

STATEMENT OF THE Business Alliance for Asia Literacy

PEAK ASSOCIATIONS

- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Australian Industry Group
- Australian Services Roundtable
- Business Council of Australia
- Chinese Professional and Business Association

BUSINESS COUNCILS

- Australia-ASEAN Business Council
- Australia China Business Council
- Australia India Business Council
- Australia Indonesia Business Council
- Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee
- Australia Korea Business Council
- Australia Malaysia Business Council
- Australia Philippines Business Council
- Australia Singapore Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Australia Taiwan Business Council
- Australia Thailand Business Council
- Australia Vietnam Business Council

CORPORATIONS

- ABB Australia
- Accenture
- Aconex
- AFG Venture Group
- Allens Arthur Robinson
- ANZ
- BHP Billiton
- Bluescope Steel
- BOC Ltd
- BP Australia Pty Ltd
- BT Investment Management
- Cisco Australia and New Zealand
- Clayton Utz
- Commonwealth Bank Australia
- Corrs Chambers Westgarth
- Deutsche Bank, Australia/ New Zealand
- DP World Australia Pty Ltd
- DuPont Australia Ltd
- Energy Australia
- Ernst & Young
- Fortescue Metals Group
- Freehills
- GE Australia & New Zealand
- Hay Group
- Hospira
- Insurance Australia Group
- IBM Australia & New Zealand
- JP Morgan Australia & New Zealand
- KPMG
- Leighton Holdings Limited
- Macquarie Group
- Mallesons Stephen Jaques
- Minter Ellison
- Mitchell Communication Group
- Nufarm Limited
- OneSteel
- PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Qantas Airways Limited
- RBS Group (Australia)
- ResMed Ltd
- Santos Limited
- Singapore Airlines
- Sino Gold
- Sydney Mining Club
- Thales Australia
- Toll Group
- United Group Limited
- Victoria Investments & Properties
- Wesfarmers Limited
- Westpac

Asia is becoming more important to the global economy. Within 10 years, the region will have three of the four largest economies of the world. A generational shift of financial might is occurring from the west to the east. The IMF forecasts the global economy to decline by 1.3% yet developing Asia is predicted to be much stronger at 4.8% growth.

Increasingly, Australian business leaders see Asia as a growth engine. Many companies are consequently investing in ensuring their talent base is Asia literate, able to leverage opportunities and minimise risk in this new economy.

Yet, Australia's education statistics do not reflect the growing importance of Asia for Australia.

- No Australian education system requires schools to teach about the Asian region
- 50% of schools teach very little about Asia
- Only 6% of Year 12 students study an Asian language, and just 3% pursue these studies at University
- Only 2.5% of Year 12 students study Chinese
- In one state, only 2% of Year 12 Modern History students choose to study China while 65% choose Germany and 19% choose the Soviet Union. This trend applies nationally.

Australia's future depends not only on our economic success but on our ability to solve fundamental global problems. Understanding the languages and cultures of our nearest neighbours is critical to this effort.

We, as representatives of leading Australian businesses and industry organisations, call on our schools, on school communities, on education systems, and on our Governments to ensure that:

- Asia skills and Asian languages are a core part of Australian curriculum
- delivery of this is adequately funded
- senior students are given incentives to take up Asia studies and Asian languages
- teachers are equipped and available to teach Asia skills.

WHO WE ARE The new Business Alliance for Asia Literacy is made up of major corporations, peak bodies including the Australian Council for Trade Unions and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Industry Group and the Business Council of Australia who represent over 400,000 Australian businesses.

ASIALINK www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au

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