

## 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER



# Australia’s leading centre for creative engagement with Asia

**30** YEARS OF INSIGHTS  
CAPABILITIES  
& CONNECTIONS

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# DRIVING CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

**We thank you for your support as we continue to drive creative engagement between Australia and Asia.**

**2019 was a special year for Asialink at the University of Melbourne.**

**We expanded our team in each of our program areas, including welcoming new directors for Asialink Arts and Diplomacy.**

We helped develop Australians' regional insights, capabilities and connections, and set out to reach wider audiences in fresh ways, including through a new focus on rural and regional Australia and engaging our Asian-Australian and Indigenous communities.

Across Asialink, we convened over 200 events, working with a wide array of partners both in Australia and the region; delivered our education programs in over 20 countries in the Asia Pacific; engaged with thousands of Australian executives through Asialink Business; co-hosted strategic Track 2 dialogues with China, India and ASEAN; and focused on the depth of Asian-Australian engagement through our creative Alumni.

Deepening knowledge and understanding of the Asia Pacific is a central pillar of what we do as an organisation - and in 2019 there were some real highlights. Insightful and inspiring speeches on Australia's engagement with Asia hosted by Asialink this year included the Prime Minister's Address, the Weary Dunlop Asia Lecture and a speech by the Winner of the 40 under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australian Awards, STEM champion Dr Muneera Bano.

We hosted a range of distinguished guests as part of our events and insights program. Together with Bloomberg, in June 2019 we hosted the Prime Minister's first major foreign policy address of his new term of government.

At our annual Asialink Chairman's dinner, it was an enormous pleasure to award diplomat, public servant and educator Peter Varghese AO the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Medal, recognising his tremendous, life-long contribution to Australian foreign policy and engagement with Asia.

In his Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Lecture, 'Asian Australians: Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling', former Foreign Minister and then Chancellor of the Australian National University (ANU), The Hon Gareth Evans AC QC, highlighted the need for greater cultural diversity in Australia's leadership and the important role our Asian-Australian community can play in navigating engagement with the region.

Other prominent speakers at our events included Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, The Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Senator The Hon Simon Birmingham, Victorian Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade, The Hon Martin Pakula and many more.

The inaugural Asian-Australian Leadership Summit and 40 under 40 Influential Asian-Australian Awards, presented with PwC and the ANU in September, celebrated the exceptional ongoing contributions of young Asian-Australians, and aimed to tackle head-on the discrimination that continues to impede this community across sectors.



Participants at the two day national Asian-Australian Leadership Summit



Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Hon Marise Payne with students from Marrickville Public School for the launch of Australia Now ASEAN

It underlined the systematic under-representation of Asian-Australians at the most senior levels of leadership in our government, companies and universities and the need for a greater focus on cultural diversity in Australia.

Our Arts program launched a new strategy and introduced innovative creative connections across the region, providing global creative exchange opportunities to 23 individual artists and arts professionals, delivering the first Victoria-Jiangsu sister-state arts exchange, and a new India Australia dance exchange.

Dr Pippa Dickson delivered keynote addresses at Beijing Design Week and the Setouchi Asia Forum in Japan and led delegations of Australian creative workers and artists to Korea and India.

Through the Asia Education Foundation (AEF), our education program held the first ever National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum, connecting students from across Australia with their Southeast Asian counterparts in real time at the Sydney Opera House.

The AEF delivered programs including the inaugural PNG-Australia Partnership Secondary Schools initiative - a first of its kind - and the celebrated BRIDGE program, connecting schools in Australia with partners in over 20 countries in the Indo-Pacific to reach thousands of students and educators.

Asialink Business continued to deliver real impact as Australia's National Centre for Asia Capability. The groundbreaking Women in Innovation Leadership Dialogue and the Activating Asia and Growing with Asia reports shed further light on the opportunities for Australian business right on our doorstep.



Andrew Robb AO speaking at the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Lecture

Asialink Business also delivered capability development programs and events to 14,000 executives in the workforce across 24 locations in Australia and Asia. A focus on Asia-capable leadership also saw tremendous growth in both our flagship Asialink Leaders Program and support of the New Colombo Plan, through both pre-departure training and professional development for alumni.

The Asialink Diplomacy team offered a breadth of insights in a busy year for elections across the region. The team criss-crossed Southeast Asia developing social entrepreneurs as part of the Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program, delivered briefings ahead of the seventh Asian Youth Forum, supported several Australia-Asia youth dialogues, held Track 2 Dialogues with China, India and ASEAN, and participated in key regional forums.

**Successful engagement only works when there is mutual respect and the recognition that diversity and partnerships at home and throughout the region makes us stronger.**

As we set out on a new strategic direction that prioritises the voice and mobility of rural, regional and indigenous communities, along with the large and growing Asian-Australian community, we invite you to think about how you or your organisation can contribute to a new creative engagement with Asia.

**Penny Burt**  
Group CEO  
Asialink

**Andrew Robb**  
Chairman  
Asialink

**Michael Wesley**  
Deputy  
Vice-Chancellor  
International  
The University of  
Melbourne



Penny Burt hosts the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Lecture



# ASIALINK

We drive creative engagement between Australia and Asia to build a strong shared future.

Uniquely Australian.

Thirty years of insights, capabilities and connections.



## Insights:

Asialink provides a unique platform to create, curate and share thought leadership, research and knowledge through diverse voices in our region.



## Capabilities:

Asialink supports people and organisations with immersive learning experiences to grow and scale their interest and skills to navigate successfully in Asia.



## Connections:

Asialink communities are continuously building relationships as we activate networks between sectors, people and places.

# 2019 HIGHLIGHTS



24

Number of countries where programs have been delivered in the Asia Pacific

215,000

Number of users of Asialink Business market resources online

15,000

Number of participants at our events, exchanges and capability programs

100,000

People engaged in our Asia Education Foundation networks

300

Number of new pieces of research and insights published

24

Number of Australian creative exchanges to Asia across

10

countries

17 million

Number of media impressions

- International school partnerships
- ▲ Creative exchanges
- Events and training programs in Australia, Asia and online



# THIRTY YEARS OF INSIGHTS, CAPABILITIES AND CONNECTIONS

**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 philanthropic foundations.**

In 1990, Ken Myer AC DSC was appointed the first Chairman of Asialink. In 1991, Asialink became a Centre of the University of Melbourne under an agreement between the Myer Foundation and the University and launched its first public programs.

For 30 years, Asialink has continued to evolve in response to changing Australian and global contexts. Over that time Australia, and Australia's relationships with Asia, have changed dramatically in many ways and endured in others.

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 the countries and cultures of the Indo-Pacific. 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 region.

Asialink has prioritised working with, listening to and learning from our Asian counterparts. The voices of our partners in the region and Australia have provided the bedrock for all our programs from our inception until today.

## Honouring a special contribution to Asia-Australia relations

Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Medal



**Former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Peter Varghese AO was awarded the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Medal.**

Each year Asialink awards the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Medal to an Australian who has shown long-term commitment to enhancing the quality of life in the region and improving Australia-Asia relations.

The 2018 Medal was awarded (March 2019) to an outstanding Asian-Australian, Peter Varghese AO – the former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and now Chancellor of the University of Queensland.



Andrew Robb AO, Peter Varghese AO and Lindley Edwards

It marks his career-long commitment to improving Australia's understanding of, and engagement with Asia – through vigorously advocating for deepening Australia's economic, security and cultural ties with Asia.

