in Asia. By accessing Asialink Business' bespoke research services, clients ranging from governments, to universities, corporates and SMEs, have developed and refined their Asian market entry strategies.

EVENTS

Leveraging a platform of thought leadership research, events and public forums, Asialink Business has continued to elevate the critical importance of Asia capabilities on the public agenda. Leaders from business, industry, government, foreign investors and the education sector have all participated in robust conversations on cutting-edge developments and the future of Australian business with Asia.

Over 4000 event attendees per year share practical insights and experiences for success.

CREATING
AN ASIA CAPABLE
WORKFORCE

ASIALINK BUSINESS

Since its establishment in 2013, Asialink Business has been providing Australian businesses and organisations in the public and private sector with the skills and the capabilities they need to succeed in the Asian Century... Never has it been more important for business leaders to embrace a global mindset, to appreciate the significant economic and cultural potential of Australia-Asia relationships and to improve intercultural networking and understanding."

THE HON CRAIG LAUNDY MP
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY
INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

ASIA LITERACY

HOW TO BUILD IT IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS?

Aimed primarily at teachers and school leaders, the What Works series of 10 reports was based on the practice of schools around Australia. It combined up-to-date international research with illustrations of 'what works' and 'what is possible' to support the development of Asian languages and studies in Australian schools.

Case study schools found that student learning was enhanced by direct interaction with student speakers of target languages. One school noted that such student exposure broadened students' world view."

WHAT WORKS 6
AUSTRALIA-ASIA SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS, 2014



2013

ON THE GROUND & IN THE KNOW

In 2013 Asialink Arts published *On the Ground and In the Know: The Victoria-Asia Cultural Engagement Research Report* after a series of interviews and roundtables.

The report revealed the extensive diversity, depth and richness of the cultural relationships that have evolved and are ongoing between Victorian artists and organisations and various countries in Asia. The report recommended the need for high-level leadership to advocate the value of cultural exchange between Australia and Asia. Outcomes included funding commitment of Arts Victoria to support capability and residency programs based on research findings.



SYDNEY OFFICE OPENS

On 14 March 2013, New South Wales Premier The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP (pictured) officially launched the new Asialink Sydney office in Corrs Chambers Westgarth's Sydney office. The official opening was followed by a cocktail event for more than 90 guests, including the Consuls-General of Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Republic of Korea, as well as Asialink Board members and supporters. Today the Sydney office is Asialink Business' base to expand research and capability development services across New South Wales.

A portrait of Mukund Narayanamurti, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and a green patterned tie. He is standing with his hands in his pockets, smiling slightly. The background is a blurred architectural structure with a grid-like pattern, overlaid with a red tint.

MUKUND NARAYANAMURTI

Asialink Business, Chief Executive Officer

2015 — present



Truly at the heart of it, the end game is a deeply engaged, and as a result, a more resilient and more prosperous Australia. An Australia where the entire workforce is thinking in some way about engagement with Asia, with their partners, their customers, their suppliers and with their colleagues.”

MUKUND NARAYANAMURTI

Ali Moore: Mukund, lets go back a couple of years to 2015. Why did you join Asialink?

Mukund Narayanamurti: I’d spent about 10 years in consulting with a lot of my work focused on Asia. It gave me a sense that Australia was quite reluctant as a nation to engage with the region. When I found out about the establishment of Asialink Business, an organisation with bipartisan support to establish an Asia capable workplace, I found it really compelling, it made sense. I felt that I needed to give it a shot and apply for the role at Asialink Business. I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity and it’s been terrific.

AM: Asialink had been working with the corporate sector from the mid 1990s. Why do you think it was so important that Asialink Business was set up as separate but connected entity?

MN: Asialink had done some very important work with the corporate sector for the best part of 25 years, but mainly at the top end of town. Asialink Business’s task is much broader. We need to support the entire Australian workforce, especially targeting small and medium sized enterprises that make up 99 per cent of all businesses in the country, and employ 70 per cent of our workforce. We also need to work with our 40 public universities and support all levels of government, including local and regional councils right across the country.

AM: That’s a huge remit though. It’s tough enough dealing with the top end of town isn’t it?

