Australia's Asia Education Imperative:
Trends in the Study of Asia and Pathways for the Future

Report of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA)

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ISBN 978-0-7334-4056-4 (e-book)

ISBN 978-0-7334-4057-1 (print)

Design and layout: Elly Kent

Front Cover image:

Arwin Hidayat, *Wasingun*, 2021

Buffalo hide, acrylic paint, and wood

(Artwork exhibited at the 2022 Asian Studies Association of Australia Biennial Conference Image captured by Simon Milder Photographer)

Suggested citation:

Aspinall, E & Crouch, M, 2023, *Australia's Asia Education Imperative: Trends in the Study of Asia and Pathways for Reform,* Asian Studies Association of Australia, Canberra, Australia. http://doi.org/10.26190/ha4q-dm52

Contents

Acknowledgements

This report was made possible by both institutional support and the generous intellectual contributions of colleagues committed to Asian Studies in Australia. We acknowledge the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Law School and the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University (ANU), for their financial support for this report.

We thank research assistants Natasha Naidu and Colum Graham for their excellent assistance in compiling information and preparing figures for this report. Natasha undertook background research on research centres, government policies, dual degrees and off-shore campuses. Colum compiled data and conducted analysis on ARC grants. Maxine McArthur (Bell School, ANU) copy edited the report; Elly Kent designed the layout. The Australian Human Rights Institute at the University of New South Wales funded the printing and distribution of hardcopies.

In early 2019, initial consultations leading to this report were held in Sydney and Melbourne. In November 2019, we convened a workshop at the ANU. We thank the following scholars who contributed to that workshop: Kate McGregor, Priya Chacko, Mridula Nath Chakraborty, David Hundt, Anthony Milner, Anne McLaren, Robert Cribb, David Hill, Michael Barr, Assa Doron, Matt Davies, Patrick Jory, Rebecca Suter, James Leibold, Tanya Jakimow, Georgina Drew, Ruth Barraclough, Jacqui Baker, Shuge Wei, Eva Nisa, Rebecca Gidley, Shameem Black, Yuri Takahashi and Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan. We also thank Colum Graham for his efforts in organising the event at ANU. As a result of this workshop, in 2020, a series of articles on the state of Asian Studies was published in the *Asian Currents* blog. In 2022, a further series of articles on the achievements of ASAA was published, consisting of contributions by David Hundt, Georgina Drew, and Rheny Pulungan. This report draws on and cites findings from these articles. The full list of articles is included in the references.

We thank members of the ASAA Council (2021–2022) for their support and feedback on a draft: Alexander Davis, Arjun Subrahmanyan, David Hundt, Elena Williams, Elisabeth Kramer, Kate McGregor, Kayoko Hashimoto, Li Narangoa, Minerva Inwald, Nisha Thapliyal, Rebecca Cairns, Rheny Pulungan, Sharyn Davis and Yu Tao.

In addition, the following persons provided input on draft versions of this report: Anne McLaren, Annie Pohlman, Andrew MacIntyre, Andrew Rosser, Anthony Langlois, Anthony Milner, Bob Smith, Caitlin Byrne, Caroline Norma, Carol Warren, Colin Brown, David Hill, David Goodman, David Brown, Elly Kent, Emma Dalton, Gerry Groot, Greg Fealy, Howard Dick, James Leibold, Jane Alhstrand, Jemma Purdey, Jen Star, Jemma Purdey, Jo Elfving-Hwang, John Ingleson, Julian Millie, Kam Louie, Kama Maclean, Kaori Okano, Kathleen Kirby, Kent Anderson, Laura Dales, Louise Edwards, Liam Prince, Michael Barr, Michael Wesley, Minako Sakai, Monika Tan, Monika Winarnita, Olivier Krischer, Priya Chacko, Purnendra Jain, Rachel Diprose, Rebecca Strating, Robin Jeffrey, Ruth Barraclough, Sandra Wilson, Sarah Biddulph, Sonia Broad, Robert Cribb, Tanya Jakimow, Tim Lindsey, Vannessa Hearman, and Vedi Hadiz. We are deeply grateful to all of these colleagues for the time they devoted to this task, and for their many important comments and corrections.

Executive Summary

For about half a century, Australia has been a global leader in the study of Asia. This report, the fifth in a series of reports since 1970, surveys the strengths of Australian university research and teaching about Asia. It does so on behalf of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), the peak academic association for the study of Asia in Australia.

The report focuses on trends in the promotion of Asia literacy in Australian universities from 2000 to 2022, outlining both achievements and challenges. It identifies a decline in government and, in many cases, university support, pointing to growing challenges in Australia's efforts to promote Asia literacy among Australian graduates at a time that Asia's rise to global prominence is more obvious than ever. It proposes renewed national commitment to Asia literacy.

The key findings of this report are as follows:

Australian Government Engagement with Asia

- There is no coordinated, national strategy to support and enhance Asia literacy, including Asian languages and Asian Studies, across all levels of education. Periods of support for Asia literacy have been punctuated by inaction, retreat, and complacency, giving rise to significant policy inconsistency and discontinuity.
- Over recent decades, Australian governments have stated that Australia has strong economic and security interests in Asia, but have varied greatly in the extent to which they recognise that pursuing these interests effectively requires sustained engagement with and in-depth understanding of Asia. The shift from Asia's rise to Asia's growing dominance in economic and geopolitical influence makes Australian government investment in Asia literacy more important than ever. The region is changing fast. Australia needs to work hard to stay engaged.
- In much of the 2010s and 2020s to date, the federal government emphasised Australia's security interests in the region over other forms of engagement. There is a need to ensure balance in Australia's economic, cultural and security engagement in Asia and to recognise that the depth and quality of engagement across all fields is enhanced by knowledge of the region and advanced language skills. Cultural engagement and people-to-people skills can determine success in growth areas such as the digital economy and popular culture, the arts and education, health and tourism, as well as in traditional areas of trade and security cooperation.

Asian Languages

- Teaching of Asian languages has suffered from policy discontinuity and fragility, with significant federally coordinated programs to support Asian languages (principally in primary and secondary education) in 1995–2002 and 2009–2012 giving way to relative neglect.

- The teaching of Asian languages at universities is sensitive to government policy priorities, with the number of universities offering Asian languages expanding dramatically in the 1990s and declining from 2002. Student numbers are also shaped by other factors, including demand from international and heritage students, inflows from secondary education, and the extent to which a country's cultural power and other factors fuel or diminish student demand.
- Overall, demand for Northeast Asian languages has increased significantly since 2000 (though not keeping pace with the growth of the university sector), principally due to sustained interest from international and heritage students, and the cultural soft power of East Asian countries (notably, Japan and Korea). Other Asian languages, including languages of countries that are strategically important to Australia, such as Indonesia and India, have fared much worse. The teaching of Indonesian has declined precipitously. South Asian languages are virtually absent.
- Australia has a national asset in its international student graduates from Asia and its Asia-heritage Australian graduates. These graduates have the capacity to contribute greatly to Australian engagement with Asia. But the government and universities must also ensure that other Australian students are equipped for engagement with Asia.
- Renewed government investment is required to revitalise the teaching of Asian languages through the education system. Government efforts should create a pipeline of students from school to university who are interested in Asia and keen to advance their Asia literacy skills, including language competence.

Teaching and Research on Asia

- At universities, there has been an accelerated shift away from a traditional area studies model of teaching Asian Studies that emphasised language acquisition and comprehensive study of a particular Asian country or region, to a post-area studies model where the study of Asia is dispersed within faculties or schools organised on a disciplinary basis. This shift presents a challenge for government and universities to ensure graduates acquire deep intellectual engagement with Asia, while providing opportunities to mainstream the study of Asia throughout the curriculum and across faculties.
- Evidence suggests that the promise of mainstreaming is being missed: with a few exceptions, there has been a decline in Asia content across universities. A gap is emerging between a small number of Asia-focused universities (most of which are large research-intensive universities) and the majority of universities where Asia content is minimal and/or in decline. This gap creates the risk that most Australian students have little or even no opportunity to study Asia at university.

- Specialist government funding for postgraduate research in Asia has ended, leading to a gap in support for higher degree research that requires advanced Asian language skills.
- Universities have a crucial role to play by offering Asian Studies programs and by mainstreaming the study of Asia across disciplines. Doing so requires informed university leadership and coordinated federal and state/territory government support. Such cooperation is necessary to become what we want to be: an Asia-literate society.

Public Funding for Asian Studies Research

- Australia's global reputation for leadership in Asian Studies has been supported by public funding for Asia-focused research, notably through the Australian Research Council (ARC). During 2002–2020, our analysis shows that the ARC funded a total of 692 Asian Studies projects, for a total of almost $216 million.
- Even so, there is a gap in public funding for research on Asia given that ARC funding in this area has failed to keep pace with the growth of the Australian university sector and with inflation. Public funding available to academics at Asian universities is increasing, and Australian government funding needs to keep up if Australia is to retain its competitive advantage as a global leader in Asian Studies.
- To a large extent, the decline in Asian Studies funding through the ARC is linked to vulnerabilities in the overall share of Humanities and Social Science (HASS) projects in grants provided by the ARC. Reinvigoration of support for Asian Studies needs to be viewed as one part of a wider emphasis on HASS.
- Targeted schemes are needed to reinvigorate high-level Asia-focused research and to promote research collaboration with Asia's booming universities and research sector.

Asia Risen and Australian University Engagement in Asia

- Asia's long-heralded rise is now upon us, with Asian countries moving to the forefront of the global economy, culture and geopolitics. One area in which Asian countries are fast moving past Australia is in the quality of universities and commitment to research. Asian countries are themselves becoming major sites of scholarly knowledge production about Asia, creating an opportunity for Australian universities to deepen their research, educational, and other links with Asian universities.
- Bipartisan commitment and government funding has incentivised universities to establish study abroad programs for undergraduate students in Asia. However, these programs are often disconnected from the goal of promoting advanced language skills based on long-term study of a language

and culture.

- Universities have embarked on new forms of engagement in Asia, including establishing campuses in Asia and running joint degrees with Asian universities. Universities need to coordinate these initiatives with efforts to expand teaching of Asia and ensure Asia experts lead and inform such initiatives.
- Growing numbers of Australia-based academics are teaching students from Asia, teaching at offshore campuses in Asia, or teaching as part of joint degrees in collaboration with universities in Asia. These shifts demand greater Asia knowledge on the part of Australia-based academics, and require a substantial increase in hiring of Asian Studies experts.

Independent Academic Associations Promoting Asian Studies

- Central to the mission of universities is the promotion of academic freedom, which enables an environment where creativity and innovation can flourish. Independent academic associations like the ASAA play an important role in collectively supporting and representing the interests of academics across disciplines and universities.
- Academics and students face growing challenges in exercising their academic freedom in a political atmosphere that has seen significant declines in rights and freedoms in Asian countries, as well as concerning pressures on academic freedom in Australia.
- One strength of academic expertise based in Australia is the ability to be an independent voice to inform government and university policies on engagement with Asia, and to ensure a balanced approach to Australia's economic, cultural and security interests in Asia.

Introduction

Introduction

As recently as a decade or two ago, academics, policy makers and others in Australia often asked how our country could best equip itself for the coming rise of Asia. That rise is now upon us. Numerous Asian countries have already sped past Australia in areas ranging from geopolitical influence and cultural power to investment in research, and so much more. It is increasingly obvious that the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century—from pandemics to climate change, regional refugee flows, the growth of China as a global power, and the rise of Artificial Intelligence—all demand deeper knowledge and engagement with Asia. If Australia is to thrive in a region that continues to expand its wealth, power, and global influence, such challenges and opportunities require a coherent policy response informed by scholars with deep knowledge of Asian languages, cultures, politics, economies, histories, and societies. Asian Studies academics at Australian universities are equipped to provide leadership in research and teaching on many of the key challenges facing the country—but much more can and should be done to help Australia to adjust to a world in which Asian countries assume global leadership across multiple fields of endeavour.

Australian academics have long been recognised internationally as leaders in the field of Asian Studies across the social sciences and humanities. Yet the nature of Asian Studies in Australia and elsewhere, as well as wider engagement with Asia in the higher education sector, is changing. The idea of the Asian Century emerged in the last decades of the 20th century, initially giving rise to widespread recognition of the value of Asian Studies as an academic field. But the expanding importance of Asia in all aspects of global interactions—economic, military, cultural or environmental—has meant that the need for Asia expertise is spreading beyond the purview of Asian Studies specialists working in this discrete field. The rise of Asian universities in global rankings, and the massive investments being made by many Asian countries in research, pose another set of challenges and opportunities to the role of Asian Studies scholars beyond Asia as analysts and interpreters of the region. In short, the Asian Century provides both opportunities and challenges to the relevance of Asian Studies as a specialist field in Australia—as does growing cultural convergence and economic integration linking Australia with Asia.

> "Australian universities can adapt to build sustained Asia expertise to face the challenges posed by Asia's rise to global pre-eminence."

We are more than 20 years into the Asian Century. How has support for Asian Studies changed over time in Australia, and how has Asian Studies fared? What is the case for expanding and maintaining a robust Asian Studies, and how do we get there? This report answers these questions.

In this report, we show that the evolution of Asian Studies in Australian universities is shaped by the cues, signals, and/or policies of three sets of actors: government, universities, and students. University leaders' growing emphasis on market mechanisms over recent decades, itself a product of government policy, has put pressure on small-enrolment courses and led to greater casualisation of the workforce, often challenging Asian Studies programs. Governments and universities alike have put greater emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) disciplines, often to the detriment of HASS (Humanities and Social

Sciences), negatively impacting on Asian Studies. Government funding to the university sector has failed to keep up with the sector's growth, while there has been great instability in government policies aimed at supporting Asian languages. Teaching of Asian languages at universities is also affected by wider social trends, with Australian students spending less time learning a second language than students in other OECD countries.[1] Meanwhile, there has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of international students, particularly from Asia, on Australian shores, although COVID-19 disrupted this trend. In this report, we address how these myriad factors have reshaped the field of Asian Studies in Australia over the last two decades, and how and why Australian universities can adapt to build sustained Asia expertise to face the challenges posed by Asia's rise to global pre-eminence.

By Asian Studies, we mean the in-depth study of Asia using language skills, in-country expertise, and interdisciplinary knowledge of the broad social, economic, and political contexts of particular Asian countries and/or regions. Undergraduate students often undertake Asian Studies as a program or major as part of an Arts degree, which usually includes subjects such as political science, history, cultural studies, and anthropology, as well as language study, and may require or provide an opportunity for students to study for a semester or even a year in Asia. There are 11 Asian Studies programs in Australian universities, but students have the opportunity to learn about Asia, and to study an Asian language, across most Australian universities, and in many different programs. Some students do so while undertaking dual degrees, or while studying for a degree in, for example, Business, Education or Law. There are also Asian Studies Masters and PhD programs, and opportunities to learn about, and conduct research on, Asia in many other postgraduate programs. This report explores the extent to which students at Australian universities are securing deep engagement with Asia—regardless of the programs or courses in which they are located—and identifies Australian universities' capacity to provide that depth.

"By Asian Studies, we mean the in-depth study of Asia using language skills, in-country expertise, and interdisciplinary knowledge of the broad social, economic, and political contexts of particular Asian countries and/or regions."

We focus in this report on Asian Studies as a means by which students can advance their skills in Asia literacy, or Asia capability, terms which we use interchangeably.[2] Asia literacy, or Asia capability, refers to the skills, knowledge and competencies a person needs in order to communicate and engage effectively with people in or from Asian countries. These skills and values include language competence, understanding of relevant cultural norms and codes, and of historical and social context, cross-cultural communication skills, and commitment to investing in mutual long-term relations. By developing a deep appreciation and understanding of the complexity and diversity of societies, cultures, and languages of Asia, a person's view of and engagement with Asia is changed. While in the past, the idea of Asia literacy may have implicitly suggested that Asia is separate from Australia, we acknowledge the reality that Australia is increasingly closely intertwined with and influenced by Asia, including through its growing Asian-Australian population. Australian universities have a crucial role to play in advancing the Asia literacy capabilities of students.

In Chapter 1, we begin by examining the policy landscape. We ask: How has engagement with Asia by Australian governments changed over time, and how have the arguments governments use to justify engagement evolved? To what extent have government policies supported Asian Studies? Australia has strong economic and security interests that compel engagement in and with Asia. Yet over the last two decades there has been a tendency for government to neglect the cultural understanding and linguistic skills that can build sustained relationships. People-to-people skills underpin strong lasting relationships that go beyond the short-term transaction of "one deal at a time". Government policy regarding Asian Studies has been marked by instability and inconsistency, with a series of policy initiatives punctuated by reversals and neglect. We show that the ability of Australian universities to offer Asian Studies programs largely depends upon coordinated federal and state/territory government support, initiatives and structures across all levels of education to create a pipeline of students from high schools who are interested and engaged in Asia and keen to advance their Asia skills, including language skills. Doing so consistently requires government commitment to holistic understanding of Asia. Even Australia's most instrumental, short-term economic and security interests will be better advanced by developing our cultural and linguistic skills.

In Chapter 2, our attention shifts to Asian languages. We ask: What are the trends in Asian language enrolments and programs at Australian universities? What have been the successes and failures in promoting Asian language programs as a key component of Asian Studies? We show that 2002 marked a significant decline in government support for a national Asian languages strategy, with 2012 marking another decline. Predictably, this loss of support has led to the near endangerment of some language programs, such as Indonesian, while others such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean have remained stable or grown, due to a mixture of international student enrolment and these countries' growing global influence.

"Both government and university leadership are needed to support a comprehensive and long-term approach to sustaining Australia's Asia education imperative."

In Chapter 3, we consider whether Australia's reputation for global leadership in teaching and research in Asian Studies is still justified. We ask: To what extent do students at Australian universities have the opportunity to study about Asia, and how far do Australian universities offer a depth of rich expertise on the countries of the region? We identify a shift away from a traditional area studies model of teaching Asian Studies to a post-area studies model where the study of Asia is dispersed within faculties or schools, rather than being concentrated in Asian Studies programs. Beyond that shift, however, we point to a continuing marginalisation of Asia through much of the university sector, and caution against dispersal of Asia expertise to the point of dissolution.

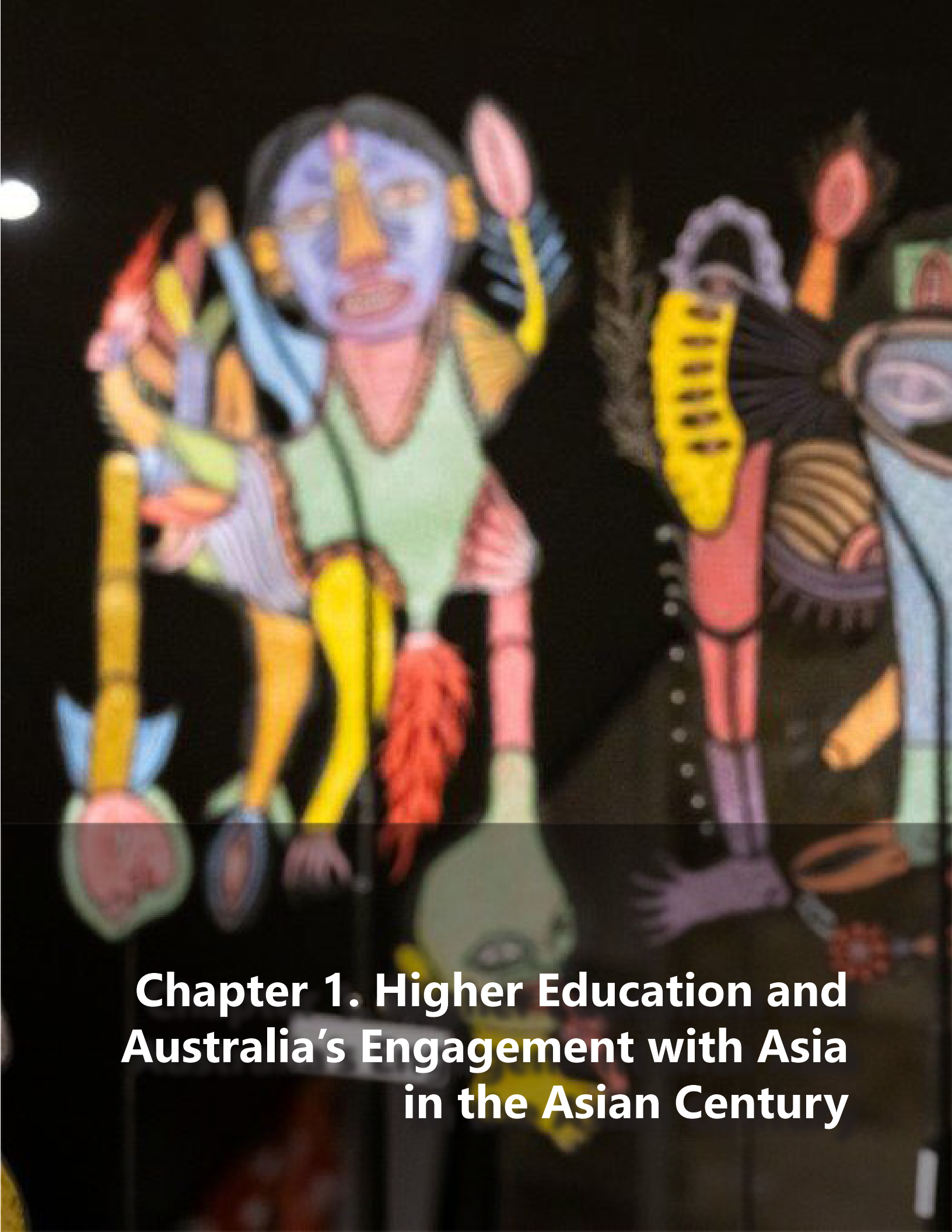
Chapter 4 examines public funding for Asia-focused research. We ask: What are the trends—across disciplines and regions—in public funding for Asian Studies research in Australia? The chapter focuses on funding provided over the last two decades by the Australian Research Council (ARC). When viewed in the context of the rapid expansion of Australian universities, we show that funding for research on Asia, while considerable,

has failed to keep pace with the growth of the Australian university sector, and risks being outpaced by the growth of research funding made available by governments in the region—from Japan and Singapore to Korea and Indonesia. We also provide evidence indicating that the fate of public funding for Asian Studies is closely related to the state of funding for HASS disciplines.

In Chapter 5 we ask: How is the "Rise of Asia"—including its economic transformation and the rise of Asian universities—transforming the Australian university sector's engagement with Asia? How has this rise affected teaching and research about Asia at Australian universities? We show that Australian universities' engagement with Asia over the past 20 years has undergone major change, including the establishment of campuses in Asia and joint degrees with universities in Asia, as well as significant outbound student mobility to Asia. While these initiatives have not always been integrated with Asian Studies, and often bypass it, they have the potential to boost research and teaching on Asia in Australian universities.

In Chapter 6, our attention shifts to what Asian Studies scholars have done and can do to promote their field. We ask: What role have independent academic associations played in promoting Asian Studies in Australia? We argue that independent, interdisciplinary, cross-institutional academic associations such as the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), as well as related regional councils, play a critical role in sustaining and enhancing Asian Studies, and upholding academic freedom. Academic associations will continue to sustain the next generation of scholars and provide an independent voice to inform government and university policies on engagement with Asia, and inform a balanced approach to Australia's economic, security and cultural engagement in the region.

In our concluding chapter, we offer recommendations to federal and state and territory governments, and to universities, because both government and university leadership are needed to support a comprehensive and long-term approach to sustaining Australia's Asia education imperative.



Chapter 1. Higher Education and Australia's Engagement with Asia in the Asian Century

Chapter 1. Higher Education and Australia's Engagement with Asia in the Asian Century

Academics and universities in Australia are known globally for their expertise in Asian Studies. This reputation partly results from historic commitments by Australian governments and universities alike to Asia expertise. But as we show in this report, these commitments have come under increased strain over the last two decades—ironically, precisely as the world entered the much-heralded Asian Century. How has federal and state/territory government engagement with Asia changed over time? To what extent have government policies supported Asian Studies? How have government rationales for support of Asian Studies changed, and does government now have the right balance of priorities?

In this chapter, we detail tremendous instability and inconsistency in policy support for Asian Studies and languages at Australian universities and in Australia's education system broadly. Over the last several decades, moments of enthusiastic promotion of Asia engagement by governments, and ambitious programs to support teaching and research on Asia have been punctuated by dramatic policy reversals, periods of neglect, and pessimistic rhetoric. While these dramatic switches have largely resulted from changes of government at the federal level, they also reflect the changing tenor of government discourse on Asia.

We show that government engagement with Asia has often been based on arguments that foreground Australia's economic and security interests. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, governments also emphasised that pursuit of economic and security interests would benefit from greater cultural understanding of, and engagement with, Asia by Australians. Over the last two decades, the emphasis on broad cultural engagement came under sustained challenge. This shift coincided, from 2002, with a decline in federal government commitments to Asian Studies in Australia, specifically, the end of the National Asian Languages/Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy in 2002, and, later, the failure to renew a relatively short-lived National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) which ran between 2008 and 2012, and the failure to take action to implement the much-vaunted White Paper on *Australia in the Asian Century* from 2013 onwards.

With the notable exception of government-funded student mobility to Asia (see Chapter 5), there was a decline of federally coordinated efforts to encourage and promote the study of Asia in Australian universities. This decline was accompanied by growing emphasis on Australia's perceived security interests in its dealings with Asia, without foregrounding the cultural skills required to build deep, flexible, resilient and sustained relationships in the region. While an emphasis on security has provided some grounds from which to advance and defend Asian Studies, ultimately, broad cultural engagement is critical to Australia's long-term success in the region.

Australia's federal system of government means that support for Asian Studies occurs at two levels: federal and state/territory, which we consider in turn in this chapter. We find that in the 2010s, while the federal government emphasised economic and, especially, security interests in its dealings with Asia, state and territory governments introduced new policies emphasising the economic contribution of international students as central to their Asian engagement. This shift suggests that the Asian Century White Paper, despite falling from the national agenda federally, had some impact at state and territory level. New state/territory

policies, however, have not translated into significant new support for the study of Asia in Australia's universities, and some policies were quickly reversed or reduced in response to pressures generated by COVID-19 from 2020 onwards.

The lesson to be drawn from these trends is clear: the ability and will of Australian universities to offer Asian Studies programs depends to a significant degree on coordinated federal and state/territory government support generating initiatives and structures across all levels of education to create a pipeline of students from high schools who are interested in Asia, and keen to advance their Asia literacy skills, including language skills.

Background: Asian Studies and Australia's Engagement with Asia

The commitment to Asian Studies in Australia goes back decades. Its early origins can be traced to the first half of the 20th century, with the beginnings of teaching of some Asian languages at a handful of universities, the pioneering efforts of individual scholars such as the historian A. C. V. Vernon to promote greater study of, and engagement with, Asia, and the establishment of a few specialist units, such as the University of Sydney's Department of Oriental Studies, which was founded in 1918, "largely as a result of the realisation during the war years of the growing need for Australians to equip themselves to meet the new conditions that were emerging in Asia."[3] Awareness that Australia needed to better understand its Asian neighbours expanded greatly in the aftermath of World War II, and was reflected in institutional developments, such as the establishment of the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific Studies in 1946, and its School of Oriental Languages in 1952.

The decade between the late 1960s and late 1970s was a watershed period for Asian Studies in Australia. This was the period when there was a shift from the use of the term Oriental Studies to Asian Studies, which, according to Kam Louie, reflected a "new trend towards recognizing the cultural value of contemporary Asia".[4] The period was also marked by the first concerted efforts to assess and expand the study of the region at Australian universities. In the late 1960s, a Commonwealth Advisory Committee led by James Auchmuty established by a federal Liberal government undertook the first detailed review to examine the state of Asian Studies in Australia. Its mandate was to investigate the teaching of Asian languages and cultures. The resulting "Auchmuty Report", *Teaching of Asian Languages and Cultures in Australia,* recommended that the federal government set up an Asian Studies Co-ordination Committee to enhance efforts to promote Asian Studies in schools and through teacher education.[5] Less than a decade later, in 1978, Malcolm Fraser's Liberal government disbanded the Committee.[6] In the meantime, teaching and research on Asia had expanded greatly in Australian universities. This period saw the growth of Asian language programs and the establishment of formal Asian Studies programs at universities such as Murdoch University, Griffith University and Flinders University. It was also the period which saw the foundation of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), in 1976.

Since that time, the history of Asian Studies in Australia has been told through a series of landmark reports of the ASAA and associated bodies. The first report on *Asia in Australian Education* reviewed the study of Asia from the 1960s to the 1980s. Known as the FitzGerald report after author Stephen FitzGerald, the report advocated the establishment of an Asian Studies Council and called for policies that would make Australia an Asia-literate nation by

2000. In 1987, the Council was established by Bob Hawke's Labor government, marking the beginning of a decade of significant government support for the expansion of Asian languages and Asian Studies in Australian schools and universities.[7]

Almost ten years later, in a second report focusing on the 1980s, John Ingleson continued advocacy for an Asia-literate Australia. The Ingleson report, *Asia in Australian Higher Education: Report of the Inquiry into the Teaching of Asian Studies and Languages in Higher Education,* published in 1989, set an ambitious target of 20 percent of undergraduate students studying about Asia by 2000, with specific mention of the fields of commerce, arts, education and law.[8] By the 2000s, it was apparent this target had not been met. Even so, in 2002, in *Maximising Australia's Asia Knowledge*,[9] Robin Jeffrey, along with John Fitzgerald, Kama Maclean and Tessa Morris-Suzuki argued that knowledge of Asia was a national asset in need of renewal. They suggested that the Australian government needed to invest more in structures and programs in higher degree education, as well as secondary education, to create Asia-literate citizens. Later, in 2008, a report by Anne McLaren addressed the specific issue of the decline in Asian language enrolments in Australian higher education.[10]

Each of the above studies was concerned with tracking both government and university support for Asian Studies in Australia, identifying areas for strategic investment, and suggesting initiatives to bolster knowledge of Asia. Overall, at least until McLaren's 2008 report, this series of studies was marked by a spirit of optimism about both Australia's engagement with Asia and the capacity of Australian universities and educators to equip Australians with the skills they needed to pursue that engagement. The current report addresses the progress made and obstacles encountered over the past two decades since the publication of *Maximising Australia's Asia Knowledge*. As we shall see in this chapter, this period has been marked by considerable policy instability. Asian Studies scholars have sometimes struggled to maintain the sense of optimism expressed in earlier periods because of this policy instability. Even so, it is our contention that the rationale for supporting Asian Studies is stronger than ever.

Federal Government Support for Asian Studies

As the above-mentioned reports identify, since the early growth of Asian Studies in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government has justified support for Asian Studies by drawing on a changing mixture of arguments focusing on Australia's economic and security interests in the region, and the imperative for cultural engagement.

Especially as Asian economic growth accelerated in the 1980s, successive Australian governments viewed Asia as the key to future Australian prosperity. Australia's economic interests in the region are thus its connections with Asian countries in trade and investment, and the economic advantages such connections offer, especially in the context of rapid growth in the region, expanding Asian middle classes, and concomitant growing demand for Australian natural resources and other goods and services. Australia's security interests include the need to protect Australia from both non-traditional threats such as terrorism and refugee flows, and from conventional military threats, with the latter becoming especially important during the 2010s and 2020s as a result of the growth of China, its military modernisation, and its emerging status as a global superpower. Policy justifications emphasising culture, while often closely linked to the economic and security frameworks, emphasise the need for

Australia to develop greater understanding of neighbouring countries and to develop more long-term people-to-people links, as part of an attempt to reimagine Australia's place in the world and its own national identity. This view was especially associated with the Paul Keating prime ministership (1991–1996).

While a focus on Australia's security and economic interests in Asia has, more or less, remained a constant in government policy over recent decades—albeit with different emphases and policy expressions—the government's emphasis on cultural understanding and engagement has waxed and waned, reaching a high point during the Keating years but receiving short shrift during the John Howard prime ministership (1996–2007) and successive Liberal Party governments during 2013–2022.

Support for Asian Studies in Australia, meanwhile, coincided with the growth of recognition of the importance of the region for Australia. In the late 1960s, the federal government began to take an interest in promoting the study of Asia in Australia. In the 1970s, it also began to establish institutions to support Australia's bilateral relationships in the region. In the 1970s, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's Liberal Party government established the Australia Japan Foundation and the Australia China Council. This was the beginning of Australia's cultural diplomacy through bilateral councils or foundations. In 1989, under the Hawke Labor government, the Australia Indonesia Institute was formed. These and similar institutes are funded by the government and offer small grants for community, research and education collaborations. In 1992, the government turned its attention to bilateral relations with South Asia and East Asia, establishing the Australia-India Council and the Australia Korea Foundation.

Table 1: Australian Government Asia Councils or Institutes

1976	Australia Japan Foundation
1978–2020	Australia-China Council (ACC)
1989	Australia Indonesia Institute (AII)
1992	Australia-India Council (AIC)
1992	Australia Korea Foundation (AKF)
2005–2015	Australian Malaysia Institute (AMI)
2005–2015	Australia Thailand Institute (ATI)
2015	Australia ASEAN Council (replacing the AMI and ATI)
2020	National Foundation for Australia-China Relations (replacing the ACC)

Australian government support for a wider vision of Asian engagement, incorporating greater support for the study of Asia and of Asian languages, came with the Hawke and Keating governments in the 1980s and early 1990s. Marking this shift, in 1988, shortly after the release of the FitzGerald Report, then Prime Minister Bob Hawke spoke at the ASAA conference. The prime minister noted that increasing Asian language skills was essential to breaking down cultural barriers with Australia's Asian neighbours.[11] He cited a survey that found Australian employers wanted stronger emphasis on the study of Asian languages and of Asia, to equip graduates with such expertise.

The promotion of Asian languages can be, and has been justified in terms of economic, security and cultural arguments, but it peaked during the period when the government articulated the view that cultural interchange mattered for building strong relationships with the societies and peoples of Asia. In 1994, the Council of Australian Governments established a Working Group on Asian Languages and Cultures chaired by Kevin Rudd. Its report, *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future*, was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). From 1994 until 2002, the federal government invested $208 million in the National Asian Languages/Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy to support Asian Studies in schools in Australia. NALSAS aimed to assist schools to improve proficiency levels in Japanese, Modern Standard Chinese, Indonesian and Korean, and to support the study of Asia across the curriculum.[12] The program targeted a national school population of 3.1 million students, at a peak expenditure of around $30 million per annum, or, it has been calculated, about $18 per Australian student per annum in 2022 dollars.[13]

"The end of NALSAS signalled the virtual abandonment of federal government support for Asian languages, contributing to significant decline in their study, with negative flow-on effects for Asian Studies generally..."

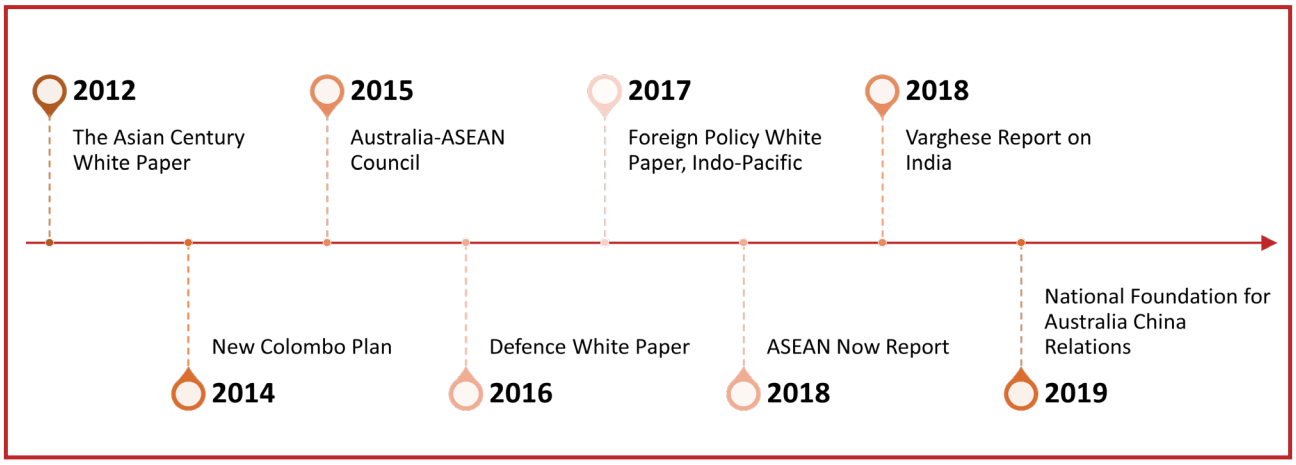
Also during the Keating years, the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) was established with core funding of around $15 million per annum provided by the federal government to promote and support the study of Asia in Australian schools. The government maintained funding for 22 years (which is almost unprecedented in funding for school education). In 2015, the government of Prime Minister Tony Abbot (2013–2015) ended the funding. AEF has been an important advocate for Asia literacy in Australia's education system, and has leveraged an investment of close to $100 million from federal and state governments, the non-government education sector, philanthropy and schools to support studies of Asia and Asian languages in schools.