He has been an architect of policy – for example, heading the secretariat that drafted Australia's first White Paper on foreign and trade policy, and authoring the strategy for Australia's economic engagement with India through to 2035.

In his acceptance speech, he highlighted that 'Asia's place in Australia's future will only grow'. In shaping Australia's responses to 'an Asia of multipolarity', he remarked: 'Yes, there are uncertainties and yes, we will have to make some tough choices, strategic and economic.'

He concluded:

**'Australia cannot solve the geopolitical challenges facing the region. But we can prepare for them ... with a sense of social and moral purpose and a commitment to the best interests of our community. It is what Weary Dunlop would have striven for.'**



# Remarks on receiving the Weary Dunlop Medal

Peter Varghese AO,  
Chancellor of the University of Queensland



## Receiving the Asialink Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Asia Medal, Peter Varghese AO reflected on the challenging time ahead for Australia in a contested Asia, a strategically ruptured Asia and an Asia of multipolarity.

Thank you, Lindley, for those generous remarks.

Thank you, Gareth, for a magisterial lecture, characteristically full of substance and solutions.

I once worked as a speechwriter for Gareth. It was the definition of redundancy.

To Andrew Robb, Penny Burt and Mukund Narayana Murti, I thank Asialink for this honour.

The medal for sustained work on Asian engagement really belongs to Asialink because you have been such a consistent and important advocate and promoter of Australia’s links to Asia.

No more so than Andrew Robb. And I also want to acknowledge Sid Myer and the Myer family for their long-standing support for the work of Asialink.



Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Frances Adamson, attends the Asialink Chairman's Dinner

To my wife, Margaret, without whom there would have been little achieved in my professional life, a very special thank you – although I suspect she may think less Asia and more domestic might have been a much better policy mix.

I am humbled by this honour. Humbled to be in the company of such distinguished previous recipients who include a former prime minister, two foreign ministers, including of course Gareth Evans, and other great Australians such as Dick Woolcott and Ross Garnaut, and Sister Mary Theodore whose lifelong work in India with the disabled was such an inspiration.

Humbled by the connection to Weary Dunlop who was a great leader and an inspiration: a man who was entitled to be bitter but chose instead to walk the path of his better angels.

As Sir Ninian Stephen said of Weary Dunlop: ‘With perhaps only Douglas Mawson, of all Australians, he shares a lone eminence of sustained heroism and superb achievement’.

**These are challenging times for Australia and Asia. We face, to adapt a phrase from the late Tom Wolfe, a ‘bonfire of certainties’. Optimism is the currency of diplomacy.**

But these days some of us still wake up optimists but go to bed pessimists.



Mr Dhruv Deepak Saxena, Riverina Oils & BioEnergy; Dr Pradeep Philip, Deloitte Access Economics; Dr Stephanie Fahey, Austrade, and Mr Mukund Narayanamurti, Asialink Business, appear on a panel at the Asialink Chairman's Dinner

We are currently in the middle of a profound transition in international relations and that is probably the worst time to put it into perspective. Some of what we are seeing today are exaggerations or aberrations, which are unlikely to become enduring trends. But others go to the bedrock of global geo-economics. Deciding which is which is far from easy.

What we can be certain about is that Asia’s place in Australia’s future will only grow. It will not be the Asia of the last four decades: the Asia, which combined strong economic growth with strategic stability; the Asia of straightforward choices.

The next four decades will likely see a contested Asia, a strategically ruptured Asia searching for a new settling point. An Asia of multipolarity. An Asia, which both helps to drive global growth and grapples with the large challenges of economic reform.

If that sounds like a hard road, we should never lose faith that it can also for Australia be a fruitful journey.

**We cannot eliminate the uncertainties ahead. But there is much we can and should do about positioning Australia in Asia. That means understanding our advantages in proximity, in strong institutions, in high skills, in world-class universities, and in complementary economies.**

The truth is there are few countries, which are better placed to reap the economic returns of closer engagement with a changing Asia than Australia.

But for Australia Asia is so much more than a market. It is where our security will be determined and through migration and connections forged by diaspora communities it will over time exert a larger influence on our society, on the way we see ourselves and are seen by others.

**For two centuries, Australians have juggled history, geography, values and culture. We may not see it clearly yet, but we are creating something distinctive: a diverse but cohesive society; a nation grounded in the values of the enlightenment but open to new ideas; a community with a strong sense of place but recognising that we must make our way in a world where the centre of gravity is shifting.**

And for all of the baggage we carry on issues such as race, and our historical fears of Asia, Australians, more than any other country I am familiar with, show a willingness to accept people for whom they are not where they come from. There are, and always will be, exceptions to these traits but taken together they are a wonderful asset in our engagement with Asia.

Yes, there are uncertainties and yes, we will have to make some tough choices, strategic and economic. But if we play to our strengths, if we are clear-eyed about our interests and values, if we engage with both our head and our heart, Australia can be exquisitely positioned in Asia.

That is my main message. Australia cannot solve the geopolitical challenges facing the region.

But we can prepare for them and think through what form we want them to take. That is what the burden of leadership is ultimately most about: not just anticipating trends but working to shape them with a sense of social and moral purpose and a commitment to the best interests of our community. It is what Weary Dunlop would have striven for.



# Time for a national strategy to break the bamboo ceiling

The Hon Gareth Evans AC QC



The Asialink Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Medal



The Hon Gareth Evans AC QC

**At the 2019 Asialink Chairman's Dinner in Sydney, the Honourable Gareth Evans AC QC, former Australian Foreign Minister and Chancellor of the Australian National University, delivered a passionate address urging Australia recognise the presence of a 'bamboo ceiling'.**

In delivering the annual Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Lecture, he called for a national strategy to address the under-representation of Asian-Australians in senior leadership positions, which culminates from an ingrained mix of racial discrimination, stereotyping, cultural values and administrative priorities.

Studies show Asian-Australians account for 12 per cent of the population yet occupy only 1.6% of CEOs of ASX200 companies, federal government ministers, heads of federal and state government departments and vice chancellors are Asian-Australians.

He remarked:

**'Asian-Australians have been under-appreciated and under-utilised in our listed companies and public institutions for far too long. It's time to move beyond rhetoric to action.'**

And he took the lead, proposing a three-pronged strategy: Australia needs better data to track the ethnic and cultural composition of the population; must set 'realistic targets and timelines' for improving the representation of Asian-Australians in leadership roles; and should identify 'detailed strategies and programs' to change mindsets, including training and mentoring programs for employers.

He also announced an exciting joint initiative of The Australian National University, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and Asialink to convene an Asian-Australian Leadership Summit to flesh out the reasons and solutions for the lack of Asian-Australians at the top of key organisations.