MN: It is a huge remit, it comes with significant challenges, as Andrew Robb, our current Chair put it, it requires superhuman effort. It certainly feels like that because we are working in places as diverse as the Pilbara, to Townsville, to parts of regional NSW. We are getting out to the furthestest parts of this country, that actually at times have more substantive engagement with the region than the top end of town in our capital cities.

AM: So what does an Asia capable workforce actually mean? What is your endgame?

MN: Truly at the heart of it, the endgame is a deeply engaged, and as a result, a more resilient and more prosperous Australia. An Australia where the entire workforce is thinking in some way about engagement with Asia, with their partners, their customers, their suppliers and with their colleagues.

AM: I guess the size of that challenge was really underlined recently by some research work that you did looking at how prepared Australian corporate boards are for Asia. Do you find sometimes when you look at results like that, do you get disheartened?

MN: I probably would have been more disheartened three years ago when I was in the world of consulting and my view of the world was much more narrow. Then I thought the world revolved around Collins St in Melbourne and George St in Sydney. But because Asialink Business needs to reach beyond the top end of town, we have seen that small and medium size enterprises, our universities, industry bodies and regional councils are leading the way and are in fact very active in the region.

AM: What’s the highlight of your time here? An event or project, something that for you really underscored what Asialink Business does?

MN: There are several highlights only because there is great satisfaction in building something new. The scale stands out. Every year we produce 15–20 major research projects. We have now built 16 Country Starter Packs. These are the go-to guides for state and federal government agencies that inform businesses about opportunities overseas. We have released a number of thought leadership reports, and within any given year between 6–12 bespoke research projects for large corporates and government departments.

We are working with our universities, with DFAT, working with our top ten ASX listed companies, elite institutions in the context of our country. That’s been a great privilege and given us an opportunity to learn.

Building on Asialink’s long history of high quality events, we also run about 80 events a year. In the last year, the multi sector consultation we ran for DFAT for the Foreign Policy White Paper was exceptionally well-received. It actually made a material difference to the quality of the White Paper. But there’s so much more work to be done, so it’s important to build on our achievements and not just rest on our laurels.

AM: What about lessons that you have learned? Have we got better at failing and saying that we have learned that and we can move on?

MN: There are a lot of things we have certainly learned, the hard way. Because we have responsibility for the whole workforce, to partner and support their Asia engagement, we actually have to be accepted by each and every part of it. So for example, our executives in listed companies have a very different approach to Asia engagement than say academic leaders at our universities. We have to make a more deliberate effort to invest time in building relationships to get to know people better. I don’t think we always have, because we have some very significant targets and objectives that we need to meet. But it’s come at the expense of not being able to build, with some segments of the workforce, the higher quality relations necessary to lead to more sustainable partnerships for the future.

Asialink has a 30 year history, it is part of a university that has a 150 year history, but Asialink Business only has a five year history and has a national mandate that covers the whole workforce. Our brand, our reputation, in terms of what we can do and deliver, is not as well known, for instance, in far north Queensland or Western Australia. But, we are deeply committed to our mission and our partners, and willing to invest the energy to build a deeply Asia engaged Australia. We are covering new ground across the country every day.

KOCHI MUZIRIS BIENNALE INDIA

2014



Lack of nationally consistent and comparable student languages data is a major barrier to languages planning in Australia. Successful strategies in some jurisdictions and sectors to boost senior secondary language enrolments are not necessarily informing practice nationally.”

SENIOR SECONDARY LANGUAGES
EDUCATION RESEARCH PROJECT, 2015

2015



ONLY 11% SENIOR SECONDARY LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Speaking more than one language is a valuable asset for young Australians in a globally connected world. In most high-performing education systems close to 100 per cent of students exit schooling with a second language.

In Australia, only 11 per cent of senior secondary students choose to study a language in addition to English. Languages have by far the lowest enrolments of any learning area nationally. This has been the case for some 20 years.

This AEF report was part of the Australian Government’s efforts to revive the teaching of languages in Year 11 and 12. Its purpose was to inform all Australian governments of practical, easy to implement responses to build incentives and remove barriers to languages learning in the senior years.