These initiatives were one expression of a broader view that cultural understanding was essential to greater Australian engagement in the region that, as noted above, was associated especially with Prime Minister Paul Keating. Keating presented greater Asian engagement as part of a maturation of Australian identity that also involved reduced emphasis on traditional ties with the United Kingdom, support for multiculturalism, and recognition of the opportunities presented by Australia's location in the Asia-Pacific region. He depicted Australia's engagement with Asian countries as critical to Australia's future prosperity and security.[14]

A review of NALSAS found that it led to increases in the numbers of schools offering NALSAS languages, students studying these languages, and teachers teaching them, and to an increase in the number of teachers incorporating the study of Asia into the curriculum.[15] The review concluded that funding had to continue if the national targets set for Asian languages and Asian Studies were to be met. Less than ten years after the initiation of the program, however, in 2002 the Howard government (1996–2007) closed the NALSAS program. This shift signalled the virtual abandonment of federal government support for Asian languages, contributing to significant decline in their study, with negative flow-on effects for Asian Studies generally (as we explain in greater detail in the next chapter). Student enrolments fell and Asian Studies programs and research institutions began to scale back their activities, or even close. According to one report, between 1996 and 2006, 70 Asian Studies scholars in Australian universities retired and were not replaced, with the average age of existing scholars also increasing, leading some to lament the loss of Asian Studies expertise.[16]

During the Howard years, the government retreated from its expansive approach to Asia engagement and re-emphasised diplomatic and security ties with the United States.[17] The stress in relations with the region was largely on official, bilateral relations between Australia and individual Asian countries, and on narrow cooperation in areas of "shared interests", with little recognition that Australia's engagement in the region would benefit from deep cultural interchange and understanding.[18] The Howard government's 1997 White Paper *In the National Interest* stressed the role of bilateral relations as the building blocks of Australia's foreign policy and identified four key relationships: the United States, Japan, Indonesia, and China.[19] In 2005, recognising the growing economies in Southeast Asia, the government established the Australia Malaysia Institute and the Australia Thailand Institute alongside the five existing foundations or institutes funded by the government to support cultural diplomacy and engagement with Asia.

Figure 1: Federal Government Policies on Asia 2012–2018



From 2007 to 2013, successive federal Labor governments revived some Hawke-Keating era commitments to Asia engagement. Most significantly, in 2008, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (the author of the 1994 Rudd report which had advocated greater government support for Asian languages) oversaw the introduction of a new program to support Asian languages and studies in schools, NALSSP, which was a somewhat scaled-down version of NALSAS, and funded at approximately $20 million per annum for four years. The 2008 "Australia 2020" summit, a major policy brainstorming event held by the incoming Rudd government, adopted ambitious goals that included calling on the government "To reinvigorate and deepen our engagement with Asia and the Pacific" and "To ensure that the major languages and cultures of our region are no longer foreign to Australians but are familiar and mainstreamed into Australian society."[20] Also in 2008, a major policy achievement was recorded when a "Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians", endorsed by all Australian education ministers, included a statement that all Australians needed to become Asia literate, and incorporated a commitment to Asian languages.[21] The declaration, alongside advocacy led by AEF, resulted in the inclusion of a cross-curriculum priority of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia in Australia's first national school curriculum in 2012—one of only three cross-curriculum priorities.[22]

"In 2008, a major policy achievement was recorded when a "Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians", endorsed by all Australian education ministers, included a statement that all Australians needed to become Asia literate, and a commitment to Asian languages."

In 2012, the federal government, now led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard (2010–2013), produced a milestone *White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century*.[23] This paper recommended building capabilities and knowledge on Asia and fostering deeper and broader relationships with Asia. It suggested that curriculum in Australia should be infused with studies of Asia so that every Australian student was exposed to the study of Asia. The White Paper was ambitious in scope and included proposals to support researchers in their partnerships in Asia, to work with states and territories to reform school curriculum to enhance studies of Asia, to strategically embed studies of Asia across higher education, and to enable all students to undertake one Asian language, with priority given to Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian and Japanese. The vision expressed by the paper also advocated deep Asia expertise and capacity among leaders in the corporate and public sectors, by implication including universities.

In addition, the White Paper stated that Australia should increase the number of Australian students taking part of their university degree in Asia by providing financial support to students, and it encouraged Australian universities to establish cross-institutional links, including exchanges, with Asian universities. It also proposed that Australia should promote leaders with a strong knowledge of Asia in workplaces, businesses, and government bodies. The White Paper acknowledged Australia's interests in promoting cooperation in Asia on key issues of concern, such as addressing terrorism, people smuggling and transnational crime, protecting human rights, and assisting in disaster mitigation and response. The White Paper

thus presented a balance of cultural, economic and security narratives about Australia's engagement with Asia.

However, the Labor government that issued the White Paper had relatively little time to implement its recommendations (though the failure of the then Education Minister Peter Garrett to renew NALSSP after its initial four-year commitment expired in 2012 was perhaps one sign that the White Paper's message was not being received by all members of government). The new Liberal-National government under Prime Minister Abbot (2013–2015) immediately archived the White Paper, removing it and associated documents from the DFAT website. In effect, the *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper became a dead letter before it had time to have substantive impact on policy.

From 2013, the federal government increasingly re-emphasised traditional security interests in Australia's approach to Asia. A Defence White Paper emphasised that the "Indo-Pacific" would increasingly be influenced by countries such as Japan, Korea, and Indonesia, while acknowledging that the region would also remain dominated by the two major powers, the United States and China.[24] The Defence White Paper advocated achieving a "secure Indo-Pacific" as a key component of Australia's security and defence policy, and also emphasised security in Southeast Asia, noting that stability of Indonesia in particular was essential to regional order.[25] The emphasis on security is evident in how the region surrounding Australia is named and understood: from the mid-2010s, terms such as "Asia" and the "Asia-Pacific" were increasingly displaced by "Indo-Pacific" in official policy documents and pronouncements. This moniker reflects concerns about China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region and foregrounds moves by Australia and its traditional allies, the United States and Japan, to draw India into alignment against China.[26]

"From 2013, the federal government increasingly re-emphasised traditional security interests in Australia's approach to Asia."

After the publication of the Defence White Paper, successive Liberal-National governments prioritised economic and security interests in the region. From the late 2010s, government leaders made concerns about China's growing influence increasingly central to Australia's foreign and defence policy postures. After almost 40 years, in 2013, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) was abolished and its remaining programs moved to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This move signalled a shift towards the use of aid as a tool of economic diplomacy and also saw the downsizing of Australia's aid partnerships in the region. The proportion of Australia's Gross National Income spent on aid dropped, from 0.33 percent in 2011–2012 to 0.21 percent in 2019–2020.[27] The ratio of defence to aid spending also reached unprecedented new highs.[28] In 2015, the separate Thailand and Malaysia Institutes were closed and rolled into the new Australia-ASEAN Council, signalling the Australian government's recognition of the centrality of ASEAN in Southeast Asia, and growing concern about the influence of China.

In 2014, one major positive development was the federal government's introduction of the New Colombo Plan. Promoted especially by Foreign Minister (2013–2018) Julie Bishop, one of the few voices in the Liberal-National government who advocated broad

cultural interchange with Asia, the scheme aims to lift knowledge of what the government was by now routinely referring to as the "Indo-Pacific" by supporting Australian students to study and undertake internships in the region. The program includes several initiatives, such as a scholarship program and mobility program. Through this scheme, the Federal Government has provided approximately $320 million between 2014 and 2022 to support 10,000 undergraduate Australian students to study short-term in Asia, with funding peaking at approximately $50 million per annum.[29] According to Liam Prince, in real terms, the New Colombo Plan funding is roughly equivalent to the amount the government previously spent on NALSAS,[30] making this by far the most significant Asia engagement policy of the Liberal-National governments of the 2010s and early 2020s.

There were also policy setbacks, however. For example, in 2019, the Endeavour Awards program closed. For many years, in various iterations, this program had provided crucial support for Australian postgraduate students studying Asia or students from Asia seeking to undertake short-term postdoctoral study in Australia. The closure of the program signalled the end of specialised federal government funding support for postgraduate studies of Asia.

Case Study 1: Australian Business and Asia Capability

Down the years, government has not been the only promoter of Asia literacy in Australia. Business organisations have recognised the critical role of Asia in Australia's economic future and have emphasised that Australian universities need to produce graduates with the skills that will enable Australian business to take advantage of the economic opportunities afforded by the Asian Century. In 2021, the Business Council of Australia and The Asia Society issued a report, *A Second Chance: How Team Australia can Succeed in Asia,* that set out the business case for Asia literacy, arguing that Australia was falling behind. The report stated that Australia had been missing out on Asia's rise: "we have slipped behind, re-adjusting at the margins and thinking about competitiveness as tomorrow's challenge. We have stood back and admired the problem."[31] The report emphasised the urgency of improving Australia's skills in engagement with Asia and recognised that "Business plays a critical role in highlighting the value and significance of deep Asian language and cultural studies expertise and should invest in building and maintaining Australia's Asia expertise by building stronger collaborations with Australia's Asia-focused universities, institutions and research centres along the way."[32] This report follows from earlier work[33] promoting investment by Australian businesses in Asia capabilities and advocating policies that would strengthen the Asia literacy skills of Australian graduates.

The latter half of the 2010s saw the Australian government reiterate its economic and, especially, security interests in Asia, largely without government leaders expressing concerns about our cultural knowledge and ties (with the important exception of Julie Bishop, sponsor of the New Colombo Plan). In 2016, a new Defence White Paper again signalled Australia's interests in maintaining a secure region, including Southeast Asia, and emphasised concerns about the dispute over the South China Sea.[34] The Defence White Paper mentioned a

commitment to expanding cultural and language capabilities in order to increase Australia's effectiveness in the region and its ability to collaborate with international partners.[35] In 2017, this White Paper was followed by a Foreign Policy White Paper that reasserted Australia's commitment to a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific and identified four bilateral partners of particular significance: Japan, Indonesia, India and Korea.[36] In the report, the government also placed high priority on bilateral relationships in Southeast Asia and on its support for ASEAN.[37] It also emphasised the role of soft power and entrenched the idea of the Indo-Pacific.[38]

In 2018, the federal government through its ASEAN Now Report sought to encourage Australian businesses to engage with markets in ASEAN, due to the launch several years prior of the ASEAN Economic Community plans for an integrated regional economy.[39] The government emphasised opportunities opening for Australian business as a result of the region's "economic dynamism".[40] Also in 2018, the Indian Economic Strategy to 2035[41] contained recommendations for the higher education sector, such as the development of joint PhD programs by Australian and Indian universities, and a study-in-Australia education-hub based in India. Addressing the relative lack of knowledge of India in Australia, the government acknowledged the need to expand Indian studies and languages in Australian universities.

In sum, the period from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s was a high point for federal government support for Asian Studies in Australia's education system. In contrast, in the first two decades of the 21st century, government support for education and research focused on Asia was reduced, alongside a shift toward emphasising instrumental engagement with Asia on shared economic and security interests.

There were, however, also important initiatives during this period. NALSSP was a major attempt to revive teaching of Asian languages and studies, but was short-lived. The Asian Century White Paper set out ambitious Asia engagement goals, but they were never fully realised. The New Colombo Plan was the one major policy promoting increased Asia engagement that was sustained for more than a few years. While a steady stream of government papers and reports through the 2010s demonstrated that recognition of Asia's significance for Australia had become deeply embedded—indeed, all but reflexive—in Australian foreign policy and strategic thinking, this thinking skewed heavily towards Australia's security interests, compared to past decades, with little recognition that the government should invest in supporting deep understanding of Asian languages, cultures, and societies through its education sector. Yet in a little-noticed trend, state and territory governments picked up the mandate of the Asian Century White Paper, motivated primarily by economic considerations.

State and Territory Government Support for Asian Studies

Over the 2010s, Australian states and territories introduced a raft of policies to promote their respective economic interests in Asia. These initiatives in part flowed from recognition that the vision of the Asian Century White Paper required implementation at the state/territory level. The Paper had provided opportunities for states/territories to identify issues relevant to their state/territory that were not included in this federal paper. The 2018 Australia-ASEAN Summit hosted by the federal government also prompted renewed state

and territory attention to Southeast Asia in particular. The state/territory policies promoted during this period largely advanced economic goals of enhancing trade generally, and, more specifically, attracting international students to state/territory universities.

Over the 2010s, several state governments—including Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria—demonstrated strong commitment to enhancing trade and education engagement with Asia (the Northern Territory had long had such a commitment).[42] These governments issued a number of policy papers with both country-specific and region-specific focuses, with each promoting the state's economic engagement with Asia.

"In a little-noticed trend, state and territory governments picked up the mandate of the Asian Century White Paper, motivated primarily by economic considerations."

This state-level trend began in 2013, when the Tasmanian government issued a White Paper on *Tasmania's Place in the Asian Century*.[43] Acknowledging Tasmania's limited economic links with the region, and the state's largely homogenous (Anglo-Australian) community, the report argued that Tasmania had to increase the scale of local production and improve its connections to Asian markets.[44] Like many state-level policy statements, the paper focused on the rising middle class in Asia and their growing demand for luxury goods.[45] With regard to Asian Studies, the paper identified the need to transform educational offerings available in the state to align with evolving industry needs and opportunities in Asia.[46] The report supported the University of Tasmania's goal to double its enrolment numbers of international students and to create a "pool of Asia-knowledgeable and Asian language proficient Tasmanians."[47] The Tasmanian government subsequently partnered with the University of Tasmania to establish The Asia Institute Tasmania, which aims to build relationships with Asia, develop expert understanding of Asia, and promote new research activities by facilitating public lectures and hosting visiting scholars particularly from Japan, China, and Hong Kong.

While Tasmania started early, the Victorian government developed the most expansive set of policies for promoting engagement with China, India and Southeast Asia. In 2016, the Victorian government collaborated with the Chinese National Government and Jiangsu and Sichuan provincial governments to develop *Victoria's New China Strategy: Partnership for Prosperity*. The strategy focused on trade, investment and business with a view to enhancing the mutual economic value of the relationship.[48] It emphasised the importance of raising Asia literacy and Asian language proficiency in Victoria, including by providing students with scholarships and immersion programs to study in China.[49] In 2018, the Victorian government released its India strategy,[50] which emphasised building knowledge and understanding of India by continuing to support the Australia India Institute in Melbourne and by supporting research endeavours such as Deakin University's India Research Initiative.[51] In the same year, the Victorian government announced a new Southeast Asia Strategy, which also focused on promoting trade and attracting international students.[52] Also in 2018, the government announced a partnership with The Asia Society, under which the New York-based organisation opened an office in Melbourne.[53] The government signed two Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) documents with China: a memorandum of understanding, and a framework agreement for a future roadmap (in 2021, the federal government dissolved these BRI agreements, as part

of its enhanced security posture targeting China).[54]

Other state governments adopted similar approaches. The New South Wales (NSW) government released a set of engagement strategies for China and Japan (2014), India and Korea (2015) and ASEAN (2018), as well as an International Education Strategy (2019).[55] All four strategies focused on enhancing education ties. NSW already had a large share of the Australian international education market in India and China; the state also wanted to expand vocational and higher education offerings to students in Japan and Korea. The NSW government also established the StudyNSW program to increase the number of ASEAN and other international students studying in NSW.[56] In Queensland, the state government's India trade and investment strategy identified Indian education as a critical market.[57] The South Australian government developed engagement strategies specific to India (2013) and China (2014). As an example of the economic focus, two of the four key action goals of South Australia's China policy were to "Coordinate and leverage Government activity to build a trade and investment framework for business" and "Build and support China-ready South Australian businesses".[58]

Governments of several states and territories focused on attracting international students to their jurisdictions, by developing general international education strategies. Such policies were introduced by the Northern Territory (2018), South Australia (2019) and Queensland (2016).[59] The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government's international education strategy (2016) identified Asia as a key market for students, and acknowledged research as a key capability of the ACT economy.[60] Again, economic arguments were paramount, with the document declaring: "We must consolidate and foster closer ties with Asian countries to develop greater economic opportunities."[61]

The Western Australian government briefly went further than any other state.[62] Like others, the government emphasised "maximising investment and trade opportunities" and "supporting business networks and communities", although it also aimed at "supporting Asia literacy and capability". It went further by becoming the first and only state government to establish a position of Minister for Asian Engagement. The first appointee to this position, in 2017, was Minister Bill Johnston, who is proficient in the Indonesian language (he also held several other ministerial portfolios). In 2018, the WA government launched its Asian Engagement Strategy, yet by March 2021 the portfolio of Minister for Asian Engagement had been scrapped. This four-year trajectory shows just how short-lived and fragile state government initiatives regarding engagement with Asia can be.

Overall, while many state/territory policies focused on promoting business and trade ties, and attracting international students, these polices were generally not embedded in a wider attempt to build Asia knowledge. Doing so might have helped to ensure that these policies did not reduce talk of Asia engagement to a narrow marketing exercise. Likewise, while the emphasis by state and territory governments on attracting international students is welcome, ideally any increase in the number of international students from Asia should be accompanied by provision of sufficient support to ensure students studying in these jurisdictions have access to world-class lecturers and supervisors with expertise on Asia.

While state and territory government policies have not directly supported Asian Studies, the marketing to international students has fundamentally changed the makeup of classrooms at Australian universities. Australia is fortunate to have such strong enrolments from Asia, and

the presence of students from Asia as active participants in the classroom offers opportunities to foster greater learning and knowledge about Asia. By the same token, universities need academics who have deep knowledge of Asia to be able to effectively teach these students.

Case Study 2: The Victorian Model: Increasing Language Enrolments

What difference do state government policies on multi-lingual education make? A lot, according to Professor Joseph Lo Bianco. In Victoria, from 1991 to 2019, Lo Bianco found that the number of primary schools offering a language increased from 24 percent to 88.1 percent, with secondary schools increasing from 82 percent to 88.7 percent. In particular, he found a shift to Asian languages: in 2018, of primary schools, 19.7 percent offered Indonesian, 18.5 percent Mandarin, and 17.8 percent Japanese; while in secondary schools, the top Asian languages by enrolments were 18.8 percent Japanese, 14.2 percent Indonesian and 12.5 percent Chinese (Mandarin). Lo Bianco identifies several key characteristics of the Victorian government's commitment to language provision:

- targeted efforts to widen the number of languages provided, which is in fact more effective than restricting the provision of languages to a select few (contrary to common assumptions)
- ensuring that the languages provided can be accredited for admission to Higher Education
- regular and systematic collection of data on language programs in order to track progress, which Victoria has undertaken for over 30 years
- bi-partisan support from successive Ministers of Education for high-quality language education
- the role of the Victorian School of Languages, an institution with flexibility to respond to short-term needs for local multilingual language provision (a model that has been copied around the world).

Lo Bianco is realistic on challenges that remain, such as the need to improve the quality of programs offered and to overcome stasis in enrolments and programs. Yet overall, "Victoria has strong mandatory languages education curriculum requirements and the highest student participation rates in languages education across all Australian jurisdictions". The Victorian model of language provision is one that other state and territory governments can learn much from to increase language enrolments.[63]

The COVID-19 Pandemic and China Security Concerns

The above trends in government funding for the study of Asia and Asia engagement through Australia's universities were relevant to 2020. Since then, there have been, and

are likely to continue to be, major changes in the approach of the federal government to universities and to Asia.

During the final years of the Morrison government in 2020–2021, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting cessation of inflows of international students into Australia put financial pressure on the tertiary education sector. The field of Asian Studies—along with much of the Humanities and Social Sciences—experienced significant stress. One reason, among others, is that the federal government denied public universities access to Job Keeper—the main source of government funding to businesses during the pandemic. University leaders claimed there was a financial crisis across the university sector and subsequently shed staff, both professional and academic, casual and permanent, and—as we shall see in later chapters—moved to close down programs and units they saw as performing poorly in financial terms. In several universities, university leaders targeted Asian language and Asian Studies courses and programs, which often have relatively low numbers and require intensive teaching.

"In addition to the economic crisis, the federal government placed its security concerns front and centre of its engagement with Asia, with significant impacts on the university sector."

In addition to the economic crisis, the federal government placed its security concerns front and centre of its engagement with Asia, with significant impacts on the university sector. In 2018, the government introduced a Foreign Interference Law, which placed new reporting requirements on academics and universities to declare partnerships and engagement with foreign governments. The government established a University Foreign Interference Taskforce, reiterating the idea that universities needed to be protected against foreign interference. The scope of the Taskforce includes "Cyber Security; Research and Intellectual Property; Foreign Collaboration; and Culture and Communications", with potentially broad interpretation. The reporting requirements are so expansive that some universities have suggested that academics even have to report attendance at a conference held at a foreign public university. The new scheme risks disincentivising academics in Australia from collaboration and engagement with research partners and institutions in Asia.

Further, for academics it became particularly fraught, if not difficult, to pursue research engagement with China which, as noted above, the Morrison government was increasingly positioning as an emerging adversary in Australia's foreign policy and security posture. In 2021, a new security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) signalled a return to traditional Western alliances, rather than emphasising security through cooperation with Asian partners.[64]

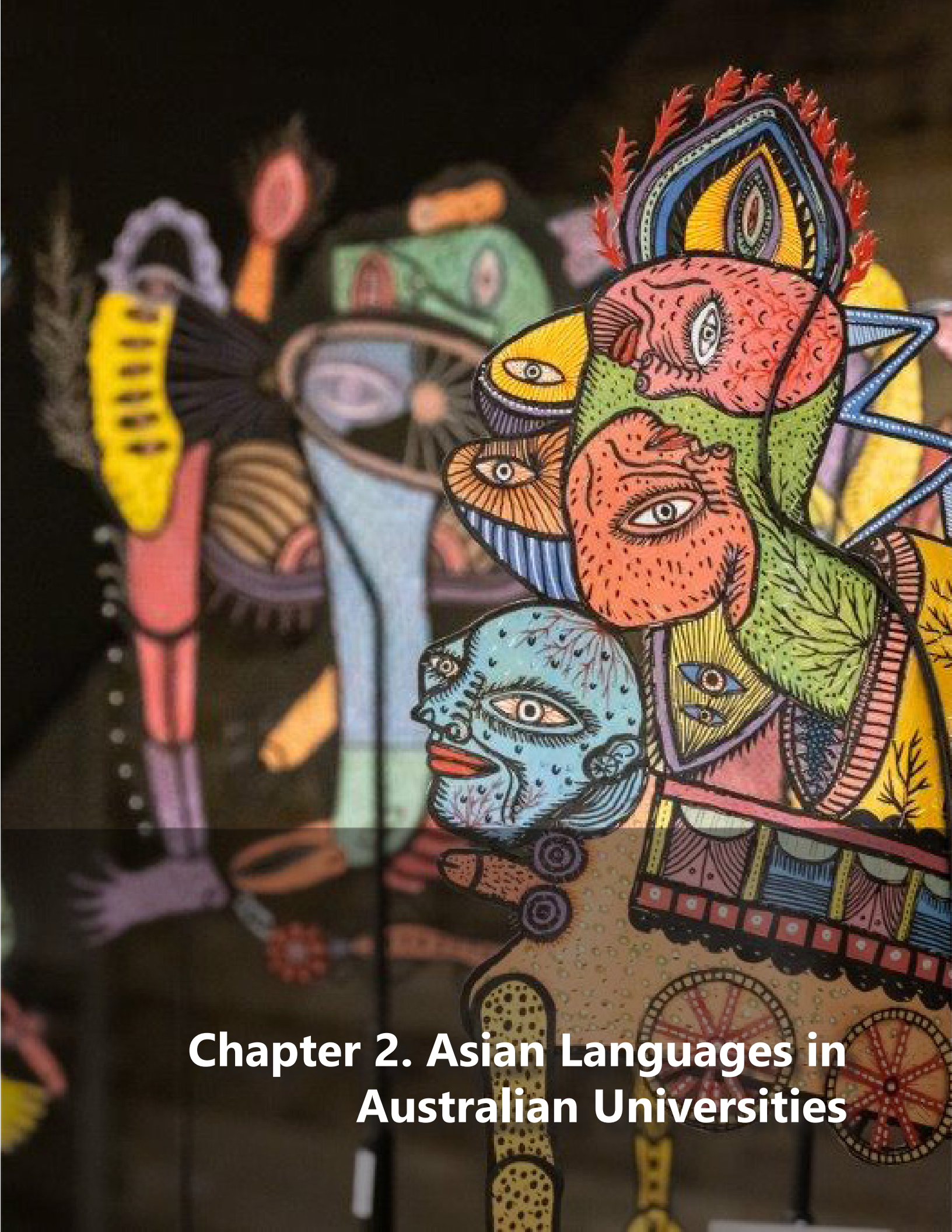
Overall, the economic crisis at universities, combined with the onerous foreign interference reporting requirements, have had negative impacts on Asia engagement in the university sector. Asian Studies, like other parts of the humanities and social sciences, has come under significant financial pressure in the absence of government support. Possibilities for partnerships and collaboration with research institutions in Asia face the unusual scrutiny of the government's foreign interference regime. All this suggests that there is a need for new federal government policies that support informed engagement with Asia across a range of sectors.

Conclusion

As we have shown in this chapter, for a period in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, Asian Studies in Australian universities experienced a boom, coinciding with the federal government's recognition that it was important to develop greater Australian understanding of Asia. Over succeeding decades, Australian policy makers have continued to recognise that Australian economic and security interests depend upon the nation's links with Asia—as attested by the steady stream of government reports and White Papers we have documented in this chapter.

However, from the late 2010s, the Australian government prioritised security, to the detriment of a more balanced approach that treats economic, cultural and security engagement in an integrated manner. There was fading government recognition that deepening Australia's connections with the region requires promotion of knowledge of Asian languages, cultures and societies to the Australian public—even if the primary motivation is to pursue economic and security goals. While the New Colombo Plan was one major commitment, there were few other indications of Australian government interest in, or support for, the study of Asia.

For the field of Asian Studies, the result was that, in the first decades of the 21st century—with major but still partial exceptions being in student mobility and public research funding—Australian universities were largely on their own when it came to developing and sustaining Asia-focused programs of education and research. Government rhetoric about Asian engagement translated into relatively little targeted support for promoting Asia literacy. Given that government policies significantly shape university agendas in Australia, few universities—there were some notable exceptions—put much emphasis on building Asia expertise. Even so, growing Australian integration with Asia forced universities to adapt. For example, government emphasis on attracting international students led to unprecedented numbers of students from Asia joining Australian universities, challenging academics to acquire basic cultural knowledge and expertise on their countries of origin. The growth of Asian universities represented both a challenge and opportunity for Australian universities. In the following chapters, we examine the consequences of this mixture of growing de facto engagement with Asia alongside government neglect of Asia teaching and research.



Chapter 2. Asian Languages in Australian Universities

Chapter 2. Asian Languages in Australian Universities

A defining feature of Asian Studies expertise is competence in one or more languages spoken in Asia. A major concern of Asian Studies scholars over the last several decades has been to increase the number of students learning Asian languages at Australian universities (and schools, though that is not the topic of this report). Promoting Asian languages was, accordingly, a topic of previous ASAA reviews of the field, and it has always been a central concern of the public advocacy of ASAA.

Asian Studies scholars have focused on the promotion of Asian languages for two reasons. First, and most narrowly, Asian language ability is a bedrock of the intellectual enterprise in which we are engaged. Scholars and students who wish to conduct advanced research on Asian societies in virtually every field need to master the relevant languages. Building Asian-language expertise is critical to the goal of developing Australian universities as major centres for Asia research.

Second, and more broadly, building Asian language capacity serves much wider national interest goals: it encourages Australians to visit and live in Asian countries, promotes better understanding of those countries in the Australian community, and encourages the economic, governmental, cultural, personal and other relationships that we agree are essential to promoting Australia's well-being in the Asian century. While English has become an important global lingua franca, and is a language spoken by members of the global elite in all countries, including in Asia, the majority of citizens of Asian countries use the vernacular languages of the region on a daily basis, including when conducting government and business affairs. Failing to comprehend these languages necessarily limits Australians' ability to understand and interact with the societies of our neighbours.

"Building Asian-language expertise is critical to the goal of developing Australian universities as major centres for Asia research."

Indeed, at points in our recent past, Australian governments have recognised this imperative too. For example, language skills were a focus of the Asian Century White Paper, which noted that "The capacity for Australians to build deeper ties with Asia will be hampered if there is not an increase in proficiency of languages other than English. Relying on the language capabilities of Asian-Australians for all of Australia's relationships and engagement will not be adequate. Proficiency in more than one language is a basic skill of the 21st century".[65]

For these and similar reasons, the ASAA has since its inception been committed to promoting the teaching and learning of Asian languages. In this chapter, we assess the current state of this endeavour. What are the trends in Asian language enrolments and programs? The chapter reveals that progress has been limited. Viewed in the long term, it is true that over the half century that followed the 1970s there has been a dramatic expansion of the teaching of Asian languages in Australia, but if we narrow our focus to the last two decades, then the picture is more mixed: the teaching of major Northeast Asian languages remains relatively stable (though largely due to increasing international student enrolments), but in other areas there has been stagnation and even decline.

The Policy Setting

As a consequence of federal government policy to prioritise Asia engagement in the 1980s and early 1990s, there was steady expansion of the teaching of Asian languages at Australian schools and universities. As we touched upon in the preceding chapter, the Council of Australian Governments commissioned a report on *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* (the "Rudd Report").[66] Following the release of that report in 1994, the federal government launched the ambitious NALSAS (National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools) strategy referred to in the preceding chapter.[67] This policy initiative was accompanied by a shift in the tenor of government rhetoric, with senior officials such as Prime Minister Paul Keating (1991–1996) frequently declaring that it was important not only to build closer ties with Asia but also to learn more about the region, including by studying its languages.

As we have seen, in 2002, the Howard government cancelled the NALSAS program. Since that time, federal government attention to promoting the study of Asian (or other) languages in the Australian education system has never matched that achieved under NALSAS. Three policies deserve note, however. First, when Kevin Rudd, the author of the 1994 report on Asian languages, became prime minister in 2007, there was the short-lived National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) initiative, but it was more modestly funded than NALSAS. Second, during the 2010s the Commonwealth government included a clause in the funding agreements it drew up with universities which gave it authority to protect the teaching of "strategic languages" (which included Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian), but to our knowledge it never used this power to prevent closures of Asian-language programs. Third, in 2020, the federal government, as part of its "Job-ready graduates" package significantly discounted the cost of a language major relative to most other humanities majors ($3,950 vs. $14,500) for students while preserving the income stream provided to universities for these students, potentially increasing incentives to students to take these programs and universities to maintain them, but with little appreciable impact at the time of writing.[68]

> "In 2014 a study by the Asia Education Foundation noted that whereas many of the world's leading education systems produce virtually 100 percent of high-school graduates proficient in a second language, only 11 percent of senior secondary students study any language other than English in Australia."

We know that concerted government action can make a major difference. The NALSAS program was associated with a dramatic increase in the teaching of Asian languages at Australian schools, including an increase of 50 percent in the number of students learning one of the four priority languages (Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean) in 1995–1997 alone, such that, by 2000, 23 percent of Australian school children were studying one of the priority NALSAS languages.[69] In 2002, the cessation of funding caused an almost immediate contraction in the number of students studying Asian languages in Australian schools.[70] As one academic we consulted put it, the end of NALSAS was like "stopping a course of antibiotics mid-way through treatment". With a six-year gap between NALSAS and

NALSSP, Minister for School Education, Peter Garrett, admitted, in justifying the decision not to continue NALSSP in 2012, that it had not gone "anywhere near arresting the trend lines."[71] Since that time, it has been difficult to track national Asian languages enrolments in Australian schools, since the federal government has not collected these data again, with the exception of Year 12 student participation in languages collected through the National Report on Schooling and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

While declining government interest is certainly part of the picture, it must also be recognised that Australia's social and cultural context presents obstacles to the expansion of Asian language teaching and learning. In common with other English-speaking countries in an age when English has become the global lingua franca, monolingualism is firmly entrenched in Australian society. In 2014 a study by the Asia Education Foundation noted that whereas many of the world's leading education systems produce virtually 100 percent of high-school graduates proficient in a second language, only 11 percent of senior secondary students study any language other than English in Australia.[72] In 2019, only 10.3 percent of year 12 students were studying a language.[73] Australia's indigenous and multicultural communities of course remain important sites of bilingualism and multilingualism—for example, 10 percent of indigenous Australians speak an indigenous language at home, according to the 2016 census.[74] However, the children of migrants often become monolingual as a result of their interactions with Australia's education system.[75] It requires significant government support and national leadership to arrest the in-built drift toward monolingualism.

The Big Picture

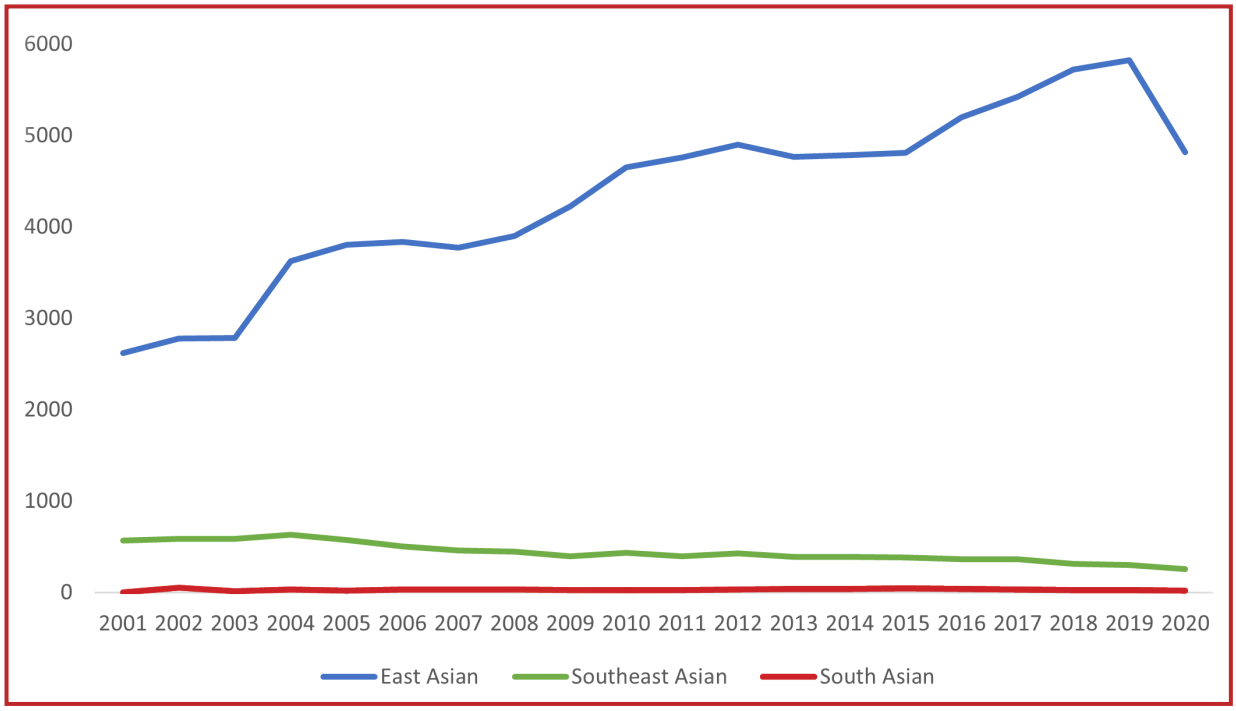
In Australian universities, meanwhile, trends in the study of Asian languages suggest a complex picture. While the study of some languages has flourished, the overall trend matches that in the school system, with stagnation and even decline in some languages over the last 20 years. Figure 2 presents a summary of numbers of students studying Asian languages at Australian universities, using data at the lowest level of aggregation supplied by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills, and Employment.[76]

In terms of absolute numbers, the overall picture here is one of stability, even a slight increase. In 2001, the earliest year for which data in this form are available, Asian languages at Australian universities had enrolled a total of 3,186 Effective Full Time Student Load (EFTSL: one EFTSL is the equivalent of one student studying full-time for an entire year), more than were studying European languages (2,683 EFTSL).[77] After that time, the number of students learning Asian languages increased by 93 percent to 6,148 EFTSL in 2019, significantly outpacing the growth in European languages of 43 percent to 3,837 EFTSL. Viewed as a proportion of the student body, the numbers are less impressive. Between 2004 and 2019, according to the Department's publicly available data, student numbers increased from 944,977 to 1,609,798, or by 70.4 percent. Moreover, language enrolments took a significant hit as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with the figure for Asian languages dropping by 17 percent between 2019 and 2020, to 5,092 EFTSL.

The data also show contrary trends in Asian language enrolments, the most important of which are strong growth in the learning of East Asian languages (which in the Australian context means especially Chinese as well as Japanese and Korean) and significant decline

in the learning of Southeast Asian languages beginning in 2006, and persistently very low enrolments in South Asian languages. We examine these trends in greater detail below.

Figure 2: Total Student Numbers (EFTSL) by Selected (Asian Language) Discipline Group 2001–2020



Our own count of the number of universities offering Asian languages also paints a picture of past growth and present stagnation, even decline (Table 2). During the period between the late 1980s and 2001—which includes the period during which the Commonwealth government strongly promoted the learning of Asian languages through NALSAS—there was a significant increase in the number and proportion of Australian universities teaching Asian languages, with the number of universities teaching certain key languages doubling. Since this time, there has been significant divestment, notably in Indonesian (which we discuss below) and Japanese. Out of 42 universities in Australia, a slim majority of universities offer Chinese and Japanese programs, and most do not offer other Asian languages (12 offered no Asian language at all).