## 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians Awards 2019

### Arts, culture and sport

**Category winner: Benjamin Law** – Author

**Marc Fennell** – Journalist & Interviewer, SBS, ABC & Audible

**Walter Lee**, General Manager, Strategy, Australian Football League

**Leah Jing McIntosh** – Editor, LIMINAL magazine

**Chris Pang** – Actor/Producer, Empty by Design, Crazy Rich Asians, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Sword of Destiny, Tomorrow, When the War Began

**Pallavi Sharda** – Actress, Les Norton, Tom and Jerry, Lion, Besharam, Beecham House, Hawaizaada

### Community and advocacy

**Category winner: Khunapong Khunaraksa** – Board Member at Gravity Water and Founder/CEO at Khunapong Consulting

**Cat Thao Nguyen** – Co-Founder & Chairperson, Australia Vietnam Young Leadership Dialogue

**Yasmine Poole** – Youth Ambassador, Plan International

**Alan Wu** – Member of the Board, Oxfam Australia

**Weh Yeoh** – Founder, OIC Cambodia and Co-Founder and CEO Umbo

### Corporate

**Category winner: Dr Imran Kai-Shek Bin Omar Lum** – Director, Islamic Finance, National Australia Bank

**Queenie Chow** – Microinsurance Center @ Milliman Consulting Association of Australian Actuaries

**Matthew Park** – Vice President, Communications and Media, Oil Search

**Adriana Saw** – Assurance Chapter Lead – Deposits & Wealth Australia & New Zealand Bank Group

**Shuyin Tang** – Partner, Patamar Capital

### Education

**Category winner: Dr Muneera Bano** – Lecturer, Swinburne University of Technology

**Eddie Woo** – Mathematics Teacher, Author & Communicator, NSW Department of Education

**Dr Huong Le Thu** – Senior Analyst, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

**Shivali Nayak** – Senior Content Producer, Learn English, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

**Dr Mimi Zou** – Fellow in Chinese Commercial Law, Oxford University

### Entrepreneurship

**Category winner: Tim Fung** – Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Airtasker

**Fung Lam** – Co-Founder and Director, New Aim

**Sarah Liu** – Founder and Managing Director, The Dream Collective

**Zion Ong** – Director and Co-Founder, Alyka

**William Taing** – Co-Founder and Director, Beanstalk AgTech

### Science and medicine

**Category winner: Dr Meru Sheel** – Westpac Research Fellow, ANU

**Dr Zhaojun Han** – Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Scientist and Co-Founder, CSIRO and University of New South Wales Joint Lab

**Dr Jagnoor Jagnoor** – Senior Research Fellow and Head of Injury Division, The George Institute for Global Health

**Dr Rebecca Lim** – Scientific Director, Monash Health Translation Precinct, Hudson Institute of Medical Research

**Dr Chengxue Helena Qin** – Group Leader & Baker Fellow, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

### Professional services

**Category winner: Astrid Haban-Beer** – Barrister, Victorian Bar

**Jehan Kanga** – Deep Tech Lead, High Growth Ventures, KPMG

**Sue Ann Khoo** – Director, Greenwoods & Herbert Smith Freehills

**Kenneth Hong** – Principal, H&H Lawyers

**Sek-Loong Tan** – Partner, Boston Consulting Group

### Public sector / government

**Category winner: Philip Le Liu** – Councilor, City of Melbourne

**Helen Dai** – Director, Office of Deputy CEO Austrade

**Yen Tan** – Regional Director (Hong Kong, Macau and South China), Trade & Investment Northern Ireland, The British Consulate-General Hong Kong

**Andrew Wan** – Chief Information Security Officer, The Smith Family





## Celebrating diversity in leadership

The 40 Under 40: Most Influential Asian-Australian Awards and the Inaugural Asian-Australian Leadership Summit

Monica Tan

Ming Long

Benjamin Law

**In a nation-wide first, outstanding Asian-Australians have been recognised for their achievements in the 40 Under 40: Most Influential Asian-Australian Awards.**

The Awards were a key part of the Asian-Australian Leadership Summit (AALS), which was held in Melbourne on 12th and 13th September 2019.

From individuals like Dr Meru Sheel who led a team of health professionals that responded to a 2018 diphtheria outbreak among Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh, to others like Benjamin Law, one of Australia's most prominent writers and TV personalities, the winners were both diverse and deserving for their outstanding contributions to Australian society.

The AALS is a joint initiative of Asialink, PwC, Australian National University and Johnson Executive Search, designed to address the under-representation of Asian-Australians in senior leadership positions.

The initiative was held over two days, and consisted of a NextGen Program, a Leadership Summit, and a Gala Dinner where the 40 Under 40: Most Influential Asian-Australian Awards were announced.

The Awards place a spotlight on young influential Asian-Australians by recognising the contribution they have brought to Australia's engagement with Asia in the fields of arts, culture and sport; community and advocacy / not for profit; corporate; education; entrepreneurship; science and medicine; professions; and public sector / government.



Writer and Chef Adam Liaw delivers a keynote speech



Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong addresses the Summit



Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan



Professor Tim Soutphommasane



Author Benjamin Law receives his category award from Asialink Chairman Andrew Robb AO

***'If we are not careful, we are at risk of creating a new class in Australian society: a class of professional Asian-Australian coolies...who may nonetheless be permanently locked out from the ranks of their society's leadership.'***

PROFESSOR TIM SOUTPHOMMASANE

The award winners were selected with the help of leading executive search firm, Johnson, and a panel of judges that included the firm's Managing Partner Jason Johnson, Chancellor of the University of Queensland Peter Varghese AO, Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan, Director Naseema Sparks AM, celebrity chef Adam Liaw, Managing Editor of Australian Financial Review, Joanne Gray, PwC's Asia Practice Leader Andrew Parker, along with Penny Burt, the Group CEO of Asialink.

The Summit importantly drew attention to the breathtaking absence of Asian-Australians in senior leadership positions and started the conversation about how we can break through the 'bamboo ceiling' in key institutional areas across Australia.

**While Australia celebrates itself as a 'multicultural success story', the hard reality is that Asian-Australians are simply not getting into senior leadership positions at the same rate as non-Asian Australians.**

'It's time to celebrate the stories of success and confront the underlying issues that are holding back some of our best talent. Cultural diversity in leadership needs to be a high priority across our community', said PwC Asia Practice Leader Andrew Parker.



