

From: Andrew Gosling

Sent: Wednesday, 16 July 2008 10:29 AM

To: Committee, JCPAA (REPS)

Subject: Inquiry into the Effects of the Ongoing Efficiency Dividend on Smaller Public Sector Agencies

Attention : The Secretary of the Committee, Parliament of Australia Joint Committee Inquiry into the Effects of the Ongoing Efficiency Dividend on Smaller Public Sector Agencies

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing in support of the National Library of Australia, and in particular its nationally vital and internationally recognized Indonesian cooperative acquisition program, which is to be reduced as a direct result of the severe efficiency dividend.

My qualifications for writing on this are that I am a former member of staff of the National Library, where I worked for 30 years, mostly in the Asian studies field, including four years from 1979 to 1983, as the Library's Indonesian Acquisition Librarian based at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, followed by 18 years as Chief Librarian, Asian Collections. I continue to be active in writing articles and guides for publication about the Library's Asian collections and services.

The National Library has internationally renowned holdings on Australia's neighbouring countries in East and Southeast Asia. In particular the National Library is widely recognized as having an unrivalled collection of contemporary Indonesian resources from the Suharto period (1967-1998) and the post-Suharto era.

This has only been possible because for most of the past 40 years the Library has had a presence in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, attached to the Australian Embassy and headed by a succession of Australia-based staff with specialist language, country and library skills, supported by qualified local staff. Despite changes in Indonesia it remains true that the book trade and distribution systems remain underdeveloped. The countries which have been successful in developing strong Indonesian library collections are Australia, the United States and the Netherlands, all of which have long had acquisition offices based in Jakarta.

Reducing the National Library's Jakarta operation will inevitably lead to poorer collecting. This in turn will have an effect on Australians' access to information about and understanding of our major and strategically important Southeast Asian neighbour. This concerns scholars, government officials and members of the public who make use of the National Library's own collection and those of the other Australian research libraries for which the National Library acquires Indonesian publications.

This reduction, forced by the efficiency dividend, is I am sure, being carried out with extreme reluctance by the Library, as the Director-General and her senior management are highly committed to maintaining and further developing the Library's outstanding Indonesian resources, in the national interest.

The Library has past experience of the deleterious effects of such a reduction. In the early 1980s as a result of government spending cuts the Library was forced to scale back its Jakarta office, withdrawing its Australia-based staff member. It took ten years before it was possible to restore the operation fully. During this decade there was an inevitable decline in the Library's own collecting and in the collections of major Australian university libraries dependent on the National Library for the acquisition of Indonesian publications.

Surely no Australian government of whatever complexion would deliberately set out to weaken such a strategically important operation as the National Library's acquisition program in Indonesia, and yet that is exactly what the efficiency dividend is about to do.

I wish to draw this to the attention of the Parliament of Australia Joint Committee Inquiry into the Effects of the Ongoing Efficiency Dividend on Smaller Public Sector Agencies, as a matter of the utmost importance to Australia's national interest.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Gosling