What accounts for these declines? Clearly, various social, economic and cultural factors are at play (we discuss some below). The timing of the declines, however, also suggests they are tied to shifts in government policy. Put simply: the teaching of Asian languages expanded dramatically during the period when it was prioritised by government and declined thereafter. Reduced support for, and enrolments in, Asian languages in the school system (with the state of Victoria being one major exception) presents a particular challenge. It has been noted that "A major barrier for students who do not choose to study a language in the senior secondary years is lack of direct access to their preferred language in their school."[78] At public schools it is common for only one language to be offered; larger schools may offer a choice of one of two languages. Overall, the number of students graduating year 12 with an Asian language has declined since the end of NALSSP.[79]

Table 2: Australian Universities Teaching Asian Languages[80]

	Chinese	Japanese	Indonesian	Korean	Hindi
1988	13	19	13	n/a	n/a
1997	28	35	24	7	4
2001	26	33	24	7	2
2019	25	26	14	7	2
2019 total as % of total universities	59.5	61.9	33.3	16.7	4.8
Decline 2001–2019 %	3.8	24.2	41.7	0.0	0.0
2021	23	24	13	8	2

It should also be noted that these trends mask deeper changes in the delivery of language courses at some Australian universities. The headline numbers disguise significant reductions in the breadth and depth of language programs. For example, numerous universities have retained core programs in particular languages while cancelling specialist and/or advanced courses, or they have cancelled advanced majors (i.e. those for students who begin university having already studied the language at high school, or having equivalent competence) while retaining three-year majors only for students who enter university as beginners. There is thus a reduction in the intensity of language learning available, regardless of whether the university concerned maintains a particular program.

While there is much variation across universities, language programs are also becoming disproportionately dependent upon casual staff and teaching-only positions, a shift that was accelerated by the COVID-19 induced crisis of 2020–2021 (see Case Study 3). These changes have tended to marginalise language training from mainstream academic life, reducing the capacity of language teachers to conduct research and to make an intellectual contribution to the development of their disciplines.

Some language teachers also complain that requirements of covering background history, culture etc. of the country or region concerned—especially when students have limited options to take general contextual or Asian Studies courses—can limit the time available to focus on language training. Courses often also emphasise conversational skills at the expense of advanced reading, writing and formal speaking skills. Numerous language teachers consulted for this report expressed concerns about declining capacity within Australia to teach Asian languages—including more widely taught languages such as Chinese and Japanese—to the level needed for graduate research.

Case Study 3: The COVID-19 University Crisis and its Impact on Asian Language Teaching

The COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting economic impacts and, especially, the closure of international borders had a negative impact on the Australian university sector. In particular, the border closures meant there was a dramatic decline in international student fee income, estimated to constitute 27 percent of university revenue in 2019.[81] By early February 2021, just one year into the crisis, Universities Australia was already estimating that the sector had shed at least 17,300 jobs in 2020, as well as suffering a shortfall of revenue of 5.5 percent or $2 billion compared to projected revenue.[82]

Around the sector, units and programs that were seen as not delivering sufficiently high student income were targeted for cuts. This often meant that social sciences and humanities were the hardest hit, and many small units were merged into larger faculties. Languages were among those programs hardest hit. Programs that were closed in 2020–2021 included:

- Indonesian at La Trobe University (Victoria)
- Indonesian at Western Sydney University (NSW)
- Chinese and Japanese at Swinburne University (Victoria)

The Swinburne experience is noteworthy as an example of a program that did not have low enrolment but was closed as part of a turn away from languages and concentration on STEM disciplines.

Several other languages were also flagged for closure but were saved after community feedback (e.g. Hindi at La Trobe). In other places, programs were pared back, senior staff made redundant, and staff shifted to teaching-only positions (this was the case, for example, at Deakin University, where language staff at level D (associate professor) or above were made redundant. This is a far cry from the trend less than 10 years ago, when the Innovative Research Universities (its member universities include La Trobe, Murdoch, Griffith, Newcastle, Flinders, Charles Darwin, and James Cook) proudly declared that "Ensuring increasing numbers of our students are well educated in Asian culture, language, business and politics is front of mind across the senior IRU executive. We are committed to further increasing the number of students who have a study experience in Asia".[83] In 2013, these universities collectively boasted a large number of undergraduate and postgraduate Asian Studies and language programs, and committed to enhancing programs in Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Hindi. Their new posture after 2020 shows that support for Asian Studies can be fragile.

One bright spot amongst the general gloom was that in early 2022 Newcastle University launched a new Indonesian language program as part of a wider commitment to connections with Asia. As noted elsewhere, Curtin

University and Murdoch university are also renewing their commitment to Asian Studies.

The closures, coming in such close succession and occurring amidst the height of a much wider crisis in Australian universities, generated many expressions of concern. Though the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic were unique, in many ways they simply brought into sharp relief long-term trends in the social sciences and humanities in the university sector.

Northeast Asian Languages

The teaching of languages of Northeast Asia (which in the Australian context primarily refers to Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese and Korean) is the healthiest across the university sector. As Figure 2 indicates, the number of students studying Northeast Asian languages in Australian universities rose dramatically from 2,621 EFTSL in 2001 to 5,823 in 2019, an increase of 122 percent. Numbers dropped to 4,818 in 2020, but this was still a remarkable record of growth.

Unfortunately, we do not have disaggregated data for individual languages in this category.[84] Anecdotally, much of the growth is accounted for by expansion in Chinese language programs, especially in major-city universities, though growth in Korean has also been robust, but from a lower base.[85] In most universities offering both Chinese and Japanese, Chinese programs are significantly larger than Japanese programs.

Korean is a more specialist offering in the Australian tertiary sector (three states and territories—South Australia, Tasmania, and Northern Territory—do not have universities offering the language), but also one in which academics are particularly optimistic. For example, in her report to the 2019 annual general meeting of the Korean Studies Association of Australia, the organisation's president Joanne Elfving-Hwang explained that "Korean Studies programs continue to flourish with none of the established programs showing any significant loss of student interest. The most significant growth has taken place in the area of undergraduate Korean language education."[86] At the time of writing, several universities in Australia, such as the University of Melbourne and Curtin University, were in the process of introducing or significantly enhancing their focus on Korean studies

In Japanese studies, too, there is relative optimism. According to Rebecca Suter in a 2020 report to the ASAA, "The past twenty years have seen stable or growing enrolments in Japanese language and culture courses in Australia, and overall a significant growth in beginner level language units."[87]

Two main trends account for the growth of Northeast Asian languages. The first is the growing economic, geopolitical and cultural influence of the countries of the region. This growing influence generates student demand. The increasing economic clout and geopolitical influence of China means that many students are attracted to studying Chinese in the hopes of developing careers in the private sector, as well as in public-sector positions that have always been a drawcard for students of foreign languages. In the case of Korea and Japan, language teachers often note the influence of the cultural soft power of these countries, with phenomena such as the rise of K-pop and new cinema in Korea, and the

global reach of Japanese anime and manga, contributing to high enrolment in Korean and Japanese language programs.[88] Importantly, the rise of culture, the arts, and the digital economy in the economies of Korea and Japan provides students studying Korean and Japanese language with a way to bridge a personal interest in making cultural connections (often a major motivating factor for second-language learners) with career paths in the digital economy—providing an example of how economic and cultural rationales for Asian Studies can be mutually supportive. As more Asian countries expand their pop culture influence and develop more expansive digital economies, we can expect this appeal to expand.

These countries' efforts to gain global influence and promote themselves internationally have also assisted the teaching of these languages. In 2019, 13 Australian universities had Confucius Institutes, in which Hanban (the organisation set up by the Chinese Ministry of Education to run these Institutes) provided "start-up funding, annual funding of U.S.$100,000, teaching material and teaching staff" and in which the Australian university provided "office space and a director."[89] Since then, some of these have closed and the future of others remains uncertain due to the new federal government emphasis on preventing alleged foreign interference, as well as eligibility changes for universities holding United States Department of Defense funding.[90]

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Likewise, the development of Korean language learning and Korean Studies more generally has been "aided in its development by a supportive and globally oriented South Korean government", which, primarily through the Korea Foundation, has provided support in areas such as PhD scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships, lectureships and endowed professorial positions.[91] Japanese Studies benefits from funding from the Japan Foundation and other sources such as the Sakura Network.[92] In general, countries of Southeast and South Asia have not provided equivalent support.

The second factor driving growth in Northeast Asian languages is high demand from international students from East Asia for programs in these languages. Data from the federal government (Table 3) shows that over two decades from 2000 there was a dramatic increase in the share of international students in the student cohort studying Asian languages in Australian universities. The growth was especially dramatic for Northeast Asian languages, where the increase in international student numbers accounted for 74 percent of the overall growth of students taking these languages in 2001–2019. While the proportion of international students studying Southeast Asian languages also increased, this was in the overall context of a decline of student enrolments, noted above.

Table 3: International Students as Percentage of Overall Student Load (EFTSL), Asian Languages[93]

	2001	2010	2019
Northeast Asian languages	26.6	43.7	52.7
Southeast Asian languages	7.4	9.6	30.3

Writing of the strength of Chinese language programs in Australian universities, Anne McLaren in a 2020 report for the ASAA notes:

> A Chinese language program on a major Sydney or Melbourne campus may well comprise over 1,000 students. Most would be Australians of Chinese background or students from the People's Republic of China (PRC). Students of non-Chinese background generally comprise a small component of the overall enrolment and a dwindling number in advanced classes. This compares with the situation of several decades ago, when the major enrolment comprised non-Chinese background Australian students.[94]

McLaren notes that the Australian approach is different from that adopted in leading Chinese language programs in other countries (she cites Georgetown University as an example) which exclude native speakers. In contrast, Australian universities have developed specialist courses for native speakers, including in areas like translation, and these courses are "highly lucrative". According to Rebecca Suter in her 2020 report to the ASAA, meanwhile, "a large proportion of the students of Japanese language are international students from Asia" which has been "a positive factor for the financial sustainability of Japanese studies programs until 2020".[95]

This situation brings many benefits, but also masks problems in the pursuit of Asia literacy on Australian campuses. On the one hand, international undergraduate students are valuable contributors to the health of Asian Studies in Australia. Many of them achieve outstanding academic success, and they contribute to the vibrancy of social and cultural life of Australian campuses. Some of them go on to pursue postgraduate studies in Australia, remain permanently in Australia and, in a few cases, eventually take up positions in Australian academia. Others return to their home countries, or move to third countries, while maintaining life-long connections with Australia. Moreover, the financial contributions international students make are also significant—and largely explain the growth of programs targeting them. Their fees provide sources of income that frequently cross-subsidise programs in smaller languages, linguistics, Asian culture or history, and other areas with less student demand. In Australia's largely market-driven higher education system, the field of Asian Studies would be much weaker without these students.

On the other hand, the contribution made by international students signifies that the growth in these programs is not necessarily a barometer of wider Australian Asia engagement and Asia literacy. Between 2001 and 2019, while there was a 242 percent increase in EFTSL of international students studying Northeast Asian languages in Australian

universities, the growth of domestic EFTSL was only 43 percent, far below the growth rate of the student cohort as a whole. With regard to Chinese studies, for example, McLaren notes that the presence of large numbers of students from China "can have a dampening effect on the participation of domestic students" whose language skills generally lag behind those of their China-origin classmates.[96] She also points out that while Chinese programs in major universities in Australia's largest cities are prospering as a result of high demand from students from PRC, this is not the case in regional areas and in less research-intensive universities where programs are "harder to sustain" and where there may even be declining student demand. McLaren concludes that Australia's Chinese studies programs, despite their growth, are not producing enough domestic expertise on China: "The result is that Australia still has too few Australian China specialists to meet the national need for expert engagement with our largest trading partner."

Again, we stress that international students bring many benefits to Chinese language and other Asian Studies programs. The point is that their contribution should not be seen as reducing the imperative for Australians—whether of Asian background or not—to learn more about Asia, including by studying Asian languages. Critically, universities will only be able to cater to both groups of students if their language programs are provided with the staff and resources to allow for adequate streaming based on levels of fluency, and to cater for students with a large range of background language capabilities—from absolute beginners to advanced.

"Australia's Chinese studies programs, despite their growth, are not producing enough domestic expertise on China."

Some comparable problems are visible in Japanese and Korean language programs, even if these language programs do not face the same challenge of dealing with large numbers of background speakers. In a recent report on Japanese language programs in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore, Carol Hayes and her co-authors explain that they "have become increasingly concerned about the sustainability of advanced Japanese language programs", noting that "diminishing investment into language education in the higher education sector" makes advanced subjects "most at risk of being merged, cut back or dropped altogether."[97] Suter notes an "imbalance between the high number of students taking one or two Japanese language classes as electives and the relatively low number of students doing a full major," as well as pressures to turn Japanese studies programs into teaching-intensive programs taught by sessional lectures given that "student enrolments are typically higher in language than in culture courses".[98] In Korean studies, too, there is a growing tendency of universities to "hire staff on fixed-term purely teaching-focused contracts, often under the title of 'Teaching Fellow' or 'Senior Tutor'."[99]

Beyond the "big three" of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, few Northeast Asian languages are taught at Australian universities, and none as a major. Courses on Tibetan have been offered for some time at University of Sydney and ANU, and the latter university will offer an (online) minor in that language from 2023, alongside an online minor in Mongolian.

Southeast Asian Languages

Ironically, the most dramatic decline in the teaching of Asian languages has occurred in Southeast Asian languages—the languages of the Asian countries closest to Australia. A very limited range of Southeast Asian languages is taught at Australian universities. By far the most comprehensively taught language is Indonesian which, as Table 4 shows, was taught at 14 universities in 2019. In 2022, only 11 universities taught Indonesian. The Australian National University has the most comprehensive Southeast Asian language offerings, with majors in Thai, Vietnamese, Burmese, and Indonesian and minors in Tetum (Timor-Leste) and Burmese. No other Australian university offers a major in any Southeast Asian language apart from Indonesian.[100]

This situation represents a dramatic decline in the lesser-taught languages of Southeast Asia. In 1997, for example, Vietnamese and Thai were each taught at eight universities (declining to five universities each by 2001).[101] Cambodian, Javanese, Sundanese, and Filipino were each offered at one university in either 1997 or 2001 and have now entirely disappeared from the Australian university landscape. This absence is remarkable given how widely spoken some of these languages are in Australia: for example, Vietnamese is the fourth most widely spoken language other than English in Australian households.

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The virtual disappearance of lesser-taught languages, however, does not constitute the bulk of the decline of Southeast Asian languages. Indonesian constitutes the lion's share of this category, and has contributed a disproportionate share to the decline. Indonesian was a major focus of efforts to expand Asian language education from the 1970s onward at both schools and universities. David Hill, of Murdoch University, has documented trends in Indonesian language enrolment (his findings, displayed in Table 4, measure enrolments in EFTSL). He shows that university enrolments in Indonesian more than doubled between 1988 and 1992, before beginning a steady decline around the turn of the century. By 2019, numbers had dropped to less than half the peak enrolments achieved in 1992. More dramatically still, his figures show that fewer students were studying Indonesian in Australian universities in 2019 than were doing so in 1988.

The decline in the study of Indonesian language is striking when seen in the context of the economic, strategic and cultural importance of Indonesia to Australia, an importance that Australian governments formed by both major parties have acknowledged throughout the period of contraction. The decline of Indonesian is therefore perhaps our clearest signal of what happens in the absence of government planning and support for the development of Asia literacy—especially when contrasted with the evidence of growth during a period when such national planning and support were provided.

Table 4: Indonesian Language Enrolments in Australian Universities: 1988–2019 (Selected Years) in Effective Full Time Student Load[102]

	1988	1992	2001	2010	2014	2019	Compare 1988:2019 (%)	Compare 1992:2019 (%)
NSW	30	75.2	83.1	40	38.9	38.9	+29	-48
SA	15.8	50	31	20	14	9.8	-38	-82
VIC	52	143	181.5	130	133	80	+54	-44
QLD	56	101	38.7	21	24.6	16.2	-71	-84
WA	20.6	44.2	55	34	33	26.4	+ 28	-40
NT	0	19.4	15.3	14.5	18.8	N/A	N/A	N/A
ACT	25.9	40.5	45	28.5	32.5	22	-15	-46
TAS	0	29.9	32.3	16.5	8.5	6.4		-79
TOTAL	**200**	**503**	**482**	**304**	**303**	**178**	**-11%**	**-63%***

However, that this decline is especially severe in the case of Indonesian suggests that special factors have also contributed, not only at universities themselves but also in schools. A recent study of the decline of Indonesian in the Queensland education system, for example, pointed to a drop of numbers of students studying the language of about 50 percent between 2009 and 2018.[103] Such declines in high school programs are important, not only because they deprive young Australians of a basic tool to help them engage with and understand our closest Asian neighbour, but also because they have flow-on effects for university enrolments.

Most explanations for the decline in student demand for Indonesian language programs point to changing political and security conditions in Indonesia, with the violence that surrounded the 1999 independence referendum in East Timor, and then a series of terrorist bombings in Indonesia in the early 2000s, including the first and second Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005 in which many Australians died, seen as particular turning points. From this time, the media increasingly portrayed Indonesia as a site of political conflict and insecurity, rather than as a place of dynamic economic growth which had been at the centre of many media and government depictions in the 1980s and 1990s. Australian government warnings against travel to Indonesia, and the effective prohibition of exchange programs, reinforced this message. Cumulatively, these developments made Indonesian seem less attractive as a subject of study for many students and their parents.[104] Meanwhile, there is little demand for Indonesian from international students, including those from Northeast Asia who contribute to healthy enrolments in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. The government of Indonesia, for

its part, makes limited efforts to promote Indonesian language and culture abroad, unlike the governments of the three major countries of Northeast Asia.

One argument that is sometimes advanced to justify the closure of language programs at universities is that students can still study the language at another university, and that cross-campus enrolments and coordination of low-demand courses is a desirable option. But—as happened with Indonesian in several cities—students often find it difficult if not impossible to coordinate timetables and travel between campuses, and the closure of programs anyway leads to a loss of visibility and marketing to students. An example is the closure in 2013 of Indonesian language at UNSW Kensington campus. Since then, very low numbers of UNSW students have enrolled in Indonesian language at the University of Sydney: two in 2014, eight in 2015, nine in 2016, three in 2017, three in 2018 and 10 in 2019.[105] Similar problems were experienced after the closure of Indonesian at Western Sydney University.[106]

South Asian Languages

The situation of South Asian languages in Australian universities is most parlous of all. Never particularly strong, these languages are now hanging by a thread in the Australian university sector. Hindi is taught at two universities, ANU and La Trobe, down from four in 1997. In 2020, it was flagged for closure at La Trobe as part of a wider retrenchment of courses and positions in response to the COVID-19 crisis, but was saved after community mobilisation. Sanskrit, by contrast, is taught as a minor at the University of Sydney and as a major at ANU (down from being taught at five universities in 1997). Urdu, which was taught at one university 20 years ago, has disappeared from the Australian university landscape. The weakness of these languages reflects broader weakness in the study of South Asia writ large (see next chapter), though the growth of a very large Indian diaspora in Australia provides scope for a recruitment of heritage students.

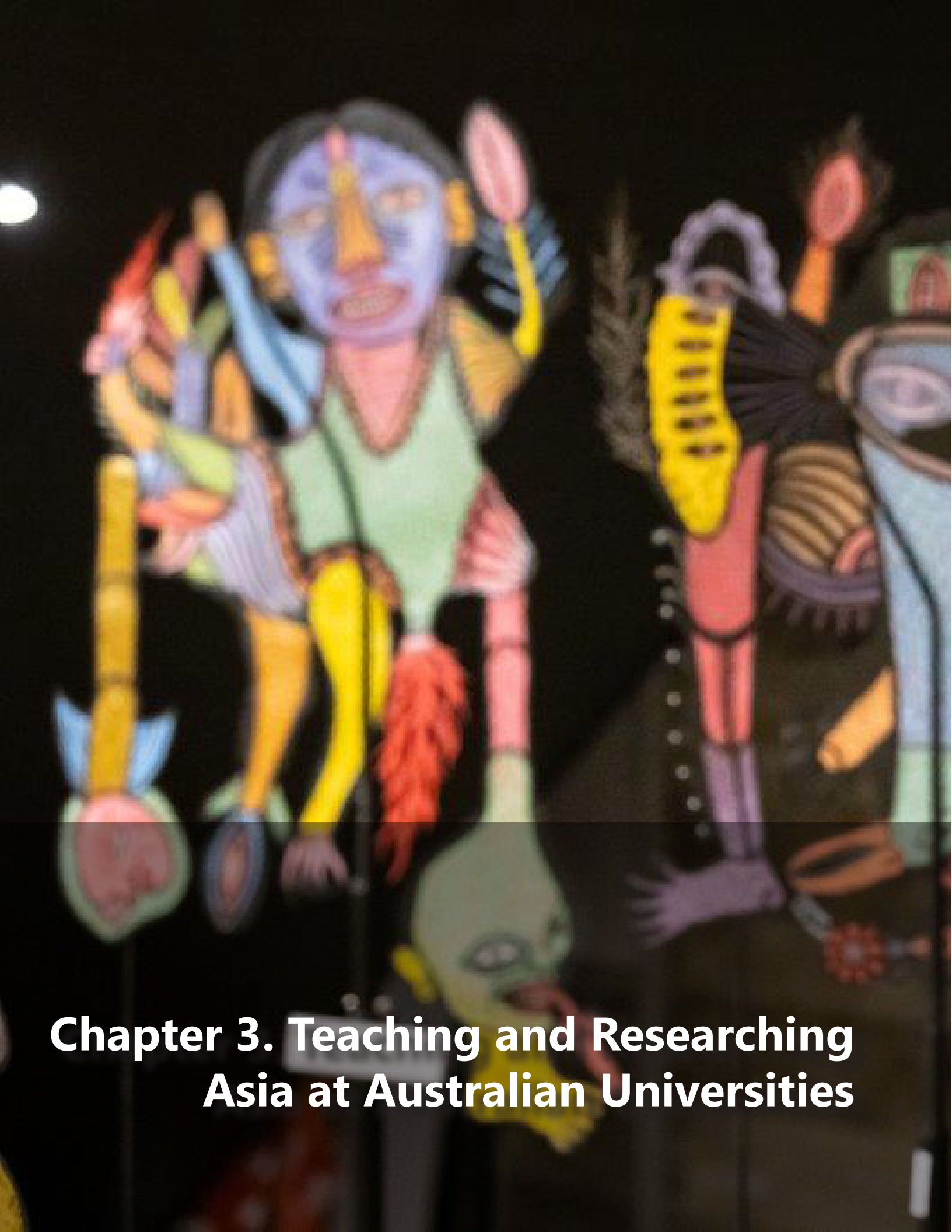
Conclusion

Reflecting on the decline in the learning of Asian languages in Australia, former Prime Minister John Howard commented in late 2020 that the growth of English as the "lingua franca of Asia" means that "you get to a point where the rationale [for learning Asian languages] has disappeared or greatly diminished." He added, "Every Indonesian president I dealt with had good conversational English."[107] Howard's comment is revealing in several respects. He is certainly not altogether wrong in pointing to the growing global power of English as one factor undermining the appeal of studying other languages in English-speaking countries such as Australia. The sense of complacency revealed by his comments reflects a growing confidence on the part of monolingual global elites, such as Howard—but also members of the broader Australian public—who when visiting Asian or other foreign countries are increasingly able to manage by interacting with largely English-speaking associates (the rise of instant—and rudimentary—online translation apps, such as those provided by Google, is another factor). Of course, in Howard's case, the complacency has an ironic edge to it, because John Howard was the leader of a government that—driven by the very sense of complacency he expresses—abolished the NALSAS program, thus bearing considerable responsibility for the decline being discussed. (Similar views were expressed internally within the then Gillard government when the NALSSP program was axed in 2011).

Despite such confident assertions of monolingualism, as Asia scholars we know that Asian language training must remain a bedrock principle of our field, and that it has broader national and strategic significance for Australia. Just as we would not expect a foreign expert studying Australia to be able to produce reliable analysis without being able to speak English, we should not expect first-rate analysis of developments in Thailand or Korea, for example, to be produced by a non-Thai or non-Korean speaker. Being embedded in the Asia-Pacific region implies a need to build expertise in the countries of the region at Australian universities, and doing that requires language skills.

"Australia would benefit greatly from a cohort of graduates who can combine their skills in trade, business, diplomacy, defence, the arts, digital economy—or any other area of growing exchange with Asia—with language competence."

Moreover, for a host of economic, cultural and strategic reasons, encouraging competence in key Asian languages beyond the community of university researchers and academics should remain an important national goal. It is not that every Australian needs to study an Asian language, but Australia would benefit greatly from a cohort of graduates who can combine their skills in trade, business, diplomacy, defence, the arts, digital economy—or any other area of growing exchange with Asia—with language competence.[108] Already, anecdotal reports point to dramatic declines in recruitment to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and intelligence agencies of graduates with Indonesian and other key Asian language skills. Eroding Australia's "sovereign capability" in this way could turn out to be a critical problem in the event of a major future crisis. At a more quotidian level, all manner of normal relations with Asian countries can be enhanced when language comprehension unlocks the deeper level of engagement unavailable to Australian visitors to Asia who remained trapped in the iron cage of monolingualism.



Chapter 3. Teaching and Researching Asia at Australian Universities

Chapter 3. Teaching and Researching Asia at Australian Universities

Australian universities have long been known internationally for their Asia expertise. Is this reputation still justified? To what extent do students at Australian universities have the opportunity to study about Asia, and how far do Australian universities offer a depth of expertise on the countries of the region? To address these questions, this chapter examines course offerings about Asian countries at Australian universities, and the ways in which teaching and research on Asia is organised through the sector.

This chapter finds that while teaching on Asia remains highly varied across the Australian university sector, the mission of promoting Asia literacy on Australian campuses has made at best limited progress over the last two decades, and certainly the more ambitious goals of generating a new Australian "Asia generation" have not been realised.[109] With few exceptions, traditional Asian Studies models and units have not expanded or flourished. A charitable view of developments is that there is an accelerating move away from promotion of "deep" Asia knowledge—researchers and students learning long-term about the language, history, culture, politics and society of a particular country or region—in favour of a post-area studies model that promotes "broad" knowledge about Asia. In the post-area studies model, teaching about Asian countries is moved out of specialist Asian Studies units, and out of an Asian Studies framework, and is instead embedded in disciplinary units and approaches. Some advocates of Asia-focused research argue that such a development is necessary and welcome, and is anyway likely to happen naturally as Australia becomes ever more economically and culturally embedded in its Asian environment.

There is mixed evidence on how far this trend is progressing. While there are certainly some indications that Asia expertise is spreading far beyond its early roots in the humanities and becoming more dispersed through the Australian academy, there is little systematic evidence that this process is generating sustained Asia knowledge, or moving the study of Asia away from its marginal status in most mainstream disciplines. We present data indicating that the number of Asia-focused subjects is not increasing at a selection of Australian universities, and that the study of Asia remains relatively peripheral to history and politics programs. There are exceptions, such as the discipline of law, where Asian legal studies has a well-established presence. We conclude that while expertise on Asia remains strong in Australian universities in global comparative terms, there is mounting evidence that this strength is vulnerable.

The Big Picture

Considered in the broadest possible terms, there are two main models through which the study of Asia might be pursued: the traditional or classical area studies model, which might also be thought of as promoting "deep" Asia knowledge, and the post-area studies model, which seeks to broaden and contextualise Asia knowledge by embedding it in general disciplinary pathways and wider intellectual pursuits.

The traditional model promotes deep knowledge of one country or region of Asia, by concentrating the study of Asia within an Asian Studies program. Students develop rounded expertise on a particular country, often focusing on one discipline (e.g. studying that country

through the lens of literature, anthropology, political science etc.) while supplementing their disciplinary focus with relevant language expertise and a broad grounding in the country's history, society and culture. Students wishing to learn about a particular country or region can take a range of courses, starting with the relevant language or languages, but incorporating country- or region-focused courses on history, culture, politics and so on. Historically, there have been varied ways to organise (and teach) this approach. The most common was that scholars would be embedded in a specialist Asian (or Chinese, Japanese, Southeast Asian, etc) Studies department, which taught a comprehensive program on language, history, literature, culture and so on. Traditionally, in Australian universities, such departments were based on Asian languages taught by scholars who had additional research interests in classical humanities subjects such as literary studies and history, and who thus also taught subjects in those areas. Hybrid models were also possible in which a China specialist, say, would be located in a History Department, but also affiliated to a China Studies or Asian Studies centre or program at their university.

"While expertise on Asia remains strong in Australian universities in global comparative terms, there is mounting evidence that this strength is increasingly vulnerable..."

This model of area studies took hold in the post-World War II period, beginning especially in the United States, and drew on earlier Orientalist traditions. In Australia, building on Oriental Studies foundations in a few campuses, the establishment and expansion of Asian Studies programs can mostly be dated to the 1970s. For example, in 1970 the ANU established its Faculty of Asian Studies, out of the former School of Oriental Studies that was founded in 1961. In 1975, Griffith University launched a Modern Asian Studies program, with the School of Modern Asian Studies being only one of four in this then newly-formed university. Murdoch University offered Southeast Asian Studies in the same year, and in 1976 Flinders University launched an Asian Studies program.[110]

Over the years, traditional Asian Studies approaches—like area studies more broadly—have been criticised on various grounds, including for their alleged complicity in Western projects of political dominance in the Global South, their allegedly Orientalist assumptions (and hence for "essentialising" the country or region concerned), for excluding the voices of the very people who are the subjects of their study, and for allowing the study of Asian societies to atrophy through isolating it from the latest disciplinary debates and methodological advances. It is possible to go back at least three decades and find reports stating that Asian Studies and area studies are "at a crossroads", "in crisis," and such like.[111]

It is important to note, however, that even the traditional Asian Studies approach was rarely a narrow pathway for students. In Australia, while undergraduate students could undertake an Asian Studies major or minor in an Arts degree, since the 1990s it has become common for students to undertake dual degrees. This means that students may undertake an Arts degree, with a major in Asian Studies, plus another degree which may or may not include studies of Asia (e.g. Arts/Law, Arts/Commerce, Arts/Education etc.).

The traditional area studies model had the advantage of being able to train students and, ultimately, scholars with deep knowledge of a particular country and its language who,

accordingly, have the ability to connect their study of, say, Chinese law or Thai Buddhism to wider historical, cultural and political contexts in the country concerned, adding depth and grounding to both their research and teaching. The traditional model also encouraged universities to offer a broad range of Asian Studies courses and expertise. It also had certain disadvantages. As well as potentially isolating Asia scholars from disciplinary debates, as noted above, it tended to lack integration with non-traditional area studies disciplines, such as law, commerce, education, and architecture, whose connections with Asian Studies often tended to be ad hoc rather than integrated.

The ASAA has generally been closely linked to this model of area studies-based research and teaching, and has tried to promote and defend it over the decades since the Association was formed in 1976. However, ASAA members have widely differing disciplinary backgrounds and approaches, and include many academics based outside Asian Studies programs. In fact, the traditional area studies model has long been under pressure, in part because it is challenging for the students who take it (not least because, depending on the degree, studying a language may add another year to the length of the degree). As universities increasingly moved toward a market-oriented model from the 1980s, units which were seen as underperforming financially—which included many Asian Studies programs, which often had relatively low student numbers and required intensive teaching—came under increasing pressure. Already, by 2002, the *Maximising Australia's Asia Knowledge* report stated that it was hard to generate "area specialists… because the 'area' based approach to teaching and learning has virtually been abandoned with few exceptions."[112]

In its place has emerged, at most Australian universities, a post-area studies model. This is where students undertake a single or dual degree without an Asian Studies program or major, and where Asia-focused academics are also no longer concentrated in Asian Studies departments, schools or other units. The post-area studies model is "dispersed" or "broadened": the study of Asia is taken out of specialist units, and is instead distributed across disciplines and academic units. Asia specialists are embedded in discipline-based units. Students learning about Asia encounter it through their engagement with discipline-based topics; this encounter with Asia can, but does not necessarily, involve learning an Asian language. In this way, the approach potentially creates a much larger cadre of non-specialists who have a better-than-zero understanding of Asia and who may therefore favour developing their Asia expertise and engagement in their future careers. The potential for individual students to develop deep Asia knowledge, meanwhile, remains highly dependent on both the Asia literacy skills of their lecturers and the student's own initiative and commitment.

One argument for taking the post-area studies approach is that it connects the study of Asia better to disciplinary debates, potentially making Asia central rather than marginal to the development of academic knowledge writ large. In the Australian context, Kanishka Jayasuriya has recently argued that "A strategy for the study of Asia as part of 'global social science and humanities', constitutes a transformative concept for the development of Asian Studies. In institutional terms, it means bringing Asian Studies to the centre of humanities and social science disciplines."[113] By extension, in this perspective, clinging to the old model of Asian Studies, in which Asia scholars are separated administratively and organisationally from colleagues working on cognate issues in other world regions or in terms of theory, represents an intellectual and political cul de sac: one that leads to academic stagnation, and therefore leaves Asian Studies scholars vulnerable when university administrators are

looking for cost savings. In fact, this broadening approach has been advocated by leading Australian scholars of Asia for some time, in part in response to changes in the region and Australia's growing integration with Asia. For example, in 1999, then ASAA president Robert Elson urged Asian Studies scholars, to reinvent themselves and work through this new model, "as the area studies project fades".[114]

It is possible that the process of broadening can happen naturally, without deliberate planning, as a response to the growth of Asian economies, the increased presence of scholars with backgrounds in Asian countries on Australian campuses, expanding links between Australian and Asian universities, as well as budget cuts and pressures to close small programs. A little after Elson made the call noted above, the *Maximising Australia's Asia Knowledge* report in 2002 noted that a shift to non-traditional Asian Studies was underway, and that this shift "represents an important development in the integration of the Asian experience in the teaching and research agendas of Australian universities." The report cited the example of Monash University, which had experienced growth in teaching on Asia in fields such as "international business, international taxation law, international labour relations and international organisations such as the WTO [World Trade Organisation] and APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation]."[115]

"One argument for taking the post area studies approach is that it connects the study of Asia better to disciplinary debates, potentially making Asia central rather than marginal to the development of academic knowledge writ large."

One possibility, therefore, is that as Australian links with Asian countries develop, researching and teaching Asia will no longer been seen as a specialist field, open only to those who had served an arduous area-studies apprenticeship, but be treated naturally as an important component of serious discipline-based approach at any modern Australian university (see Chapter 5 for more). Another argument in favour of the post-area studies approach is that it better prepares students for future professional careers: it is more advantageous, it is argued, from a job-market perspective for students who learn an Asian language to also concentrate on a professional specialisation such as law, commerce, or marketing, rather than building comprehensive knowledge of a country's politics, history, and culture.

The experiences of scholars studying mainland Southeast Asia (MSEA) in Australia is revealing. This field of study was never thought to be particularly well-represented in the Australian academy, especially in comparison to the study of Indonesia, which has tended to dominate Southeast Asian Studies. In 2017 a survey by Professor Michele Ford, Director of the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC), and her colleagues revealed unexpected strengths and diversity:

> Among the key findings of the survey are the following: there are approximately 398 researchers in universities around Australia who work on MSEA. Of these, 173 or about 43 per cent, are women. 126 work on Vietnam; 115 on Thailand; 98 on Cambodia; 75 on Myanmar; 59 on Laos, and 54 on the MSEA subregion. The disciplines in which staff carry out their work include: Agriculture, Development, Environment, Geography, Tourism (92); Economics, Demography, Public Health (80);

> Business, Law, Criminology (67); Politics, Political Economy, International Relations, Security Studies, Sociology, Economics (50); Linguistics, Education, Language (41); Anthropology, Culture, Religion, Music, Art (32); History, Heritage, Archaeology, Architecture (31); Cultural Studies, Literature, Media (10).[116]

Two elements of this account are noteworthy. First, is the fact that the extent of this expertise was largely unexpected: much of the growth of the field had occurred outside the purview of Asian Studies departments, and without the guidance or knowledge of the traditional custodians of Asian Studies in Australia. Moreover, it occurred despite the virtual collapse of teaching of the languages of mainland Southeast Asia at Australian universities (see Chapter 2). Second, is the dispersed nature of the disciplinary backgrounds of scholars involved in researching mainland Southeast Asia, including in fields such as agriculture and business that, to a large extent, lie outside traditional areas of Asian Studies strength.

As with traditional area studies approaches, the dispersed model also has weaknesses as a strategy for expanding Asia knowledge. The post-area studies model offers few structured incentives for students to undertake a language or to go beyond basic conversational skills, and may require them to add a year onto their degree in order to do so. Students may also be taught by academics who do not have deep Asian Studies expertise (lacking language skills, in-country experience etc.), with the result that their learning about Asia is mediated solely by English language sources. One striking element of the survey of Mainland Southeast Asia scholars just cited is that it included academics who did not possess relevant language skills. The potential loss of language skills—both by academics and by students—is one major downside of the post-area studies model.

"The post-area studies model offers few structured incentives for students to undertake a language or to go beyond basic conversational skills, and may require them to add a year onto their degree in order to do so."

