

## **SUBMISSION OF EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA, CANBERRA**

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### ***Strengthening Indonesian Language Education in Australia: A Shared Commitment for Regional Partnership and Mutual Understanding***

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia would like to express its sincere appreciation for the opportunity to share perspectives on the current state and future of Indonesian language education in Australia. As the official representative of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, the Embassy welcomes this important dialogue and recognises the vital role that language and cultural education play in strengthening the long-standing partnership between Indonesia and Australia.

The Embassy values Australia's commitment to advancing Asia literacy and regional engagement, and it stands ready to collaborate further in supporting initiatives that ensure Indonesian language education remains a key pillar of mutual understanding, educational cooperation, and people-to-people connections between our two nations.

#### **A. Introduction**

Language plays a vital role in strengthening collaboration between Australia and Indonesia. The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia is actively engaging the Australian community through Indonesian language and cultural programs. With a population of more than 280 million people, Indonesia is Australia's nearest large neighbour, a G20 economy, and a key strategic partner in trade, security, education, and cultural exchange. Both countries enjoy a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) that encompasses cooperation in trade, investment, defence, research, and education.

Indonesian language competence is therefore essential to strengthen people-to-people connections and promote long-term mutual understanding. We believe it supports diplomatic, economic, and social engagement while fostering inclusive communities across Australia, where the Indonesian diaspora continues to contribute actively. However, while the strategic partnership between the two countries continues to grow, the human capital needed to sustain it, students, teachers, and professionals proficient in Indonesian has been steadily declining. This creates an imbalance between institutional collaboration and language capability. We put forward several reasons why Indonesian language education is vital for Australia:

1. **Economic Engagement:** Indonesia is projected to become the world's 7th-largest economy by 2030. The Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA) opens new trade and investment opportunities that require professionals fluent in Indonesian.
2. **Security and Diplomacy:** Both nations cooperate closely on regional security, counter-terrorism, and maritime issues, where language capability is crucial for nuanced communication and mutual trust.

3. **Research and Education:** Joint initiatives such as KONEKSI (Knowledge Partnership Platform) and the New Colombo Plan depend on bilingual researchers and students to deepen academic collaboration.
4. **People-to-People Ties:** The Indonesian diaspora across Australia plays a vital role in community life, requiring cultural and linguistic understanding to strengthen social cohesion.

Despite this strategic importance, Indonesian language programs in Australia are in decline. School enrolments have dropped by more than 50 per cent since the early 2000s, and several universities, including the University of Tasmania and the Australian Defence Force Academy (UNSW Canberra), have recently closed or suspended their Indonesian language offerings for next year.

This submission seeks to address this gap by presenting evidence, current programs, challenges, and recommendations to strengthen Indonesian language education in Australia. For our mutual benefit, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia has implemented a range of initiatives, including Indonesia Goes to Schools (IGTS), the Indonesian Language Teaching Assistant (ILTA) program, the Indonesian Film Festival, Community Language Programs (Rumah Bahasa and Taman Bahasa), the Australian Congress for Indonesian Language, and various stakeholder engagement activities.

While these initiatives have had a meaningful impact, they remain insufficient to reverse the downward trend. The Embassy therefore calls for greater support and collaboration from the Australian Government, universities, schools, and communities to revitalise Indonesian language education and reinforce Australia's Asia capability for the future. We humbly offer a submission addressing the questions raised by the terms of reference of the inquiry.

## **B. The Current Situation**

We note several key challenges facing Indonesian language education in Australia.

