

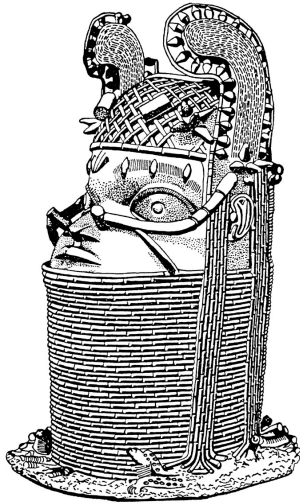


Submission No 60

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the
Countries of Africa**

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***AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA AND THE
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Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

Dr. John Carter
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

26th April, 2010

Dear Dr. Carter,

Thank you for your invitation to submit comments to the Inquiry regarding Australia's relationship with Africa.

AFSAAP was founded in 1978 and represents scholars of Africa within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Our membership derives from a multitude of disciplines both within academic institutions and the private sector involved in African issues. Our organisation has been led by academics and a Vice-Chancellor. The past three presidents have been academics. The foundation Vice-Chancellor of the ANU and eminent African scholar, Professor Anthony Low was AFSAAP's first President. Professor Deryck Schreuder, Vice-Chancellor of the University of West Australia and also an established African scholar was a later President and all Presidents have been African scholars in an Australian university. Current Executive members are of different ages, academic and cultural backgrounds, and various parts of Australia.

Our **core roles**, usually defined within AFSAAP's principal aims and objectives, are as follows:

1. To maintain a **network of Africanist scholars** in Australia and the Asia-Pacific area;

2. To **facilitate communication** between members through regular email contact and to provide the Australian community, including the media and government, with scholarly information regarding African issues-an expert guide of Africanists is available on the website, www.afsaap.org that is frequently used by media for up-to-date information about events in Africa. A published version is updated regularly, *The Directory of Africanists*, 6th edition;
3. To publish **The Australasian Review of African Studies** (editor, Dr. Tanya Lyons), a peer-reviewed journal; ARAS is a key instrument in the dissemination of Africa-centred research in Australia and Asia-Pacific regions; it is a peer-reviewed multidisciplinary publication representing the breadth of knowledge of our members and regularly accepting articles by both international and Australian researchers; ARAS comprises an international editorial board and encourages new scholars through an annual post-graduate essay competition;
4. To organise an **Annual Conference** held at different locations within Australia each year; conferences have been held for the past 32 years within Australia, are multi-disciplinary and well-attended by a cross-section of scholars, government representatives, private sector institutions, and community organisations;
5. To encourage **advocacy and cooperation** amongst interested parties including: correspondence with ministers; the inclusion of African-Australian community leaders in our conferences; conducting of research among African migrant communities and to feedback results to these communities, government and interested non-governmental organisations;
6. To promote the cause of **African-centred education** through advocacy for an Africa Studies Centre, increased university courses on Africa-related themes, and cooperative arrangements between Australian and African universities; to support Africans who study in Australia;
7. To maintain an **archive of Africanist scholarship** in Australia; AFSAAP has maintained an archive since its foundation in 1978, currently housed at School of International Studies, Flinders University; this collection contains documentation regarding Australia-African issues but proper archiving has been hampered because of lack of funds.

Our position with regard to Australia's new approach to Africa is as follows:

The AFSAAP membership is excited about the Australian government's increased interest in Africa because of our longstanding commitment to the scholarship of the continent. Through the diligence and tenacity of its members, the AFSAAP has maintained both Africa-themed research and Africa-related courses in Australian universities throughout the last 32 years.

Creation of an African Studies Centre:

AFSAAP members overwhelmingly support the creation of an **Africa Studies Centre** in an Australian university for the following reasons:

1. To foster a critical mass of scholars, in different disciplines, who would produce scholarly material on Africa, and who could cooperate to maximise outcomes of limited research funding;
2. To provide leadership within Australian African studies to ensure the production of both scholarly and relevant research; AFSAAP submits that the creation of a Chair in African Studies would be an important step in the development of this field in Australia;
3. To foster scholarly communication within Australia and internationally with regard to Australia-centred African studies; the AFSAAP is uniquely placed to aid in this endeavour through its established network of Africa experts and its publications, The Australasian Review of African Studies and a regular Newsletter (edited by Dr. David Lucas). In addition AFSAAP is working towards creation of innovative discipline-based research clusters to enhance research capacity-building in Australian universities in areas such as human resources, health, cultural issues, social and economic development, trade and investment, migration, and community development;
4. To promote African-themed courses in Australian universities; to promote Australia-Africa scholarly collaboration such as twinning with African universities, joint research, study tours, and exchange programs;
5. To foster research to assess the impact, costs and benefits of Australia's re-engagement with Africa.

This Centre could consist of a model whereby a central node is located in a university led by a Professor, whilst a number of spokes could be located virtually (or physically) in various parts of Australia. In this way, Africanist scholars resident outside of the major centres could participate as equals in various academic and administrative aspects of the Centre. Many of the newer educational technologies, including podcasts, could be deployed to foster greater inclusion of individuals and greater regional representation in an African Studies Centre.

