WHY INDONESIA MATTERS IN OUR SCHOOLS

A RATIONALE FOR INDONESIAN LANGUAGE AND STUDIES IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

PICTURE THIS

It's 2030.
Indonesia is the fifth-largest economy in the world.
Its population is 296 million – more than 10 times the size of Australia's.
It's a regional heavyweight and a global power – its language is the sixth most spoken in the world.

Its young population outnumbers the old,
driving vibrant megacities powered by innovative new technologies.
It's making strides on climate action and sustainable development.
And its writers, artists and performers are renowned on the world stage.
But right next door in Australia, our young people don't speak the national language, and they know next to nothing about our neighbouring country.

WE CAN DO BETTER.

It's time we took another look at Indonesia, and what we are teaching young Australians about our neighbour, our region, and ourselves.

OUR NEIGHBOUR OUR FUTURE

Indonesia is our next-door neighbour – Darwin is closer to Denpasar than it is to Melbourne. But regular polling reveals that Australians lack even basic knowledge about Indonesia – for example, that it is a democracy and one of the largest in the world.

How might we view our neighbour if we knew a little bit more about it?

What if we knew that Indonesia, like Australia, is a richly multicultural country with 300 Indigenous ethnic groups?

What if we knew that Australia's largest embassy is in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital? When President Joko Widodo stood up in Australian parliament in 2020 he called us Indonesia's closest friend, even comparing our friendship to that of the superheroes in the Marvel Avengers films.

What if we knew that Indonesia's armed forces assisted our rural fire services during the 2019-2020 bushfires, and have cooperated with Australia on defence activities since the 1960s?

Or that our friendship extended back to World War II, when Australia became an ally to Indonesian nationalists and their struggle to win independence from Japanese and Dutch occupation?

What if more Australians knew that centuries of trade with Makassan seafarers appears in shared words with Indigenous languages in Australia's Top End?

Our neighbour is already the most populous and resource-rich nation in Southeast Asia. It's also the world's fourth-largest country by population behind the United States, India and China. Its trillion-dollar economy has been growing at a rate of 5%, compared to 2% in Australia.

Indonesia and Australia are tied together by geography and history. We can shape our future by working together in strategic partnership on trade, regional security, innovation and environment.

Building our important friendship with Indonesia is essential to preparing young Australians for the future that lies ahead.

With common interests in democracy, diversity and peace in our region, knowing and engaging with Indonesia can go a long way in helping us know who – and where – we are.

RRUPIYA

In Australia's Miwatj or northeast Arnhem Land region, the Yolngu word for money is *rrupiya*, just like Indonesia's national currency, the Rupiah.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Indonesia's national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* means 'Unity in Diversity'. It reflects an inclusive attitude towards Indonesia's diverse population of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, and hundreds of Indigenous and regional ethnic groups.

> "Knowing about Indonesia can go a long way in helping us know who – and where – we are."

OUR LEARNING OUR LANGUAGE

Building Australia's friendship with Indonesia starts at school.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration says that young Australians must learn to "engage in the global community, particularly with our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region."

Imagine the potential. Students in two schools, one in Sulawesi, Indonesia, and one in South Australia taking part in the Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE School Partnerships Program, collaborate on a major science investigation of their local river. They communicate in Indonesian and English. They collect the same data on the rivers to compare results. They face a similar challenge : the rivers are polluted. What solutions can they take action on? Real-time virtual exchange like this is the dynamic starting point for our digitally connected students to collaborate and make friends with our neighbours.

Since the 1950s Australia has been a world leader in teaching Indonesian. It's part of *who* we are and essential to *where* we are in the Indo-Pacific. In the United States, Spanish is the most taught language because it's spoken by the neighbours. In the UK it's French. For Australia, Indonesian – the national language of our neighbour – is a logical choice.

Indonesian has stable uptake in Australian primary schools. But these days, most students don't continue with the language when they enter secondary school, often because it's no longer available. In Year 12, Indonesian enrolments have declined by 50% in just one school generation.

Today, Indonesian is an 'at risk' language in Australia with fewer than 760 Year 12 students studying it.

Of most concern, the latest research on the state of Indonesian in our schools points to student drop-off as a result of xenophobia, stemming from limited understanding and negative perceptions of Indonesia in the Australian community. We need to re-think what we teach our young people about Indonesia.