### **1. Declining School Enrolments**

In the 1990s, Indonesian stood as one of the fastest-growing languages in Australian schools, symbolising the close and dynamic ties between Indonesia and Australia. It represented more than just a language; it was a bridge of understanding, friendship, and regional engagement. The latest data indicate that around 190,000 students across Australia are currently studying Indonesian, with the majority enrolled in primary schools, approximately 123,500 in Years F–6, 64,300 in Years 7–10, and 3,700 in Years 11–12. This highlights a particularly strong foundation for Indonesian language learning at the primary level (ACARA). However, most students who begin Indonesian in primary school do not continue with the language into secondary education, often due to limited program availability or a decision to pursue another language. At the same time, secondary school serves as a new entry point for many learners who are engaging with Indonesian for the first time. Across Australia, approximately 400 schools in secondary schools currently offer Indonesian language programs. The highest concentration is in Victoria, with around 250 schools, both public and private, providing Indonesian as part of their curriculum. In

South Australia, 39 schools continue to teach Indonesian, including through the Open Access College. Queensland maintains about 38 schools, while New South Wales has 18 schools offering Indonesian, mostly clustered around Sydney. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has the lowest number, with only 11 schools currently running Indonesian language programs.

These numbers highlight the uneven distribution and limited growth of Indonesian language education across states and territories. While Victoria remains the strongest base for Indonesian learning, other regions show signs of fragility, with declining enrolments and program closures threatening long-term sustainability. Without stronger policy support, coordinated funding, and teacher development programs, the national capacity for Indonesian language education will continue to diminish, weakening one of Australia's most vital cultural and strategic bridges with Indonesia.

This downward trend is deeply concerning, as it not only limits opportunities for Australian students to engage meaningfully with one of their nearest neighbours, but also weakens the foundation of mutual understanding that underpins long-term bilateral cooperation. Revitalising Indonesian language education is therefore essential, not only as an academic pursuit but as an investment in Australia's future relationship with Indonesia and the broader region.

The once-promising growth of Indonesian in Australia has seen a worrying decline. A 2024 article reports that the number of Australian high-school students studying Indonesian has fallen by about 80% since 2002 (Jack Allen, University of Melbourne, 2015). According to a 2023 UWA news item: Australia's 15-year-olds show declining foreign-language learning; the article states that campaigns to encourage Indonesian language learning "missed the mark" (Lecturers in Indonesian Studies and Linguistics in UWA and Monash University). A 2025 commentary noted that: in Victoria, the number of students enrolled in Year 12 Indonesian fell from "more than 1,000" around 2002 to 387 in 2022; and in NSW from "more than 300" to 90 in 2022 (Tedjadinata, 2025). By 2023, fewer than 0.7% of Year 12 students were studying Indonesian, according to data from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The decline appears more pronounced at upper secondary (Year 12) than necessarily in primary or early secondary. For example, in Victoria only ~3.3 % of Year 8 Indonesian students in 2016 continued to Year 12 by 2020 (AIIA, 2024). In several states, Indonesian programs have even been discontinued due to low enrolments.

## **2. University Closures**

The decline is also evident at the tertiary level. The number of Australian universities offering Indonesian dropped from 22 in 1992 to 12 in 2022 (Walden & Kristanto, 2022). This sharp reduction represents not only a contraction of academic opportunities but also a narrowing of pathways for students to engage deeply with Indonesia's culture, society, and strategic importance in the region.

The recent announcement by the University of Tasmania to close its Indonesian program in 2025 marks a major setback, particularly given the university's historical commitment

to regional engagement and its leadership in promoting Asia literacy (Wallen, 2025). Similarly, the closure of the Indonesian language program at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), University of New South Wales, is deeply concerning, as it undermines Australia's long-standing investment in fostering linguistic and cultural understanding within its future defence and diplomatic leaders.

### **3. Comparison with Other Languages**

Over the past two decades, Australia has witnessed a steady and worrying decline in the teaching and learning of the Indonesian language at both school and university levels. While languages such as Japanese and Mandarin have maintained, or even increased, their enrolments, Indonesian has experienced significant losses across all sectors.

In the mid-1990s, Indonesian was among the fastest-growing languages in Australian schools, supported by the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) program. However, following the end of this national policy in 2002, enrolments have dropped by almost 80 per cent.