Research funding:

The recent announcement by Foreign Minister Stephen Smith of AU\$8 million in new research funding is a wise and necessary move welcomed by scholars of Africa in Australia. However, considering the dearth of research on Africa in Australia, these funds would re-dress part of the need for research, but would need to be increased over time. In the short term, the AFSAAP urges the federal government to consider a fair distribution of these funds across disciplines that underpin Australia's foreign policy interests, e.g. humanities, economics, business, social sciences, public health, agriculture, sustainable land use and others. The allocation of "seed money" to emerging scholars and research groups who can then leverage pilot studies and initial publications into applications for established larger Australian funders (NHMRC, ARC, etc.) and international money is one suggested strategy. Another useful approach would be to target money toward multi-disciplinary research teams that would approach chosen research questions in a holistic fashion to better reflect circumstances in African countries where, for example, economies, kin relations, forms of power, and land issues may be crucially intertwined.

Development cooperation:

AFSAAP welcomes the increase in federal government development assistance to Africa in 2009-2010 by 40% to AU\$163.9 million. Similarly, we would like to

acknowledge the generosity of the Australian public in funding the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Africa. In 2008, almost one third of the AU\$280 million donated by the Australian public to Australian NGOs was spent on programs in Africa. At this particular historical moment it is clear that there is interest from both the public and the federal government in funding development to African countries, a fact that, AFSAAP agrees, will enhance Australia's profile overseas.

We acknowledge that a focus on targeting available monies toward the Millennium Development Goals adds Australian funding and personnel to existing international efforts. We would add that Australian international development comprises areas of excellence in water and sanitation, search and rescue, rural health, agriculture and others resulting from Australia's particular circumstances. These are niche areas that set Australia apart in a cluttered global development order.

There are many similarities between Africa and Australia in terms of climate and landscape, and associated vulnerabilities with regard to water and food production. Shifting disease ecologies related to climate change are another feature in common. The research infrastructure and expertise to manage these circumstances is one very strong offering that Australia can bring to progress toward the MDGs. However, our development efforts could be improved through better knowledge of African countries, their complex societies, and histories, forms of government and variants of economy. In a recent study comprised of 75 in-depth interviews with aid and humanitarian workers, a majority of respondents stated the need for better and more detailed situational analyses of areas of deployment¹. Scholarly work by academics engaged in ongoing research on Africa would provide contextually-appropriate information to subsume all forms of development initiatives.

Humanitarian aid:

As with development funding, both the Australian public and the federal government have been responsive with funds to address humanitarian crises in Africa. For example, Zimbabwe has received a great deal of Australian aid in recent times, with AU\$28 million worth of aid provided since February 2009, including AU\$8 million for food, agriculture, and education (<http://www.aisaid.gov.au>). Similarly, NGOs regularly deploy workers to crisis areas to provide basic infrastructural services (eg. healthcare, water and sanitation, and refugee care). Australian involvement in African humanitarian crises is admirable. However, the nature of crisis has changed in recent years with the increase in protracted conflict and complex emergencies, and the complicated transition from humanitarian to development aid. To better inform Australian aid policies to Africa, and to increase coordination and effectiveness, the AFSAAP submits that there is a pressing need for scholarly advice with regard to specific features of each crisis in its historical, social, cultural, economic, political and international dimensions.

Trade:

In 2009-10, Australia hosted government officials from Botswana, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and others for talks regarding trade and international cooperation. In the complex and disrupted economies of African

¹ Taylor R, Blake B, Claudio F. Analysis of opinions and experiences of Australians involved in disaster response overseas to enhance effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. ADRA Final Report 2009.

countries, where infrastructure is inadequate, trade and development assistance are, by necessity, part of the same conversation.

Bi-lateral and equitable trade relations, fostering employment in Africa should be supported by the Australian government.

Mining is one key sector in which Australia could increase its economic relations with Africa, but this requires monitoring of employment and business practices. The agricultural sector in Africa requires investment, especially in areas of protracted conflict and land tenure disagreements that have impeded production. Australian technology and expertise could add to fostering food security on the continent.

Australian investment in tertiary industries, that create employment in African countries in the short- to medium-term, should be encouraged by the Australian government.

Diplomacy:

More diplomatic representation is required in Africa as well as an increase in trade missions. Embassies and High Commissions are too few and too far apart making it difficult for Australian diplomats to well-understand regions within their mandate, and best represent Australian interests.

Peace and security:

The Australian Defence Forces are intrinsically linked with Australia's peace and security practices overseas. ADF personnel have typically served in the Asia-Pacific region in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands and elsewhere, regions with which Australia has had longstanding diplomatic and migratory relations. Additionally, there is available scholarship and expertise in Australia to advise government on contextual matters with regard to this region. The peace and security engagement with Africa is relatively recent and qualitatively distinct. For one, armed conflict in areas such as Darfur is related to longstanding fissures in society exacerbated by ethnic tensions, droughts, access to resources, the actions of external players, and other factors. Beyond visible issues of conflict, Darfur is a complex emergency² requiring contextually-relevant approaches by external agencies in order to maximise aid effectiveness and long-term solutions, and to minimise unwitting exacerbation of existing problems. Australian peace-keeping efforts could benefit from advice by Australian scholars, versed in Australia's unique international position

Education:

The AFSAAP believes that no issue so well represents the intersections between foreign and domestic African affairs in Australia as education. For one, education is a key issue in the proper and fruitful resettlement of African migrants in this country. Education is crucial to integration into the workforce and to future participation in the economy and political life of Australia.