A more general problem is that dispersing Asia expertise produces fragmented training about, and knowledge of, Asian societies. The approach risks producing graduates who pick up glimpses of this or that Asian society as they progress through their degrees, but who lack the language and contextual knowledge to develop anything approaching a nuanced appreciation of a country or region—let alone enough to enable them to conduct self-guided research of their own in one country. At worst, mainstreaming of Asia in the general curriculum can end up as a purely rhetorical commitment that covers loss of substantive Asia expertise. By the same token, even when done well, this approach might generate researchers who may have excellent knowledge of, say, the tourism industry in Bali or urban planning in Taiwan, but may be unable to contextualise their research topic in its broader social setting—and so miss opportunities to deepen their own insights.

From an organisational perspective, the post-area studies approach also arguably leaves Asia specialists vulnerable, just in a different way: it places scholars at the mercy of school and department heads, deans, and other academic managers who might—but often

Case Study 4: Assessing Research Excellence and the Fate of Asian Studies

Over recent decades, a growing challenge to Asian Studies scholars in Australian universities has been posed by the illegibility of much of their research in the assessment exercises used to assess research quality. Such exercises include the Australian government's Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) scheme, and international university rankings. The frameworks used in these exercises typically recognise, group, and assess research according to disciplinary categories. While the work of many Asia scholars—historians, anthropologists, political scientists and the like—are captured through such exercises, their contribution is not made distinctive or visible in the resulting reports and rankings. The research of many other Asian Studies scholars, meanwhile, is inherently interdisciplinary and risks being either missed or devalued.

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) system, which is used to classify research in Australia, including for the ERA, does not recognise Asian Studies at the 4-digit disciplinary level (i.e. the level used for e.g. Political Science (4408), Archaeology (4301) or History (4303)). By contrast, Indigenous Studies is recognised at the 2-digit level, and Pacific Peoples Culture, Language, and History is recognised at the 4-digit level. Asian Studies scholars therefore classify their work according to less prominent 6-digit categories (e.g. 440807, Government and Politics of Asia and the Pacific; 430102, Archaeology of Asia, Africa and the Americas; 430301, Asian History) or in obscure, residual categories such as 449901, Studies of Asian Society—one of only two categories under 4499, Other Human Society (the other being 449999, Other Human Society not Elsewhere Classified). Meanwhile, significant university rankings, such as the QS World University Rankings, assess universities by subject areas such as History, Modern Languages, and Sociology, but not by Asian Studies (or area studies more broadly).

Why does all this matter? Universities have come to place growing weight on such rankings and assessments in both their marketing to potential students and their efforts to attract government and non-government research funding. As a result, university leaders are typically keen to direct resources to areas of research strength, and to reduce support for areas that do not boost the university's research scores. The invisibility of Asian Studies research devalues the field in the eyes of university leaders, and can greatly affect investment decisions.

do not—appreciate or value Asia knowledge. Recent decades have seen the study of Asia at several universities enjoying rapid turns in fortune when a dean or vice chancellor who "gets Asia" is recruited, only to be replaced a few years down the track by somebody who does not "get Asia" at all. The post-area studies model is thus vulnerable to leadership change and whim, producing uneven Asian Studies personnel both within academic units (e.g. hiring five China specialists without a single South Asia expert) and across them (as when, say, a law faculty becomes a bastion of Asia expertise but Social Sciences is denuded).

Finally, there is also no guarantee that growing recognition on the part of Australian university leaders of the importance of Asia for Australia, and even for the tertiary sector,

will inevitably lead to an expanded focus on Asia in terms of research and teaching within Australian universities. In fact, several Australian universities have developed Asia "engagement strategies" which primarily focus on recruiting students from the region, and, sometimes, on developing partnerships with Asian universities, but which involve little or no commitment to developing Asia expertise (and which are themselves often underfunded).

The situation we have described leaves academics who are committed to research and teaching on Asia with a dilemma. One approach is to continue to advocate for Asian Studies programs, recognising their benefits in terms of imparting deep Asia knowledge, which also acknowledging that there are only 11 of these in Australia, and that the currents running against them remain strong. Another approach is to engage constructively with the post-area studies model, and to act strategically to promote deep and concentrated study of Asia in particular faculties and universities whenever opportunities arrive. In practice, scholars of Asia need to do both, defending and, where possible, expanding Asian Studies programs where we can, but also building Asia expertise into other disciplines and approaches.

Where Are We Now?

Traditional area studies approaches have continued to come under pressure over the last two decades. We have already covered the state of Asian language teaching—a core component of the traditional area studies approach—in Chapter 2. Universities that continue to offer Asian languages often combine a core stream of language courses with additional contextual (cultural, historical, political etc.) content, either woven into the language classes or as additional courses, generating Chinese studies, Indonesian studies, Japanese studies, Korean studies etc. minors, and majors, or as individual courses in other programs. Language lecturers also generally have their own research interests—often in linguistics, cultural or media studies, literature, or history. So in general, where a language is offered, there is typically at least some broader teaching and research on the country concerned, and a large portion of Australia's Asia-focused academics are employed to teach in these programs.

"Where a language is offered, there is typically at least some broader teaching and research on the country concerned, and a large portion of Australia's Asia-focused academics are employed to teach in these programs."

There is, however, considerable variation in how extensive such programs are: they range from language-only majors through to programs that combine a language core with contextual courses and in-country study components. Due to its location in Canberra, its history, and the special research support it receives from the federal government, the Australian National University is the only university that offers an extensive selection of area studies majors that run parallel to, and complement, language majors (so that a student can, for example, take majors in both Indonesian language and Indonesian studies).[117]

What about broader programs of study focusing on Asian history, society, and the

like, and taught in English? In 2021, only 11 of 40 Australian universities[118] offered an Asian Studies (or similar) program at the undergraduate level: Australian National University, Curtin University, Griffith University, La Trobe University, Monash University, University of New South Wales at Sydney, University of Melbourne, Murdoch University, University of Sydney, Western Sydney University, and University of Western Australia. The scope and nature of these offerings varied tremendously. Programs were relatively robust at larger universities like Melbourne and Sydney. La Trobe offered both an Asian Studies major and a major in "Asian Politics and Security". The Australian National University is again a special case, and offers not merely a major in Asian Studies, but an entire Bachelor's degree. Griffith and Monash do not offer traditional Asian Studies majors but more specialised versions: "Asian Engagement" and "Politics in Asia" in the former, "Global Asia" in the latter. Western Sydney University offers a major in "International Relations and Asian Studies" as part of its Bachelor of International Studies. Curtin offers only a "specialisation" of four subjects, two of which are introductory Asian language options (the latter university, however, is undergoing renewal in Asia offerings as this report is finalised, and is in the process of developing and launching a Bachelor of Asian Studies). Over the last two decades, specialist Asian Studies programs have closed in several universities. But at some universities, the retrenchment has been reversed: at Murdoch University, both Indonesian and Asian Studies Majors were reduced to minors, but these specialist language and area studies programs have now been restored to full major status, with community reaction to threatened closure having contributed to their revival.

"In several universities, a traditional Asian Studies department or similar unit, hosting academic staff and teaching its own programs, survives but in other campuses these have weakened or disappeared."

The organisation of the scholars teaching in these Asian and country studies programs is varied. A common model is a hybrid: with a specialist Asian Studies (or Chinese, Southeast Asian Studies etc.) centre acting as a hub, helping to coordinate the Asia-related teaching and research work conducted by scholars distributed in other parts of the university. Often, such centres focus on coordination, support and promotion of research—we discuss these centres below. In several universities, a traditional Asian Studies department or similar unit, hosting academic staff and teaching its own programs, survives but in other campuses these have weakened or disappeared. Again, The Australian National University through its College of Asia and the Pacific integrates both broad and deep approaches most comprehensively across the Australian university sector, with academic units that specialise exclusively in the study of Asia (and the Pacific) in disciplines such as politics, international relations, anthropology, economics, and history, paralleling equivalent academic units in the College of Arts and Social Sciences that do not focus on Asia.

Teachers of Asian languages, meanwhile, are often located in Schools of Languages and Cultures (or similar), along with staff teaching European and other languages. Some universities that do not offer Asian Studies majors still organise their staff through a Department of Asian Studies (Adelaide University is one such), in which staff combine

language teaching with teaching of courses on Asian culture, society and history offered through different programs.

One way of assessing the degree of teaching Asia-focused courses, both inside and outside traditional Asian Studies programs, is offered in Table 5. In this table, we compare 2001 course counts presented in the *Maximising Australia's Asia Knowledge* report with courses offered in 2021.[119] Following the methodology used in 2001, to count courses in 2021, we searched university course summaries online, using relevant key words, and inspecting course descriptions in key disciplines to identify courses with a significant Asia focus. We also consulted academic staff at each of the universities listed. These counts exclude postgraduate courses, courses which are delivered wholly or partly in an Asian language, in-country experience, theses, and so-called "umbrella" courses (which some universities offer in order to provide a framework for students to embark on special projects or to engage on one-on-one or small-group reading courses).The table separates courses listed as being part of an Asian Studies major from courses taught in other programs that are not also listed in the Asian Studies major (i.e. the column for "discipline-based subjects" contains no duplicates with the "Asian Studies subjects" column).

Table 5: Comparison of Asia-focused Non-language Undergraduate Courses at Key Universities 2001 and 2021

	Asian Studies Subjects		**Discipline-based subjects with more than 50% Asia content**	
	2001	2021	2001	2021
Melbourne University	48 (12 not offered in 2001)	30 (5 not available in 2021)	52 (3 not offered in 2001)	22 (8 not offered in 2021)
UNSW	40	25	64	19
Flinders University	18		18 (6 not offered in 2001)	16 (9 not offered in 2021)
Curtin University	12	2	62	8
James Cook University	-	-	18	2

The courses that lie behind the numbers in Table 5 show us that Asian topics appear across a diverse range of disciplines. While courses in Asian Studies majors tend to be largely drawn from the traditional humanities and social science disciplines, such as history, political science, cultural studies, gender studies and international relations, the other courses counted in Table 5 come from a broad mixture, including business, law, linguistics, architecture and design, art, and musicology. It also should be noted that there are Masters programs at several universities that also heavily feature Asia content (e.g. law programs at UNSW and University of Melbourne, the Master of Asia and Pacific Studies at ANU, as well as business programs at several universities).

Overall, there has been a decline in the range of Asia-focused offerings in each university, both in terms of Asian Studies subjects, and discipline-based subjects with significant Asia content (as shown in Table 5). Before commenting at greater length on this trend, we should briefly consider the possibility that our table has at least some undercounting of Asia content. After all, universities offer courses on topics such as global history, development studies, and international law that likely have at least some Asia content alongside material drawn from other world regions. We only counted such courses in our list when it was clear from the online summary that Asia featured significantly in the content. It is not impossible that Asia content is now being dispersed so widely in the curriculum that it is all but invisible to our assessment (though we have little even anecdotal evidence to support such an interpretation).

"Overall, there has been a decline in the range of Asia-focused offerings in each university, both in terms of Asian Studies subjects, and discipline-based subjects with significant Asia content."

Further, at least some of the reduction in course offerings may reflect a decline in the total number of courses available to students, rather than being confined to Asia-related courses. This is likely to be the case in the University of Melbourne, in particular, which streamlined its undergraduate course offerings over the last decade. University of Melbourne staff provided us with a count of the number of students taking non-language based Asia-related subjects in 2019, which we were able to compare with 2001 data.[120] These calculations in fact indicated an *increase* in student load from 90 EFTSL (Effective Full Time Student Load) to 563 EFTSL in 2019, or a jump from 0.3 percent to 1.33 percent of the University's entire EFTSL (unfortunately, we were unable to make these calculations for other universities).

However, it is likely that the University of Melbourne story is unique in our sample. Of the universities listed, it stands out as having made the most serious investments in Asia capacity over the last two decades, and we know enough about the stories of what has happened in the other universities to conclude that the overall picture is suggestive of decline in Asia offerings across much of the Australian university sector.[121] Indeed, in some of the cases listed in this table, the decline looks more like collapse. Two of the five universities included in the 2001 sample have either entirely lost an Asian Studies major (Flinders University) or severely downgraded it (Curtin University—though as noted above this university is in the process of rebuilding its offerings).

The Flinders story is instructive of the broader pattern by which Asia can fade from the curriculum, as a result of a series of restructures. Asian Studies was first absorbed into the Department of Politics and International Studies in 2004, then into the School of International Studies (around 2010), which later became the School of History and International Relations (mid-2015), during which process both personnel and teaching offerings were slowly reduced. In 2017–2018, the university underwent a full restructure, where schools disappeared. A College of Business, Government and Law was set up, which incorporated International Relations, and the ensuing curriculum and personnel restructure was the end of any entity which deliberately housed Asia-focused politics scholars. Indonesian language was saved by removal to the Humanities. Across Flinders University there are still scholars who work on Asia, but there is no collective formal group that could be identified as Asian Studies.[122]

Case Study 5: Asian Studies in Australian Law Faculties and Schools

In Australia, faculties and schools outside traditional Asian Studies programs provide opportunities for students to study Asia across an array of disciplines. One example of the strength of such programs in Australia is the field of Asian Legal Studies. In the 1990s, Malcolm Smith, a professor of Japanese law and founder of the Asian Law Centre, declared the triumph of the mainstreaming of the study of Asia in law schools.

Two decades on, the law school landscape in Australia has changed considerably. In the 1990s, there were just 12 law schools in Australia; by 2019 there were 39. Likewise, the number of students has grown dramatically, and many law schools now offer juris doctor degrees (often with many international students from China). This growth is partly a result of the influence of the market orientation of many universities, which view law schools as offering relatively cheap degrees (they do not require expensive equipment) that are in high demand from students. One result is growing fears of an oversupply of graduates competing to enter the legal profession.

So what is the fate of Asian Legal Studies since the 1990s? In 2019, a total of 34 law academics in permanent positions in Australian universities might also be called Asian Studies scholars—i.e. they had Asian language skills, in-country experience, and long-term commitment to the study of Asia. They represented less than 4 percent of all permanent law academics in the country.

The content of law degrees is primarily determined by the Australian legal profession, which means students must study core subjects (known as the "Priestly 11") to be eligible to enter the legal profession. This structure effectively leaves the study of Asia to a small number of electives. The availability of Asia-focused electives offered across LLB/LLM/JD programs has risen, but not in relative terms. In 2001, 42 subjects on Asia were offered across Australia, compared to 92 on the books in 2021. Though an increase in absolute numbers, this represents a decline in proportion given the expansion of the number and size of law schools in Australia. There is a noticeable increase in subjects on private law in China. There is also an increase in subjects run in-country: there was only one such subject in 2001; 24 were on the books by 2021 (due to COVID-19, many did not go ahead as planned that year). This expansion is largely a result of the New Colombo Plan.

Asian legal studies expertise and courses remain concentrated, with eight of 39 law schools each offering more than two electives on Asia (with some offering up to 24, including comparative law subjects with reference to Asia case studies). These eight were ANU, La Trobe, Monash, Melbourne, Swinburne, Sydney, UNSW and UQ.

Some law faculties have sustained their Asian legal studies expertise by establishing research centres. In the 1990s, there were two relevant research centres: the Asian Law Centre (ALC) at the University of Melbourne (est. 1985)

and the Centre for Asian and Pacific Law (CAPLUS) at the University of Sydney (est. 1995). By 2021, there were another three research centres: the Centre for the Study of Indonesian Law, Islam and Society (CILIS, University of Melbourne, est. 2013); the China International Economic & Business Law Initiative (CIBEL, UNSW Law, est. 2015) and the Southeast Asia Law & Policy Forum (UNSW Law, est. 2015). Other cross-institutional and international and comparative research groups with a focus on Asia also exist. Law-focused groups also exist in other faculties such as Monash Business School's Asia Pacific Regulation Research Group. No other discipline in the social sciences or humanities has the same number of Asia research centres specific to the discipline. Some of these Asian law centres have also been able to offer refuge to Asian Studies scholars from a discipline other than law by providing them short-term postdoctoral or research assistance roles, until a position in their own discipline became available.

Overall, the story of Asian legal studies in Australia is one of qualified success. On the one hand, faculties that established Asian legal studies through strategic hiring, new courses and new centres in the 1980s and 1990s have managed to maintain or modestly expand their programs and staff. On the other hand, most law students will never have the chance to study Asian law, with Asian legal studies concentrated in roughly eight law schools, failing to keep pace with the expansion of legal education in Australia. [123]

Asia in the Disciplines

It is also possible to assess the extent of teaching on Asia by looking at disciplines which have traditionally been a focus of Asia-related research and teaching in Australian universities, and where we would therefore expect to find the study of Asia well represented. Table 6 presents a summary of Asia undergraduate offerings (excluding honours) in select universities in the disciplines of history and politics/international relations. Again, this table does not identify courses that touch on Asian countries or topics in general thematic courses on, for instance, global politics, human rights, world history, or history of empires. Instead, it identifies only courses that are either wholly or substantially (i.e. around 50 percent or more) focused on Asia. The table also does not distinguish between courses that were on the books and those that were actually offered in 2021, except when that was made obvious by the university website.

It should be stressed that the table presents a snapshot of courses offered in a single year, and thus may understate the full range of courses offered by a university (for example, Murdoch University employs two historians of Asia and not all of their subjects were listed in the year we conducted the survey). Even so, the table suggests that even in two core disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, most of Australia's major universities make little effort to prioritise teaching about Asia. To be sure, there are notable exceptions (in this selection, the University of Sydney's History program stands out, as does Griffith University's Politics in Asia major), and it should be noted that several of these universities—notably Sydney, Melbourne, Monash, and UNSW—have Asian Studies programs running parallel to these programs, so in these cases the table does not always include the full range of Asian history, politics, and society courses on offer.

Table 6: Comparison of Asia Content in History and Politics/International Relations Undergraduate Majors (excluding Honours), Select Universities, 2021

	History			Politics and international relations		
	Asian topic	Significant (i.e. around 50% or more) Asia content	Not Asia focused	Asian topic	Significant (i.e. around 50% or more) Asia Content	Not Asia focused
University of Western Australia	0	1	31	1	1	19
University of Queensland	1	-	13	-	-	9
Adelaide University	-	-	13	-	1	15
University of Sydney	14 (7 not available in 2021)	1 (not available in 2021)	60 (29 not available in 2021)	3 (2 not available in 2021)	1 (not available in 2021)	28 (11 not available in 2021)
UNSW Sydney	16	1	47	2	-	20
University of Melbourne	3	-	38	2	-	26
Monash University	2	1	31	-	-	20
University of Tasmania	-	1	14	-	-	13
Murdoch University	3	1	6	1	-	7
Newcastle University	-	-	15	-	1	11

Overall, however, the low priority placed on Asia in these disciplines is especially striking given that several of the universities in the table offer broad suites of courses on European and American politics and history. In particular, history programs at several of the universities listed offer not only survey courses on Europe and the U.S., but also specialist courses on topics such as witchcraft in early modern Europe or the Vikings, without offering

anything at all on, say, the history of China or India—countries that are home to some of the world's most important civilizations and which together today account for more than a third of the world's population.

As for politics, Michael Barr in a 2020 report looked at course numbers across the entire university sector and found only 16 courses on the politics of particular Asian countries (eight on China, two each on Japan, Korea, and Indonesia, one on India and one on Taiwan). He concluded that these figures suggest that:

> the state of teaching about Chinese politics is in reasonable shape, at least for the moment. Yet if we look beyond the China topics, the state of the remaining field is worryingly poor. This is especially so once we consider that most of these topics are offered in just a handful of universities (with ANU disproportionately represented).[124]

On the other hand, if we focus just on international relations, then there is a different picture. In another analysis produced for the ASAA, Jennifer Canfield and Mathew Davies identified 264 international relations scholars distributed across 20 Australian universities.[125] They found that of these, 112 (or 42 percent) had an Asia-Pacific regional focus, which likely makes international relations the most Asia (or Asia-Pacific) focused of all disciplines in Australia, outside of language and Asian Studies programs themselves. This weight is arguably attributable in part to the continuing, indeed growing, emphasis on security in official Australian government policy and discourse on the region (see Chapter 1), and resulting funding opportunities and student demand.

"The field of Mainland Southeast Asian Studies suggests that there is likely a great deal of highly fragmented and dispersed Asia expertise in Australian universities, including in many non-traditional fields."

In summary, it seems that neither model for promoting Asia knowledge through Australia's university sector—the traditional area studies model nor the post-area studies model—has fared particularly well over the last two decades, although the picture is decidedly mixed, with considerable unevenness across universities and subject areas. The challenges facing the traditional approach are long-standing and are underpinned by the problems of language programs discussed in Chapter 2. In areas where language teaching is relatively robust—such as Korean and Japanese—the old model remains relatively healthy, but it is under great strain in areas—South or Southeast Asia—where language programs are weak or in decline. At the same time, it appears that the post-area studies model of embedding the study of Asia throughout the disciplinary universe of the Australian tertiary education sector has also not made significant progress. To be sure, the field of Mainland Southeast Asian Studies suggests that there is likely a great deal of highly fragmented and dispersed Asia expertise in Australian universities, including in many non-traditional fields. But often these scholars' interests in Asia are not reflected in their universities' teaching programs. Overall, it is hard to escape the conclusion that most Australian universities remain determinedly Euro- and America-centric, and have perhaps become more, not less, so over the last two decades.

Case Study 6: Decolonising Asian Studies in Australia

One important and welcome—albeit still gradual and partial—shift in the field of Asian Studies in Australia is that it is increasingly made up of academics originating in the countries of the region.[126] This is not, of course, an altogether novel development. In its early years, Asian Studies in Australia was shaped by major scholars like Wang Gungwu and Ranajit Guha; language programs long featured "native speaker" instructors, and there was always a sprinkling of Asian historians, political scientists and others—especially in programs that focused on more developed countries, notably Japan.

Overall, this trend has intensified considerably over the last two decades. The gradual internationalisation of the Australian university sector, rapid advances in the quality of Asian universities, growing educational, economic and cultural links between Australia and the region, the effectiveness of Australian government postgraduate scholarship programs, among many other reasons, have accounted for a shift in the composition of the Asian Studies academic workforce in Australia.

What are the implications of this shift? One is the emergence of a new strain of recognition of, and scholarship on Asian Australians, a field still in its relative infancy but marked in 2006 by the foundation of the Asian Australian Studies Research Network (AASRN), pointing toward what Mridula Nath Chakraborty calls "a gathering of momentum in properly uncovering the two-centuries old Asian presence in Australia, and to bring to the fore the rich and layered Asian genealogies that have contributed to the making of contemporary Australia."[127]

There are also potential implications for the study of Asia writ large. In the past, research and teaching about Asia in Australian universities was often conceived as having a distinctive national mission: Asian Studies scholars saw it as part of their job to educate Australians about Asia, and to interpret and explain events in Asia to the Australian public and policy makers. In a general sense, this mission remains unchanged. Many Asia-background scholars working on Asia topics in Australia view it as part of their service orientation to engage in outreach to the Australian public and decision makers. But some may not place such a priority on this aspect of their work, instead viewing their primary public as being in their country of origin. Australia-based scholars of Indonesia such as Ariel Heryanto (cultural studies) and Nadirsyah Hosen (law), for example, while discharging important service to the Australian academy have maintained massive media and social media influence in Indonesia, where they are both famous as critical commentators on contemporary events. Outside of Asian Studies, medical researchers Dicky Budiman (Griffith) and Ines Atmosukarto (ANU) were among the most prominent experts providing commentary to the Indonesian public about the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Asia-background scholars may also have different needs and priorities. For example, they typically do not require language training to be able to conduct fieldwork in the countries that are their primary focus, nor do they need such long

apprenticeships studying the culture, history, and society of their country of origin. They therefore may be less encumbered by the disciplinary versus area studies debates that have tended to dominate the field, bringing fresh perspectives on how to bridge, or bypass, such divides.

Research Centres on Asia

One notable area of growth over the last two decades has been in research centres, institutes, hubs, initiatives and networks within universities that focus on profiling, coordinating, and supporting teaching and research on Asia. Such organisations are one visible way in which universities have endeavoured to showcase their commitment to the study of Asia. In this section we include research and policy centres and institutes at Australian universities that view their main mission as being to foster Asian Studies expertise. Some of these centres also include comparative experts or experts on Australia-Asia relations who do not necessarily identify with Asian Studies. External to universities, there has also been growth in the number and size of institutes focused on policy and business, including many with significant Asia coverage, such as The Asia Society (expanding to Melbourne) and The Lowy Institute, among others.

In recent decades, Asia research centres have become more common in Australian universities due to several factors, including the increasing emphasis on research performance, the desire to attract students, the imperative to promote publicly the findings of academic research, and the goal of attracting donor funding. In particular, the rise of Asia centres is a method to recognise and promote Asia research in the wake of the fading of the traditional area studies model. In the past, study of Asia was often concentrated in Asian (or Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, etc.) Studies departments. This pattern of organisation partly explains why, in 1990, there were fewer than ten research centres focused on Asia in Australia. As Asia-focused departments were abolished or merged into larger entities, and as university managers recognised that Asia experts were scattered across the university, centres became one way to coordinate and promote their work.

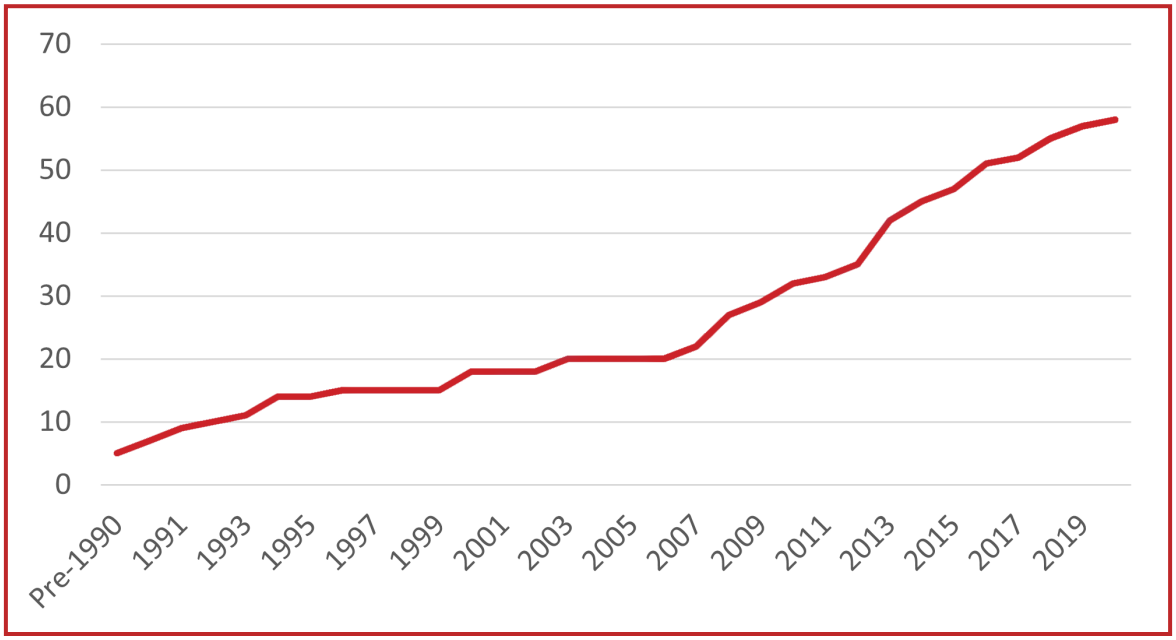
"The rise of Asia centres is a method to recognise and promote Asia research in the wake of the fading of the traditional area studies model."

By 2000, there were 18 research centres focused on Asia at Australian universities. From the mid-2000s, the number of research centres on Asia increased further (see Figure 3). By 2020, there were 58 Asia-focused research centres, policy institutes and similar bodies (hereafter "centres").[128] We identified at least eight centres that had either been abolished or restructured since being founded.

For universities that wish to highlight and support their otherwise dispersed Asia-related activities, establishing an Asia centre to which existing staff can affiliate can be a relatively cost-effective solution, especially as they require little infrastructure. Though there is considerable variation in the size and investment in such centres, they usually have one

of three types of funding and support base: some are funded by the university or through faculties; some are funded by the government in partnership with universities; and some are funded through philanthropy.

Figure 3: Number of Asian Studies Research Centres

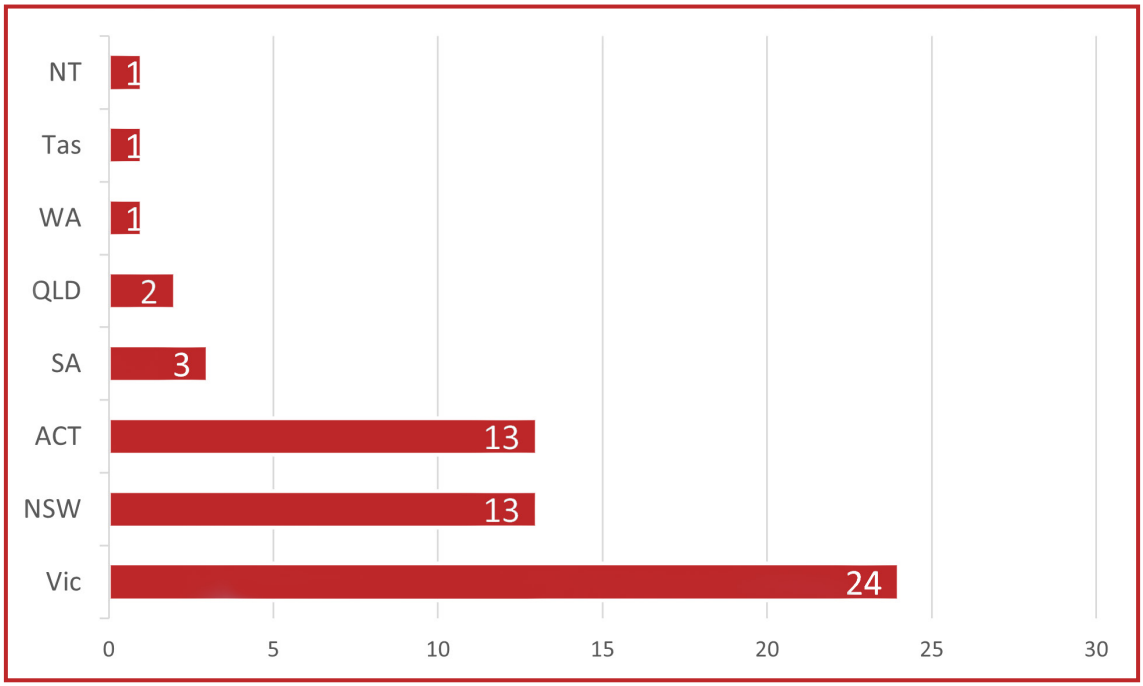


Such centres are often run by a director and/or board consisting of academics seconded from other departments, or who add running the centre to their existing duties, with relatively modest administrative and budgetary support for centre activities. Not all centres follow this pattern, however; some universities have large and relatively well-funded centres that play a major role in external promotion of research, teaching and outreach on Asia. These include long-standing bodies such as the Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne, as well as newer entities such as the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre and the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, and the China in the World Centre at the ANU. In 2022, research centres on Asia were primarily concentrated in three states: Victoria, NSW, and the ACT (Figure 3). Victoria is the state that hosts the largest number of Asian Studies research centres, with 24 centres. Next, NSW has 13 and the ACT has 13. Several states including Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania have one or two Asian Studies research centres.

In terms of their focus, most Asia research centres adopt an interdisciplinary approach. In 2022, 50 of the 58 Asia research centres we identified were interdisciplinary. Most such centres rely primarily on funding support from the university, but also encourage academics to apply for external grants for specific research projects. Examples of newer interdisciplinary Asia centres include the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) at the University of Sydney, nine Regional Institutes at the ANU (on China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) and La Trobe Asia. These centres focus on fostering

and promoting academic research and some also inform public policy; the ANU Regional Institutes do not directly employ academic staff but are instead intended to coordinate and galvanise academic work on the country or region of focus across the campus. Accordingly, the budgets of such research centres and institutes vary widely.

Figure 4: Distribution of Asian Studies Research Centres by State/Territory



Discipline-specific Asia centres typically also are funded from within the university, though some also draw upon government and/or philanthropic funding. In 2022 we identified just eight of 58 centres as following this model, and most were located in law schools and business schools. Though there were some early pioneers, such as the ANU's Indonesia Project, established in the 1960s with funding support from the Australian government to research the Indonesian economy, most of these were established from the late 1980s. Research centres based in law faculties are a prime example and include the Asian Law Centre at the University of Melbourne (est. 1985); Sydney's Centre for Asia and the Pacific (est. 1994); UNSW Law School's China International Business and Economic Law Initiative (2014) and its Southeast Asia Law & Policy Forum (2015). Centres which in practice focus primarily on international relations and political science (though having a wider remit) include the Griffith Asia Institute and La Trobe Asia.

In the 2000s, a new form of research centre that emerged were centres initiated and co-funded by government in collaboration with consortiums of universities. In 2008, the Australia-India Institute was established as a consortium of universities including La Trobe, UNSW, UWA and the University of Melbourne, funded by the federal government, the Victorian state government and the University of Melbourne. It has four priorities: education, health, governance and security, and infrastructure. It was established in the wake of anti-Indian violence in Australia and as part of efforts to reassure international students from India.

Another example is the Australia Indonesia Centre, established in 2014 as a consortium of four Australian universities in collaboration with seven Indonesian universities, based at Monash University. Both institutions are primarily policy and outreach oriented, with the Australia Indonesia Centre particularly interested in promoting research collaboration, especially in areas of interest to the Australian government. Both bodies have also had academics and non-academics as directors. Another example is The Asia Institute Tasmania, formed in 2014 and funded by the Tasmanian Government. While academics engaged with research centres supported by government many positive outcomes and experiences, the way in which they mix government and academic goals, fusing soft power, outreach, and research purposes, can prove hazardous for the intellectual enterprise.

While some research centres on Asia have a broad geographic focus, some are either country-specific or region-specific in their focus. In 2020, 28 such centres had a country-specific focus, comprising 48 percent of the total, while 18 (31 percent) had a general Asia focus, and 11 had a regional focus (on either Southeast or South Asia). Among country-specific research centres in 2020, eight were focused on China, six on Korea, four on Japan and four on Indonesia.

Such centres were also concentrated at Group of Eight (G8) universities, which had 47 centres, or 81 percent of the total, mirroring other trends we have observed in this chapter. While we cannot identify the precise relationship between the presence of a research centre in a university and other indicators of strength in Asian Studies, such as the existence of Asian Studies programs, courses on Asia in other disciplines, or the number of Asian Studies scholars across the university, for at least some disciplines there is a clear positive relationship, with universities that have research centres also having the highest number of academic experts on Asia and the largest number of program offerings.[129] Universities doing well in one of these fields often do well in the others, suggesting that both Asian Studies student opportunities and research remain relatively concentrated at about 15 universities in Australia.

"While academics engaged with research centres supported by governmentreport many positive outcomes and experiences, the way in which they mix government and academic goals, fusing soft power, outreach, and research purposes, can prove hazardous for the intellectual enterprise."

Even so, it is a paradox that this expansion in the number of Asia centres at Australian universities has occurred during the period that teaching of Asian languages and Asia-related course content generally has stagnated or declined, as discussed above. While the growth of these centres is a welcome development, we should be cautious when considering their contribution to the development of Asia knowledge in the Australian university sector. They play important, often critical, roles in coordinating otherwise dispersed Asia-related teaching and research, and can play a crucial role in the post-area studies model as they offer a way to maintain a focus on Asia in the absence of traditional Asian Studies programs. Leaders of such centres, even when they have a limited role in academic recruitment and appointment, often endeavour to play a galvanising role by highlighting the value and

potential of Asia-related work to those university managers who oversee budgets and recruitment.

Despite their often positive role, Asia research centres are not a magic solution to deeper trends that affect investment in Asia expertise across the university sector. Moreover, it is worth stressing that there are still many academics who are Asian Studies specialists who are not supported by a research centre, or who may be a part of cross-institutional Asian Studies networks. We turn to the role of associations supporting such scholars in the final chapter of this report.

Regional Focus

In terms of regional focus, the strengths and weaknesses of Asia expertise in the Australian university sector tend to be driven by two factors: i) the relative health of language programs; and ii) geopolitical, strategic, and economic factors. Strong language programs, as noted above, tend to be associated with a broad Asian Studies approach, either formally when they are part of an Asian Studies program or unit, or because they are taught by scholars who use the opportunities afforded by teaching languages to express their research interests elsewhere in the curriculum. National-level concerns and priorities about Australia's regional and bilateral relations often also filter into hiring choices and the growth or decline in teaching programs: the growth of Indonesian studies in the 1990s, for example, was at least partly associated with Australian government enthusiasm about APEC and the possibilities of expanded economic ties with Southeast Asia; over the last two decades, China's protracted economic boom and its growing geopolitical assertiveness have prompted increased attention to China across Australian universities.