This pattern reveals a growing imbalance: Australia continues to invest in developing broader "Asia literacy," but the decline of Indonesian language programs keeps going. Therefore, we keep efforts to engage Australia to strengthen its regional engagement and maintain meaningful ties with Indonesia. The revitalisation of Indonesian language education must become a national priority. This calls for renewed collaboration between governments, universities, and communities to reimagine Indonesian language learning as part of Australia's regional collaboration.

## **C. Challenges And Barriers**

There are several challenges and barriers in engaging Australian students with the Indonesian Language:

### **1. Continuity Gaps and University Closures**

The closure of Indonesian language programs at Australian schools and universities has created continuity gaps across the education system. These closures weaken learner pathways for students and reduce opportunities for sustained, advanced study of the Indonesian language. As a result, only a limited number of students are able to continue studying Indonesian through to Year 12 and beyond.

Many students who begin learning Indonesian in primary school find themselves unable to continue in secondary and then tertiary education because programs are discontinued or unavailable in their local areas. This discontinuity discourages long-term language commitment and erodes the pipeline of qualified learners and future teachers. Without consistent pathways from school to university, we find difficulties in sustaining Indonesian across all education levels.

## **2. Teacher Shortage and Recruitment Barriers**

Besides the nationwide shortage of qualified teachers in Australia, many schools face additional challenges in recruiting Indonesian language teachers. These difficulties are not only due to limited training pathways but also because of stringent English-language proficiency requirements. Under current regulations, teacher registration in Australia generally requires an IELTS Overall Band Score of 7.5, with no less than 7.0 in Reading and Writing and 8.0 in Listening and Speaking.

While these standards aim to ensure classroom effectiveness, they often discourage capable Indonesian graduates and experienced educators from applying. Many potential teachers who possess strong pedagogical and linguistic skills struggle to meet these language test thresholds, even when they have already completed degrees or teacher training in English-speaking contexts. Consequently, the pool of qualified candidates available to support Indonesian language programs remains very limited.

To address this issue, we would like to encourage Australia to consider more flexible recognition mechanisms, including targeted language-teaching scholarships, bridge programs, and mutual recognition agreements with Indonesian teacher education institutions. Such measures would strengthen the pipeline of qualified Indonesian language teachers, ensuring program continuity and expanded access to Indonesian across schools and regions.

## **3. Perceptions of Value and Limited Opportunities**

Despite Indonesia's geographic proximity and strategic importance to Australia, the Indonesian language is often perceived as less "valuable" than other Asian languages such as Mandarin or Japanese. This perception partly stems from the association of Mandarin with economic opportunity and Japanese with technological advancement and cultural prestige. In contrast, Indonesian is frequently viewed as offering fewer career or academic pathways, both within Australia and internationally. This is an irony. China and Japan are aging societies, while Indonesia still benefits from demographic bonus. Australia should see the abundant young population in Indonesia as growing opportunity for fruitful bilateral partnership.

Such misconceptions have a profound impact on student motivation and institutional support. Although Indonesia is one of Australia's closest and most dynamic neighbours—with deep political, economic, and cultural ties, its language continues to receive limited recognition and investment within national education policy.

In reality, Indonesian language proficiency opens valuable pathways for employment and collaboration in sectors such as trade, tourism, education, research, international development, and diplomacy. With Indonesia emerging as one of the fastest-growing economies in the Indo-Pacific, professionals who are culturally aware and linguistically competent in Indonesian are increasingly sought after to support business expansion, regional cooperation, and policy engagement. Consider the following development:

- a. It should be noted, from 2020 to 2024 the total trade of Australia and Indonesia has jumped from AUD 13.3 billion to AUD 37.3 billion (almost 300 percent increased).
- b. Realisation of Australia's investment in Indonesia, by the same period, has increased 110 per cent, while Indonesia's investment in Australia increased by 20 per cent.