At the same time, African students who travel to Australia for tertiary education, particularly post-graduate study, play an important role in this country's engagement

² “a situation affecting large civilian populations which usually involves a combination of war or civil strife, food shortages, and population displacement, resulting in significant excess mortality”.

(Burkholder B, Toole MJ. Evolution of Complex Disasters. Lancet 1995; 346: 1012-15)

with Africa. Not only do they return with qualifications and skills acquired from an Australian point of view, their experiences here will also influence the attitudes of their fellow citizens and their country's leadership toward Australia. African graduates of Australian universities play an important role in Australia's image in Africa. We at the AFSAAP are well-placed to advise both governments and educational institutions about hosting and supporting these students. Increased funding toward scholarships for African university students is a welcome initiative by the federal government.

Australia's interests would be well-served by cooperation between educational institutions in Africa and Australia with regard to study and research through schemes such as twinning, fostering of inter-institution research projects, student exchanges and others.

Sport:

Sport is a longstanding bridge in international relations and could play a role in fostering closer ties between Africa and Australia. Sporting tours and competitions and reciprocal training arrangements would encourage goodwill and build common experiences and exchange of knowledge between Australia and African countries.

Sports programs aimed at African migrant youth, with the added impetus of their participation in established teams and clubs within Australian regions, would provide one tool in the resettlement and integration of these individuals.

African migration to Australia:

Experiences of African migrants in Australia are known worldwide through both media reports and personal communication. For this reason, migration and resettlement issues stand as a crucible for Africa-Australia relations. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, between 1976-2006, 197 947 African migrants (by country of birth) from the sub-Saharan region arrived in Australia. African migrants to Australia are a varied group, from refugees to economic migrants who comprise many ethnicities, languages, and professional backgrounds. Thus, the resettlement needs are also varied and merit further study. As an example of the relevant work our members do, Nsubuga-Kyobe and Dimock (2002) compiled a directory of African services in Victoria³. Similarly, several of our members research education, business, health, youth, economics, refugees and other areas related to migration.

AFSAAP suggests the following with regard to African migration in Australia:

1. Research funding targeted toward resettlement issues such as youth, employment, access to healthcare, maternal and child health, education and a number of areas related to capacity building and social inclusion;
2. Greater consultation by government services of African scholars and communities to better target their services to the specific needs of migrants (e.g. community consultation by the police, education departments, health providers, and Centre-link);

³ Nsubuga-Kyobe A. and Dimock L (2002) African Communities and Settlement Services In Victoria: Towards Better Service Delivery Models. La Trobe University.

3. In areas of greater African settlement, inclusion of African community members, of various ages, both sexes, and cultural groups on health and education boards;
4. Affirmative action and mentoring initiatives with regard to apprenticeships and employment;
5. Endeavour to implement research findings with regard to service delivery to African-Australians; endeavour to implement results of consultations with interested African migrant groups; endeavour to place service delivery by African-Australians to African migrants within the mainstream (Nsubuga-Kyobe and Dimock 2002:197-9; Nsubuga-Kyobe, A. 2005:10-20⁴; and Nsubuga-Kyobe, A. and Hazelman, C. 2007: 23-32⁵).

Conclusion:

Since 1978 the AFSAAP as an organisation, and its members individually, have maintained Africanist studies in Australia despite low levels of funding and fluctuating interest on the part of universities. Together with other organisations such as the Africa Think Tank and the Africa Australia Business Council, and Monash University in recent times, we endeavour to work for the cause of a better understanding of Africa and Africans within Australia.

Please note our 2010 Annual Conference:

AFSAAP 33rd Annual Conference, 2-4th December 2010

“Engaging Africa: Knowledge, Representation, Politics”

Victoria University, City Campus, Melbourne

For further information please consult our website: www.afsaap.org

Thank you for your interest in Africa-Australia relations and for the kind invitation to provide this submission.

Yours sincerely,



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⁴ Nsubuga-Kyobe, A. (2005) “Settling Sub-Sahara Africans Migrants in Rural Victoria: A Strategic Decision?” in Migration Action Vol XXVII, Number 3, 2005; Issue “Our Changing Terrain: Reflections on Current Debates”.

⁵ Nsubuga-Kyobe, A. and Hazelman, C. (2007) “Diversity Management Strategies: Community Driven Employment Initiatives: Congolese Experience in Shepparton, Victoria, Australia” in Migration Action Vol. XXX, Number 2, 2007; Issue “Valuing Diversity: Working Towards Successful Settlement”.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Nsubuga-Kyobe', written on a light gray rectangular background.

Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe
Ph.D, AFAIM, FAFBE, MAHRI, JP
Vice-President, African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific