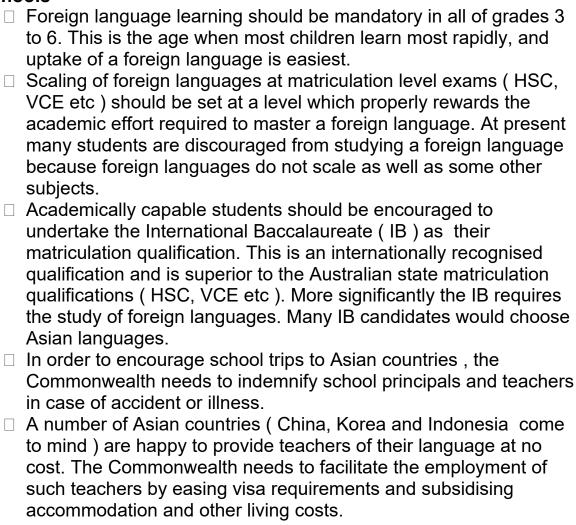
## To: Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

## Introduction

Language is the major key to building Asia capability. While the decline in the study of Asian languages is a subset of the general decline in foreign language learning at all levels of the education system — primary, secondary and tertiary, nevertheless, the negative impact of this general decline is most pronounced with regard to Asian languages, and Indonesian in particular. That said, the solution to the decline in Asian language learning may lie in the general promotion of all foreign languages of relevance to Australia. Private industry will not drive the necessary change. Nor will the States. The Commonwealth of Australia is responsible. After all, this is a matter of national importance.

## **Schools**



	The Commonwealth should fund Australian teachers of Asian languages directly bypassing the State bureaucracies. Reinstate NALSAS type funding for study of Asian languages. It is recognised that the above measures will create a demand for teachers of Asian languages in Australia. Relevant Asian language departments at Australian universities need to be supported in order to produce these teachers.
Commonwealth Public Service	
	Foreign language ability must be a prerequisite for any graduates seeking employment in DFAT. Apparently, this is not the case at present.
	Other Commonwealth agencies with an international outlook (AFP, Immigration, Defence etc) should be required to maintain a large pool of employees with Asian language ability
	The ABC in particular should be required to maintain a pool of reporters with Asian language ability. The fact that the ABC sends to countries like China and Indonesia reporters who cannot speak or understand the languages of those countries is an absolute embarassment.
	The Commonwealth should encourage the study of foreign languages by its' employees by extending the payment of language allowances to any employee who is fluent in an Asian language. This should be independent of department or supervisor approval.

Michael Kramer

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