The Australian Curriculum provides multiple opportunities for students to develop knowledge and understanding of Indonesia through many learning areas and three cross-curriculum priorities of 'Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia', 'Sustainability' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures'.

Indonesia's history has shaped the world and is important to study. Demand for cloves, nutmeg, pepper and cinnamon changed the course of history as nations battled for over 2,000 years to control trade of these precious commodities. From the First Century BCE spices were carried by outrigger canoes to East Africa, and by camels along the Silk Road from China. The spice trade led to the rise of powerful kingdoms in the Indonesian archipelago and colonial empires.

For students of geography and science Indonesia's rich biodiversity means it is a 'megadiverse' country, home to 17% of the world's bird species and 16% of its reptiles. Indonesia has the largest rainforest area in the world after the Amazon and the Congo, and it's located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, making it a hotspot for volcanoes and earthquakes.

For a dynamic Arts curriculum students can study Eko Nugroho who is taking the global art world by storm. His pop-culture multimedia works combine a comic book aesthetic with traditional Javanese motifs from batik textiles, *wayang kulit* shadow puppets and other storytelling traditions.

The opportunity to know Indonesia's diversity, understand Indonesia's global significance and grow Australia-Indonesia engagement is part of the Australian Curriculum.

BICARA (SPEAK)

Indonesian is an accessible language for English speakers. It uses the Roman alphabet and has a systematic grammar structure with a strong letter-sound relationship – just see it and say it. There are many borrowed words from English, Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Sanskrit and Portuguese reflecting Indonesia's role as a meeting place of the world in Southeast Asia.

> "Young Australians must learn to engage in the global community, particularly with our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region."

OUR CREATIVITY OUR CULTURES

Opportunities just keep on growing for collaboration among young people in Indonesia and Australia.

More than half of Indonesia's population are millennials or Gen Z, and the majority live in rapidly growing cities powered by innovative local apps.

Indonesia's creativity in digital and social innovation offers rich material for studies in culture, media, economics and society. It also underscores future opportunities for collaboration with young Australians in business, in caring for the environment and our people, and in creating popular culture.

The country has produced at least six 'unicorn' start-ups – mobile applications with a value exceeding US $1 billion. Many of the most successful start-ups have been those that blend the old with the new, bringing Indonesian traditions into the 21st Century.

GOJEK is one of the best-known 'unicorn' start-ups to come out of Indonesia. Based on the informal street trade of *ojek* – motorcycle taxi services – the application has grown into a hugely successful 'super app', offering everything from ride-hailing to courier services, food delivery, shopping, beauty therapy, cleaning services, auto repairs and online banking. The company is now worth over US $10 billion.

BUKALAPAK is another local success story. The name means 'open a stall', and the app provides an online platform for family-owned streetside kiosks, or warung. From the initial investment of a five-dollar web registration fee by a 23 -year-old student at the Bandung Institute of Technology, Bukalapak has grown into a multibillion-dollar business connecting consumers to micro, small and medium enterprises.

For creative young Australians, getting to know the neighbours could be just the beginning of opening up their world.

There is so much opportunity :

Agnez Mo has been a star of the Indonesian music industry since she was a child. She is the most-awarded artist in Indonesia's history, with a host of local, regional and global accolades to her name. She has collaborated with international artists including Timbaland, Michael Bolton and Steve Aoki.

Indonesia is a storytelling nation. Mira Lesmana is a film director credited with jump-starting the post-crisis recovery of Indonesia's film industry, with her teen romance film, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (What's Up With Love?) followed by the film adaptation of *Laskar Pelangi* (The Rainbow Troops), which became Indonesia's highest-grossing box office hit.

Indonesian multimedia artist Timoteus "Angga" Anggawan Kusno found inspiration and community through his artistic exchange with Tony Albert, an Indigenous Australian artist based in Sydney. The pair were brought together via Kerjasama (Collaborate), an exchange residency initiated by Asialink Arts. Through their joint residency, the artists spent six weeks collaborating and held a joint exhibition in Alice Springs – then they did the same in Yogyakarta. The two artists went on to present a joint exhibition in Singapore taking their Australian-Indonesian collaboration to the world.

CHANGING LIVES

Gita Nofieka Dwijayati noticed the struggles of the visually impaired in navigating Indonesian cities. She co-founded Tune Map (tunemap.org), a mobile platform that crowd-sources information from sighted users to benefit the visually impaired.