As a result of the first factor, the fields of Japanese, Korean and, to a lesser extent, Chinese studies tend to retain the strongest resemblance to traditional area studies approaches in Australian universities. Building on the back of relatively healthy language enrolments, these programs tend to be marked by continuing emphasis on humanities broadly defined, including literature, cultural studies, gender studies, media, and history. In assessing the field of Japanese studies, Suter noted in 2020: "Literature had traditionally been an area of strength in Japanese Studies; in the past ten to fifteen years the focus has been gradually shifting from purely literary studies towards more interdisciplinary research in gender studies, cultural studies, and media studies."[130] By contrast, Japanese political science (and social science generally) is relatively weak in Australia. Korean studies, by contrast, is somewhat broader: "Today a glance around the disciplines represented in Korean Studies taught in Australia reveals an expansive curriculum including politics, political economy, international relations, linguistics, literature and translation, film studies, history (Joseon Dynasty to contemporary times), religion, business, communication studies, and more."[131]

China deserves special mention. The study of China is arguably the most diverse and healthy of any Asian regional focus within Australia; it is also significantly shaped by Australia's economic and security interests. The health of Chinese language programs means China humanities remain relatively strong across at least some universities. The rising significance of China economically and in world affairs, meanwhile, imparts strength in fields such as politics, international relations, strategic studies, business, law and similar programs.

As noted above there are nine China research centres across Australian universities, even as some China experts express concerns about the capacity of Australian universities to train a cohort of Australian experts on China, given the challenges of attracting Australian students to studying the Chinese language (see Chapter 2).

In addition to resonating with Australia's economic priorities, research on China is increasingly driven by Australia's security interests. In consultations leading to this report, some China specialists noted a "securitisation" of studies of China in Australia, with some centres focusing on China as a growing potential security threat for Asia. This shift closely tracks the downturn in Australia's bilateral relations with China. These specialists pointed to the rising prominence in public commentary and scholarship on China of a cohort of international relations and security scholars who lack knowledge of the Chinese language and deep knowledge of China's history, literature, and culture. Similarly, the American Council of Learned Societies has observed the "distortion of academic priorities by national security concerns" in relation to China Studies at U.S. universities.[132] In Australia, with some notable exceptions (such as the Rudd government's support for the establishment of ANU's Australian Centre on China in the World in 2010), growing government and public concern about China's rise is not necessarily translating into expanded commitment to deep study of the country.[133]

"Specialists pointed to the rising prominence in public commentary and scholarship on China of a cohort of international relations and security scholars who lack knowledge of the Chinese language and deep knowledge of China's history, literature, and culture."

Southeast Asian Studies, in the traditional area studies sense, has largely died out at Australian universities, with the partial exception of the study of Indonesia. Generally speaking, the field is instead characterised by the pattern of fragmentation indicated above with regard to mainland Southeast Asian Studies: there is still considerable expertise on the region, and that expertise is arguably diversifying in terms of disciplinary focus, but Southeast experts are distributed widely through mostly disciplinary departments or schools and, to a lesser extent, in Asian Studies programs. With exceptions, such experts rarely have the opportunity to teach courses that focus mostly, let alone exclusively, on their countries (or even region) of expertise. The field of Southeast Asian Studies in Australia tends to be tilted toward the social sciences, with much emphasis on politics, development studies, and the like. Even much of the anthropological research on the countries of Southeast Asia in Australian universities focuses on issues of power, development, and politics.

The study of Indonesia stands somewhat apart from this pattern. The survival of Indonesian language programs at several universities means remnants of the old area studies approach are still visible, though they are fading. For example, the study of Indonesian literature was very prominent a generation ago, with some of the world's leading scholars in the field working at Australian universities—but this topic has now all but disappeared from Indonesian studies programs. Even so, in global comparative terms, there is still a heavy concentration of Indonesia expertise at Australian universities, with a strong tilt toward social sciences rather than humanities, and with relatively few specialist courses on

Indonesia being taught outside surviving language-based programs. There are questions about the sustainability of this expertise: many of the Indonesia specialists in Australian universities today were trained during the heyday of Indonesian studies between the 1980s and early 2000s: the decline of Indonesian language training at both schools and universities might be a leading indicator of future decline in this field (though this is a field which is also increasingly attracting talent from Indonesia itself).

Given that there is so little teaching of other Southeast Asian languages in Australia, there are few universities with concentrations of expertise on other Southeast Asian countries, or Southeast Asia in general. To be sure, given the region's proximity to and close ties with Australia, universities that have a focus on Asia often employ significant numbers of experts on Southeast Asia, but they tend to be scattered, with no university maintaining a special focus on developing, say, Thailand or Vietnam expertise per se. There are some exceptions, however. For example, the University of Sydney and Australian National University both have internal centres focused on Southeast Asia (with the ANU also having separate Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar Institutes). Melbourne and Monash also have strengths in Indonesian studies, while UNSW has both an ASEAN Business Research Hub and the Southeast Asia Law & Policy Forum.

In contrast, the study of South Asia is strikingly weak in Australia, especially in light of the growing economic and geopolitical weight of India—factors repeatedly emphasised by government. During the 1970s and 1980s, study of the region was relatively strong in Australia.[134] Priya Chako, however, has observed that:

> South Asian Studies has had a sustained presence in Australia, but the growth of the field has largely been driven by the collective and individual efforts of scholars of South Asia working in the Humanities and Social Sciences across various universities. Government and university support for South Asian Studies has waxed and waned and has always been limited and inconsistent.[135]

Writing in 2021, Craig Jeffrey and Matthew Nelson noted that whereas in the 1970s 13 Australian universities offered undergraduate subjects focused on South Asia, as the university sector has grown "it has withdrawn support for Asian Studies, and South Asian Studies in particular." They noted that there was only one South Asia or India program (at ANU) and only five universities now offered semester-length subjects on India or South Asia. The result is a dramatic loss of expertise, especially compared to the past, when "Australia boasted some of the leading scholars on South Asia" and when "Students could learn about South Asian coins at ANU and Sanskrit at the University of Wollongong."[136]

Sources of Malaise

While recognising that the teaching and study of Asia at Australian universities remains rich and varied, and that some universities remain important bastions, the overall picture we have presented in this chapter is one of, at best, stasis, at worst gradual decline and fragmentation.

What accounts for this situation? In general terms, the pressures on Asian Studies—

whether the deep or the broad version—cannot be separated from wider trends in the Australian university sector, including reliance on market mechanisms as the organising principle of the system, resulting in financial pressures on universities, the need of university managers to maximise student load, alongside increasing emphasis on STEM disciplines and technical and vocational training. Together such trends have placed considerable pressure on humanities and social sciences, even as these areas continue to attract a majority of student load across the Australian university sector.[137] These pressures have been felt particularly acutely outside of the major research universities, and it is in regional universities that the decline in Asian Studies has been most severe.

The crisis in Australian universities occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting reduction in international student fee income had further deleterious effects on Asian language and studies in several universities (see Chapter 2). As dramatic as these developments were, they also repeated a pattern that was familiar to academics working in the sector. Over the course of their careers, most senior academics working at an Australian university will have experienced several waves of financial pressure if not crisis in their workplaces, alongside episodes of job losses, restructuring and increased workloads. Often, such crises are highly localised—occurring when a particular faculty, school, or department begins to go into financial deficit—and when university leaders and management boards look for savings to remedy the situation. Or it may simply be that central university managers decide that certain programs, even when financially viable, no longer match the university's corporate vision statement or strategic plan, and intentionally place them under financial pressures or close them down. This state of recurrent, if not permanent, crisis and restructuring in the university sector places most pressure on areas that are seen as unproductive because of relatively low student enrolments (hence income) and/or high costs (e.g. low student to teacher ratios). Often, the teaching of Asian languages, and Asian Studies, fall into one or both categories.

"The pressures on Asian Studies—whether the deep or the broad version—cannot be separated from wider trends in the Australian university sector, including reliance on market mechanisms as the organising principle of the system..."

Such mundane administrative and financial pressures are typically exacerbated by the fact that, within various disciplinary settings, the study of Asia is still not highly valued. For example, Michael Barr noted the tendency of political science departments "to look down on Area Studies of all flavours, including Asian Studies", a tendency he attributes to both "Anglo-centric complacency" as well as Australia's research assessment system, which ranks disciplinary journals that "value theoretical and statistical analysis more than mastering a foreign language or the nuances of a foreign society".[138] Each discipline is different, and much depends on the makeup of each faculty or school and the proclivities of its dean or director. But it remains the case that Asian topics are often seen as being "optional extras" alongside core disciplinary concerns, rather than as central to them. When financial resources are stretched, and hard decisions have to be made about which unit gets dissolved, which program is closed, which position gets replaced, or who gets hired, it is not surprising that

those seen as being peripheral are the ones which are discarded.

At another level, of course, weak student demand is also a problem. Were students flocking in ever larger numbers into Chinese or Indian history courses, it seems likely that most universities would respond by offering such courses—indeed the logic of the system dictates that they would. Lack of demand for Asian Studies programs itself emerges from a wide array of sources, some of which are outside the control of Australian educators and policy makers. The relative popularity of Korean and Japanese language and studies in recent times, reflecting these countries' importance to global pop culture, contrasted with the declining appeal of Indonesian in the aftermath of that country's internal conflicts, points to the importance of soft power and cultural appeal in shaping student demand (arguably, scholars of Asian countries are themselves sometimes to blame, by highlighting unappealing aspects of these countries' histories, such as ethnic and religious conflict, authoritarianism, genocide, and the like, in their course offerings and publications).

> "Low demand for Asia content at the university level also reflects the failure of the Australian school system to provide students with a grounding and interest in Asian languages and societies."

But low demand for Asia content at the university level also reflects the failure of the Australian school system to provide students with a grounding and interest in Asian languages and societies. A related ingredient is the national political climate. In the 1970s and, especially, the 1980s, the intellectual and political climate in Australia was much more Anglocentric than it is now, yet these were decades when the study of Asia began to enjoy a growth spurt. Federal governments not only provided policy backing and funding support to promote Asia knowledge, their leaders also helped set the national agenda by helping to "talk up" Australia's connections with Asia and to promote the idea that Australian students should develop greater Asia literacy. Over much of the last two decades, a mood of complacency if not indifference set in, in which government leaders spoke of connections with Asia in terms of narrowly defined economic and security interests, and reasserted traditional Australian connections with the United States and Europe—as we explored in Chapter 1.

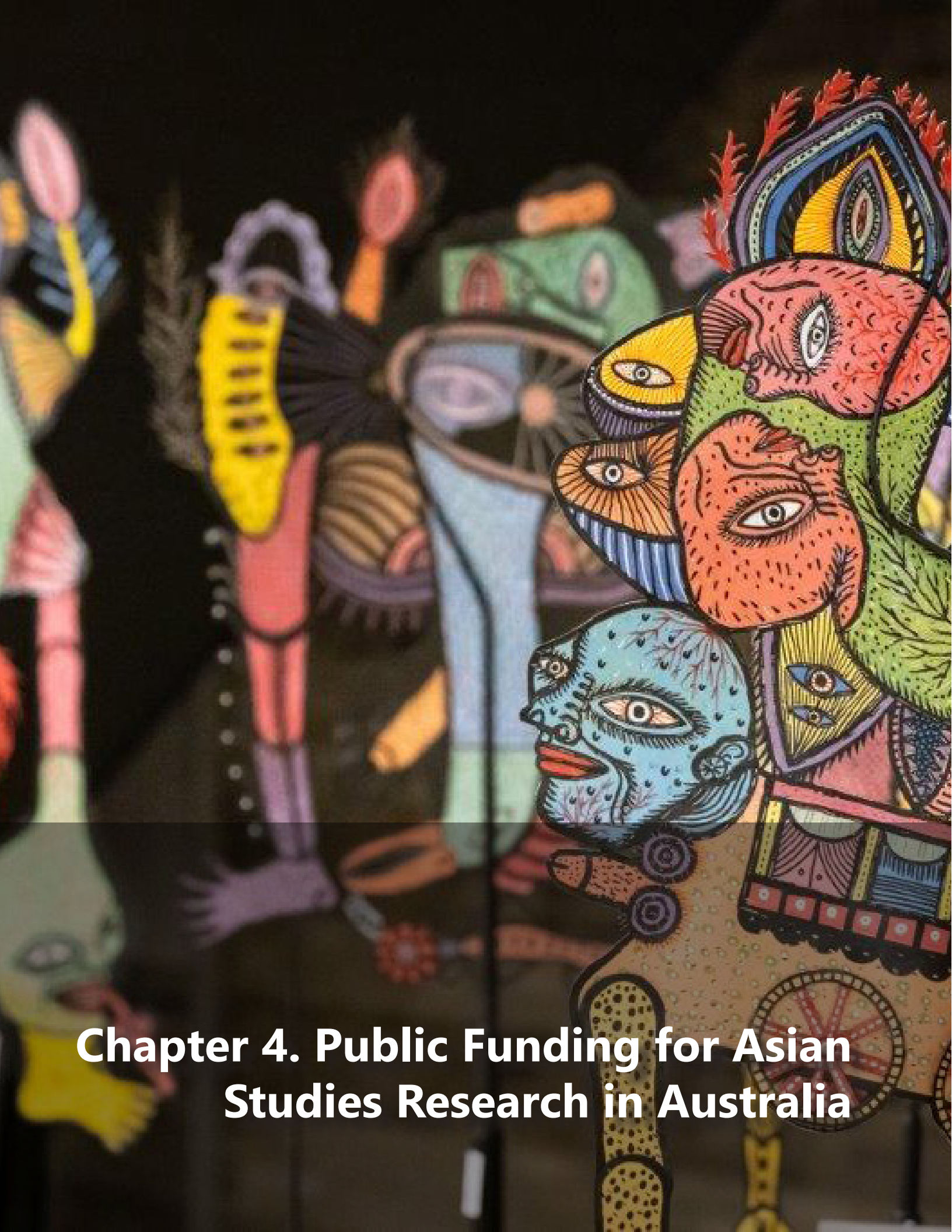
Conclusion

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, the ASAA and similar organisations made many proposals on how Australia should respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by Asia's rise by expanding university teaching and research on Asia. At various points, Australian governments indicated that they supported such proposals, at least rhetorically. This chapter, along with the analysis of language teaching in the preceding chapter, has demonstrated that the most ambitious of these proposals have largely not been realised. Overall, the study of Asia remains a relatively marginal pursuit in most Australian universities, and appears to have gone backwards in at least some of them. Given the spread beyond traditional disciplines, there may be more attention paid to Asian countries scattered through university curriculums and research centres than there was a generation ago. But this is far from a universal trend and only in a few universities does this endeavour constitute a major focus.

The twin challenges that lie ahead are maintaining and expanding the traditional area studies model of existing Asian Studies programs, while also seeking to work within the post-area studies model to advance the study of Asia. Both models need supportive university leadership, yet often it is the case that university managers do not know what they do not know about Asia and why it matters to Australian universities (it does not help that, in 2022, not one university vice-chancellor in all of Australia speaks an Asian language). As we have noted, there are signs that Australian universities have not always got the balance right, and that, in dispersing the study of Asia through the disciplines, some universities have diluted it virtually to the point of invisibility. Certainly, in consultations accompanying the preparation of this report, numerous academics expressed concerns about what they perceived as a slow decline in the capacity of Australian universities to train first-rate Asia scholars, with anecdotal reports on disparate but arguably connected trends such as declines in Australian (as opposed to international) students pursuing certain subjects (such as Chinese language) and declines in Australian students pursuing PhDs in some areas (such as the study of contemporary Indonesia).

"The twin challenges that lie ahead are maintaining and expanding the traditional area studies model of existing Asian Studies programs, while also seeking to work within the post-area studies model to advance the study of Asia."

Despite such observations, we must stress that Australia remains a major centre for the study of Asia. Nothing in this chapter should be taken to suggest that the field in Australia is weak in global terms, and the trends we have outlined do not suggest it is in terminal or even steep decline. On the contrary, Asian Studies remains *relatively* strong in Australia in comparison with comparator developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States or Germany. (The study of Asia *in* Asia is a different story: we return to this topic in Chapter 5). Even though Australia's strength is not visible in all fields—the relative weakness of South Asian Studies is particularly noteworthy—overall, Australia still punches above its weight in terms of its contribution to global scholarship on Asia. One reason is the considerable public funding that has been made available for Asia-focused research—a topic we turn to next.



Chapter 4. Public Funding for Asian Studies Research in Australia

Chapter 4. Public Funding for Asian Studies Research in Australia

What are the trends in public funding for Asian Studies research in Australia? In this chapter, we answer that question by examining funding provided by the Australian Research Council (ARC), the peak government body providing research grants to academics. For several decades, ARC funding has been a mainstay of Asian Studies research in Australia.

In this chapter, we analyse trends in ARC funding in Asian Studies to assess the level of public funding for the field. We analyse ARC funding data by discipline and by region in Asia over the last two decades, specifically, for the 2002–2020 period. We show that the ARC has provided significant support for Asia-related research, with total funding of more than $200 million over the period covered. This is a major investment of public funding in Asia-focused research projects. These grants have funded research that has produced major advances in the study of the politics, societies, histories, legal systems and other aspects of Asian countries. Some of the major books and other works in the field of Asian Studies produced in recent decades have their roots in ARC-funded research: it is no exaggeration to say that the ARC is one reason for Australia's world-leading reputation for research on the Asia-Pacific region.

"Asian Studies funding has not kept pace with the increased size of the Australian tertiary education sector."

But the story is far from being one of unvarnished progress. We show that funding for Asia-related research provided by the ARC has gradually declined over the period covered, with falls in both the total number of projects being funded annually and the value of total funding in real terms. When viewed in the context of the rapid expansion of Australian universities, these declines are more dramatic, with public funding for research on Asia failing to keep pace with the growth of the Australian university sector. These declines are also partly explicable by shifts in funding support for Humanities and Social Science (HASS) research. The fate of public funding for Asian Studies, therefore, is closely related to the fate of HASS.

The Big Picture

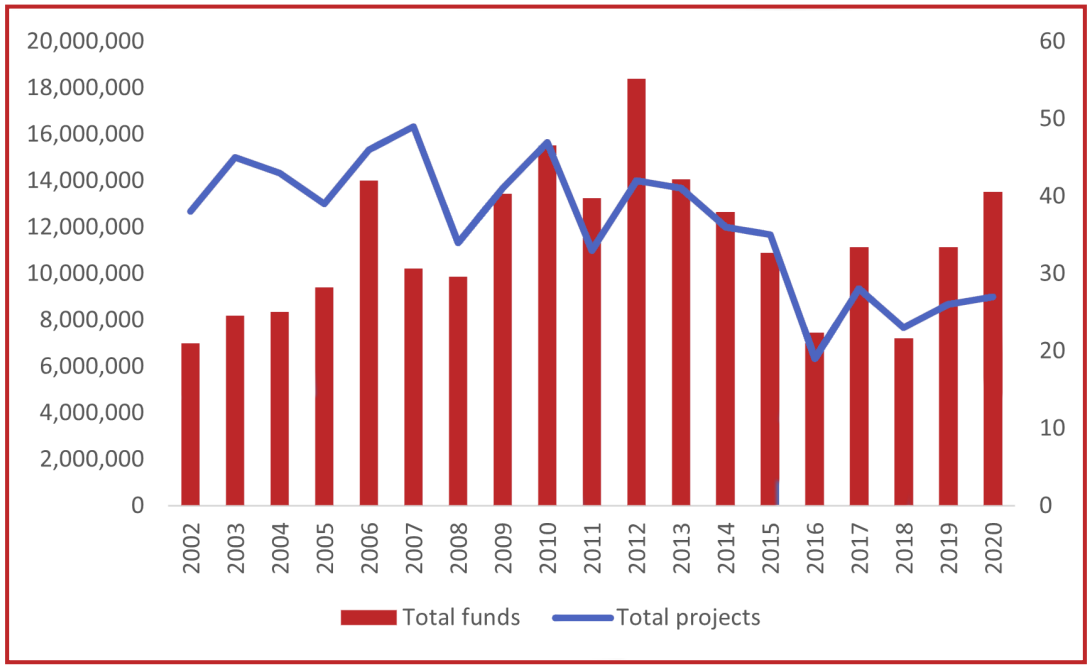
The vast bulk of support for Asian Studies research from the ARC has been provided through its competitive research schemes, which are open to bids from scholars from all disciplines.[139] The ARC's various schemes include a mixture of project funding (especially in the form of Discovery Projects, but also increasingly Linkage Grants) and fellowships (most recently, Discovery Early Career Awards, or DECRA, for junior scholars, Future Fellowships for mid-career scholars, and Laureate fellowships for senior scholars).

To analyse trends in ARC funding for Asia-related projects we collected information made publicly available by the ARC on projects funded between 2002 and 2020.[140] To identify Asia-related projects, we located all projects that used an Asia-related Field of Research (FOR) Code, and searched project titles and summaries for a range of relevant terms (mostly, the names of Asian countries, regions and languages, as well as terms likely to connote an Asia-connection, such as "Buddhism" or "Hinduism"). When a project was conducted in more than one country, we counted it as Asia-related if more than one-third of the countries were in Asia. We also counted as Asia-related projects that focused on Asian diasporas, literatures or

languages outside of any particular Asian country. We did not identify whether the individual academics involved had skills in an Asian language, so the figures below potentially over-count the number of projects that involve scholars who identify with Asian Studies. We excluded STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) projects.

Using this methodology, we found that over the 2002–2020 period, the ARC funded a total of 692 Asian Studies projects, for a total of $215,675,655. This is a significant commitment by successive Australian governments to support research into Australia's Asian region, confirming the critical role played by the ARC in making Australia a major centre for world-leading research on Asia.

Figure 5: The ARC and Asian Studies: Total Funding and Projects

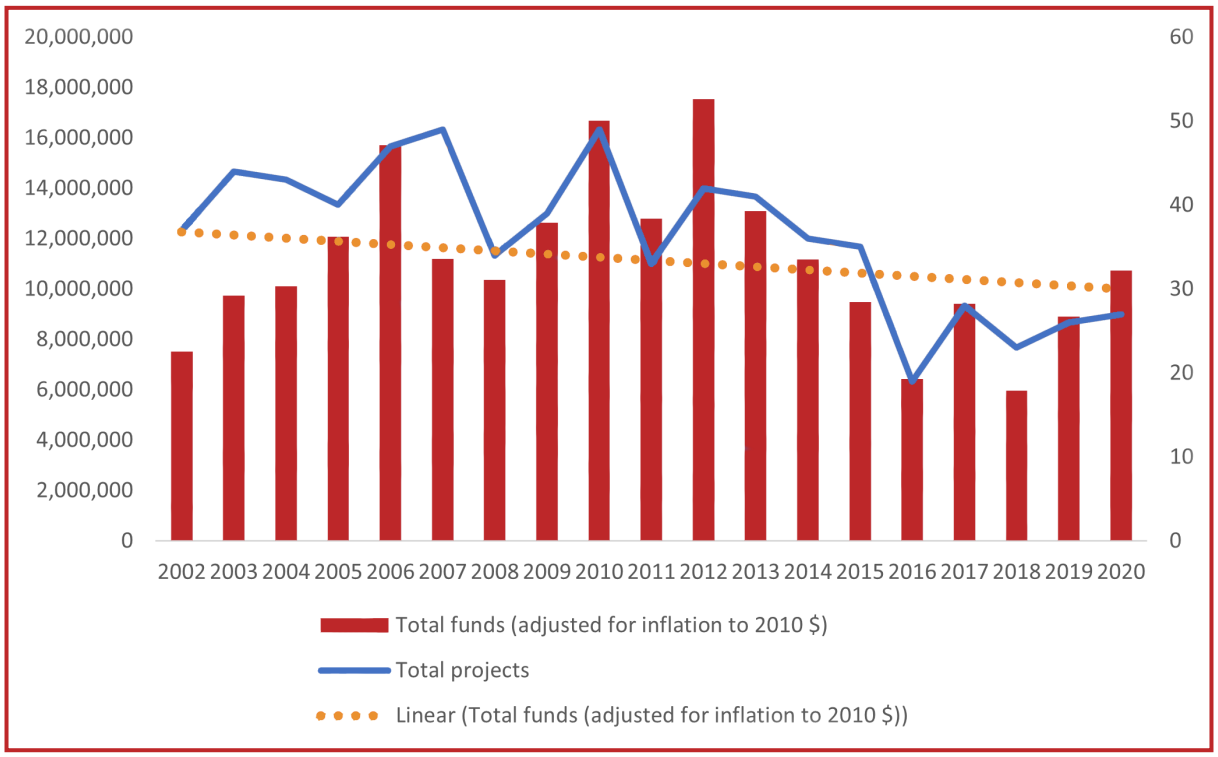


If we look at the trend over time (Figure 5), however, the picture is less positive. In terms of the number of total projects funded annually, we see a steady decline. A total of 37 Asia-related projects were funded in 2002, with the number peaking at 49 in 2007 and again in 2010, before dropping by more than half to 19 in 2016, then rebounding slightly to 27 by 2020.

The total funding provided annually for Asia-related projects has not declined so sharply, indicating that average funding per project has increased (from $162,214 per project in 2002, to $500,312 in 2020). These funding figures, however, are not adjusted for inflation. If we adjust for inflation and compare the 2002 total ARC funding for Asia-related research ($6,001,935) to the 2019 figure ($11,121,095), we find an increase in funding of 24 percent in real terms. However, if we compare the year of peak funding in 2012 ($18,393,951) with the 2019 figure we find a *decrease* of 40 percent for Asia-related funding.

Likewise, looking at the overall trend line, and adjusting total funding to 2010 dollars (Figure 6) we see a steady (but not pronounced) decrease in real terms over our period.

Figure 6: Total Funds (Constant 2010 $) versus Total Projects



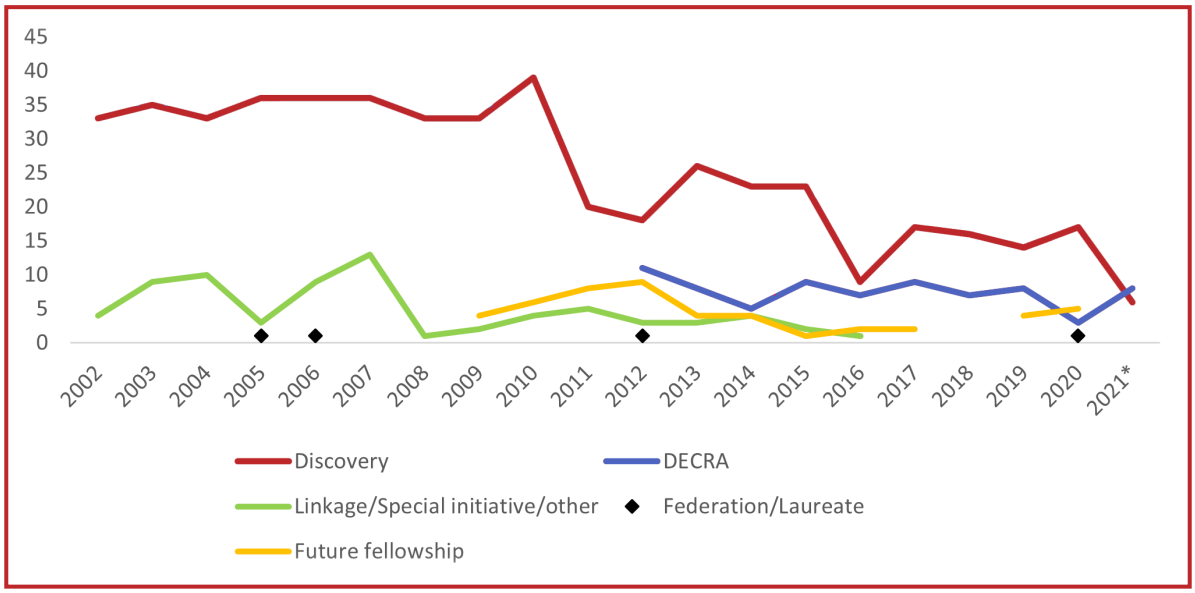
More importantly, these figures need to be placed in the context of a rapidly expanding Australian university system. According to data produced by the Commonwealth government,[141] the total number of students in all Australian universities in 2003 was 929,952; in 2019 it was 1,609,798, representing an increase of about 73 percent. Staff numbers also increased, though not quite so dramatically: in 2003, the number of FTE (Full Time Equivalent) staff at Australian universities was 89,370; in 2019 it was 137,578, a 54 percent increase. Asian Studies funding has not kept pace with the increased size of the Australian tertiary education sector.

Overall, therefore, in real terms, research funding for Asian Studies provided by the ARC has declined. The total number of projects funded annually has dropped, as has the value of total funding in real terms (though much less steeply). Set in the context of the rapid expansion of Australian universities, these declines are significant.

What accounts for these trends? First, to understand the decline in the total of Asian Studies projects funded, it is worth drilling more deeply into the numbers. Figure 7 shows that much of the decline was driven by a fall in the number of Discovery Projects. Discovery Projects cover basic research costs, and are led by researchers already employed at Australian universities (either as single investigators, or as members of teams). They are particularly important for Asia scholars who use them to fund the costs of travel and field research, local research assistance, surveys, and other forms of research support needed for in-country research. Between 2002 and 2010, the ARC funded an average of 35 Asia-related Discovery Projects a year, while between 2011 and 2020 it funded an average of only 18 such projects annually. It is also striking that the nature of these projects changed dramatically. Early on, a relatively large number of projects were awarded to single researchers, often individuals who

wanted to pursue their research interests in a particular country, making use of language and other country expertise built up over the course of their career. The trend over time has been toward larger-scale, multi-country, and collaborative research. This shift is apparent in the higher average funding per project, and the growing tendency over time for Discovery Projects to involve collaboration.[142]

Figure 7: Asian Studies Projects by Type, 2002–2021



Part (though not all) of the drop in Discovery Projects was counter-balanced by an increase in the number of Asia-related fellowships, especially DECRAs and Future Fellowships. A distinctive feature of the various fellowship schemes is that they primarily fund the salaries of researchers, mostly providing only relatively modest supplementary research funding. These fellowships are important for the career development of researchers, because they allow recipients to focus full-time (or nearly full-time) on their own research projects. Universities sometimes use them to employ researchers who would otherwise be without academic employment, or—when such fellowships are won by existing employees—to employ casual or fixed-term staff to take on the teaching and other responsibilities of the recipient for the duration of the fellowship.

Anyone who has received one of these fellowships can attest to their value, though they are highly competitive, require a massive investment of effort in the application process, and have success rates that vary greatly from year to year. They provide recipients with the most valuable research resource: time. By (largely) freeing them from administrative and teaching tasks, recipients have the freedom to conduct fieldwork and collect data, think deeply, and write. Their value is thus great for the individual recipients. Even so, the shift in funding from Discovery Projects to Fellowships partly signifies that the ARC is taking on salary costs of researchers that were formerly borne by universities, and funding less direct research costs than indicated by the headline figures. Against this contribution is the tendency of the ARC to underfund these salary costs and other indirect costs of research (see Case Study 7).

Case Study 7: The ARC and the Indirect Costs of Research

The growth of ARC funding and other forms of competitive Commonwealth funding schemes over recent decades—even if that growth has not kept pace with the growth of the university sector—has been associated with significant shifts in the national funding landscape for Australian universities.

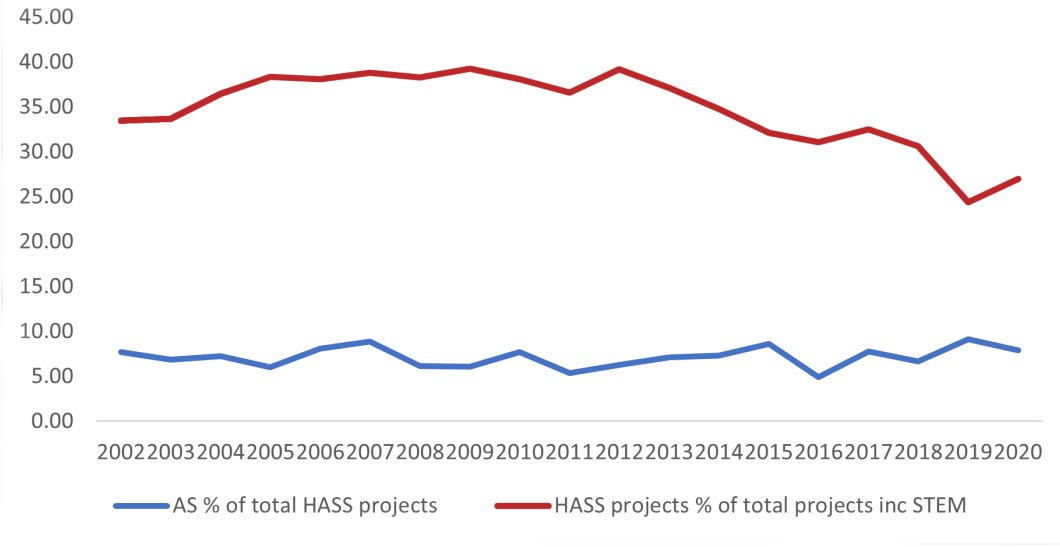
One consequence of the growth of competitive research funding is a concomitant decline in block grant funding—i.e. funding that the Commonwealth government provides to universities to support their research, but with few restrictions on how this funding is used. Historically, universities used much of this income to support salaries of research staff. According to an analysis conducted by higher education specialist Andrew Norton, "In the 1990s . . . competitive grants made up less than a quarter of Commonwealth research spending on universities (counting Department of Education plus NHMRC). By the middle of the 2010s nearly half of Commonwealth funding was delivered through competitive grants."[143]

Norton further explains that whereas "in the early 1990s total research expenditure by universities was only modestly above Commonwealth government research support", competitive research grants frequently do not cover the full costs of projects. Notably, ARC Discovery Projects usually do not cover salary costs at all. They sometimes provide "teaching relief" funds, but these are modest and generally insufficient to fully fund the release of the researcher concerned from teaching commitments for the time periods budgeted. There are almost always, moreover, funding shortfalls in the more generous ARC fellowship schemes. This is all without factoring in other indirect costs of research, such as facilities and administrative support.

According to Norton, one result of this shift in the funding landscape has been to make universities even more dependent on other sources of income—notably international student fee income—in order to cover these shortfalls.

To understand the decline in the number of Asian Studies projects funded by the ARC, we can observe broader patterns in funding by the organisation. These patterns show (Figure 8) that, while there is considerable volatility, between 2007 and 2018 there was a decline in the share of total projects from Humanities and Social Science (HASS) disciplines being funded. By our calculations, HASS projects fell from 30 to 22 percent of all ARC projects funded between those years. Asian Studies projects have bumped along at 7 to 12 percent of the HASS projects funded, peaking in 2006-2007. In 2019 and 2020, a partial rebound in the HASS share of funded projects coincided with a relatively low Asian Studies share of these projects. These findings suggest that declines in Asian Studies projects do not result from bias in the ARC directed specifically against research on Asia, but are part of a broader vulnerability of HASS research funding, pointing to the general lesson that promotion of Asian Studies needs to be positioned in the context of wider defence of the humanities and social sciences.

Figure 8: Proportion of ARC Projects by Field, 2002–2020



Case Study 8: Academic Freedom and Political Interference

Academics and students at Australian universities have faced a wide range of challenges to academic freedom over the past two decades. Such challenges can include obstacles placed in the way of conducting field research in Asia, as well as intimidation or threats to safety while doing so. Several Asian countries, including Indonesia and China, have over the last decade become more suspicious of foreigners conducting research in-country.

One focus of concerns about academic freedom in recent years is China. Both globally and in Australia, human rights organisations and others have expressed concerns about surveillance of, and restrictions on speech for, students from China and Hong Kong, and academics who teach and research on China.[144]

Threats may also arise within Australian universities, either through intentional action to constrain what academics say, or through inaction. Over the last decade, Australian researchers have been shocked by instances of political interference in the allocation of ARC grants. Under the rules governing the body, the federal education minister signs off on all ARC grants. In the past, this step was regarded as largely pro forma, with the minister in practice deferring to the grant selection made by the ARC after rigorous peer review. While assessors, and the ARC, were required to take into account designated "national priorities", these did not amount to more than 10 percent of a project's score, with the emphasis instead being on the originality and quality of the proposed project and the track record of the applicants. In this way, the review process ensured that high quality research was funded, free of political or other forms of favouritism.

This process has come under challenge, with education ministers in several Liberal-National coalition governments exercising their discretion to veto grants recommended by the ARC. This practice began in 2004 and 2005 when Brendan Nelson, education minister in the Howard government, vetoed an unknown number of grants.[145] In 2017 and 2018, Education Minister Simon Birmingham (under Prime Minister Turnbull) vetoed 11 grants valued at $4.2 million,[146] followed by acting Education Minister Stuart Robert (under Prime Minister Morrison) who in 2021 vetoed six.[147]

Several of the vetoed grants would have focused on Asia, including two in 2021 on the topics of "National forgetting and local remembering: memory politics in modern China" and "China stories under Xi Jinping: popular narratives". In rejecting these and other ARC-approved projects, the minister stated that the vetoed projects did not "demonstrate value for taxpayers' money nor contribute to the national interest".[148] The statement accords with the general tenor of other justifications made for ministerial vetoes, pointing both toward a preference for the grants process (and universities) to serve narrowly defined economic, security and similar goals, and reflecting a broader culture-war style hostility to the humanities.

The ASAA has joined other academic institutions and universities in condemning this politicisation of the grants process. As detailed in this chapter, projects funded by the ARC have contributed to Australia's international reputation for research excellence on Asia. In the context of this report, it is also astonishing that a federal minister could determine that research on popular culture and politics in China did not "contribute to the national interest". Such language demonstrates just how far the national discourse had drifted away from an emphasis on engagement with, and understanding of, Asia that was promoted by national governments a generation or two ago.

Trends by Discipline

One way to consider whether there have been changes over time in the funding of Asia-related research by the ARC is to review the data by discipline. Table 7 provides a snapshot of projects classified according to major disciplinary groupings using the primary FOR codes assigned by the researchers.