“WHEN I TRAVEL I TAKE A SMALL AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT... WHEN I WENT TO CHANG MAI I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD BE DOING INTERACTIVE MUSICAL PERFORMANCES WITH A LOCAL ORPHANAGE... BUT THAT FELL THROUGH AND I ENDED UP DOING ROBOTIC PERCUSSION WORKSHOPS WITH BUDDHIST MONKS WHICH I WOULDN'T HAVE FORESEEN IN 100 YEARS.” DYLAN MARTORELL, ARTIST



Dylan Martorell, *Soundtracks – Kochi*, sound installation, found materials, dimensions variable, Aspinwall House, Fort Kochi, Kochi Biennale 2012. India

Asialink Arts was invited to represent Australia in India’s first biennale – Kochi Muziris Biennale in Kerala 2012 – with nearly 400,000 visitors experiencing the work of Australian Dylan Martorell. Asialink Arts participated again in 2014, supporting indigenous artist Daniel Boyd with audience reach over 500,000 and counting.

THE BIG THREE: FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

2014–15

House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra. Photographer: Eduardo M C

Over 2014–15, three major Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) were concluded with Australia's biggest Asian trading partners – Korea, Japan and China – which account for over half of our total exports. These FTAs were concluded under the Abbott Government, by Trade Minister Andrew Robb after many year's work by all Australian governments. No other country had ever before managed to secure such highly preferential trading agreements with these important Asian economic powers.

The big three FTAs have unlocked significant opportunities for Australian businesses, reducing tariffs on most Australian goods to zero over time, and creating better market access and conditions for Australian service providers and investors. While there were certainly difficulties in the negotiating stages, the real challenge now is encouraging Australian businesses to take advantage of the opportunities on offer from the FTAs, including new markets, lowered input costs and new employment opportunities. Asialink Business' mandate of equipping Australian businesses with the Asia capabilities needed for success in doing business with Asia became even more important and exciting.

While the conclusion of these three FTAs was a watershed moment for Australia, they were only another step in Australia's trade journey with Asia. Australia had already concluded FTAs with Asian partners including Singapore (2003), Thailand (2005), Malaysia (2013) and the entire ASEAN region through the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) which entered into force in 2010. Negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (now TPP-11) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are ongoing, as are a number of other FTAs with other Asian partners including Indonesia, India and the Pacific nations.

The FTAs not only highlighted the strong economic relationships we had and continue to have with our Asian partners – and therefore how our future prosperity is intricately tied to our region – but also made clear the strategic importance Australia attached to these countries, as partners in other areas including security and foreign policy, education, health and the arts. Asialink Diplomacy continues to play a positive role in leading Track II dialogues and forging people to people links to ensure that key relationships in the region flourish for the sake of Australia's future prosperity.

2016

CHINA PRACTICE



The Asialink Business China Practice was established in 2016. It is a leading centre of excellence for practical business engagement with China. The Practice is a hub of market research, training, strategy and expertise, providing an unmatched offering for businesses seeking to understand the market, expand or grow in China.

From city, to coast, to outback, the opportunities with Asia are opportunities for businesses all around Australia. In 2017 more than 25 local businesses from Warrnambool in regional Victoria developed their market entry plans and boosted their business links with China, under the Warrnambool China Bureau initiative.

Reflecting a successful partnership with Warrnambool City Council, the initiative was a key achievement of the Asialink Business China Practice.

// As a nation we are linking with Asia in more ways than ever before and the Country Starter Packs produced by Asialink Business are an invaluable resource for small and medium enterprises who want to build their engagement with Asia.”

THE HON KELLY O'DWYER MP
MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FOR BUSINESS

Small or medium-size businesses looking to enter a market like China, Indonesia, Korea or Japan for the first time, have struggled to find free and comprehensive information on how to get started or expand.

Asialink Business launched its flagship Country Starter Pack range to bridge this gap in practical Asian market information. Whether registering a business in Asia, opening a bank account, or understanding different sales and distribution channels, the Country Starter Packs offer accessible and up-to-date answers for businesses of all sizes.

Featuring case studies and contemporary market insights, the Country Starter Packs were launched in a nation-wide roadshow attended by over 770 business and industry leaders in all capital cities.

