

Tasmania's Place in the Asian Century

Response to the Issues Paper from the Department of Education

Summary of current context

International students

Current top Asian markets for International students coming to Tasmania are China, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore (Australia - China India Korea Malaysia and Vietnam). Tasmania has offshore transnational programs in China, Korea, Malaysia and Hong Kong (and Kuwait).

As countries develop, the demand for overseas education moves from secondary school onto VET and Higher education, although schools and VET remains as feeders to the Higher Education sector. Currently there are about 150 students Years 7- 12 (with two thirds being in 11-12) and 300 VET students. There are about 400 students who are dependents of visa holders.

Tasmanian international education providers currently invest a large marketing effort in attracting students throughout Asia to study in Tasmania. Marketing effort comes from individual independent schools, University of Tasmania both International Unit and individual faculties and Government Education and Training International (GETI) on behalf of Tasmanian Government schools and Polytechnic. Tasmania has also recently launched *Study Tasmania* an initiative of the Education Minister's International Education Industry Round Table. *Study Tasmania* is marketing Tasmania as a destination for education at all levels. <http://www.studyintasmania.tas.gov.au/>

Tasmania also has a number of current offshore programs in China, Malaysia, Korea, Hong Kong and Kuwait originating from UTAS, Polytechnic and schools. These include full delivery of qualifications offshore, partial delivery offshore with completion onshore, pathway programs, English language programs and sister school exchange programs.

Languages in Tasmanian government schools and colleges

A 2012 survey, found that in a total of 11,185 students attending schools from Kindergarten to Year 10 are studying an Indonesian, Japanese or Chinese language. Of these, a total of 1,339 students are specifically learning the Chinese language, an increase from 2011, when 770 students studied Chinese. Asian languages including Japanese and Indonesian have been taught in Tasmanian Government schools since the late 1970s. 67 schools offer one of these languages to students from Kindergarten to Year 6, 35 schools offer at least one to students from Year 7 to 10 and all colleges offer at least one of these three languages.

Australian Curriculum context

The following curriculum pathways will be developed for each of the following Asian languages in Years Foundation (Preparatory) -10 by the end of 2013:

- Vietnamese (one learner pathway to be developed, pitched to learners who have some background in the language);
- Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, and Korean (one learner pathway to be developed, pitched to second language learners); and
- Chinese (three learner pathways to be developed to cater specifically for second language learners across F-10, background language learners across F-10 and first language learners in Years 7-10).

Each relevant question posed in the paper is now addressed and includes current and future activity as well as some of the challenges and what else might be required.

3.3 How well prepared is Tasmania to receive Asian students?

Tasmania has some clear advantages to market:

- Top ranked world class university research centres
- Offers the opportunity for a genuinely English speaking experience – enabling international students to easily mix with Australian students in an English speaking community. Whilst there is a small international community in Hobart, there are not the numbers that are in Melbourne or Sydney where it is easier for a student to remain within their own culture thus reducing the English experience or compared to countries such as Malaysia that promote themselves as an English speaking destination.
- World class training in some VET areas which is closely linked to industry requirements; maritime, tourism, child care and aged care. Training includes genuine industry placements, enabling development of work skills for employment.
- Excellent study pathways;
 - Dual-offer pathways for Tasmanian Polytechnic/UTAS Diploma/Degree programs
 - Straightforward and uncomplicated pathways from VET to university for students who don't initially meet university entrance requirements
 - Easy pathways from Year 11/12 to university
 - Tasmanian secondary students have an advantage over those in other Australian states in not having to count English as an Additional Language (EAL) towards their Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR)
 - On application students can undertake assessment only qualifications as a 'background speaker' in Chinese or Korean and also in Filipino, Hindi, Khmer, Punjabi, Sinhala, Tamil and Vietnamese. These can contribute to their ATAR.
 - Advanced students in year 12 are also able to undertake university units.
- Largely safe and connected communities - community engagement is an important issue for many international students
- Clean, green, natural environment
- Relatively affordable cost of living
- Australia/Tasmania has many strong family and business connections in place in the region
- A location closer to Asia, compared with key competitors USA, Canada and UK, meaning more convenient travel, more cultural understanding and easy access to familiar foods
- The capacity to provide 'quality at a reasonable rate'

Success in school and VET placements is in part due to the experiences and English language opportunities provided through the well-developed homestay accommodation program which is co-ordinated and managed by Government Education and Training International.

There a number of schools which have developed strong, supportive programs, having enrolled international students for a number of years. These good practices and the associated professional learning that can assist mainstream teachers to teach appropriately should be shared with all relevant schools.

3.4 What actions should the Tasmanian Government, community and educators take to attract Asian students and ensure they have a positive educational experience?

The reasons for families to send their children need to be well understood so that the experience that is offered mirrors those reasons – usually, to improve self-reliance and independence and to understand a new culture, as well as of course to learn English. Sometimes the motivation is the prestige of a overseas qualification or access to University entrance – when there are limited places or the requirements are very high in their home country.