The table reveals the breadth of Asia-focused research funded by the ARC. Some features are particularly noteworthy, including the prominence of historical research and the relative strength of funding for archaeology (a significant portion of the archaeology projects funded are on early human settlement in Asia and arguably are closer to STEM projects, having little to do with the study of recent Asian languages, cultures and societies).

Table 7: ARC Funding for Asian Studies Projects by Primary FOR Code, 2002–2020

Discipline area (FOR code)	Total projects (2002–2020)	Total funds (2002–2020)	Project funding average
Law (1801)	26	$6,807,387	$261,823
Economics, Business and Management (1402, 1403, 1499, 1503, 1505)	40	$12,169,542	$304,239
Archaeology (2101)	48	$21,471,723	$447,328
Anthropology (1601)	54	$15,252,217	$282,449
Sociology & other studies in human society (1608, 1699)	55	$16,898,553	$307,246
Cultural, Literary, Communication and Media Studies (2001, 2002, 2005, 2999)	86	$23,127,268	$268,922
Political science (1606)	87	$24,158,884	$277,688
Historical studies (2103, 2202)	118	$39,234,712	$332,498

Of course, we should note that these disciplines vary widely in size. While it is inherently difficult to compare disciplines, a rough illustration can be seen from available numbers in the disciplines of history and law. For example, in 2016, there were around 150 full-time equivalent historians in continuing positions in Australia and New Zealand.[149] In 2019 in law, there were 820 continuing academics at or above the level of Senior Lecturer in Australia alone (this figure does not distinguish between full- or part-time).[150] If we compare the total number of Asia-related ARC grants for the disciplines of law and history relative to the size of their academic body, we do not know if the explanation for the greater success of historical studies of Asia is that individual historians have a higher success rate when applying for grants, that there are more applications from historians of Asia than law academics specialising on Asia, or some other factor. But the difference in grant numbers suggests that ARC-funded Asia-related projects in some disciplines, such as law, are relatively under-represented compared to their weight as a discipline on Australian campuses. Arguably economics is similarly under-represented, not only relative to the weight of the discipline in Australian universities but also given the importance of economic relations with the region for Australia; this under-representation may reflect under-valuing of country and regional expertise, as well as applied knowledge more generally, within the economics discipline,

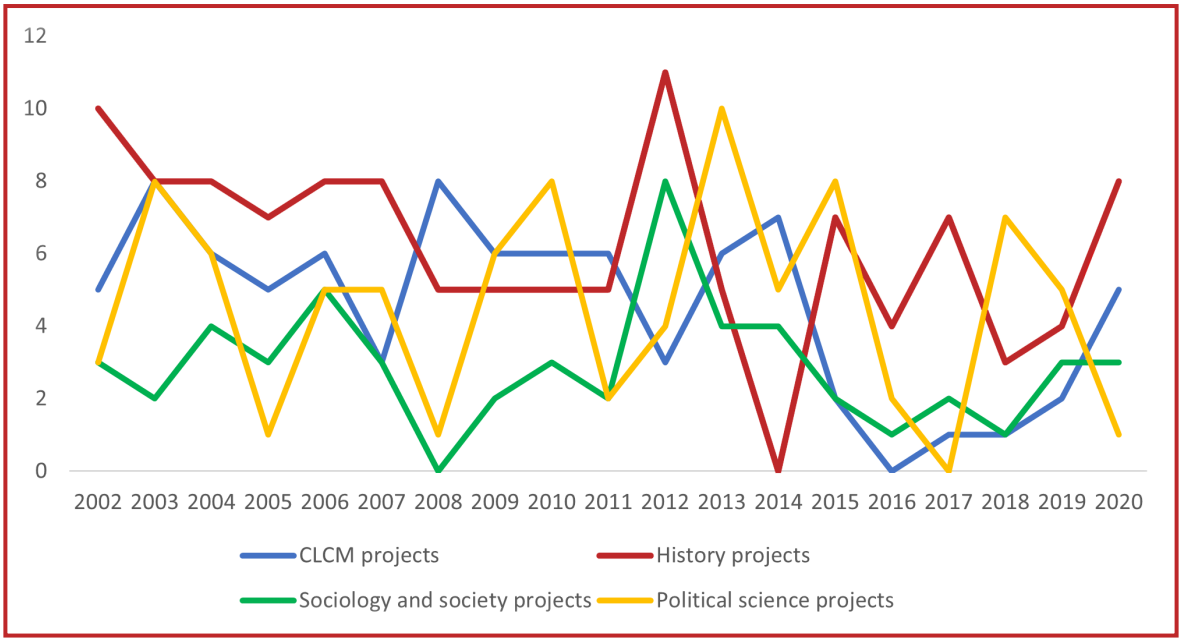
"The difference in grant numbers suggests that ARC-funded Asia-related projects in some disciplines, such as law, are relatively under-represented compared to their weight as a discipline on Australian campuses."

which might make the ARC less relevant as a source of funding, reduce the pool of potential applicants for Asia-related economics projects, bias peer reviewers against such projects, and deter some potential applicants from even submitting proposals.

Some analysts, drilling down into the details of funding, have detected shifts in foci over time. For example, David Hundt has noted a change in funding of political research over the last decade, whereby "the priority shifted from politics at the local and communal levels, to national and international politics".[151] In particular, he argues, a growing proportion of funded projects on Asian politics focus on the international relations of Asia and Australia's relations with the region. It is possible that similar patterns would be apparent if we scrutinised all funded projects, but we lack the ability to do this (project summaries, for example, do not provide data on the linguistic abilities of researchers, so we cannot say if there has been a shift away from support for researchers with Asian language abilities).

Overall, there are few signs of obvious trends in terms of a shift in the disciplinary focus of research in the data. For example, when we examine trend lines in funding for some of the more prominent disciplinary groupings (Figure 9), it is possible to discern a great deal of year-to-year fluctuation, but few over-arching patterns.

Figure 9: Number of ARC Asia-related Projects by Major FOR Grouping, 2002–2020

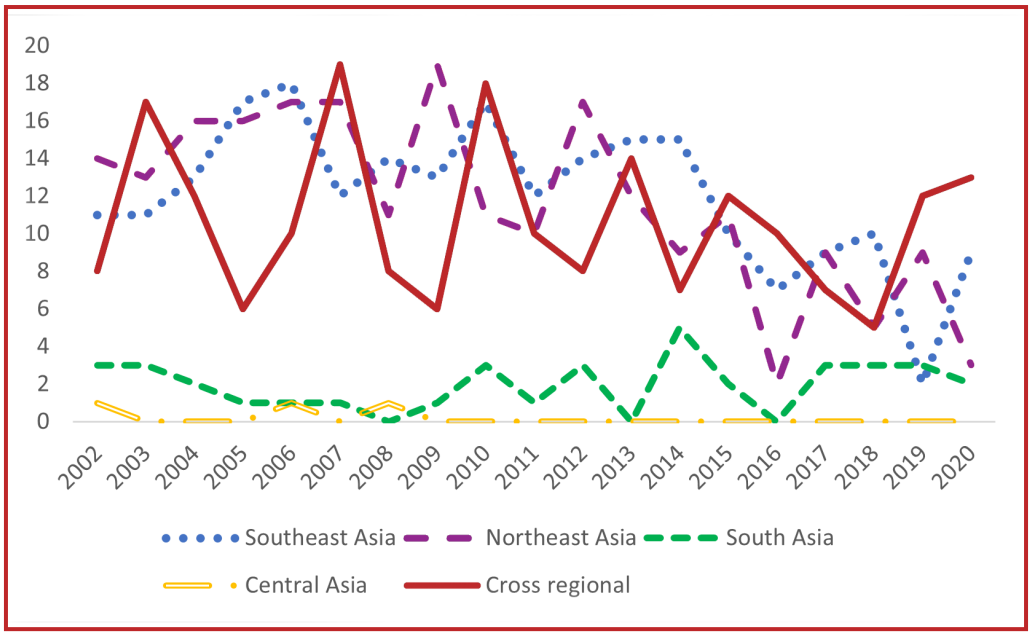


Trends by Region

Turning to the regional and country focus, again it is appropriate to begin by acknowledging the breadth of research funded by the ARC. Our database includes ARC-funded projects on almost every Asian country. By far the largest number of projects (228) listed a focus on or including China, with Indonesia (144) some way behind. Other major foci include India (67) and Japan (56), with the major regional foci being Northeast and Southeast Asia—consistent with the traditional areas of Asian Studies strength in Australia outlined in Chapter 3 (but with a higher than expected focus on India).

When we look at how the regional emphasis has changed across time, the trends are a little clearer than for discipline. As Figure 9 indicates, the decline in ARC-funded projects on Asia in recent years can mostly be attributed to declines in funding for projects in the two main areas of strength in Australian Asian Studies: Southeast and Northeast Asia.

Figure 10: Number of ARC Projects by Region, 2002–2020



Meanwhile, studies we categorise as cross-regional (i.e. encompassing research in more than one Asian region, or involving research outside of Asia, such that both a project comparing some aspect of China and India, or involving research in Indonesia and Australia, would each count as cross-regional) have remained relatively steady over time, thus constituting a greater proportion of funded projects overall. There has also been a weak trend away from single-country projects toward multi-country studies. For all projects, in the 10 years between 2002 and 2011 an average of 63 percent of all Asian Studies projects focused on a single country; in 2012–2020 that number declined to 57 percent. For Discovery Projects the equivalent numbers were 222 out of 334 (66.5 percent) and 102 out of 163 (63 percent). In 2019–2020, the numbers dropped to 14 out of 31 (41 percent), before bouncing back to 4 of 6 (67 percent) in 2021. While we should not read too much into such weak trends, there is a possibility that, taken together, they reflect the move from "deep" to "broad" Asia knowledge discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.

Case Study 9: The Growth of Research Funding in Asia

Over the past two decades, funding for research has significantly increased in Asia. Already, governments in several Asian countries spend a greater share of GDP on research and development than Australia (1.83 percent, 2019). They include Singapore 1.89 percent (2019), China 2.4 percent (2020), Japan 3.26 percent (2020), and Korea 4.81 percent (2020) (these figures include private sector funding).[152]

Governments in countries such as Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia have provided increasing funding for academic research, both through government bodies like the Research Council of Hong Kong (established in 1991), or by providing government funding directly to universities. The growth in funding for academic research is in part driven by international rankings of universities and the emphasis these rankings place on research and publications.

Government funding available to academics in the region is fast catching up with, rivalling, or exceeding that provided by the ARC and other domestic funders to Australian-based scholars. For example, since 2012, the Ministry of Law in Singapore has funded the Faculty of Law in the National University of Singapore to establish and run a Centre for Asian Legal Studies, a Centre for Maritime Law, an Asia Pacific Centre for Environmental Law, and a Centre for Technology, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and the Law. Perhaps the best-funded law research centres in all Asia, these bodies create numerous postdoctoral positions and support large-scale academic research. In contrast, in Australia no Asian law centre receives direct funding from government. The example of research centre funding in Singapore demonstrates the challenge to the Australian government and universities to keep pace with research expertise in Asia

Conclusion

Of course, the ARC is far from being the only source of funding for Asian Studies research in Australia. Overall, the research funding landscape is diverse and complex. Several major international foundations, such as the Japan Foundation and Korea Foundation, are important sources of financial support for researchers working on particular countries. In some fields, international agencies, such as the World Bank, or overseas governmental sources, such as the United States Department of Defense through its Minerva grants scheme, provide important research support. The Australian government, especially the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, also provides research funding for particular centres, schemes, and one-off projects. Private philanthropy is very limited in Australia when compared to countries such as the U.S., but in a few locations, private foundations provide significant support, and some universities, centres or departments also have access to—typically modest—research support in the form of private gifts, bequests, or corporate funds. The National Library of Australia offers Asia Fellowships to fund researchers to use its Asian Studies collection. Finally, universities often also make available—typically very small—research grants to their academics, often in the form of seed grants intended to allow the researcher concerned to

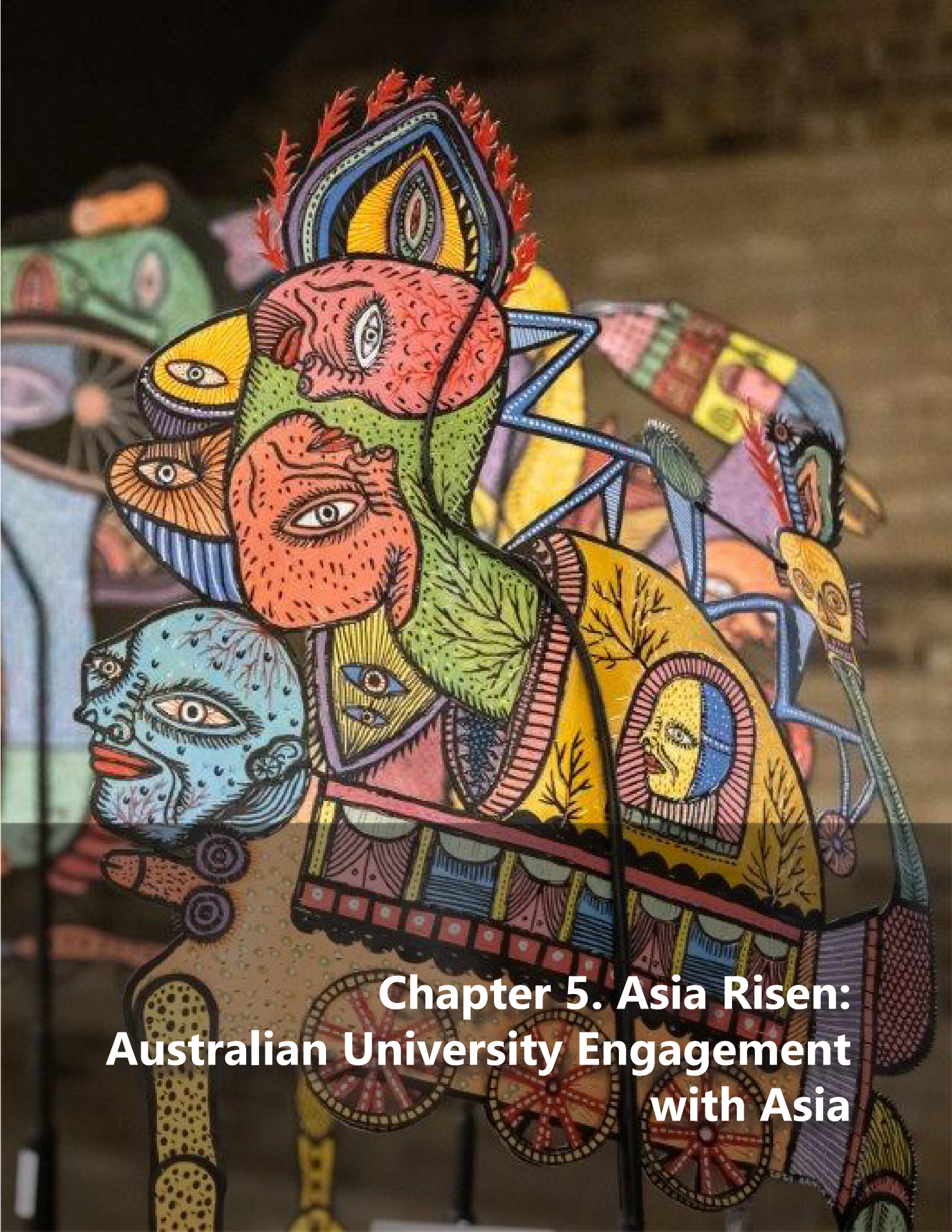
conduct preliminary research for a competitive grant application. Some universities are able to mobilise significant internal funds for favoured research projects, though these relatively rarely go to HASS subjects, including Asian Studies.

The ARC stands out from these other sources of funding, both in the amount of funding that it makes available, but also in the openness of its processes. Whereas many sources of funding are available only to highly credentialed, specialised and/or connected scholars, the ARC is, at least in theory, open to all university-based researchers, and with applications decided by a process of peer review. In recent years, the ARC and its processes have been subject to a growing chorus of criticism from academics and university leaders.[153] Many of these criticisms zero in on the overall funding levels, political interference, as well as the huge effort that is expended on the grant application process, with applications often requiring hundreds of pages of text and many weeks of concentrated work. When combined with the increasingly low success rate in the various schemes (for example, the success rate in applications for Discovery Project commencing in 2022 was 19 percent), the result is a massive waste of effort across the sector, with many hundreds of academics devoting many thousands of hours to writing applications that never end up being funded or producing research. The field of Asian Studies is no exception. The competitiveness of ARC schemes means that many excellent research projects on Asian countries do not receive funding.

At the time of publication, in late 2022, the Labor government announced a new review into the ARC, cancelled the Excellence in Research Assessment for 2023 and signalled changes to simplify the National Interest Test for ARC proposals. Universities and academic organisations generally welcomed the review; the federal parliament may make legislative changes to reduce future political interference in the ARC.

Overall, the ASAA recognises the considerable contribution made by public funding under the aegis of the ARC to support Asia-focused research in Australia. As we have documented in this chapter, over the last two decades, the ARC has provided a large amount of funding to support such research, contributing to Australia's global reputation in the field of Asian Studies. However, we have also documented causes for concern in the trends. ARC funding for Asia-focused research has not kept pace with the growth of the Australian university sector, and has been affected by a more general vulnerability in funding support for HASS disciplines—despite their continuing importance in the Australian university landscape. The results include not only limitations to the research on Asia produced by Australian-based scholars, but also many intangible but no less important losses—the countless hours wasted on lengthy proposals that never get funded, the excellent research ideas that never get pursued, the promising research careers that never get off the ground.

The trends are particularly concerning given the centrality of the ARC to Australian university research funding, and to Asia-focused research. Overall, spending on research and development from all sources in Australia is not particularly high when compared to other developed countries.[154] The relative paucity of research funding from other sources highlights the importance of the ARC. For most researchers, there are limited alternative sources of funding for large projects. It is for this reason, that the long-term trends identified in this chapter are of particular concern to scholars of Asia. Renewed commitment to public funding for Asia-focused research, as part of the wider HASS field, is urgently needed.



Chapter 5. Asia Risen: Australian University Engagement with Asia

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In past reports on Asian Studies in Australia, the ASAA has often begun by emphasising how the rise of Asia would both pose challenges to, and provide opportunities for, Australia. We argued that Australia needed to anticipate Asia's rise by investing in domestic Asia knowledge, language skills, and research. The ASAA presented these reports as calls for action for domestic investment by government and universities. The past two decades has been a period of profound change in the context in which we made these recommendations: Asia is no longer on the rise, it has risen. Australia can no longer anticipate that rise, but must adjust to it. Australian universities' engagement with Asia has already greatly expanded in response to this shift, though they still need to do more.

In this chapter we ask: How is Asia's rise transforming Australian universities and their engagement with Asia? How is it affecting teaching and research about Asia at Australian universities? Such questions are urgent in an era when the long-heralded rise of Asia is no longer a future projection but current reality. Asia and the Pacific already account for over a third of world GDP; the Asia Development Bank projects this share will increase to 50 percent by 2050 if current growth rates are sustained.[155] Around 2013, China's GDP overtook that of the U.S. in Purchasing Power Parity terms and is widely predicted to overtake it in nominal terms within a decade.

Asia's rise has already had profound effects on Australia. Already by 2018–2019, two-thirds of Australia's two-way trade was with Asia, and seven of Australia's top 10 trading partners were in the region.[156] Australia's demographic composition also continues to slowly change. According to the 2021 census, the proportion of Australian residents born in China increased from 1.7 percent in 2011 to 2.3 percent. Those born in India increased from 1.5 percent to 2.8 percent over the same period. Among the 24.8 percent of Australians who lived in a household where a language other than English is spoken at home, the most common languages used were Chinese (Mandarin), Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese, and Punjabi.[157]

One aspect of the rise of Asia that is relevant to Australia-based university researchers and teachers is the rapid transformation of Asian universities. Numerous Asian countries have been massively investing in research, and in universities in particular, resulting in dramatic increases in the quality of Asian universities, and their research outputs. Between 2016 and 2021 alone, Asian universities went from being a quarter to almost a third of ranked universities in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking; China increased its representation in the top 200 of the same ranking from two to nine universities between 2016 and 2022; Hong Kong went up from three to five and Korea from four to six.[158] While the rise in university standards is particularly apparent in Northeast Asia, especially China, it is a region-wide trend. Universities in countries such as Malaysia are transforming themselves into education exporters, attracting growing numbers of international students; Indonesia has dramatically expanded domestic research funding for universities, and adopted academic promotion guidelines that reward international publications.

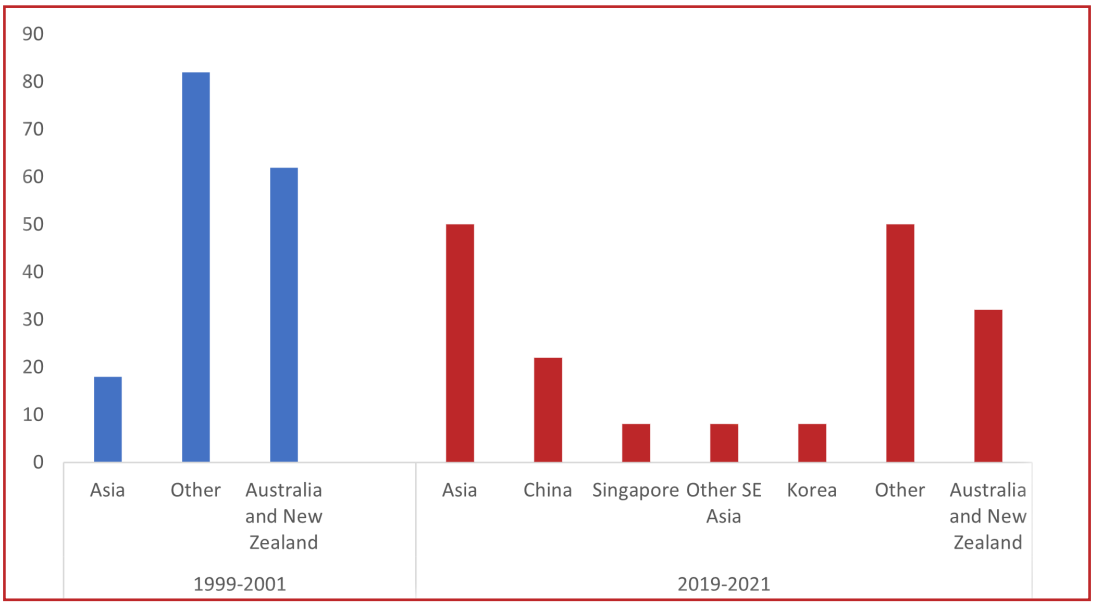
In many fields of academic endeavour, therefore, Australia is *already* being matched or passed by Asian countries. In no area of academic research is this change more relevant than in Asian Studies. Numerous Asian countries—including major players such as China, Korea, and Singapore, but also less obvious candidates such as Indonesia—are making major

new investments in area studies and Asian Studies in particular. More generally, the locus of research on Asian societies—including research engaging international scholarly audiences through English-language publications—is rapidly shifting to those societies themselves (see Case Study 10).

Case Study 10: The Repatriation of Asian Studies

One indication of the growing weight of Asian countries in the global field of Asian Studies can be obtained by looking at who publishes in the ASAA's flagship journal, *Asian Studies Review*. Published since 1977, over the last two decades a remarkable shift has occurred in the backgrounds of authors writing in the journal. Using the "Contributors" page, we compared the backgrounds of authors in all issues published in 1999–2001 and 2019–2021. We found that the proportion of authors listing an institutional affiliation and/or place of residence in an Asian country jumped from 18 percent in 1999–2001 to 50 percent in 2019–2021, with a particularly marked increase among authors from China (22 percent of contributors in 2019–2021). The proportion of contributors from Australia or New Zealand, meanwhile, almost halved, falling from 62 to 32 percent of contributors.

Figure 11: *Asian Studies Review*: Contributor backgrounds (%)



Changes in submissions to the journal are even more dramatic. The journal's publisher, Taylor and Francis, provided data on the countries of origin of persons submitting articles to *Asian Studies Review* for consideration. In 2008 (the earliest year for which Taylor and Francis has data), 42 percent of all manuscript submissions came from authors in Australia; with zero from China. By 2021, 24 percent came from China, and only 11 percent from Australia. The volume of submissions to the journal had also expanded greatly: from a total of 57 submissions in 2008 to 377 in 2021. In 2008, exactly one-third of submissions came from authors based in Asian countries; by 2021 the proportion had grown to just over two-thirds (66.84 percent).[159]

Asia is becoming the major site for scholarly knowledge production about Asia, and the age in which many people assumed (not always correctly) that most cutting-edge scholarship about Asian societies was being produced in universities in North America, Europe, and Australia is rapidly drawing to a close.

These shifts pose challenges to Asian Studies as a field of academic inquiry in Australia, and to the scholars engaged in it. For decades, Australian social scientists and humanities scholars have prided themselves on being world leaders in Asia research. This expertise has affected how others have viewed Australia: for example, U.S. and European governments have often praised Australia's foreign policy establishment for its expertise on and insights into Asia. In the future, Australia will need to work harder to maintain this edge.

The growth of Asian universities also provides numerous opportunities for Australian universities—and Australia-based scholars of Asia—to integrate our own research agendas with those of our Asia-based colleagues, and to build genuinely collaborative research and other links with Asia countries. Scholars will need to abandon old models of so-called "helicopter" research, in which Australian or other foreign researchers visit an Asian country for fieldwork and rely on the assistance of local researchers to collect data, but then do not co-author publications or other outputs with those local partners. New models of genuinely collaborative research, knowledge production and scholarly publication are already moving to the fore and will need to be developed further.

Meanwhile, growing de facto social, cultural and demographic integration of Australia into the region motivates a rethinking of the scope of Asian Studies itself, fostering a need for greater reflection on the nature of Australian society and the place of Asian-Australians therein. Asian Studies in the future will not only involve looking outwards, but also turning an eye on ourselves, to better understand the nature, origins and development of contemporary Australia.

It is our contention that the rise of Asia—and of Asian universities in particular—means it is more important than ever for Australia to invest in Asia knowledge, and Asian languages in particular, through the country's university system. We need scholars of Asian Studies to be leading and informing engagement between Australian universities and Asia. We have been advocating such an approach through much of this report. But it is also worth asking how the rise of Asia is *already* transforming what Australian universities are doing. In this chapter, we broaden our focus to look at three loci of engagement with Asia by Australian universities that do not always intersect with the work of Asian Studies scholars, but should do so.

The three areas of engagement are: the establishment of campuses by Australian universities in Asia; the creation of higher research joint degrees or programs linking Australian and Asian universities; and the rise of study abroad programs for Australian students in Asia. All three areas have expanded dramatically in the past 20 years, and have produced significant growth in the scale and breadth of collaboration by Australian universities with Asia.[160] They do so in ways that may, but do not always, reinforce research and teaching on Asia in Australian universities. All three forms of engagement present potential synergies with Asian Studies, as does another trend we discuss in this chapter: the dramatic increase in the number of international students from Asia studying in Australian universities.

Australian University Campuses in Asia

A growing number of Australian universities have established and operate campuses in Asia. In Southeast Asia, Monash University, Swinburne University and Curtin University each have a campus in Malaysia. RMIT University hosts two campuses in Vietnam, and James Cook University has established a campus in Singapore. As a result of the Australia Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, in 2020 Monash University was the first Australian university to announce plans to establish a campus in Indonesia; the campus was formally inaugurated in April 2022.

Yet not all efforts to establish campuses in Asia by Australian universities have been successful. In 2007, a major effort by UNSW to establish a campus in Singapore failed and the campus was closed after just one term.

Table 8: Off-shore Campuses of Australian Universities in Asia

Year of Establishment	Australian University	Offshore Location
1998	Monash University	Malaysia
2000	Swinburne University of Technology	Malaysia
2000	RMIT University	Vietnam
2002	Curtin University	Malaysia
2003	James Cook University	Singapore
2008	Curtin University	Singapore
2008	Murdoch University	Singapore Dubai
2015	University of Wollongong	Hong Kong
2019	University of Wollongong	Malaysia
2022	Monash University	Indonesia
2022	University of Newcastle	Singapore

While the global pandemic beginning in 2020 has slowed the establishment or expansion of off-shore campuses, it is likely that this trend will persist and possibly regain strength, especially given that the Indonesian higher education market is open to Australian universities for the first time.

The establishment of off-shore campuses has several implications for scholars of Asia. First, such arrangements ideally require the input of country experts to assess feasibility and risks. Second, they provide Australia-based academics with more opportunities to teach either on a long-term or short-term basis in Asia. Third, off-shore campuses tend to include the hiring of staff from the country in which that campus is based, yet overall operations and reporting remain oriented to the host university in Australia. Making such arrangements

work effectively again requires deep knowledge of country context on the part of university leadership. Some universities have responded to such challenges by expanding the academic representation in their international divisions. For example, Monash University has a position of Pro Vice-Chancellor, South East Asia Partnerships and Pro Vice-Chancellor and President (Malaysia), to oversee the Indonesia and Malaysia campuses respectively, both held by academics with Asian Studies expertise.

Joint Postgraduate Programs Involving Australian and Asian Universities

Over the past two decades, Australian universities have begun to develop a range of dual degree or joint degree programs with universities in Asia, which are often at the postgraduate level. These dual degree programs are primarily with institutions in China, India and Japan, and range across disciplines but are strong in STEM fields (see Appendix 2).

The largest number of dual degree programs established by Australian universities in Asia are with academic institutions in China. Examples include UNSW Law's joint JD degree program with China, as well as a joint PhD program; RMIT has join programs with Chongqing University, Jilin University, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (NUAA), Northwestern Polytechnical University (NPU) and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SHUFE). In 2017, the University of South Australia established six programs in civil engineering with Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology (XAUAT), four at Bachelor and two at Master level. In 2018, the University of Adelaide created a dual masters' degree in wine making and viticulture with Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The Global Medical Program of UWA has established a joint degree program with Zhejiang University (ZJU). The Monash Arts faculty offers a Southeast-Monash Joint PhD with Southeast University, Suzhou, China. A joint Master of Economics degree has been established between the University of Sydney and a Master of World Economy (Globalisation and Chinese Economy) from Fudan University.

There is a smaller, but growing, number of joint programs with institutions in India. For example, the Monash Arts Faculty offers the IITB-Monash Joint PhD with the India Institute of Technology Bombay; while the University of Melbourne runs the Melbourne India Postgraduate Academy, a Joint PhD program in either engineering and science with one of three Indian Institutes of Technology: Madras, Kanpur, and Kharagpur.

Aside from China and India, the ANU has a Bachelor of Asia Pacific Affairs dual-degree with Ritsumeikan University (RU) in Japan, while RMIT has a joint degree with the University of Peradeniya and University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka.

Our survey of dual degree or joint degree programs is selective rather than comprehensive, as universities tend to present this information in different ways. Some showcase their joint degrees on a central website connected to their international division. Others have joint degree programs hidden in faculty or even school pages. But the above list is illustrative of a growing trend of closer cooperation between Australian universities and universities in Asia. Opportunities for Australian universities to establish joint degree programs are likely to continue to expand in the decades to come, meaning that more and more Australian academics will teach students from the region in collaboration with colleagues in universities in Asia.

Study Abroad Programs

One dramatic shift in the tertiary educational landscape over the last two decades has been the growth of study abroad options for Australian students. In 2005, a survey indicated that approximately 7,000 students from Australian universities were studying abroad.[161] According to data released by the Department of Education, Skills, and Employment, in 2019, the last year before the COVID-19 pandemic dampened numbers, students from Australian universities had some 52,171 international study experiences, with 54 percent of that number (31,376) being domestic undergraduate students (16 percent were international undergraduate students; the remainder were postgraduates). Domestic undergraduate participation was equivalent to 23 percent of the 2019 graduating cohort, greater than equivalent proportions in the U.S. (16 percent) and UK (7 percent). In the same year, almost half (48 percent) of the students on learning abroad experiences went to Asia, followed by Europe (28 percent); the top destination country was China (14.8 percent).[162]

The growth of study abroad options is part of a worldwide trend and associated with globalisation. Internationalisation of university study has occurred across developed countries, with universities seeking to enrich their students' experience by enabling them to spend periods studying abroad. Growing ease and affordability of international travel, as well as many students' belief that international experiences will enhance their employment prospects, have accelerated the trend. Typically, universities enable their students to study abroad through reciprocal partnership and student exchange arrangements with overseas universities, but also through mechanisms such as joint degree programs, discussed above.

In Australia, one policy initiative that has contributed to this trend, especially to the growth in the number of Australian students pursuing study options in Asia is the New Colombo Plan (NCP). As discussed in earlier chapters, the NCP was established in 2014, and championed by then Foreign Minister Julie Bishop. It was named after a program which brought Asian students to Commonwealth universities from the 1950s to the 1980s. Designed to support Australian students seeking to study in the Asia-Pacific region, the NCP is described in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper as one of the government's "signature initiatives", and "a practical manifestation of Australia's commitment to learn from our neighbours", which the government "wants [...] to become a rite of passage for young Australians to live and work in our region."[163]

Funded at around $50 million per annum, by 2021 more than 70,000 Australian students had participated in the program.[164] The NCP provides two types of grants for approximately 10,000 students per year in 40 designated Asia-Pacific countries: a small number (approximately 100 per year) of high-value (up to $69,000) NCP Scholarships, and a much larger number of more modestly funded Mobility Grants ($2,000–$7,000, with some room for top-ups for language study and internships). In 2019, of the 52,171 study abroad experiences involving students from Australian universities, 11,660 involved students receiving NCP scholarships and grants, with the vast bulk of that number receiving Mobility Grants.[165]

The NCP has clearly been an important initiative, greatly contributing to Australian students' ability to study in, and about, Asian countries. In fact, by supporting direct student engagement in the Asia-Pacific, the NCP raises the question of whether it makes the study of Asian languages, societies and cultures at Australian universities less urgent. If students can

learn about an Asian society in the country concerned, or learn a language in an environment in which they are surrounded by native speakers, perhaps this means that extended Asian Studies programs at Australian universities are less necessary?

One reason that the NCP does not serve such purposes is that the program primarily supports short-term (i.e. less than a semester in length) programs, funded through the Mobility Grants. Many of the programs involved provide students with a stimulating "taste" of an Asian country, but without the extended engagement necessary to become richly familiar with that country's language, history, and society. Of the more than 50,000 Australian students participating in overseas experiences in 2019, the vast majority (79 percent) did so for less than a semester.[166] In 2018, only 12 percent of Australian undergraduates studying in China did so for a semester or more; for Indonesia the figure was 10 percent, for India just 1 percent (Japan was the major exception, with 29 percent of Australian undergraduates in 2018 living in the country for a semester or longer).[167]

"Short-term programs cannot substitute for extended programs of deep study. Indeed, one problem is that students who participate in NCP programs often lack the opportunity either to prepare for or build on their study abroad experience at their home campus due to the weakness of Asian language and Asian Studies there."

Short-term programs play an important stimulatory role. One study, based on a survey of 1,371 NCP students and alumni, and qualitative interviews, found that even short-term mobility was beneficial, including in increasing participants' knowledge of the region, and their intercultural competence.[168] It also found that students were more satisfied with short-term rather than long-term learning abroad experiences. This study concludes that "the NCP program has achieved its objective of increasing knowledge of the Indo-Pacific among young Australians."[169]

However, while the ASAA strongly welcomes the NCP's role in encouraging Asia engagement, the short-term nature of many programs are insufficient to provide Australia with the levels of Asia knowledge we need. Short-term programs cannot substitute for extended programs of deep study. Indeed, one problem is that students who participate in NCP programs often lack the opportunity either to prepare for or build on their study abroad experience at their home campus due to the weakness of Asian language and Asian Studies there. It is noteworthy that 89 percent of respondents to the survey above stated that dealing with a new language was a major challenge during their NCP experience.[170] Study abroad programs are best viewed as an extension of university-based programs of deep learning about Asia, rather than as an alternative to them. Students need opportunities to study about Asia both in Australia and in Asia.

According to an analysis by Liam Prince, one reason for the dominance of short-term programs in the Asia Pacific is that, while the NCP gives incentives to students to study in the region, by providing them with mobility grants, it "currently does (almost) nothing to provide an economic incentive to Australian universities to make it easier for large numbers of their

domestic undergrad students to spend a semester in the Indo-Pacific."[171] Prince argues that the primary reason is that Australian universities do not earn additional federal government income when their students take up courses overseas. One way to recoup this foregone student income is for universities to establish reciprocal joint degree or student exchange programs (by which students from partner universities enrol in Australian host universities, contributing fees in the process). However, given the small numbers of students involved in many NCP programs (Prince notes only 14 Australian students studied for a semester in India in 2018) it is often not worthwhile for Australian universities to establish bilateral exchange agreements with Asian universities, given that "Bilateral exchange agreements are administratively costly for individual Australian unis to establish and manage, and just aren't worth the hassle if there isn't a consistent, substantial two-way flow of students justifying the maintenance of a particular agreement."[172]

International Students from Asia Studying in Australia

Over the last two decades, there has been major growth in the number of international students studying at Australian universities and a shift in the background of international students. Just prior to the pandemic, in October 2019, a little over 430,000 international students were pursuing higher education in Australia, a number that had doubled since the turn of the century.[173] In 2020, as a result of Australian government border restrictions due to COVID-19, there was a significant decline in the number of international students studying at Australian universities. However, it is expected that numbers will soon recover.