Nonetheless, all of these numbers and percentages only represent a small fraction of respective Indonesia's and Australia's trade with the world. This means the total trade and investments are still far from expectations. Increasing Indonesian language capability will be helpful for Australian companies to fully tap the benefit of Indonesia's small and medium enterprises, which makes up the backbone of Indonesia's economy. Most of Indonesia's small and medium businesses have a low command of English.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia continues to implement a range of programs aimed at enhancing the image and visibility of Indonesian language learning in Australia. However, to truly transform public perception, there is a need for innovative and collaborative strategies that demonstrate the career relevance, regional importance, and cultural richness of Indonesian as a language of opportunity and connection.

#### **4. Funding and Policy Collaboration**

Sustaining Indonesian language programs in Australia requires not only adequate funding but also supportive and coherent education policies that recognise the language's strategic and cultural value. Over the years, we have heard of many schools and universities where budget constraints have limited their ability to maintain smaller language programs, including Indonesian. Without consistent policy frameworks and financial support, Indonesian programs are often among the first to be reduced when funding pressures arise.

Nevertheless, this situation also presents an opportunity for stronger policy collaboration between Indonesia and Australia. The Government of Indonesia, through its Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, remains committed to strengthening bilateral cooperation in language education. With appropriate joint policy initiatives and funding mechanisms, Indonesia is ready to contribute through teacher exchanges, curriculum development, scholarship schemes, cultural programs, and resource-sharing platforms. By aligning national and bilateral policies, both countries can ensure that Indonesian language education receives the long-term support it deserves, reflecting a shared vision for mutual understanding, inclusive education, and stronger people-to-people connections across the region.

## **D. Programs Initiated and Supported By The Embassy of The Republic of Indonesia**

To support the committee in its work to plan for improved Asia capability we would like to outline our current initiatives. This should help to prevent duplication and ensure that we work cooperatively. We hope you find the following descriptions helpful.

### **1. Indonesia Goes to Schools (IGTS)**

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia actively promotes Indonesian language and culture through a range of outreach programs across Australia. One of the flagship initiatives, Indonesian Goes to School (IGTS), brings language lessons, cultural performances, and interactive sessions directly to schools. In 2024 alone, more than 40 schools participated in IGTS activities held in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and several regional areas.

In addition, the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra regularly welcomes school visits to its Cultural Centre, providing students with hands-on experiences in Indonesian arts, language, and traditions. Each year, approximately 10–15 schools, representing around 300 students, visit the Embassy to learn about Indonesia’s rich cultural heritage and to develop a deeper appreciation for its language.

These programs serve as a vital bridge for people-to-people connections, helping to nurture early interest and positive perceptions of Indonesia among young Australians while strengthening the foundation for long-term educational and cultural collaboration between the two nations.

### **2. Indonesian Language Teaching Assistant (ILTA) and ILLA Programs**

To address the shortage of qualified Indonesian language teachers in Australia, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia has implemented the Indonesian Language Teaching Assistant (ILTA) program. In 2025, the Embassy deployed 31 ILTAs to private schools in Canberra, Melbourne, and Adelaide, with plans to expand the program to other states in the coming years. The initiative is a collaborative effort supported by the Indonesian Embassy, Indonesian universities, and the Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (Language Development and Fostering Agency) under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia. These teaching assistants provide classroom support, share cultural context, and play a vital role in sustaining Indonesian language programs across schools.

The Embassy greatly appreciates the support of the Education Directorate in Canberra, which has partnered to place ILTAs in public schools within the ACT. It is hoped that similar partnerships can be established with education authorities in other states and territories.

We also note the important Australian Government initiative organised through Australia Awards Indonesia, the Indonesian Language Learning Ambassadors (ILLA) program. In 2025, there are 28 ILLA participants. This program engages university students who have studied Indonesian as “ambassadors” to promote the language in schools and local

communities. This initiative encourages peer-to-peer learning and strengthens the bridge between secondary and tertiary education. The ILLA program exemplifies the spirit of bilateral cooperation in fostering greater interest and appreciation for the Indonesian language and culture among young Australians.

### 3. Cultural and Educational Engagements

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia actively promotes Indonesian language and culture through a variety of cultural diplomacy programs that connect directly with Australian schools, universities, and communities.

