



Submission No 73

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

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Lawson, Cliff (REPS)

From: Cowan, Lesley (REPS)
Sent: Thursday, 24 October 2002 9:30
To: Lawson, Cliff (REPS)
Subject: FW: Submission

-----Original Message-----

From: Karen Kelloway [mailto:karenkel@ozemail.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2002 12:20 AM
To: Committee, JSCFADT (REPS)
Subject: Submission

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

At a time in our history when it is so important to establish an open and honest working relationship with Indonesia, I feel that it is very short-sighted for the government to cut off funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy. Culture is embedded in language. It is through the study of Asian languages and Indonesian in particular, that, as a nation, we will develop a greater depth of cultural understanding of our nearest neighbour.

As a teacher of the Indonesian language, I believe that removing the support which NALSAS provides for implementing language programmes will impact significantly on our diplomatic, trade and defence relationships with Indonesia. Without the cultural understandings that come through studying a language our future citizens will be ill-equipped to work in and with Indonesia. Business development and success relies heavily on knowledge of the country and the ability to communicate effectively with our trading partners. Similarly, without our students being able to learn about Indonesia and study its language, diplomatic and defence relationships will also be adversely affected. We cannot hope to be able to guarantee national security without developing language skills. The opportunities language studies provide to build bridges between our nations will be lost immediately. The breaking down of prejudice towards our Indonesian neighbours and overcoming the ignorance which characterizes common Australian perceptions of Indonesia must start with our youngest children and continue throughout all stages of their schooling. Language study is the most effective way to enhance the average Australian's attitude towards Indonesia.

I am extremely disappointed that this government is planning to remove the support for NALSAS which only began in 1994. It is very important for this committee to recognize the contribution language study makes towards Australia's relationship with Indonesia.

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