



Submission No 32

Review of Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

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Organisation: Personal Submission

Personal Submission

My names are Peter Mbago Wakholi. I am the Secretary of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP). I have also served as a chairperson of the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) in Perth (WA), an organisation involved with resettling refugee migrants in Western Australia. I am also actively involved in the arts both as a performer and Educator/Researcher. I migrated to Australia 18 years ago (1991) with my wife and three daughters from Africa. Since then I have been working as a high school teacher with the Education Department of Western Australia. I am also affiliated to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Murdoch University, Western Australia, where I am pursuing a PhD entitled 'African Cultural Memory Youth Arts Festival (ACMYAF)'. The PhD project is located amongst youth of African migrant descent in Western Australia. It is an Arts-Based project through which young people of African background were involved in arts based theatrical activities as a means of exploring issues relating to their cultural identities. My submission, to the committee, is partly motivated by my experience as an African parent; working with African communities through my project and my role as Secretary of AFSAAP. I have got two ideas that I wish to submit to the committee. The first one is based on the concept of an African Studies Program and the second one is about establishing an African Studies Research and Resource Centre (ASR & RC).

(I) African Studies Program: with the increased presence of African migrants in Australia there is need to have an innovative and well funded African studies program with a strong research component, preferably multidisciplinary in approach, including cultural,

sociological, anthropological, education, religion, history, politics and philosophy centred on the African migrant community in Australia/ New Zealand and the African Diaspora. Such an approach would entail African studies teaching and research approaches through a dedicated Research Centre/Faculty at a University. AFSAAP has the expertise that may provide a think tank for developing this concept. Such an initiative, of African Studies Program (ASP), would provide employment and intellectual resources about Africa and Africans that informs foreign policy and bilateral cooperation between Australia and African countries. Furthermore it would avail useful counter knowledge to media stereotypes and prejudices that are held about Africa and Africans.

(ii) Funding an African Studies Research and Resource Centre (ASR & RC)

AFSAAP is an organisation committed to research and teaching of African studies in Australia. Since its inception thirty one years ago (1978) it has organised conferences on an annual basis leading to a generation of knowledge through its journal publication, (The Australasian Review of African Studies, ARAS). AFSAAP has accomplished these tasks through voluntary services of its executive. Through research and academic teaching programs AFSAAP has the potential of playing a bigger role in Australia's bilateral initiatives with African countries. A funded fulltime staff and office location would enhance the activities of AFSAAP which in turn would compliment the government's policy objectives. Such activities of the centre would include cooperation and collaboration with African Universities in areas of mutual and strategic interest.

Furthermore the Research Centre as a coordinated activity of the AFSAAP would collaborate with Education

Departments/ Institutions and any other relevant agencies across the states to develop curriculum resources at primary, secondary and university level which would enhance the understanding of African histories, geography and culture. Such a resource centre would facilitate the renewal of African identities in Australia and inturn strengthen their biculturalness.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Mbago Wakholi

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References

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