Of these international students, 164,000 were from China, comprising 37.7 percent of the total. Most students from China were undertaking either a Masters or Bachelor degree. Alongside the significant rise in the number of Chinese students, since 2008 there has been a decline in the number of Indian students studying in Australian universities, perhaps in part due to incidents of violence against Indian students and related media coverage. Nevertheless, students from India still account for the second highest number of enrolments. In 2019, there were almost 88,000 students from India, comprising 20 percent of all international students in higher education in Australia. Students from India were predominantly enrolled in Masters degrees (71 per cent). Nepal and Vietnam comprised the third and fourth highest number of enrolments of international students from across the Asia-Pacific region (6.5 percent and 3.6 percent respectively).

One driver of the increase in international students comes from higher degree research programs. In 2006, international students made up 18 percent of all higher degree research students at Australian universities. By 2017, they were 33 percent.[174]

Government and university leaders have long recognised the critical financial contribution international students make to Australian universities and the Australian economy as a whole: education, including student expenditure on tuition fees and living expenses, is officially recognised as Australia's third largest export, after iron ore and coal.[175] International rankings also incentivise universities to attract international students from Asia: for example, the 2023 QS Word University Rankings use six indicators that include international student and faculty ratios as an indicator of a university's capacity to attract talent from around the world and foster a global education experience.[176]

Both the increasing number of students from Asia in Australian classrooms, and increasing numbers of higher degree research students in need of supervision suggest a need for continuing the pursuit of Asia literacy on Australian campuses. While most international students from Asian countries do not come to Australian universities to learn about Asian societies, some certainly do. A number appreciate Australia as providing an environment where they can learn about Asia—and their home country in particular—without the distortions produced by a nationalist lens or an authoritarian political system. Others simply appreciate the opportunity to supplement their primary learning goals with courses with Asia content, and to study on campuses which take their home societies seriously.

In general, the increasing number of international students both in and beyond Asian Studies programs and courses provides an opportunity to incorporate their knowledge and experiences into course curriculum, and to ensure teaching is responsive to this change in student demographics. For advanced students who wish to pursue study about their home or other Asian societies, of course, the need for specialist expertise is especially important. Certainly, higher degree research projects drawing on Asian country data work best when both the student and their academic supervisors have relevant country and language expertise, with the supervisor able to guide the student through the literature and data, and to contextualise the significance of the student's research finding. Unfortunately, the Australian university sector has mostly viewed international students as a source of revenue, and as seeking a distinctively Australian and/or global experience, without considering the need to adapt course content and expertise.

"International students from Asia are thus one additional reason why Australian universities need to invest in Asian Studies. Offering a truly global curriculum, including strong offerings about Asia, has the potential to be attractive to students from the region."

International students from Asia are thus one additional reason why Australian universities need to invest in Asian Studies. Offering a truly global curriculum, including strong offerings about Asia, has the potential to be attractive to students from the region. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, many universities have struggled to rebuild their international student numbers. Further, even before the pandemic, Australian universities were overexposed to one student market, China, and needed to diversify their appeal. Given the broad interest in Australian higher education across Asia, Australian universities can use a broad-based Asia approach—investing in both Asian Studies programs and the study of Asia across disciplines—to support a strategy of diversifying the international student body.

Conclusion

Over the past two decades, but particularly in the past five to 10 years, many Australian universities have begun to engage more deeply with Asia, including in new and innovative ways.[177] At times, universities have used their new partnerships with Asia as a unique selling point. For example, the Innovative Research Universities network in its publicity material has

emphasised its members' historic ties to graduates from Asia through the Colombo Plan of the 1950s–1960s, their successful alumni from Asia, their Asia research centres, the breadth of their Asia-related teaching and language programs, and their collaborative research partnerships with academics and institutions in Asia.[178] Such achievements across many universities should rightly be applauded.

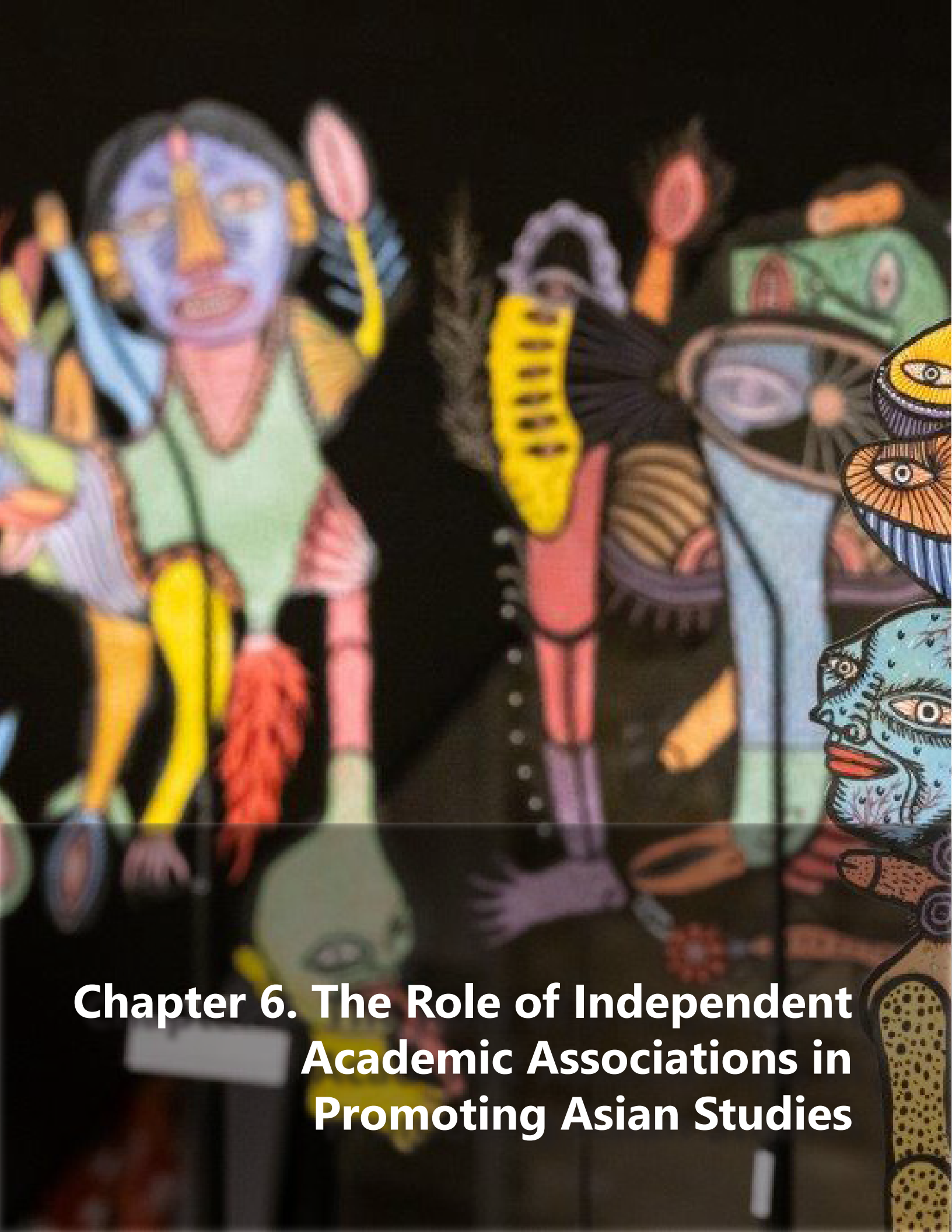
In this chapter, we have highlighted the establishment of off-shore campuses in Asia by Australian universities, the diversity of joint programs involving Australian and Asian universities, the growth of study abroad programs in Asia for Australian students, and the rapid growth in numbers of international students, particularly from Asia, studying on Australian campuses. In Australia, these changes mean that virtually no academic is untouched by the Asian Century. All academics have students from Asia in their classrooms, and some in large numbers. The baseline level of knowledge about Asia needed to engage effectively in the classroom has risen dramatically.

These trends present a raft of opportunities for Asian Studies scholars to promote deep study of Asia, including through involvement in university initiatives to promote Asia engagement. They require a new generation of Asia-literate academics, leading and informing the new partnerships and other initiatives.

"Universities need to maintain and guard academic freedom, and ensure that their partnerships do too."

But with these opportunities come challenges. Universities need to maintain and guard academic freedom, and ensure that their partnerships do too. While a few universities have prioritised Asian Studies experts as leaders of engagement initiatives, most have not. The growing integration of Australian universities with Asia has not always led to greater awareness among university leaders of the importance of understanding Asia or support for Asian Studies, but rather been a substitute for it. Many academics generally find themselves unprepared for the challenges that arise with the increase in international students; higher degree students from Asia, for example, often find themselves with supervisors lacking language or cultural knowledge of their country of origin and/or focus.

While the focus of this chapter has been on how Australian universities, as institutions, have adapted to the rise of Asia, and the further steps they need to take along this path, we should also acknowledge that that rise also poses challenges to individual Asian Studies scholars in Australia, and elsewhere. The growing pre-eminence of Asian countries themselves in scholarly knowledge production about Asia will challenge the way in which Asian Studies scholars conduct research. We need to ensure that we move away from old approaches that merely treat Asian countries as "field sites", and move toward more intensive modes of research collaboration and genuine partnership with Asia-based colleagues. And we need to consider the extent to which Australia's contemporary transformation and integration in the region require us to think beyond dichotomous frameworks which position Asia as being located exclusively externally to Australia. The Asian Studies of the future will also require us to understand ourselves.



Chapter 6. The Role of Independent Academic Associations in Promoting Asian Studies

Chapter 6. The Role of Independent Academic Associations in Promoting Asian Studies

Asian Studies, like all academic pursuits, requires space for critical thought, freedom of expression, and independence from the interests of government and the corporate sector. One of the main ways academics have organised and promoted the interests of their field is through academic associations. What role have independent academic associations played in promoting Asian Studies in Australia, and how has this role changed over the past two decades? In this chapter, we focus on the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), the peak academic association for Asian Studies in Australia, and related regional councils.

As the ASAA approaches its 50th anniversary, we suggest that the record of recent decades shows that independent, cross-institutional academic associations are critical to sustain and enhance Asian Studies. The ASAA, in combination with related regional associations, acts as a network for academics working in Asian Studies in Australia, fostering and mentoring new generations of academics, and supporting academic collaborations and interdisciplinary research.

The ASAA, along with related regional councils, represents scholars who identify with the field of Asian Studies, including academics who teach in Asian Studies and language programs, as well as those based in other disciplines where they teach and research Asia. The ASAA seeks to foster and develop the field through a range of academic activities, such as conferences, publications, prizes and grants. It informs public policy through public submissions and advocacy relevant to the interests of its members.

Given the rise and fall of government and university support over time, cross-institutional academic associations like ASAA ensure continuity in Asian Studies, offer a critical independent voice on the study of Asia in a time of democratic decline in the region, and have the potential to inform engagement between academics based in Australia and in Asia.

The Asian Studies Association of Australia

The History of the ASAA

The ASAA facilitates professional networks among Asian Studies scholars and students, and supports its members through a range of activities including conferences, publications and public engagement. In 1976, the ASAA was formed after several decades of the development of Asian Studies at Australian universities. The ASAA is part of the wider history of the development of Asian Studies in Australia, which, as we have seen in earlier chapters, unfolded in four key phases.

The first phase from the early 1900s to the early 1960s saw the beginnings of Asian Studies—or Oriental Studies, as it was then often known. In the second phase, from roughly the mid-1960s through to the early 1980s, there was an expansion and growth of Asian Studies in Australia, with the foundation of many programs and concentrations of expertise that survive to this day.

The third phase, the late 1980s and 1990s, was a time of change and dynamism

in Asia, and a period when universities and Asian Studies programs benefited from both Australian government and corporate sector interest in Asia. The fourth phase, the 2000s to 2020s, is the focus of this report. As we have seen, it has been a period of relative stagnation in Asian Studies at Australian universities, but also of widening engagement with Asia.

Through these periods, the influence of the ASAA has waxed and waned. Founded as part of the emergence of the modern field of Asian Studies at the height of the second period, in 1976, during the second and third phases, there were times when the ASAA and its members closely informed government policies on Asia. In 1988, Prime Minister Bob Hawke opened the ASAA conference. In the 1990s and 2000s, ASAA members played a key role in the design and implementation of government language policies that led to NALSAS and NALSPP, discussed in Chapter 2. Through to the present, ASAA members have also served on the respective Australian national councils (e.g. Australia Indonesia Institute), served on DFAT committees for higher degree scholarships for students from the region to study in Australia, served on the National Library of Australia council, and held numerous DFAT grants, among many other initiatives and collaborations with government.

"The 2019 survey of ASAA members showed that members were drawn from over 20 disciplines, with the most common disciplines being history, anthropology, language and culture, political science, and sociology. Among ASAA members, at least 25 languages are spoken."

One indicator of the scale of Asian Studies in Australia is the membership size of relevant associations. In the United States, there has been an apparent decline, or at least stasis, in Asian Studies. In 1994, the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) had 8,000 members; by 2003 this had fallen to 5,708 U.S.-based members.[179] In 2022, the membership had stabilised at 5,500, still a decline from its heights in the 1990s. By comparison, in Australia, at what was perhaps its peak in 1988, the ASAA had 600 members.[180] In 2002 and 2003, the membership of the ASAA dropped to the mid-300s.[181] By 2018, the membership rose to over 600, due to the efforts of Sydney's Southeast Asia Centre to host the biennial ASAA conference with a record of over 1,000 speakers. In 2022, ASAA had around 400 members. Factors affecting membership today include the tumultuous period in 2020–2021 with the cancellation of the in-person ASAA biennial conference due to COVID-19 (membership rates often peak around conference time, with some persons joining in order to access the member discount for registration), retrenchments or voluntary redundancies, and sector-wide job insecurity. On the other hand, in recent years, conference enrolment numbers have indicated health: the 2020 conference, which was planned to be hosted by the University of Melbourne, attracted over 600 registrations before it was cancelled; in 2022 the conference hosted by Monash University Herb Feith Engagement Centre, and taking the form of a hybrid conference with regional hubs, again attracted around 600 registrations. These numbers are well above historic averages, and partly result from a greater participation from scholars based in Asia.

The 2019 survey of ASAA members showed that members were drawn from over 20 disciplines, with the most common disciplines being history, anthropology, language and culture, political science, and sociology.[182] Among ASAA members, at least 25 languages are

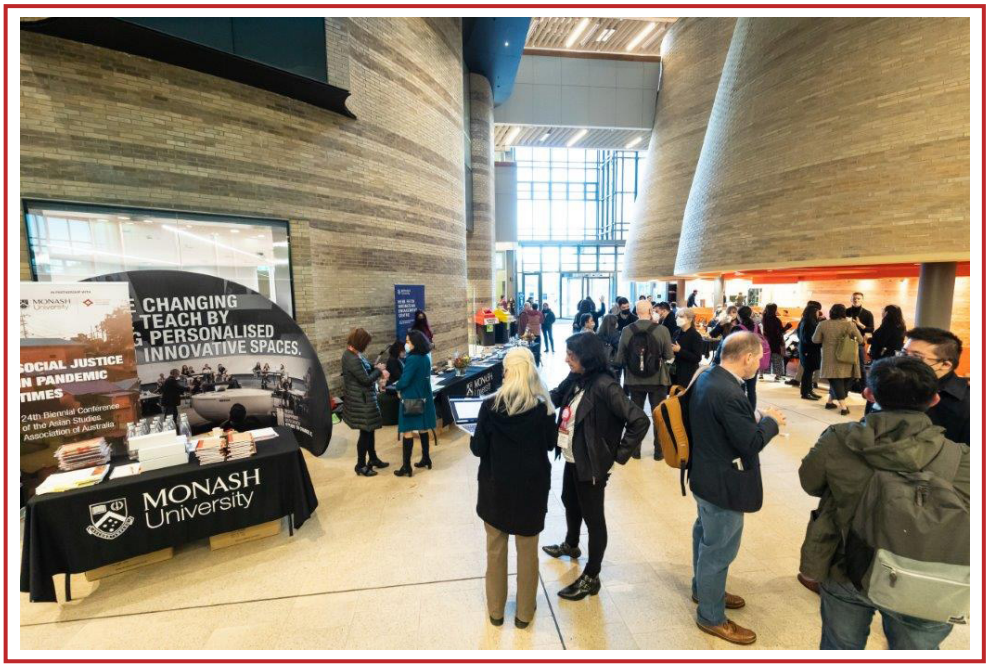
spoken. The most common languages include Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese. Notably, there has been an increase in Burma/Myanmar studies scholars, linked to the political opening in Myanmar in 2011–2021 and the opportunities that this brought for engaging with and studying the country.

The ASAA is led by a Council that consists of a secretary, treasurer, president and vice-president, as well as councillors with a regional focus, the *Asian Studies Review* (*ASR*) editor, the book series representative, a postgraduate representative, a librarian representative, a teacher representative and the conference organiser.[183] Each of these individuals plays a crucial role in the work of ASAA, discussed more below.

Publications, Activities, and Public Engagement

In its work to promote the study of Asia in Australia, over the decades the ASAA has engaged in a range of activities, most of which can be loosely categorised in one of four categories: networking, publications, public advocacy, and prizes that recognise achievements in the field.

In terms of networking, the founders of the ASAA from the start recognised that in order for the field to overcome its early position of marginalisation in Australian universities, it was essential for scholars to counter the feelings of isolation they could sometimes experience at their individual campuses. Biennial conferences accordingly have always been a major focus of the organisation, involving large investments of effort by the universities that host them and the voluntary committees that convene them. Typically involving several hundred participants, with panels spanning the range of country and topic interests of ASAA members, and attracting numerous international participants—increasingly from Asian countries—these conferences have become a significant part of the international Asian Studies scene.



In 2022 a hybrid conference with in-person and online options, as well as hubs in regional cities, was hosted by Monash University.

The ASAA's largest conference to date was hosted by the University of Sydney in 2018. In 2020, despite enormous effort from its hosts at the University of Melbourne, the conference had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, although various online initiatives and mentoring schemes were held in its place.

The ASAA produces three main sets of publications: the interdisciplinary *Asian Studies Review* journal; several book series; and an online publication, *Asian Currents*.

Case Study 11: Public Outreach via Blogs and Podcasts

One significant development over the last two decades has been the rise of non-traditional forms of outreach pioneered by Australia-based scholars of Asia. Australian scholars have created some of the most popular and influential online blogs and podcasts on the region, communicating academic research in accessible ways, providing commentary on news, culture, and contemporary events—and often reaching massive audiences in the process. Standout examples include the *New Mandala* blog, which focuses on Southeast Asia, and is based at the ANU, and the University of Melbourne's *Indonesia at Melbourne*—both of which can reach hundreds of thousands of readers when publishing on controversial or topical issues, such as elections. Important podcasts include the *Talking Indonesia* podcast based at the University of Melbourne, *Asia Rising* from La Trobe University, and the *Little Red Podcast*, which is run by China specialists based at ANU and University of Melbourne, and which was the winner of the 2018 Australian Podcast of the Year in the News and Current Affairs category. Such endeavours are remarkably successful at presenting academic research in ways that are accessible to policy audiences, and the wider public, and, unlike conventional academic publishing, they have the advantage of immediacy—allowing rapid analysis and commentary on events as they happen. These endeavours often begin as the personal initiatives of small groups of scholars, and are run by enthusiastic volunteers. But it can be hard for academics to sustain the commitment required, especially when juggling teaching and academic publishing expectations. To be successful over long periods, such initiatives typically require sustained institutional support from their sponsoring university in the form of editorial support, web management, and administration. Though university managers often appreciate the publicity benefits such initiatives bring, they can be vulnerable when funds run short. The growth of well-funded initiatives at universities in Asia, such as the *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* which publishes blog posts in Thai, Indonesian, Burmese, Chinese, Vietnamese and Tagalog, also presents a challenge to efforts in Australia, particularly to increase the variety of languages in which they publish.

In 1977, the ASAA founded the *Asian Studies Review*. Founding editors were Anthony Reid, John Caiger, Jamie Mackie, Anthony Milner, and Virginia Hooker, all from the Australian National University. From 1977 until 1990, the *Asian Studies Review* was known as the *ASAA Review*. In 1998 it joined Blackwell Publishing and by 2004 had moved to Taylor & Francis. Currently, the journal publishes four issues per year on the history, cultures, societies, languages, politics, and religions of contemporary and modern Asia.[184] The journal is led by the editor, David Hundt, its twelfth editor, along with a large editorial board.

The ASAA also runs four book series, on Women in Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and South Asia, in collaboration with the respective editors of each series.[185] Well over 140 books have been published across these book series.

By the mid-2000s, ASAA established the online publication *Asian Currents*, which was funded in its first two years with a grant from The Myer Foundation. From 2006 until the end of 2009, *Asian Currents* was funded by the ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network, an example of the importance of ARC funding for the field. In terms of output, from 2015 to 2019, *Asian Currents* published over 300 posts. These posts spanned the region, with the highest number on Indonesia (41), followed closely by Japan (34), China (32) and India (25). Since 2015, the most read pieces on *Asian Currents* have been on Indonesia, Singapore, and Japan. *Asian Currents* is part of a wider proliferation of the use of blogs and other formats such as podcasts to disseminate research to a wider audience and engage the public, as discussed in Case Study 11.[186]

In terms of public engagement, the two major public reports issues by the ASAA over the last 20 years are the 2002 *Maximising Asia* Report and the 2011 *Asian Languages* Report (both discussed above). In addition, the ASAA Council has issued numerous public statements and submissions, which can be found on its website. They include a submission to the Henry Commission that led to the White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century and a submission to the Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill. In response to the Draft National Strategy on International Education, then ASAA President Louise Edwards recommended that additional support be provided for the teaching of strategically important, but small enrolment, Asian languages in Australian universities, and the extension of scholarship schemes to allow students of disadvantaged and ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) backgrounds to study in the Asian region.

In a similar vein, in 2017, the ASAA made a submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper consultation process. The submission recommended that the Australian Government commit to: (1) prioritising Asia as a region of primary importance in international engagement; (2) deeper engagement with Asia, including by expanding the New Colombo Plan and Endeavor Program; (3) increasing Australians' intercultural competence as "a key human capital development priority"; and (4) increasing active collaboration with professional Asia experts to enhance Australia's policy responses to international affairs.

Several submissions and statements have been issued in response to the challenges facing Asian Studies. For example, in 2018 the ASAA issued a statement of concern over political interference in the ARC grant application process, affecting at least one ASAA member. In 2019–2020, ASAA led advocacy in response to National Library of Australia cuts to its Asian Studies collection. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASAA has responded to the workplace change proposals of several universities that proposed to cut language and Asian Studies programs and/or positions. The ASAA has also made public statements concerning developments that affect academic freedom and the well-being of academics and students in the region, which in 2021 included political developments in Afghanistan and the military coup in Myanmar and detention of the Australian academic and economist Sean Turnell.

The breadth and depth of this advocacy express the ASAA's commitment to promote Asian Studies and support ASAA members. Such advocacy campaigns play multiple roles: to offer public statements of values the ASAA stands for; to express solidarity with scholars in the

region; to generate collective action among members on an issue; to attract media attention; and to make recommendations to government. Over the past decade under successive Liberal-National Party coalition governments, ASAA lobbying achieved limited success at the federal level; ASAA responses, however, did contribute to successful community push-back against some university proposals to close Asian language and Asian Studies programs.

Case Study 12: The National Library of Australia's Downgrading of Asia

For many years, the National Library of Australia (NLA) has maintained one of the world's richest collections of Northeast and Southeast Asian materials. Initiated as part of the post-World War II recognition by national policy makers that Australia needed to foster greater understanding of the region, the origins of this collection share much in common with the genesis of Asian Studies at Australian universities. Decades of collecting, a specialist Asia reading room, and specialist staff with Asian language skills, combined to make the NLA one of the world's treasure houses for Asian materials.

In 2019–2020, the National Library undertook a review of its collecting strategy, resulting in a significant downgrading of its emphasis on Asia. While presented as part of a renewed focus on its mandate to enhance Australian collecting, part of the backdrop was financial pressures similar to those experienced by universities. According to calculations using data in the library's annual reports, the National Library experienced roughly a 15 percent cut in government income (adjusted for inflation) in the years between 2009–2010 and 2017–2018 alone (take out a special grant for a Captain Cook exhibition held in 2018 and the decline is even steeper). In the same period, the population of Australia grew by 14 percent, further increasing the library's domestic collecting burden, but the number of National Library staff fell by 20 percent, from about 500 to 400.[187]

The result of the review included a significant downgrading of overseas collecting, with the new policy stating that "the countries of Asia and the Pacific is the Library's highest priority after its Australian collecting responsibilities, and the Library aims to maintain a level of curatorial focus on collecting from Indonesia, China, Timor-Leste and the Pacific".[188] The previous Collection Development Policy (2016) stated that the Library prioritised collecting from the following countries: "China, Japan, Korea and, within South-East Asia: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia and East Timor." In other words, the new document removed Japan, Korea, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar from this list of priority countries. The deleted countries include two of the top four trading partners of Australia in 2019 (Japan and Korea). Collecting on the countries of mainland Southeast Asia, meanwhile, is very patchy in both home-country and other international collections; online options there are also limited, while political conditions make it important to build up significant collections outside the region. As well as this dramatic downgrading in collecting, other changes in the library include the closure of the Asia reading room, and the loss of specialist staff.

Part of the NLA's justification for these changes was that university libraries should be able to take up the slack of national Asia collecting. However, if anything, the trends are going in the wrong direction on campuses, too. For example, in 2021, Monash University discontinued its Asia collection librarian specialists. As Rheny Pulungan notes in a report for ASAA, there has been a trend of increased reliance on online collections curated by commercial suppliers, with one result being that "the majority of academic libraries in Australia do not have dedicated specialist librarians to develop and manage their Asian studies collections."[189]

The ASAA also supports and promotes the field of Asian Studies by recognising and promoting outstanding scholarship through various awards, grants and prizes. Having expanded the range of prizes it offers in recent years, the ASAA currently offers the John Legge best thesis prize, an early career book prize, a mid-career book prize, and the Wang Gungwu prize for the best article in the *Asian Studies Review*. In 2022, the ASAA inaugurated the Reid Prize, established with a generous endowment by Helen and Anthony Reid ($250,000) for the book written by an Australian- or New Zealand-based author that has made the most significant contribution to understanding of Asia.[190] The ASAA also offers a postdoctoral fellowship, a biennial conference grant scheme, and competitive postdoctoral bursaries for attendance at the ASAA conference. These eight prizes are made possible through the volunteer work of over 30 senior academics who run the various committees.

Finally, the ASAA Council has a library representative who plays an important role in promoting interest in and understanding of Asia collections across Australia.[191] This role was particularly important in 2019–2020 due to cuts to the Asia collections at the National Library of Australia (see Case Study 12). In 2022, the ASAA also re-established the role of the teacher representative, to lead efforts to promote stronger collaboration among primary and secondary teachers, language teachers, and academics working in higher education.

Women's Forum

A key component of the ASAA is the Women's Forum, which began in 1978 as the Women's Caucus, changing its name in 2006. The forum has played a significant role in raising the profile of women doing research on Asia in Australia, as well as promoting research about women and gender in Asia. It coordinates a moderated email list, holds a meeting during the biennial ASAA conference, and supports the Women in Asia book series.

In 1981, the first Women in Asia international conference was hosted by UNSW. In 2019, the 12th Women in Asia conference on "Women in an Era of Anti-Elitism" returned to UNSW, with 150 speakers from over 14 countries in Asia and over 30 different Asian universities and institutions.[192] This conference series endeavours to provide a safe space for women and LGBTIQ researchers and their work.

Since 2019, the ASAA Council has committed to offering a small grant on a biennial basis to the Women in Asia Conference to provide bursaries for postgraduate students to present papers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019 the Women's Forum shifted online with a conference on "Fashioning Gender in Asia", hosted primarily online by La Trobe University.[193]

Aside from the conference, in 1992, the Women in Asia book series began and had published 54 books to 2019. The books are interdisciplinary with core representation from history, sociology, literature, anthropology, sexuality, health, politics, religious studies, labour studies, youth studies, urban planning, and legal studies. The series positions Australia as a global leader in scholarship on Women and Gender in Asia—no other book series in the area has the same interdisciplinary, multi-national scope. The series, overseen by editor Louise Edwards, seeks to maintain a mix of books by senior and junior scholars, native and non-native speakers of English, edited, co-authored and sole authored monographs. In 2023, the ASAA will welcome its first Women's Forum representative on the Council.

Regional Asian Studies Associations and Councils

Eight regional councils are affiliated with the ASAA, focusing on China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mainland Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Singapore, South Asia, and Timor-Leste. Some are independent incorporated associations, while others operate as informal research networks. These interdisciplinary regional councils exist to promote the study and research of their respective regions or countries in Australia. They share a common commitment to promoting Asian Studies in higher education, and foster and support postgraduate students and scholars using many of the same methods used by the ASAA itself. Most regional councils have a governing committee, host a biennial conference and some also publish journals and recognise outstanding scholarship through prizes.

The history of these regional associations begins with South Asian Studies. The South Asian Studies Association of Australia (SASAA) is the oldest formally constituted body of scholars of South Asian Studies in the world. SASAA was formed in 1969 by a network of scholars in Australia and New Zealand to serve as the peak professional association for scholars, practitioners and students teaching and researching in the humanities and the social sciences with an interest in South Asia.[194] This was a period when the study of South Asia was still strong in Australia. While the field has since experienced relative decline, since 1971, SASAA has continued to publish the highly-regarded *South Asia: The Journal of South Asian Studies*. SASAA offers several prizes and grants.

In 1977, less than 10 years after the formation of SASSA, the Malaysia Society was established as the first country-based council affiliated with the ASAA. It later expanded to include Singapore and became known as the Malaysia and Singapore Society of Australia (MASSA). In 1977, Griffith University hosted the inaugural MASSA conference. In 2019, MASSA hosted its 20th biennial conference, on "Webs of Connection Towards Sustainability" at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, while in 2021 the conference shifted online. At ASAA conferences, MASSA hosts the James C. Jackson Memorial Lecture, which has included distinguished scholars such as Professor Wang Gungwu, Professor Gary Rodan, Professor Michael Barr, and Professor Anthony Milner.

Also in the late 1970s, riding the wave of momentum in the Japanese economy in Australia, the Japanese Studies Association of Australia (JSAA) was formed as the professional association for academics and students in Australia who teach, research or study Japan.[195] JSAA is a member of the Global Network of Japanese Language Education (GN), which has affiliations in 11 countries around the world. JSAA publishes a flagship journal, *Japanese*

Studies, published by Taylor and Francis. In 2004, JSAA had a membership of just under 200;[196] in 2019, JSAA had mostly retained these numbers with 137 members. In 1980, ANU hosted the inaugural JSAA biennial conference. In 2021, JSAA held its 22nd biennial conference online, around the theme of "Sustainability, Longevity and Mobility" hosted by the University of Queensland.[197]

In 1987, the Chinese Studies Association of Australia (CSAA) was formed,[198] with members including specialists in the fields of anthropology, economics, geography, history, language, law, linguistics, political science, sociology, literature and other aspects of Chinese society and culture. The inaugural president of CSAA was Professor Mabel Lee (a specialist in modern literature), who later became globally renowned as the translator of the Nobel Prize winning author, Gao Xingjian.[199] In 2004, the Chinese Studies Association had 246 members. These numbers appear to be stable: in 2019, CSAA had 210 members, with over 30 percent of its members being students. In 2021, the CSAA held its 17th biennial conference at the Australian Centre on China in the World, ANU.

"Regional councils provide an interdisciplinary forum for Asian Studies scholars and offer a supportive environment for the study of Asia in Australia".

The establishment of CSAA was followed in 1994 by the creation of the Korean Studies Association of Australasia (KSAA).[200] A central activity of the KSAA has been its biennial conference, which it first held in 1999 at UNSW. Since then, it has held 12 biennial conferences. In 2022, it has over 100 members across Australia and New Zealand. Funded by the Korea Foundation, in 2022, the KSAA oversees the Exchange Program of Australasian Lecturers (EPAL), which funds a scholar based in Australia or New Zealand to give a talk on any Korean Studies-related topic.[201]

Up to the end of the 20th century, therefore, five separate and independent regional associations for South Asia, Malaysia, Japan, China and Korea had been formed: SASSA, MASSA, JSAA, CSAA and KSAA. Three of these are incorporated associations and all five still exist. Past ASAA reports have mentioned the formation in the 1980s of a Philippines Studies Association of Australasia and a Vietnam Studies Association.[202] In 2003, there were 65 members of the former body, and in 2004 there were 63 members of the latter. Informal research networks focused on these countries still exist, but not incorporated associations.

In the 2000–2022 period, three new regional councils were established: the Indonesia Council, the Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA) and the Association of Mainland Southeast Asia Scholars (AMSEAS). In 2000, two years after Indonesia's transition from authoritarian rule, the Indonesia Council was founded to support and promote the study of Indonesia in Australian higher education. The first president was the literary studies scholar Harry Aveling. The Indonesia Council runs a biennial Open Conference, which was first held in 2001. It remains unincorporated and does not have a membership fee but maintains an email list of about 500 people. In 2021, the University of Queensland hosted the 11th biennial Indonesia Council conference (online due to COVID-19).

In 2005, the Timor-Leste Studies Association was founded after a conference on "Cooperating with Timor-Leste" held at Victoria University, Melbourne.[203] TLSA is global in

reach and holds biennial conferences in Dili, Timor-Leste. Since its founding, TLSA chapters have been formed in Portugal and Brazil, with a new one in the process of being formed in the United Kingdom. The TLSA is affiliated with the ASAA. In 2021, TLSA hosted an international symposium on the 1991 Santa Cruz Massacre, with support from the ASAA.[204]

Formed in late 2017, AMSEAS is the newest regional council.[205] AMSEAS was established with support of Sydney University's Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. Focusing on Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, AMSEAS is building its profile in support of research on these countries. In 2019, AMSEAS hosted its first workshop on "China's Influence in Mainland Southeast Asia" at the University of Sydney, supported by the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. In 2021, AMSEAS hosted its inaugural biennial conference. The organisation has since established an early career book prize.

Regional councils provide an interdisciplinary forum for Asian Studies scholars and offer a supportive environment for the study of Asia in Australia. These associations have often been established at ASAA conferences or through ASAA networks, and they are an important forum for academics who are the sole country or regional expert in their school, faculty or, sometimes, university, enabling them to connect with likeminded colleagues across Australia, in the region, and beyond.

Conclusion

Asian Studies requires the support of a diverse range of institutions, especially those that fund and provide higher education: faculties and schools, universities and governments. In this chapter we have highlighted the essential role that independent academic associations also play in maintaining the vision and independence of the field. As we have explained elsewhere in this report, the contemporary Australian higher education sector is characterised by fluctuating support for Asian Studies from university leaders and governments, sometimes causing instability in the field, and limiting its growth and potential. Research centres funded by the government, meanwhile, can be perceived as foregrounding Australia's trade and security relationships, potentially at the expense of academic independence.

In this context, independent academic associations can help to sustain and enhance Asian Studies. The ASAA is an independent voice able to inform government and university policies with regard to the provision of institutional support for Asian Studies and engagement with Asia. It can also play a role in encouraging the mainstreaming of the study of Asia across disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.