Next Generation workshop participants

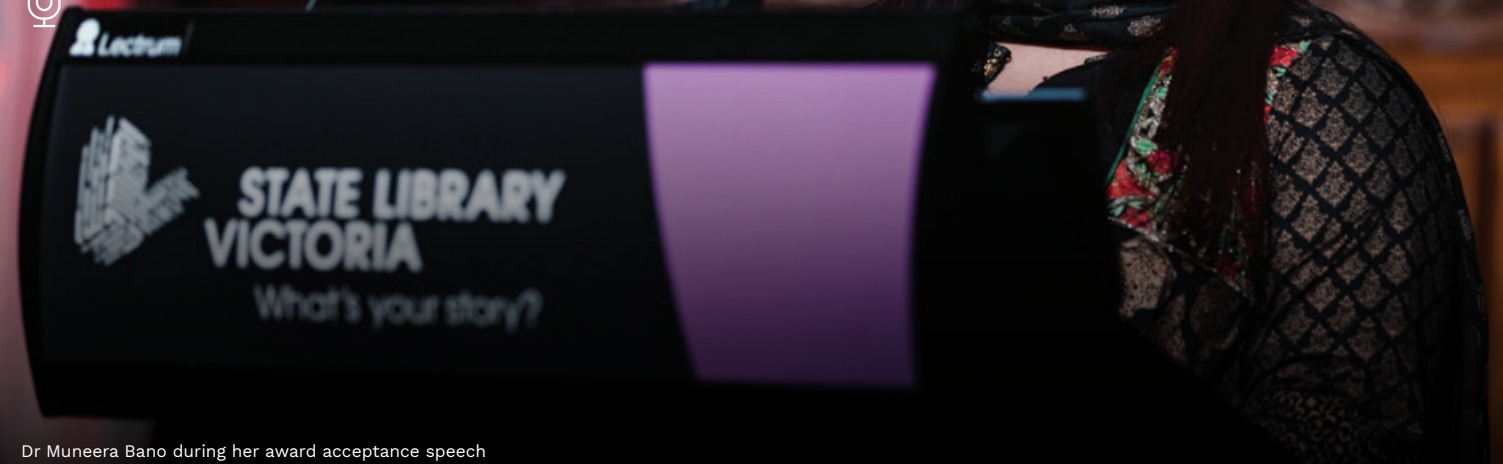


Wesa Chau, Yasmin Poole and Tuanh Nguyen



# Glass, bamboo and concrete ceilings

The 40 Under 40: Most Influential Asian-Australian Awards



Dr Muneera Bano during her award acceptance speech

**Accepting the inaugural 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australian Award, Dr Muneera Bano shared her personal journey breaking the bamboo ceiling, as a rising leader and one of Australia's 'Superstars of STEM.'**

Thank you so much Asialink, PwC, and Australian National University for this great initiative, and for giving us all the opportunity to demonstrate and celebrate the diversity and talent of Asian-Australian leadership.

Today, throughout the day, I heard about two types of ceilings – glass ceiling and bamboo ceiling. Let me add another one to this list, a ceiling made out of concrete, that I have seen to exist for Pashtun women. It cannot be smashed like glass or broken down like a bamboo, it can only be blasted apart.

Whenever I mention my ethnicity to others, most of the time I get puzzled looks in return; who are Pashtuns? My ready to go answer is, do you know Malala Yousafzai, and I have never heard no for this question. Yes, she is a Pashtun girl with a world-wide famous story and the youngest recipient of the Nobel Prize.

I didn't have to face the cultural adversaries like her, but my mother who grew up in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the north-west province of Pakistan, was denied education only because of her gender. My father on the other hand, also a Pashtun man, was able to travel to North America and had access to higher education back in the 60s.

Both my parents moved to the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, where I was born and raised. I am the youngest and the fifth child, and the only sister of four elder brothers. My parents raised me as equal to my brothers in every aspect including education. But my father made it clear to me at a very young age that unlike my brothers, my education was a privilege, that was denied to the previous generation of women in my family and to a significant number of Pashtun girls even in my age.



Asian-Australian Leadership Summit category winners, judges and supporters

**I valued my education and decided that I will go all the way to a PhD in a male-dominated field. I did my Bachelors and Masters in Computer Science in Pakistan and seven years ago, I came to Australia to pursue my PhD in Software Engineering at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).**

One of my brothers accompanied me for moral support, but he had to leave after a week. It was only then the reality hit me in the face. I had never lived without my family before. Not only that I had no family in Australia, but also there was not a single person in this whole country I could call as 'my friend'.

I tried to be as brave as I could for my brother at the time of goodbye, who was catching a train at Central Station in Sydney for the airport. When he left, I came outside the central station and sat down on the stairs and cried like a child, who has just lost her family in the crowd of strangers.

The fact that I was at the train station at rush hour, the huge crowd of strangers was making it worse for me. I started to walk towards the university. I could see the tower building of UTS all the way from the station. That tower fondly referred to as the 'ugliest tower of Sydney', is not only beautiful to me but also symbolises a special meaning for me. That day when I looked at it, it made me realise that there is, after all, one place in Sydney that I can call as mine.

My University! I belonged to an educational institute, and at that moment, I was brought back to my sense of purpose, why I left the comfort of my home and came to Australia. My first sense of belongingness in this country, while still being an international student, was my university. That's where I not only did my academic research, excelled in my field, learnt and grew but also made life-lasting new friends including my PhD supervisor Professor Didar Zowghi.







40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians Awards Dinner

Three years later I graduated with a PhD in Software Engineering and broke my concrete ceiling as a Pashtun woman. I could see some other graduating students worried about life after PhD, but I was no longer afraid of the future.

My PhD was not a pursuit of a degree in the form of a piece of paper. It was a transformational journey of my life towards empowerment. That day I felt this enormous sense of achievement, resilience and fearlessness, so much so that I knew there never ever is going to be any ceiling, glass or bamboo, that I am not capable of bringing down, for I am the breaker of my 'concrete ceiling'.

Last year, I raised my hand to become one of the Superstars of STEM as it is now time to show other women like me on how to cross the psychological boundaries and break the stereotypes. I grew up without a sister, and today, there is not a single city in Australia where I don't have a sister. I have 59 amazing sisters, Superstars of STEM all over the country.

In the NextGen Summit, the first panel was about 'You can't be what you can't see!' Well, I did not see a single Pashtun man or a woman throughout the Summit or currently in this room. A glass ceiling allows you to see through it, you just can't move up. The bamboo ceiling, allows you to hear what is happening on the other side, even if you can't see it. A concrete ceiling would not let you perceive any reality behind that confinement. What do you do then?

Well just because you can't see, does not mean you can't dream, and once you have a dream, it's your choice how hard you will work to turn it into reality regardless of the odds. I came to Australia as an immigrant, single, Muslim, Pashtun woman from Pakistan, and each of these identifiers is a barrier that reinforces and enhances the others in a vicious cycle.

Yet, here I am today, with a PhD in Software Engineering, an academic at Swinburne University, a superstar of STEM and from tonight onwards, winner of the 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australian Leadership Award.

This award is a huge honour and a giant leap for me in my commitment to inspire the next generation of women in science and technology. Thank you, everyone, and especially the judges for considering my story worthy of honour and to be shared with everyone. ●



## Shining a light on discrimination

**A new ANU study initiated ahead of the Summit revealed that eighty-two per cent of surveyed Asian-Australians report that they have experienced discrimination in Australia.**

According to the study, which was conducted by the Australian National University's Centre for Social Research & Methods and the Social Research Centre to determine 'Exposure to and Perceptions of Discrimination', sixty-five per cent of Asian-Australians reported being discriminated against in the workplace.

The survey showed that the most common barriers to Asian-Australians obtaining leadership positions in business, professional and other organisational roles were the 'stereotypes associated with the group' (forty-two per cent) and discrimination (forty-four per cent).

According to Penny Burt, Group CEO of Asialink, the findings were a 'stark illustration of the challenges faced by Asian-Australians in our society - and particularly in the workplace'.

**'This study reinforces the need to do more to advance Asian-Australians in our workplaces, particularly given the important role that this community can play in our successful engagement with the Asian region.'**

**1.6%**



The percentage of top leadership positions in Australia occupied by Asian-Australians

As The Hon Gareth Evans AC QC remarked, Asian-Australians are an 'underappreciated and underutilised national resource'.

Australia's success in the Asian Century will depend on our ability to harness the expertise and skills of Asian-Australians in key leadership positions.

'The Summit and 40 under 40 Awards are a promising step in the right direction in both celebrating the vibrant contribution that outstanding Asian-Australians bring to our society, as well as energising the conversation surrounding the importance of Asian-Australian leadership in Australia', said Professor Evans.



# Asialink Arts

## Asialink Arts elevates the agency and capability of the Australian arts sector to engage with Asia, through insight, connections, and enhanced capability.