While parents have traditionally made education decisions, increasingly students have a stronger influence on where they study, so the amenity and lifestyle appeal of Tasmania to potential Asian students will be of increasing importance. More briefing documentation which focusses on a student audience may be required.

Anecdotally, Tasmania's attractiveness has been based on being well-priced relative to its academic standing, positioning that is potentially under threat from both exchange rates and any increase in fees. Conversely, Tasmania may be held back by lower population densities and comparatively less access to cultural amenities such as late-night entertainment and public transport. In Tasmania there are limited options for public transport for students outside business hours, making it difficult for students to be involved in social engagement and activities outside their study experience, such as work or sport. Additional funding for late night public transport would also benefit local students as would adequate lighting around campuses and on major travel routes students may be walking at night, and providing adequate police to patrol areas where students are likely to be outside their campuses.

There remain concerns in relation to the reception of international students by some members of the community as the level of complaints by students about their treatment (outside of their educational institutions mainly) is significant. The office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner collects such reports from both students and witnesses; sometimes these are anonymous. To ensure accurate data and to measure improvement, police should record national origin and visa status of complainants about racial attacks. Offenders need to be pursued and prosecuted wherever possible.

Consideration could be given to government funded affordable boarding houses and share houses for older students with custodial carers/ supervisors for support and transport. Many international students lack confidence in their English particularly when they are studying technical subjects where the opportunities to gain a better grasp of English is more limited and the teachers may not be so skilled in making the subject accessible to them. Courses such as *Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms* and *How Language Works* could be widely implemented through the Professional Learning Institute if sufficient tutors were trained. GETI is starting an 'international ready' program for staff dealing with international students.

Industry needs to provide places for international students to work and sponsor interns. In overseas business development activity Tasmanian companies or Government agencies should consider any education and training opportunities for Tasmanian providers e.g. OH&S training in factories, English training for overseas partners wanting to operate globally.

There remains a reluctance from some schools and Polytechnic teams to welcome international students. Some schools do not see international students as a high priority or will only enrol one or two international students because of the belief that such students create more problems than they are worth particularly if they are not highly skilled in English. This relates to issues such as;

- Different learning needs and styles
- Communication difficulties particularly if their English is not well developed – this can relate to their capacity to learn as well as dealing with any personal issues
- Lack of understanding of the differences between full fee paying students and those who are migrants, refugees or those who are dependent children of other temporary visa holders

This needs to be addressed through both intent and effort through looking for every opportunity to provide teachers and students with cultural learning opportunities and experiences in overseas countries, particularly with our Asian neighbours. Consideration should be given to looking at how the fees income is spent to maximise outcomes and opportunities for each student.

Given the range of schools colleges and campuses involved and the links to curriculum and English as an Additional Language, better co-ordination of responsibilities and support might improve policy development, delivery, training and information sharing. GETI would be best placed to undertake more work in this area given its size, existing role and knowledge of how similar matters internationally and in other states and territories are being addressed.

Other activities that could improve matters include;

- encouraging on-line pen pals in primary and high schools at an individual, class and school level

- sharing existing good practice between schools and colleges and ensuring that information about such practices is easily accessible
- considering how cultural experiences can be introduced into those schools where there is no history of international students – not necessarily with the goal to have students enrol in language studies but to create a more welcoming community/tolerant environment
- partnership programs with overseas institutions and departments to enable mid-course exchanges (and cultural experiences)
- offering credit for approved overseas courses
- recognising comparative qualifications but being aware that the name of a qualification does not necessarily equate to equivalence in quality or subject matter
- providers including credits in study programs for offshore study
- moving emphasis from only receiving inbound students to contributing to developing source countries educational needs and providing educational opportunities offshore
- the Australian Government could provide scholarships to students in developing countries to assist with connections to emerging markets
- provide Tasmanian curriculum to overseas institutions (under contractual agreements)
- follow up on visa decisions which are disadvantageous to students wishing to study in Tasmania
- students intending to go on to University in Australia often move to the mainland. There is a need to encourage them to stay in Tasmania for tertiary studies and a bursary program has been established linked to the UTas Foundation English program. Half is paid on entry to the program and the second half when they enrol in a UTas course
- provision of scholarships, transnational education and other partnership programs should be developed and promoted

Other travel suggestions that would increase Tasmania's attractiveness include:

- enable international baggage allowances to be carried domestically even if the flights are not 'connected' or remove excess baggage costs for students;
- consider government subsidies to make travel to Tasmania more competitive such as the cost for the leg from Melbourne or Sydney to Tasmania; and
- influence airlines to provide some direct flights to Hobart from Asian destinations to reduce multiple stopover issues.

Tasmania could consider some of the strategies Malaysia is developing to establish its reputation as a regional hub for higher education for students from across Asia (and the rest of the world). The goal is for Malaysia to become the world's sixth-biggest education exporting country by 2020 (with a target of 200,000 international students) through:

- leaning on the private sector to help provide industry-relevant education;
- streamlining and easing immigration processes for students;
- setting up a marketing arm to promote the country's universities;
- investing in niche study areas like Islamic finance/banking and executive education for which the country can be known internationally; and
- attracting foreign universities to set up branch campuses in Malaysia.