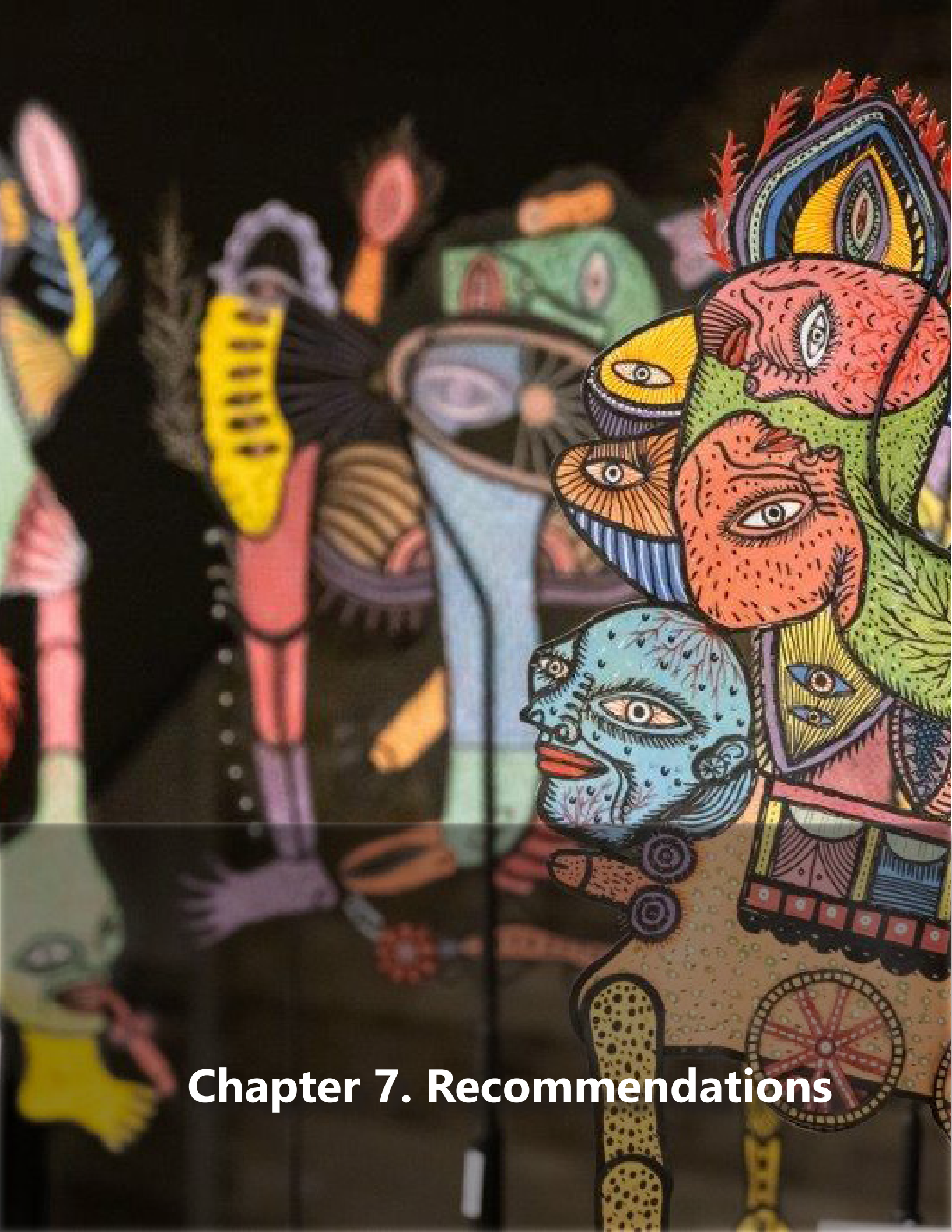
The ASAA also plays an incubator role by mentoring the next generation of scholars and supporting academics throughout their careers through conferences, publications, prizes, and grants. ASAA has a particularly strong commitment and track record in supporting groups underrepresented in academia, notably women through the Women's Forum and its Women in Asia conference. The ASAA recognises the need to support the growing number of Asian Australian academics and their research, and has collaborated with relevant organisations such as the Asian Australian Studies Research Network.

One challenge in the future is that associations like ASAA rely on volunteers. Increasing pressures on the workload of academics, rising performance expectations, and increasing casualisation of the workforce together mean that academics who volunteer for

independent associations are making a significant sacrifice of their time in an environment of growing workplace pressures.

"Given the uncertainties of Australian universities and often fragile state of Asian Studies in any particular faculty, department or program, independent academic associations such as the ASAA can provide important ballast in the field."

Academic research on Asian Studies benefits from the support of independent academic institutions that work to promote and foster the study of Asia. Given the uncertainties of Australian universities and often fragile state of Asian Studies in any particular faculty, department or program, independent academic associations such as the ASAA can provide important ballast in the field. They also provide an important source of collegiality and solidarity, in contrast to the climate of competition fostered in Australia's market-driven university sector, in which performance reviews, rankings, and competitive grants schemes frequently make academics working in similar fields compete against one another. In many respects, the strength of the field of Asian Studies in Australia depends on the united and collective efforts of the diverse people who make up that field, many of whom are ASAA members.



Chapter 7. Recommendations

Chapter 7. Recommendations

To conclude the report, we offer a set of 12 recommendations to the federal government, and to Australian universities. Australia's Asia education imperative requires a clear set of policies and funding. Fostering a new generation of Asia-capable graduates in Australia will not happen by accident, but it is achievable.

Recommendations to the Federal Government

The federal government has the power and responsibility to develop strategies to enhance Australia's engagement with Asia. Efforts to promote Asian languages and the study of Asia require a deliberate and sustained federal strategy with bipartisan support. Such a strategy should be developed in cooperation with state/territory governments. We identify six recommendations to the federal government, as follows:

Recommendation 1: Develop a new federal strategy on Asia literacy.

To initiate such a strategy the federal government should convene a national summit on Asia literacy with all key stakeholders to inform and develop a policy framework and clear goals on Asia literacy. Such a summit could be held regularly to update and renew the strategy.

As part of this strategy, the government should collect and publish annual data on enrolment numbers in every Asian language taught across the Australian education system at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

Recommendation 2: Renew federal government support for Asian languages.

To promote the study of Asian languages, significant government funding is required to provide appropriate incentives and structural support for primary, secondary and tertiary education providers. Australia has a history of success in this area, and should take two steps: first, to restore federal funding for the teaching and learning of Asian languages in Australian schools at a level of $18 (2022 dollars) per Australian school student per year—equivalent to the level prevailing between 1995 and 2002; and second, to establish a competitive program, open for bids by universities, to support the teaching of lesser-taught but high-priority languages like Indonesian and Hindi.

Recommendation 3: Enhance world-leading Asia research in Australia, and deepen Australian research links with Asian universities, through the Australian Research Council (ARC).

This approach would require the federal government to take three steps. First, the federal government should establish two dedicated research schemes: i) an Asian Studies Fellowship Scheme, and ii) an Asia Special Research Initiative. The fellowship would support individual academics based at Australian universities to undertake major research projects on Asia for a period of three years. Applicants should be assessed relative to the position they hold. The Special Research Initiative would be for collaborative research to enhance the sustained study of Asia by teams of academics based at Australian universities. Criteria for

both schemes would include competence in at least one Asian language, and collaboration with partners from Asian universities. Both schemes would apply to the humanities and social sciences.

Second, the federal government should establish a special program based on the Centres of Excellence framework to support deep research collaboration between Australian and Asian universities in addressing major global challenges. Over a period of five to 10 years, five such Australia-Asia Collaborative Centres of Excellence could be supported, with potential for collaboration and support from partner Asian governments.

Third, the federal government should ensure a permanent role for Asian Studies expertise on the ARC College of Experts. The ARC should be required to ensure there is a permanent role for an Asian Studies expert with relevant language capabilities to assess grant rounds of the Social, Behavioural and Economic Sciences panel and the Humanities and Creative Arts panel.

Recommendation 4: Maintain support for in-country study and create a new scheme to fund postgraduate research in Asia.

The federal government should maintain support for in-country study in Asia for Australian undergraduate students, and enhance the New Colombo Plan to encourage more sustained study of Asian languages and Asian Studies, beyond two–three week intensive trips. Incentives should be put in place to prioritise students who are already learning an Asian language, and to prioritise universities that offer relevant Asian language programs, so that students can continue to learn after returning to Australia.

The federal government should introduce a revised version of earlier programs (the Endeavour Awards program or Prime Minister's Australia Asia Awards) to fund postgraduate, especially PhD, field research in Asia and advanced learning of Asian languages. Priority should be given to students who have skills, or are advancing their skills, in an Asian language, and funding could include support to undertake advanced language studies programs overseas.

Recommendation 5: Create a new Prime Minister's Literary Award on Asia.

The federal government should actively promote Asia literacy, language learning and research to the Australian public through public statements and events. One way to do this would be for the Prime Minister to develop a book award as part of the PM's Literary Awards to include recognition for a monograph that demonstrates excellence in Asia research. Such an award would be an opportunity to celebrate and profile outstanding academic research on Asia. Similar literary awards could be developed by premiers at the state/territory level.

Recommendation 6: Develop a coordinated Australia-wide library strategy on Asia collections.

The federal government should invest funding in a new strategy to be driven by the National Library of Australia (NLA), in collaboration with university libraries, to maintain and enhance the collection of Asian language materials by Australian libraries. This should include restoring the NLA Asia collection reading room, restoring NLA acquisitions for all Asia collections, and hiring librarians with expertise in Asian languages to oversee the collection at the NLA.

Recommendations to Australian Universities

Australian universities also have an essential role to play in implementing a strategy to promote Asia literacy and increase the number of Asia-capable graduates. We identify six recommendations to Australian universities:

Recommendation 1: Develop explicit strategies to ensure Australian universities are global leaders in Asia literacy.

Each university should develop its own Asia Literacy and Engagement Strategy, with clear targets and benchmarks, adapted to the needs and strategic priorities of that university, to include concrete commitments on development of Asia expertise and education, alongside outreach, engagement, and collaboration in Asia. Australian universities can use Asia research expertise as a pillar of marketing to international students from Asia, especially research higher degree students. Each university's Asia Literacy and Engagement Strategy should include renewed commitment to Asian Studies programs and/or ensuring an intentional and planned focus on Asia literacy in the post-area studies model, mainstreaming the study of Asia across disciplines and schools.

Recommendation 2: Support Asia literacy through appointing and supporting academic leaders with the right mix of skills.

Universities should employ, support, and promote academic leaders able to drive forward Asia literacy and engagement strategies, through several steps.

First, each university should establish permanent institutional and leadership structures to support Asia literacy. Australian universities should make sustained institutional commitments to the study of Asia to ensure programs are resilient over time and sustain strong student numbers and world-class scholarship. Each university should adapt such structures to their own particular needs and strategies, but dedicated leadership positions (e.g. Pro Vice Chancellors, Associate Deans) focused on Asia Engagement have been shown to be effective in some universities. Universities should ensure that at least one Asian Studies expert holds a senior leadership position on relevant university management boards, e.g. in the international portfolio.

Second, each university should support Asia-background academics. Australian universities must support Asia-background academics (both Asian-Australians and academics from Asia) in Australia, including by making efforts to enhance diversity in senior leadership. Doing so will enhance equity and inclusion, but also help equip universities for the growing weight of Asia in global education and research, and for the changing composition of our study body and Australian society writ large.

Third, each university should undertake targeted hiring of Asia experts. Australian universities, faculties and schools should be committing to hiring Asia experts with relevant language skills to enhance their academic breadth, teaching offerings, and supervision possibilities. Such experts can enhance Asian Studies programs and/or mainstreaming of Asia in other disciplines, and help universities to provide supervision for the growing number of research higher degree students from Asia studying in Australia across many disciplines.

Recommendation 3: Collaborate with federal and state/territory governments on Asia literacy.

Australian universities have the opportunity to partner with the federal and state/territory governments to promote the study of Asia in higher education through programs to deepen Asia literacy and engagement. Universities should be an active part of any federal and state/territory strategy to enhance Asia literacy.

Recommendation 4: Support cross-institutional consortiums for in-country programs.

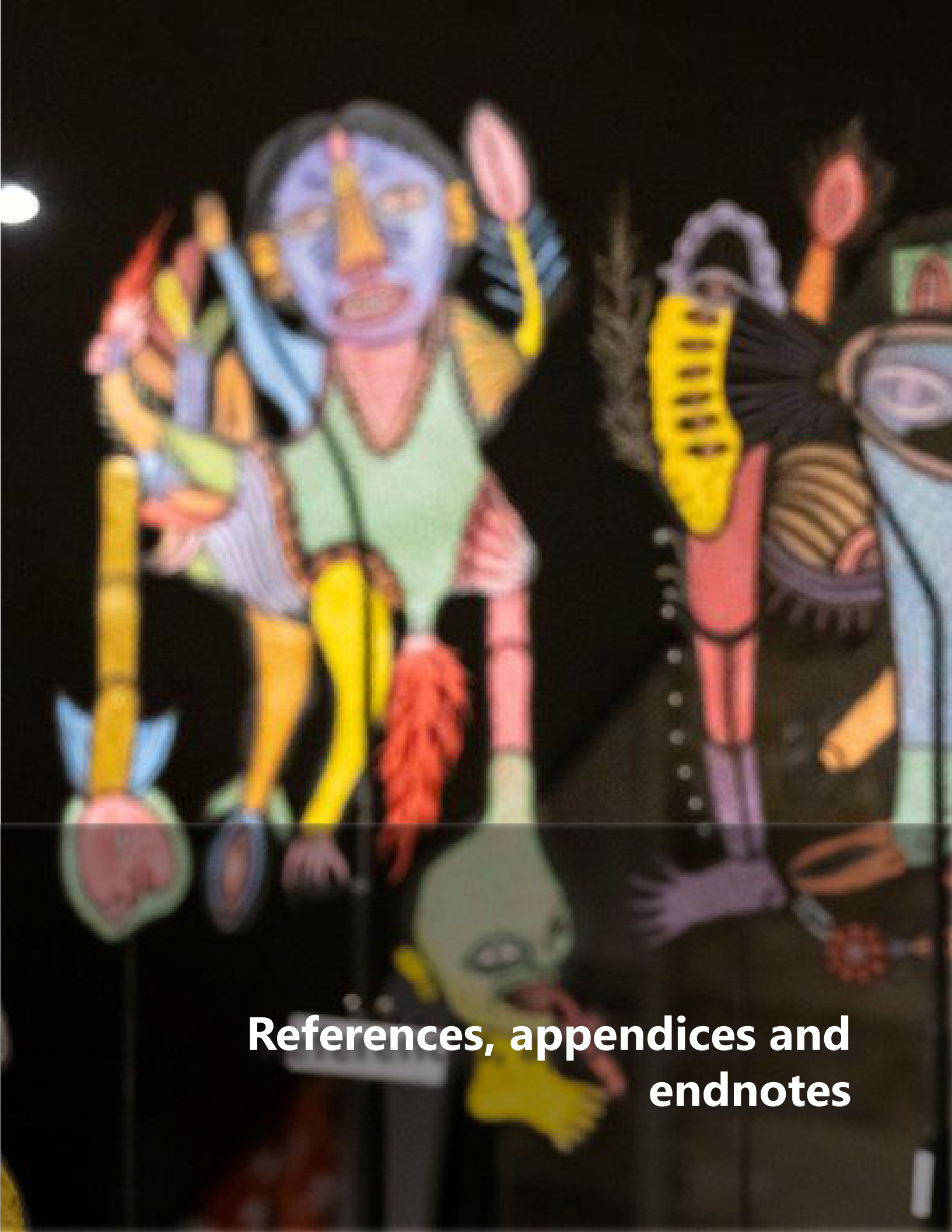
Australian universities should collaborate to establish cross-institutional consortiums for in-country programs, based on the successful Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) model, to ensure that students from all universities have options for study abroad in Asia, including in language programs. Funding should be retained for existing student in-country programs and such programs made easily accessible to students, reducing administrative red-tape.

Recommendation 5: Reaffirm a commitment to academic freedom as it relates to the study of Asia.

A central tenet of Australian universities is the protection of academic freedom. Academics and students focused on Asia must be able to work in an environment where academic freedom is supported and protected. Providing this support and protection may require fortitude when they involve initiatives with Asian countries in which conditions of academic freedom and other civil liberties are not protected.

Recommendation 6: Invest international student revenue in Asian Studies.

Australian universities need to be more transparent and accountable in how they use revenue raised by international students. Given that many international students are from Asia and some Asian language programs receive high international student enrolment, universities should invest a proportion of these funds back into ensuring sustainable Asian Studies and Asian language programs prosper. Asian countries should be viewed as partners, not merely as revenue sources.



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Appendices

1. State/Territory Government Policies on Engagement with Asia 2013–2019

Year	State	Report
2013	Tas	Tasmania's Place in the Asian Century White Paper
2013	NSW	International Engagement Strategy
2014	SA	South Australia-China Engagement Strategy
2014	SA	South Australia-India Engagement Strategy
2014, rev 2017	NSW	China Strategy: NSW International Engagement Strategy
2014, rev 2017		Japan Strategy: NSW International Engagement Strategy
2015, rev 2017	NSW	The Republic of Korea Strategy: NSW International Engagement Strategy
2015, rev 2017	NSW	India Strategy: NSW International Engagement Strategy
2016	QLD	QLD International Education and Training Strategy to Advance Queensland 2016-2026
2016	ACT	Canberra: Australia's Education Capital – An International Education Strategy for Canberra
2016	ACT	Canberra's International Engagement Strategy
2016	Vic	Victoria's New China Strategy: Partnership for Prosperity
2017	WA	Establishment of WA Ministerial Position for Asian Engagement
2018	Vic	Victoria's India Strategy: Our Shared Future
2019	Vic	Globally Connected: Victoria's Southeast Asia Trade and Investment Strategy
2018	WA	Western Australia's Asian Engagement Strategy 2019-2030: Our Future with Asia
2018	QLD	Queensland-India Trade and Investment Strategy 2018-2023
2018	NT	International Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategic Plan 2019-21
2018	NSW	ASEAN Strategy: NSW Strategy for Growing for Trade and Investment with ASEAN
2019	NSW	Study NSW International Education Strategy
2019	SA	International Education Strategy

2. Establishment of Research and Policy Institutes on Asia at Australian Universities

The list below includes research and policy centres and institutes that either primarily foster Asian Studies expertise or may include (either in the past or from time to time) scholars who are Asian Studies experts. The list includes mention of any major external donors, where known. The list includes a range of networks, hubs or initiatives of varying sizes, funding and structures.

1964–2017	Centre of Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Monash University
1974–2014	Centre for Asian Studies, University of Adelaide (since 2015, it is a department within the School of Social Sciences)
1985	Asian Law Centre, the University of Melbourne
1989	Japanese Studies Centre, Monash University
1989	Asialink, The Myer Foundation, the Australian Government's Commission for the Future and the University of Melbourne
1990–2003	Asia Australia Institute, UNSW
1990	Australia Japan Research Centre, ANU
1991–1998	Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Charles Darwin University
1991	Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University
1992	Asia Education Foundation, the University of Melbourne
1993–1997	National Centre for South Asian Studies (NCSAS), joint collaboration between the Commonwealth government and several universities
1994	Australia South Asia Research Centre, the Arndt-Corden Department of Economics ANU
1994	Centre for Asian and Pacific Law, the University of Sydney
1994–2007	ANU Centre for Korean Studies
1996	Monash Centre for Japanese Language Education (Previously The Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education), funded by the Nippon Foundation
1998	Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies, renamed The Asia Institute in 2006, the University of Melbourne
2000–2010	Korea-Australasia Research Centre, UNSW
unknown–2001	National Centre for Korean Studies, the University of Melbourne
2003	Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University
2003–2017	Herb Feith Foundation, Monash University
2007	National Centre for Contemporary Islamic Studies, University of Melbourne[206]

2007–2016	Centre for China Studies, La Trobe University, Peking University and Beijing Foreign Studies University of China
2008	ANU Korea Institute, with South Korean steel company POSCO, which, with Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton, Australia, provided a Korea Institute Endowment Fund (KIEF)
2008	Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the University of Queensland and DFAT
2008	Australia-India Institute, based at University of Melbourne and including La Trobe University and the University of New South Wales (supported by the Australian government and Victorian government)
2008	ANU South Asia Research Institute
2008	ANU China Institute
2009	ANU Japan Institute
2009[207]	Australian APEC Study Centre, RMIT
2010	Australian Centre on China in the World, Commonwealth of Australia and ANU
2010	The Korea Institute, UNSW (replacing the Korea-Australasia Research Centre)
2010	China Studies Centre (CSC), the University of Sydney
2011	India Research Centre, Macquarie University
2012	Centre for the United States and Asia Policy Studies, Flinders University
2012	Australia-Indonesia Institute, based at Monash University
2013	Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society, University of Melbourne
2013	Herbert Smith Freehills China International Economic and Business Law Centre, UNSW Law
2013	Perth USAsia Centre, UWA
2013	ANU Mongolia Institute
2013	Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC), University of Sydney
2013	La Trobe Asia
2013	South Asia Research Institute, ANU
2014	China Research Centre, UTS
2014	Asia Institute Tasmania, University of Tasmania
2014	Australia China Relations Institute, UTS
2015	Myanmar Research Centre, ANU
2015	Southeast Asia Law & Policy Forum, UNSW Law

2016	China Studies Research Centre, La Trobe University
2016	ANU Malaysia Institute
2016	Sydney Asia-Pacific Migration Program
2016	King Sejong Institute (KSI) in partnership with the UniSA Business School's Australian Centre for Asian Business
2017	ANU Indonesia Institute
2018	ANU Southeast Asia Institute
2018	Monash Herb Feith Indonesian Engagement Centre (replacing the foundation)
2018	Centre for Contemporary China Studies, the University of Melbourne
2019	Sydney Vietnam Initiative, the University of Sydney
2019	Myanmar Research Network, the University of Melbourne
2020	Korean Studies Research Hub, funded by the Academy of Korean Studies, South Korea (soon to be known as the Australia Korea Centre at the University of Melbourne)

Confucius Institutes

2005	Confucius Institute, University of Western Australia
2007	Confucius Institute, Adelaide University
2007	Confucius Institute, University of Melbourne and Nanjing University
2008	Confucius Institute, University of Sydney
2008	Confucius Institute, Queensland University of Technology
2008	Confucius Institute, RMIT
2009	Confucius Institute, UNSW
2010	Confucius Institute, University of Queensland
2011	Confucius Institute, University of Newcastle
2011	Confucius Institute, La Trobe University
2011	Tourism Confucius Institute, Griffith University and the China University of Mining and Technology
2012	Confucius Institute, Charles Darwin University

3. Sample of Postgraduate Dual Degree Programs offered by Australian Universities in Partnership with an Asian University

Australian University	Overseas University	Type of Dual Degree
Australian National University	Ritsumeikan University, Japan	Bachelor of Asia Pacific Affairs (ANU) / Bachelor of Global Liberal Arts (RU)
	Beijing Institute of Technology	Dual PhD
	National University of Singapore	Joint PhD in Physics
	Peking University	Dual-Award PhD
	University of Chinese Academy of Sciences	Dual PhD
	University of Malaya	Dual PhD
Flinders University	Mahidol University, Thailand	Joint PhD in Pharmacy
Griffith University	Chinese Academy of Sciences	Dual degree PhD
James Cook University	China University of Geosciences, Peking University and Hefei University of Technology	Joint PhD
Macquarie University	China University of Mining and Technology	Joint PhD
	Fundan University	Joint PhD
University of Melbourne	Indian Institute of Technology Madras	Joint PhD
	Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur	Joint PhD
	Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur	Joint PhD
	UI and UNHAS	Co-taught LLM program in Public Policy and Management
	Gajah Mada University	Co-taught LLM program in Social Policy
	Gajah Mada University	Co-taught LLM program in Public Policy and Development Studies
	Chinese University of Hong Kong	Melbourne Juris Doctor / CUHK Masters of Laws in Chinese Business Law
	National University of Singapore	Melbourne Juris Doctor / NUS Master of Laws

Monash University	Indian Institute of Technology Bombay	Doctor of Philosophy (IITB-Monash), Faculty of Engineering; Doctor of Philosophy (IITB-Monash), Faculty of Science
Newcastle University	Universiti Putra Malaysia	Joint PhD
	Bina Nusantara University (BINUS), Jakarta	Joint PhD
RMIT University	Guangdong Provincial Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences	Joint PhD
	Indian Institute for Chemical Technologies	Joint PhD
	Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology	Joint PhD
University of Sydney	Fundan University	Master of Economics (USYD) / Master of World Economy (Globalisation and Chinese Economy) (Fundan)
University of Wollongong	Nagoya Institute of Technology	Joint Degree Doctoral Program in Informatics

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAS	Association of Asian Studies (U.S.)
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACC	Australia-China Council
AEF	Asia Education Foundation
AII	Australia Indonesia Institute (Monash)
AII	Australia India Institute (Melbourne)
AIC	Australia-India Council
AKF	Australia Korea Foundation
AMI	Australian Malaysia Institute
AMSEAS	Association of Mainland Southeast Asia Scholars
ANU	Australian National University
ASAA	Asian Studies Association of Australia
ATI	Australia Thailand Institute
CSAA	Chinese Studies Association of Australia
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
HASS	Humanities and Social Sciences
JSAA	Japanese Studies Association of Australia
KSAA	Korean Studies Association of Australasia
MASSA	Malaysian and Singaporean Studies Association
NALSAS	National Asian Language/Studies in Australian Schools
NALSSP	National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SASAA	South Asian Studies Association of Australia
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UniSA	University of South Australia
UQ	University of Queensland

List of Case Studies

List of Tables

List of Figures

Notes

1 Mayfield 2017.
2 For an example of how the Diversity Council of Australia defines and measures Asia capability in the context of business, see its Asia Capability Quiz that has seven indicators: cultural intelligence, Asian cultural working knowledge, Asian cultural experience, Asian language proficiency, Asian social capital, Asian people management lens, and Multicultural identity. Diversity Council of Australia nd.
3 Jacobs 1953, 82. See also Klarberg 1997.
4 Louie 2003, 52.
5 Auchmuty Report 1970.
6 FitzGerald 1980, 6.
7 FitzGerald 1980.
8 Ingleson 1989.
9 Fitzgerald et al. 2002.
10 McLaren 2011.
11 Hawke 1988.
12 See Henderson 2007.
13 Prince 2022a.
14 See for example Keating 1992.
15 Wyatt et al. 2002.
16 Asian Law Centre 2008, 4.
17 Capling 2008, 610.

18 Wesley 2007.
19 Capling 2008, 611.
20 Conley Tyler and Liu 2020.
21 For the Declaration, see http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf
22 Over the following decade, the AEF and educators resisted efforts by federal education ministers to downgrade the emphasis on Asia in the curriculum and replace it with a focus on Western civilization and values. For the current version of the curriculum, see: https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/teacher-resources/understand-this-cross-curriculum-priority/asia-and-australias-engagement-with-asia
23 Australian Government 2012.
24 Commonwealth of Australia 2013, 7.
25 Commonwealth of Australia 2013, 25.
26 On the origins of the term, see for example Kuo 2018.
27 Australian Aid Tracker, at: https://devpolicy.org/aidtracker/trends/. Accessed 14 March 2022.
28 Howes 2020.
29 Prince 2022a; for more, see Chapter 6.
30 Prince 2022a.
31 Business Council of Australia and the Asia Society 2021, 1.
32 Business Council of Australia and the Asia Society 2021, 23. See also Asialink 2019.
33 For example, Asialink 2019.
34 Commonwealth of Australia 2016, 69.
35 Commonwealth of Australia 2016, 153.
36 Australian Government 2017, 40.
37 Australian Government 2017, 44.
38 Australian Government 2017.
39 Australian Government 2018, 9.
40 Australian Government 2018, 3.
41 Varghese 2019.
42 See, eg, Tasmanian Government 2013; Government of Western Australia 2019; New South Wales Government 2014a; New South Wales Government 2014b; Victorian Government 2016.
43 Tasmanian Government 2013.
44 Tasmanian Government 2013, 3.
45 Tasmanian Government 2013, 5.
46 Tasmanian Government 2013, 7.
47 Tasmanian Government 2013, 35.
48 Victorian Government 2016, 9.
49 Victorian Government 2016, 22.
50 Victorian Government 2018, 7.
51 Victorian Government 2018, 15–16.
52 Victorian Government 2018, 20.
53 Asia Society 2018.
54 ABC News 2021.
55 New South Wales Government 2014a; New South Wales Government 2014b; New South Wales Government 2015a; New South Wales Government 2015b; New South Wales Government 2018.
56 New South Wales Government 2019–2020.

57 Queensland Government 2018.

58 South Australian Government 2014a.

59 Northern Territory Government 2018; South Australian Government 2019; Queensland Government 2016.

60 Australian Capital Territory Government 2016a.

61 Australian Capital Territory Government 2016a, 38.

62 In fact, Western Australia has a significant history of supporting study in Asia, specifically Japan. The annual Japanese Studies Scholarships (two are offered annually) are generously funded by the WA government and have been provided for over 40 years. They have produced a strong cohort of Japan expertise and language ability.

63 Lo Bianco 2019; see also Lo Bianco 2009.

64 Elfving-Hwang, Mendez and Monden 2021.

65 Australian Government 2012, 170.

66 Rudd 1994.

67 Henderson 2007 provides a helpful summary of NALSAS.

68 Prince 2020a.

69 Wyatt et al. 2002, p. 2, vi.

70 See for example, Asia Education Foundation 2010.

71 Harrington 2012.

72 Asia Education Foundation 2014, 12.

73 Data are available at the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority: https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/year-12-subject-enrolments#view1

74 Simpson 2019.

75 Fukui 2019.

76 Data provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills, and Employment, July 2022. The Department does not release data on individual languages. See also Prince 2020a, 2022a.

77 We exclude Northwest and African languages (which in the Australian context mainly means Arabic) from our count of Asian languages, which instead consist of Southeast, South, and East Asian languages.

78 Asia Education Foundation 2014, 3.

79 Numbers calculated from the following portal: https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/year-12-subject-enrolments

80 Sources: For 1988 data, the Ingelson Report 1989; for 1997 and 2001 data: Fitzgerald et al 2002, table 3.1; data for 2019 is from our own survey of university websites and communications with language teachers and coordinators; data from 2021 is from https://ulpa.edu.au/ (University lan¬guages portal Australia

81 Bolton 2020.

82 Universities Australia 2021.

83 Innovative Research Universities 2013, 14 (italics in original).

84 We began the collection process but ran into difficulty when some universities refused to release student enrolment data, citing confidentiality concerns.

85 According to figures compiled by Ruth Barraclough and the Korean Studies Association of Australia, a total of 5,423 students were enrolled in Korean language programs in 2019 (Barraclough 2020).

86 Elfving-Hwang 2019, 1; see also Barraclough 2020, Elfving-Hwang 2021.

87 Suter 2020.

88 See also Elfving-Hwang 2021 on Korean Studies.

89 Gil 2019.

90 In 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense changed its rules and will not fund a university if it hosts a Confucius Institute. Many Australian universities are recipients of such funding. There is a two-year grace period but by 2023, this will potentially force Australian universities to choose between this funding and Confucius Institutes (The Australian 2021).

91 Barraclough 2020. A case study of Korean language education in Western Australia demonstrates that the growth in this area has been drive "by intrinsically motivated learners, but also by the synergic collaboration of elements such as local educational policies, nation-wide language policies, institutional long-term vision and commitment, inter-governmental support, and commercial interests. Fraschini, Elfving-Hwang and Tao 2022.

92 See for example Nakane and Hayes 2021.

93 Source: Department of Education, Skills, and Training 2022.

94 McLaren 2020.

95 Suter 2020.

96 McLaren 2020.

97 Hayes et al. 2021.

98 Suter 2020.

99 Elfving-Hwang 2019, 3.

100 The University of Queensland offers introductory courses in Thai, Tetum and Vietnamese for "everyday situations", but not as part of its standard academic offerings. Instead, it does this via a UQ affiliated language centre which offers short-term courses and provides translation services to the general public. Their teachers are employed on an on-demand base: https://iml.uq.edu.au/learn-language

101 Fitzgerald et al. 2002, p. 30.

102 Source: Hill 2019.

103 BBBIQ 2021, 11.

104 Crouch 2019b; Crouch 2021; Prince 2022b.

105 We thank then Pro Vice-Chancellor International Laurie Pearcey's office for these figures provided in 2019.

106 It should be noted, however, that where it is the lecturer, rather than students, who move between campuses, some of these problems can be avoided.

107 Connors 2020; Greenlees 2020.

108 On the case for Asia literacy in business, see for example Business Council of Australia and The Asia Society 2021; Asialink Business 2019.

109 This goal was articulated in Innovative Research Universities 2013.

110 Innovative Research Universities 2013.

111 For one early example, see FitzGerald 1978.

112 Fitzgerald et al. 2002, 16.

113 Jayasuriya 2020.

114 Elson 1999.

115 Fitzgerald et al. 2002, 16.

116 Jory 2020.

117 We acknowledge that the ANU model is a special case, as is the Melbourne model.

118 Using the list at https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/australian-education/universities-higher-education/list-of-australian-universities

119 Fitzgerald et al. 2002, 15.

120 Fitzgerald et al. 2002, p. 17.

121 However, a caveat is that Melbourne University is only one of two universities in Australia to switch to an American model, with undergraduate breadth single degrees that encourage the study of subjects outside of a student's core discipline (such as a language for a science student), followed by postgraduate degrees in fields such as medicine and law.

122 With thanks to Associate Professor Anthony Langlois for information provided in this paragraph.

123 Crouch 2020; Crouch forthcoming.

124 Barr 2020.

125 Davies and Canfield 2020.

126 See generally, Oishi 2017.

127 Khoo and Chakraborty 2021.

128 In addition to these centres, between 2005 and 2012, there were 12 Confucius Institutes established at Australian universities. We have excluded these from our data given their different purpose and function.

129 Crouch forthcoming, with reference to law.

130 Suter 2020.

131 Barraclough 2020.

132 American Council of Learned Societies 2021.

133 This trend contrasts with that in the United Kingdom, where there has been an overall increase in the number of universities offering Chinese studies related programs: British Association for Chinese Studies 2021.

134 Robin Jeffrey n.d.

135 Chako 2020.

136 Jeffrey and Nelson 2021.

137 The decline of social sciences and humanities in Australia has been pronounced, and there are many reports that have documented this decline and advocated for HASS disciplines. See for example Mackie, Johnson & Morris-Suzuki 2015; AAH 2014; Deloitte 2018.

138 Barr 2020.

139 From time to time, the ARC has also supported Asia research through special projects. For example, in 2004, the Asia-Pacific Futures Research Network (2004–2009) was established as a result of a successful Australian Research Council special research initiative.

140 Most of the pre-2019 data come from the following files provided on the ARC website: 1) arc_ncgp_field_of_research_all_projects_june_2019_0.xlsx; 2) arc_ncgp_trends_web_update_feb2019.xlsx. For post-2019 data, we used: https://rms.arc.gov.au/ to identify new projects, and ncgp_projects_dataset_oct2020.xlsx which de-identifies project data. To double check projects and attain additional information where it was missing, we used: https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/NCGP/Web/Grant/Grants

141 See https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data

142 In 2021, the government shifted $30m from the Discovery budget to the Linkage budget. This transfer represents a shift in emphasis, with the government seeking to encourage partnerships with external stakeholders, especially from the private sector.

143 Norton 2020.

144 Human Rights Watch 2019; 2021.

145 Macintyre 2005.

146 Piccini and Moses 2015.

147 Hurst 2021.

148 Hurst 2021.

149 Crotty and Sendziuk 2018.

150 This is based on data collected by the Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD), September 2019. This was a total head count of academics, and includes those who work part or full time.

151 Hundt 2020.

152 UNESCO 2022.

153 One recent media report summarising such criticisms is Mannix 2022.

154 In 2017, Australia was ranked 20th in the OECD in spending on research and development as a proportion of GDP: https://data.oecd.org/rd/gross-domestic-spending-on-r-d.htm

155 Joshi et al. 2021; ADB 2011.

156 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2020, 11–14.

157 https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/AUS

158 Baty 2021; https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2022/world-ranking

159 Thanks to Chris Freeman of Taylor and Francis for providing these data.

160 See also a series of reports published by the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA): ACOLA 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014f, 2014g.

161 Olsen 2008.

162 Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021.

163 Australian Government 2017, 111–112.

164 Tran et al. 2021.

165 Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021.

166 Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021.

167 Prince, 2020b.

168 Tran et al. 2021.

169 Tran et al. 2021, 4.

170 Tran et al. 2021, 5.

171 Prince 2020b.

172 Prince 2020b.

173 Australian Government 2019.

174 Australian Government 2019.

175 See for example DFAT 2019.

176 https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings/methodology

177 For other studies on the implications of Asia's rise for universities, see Innovative Research Universities 2013; ACOLA 2014c, 2014f, 2014g.

178 Innovative Research Universities 2013.

179 AAS 2003.

180 McKay 1988, 3.

181 Fitzgerald et al. 2002.

182 There were 76 responses to the survey, which was roughly one-sixth of the membership at the time of the survey.

183 A list of past councillors can be found on the ASAA website: https://asaa.asn.au/about/organisation/

184 Hundt 2022.

185 See Drew 2022.

186 In 2015, the ASAA website moved to its current hosting site. We acknowledge the work of Elisabeth Kramer and Elly Kent in overseeing the upgrade of the website in 2021: https://asaa.asn.au/ . Thanks also to Elly Kent for providing the information for this paragraph.

187 Aspinall 2020.

188 NLA 2020, 6.

189 Pulungan 2022.

190 On the Reid Prize, see https://asaa.asn.au/grants-awards/the-reid-prize/

191 Pulungan 2022.

192 See Crouch 2019a.

193 See conference website: https://www.international.unsw.edu.au/women-in-asia-conference-2019; and https://wiaconference.com/

194 See SASSA website: https://www.southasianstudies.org.au/

195 See JSAA website: https://www.jsaa.org.au/about

196 Fitzgerald et al. 2002.

197 See conference website: https://www.jsaa.org.au/coming-events/q8q2wibsnbd9diwfyprbx66cb8he2n; https://languages-cultures.uq.edu.au/event/session/5776

198 Louie 2003, 53. In 1991, CSAA became an incorporated association: see https://www.csaa.org.au/about-the-association/

199 Louie 2003, 51.

200 For KSAA, see https://koreanstudiesaa.wordpress.com/about/

201 See https://koreanstudiesaa.wordpress.com/2022/03/15/epal/

202 Ingleson 1989. Unlike SASSA, CSAA and JSAA, it appears these were not an incorporated association.

203 See generally https://tlstudies.org/

204 For TLSA, see https://tlstudies.org/events/

205 For AMSEAS, see https://www.amseas.net/

206 From 2007–2018, this Centre was known as the National Centre for Excellence in Islamic Studies.

207 This centre was established in 1993 by the Australian Government and run by Monash and UNSW from 1993–1997, then run by Monash alone 1997–2009, then combined with the Melbourne APEC Finance Centre and in 2009 transferred to RMIT: https://archive.is/0wZnA