In 2019, Asialink Arts launched a new strategic plan with fresh initiatives, emphasising thought leadership, reciprocal exchanges, partnership and capability development as well as foregrounding arts and culture as a vital part of Australia's soft power in the region.

Image above: Pippa Samaya, *Of Trauma and Tenderness*, photographic still from a forthcoming film project with Niharika Senapati, Aopala Banerjee and Sangram Mukhopadhyay, 2019



Maicie Lalara and Aly de Groot with Maicie Lalara's 'Monster Fish', 2019



Pippa Dickson and Penny Burt at Asia-Europe Foundation Unplugged Singapore at The Projector, 2019

### Program highlights in 2019 included:

The appointment of Dr Pippa Dickson as Director in early 2019 led to broad sector consultation in Australia and across the region resulting in a new strategy for 2020 and beyond.

Throughout 2019 twenty one artists from the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria participated in Asialink Arts' creative exchanges with global collaborators in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Cambodia, China, Singapore, Japan and the Philippines. Two new reciprocal exchanges included three artists from Victoria going to China and India and artists from Japan, Taiwan and China undertook creative exchanges in Western Australia and Victoria.

Asialink Arts partnered with Artspace in Sydney on 52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS Symposium to conclude their year-long program with leading thinkers and artists from the Asia-Pacific.

A new reciprocal creative exchange was initiated with the Pickle Factory Dance Foundation in Kolkata, India. Supported by Creative Victoria, choreographer Niharika Senapati and videographer Pippa Samaya worked collaboratively to create a series of dance film works.

Asialink Arts led a delegation of five national digital media practitioners and festival producers with a range of high level industry meetings and showcases including at the three day EyeMyth Festival.



Pippa Samaya and Niharika Senapati, at the Pickle Factory Dance Foundation, Kolkata, 2019

*We are sharing our culture to the Indonesian people because we are one and that's why. The ghost net comes all the way from overseas. The rangers go to the beach and collect all the nets. That's why when they bring the net to the art centres, we share the nets and ideas. We are making crabs, turtles, fish, baskets. My granddaughter is making that monster fish. It's important we share our story and culture with Indonesian People.*

ANNABELL AMAGULA FROM ANINDILYAKWA ARTS, ASIALINK ARTS RESIDENT AT KOMUNITAS SALIHARA, INDONESIA 2019.

This has led to a multitude of ongoing business and creative outcomes. The program was supported by the Australia-India Council.

Pippa Dickson led a delegation of two Australian craft and design luminaries from Victoria to the Cheongju Craft Biennale in Korea and established a new dialogue towards ongoing craft exchanges between Australia and Korea.

Asialink Arts was commissioned by Creative Victoria to deliver a new Premier's reciprocal arts exchange program, celebrating 40 years of sister-state relations between Victoria and the Chinese province of Jiangsu. The exchange included six-week reciprocal residencies undertaken by Victorian artist Dane Lovett and Jiangsu artist Professor Xu Fei and the commissioning of artworks as diplomatic gifts.

Asialink Arts reviewed and re-established reciprocity welcoming Japanese artist Yo Yasuda on a six-week creative exchange through a partnership with Sapporo Tenjinyama Art Studio. The project was delivered in partnership with the Victorian College of the Arts, the University of Melbourne through the Norma Redpath Studio.

To support the new focus on exchange and hosting Asialink Arts presented a sold out cross-sectoral symposium examining current and imminent potential for international residency spaces. The symposium was delivered in collaboration with the Committee of Melbourne, Res Artis and Grimshaw Architects.





Nanjing artist Xu Fei and Melbourne-based artist Dane Lovett, recipients of the Victoria-Jiangsu Sister-State Artist Exchange, 2019

## AN AUSTRALIA-CHINA CONTEMPORARY ARTS EXCHANGE

*After I arrived in Melbourne, it wasn't long before I noticed that the opening line of all formal occasions is the Acknowledgement of Country, showing respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage. As I had come to Australia as an artist in residence, the idea of 'residents' really struck me... That question can relate to the ownership of the earth, to issues between people who share the living space, and to relationships between humans and nature.*

XU FEI, RECIPIENT OF THE VICTORIA-JIANGSU SISTER-STATE ARTIST EXCHANGE, 2019

### Professor Xu Fei, Artist

I had an idea for a sculpture prior to my arrival, but I changed that idea after I came here, because of the new people I met.

I noticed that Australians have kept a really good relationship with nature. One of the guides said to me, 'We're coming to the home of the birds, we're coming to their habitat, we're outsiders, so we have to be very careful and not to disturb them.'

I felt this deeply, and then I decided to make a sculpture highlighting the theme of humans and nature.

### Dane Lovett, Artist

Nanjing University [of the Arts] was so so different to my schooling – western schooling. I never really had a class about how to make lines, or mark-making.

In Nanjing I went to a class where they were just focusing on making lines on silk, and a calligraphy class, and they were just practicing, practicing, and it's this daily routine. It's really cool, so different, and in my mind a flipped way of training.

I've been trained in this Western tradition, but there is this whole other history and it's so rich. There's a lot to get out of it. I've only just touched it, a little bit, I want to go back.



Cherine Fahd, Ecdysis #2. Photographic still from video (work in progress) at Kriti Gallery, 2019-ongoing



# Asialink Business

**Asialink Business is Australia's National Centre for Asia Capability, with a mission to create an Asia capable workforce through capability development programs, research and advisory services and public forums and events.**

In 2019, Asialink Business, with support from the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, delivered a wide range of programs and new insights, reaching more businesses than ever before.



Singapore High Commissioner to Australia HE Mr Kwok Fook Seng with New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia HE Dame Annette King



Danielle Rajendram from the Asialink Business research team



Chinese Ambassador to Australia HE Cheng Jingye addresses the Asialink Leaders Program in Canberra



The Minister for Industry, Science and Technology the Hon Karen Andrews MP at the Asialink Business event - Showcasing Women Innovation Leaders in Southeast Asia and Australia

## Program highlights in 2019 included:

Over the year, nearly 14,000 individuals directly participated in Asialink Business capability development programs and events, and millions more accessed our insights through our digital channels and media outreach.

We provided tangible support for Australian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to activate strategies for growth with Asia. In partnership with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Asialink Business launched new thought leadership to help SMEs gain practical insights on Asian markets, whilst driving a national conversation on Australian SME engagement with Asia.

The team supported rural and regional communities around Australia to realise the opportunities presented by Asia's growing markets. Through an innovative partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland, Asialink Business delivered training to all 77 Queensland councils.

From established executives, to university graduates and young professionals, Asialink Business helped create Asia-capable leaders at all levels and across all sectors of the workforce. Fifty talented professionals graduated from the flagship Asialink Leaders Program.

# 14,000



Number of people who participated in Asialink Business capability development programs in 2019

Through a partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on the New Colombo Plan (NCP) Alumni Program, the team continued to foster the next generation of Australia's leaders in the Indo-Pacific, with the NCP Alumni community set to grow to 40,000 members in 2020.

Asialink Business encouraged Australian businesses to diversify their engagement with Asia. Delivering 67 events and forums in 2019, the team helped build a nuanced understanding of key trends and developments in China, while also assessing opportunities beyond China in strategic markets such as India and Southeast Asia.

Our region is in the midst of rapid digital transformation. Asialink Business supported Australian businesses to unlock new forms of innovation-led growth and connect with the region's vibrant innovation ecosystem. One of our key initiatives was a partnership with the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources to foster women in innovation and STEM leadership.