There are now 16 guides in total, covering all major Asian markets and Australia's largest Asian trading partners. The packs have become the industry standard for SMEs, corporates, government, the arts, education and not-for-profit sectors. They have been widely adopted in government trade missions and events, and around 12,000 Australian organisations and professionals have downloaded the packs (or their Shareable App) online.

Shahril KHMD, Shutterstock, Masjid Putra – Putrajaya, Malaysia



GIVING POWER TO YOUTH

GO GLOBAL STUDENT PROGRAMS

Trying to argue from another country's perspective has been really enlightening. It made me doubt, in a good way, my own beliefs. It has changed how I see the world."

STUDENT
BENDIGO SENIOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

AEF's Go Global programs engage young Australians to explore local, regional and global issues and Australia-Asia engagement. The programs encourage students to further deepen their understanding of the Asian region.

Go Global programs include the Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum, where students represent individual ASEAN nations and simulate a meeting between the leaders of Australia and the member nations of ASEAN, attempting to reach mutually agreeable solutions through negotiation and consensus building. The first Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum was held in Melbourne in 2016 and subsequently in Brisbane, Perth and Sydney.

The Go Global UN Goals Youth Forum engages students with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Students use design thinking to propose innovative solutions to achieve positive global change.

2016

SHENZHEN'S THREE FAMOUS PROJECT



With a population of over 13 million, Shenzhen needs to rapidly expand its mental health services. Most importantly we need to further develop and build the clinical skills of our mental health workforce. We have worked closely with The University of Melbourne's AAMH over many years, participating in its mental health training programs and we are now very pleased that AAMH has agreed to make Shenzhen a special focus."

PROFESSOR LIU TIEBANG
DIRECTOR, SHENZHEN KANGNING HOSPITAL

AAMH built deep networks and expertise in supporting mental health initiatives across Chinese cities and provinces, including Shenzhen in Guangdong Province. With rapid urbanisation and mass floating populations, the Shenzhen public health system was unable to keep up with the medical needs of a city whose population grew from thousands in the mid 1900s to over 13 million in 2016.

To address these challenges, the Shenzhen Municipal Government initiated the 'Three Famous Project' to speed up the growth of the city's health services. The project provided funding for international collaborations in public health. Following a rigorous and competitive grant process, AAMH was selected as the first Australian recipient of the prestigious grant, working alongside the Shenzhen Kangning Hospital to create a state-of-the-art public mental health system.

Supported by the Shenzhen Municipal Government in partnership with Shenzhen Kangning Hospital, AAMH also delivered mental health crisis intervention training in 2016. This first-of-its-kind program in China was attended by over 100 people from medicine, journalism and the city's police force. Participants were able to workshop the necessary practical skills to enable them to predict, respond to, and manage crises when they arise.

Mental Health Crisis Intervention Training, Shenzhen, China, 2016

A NEW CHAPTER: A NEW COLUMBO PLAN

2016

...the New Colombo Plan had fuelled a passion to engage with the Indo-Pacific."

THE HON JULIE BISHOP MP
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS



The Australian Government's New Colombo Plan (NCP) program was launched by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop (pictured), in response to longstanding recommendations that a dedicated Australia-Asia scholarship program be established.

The NCP is a two-way scholarship program between Australia and the region. Undergraduate students undertake study and internship programs in one of 40 countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The Australian Government wanted to see study in the region of this nature become a rite of passage for Australian students, and as an endeavour that is highly valued across the Australian community. The NCP is intended to be transformational, deepening Australia's relationships in the region, both at the individual level and through expanding university, business and other links. It is complementary to the highly successful Colombo Plan launched in the 1950s, which brought thousands of students from Asia to live and study in Australia, helping many Australian communities overcome cultural differences and learn to understand Asian cultures.

The NCP program comprises a number of opportunities for undergraduate students in both Australia and Asia: a prestigious scholarships program for study of up to one year and internships or mentorships, and a flexible mobility grants program for both short and longer-term study, internships, mentorships, practicums and research.