- a. **Film Festivals:** Indonesian Film Festivals held annually in Canberra, Sydney, and Melbourne, and other states attract a wide and diverse audience, showcasing contemporary Indonesian cinema while also introducing Indonesian language learning resources to educators and students. These festivals serve as an engaging platform to promote linguistic and cultural appreciation through storytelling and visual art. In May 2025, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Canberra organised the Indonesian Film Festival, featuring eight Indonesian films that attracted an audience of more than 400 participants. The festival provided an engaging platform for Australians to experience Indonesian stories, language, and culture, fostering greater appreciation and cross-cultural understanding between the two nations.
- b. **Performing Arts:** Traditional performances such as Angklung orchestras, gamelan ensembles, and Kecak dance are featured in Embassy events and community collaborations. These cultural showcases are often integrated into classroom learning activities, allowing students to experience Indonesian arts firsthand, thereby strengthening their understanding of the language through music and performance.
- c. **Literature Night (Malam Sastra):** The Indonesian Embassy regularly organised gatherings devoted to discussing Indonesia's literature. Book authors are invited to lead a discussion either online or offline.
- d. **BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing) Training:** The Embassy also collaborates with Indonesian universities and the Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa to conduct BIPA training programs for Australian teachers. These programs enhance teachers' linguistic proficiency, cultural understanding, and pedagogical skills, ensuring the continued quality and authenticity of Indonesian language teaching in Australia.

Beyond these initiatives, the Embassy also seeks to understand the “pulling power” of culture in promoting the Indonesian language and identity, inspired by the global influence of K-pop and anime. While these cultural products have built massive international appeal through unified branding, Indonesia faces unique challenges due to its cultural diversity. However, this very diversity, spanning hundreds of ethnic traditions, languages, and artistic expressions, presents a powerful opportunity to create a more inclusive and multifaceted image of Indonesia that can inspire young Australians to engage more deeply with its language and culture.

#### 4. **Community Language and Informal Education Initiatives**

In 2025, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia continued to support the development of community-based Indonesian language learning through informal education initiatives known as Rumah Bahasa and Taman Bahasa in Canberra. These programs serve as inclusive learning spaces where members of the Indonesian and broader Australian community can engage with the Indonesian language and culture in a relaxed, community-oriented environment.

The initiative has also been implemented in several other states under different names, reflecting the growing interest of the Indonesian community and the strong collaboration between local Indonesian associations, volunteer teachers, and cultural groups. Rumah Bahasa and Taman Bahasa play an important role in strengthening people-to-people connections, supporting Indonesian diaspora families, and promoting lifelong learning of the Indonesian language beyond formal educational settings.

#### 5. **Case Study of The University of Tasmania: A Model for Sustaining Indonesian Language Programs**

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) provides an important case study for other universities across Australia that are considering the closure of their Indonesian language programs. Facing familiar challenges of declining enrolments and limited funding, UTAS was at risk of discontinuing its Indonesian studies—the only program of its kind in Tasmania.

Recognising the strategic and cultural importance of maintaining this program, the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia engaged in direct dialogue with UTAS leadership to advocate for its continuation. Through this diplomacy, the Indonesian Government expressed readiness to strengthen collaboration by sending more Indonesian students to study at UTAS, expanding academic partnerships, and integrating Indonesian language support for local schools and teacher training.

This partnership demonstrates that with strong institutional commitment, policy dialogue, and mutual government support, Indonesian language programs can be revitalised rather than closed. UTAS now stands as a model of resilience and collaboration, showing how joint efforts between universities and the Indonesian Government can sustain tertiary-level Indonesian studies and safeguard Australia's long-standing educational and cultural engagement with Indonesia.

#### 6. **Australian Congress for Indonesian Language**

The Australian Congress for Indonesian Language is an initiative launched for the first time by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, designed to bring together a wide range of stakeholders committed to advancing Indonesian language education in Australia. The inaugural Congress will be conducted on 6 December 2025 at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra.