Panel at the Activating Asia report launch including Rebecca Warren, Jonathan Yeung, Livia Wang, Emma Lo Russo, Stephen Philips and Sid Myer AM

## ACTIVATING ASIA

5%

55% of Australian SMEs surveyed generate less than 5% of their annual revenue from Asian markets



With only 13% of Australian small and medium businesses (SMEs) exporting internationally, significant growth opportunities in Asia risk being overlooked. In 2019, we continued to provide tangible support for Australian SMEs, helping them to gain practical insights in Asian markets and activate strategies for growth.

In partnership with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA), our thought leadership helped SMEs to acquire new insights and bridge skills gaps, whilst driving a national conversation on Australian SME engagement with Asia. This collaboration featured two thought leadership reports, 'Growing with Asia' and 'Activating Asia', and an innovative microsite and library of SME resources.

The research found that while Australian businesses were more aware of the opportunities with Asia than ever before, most were struggling to convert this awareness into business growth - while 80% of surveyed Australian businesses had Asia on their radar, the majority generated less than five per cent of their revenue from Asian markets.

The research focused on shared learning and practical tips, and underlined three key lessons for SMEs looking to succeed in Asia's competitive markets: Asia capable staff are critical; keeping up with customers' fast changing preferences is essential; and, being 'on the ground' is a must.

Accompanied by a series of events around Australia, the research generated national media coverage, including features in The Australian and the Australian Financial Review.

The full report is available at: [www.asialinkbusiness.com.au](http://www.asialinkbusiness.com.au)



Asialink Patron Sid Myer AM was a panelist at the launch of the Activating Asia report



Lesley Woods and Jean Liu, Asialink Leaders Program participants from Herbert Smith Freehills

## THE ASIALINK LEADERS PROGRAM

90%

Percentage of participants who said the program improved their capabilities



Approaching its 25th year, our flagship Asialink Leaders Program continued to equip senior leaders and decision makers with the insights, capabilities and connections needed to drive their organisations' growth with Asia.

For the first time, all participants from around Australia came together in Melbourne for the foundation week, and in Sydney for their graduation, in addition to a mid-year Canberra intensive.

Presenters in the program included the Chinese Ambassador to Australia Cheng Jingye and National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Allan Gyngell AO, as well as: Dr Marlene Kanga, the President of the World Federation of Engineering Organisations; Wendy Holdenson, Chief Operating Officer, Mitsui & Co. (Australia); Jan Owen AM, CEO of the Foundation for Young Australians; Matt Linegar, CEO of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

All participants identified that the Leaders Program had enhanced their Asia capabilities, and over 90% said the program substantially improved their capabilities.

Following an intensive nine month journey, these 50 talented Asialink Leaders for 2019 graduated in November and joined our growing global alumni community of over 850 participants.



Dr Marlene Kanga AM, the President of the World Federation of Engineering Organisations, delivered a keynote address at the Canberra Intensive of the Asialink Leaders Program





# Building Asia-capabilities for Regional Australia

**We are deeply committed to helping communities all around Australia realise the opportunities presented by Asia’s growing markets, as part of our mission to build an Asia capable Australian workforce.**

In 2019, our team of Asia capability experts hit the road to deliver 114 training programs and 67 business forums in 24 diverse locations spanning all states and territories and online. Through our training and events, we reached nearly 14,000 participants all around Australia.

*‘The China Host Program has been immensely beneficial to our business, we have implemented many of the tools and techniques taught to us from extending our payment options that are more suited to the Chinese traveller, incorporating essential technologies into our business model, to simply being able to communicate better and gain a greater understanding of the cultural differences.*

*We truly feel that we are now offering a better experience to our Chinese guests than we were before the program, I would recommend that any business in any sector would find the program hugely beneficial, the Chinese market is growing rapidly and this has by far been the best preparation that we could have done.’*

JORDAN WOOD AND CINDY GOULET, MANAGERS, ALKINA LODGE

In partnership with Warrnambool City Council and the Australian Tourism Export Council, our innovative China Host Program won a silver medal at the prestigious RACV Victorian 2019 Tourism Awards.

With tourism representing a key growth industry for Australia, the China Host Program supported around 200 regional tourism operators along the iconic Great Ocean Road to develop the tools, knowledge and networks needed to build lasting relationships with the rising number of Chinese visitors to the region.

We travelled around Queensland to deliver a series of Business Growth Essentials workshops for Trade and Investment Queensland on building cross-cultural awareness. Held across Brisbane, Townsville, Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton, Mackay, Ipswich, Cairns, Toowoomba and Bundaberg, these workshops equipped local businesses with an understanding of business etiquette in Asia and skills to form long-term, trusted relationships.



Asia Capability experts worked with a range of tourism operators across Victoria’s Great Ocean Road



North Queensland Regional Organisations of Councils (NQROC) mayors and CEOs join an Asialink Business culture and diplomacy program held in Townsville

We were also pleased to conclude a comprehensive program of assistance for local councils in Queensland, in partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).

*‘The programs provide practical information and advice for mayors, elected representatives and executive staff looking to build strong relationships in Asia, and to help ensure communities across Queensland seize the opportunities that Asia presents... [It] provides an invaluable opportunity for mayors and council CEOs to get real-world advice, develop a pan-Asian perspective and understand the cultural differences across this diverse region.’*

GREG HALLAM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, LGAQ

As a national first, the program helped all 77 Queensland local councils to navigate the delicate cultural differences involved in fostering international business relationships, and equipped them with practical knowledge and insights on how they can support their local businesses to tap into opportunities with Asia.

This article was published in Asialink Business, A year in review: 2019



# Asialink Diplomacy

**Asialink Diplomacy stimulates high quality discussion to shape foreign policy in Australia's national interest. It deepens Australia's thinking on Asia and builds mutual understanding through key dialogues in the region.**

In 2019, Asialink Diplomacy published new insights on a range of important topics, including investment in Australia's diplomacy, convened Track II Dialogues with key regional partners and delivered an Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program.



Roundtable with the Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat Tan Sri Rebecca Sta Maria and senior business leaders



Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Hon Penny Wong at the Australia India Leadership Dialogue 2019



Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders program participants in Singapore



Asialink Diplomacy Director Melissa Conley Tyler and Australian Ambassador to ASEAN HE Jane Duke

## Program highlights 2019 included:

Asialink contributed consistently across the year to media commentary and debate on key issues in Australia and the region. From the elections in India, Indonesia and Thailand to the future of ASEAN, regional security and the evolving situation in Hong Kong, Asialink featured in media outlets including The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, Brisbane Times, The Guardian, China Daily, East Asia Forum, Australian Outlook and ABC National Radio.

New research from Asialink in 2019 revealed that Australia's investment in diplomacy, including the development assistance program, has dropped to its lowest-ever level and is considerably less than that of many of our similarly sized peers, including Canada and the Netherlands.

At a time when Australia is facing an increasingly unpredictable environment, this makes finding the resources for Australia's effective engagement with Asia more challenging. The Asialink research was widely reported.

***It is the role of an informed and engaged public that matters most in shaping the way our country thinks about itself and operates in the world.***

ALLAN GYNGELL AO FELLOW OF THE AIIA  
(ASIALINK LEADERS CANBERRA INTENSIVE)

Asialink partnered with Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies and the Asia New Zealand Foundation to hold the 12th round of the ASEAN-Australia New Zealand Dialogue, bringing together leading think tanks in the region to discuss security and economic issues.