By the end of 2018, around 30,000 Australian students will have participated in the NCP – a new generation of young people who understand Asia deeply. NCP scholars have spoken of "how important it is for Australians to have a global outlook and a culture of openness. For them, the New Colombo Plan had fuelled a passion to engage with the Indo-Pacific" said Foreign Minister Julie Bishop at the New Colombo Plan Awards Ceremony.

In 2016, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee told the Australian Parliament he was grateful that a new generation would "continue the spirit of exchange" and build "goodwill between our peoples" through the NCP program.

Asialink Business delivers the Bennelong NCP pre-departure training program to help arm NCP students with the awareness and sensibility needed to effectively engage across cultures, derive maximum benefit from their experiences in the region, and be positive ambassadors for Australia. This program is delivered in partnership between the Bennelong Foundation, the Myer Foundation and Asialink Business. Up to 7000 students will have participated in the training by 2019.

**GOLDEN
MONKEY**

LISA ROET

Coinciding with Beijing Design Week 2016, China's Golden Week, and the Year of the Monkey, Asialink Arts collaborated with acclaimed Australian artist Lisa Roet to install a giant inflatable public sculpture of a golden snub-nosed monkey. This is a rare and endangered species of monkey native to the China-Myanmar forest region, and the huge, sound activated sculpture was hung on the exterior of The Opposite House Hotel in Beijing. Audiences estimated close to three million with 20 million following on social media.

Lisa Roet, *Golden Monkey*, installed at The Opposite House, Beijing, 2016

EMERGING LEADERS

Participation in the 2017 A2ELP has given me the skills to successfully pitch for financial backing. My Youth Doctors Healthcare Group recently secured over ten thousand dollars in seed funding from international donors."

DR HSU MYAT
MYANMAR DELEGATE

Launched in 2017, the Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program (A2ELP) is a leadership program for 15 young social entrepreneurs from ASEAN and Australia who have founded enterprises that address poverty, health, education, technology and the environment.

The program is designed to enhance the leadership potential of participants, strengthen and expand people-to-people, professional and institutional networks between Australia and Southeast Asia, and showcase contemporary Australian and Southeast Asian creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Australians must never lose sight of the lessons they can learn from the region. Southeast Asia is leapfrogging ahead using disruptive technology and innovation – and is a natural partner for Australian start-ups. The Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program (A2ELP) is an Australian Government initiative through the Australia-ASEAN Council (AAC) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Erin Watson-Lynn, Director, Asialink Diplomacy (pictured far left) with participants in the Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program.

TEN JAPAN ARTS EXCHANGES



Asialink Arts has collaborated with Japanese creatives and organisations since 1996, and nearly 30 percent of 2017 exchanges were in Japan.

Highlights included Asialink supporting the first Australian artist to have a solo exhibition and performance series at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo with Sydney-based artist Agatha Gothe-Snape; a collaboration with Next Wave Festival presented in Japan's international performing arts festival, Awaji Art Circus, supporting Sydney-based Skye Gellmann; a reciprocal exchange between Canberra Glassworks and Toyama Glass Studio; and Gabriella Mangano and Silvana Mangano developing new Japanese Butoh inspired work at BankArt in Yokohama.

A Reverse View with Tsuda Michiko and Kamimura Megumi, "MAM Project 023: Agatha Gothe-Snape," Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2017
Photo: Mikuriya Shinichiro Courtesy: Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

MATCH FIT FOR ASIA



It's alarming: over 90% of Australian leaders at public companies, and 82% of leaders at private companies, lack the required Asia capabilities to succeed in the region.

In 2017, Asialink Business launched a major thought leadership report, *Match Fit: Shaping Asia capable leaders*, in partnership with PwC and the Institute of Managers and Leaders. *Match Fit* sets out a compelling and evidence-backed case for why Asia capabilities are essential for business growth in Australia. The report evaluated the level of Asia capability among the board members and senior executives at Australia's top 200 publicly-listed companies and top 30 private companies. *Match Fit* continues to spark widespread debate and a critical call to action to corporate Australia to urgently address these shortcomings.

Ming Long, Chair, AMP Capital Funds Management speaking at launch of *Match Fit: Shaping Asia capable leaders*, 2017

ARTS COUNTRY RESOURCES

Asialink Arts published six online Country Resources on China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore. The resources provide access to information and networks by arts professionals and the general public and present a 'curated' perspective of the who, what and how for anyone wanting to explore creative opportunities in Asia.

