Media Release

Friday, 5 February 2021

# New Asialink Advisory Council appointed

The University of Melbourne has appointed a new Advisory Council for Asialink, Australia’s leading centre for creative engagement with Asia. Asialink works with diverse communities in Australia and Asia to build a strong, shared future for all.

The new Council will be chaired by Peter Varghese AO, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Chancellor of the University of Queensland. As a diplomat, foreign policy maker and now educational leader, Mr Varghese has worked to ensure Australia embraces both the opportunities and challenges presented by our immediate region. He has been an architect of policy, heading the secretariat that drafted Australia’s first White Paper on foreign and trade policy in 1996-1997 and authoring a ground-breaking plan for Australia’s economic engagement with India through to 2035.

The other new appointments bring a diverse bench of senior expertise to Asialink across its program areas – arts, business, diplomacy and education – and from across Australia. They include Australian Industry Group Chief Executive Innes Willox AM, Vantage Asia Chairman Jason Yat-Sen Li, Sherman Centre for Culture & Ideas founder Dr Gene Sherman AM, OzAsia Festival Artistic Director Annette Shun Wah, former Senator and Walk Free Head of Government Advocacy Lisa Singh, KPMG Australia Partner and Board Member Corrina Bertram, and University of Kansas School of Education Foundation Distinguished Professor and Melbourne Graduate School of Education Professor in Educational Leadership Yong Zhao. The new representative of the Myer Family, one of the founders and an ongoing supporter of Asialink, will be Edward Myer, Acting CEO of Placie.

University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell said it is important for Australia to strengthen its engagement with Asia.

“Asialink’s mission to build networks, forge new communities of shared interests, deepen mutual understanding, and build inclusive prosperity can make a difference to Australia. Asialink’s new Council will play a key role in guiding the organisation to deliver national impact on Asia-Australia engagement,” Professor Maskell said.

“The new Council appointments will make a significant contribution to Asialink. I would like to thank the outgoing members of the previous Asialink Board, including the Chairman of Asialink and Asialink Business, The Hon. Andrew Robb AO, for their service and support for Asialink.”

New Chairman of the Asialink Council, Peter Varghese, said he was honoured to lead the Council: “If we are to come to grips with the big challenges and opportunities flowing from a rapidly changing Asia, we will need to know our region at a deeper level: to understand its many histories, its cultures, its economic drivers, its strategic ambitions and its views of Australia and our place in the world. That has been Asialink’s core work since its inception over thirty years ago.”

Asialink CEO Penny Burtt said: “Peter has been a vigorous advocate for deepening Australia’s economic, security and cultural ties with Asia. His energy, experience and deep networks across the region will be a tremendous asset as Chair of the Asialink Council.”

Find the full list of the new Advisory Council members [here](https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/about-us/the-asialink-council).

**Media enquiries: Madeleine Bond | Asialink |** [**m.bond@asialink.unimelb.edu.au**](mailto:m.bond@asialink.unimelb.edu.au)