Together with Australian Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and the Australia India Institute, Asialink also co-hosted an Australia-India Roundtable with India's Delhi Policy Group.

We also hosted roundtables for visiting delegations including from the China Institute of International Studies, India's Gateway House, Singapore Institute of International Affairs, the APEC Secretariat, ASEAN parliamentarians and the German Marshall Fund.





Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders program participants at Kranji Countryside Farmers' Market

#### AUSTRALIA-ASEAN EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM (A2ELP)

***'Although we're from eleven different countries, we all share very similar problems. We can also share a lot of solutions.'***

NOORHAFIZAH RASHID, BRUNEI

#### Smart cities and social entrepreneurship

The Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program (A2ELP) is designed to enhance leadership potential; 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. The program brought together ten social entrepreneurs from Southeast Asia and five from Australia to take part in a series of innovative learning and development opportunities.

The 2019 A2ELP had the theme of *Smart Cities*, with a focus on green infrastructure, water governance, renewable energy, innovative technologies and data analytics.

The 2019 Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program is an initiative of the Australia-ASEAN Council (AAC) and Australia Now.

'The program had a good combination of classroom workshop, panel discussion, presentations, peer-to-peer and meet and greet with diplomatic corps.'

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

'The "face-to-face" intensive program was inspiring, informative and a highlight of my social entrepreneurial journey.'

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



Prime Minister Scott Morrison delivered the first major foreign policy speech of his new term in government at an Asialink event co-hosted with Bloomberg Television in Sydney.

***The Indo-Pacific is where we live.***

***It is where we have our greatest influence and can make the most meaningful impact and contribution.***

***It is the region that will continue to shape our prosperity, security and destiny.***

***It is the region where, together with our allies, and especially the United States, our people made great sacrifices when our peace was threatened.***

***It is the region that has accounted for two-thirds of global growth over the last decade.***

***It is home to more than half the world's population.***

***It is the destination for more than three-quarters of our two-way trade.***

***It embraces our Pacific family with whom we have special relationships and duties, our close neighbours, our major trading partners, our alliance partners and the world's fastest growing economies.***

***Where else would Australia want to be?***

THE HON SCOTT MORRISON MP  
PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA  
26 JUNE 2019  
SPEECH, 'WHERE WE LIVE'  
ASIALINK, BLOOMBERG IN SYDNEY





# Asia Education Foundation

**The Asia Education Foundation (AEF) provides school leaders, teachers and students with the global perspectives and tools to amplify intercultural learning for navigating a shared future in Asia.**

In 2019, the AEF delivered programs in over 23 countries in the Asia Pacific ranging from school partnerships to professional learning, international and digital youth forums and educator exchange programs, engaging nearly 2,000 schools.



Participants of the inaugural National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House



Participants of the inaugural National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House



AEF Executive Director, Hamish Curry opening the Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House



Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham with students at DFAT Australia's Trade Through Time Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum in Adelaide

## Program highlights 2019 included:

The BRIDGE (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement) School Partnerships Program delivered by the AEF (and funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) went from strength to strength, bringing together leading school educators across the Indo-Pacific and expanding to new countries in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

Over 10 years old, the Indonesia BRIDGE School Partnership Program hosted a major stakeholder meeting with representatives from the Indonesian Ministries of Education and Culture and Religious Affairs together with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Engaging over 40 leaders from across 13 provinces, the meeting aimed to explore greater linkages between Australia and Indonesia through education.

AEF also delivered the inaugural PNGAus Partnership Secondary School Initiative involving school leaders, teachers, and students from 24 high performing schools across PNG and Australia. Over two years, this program will build capacity in teaching STEM, English, and to promote student agency and leadership through ongoing networks.

23



The number of countries in which the AEF delivered programs in 2019

2000

Schools in the Asia-Pacific engaged in AEF programs

Through a blended model of professional learning both in Australia and India, AEF partnered with Australia-India Institute (AII) to deliver the Women in School Leadership (WISL) Pilot Program for the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The program supported female principals in Victoria and India to explore the theme 'Leading schools for social change'.

A particular highlight of 2019 was the first National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum, held at the Sydney Opera House under the Australian Government's Australia Now ASEAN initiative. The forum involved students in Years 9 to 11 from across Australia, as well as students from Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand who connected via video to join the debate on 'digital connectivity'.

Through a China School Leadership Grant, AEF supported school leaders to increase their knowledge of contemporary education in China through an immersive program in Hangzhou and Ningbo, supported by the Yutong Australian Culture Centre.





The inaugural National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House

AEF provided a comprehensive program for educators from Xiacheng District, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Education in China to learn about the intrinsic approaches to teaching and learning in Australia through an intercultural lens.

Providing youth with the opportunity to engage with leading voices on Asia-Australia relations the AEF 'Engaging ASEAN Through Education' event saw Australian Ambassador to ASEAN, Her Excellency Jane Duke visit Hurlstone Agricultural High School (NSW) to speak with students and education leaders from across the state about how school communities could better engage with the ASEAN region.

In 2019 AEF developed a new suite of Youth Programs that focused on ethics, human rights, STEM, agriculture, digital connectivity, inclusive spaces and various areas of trade. The team also designed HarvestEd, an agricultural education program for global citizens, designed for secondary students in Years 9-10 to engage them with agri-tech and innovation and our links to Asia in conjunction with key experts and sites focused initially on Greater Geelong, Victoria.



The PNGAus Partnership Secondary Schools Initiative



The Jakarta launch of the University of Melbourne Indonesia Strategy by Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell was attended by Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, HE Gary Quinlan with Professor Vedi Hadiz, Director of the University's Asia Institute



A participant of the PNGAus Partnership Secondary Schools Initiative

## PNGAUS PARTNERSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

### New connections for a new dawn in Papua New Guinea relations.

The PNGAus Partnership Secondary Schools Initiative is a two-year (2019-2020) program of the Australian High Commission Port Moresby implemented by Australia Awards PNG and Asia Education Foundation.

The initiative is funded through the Australian development assistance program and partners 12 high performing PNG secondary schools with 12 Australian secondary schools over two years to build capacity in teaching STEM, English and to promote student agency and leadership and establish ongoing networks between next-generation Papua New Guineans and Australians.

Participating PNG schools were nominated by the PNG National Department of Education and represent 12 provinces. PNG schools include Keravat NHS, Passam NHS, Sogeri NHS, Wawin NHS, Port Moresby NHS, Aiyura NHS, Mt Hagan, Anditale, Gumini, Vanimo Secondary Schools plus St Marys Asitavi on AROB and St Gabriels Technical School from Gulf Province.

Australian schools included government, independent and catholic schools from Darwin, Rockhampton and Townsville, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Bundaberg, Kempsey, Sydney, Melbourne, Benalla, and Bacchus Marsh.

Each school identified a team to participate which included a school leader, two teachers and up to four Year 9-11 students.

During September and October, 70 Australian participants ventured for ten days in PNG where they worked with their PNG partner schools using a design thinking process to develop a project they could collaborate on for the next six months.

In November 2019, 86 PNG participants visited Australia for 2.5 weeks, spending three days in Melbourne on an intensive STEM-focused program, then a week with their Australian partner schools.