Tess de Quincey, Asialink's Neon Rising Program presents IMPRO-LAB: transparencies, an Australia Japan dance exchange program, 2006

ANDREW ROBB AO

CHAIRMAN, ASIALINK
CHAIRMAN, ASIALINK BUSINESS
2017 — PRESENT

Ali Moore: After more than 12 years in Federal Parliament and two ministerial portfolios, you could have been forgiven for starting a well-earned retirement. What attracted you to the position of Chair at Asialink?

Andrew Robb: From my time in parliament and being heavily involved in the region, I could see that we've got a long way to go before we become an integral part of the region. We have a huge trading relationship, but as far as meaningful people-to-people contacts, business-to-business contacts, we're very much in the early stages. The experience that I was able to accumulate – which came to a head with my ministerial responsibilities – put me in a good position to influence as best I could the further development of our relationship with the region. And I still feel like I have a contribution to make.

I feel Asialink is a well-established organisation to help continue that contribution. The people who put Asialink together were quite visionary. It was ahead of its time, but I think we've only just started.

AM: As Trade Minister you helped to negotiate a number of the Free Trade Agreements between Australia and major regional players. What did that teach you about Australia's relationships in Asia?

AR: That period reinforced my conclusion that you never succeed with negotiations unless both sides win. Both sides have strengths, so you need to access those strengths. I learnt that you have to put yourself in the shoes of the counterpart with whom you're negotiating, and that takes some subtlety and most of all mutual respect. Reaching successful trade agreements is no different to what a business does, or even in the arts, music, IT or agriculture. No matter what area of activity, you need to get to a point of mutual respect. Our country and those in Asia are so different so we need to appreciate and respect and enjoy the differences. Once you get to that point you can really collaborate.

Unfortunately, I think that Australia has a long way to go. Yes, 80 per cent of our trade is with the region, but most of that happens through large brokers and logistics companies. Very little of the trade is with Australian businesses being actively engaged. It is pretty easy to put oranges on a ship, but you can't put medical services on a ship, or education. Services are the future – and making these work requires specific intellectual property and skills. People need to spend time in one another's countries to understand; they need to put roots in the region. These FTAs aren't the end of the story, they need strong and active engagement from members of the Australian community and the communities in our region.



AM: You're an economist and long-term politician, but beyond the economic and trading context, what are the connections with the region that inspire you?

AR: I've found inspiration in some unexpected places. I was recently at the launch of an Australia-Chinese education venture focused on advanced technology and design. As part of the opening function in Suzhou there were a number of people from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra that came and played. It might sound insignificant, but the Chinese really appreciated that presence. You could see how meaningful it was to have that orchestra at such a ceremony.

That's why I think we need to make sure we don't have the engagement happen in silos. In the region, an appreciation of arts and culture runs right through the relationships you have in business or education or trade. The arts have a great role to play in developing that mutual respect.

Asialink has been a pioneer in this area – and that is powerful because it isn't easy. As a young person I heard Chinese music but I didn't understand it, I didn't enjoy it. Now that I've had the opportunity to explore it further through travel and have it explained to me by Chinese friends, I have a totally different understanding. I can now say that music and contemporary art are some of the richest experiences I've gained from being in the region.

AM: Has the mission of Asialink already been achieved? What are the current big challenges to Australia's successful engagement with Asia?

AR: Language learning is a huge challenge in Australia and needs to be reinstated. My kids learnt Indonesian at school, but since that time it has dropped off the curricula in so many Australian schools. If we're going to achieve this mutual respect in the region, we need to recognise the importance of language in understanding culture. Our education system needs to foster this. If young people could understand the histories and the cultures of Asia earlier, they could then be compelled to learn independently and grow those skills and knowledge. We need to cultivate much greater interest, by Australians, in the Asian region and its people.

THANK YOU...

1989 — 2017

Asialink’s logo is based on the Chinese character for ‘person’. When two of these characters are put together, as they are in Asialink’s logo, they mean ‘everyone’ or ‘people’.

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We acknowledge them and look with anticipation to the future.

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