Through a campaign called #MapMyDay, thousands of reports were gathered on potential obstacles in the West Java city of Bandung to help plan safe routes for visually impaired pedestrians.

Gita received an Australia Award scholarship to further develop the concept at Flinders University in South Australia and shared her experience with other social entrepreneurs in the region via the Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program.

> "Getting to know the neighbours could be just the beginning."

OUR ENVIRONMENT OUR SUSTAINABILITY

In Indonesia the word for 'the nation' is *tanah air* – land and water.

Beyond borders on a map, Australia and Indonesia share the same air, water and rich biodiversity – many species of birds, turtles, sharks, whales and dolphins regularly migrate between our territories.

We share concerns of keeping our environment clear of pollution and plastic waste, while meeting global responsibilities such as mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Our governments cooperate in the areas of climate change and environmental governance. We work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from land conversion, and promote investment in clean energy, climate-smart agriculture and green growth.

Just as Indonesian experts assisted Australia in our recent bushfires, Australia has been there for Indonesia in times of disaster, such as the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami and the 2018 earthquake in Sulawesi.

Part of this mutual support involves sharing our expertise on disaster risk management and learning from one another, while showing our care for each other – as neighbours do.

Peta Bencana (Disaster Map), is an award-winning disaster management web platform developed in collaboration by experts in Australia and Indonesia. Drawing on reports crowd-sourced through social media and validated by government agency monitors, it produces real-time, publicly accessible maps of disaster-affected areas, assisting better decision-making by residents and humanitarian and government agencies during a disaster. Now in use across all of Indonesia, the platform has received multiple international awards, and has been recommended to other countries – including Australia – as a disaster management strategy.

Young people from Australia and Indonesia are actively engaging with each other through the Australia-Indonesia Youth Association (AIYA), CAUSINDY (originally the Conference of Australian and Indonesian Youth), the National Australia Indonesia Language Awards (NAILA) and the Australia-Indonesia Youth Exchange Program (AIYEP). These initiatives connect young Australians and Indonesians to generate creative solutions to our common challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

Through forging strong ties our young people can build a prosperous and sustainable future for our region and our world.

SCHOOL STRIKE FOR FORESTS

Jakarta teenager Salsabila Khairunisa is known as 'Indonesia's Greta Thunberg'.

She developed a passion for the environment through exploring the forests and mountains near her parents' hometown of Bandung in West Java. At 15 she co-founded the youth-led movement *Jaga Rimba*, or 'Look After the Forests'. Through social media, *Jaga Rimba* appeals to urban Indonesian youth to care about environmental issues.

Salsabila began a weekly protest called *Mogok Sekolah Untuk Hutan*, or 'School Strike for Forests'. The movement grew and she met with Indonesia's Vice Minister for the Environment and Forestry. In 2020, the BBC 100 Women list, included her as one of the world's most inspiring leaders of change.

A PLASTIC MUSEUM

Environmentalists in Indonesia have created a museum made entirely from plastics to send a message about the world's worsening ocean plastics crisis.

They aim to convince people to rethink their habits and say no to single-use bags and bottles. The plastic museum outdoor exhibition in East Java is made up of more than 10,000 plastic waste items, from bottles and bags to sachets and straws, all collected from polluted rivers and beaches.

The centrepiece is a statue called *Dewi Sri*, a goddess of prosperity widely worshipped by the Javanese. Her long skirt is made from single-use sachets of household items.

> "Our young people can build a prosperous and sustainable future for our region and our world"

WE OWE IT TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO KNOW INDONESIA.

Indonesia is our neighbour and our future.

We share values in democracy and diversity,
and a vision for peace in our region.

We share concerns for our environment and sustainability.

We share compassion for one another,
and our collaboration through culture and creativity
will be key to our prosperity.

There is so much we can learn
and do together – teaching Indonesian and
studies of Indonesia in our schools is just the beginning.

LET'S PICTURE A BETTER FUTURE.

One where our young people know each other,
and have a deeper understanding about
who – and where – they are.

This rationale aims to provide Australian schools with a compelling reason why knowing Indonesia matters. It helps us achieve Australia's national education goals and strengthens intercultural learning for young people in our part of the world.

The rationale was developed by Asia Education Foundation, Asialink at The University of Melbourne with support from the Australia-Indonesia Institute, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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