This landmark event serves as a national platform for dialogue, collaboration, and policy discussion among educators, researchers, community leaders, government representatives, and cultural organisations from both Indonesia and Australia. The Congress aims to strengthen

coordination among institutions involved in promoting Bahasa Indonesia, share best practices, and explore innovative strategies to revitalise Indonesian language teaching across schools and universities.

It will also highlight successful models of collaboration, including teacher exchanges, community engagement programs, and cultural initiatives that connect language learning with real-world applications. By convening this Congress, the Embassy underscores the importance of collective action and shared responsibility in ensuring that the Indonesian language continues to play a central role in fostering mutual understanding, educational cooperation, and people-to-people connections between Indonesia and Australia.

#### 7. **Collaboration with Key Stakeholders**

The promotion and sustainability of Indonesian language and studies in Australia rely on active collaboration between governments, universities, and community organisations. The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia continues to strengthen partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including Balai Bahasa Indonesia (BBI), Balai Bahasa dan Budaya Indonesia (BBBI), the Australia-Indonesia Association (AIA), the Australia Indonesia Institute (AII), the Australia Indonesia Youth Association (AIYA), the National Australia Indonesia Language Awards (NAILA), the Indonesia-Australia Studies (ISA) network, the Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia Australia (PPIA), and ACICIS (the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies). We also support and collaborate with Indonesian language teacher associations across Australia, and others community stakeholders.

In addition to community and professional organisations, the Embassy also works closely with Australian universities that host Indonesian Studies programs, such as the University of Melbourne, ANU, Monash University, the University of Queensland, Western Sydney University, and other universities. These institutions play a crucial role in sustaining academic pathways for Indonesian language and cultural studies, supporting teacher education, research collaboration, and student exchanges.

Through these collaborations, the Embassy helps coordinate joint initiatives, including teacher training, student mobility, language competitions, and public outreach programs, that promote a deeper understanding of Indonesia among Australians. By connecting schools, universities, and communities, this network forms the backbone of a sustainable ecosystem for Indonesian language education and a stronger foundation for bilateral cooperation in the future.

## **E. Recommendations**

We would like to put forward several key recommendations to strengthen ongoing efforts and ensure long-term impact.

### **1. National Policy Support**

The Indonesian Government continues to express its strong commitment to supporting Indonesian language education in Australia through coordinated policies, programs, and partnerships. This includes collaboration with Australian federal and state governments to ensure Indonesian remains recognised as a priority Asian language within education systems. Through sustained policy dialogue, joint funding initiatives, and teacher development programs, the Indonesian Government hopes to see the priority status of Indonesian strengthen language learning pathways, promote cultural understanding, and reinforce the shared vision of closer Indonesia–Australia relations.

### **2. Strengthen School-to-University Pathways**

The Indonesian Government supports efforts to strengthen the continuity of Indonesian language learning from primary to tertiary education in Australia. This includes developing integrated curricula, expanding scholarship opportunities, and facilitating teacher exchange and professional development programs between Indonesian and Australian institutions. By creating clear pathways and linkages between schools and universities, students can continue their Indonesian language studies at higher levels, ensuring long-term engagement and deeper intercultural understanding. These initiatives also aim to encourage more Australian students to pursue Indonesian Studies at university, supported by joint academic programs and cultural immersion opportunities in Indonesia.

### **3. Improve Teacher Recruitment and Training**

Facilitate joint initiatives between the Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, Australian education authorities, and universities to train, certify, and retain qualified Indonesian language teachers. Collaborative programs may include teacher training exchanges, curriculum development workshops, and joint certification pathways to ensure high-quality and sustainable Indonesian language teaching across Australia. Strengthening teacher recruitment and professional development will help to address the current shortage of qualified educators but also build a stronger foundation for the long-term continuity of Indonesian language programs

### **4. Strengthen Institutional Partnerships**

Promote stronger collaboration between Indonesian and Australian universities through joint research initiatives, academic exchanges, and bilingual or dual-degree programs that enhance Indonesian Studies and teacher education. These collaborations should build on successful frameworks such as the Australia–Indonesia Teacher Education Cooperation (AITEC), which connects universities, teacher-training institutions, and education ministries from both countries to strengthen teacher quality, professional development, and intercultural learning.

