

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000159

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

Decline in university-level study of Indonesian in Australia since 2001

Question

Professor David Hill, of Murdoch University, has documented a decline in university-level study of Indonesian in Australia since 2001 of 37%. This decline has been less marked in the past few years – but that is against a background of increasing enrolments overall.

(a) Can you confirm that these figures are correct? If not can you provide an updated figure?

(b) Do you agree with Professor Hill that Indonesian is a “nationally strategic language for Australia”?

(c) What measures is the Government considering to reverse this trend?

(d) Will the Government set aside funding specifically to encourage Indonesian language study in universities?

(e) Will the Government act to halt the closure of Indonesian language courses around the country?

(f) Does the Government or Department have any power to stop the closure of Indonesian Language courses in universities around the country?

Answer

For reporting enrolments by field of education, the department uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2001 Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). Indonesian language enrolments are included in the ASCED category 'Southeast Asian Languages.' As these are not further broken down by the ABS, the Australian Government funded Professor David Hill's 2012 research on Indonesian language in universities.

Indonesian is recognised as a nationally strategic language in Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding agreements between the Australian Government and universities. In addition to Indonesian, nationally strategic languages include Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Japanese and Korean.

Rejuvenating language study is included as a strategic action in the Draft National Strategy for International Education, released for consultation by Minister Pyne on 1 April 2015. It is included as a part of efforts to foster an international outlook to better prepare Australian students and researchers for global engagement.

From early childhood through to higher education, the Australian Government is supporting measures to ensure that Australian society is competent in a range of languages, particularly Asian languages, in order to strengthen engagement within the region.

Early childhood

The Government has invested \$9.8 million in online learning programmes to test the effectiveness of providing preschool children with early exposure to a language other than English to encourage language learning in future years of schooling. Indonesian is one of the five languages forming part of this trial.

Schools

The Government's role in languages education in schools is to provide national policy leadership and facilitate innovation and the implementation of national priorities by states, territories and non-government education providers. The Government's language education measures at the school level include:

- Working to revise the teaching of foreign languages in Australian schools to ensure that at least 40 per cent of Year 12 students are studying a language other than English, with a focus on Asian languages, within a decade.
- Prioritising the development of the 'Australian Curriculum: Languages'. The Indonesian language curriculum was among the first languages completed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority and is available for use on the Australian Curriculum website www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/indonesian.
- Funding the development of the online Indonesian Language Learning Space, part of a \$7.9 million investment in flexible teaching and learning methods for foreign languages. Launched in September 2014, the Learning Space uses an innovative graphic interface and game-based resources to engage students in language learning.

Higher education

The Government also supports a range of measures to support language education in higher education, including:

- The proposed higher education reforms, which would provide new opportunities for Australians to study languages beyond school. Extending the demand driven system to include subsidised student places in all diploma, advanced diploma and associate degree courses would mean that universities could expand their diploma of language programmes based on student demand. Allowing non-university higher education providers access to the demand driven system could also create more opportunities for students to study languages.
- Increasing OS-HELP for study in Asia. OS-HELP assists eligible students to pay expenses associated with overseas study as part of an Australian higher education course through the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP). Recent changes increased the maximum loan amount for study in Asia and added a new supplementary loan to support intensive Asian language training in preparation for overseas study.

- Increasing study and internship/mentorship opportunities for Australian students in the region through:
 - New Colombo Plan Scholarships for undergraduates, which include \$1000 for in-country language training and a \$2500 stipend if undertaking an intensive language program up to one month in duration.
 - New Colombo Plan Mobility Program for undergraduates, which encourages mobility projects that support language study. For the 2016 round priority will be given to projects that support language acquisition.
 - Endeavour Mobility Grants for tertiary students, which include language support grants for eligible Australian students to improve their competency in an Asian language.

Broader efforts

The Government has also demonstrated the importance it places on Australia's relationship with Indonesia by committing \$15 million over four years from 2013–14 to the Australia Indonesia Centre (AIC). The Prime Minister announced the AIC during his first visit to Indonesia in September 2013. Based at Monash University, the AIC's mandate is to lead and facilitate growth and greater understanding in the Australia-Indonesia relationship.

Universities, as autonomous institutions, determine the viability and structure of their courses and staffing needs in response to student demand and their overarching strategic direction.

The Commonwealth Grants Scheme funding agreements between the Government and universities require universities to seek Australian Government approval prior to closing a course in a nationally strategic language.