A number of projects were inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals as well as local issues. They focused on issues around land and water use. At a six day program in Port Moresby, groups also explored parts of East New Britain, Wewak and Sogeri.



# Putting students on the world stage

By Hamish Curry



The Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House

**The first-ever National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum gave secondary students across Australia the opportunity to debate and find consensus with their counterparts across Southeast Asia. The location - Sydney's iconic Opera House. The focus of discussion - digital connectivity.**

In 2019, it's no longer news that young people will face significant disruption in the world of work due to globalisation, technological developments and ever increasing cultural and social diversity. To be able to engage effectively on a world stage, our students' future success is dependent on how well our education system can support their development of global competence.

At Asia Education Foundation we believe that developing knowledge and familiarity with the Southeast Asian region will provide young people with the global awareness to contribute to a stronger social cohesion across communities in Australia.

As the socio-economics of the Indo-Pacific continue to develop, more and more global opportunities will arise for our young people. Our students need to be equipped with not only intercultural knowledge, but also well-developed communication and intercultural skills to engage with our region.

As many Australian state departments of education release international engagement strategies, which directly link to global competence and the need for greater intercultural learning, school communities are having intrinsic conversations as to what constitutes a world-class education.

The current challenge is giving students the opportunity to put these skills into practice in a safe learning environment which reflects the contemporary world that they're currently in and is relevant to the sort of real-world opportunities they will encounter. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says this could include intercultural collaboration on analysis of global issues, understanding difference and a shared respect for human dignity. ●



Farah Tan, Senior Consultant, Strategy & Transformation Office at Deloitte coordinates a session at the Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House

## THE AUSTRALIA-ASEAN YOUTH FORUM

**Young Australians take the stage to put their understanding of digital connectivity into practice.**

As part of Universal Children's Day on 20 November, AEF partnered with DFAT's Australia Now initiative and the Sydney Opera House to host the inaugural National Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum held at the iconic Opera House.

Designed to deepen students' understanding of our digitally connected world through an intercultural context, this full-day learner-centred program simulated a meeting between all ASEAN member states and Australia. After a national search, 70 Year 9–11 students from across the country were chosen to take part in the youth forum.

The Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum acknowledged the role of young Australians' participation in conversations about the global issues of our time. Through the theme of digital connectivity, students explored regional issues such as digital trade, digital innovation and digital infrastructure.

DFAT Director for ASEAN and Regional Programs, Ms Elena Rose, delivered the opening address at the Forum saying:

**'The Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum is an important part of the Australian Government's initiative Australia Now – which is focusing on ASEAN this year.'**

**'This initiative is connecting future innovators, leaders and social change makers across Southeast Asia. It is connecting you with one another as you forge a new generation of leaders who will help to shape peace and prosperity in our region.'**

Distinguished experts on the day included Penny Burt, Group Chief Executive Officer at Asialink, Farah Tan, Senior Consultant, Strategy & Transformation Office at Deloitte and Courtney Edwards, Services and Digital Trade at DFAT, who shared their expertise leading the student delegates through their committee sessions.



**'It's time to listen closely to the perspectives of our younger generations,' said Penny Burt, Group CEO of Asialink.**

'Given the significant global challenges on the horizon, it is vital that young Australians feel comfortable problem-solving with their counterparts in the Asian region.'

As part of these interactive committee sessions, Australian students linked via video with their student delegate counterparts in Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand to discuss issues of digital connectivity across the region.

Playing the part of in-country experts, these international students provided delegates with invaluable information and insight to feed the development of their final declaration.

'Discussing with my [international] contemporaries about how we can innovate and decide our own futures with regards to digital connectivity has been an extremely enjoyable and valuable experience', said Australian delegate Bradly McGee from Launceston Church Grammar School.

Over the course of the day, highly skilled facilitators guided collaboration between students as they sought consensus on a range of issues.

Secretary General on the day and Education Manager at AEF, Ms Sophie Fenton said:

**'Forums like this provide students with a platform to engage in meaningful discourse about issues that are being played out on the world stage.'**

'And that world stage is shrinking, as digitalisation connects people across the globe more immediately and more comprehensively than ever before.

'To thrive in a small world, we need to have an understanding of how others live in different cultures and how they think. Arguing from the perspective of the ASEAN member states, students have the opportunity to develop the ability to read and understand diversity, so that they are better positioned to engage in the small world of their future.'

This AEF program provided students and their schools with a great opportunity to develop a deeper awareness and understanding of global issues as well as an opportunity to put these skills into practice to better appreciate what it means to be an active local and global citizen.

An accumulation of the learnings from the day resulted in a final declaration which student delegates voted on as part of the Forum. One recommendation was a call for '...all ASEAN nations to invest in research into cybersecurity in order to strengthen multilateral digital trading systems'.

A key concern for many students was on education, resulting in a recommendation which asked that 'digital education be implemented into primary and secondary schooling through government programs'.

The Forum again highlighted that young people deeply care about how people engage with the disruption that technology is creating and how we navigate its impact.

Students were true delegates, putting aside their differences, uniting as young people from around Australia and Southeast Asia to offer their knowledge and ideas for a more connected and collaborative world.

To find out more about our upcoming youth forums and student engagement opportunities, please visit the Asia Education Foundation website: [asiaeducation.edu.au](http://asiaeducation.edu.au)



The Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House



Asialink Group CEO Penny Burt contributing during the Australia-ASEAN Youth Forum at the Sydney Opera House

# Confucius Institute

**In 2019 the Confucius Institute at the University of Melbourne, hosted by Asialink, continued to deliver a range of language and cultural programs with the aim of increasing the ability of Victorians to meaningfully engage with China.**

The Institute is a key contributor to Chinese language learning in Victoria. Language programs continued to grow in popularity. The Institute co-hosted the 2019 Victorian Chinese Language Teachers' Conference, and cultural workshops were delivered within schools across the state.

A highlight of the year was a professional development program for an in-bound delegation of the Nanjing University EMBA Program. The Institute designed profession-specific activities at leading Australian medical and health institutions. The Institute also developed a new series of business workshops that will prepare Australians for future visits to China.

The University of Melbourne entered a new five year agreement with the Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) to continue to host the Confucius Institute.



A noodle-making workshop presented at Asialink during Lunar New Year celebrations



# ASIALINK BOARD 2019

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Former Minister for Trade and Investment

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### Professor Tony Milner AM

Professorial Fellow & Director

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Group CEO  
Asialink



**Mukund Narayanamurti**

Chief Executive Officer  
Asialink Business



**Hamish Curry**

Executive Director  
Asia Education Foundation



**Pippa Dickson**

Director  
Asialink Arts



**Melissa Conley Tyler**

Director  
Asialink Diplomacy



**Julia Gong**

Director  
Confucius Institute



**Bernice McDonald**

Director of Administration



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We would also like to thank all our partners, Asialink Chairman's Circle members and donors, Asialink Business corporate members, clients and stakeholders, and those individuals and organisations who make what we do possible.



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*In 2019 we were deeply saddened by the passing of Bernice McDonald.*

*A linchpin of Asialink for more than 16 years, Bernice was a key liaison with the University of Melbourne and a critical contributor to many of the organisation’s achievements.*

*For her professionalism, empathy and mentorship, she leaves an indelible mark on Asialink and will be greatly missed.*



**30** YEARS OF INSIGHTS  
CAPABILITIES  
& CONNECTIONS

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