Through partnerships like AITEC, universities can develop joint curricula, practicum exchanges, and collaborative research on innovative teaching models, language pedagogy, and educational policy. Such initiatives not only enhance academic excellence but also serve as an effective form of education diplomacy, ensuring that Indonesian language and cultural studies remain integral to the shared vision of advancing educational cooperation between Indonesia and Australia.

#### **5. Expand Community Engagement**

Expand the network of Rumah Bahasa and Taman Bahasa as inclusive and informal learning spaces that promote the Indonesian language and culture among local communities. These initiatives serve as effective platforms for community-driven language promotion, offering opportunities for Indonesian diaspora families, students, and the wider Australian public to engage with Indonesian through creative, interactive, and culturally rich activities.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, in collaboration with local Indonesian associations, teachers, and cultural organisations, is encouraging similar initiatives in other states and territories. Support from both Indonesia and Australia for community-based programs such as Rumah Bahasa and Taman Bahasa will not only enhance accessibility to Indonesian language learning but also foster people-to-people connections, intercultural understanding, and a shared sense of belonging between Indonesian and Australian communities.

#### **6. Cultural Diplomacy**

Continue to utilise film, performing arts, and digital culture as powerful instruments to enhance the visibility, relevance, and attractiveness of Indonesian language and culture among young Australians. Cultural expressions such as Indonesian Film Festivals, Angklung and Gamelan performances, and Kecak dance showcases not only celebrate Indonesia's artistic diversity but also provide meaningful entry points for language learning and intercultural appreciation.

Expanding collaborations between the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesian creative industries, and Australian educational and cultural institutions will help bring these experiences to a wider audience. Digital platforms and social media should also be leveraged to showcase Indonesia's creativity and connect with the interests of younger generations, similar to the global appeal of K-Pop and anime. Through these creative and strategic cultural initiatives, Indonesia can strengthen its soft diplomacy and inspire greater enthusiasm for learning the Indonesian language across Australia.

#### **7. Sustainable Funding Mechanisms**

We understand competing priorities for funds in education and advocate for joint funding and sponsorship models that unite the Indonesian and Australian governments, the private sector, and educational foundations to ensure the long-term sustainability of Indonesian language and cultural programs. Collaborative funding should prioritise support for scholarships, teacher recruitment, cultural and educational exchanges, and teaching positions in schools and universities.

In addition, both governments are encouraged to develop incentive schemes for schools and universities that continue to offer or expand Indonesian language programs. Such incentives, whether through grants, awards, or institutional partnerships, would acknowledge their commitment to promoting regional understanding and cultural exchange.

Establishing sustainable and inclusive funding mechanisms, combined with performance-based incentives, will help preserve and strengthen the presence of Indonesian language education across Australia. This approach ensures that teaching institutions are both recognised and supported for their essential role in building the future of Indonesia-Australia educational and cultural cooperation.

These recommendations aim to foster a comprehensive and collaborative framework that connects schools, universities, communities, and policymakers, ensuring that the Indonesian language remains a vibrant bridge of understanding between Indonesia and Australia.

Australia's aspiration to build genuine and sustainable engagement with Asia cannot be realised without strong Indonesian language capability. The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia warmly encourages the Australian Parliament and all relevant stakeholders to recognise the importance and urgency of revitalising Indonesian language education as part of Australia's long-term regional strategy.

The Embassy stands ready to collaborate closely with the Australian Government, universities, schools, and communities to strengthen educational and cultural partnerships. Together, we can ensure that the Indonesian language remains a vibrant and integral part of Australia's educational and strategic landscape, fostering mutual understanding, friendship, and cooperation between our two nations.