Malaysia has already shown that it can harness its education sector to fuel economic growth. When it was devastated in the 1997 economic downturn, it strengthened its education system by such means as:

- convincing its student population to study in Malaysia rather than overseas;
- establishing twinning programmes with reputable foreign universities;
- attracting international students to study in Malaysia; and
- establishing branch colleges and universities in India, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka.

3.5 Are there specific Asian markets that Tasmania should target?

There are key markets in East Asia (China, Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea) South Asia (Nepal, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka) and South East Asia (Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore).

- Work needs to continue in our key Asian markets – China, India, Malaysia, Japan – whilst also extending into emerging markets such as Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam, where demand is likely to increase particularly in the VET area.
- Vocational education in particular can provide the work skills required by nations as they develop. The Australian Government should offer students from developing nations such as Myanmar and Cambodia some additional support to study in Australia, thus building a future market in these countries in line with economic development. This kind of support also leads to strong trade and diplomatic relationships into the future.
- The top five markets for international student enrolments in Tasmania are: China; Malaysia; Korea; Singapore and Saudi Arabia. By comparison, in Australia, Indian students are the second largest contributor to international education exports. This suggests that Tasmania may have the potential to increase its Indian student enrolment, although at the moment the Indian VET market has collapsed.

Some concerns

- New Zealand will launch a more streamlined visa processing system this year. International students who use a New Zealand Specialist Agent will have their visa applications processed within 10 working days, compared with the standard 30 days for other agents.
- Taiwan is to relax rules on Chinese international students to promote cross-strait relations and increase student numbers (reported in the Taipei Times).
- Canada has easier entry rules and better post-study employment rights.

3.6 Should the emphasis on delivering education be in-country, online or in Tasmania?

All are important but the emphasis is different for different sectors. High school students come to Tasmania which adds to their cultural knowledge and that of students at the host school. On-line learning is most common in the higher education sector. As indicated earlier, delivering in Tasmania enhances the cultural experience and offers the best opportunity for genuine English language learning both within the educational institution and externally.

In-country education however enables Tasmanian to make a contribution to the development of teaching and learning in developing countries. There are opportunities for joint ventures with existing and emerging education hubs in other countries. *The Australian* reported predictions made by Liberal MP Andrew Robb that Australian international education could balloon to 10 million students in 10 years. In making his prediction, Mr Robb referred to online courses, offering international students the opportunity to study the majority of a course in their home countries

Students from some key source countries are evaluating the cost of education abroad against the outcomes for education at home. As opportunities in home countries improve, there is less advantage in the large investment of family funds for overseas study. Therefore providing competitive and quality transnational programs will become more and more important for Tasmania

More growth is expected in development of off-shore education and training as well as on-line and joint venture programs. For example students completing two years in their home country and one year in Australia (or other destination) achieve the same outcome as a student entering the program in the destination country from year one. Universities such as Oxford and Berkley have such programs in place.

4.1 How important is Asian literacy to your business or work?

Nationally Education Ministers have agreed that Asian Literacy is very important in Education. The Melbourne Declaration makes specific reference to the growing influence of Asian nations on the world and the increasing need for Australians to become Asian literate, engage and build strong relationships with Asia.

Australian Curriculum

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia is one of three national cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum and *Intercultural Understanding* is one of seven general student capabilities.

- *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* should enable every young Australian to gain knowledge and develop better understandings of the countries and cultures of the Asian region and their engagement with Australia. This involves embedding studies of Asia in all learning areas from Foundation Year to Year 12, rather than establish any discrete subject. Asia-related content in the curriculum is being progressively realised as the curriculum is developed. The major themes are Asia and its diversity; the achievements and contributions of the people of Asia; and Asia-Australia engagement.
- The *Intercultural Understanding* capability is to be achieved by all students by the time they leave school. Students are to develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others. They will come to understand how personal, group and national identities are shaped, and the variable and changing nature of culture. The capability involves students in learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect. Whilst not specific to Asia it will be embedded in the subjects and disciplines that comprise the curriculum throughout schooling.

National Professional Standards for Teachers

Agreed by Education Ministers, these standards will be used in performance review and registration processes. Standard 1 requires teachers to know students and how they learn. Area 1.3 focusses on students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds and requires teachers to respond to the learning strengths and needs of such students through effective teaching strategies.

In response to these the Department of Education is developing an Asia Strategy. Still in draft form, the strategy is expected take account of these national requirements linking them with the Department's Strategic Plan 2012-15. Proposed objectives of the Asia Strategy are:

- Implementation of the Australian Curriculum;
- Building leadership support and teacher capacity through professional learning and cross cultural engagement;
- Stimulating engagement through interactive technologies; and
- Specialist language provision.

4.2 What actions should the Tasmanian government, community and educators take to improve Tasmania's Asian literacy?

Asian literacy from an educational perspective is not just about responding to markets and the economic needs (financial income) of the state – it is also about education outcomes for Tasmanian students.

- There needs to be a broader focus on Asian Literacy in Tasmania, recognising that literacy is more than language, food and music.
- There is a need to consider culture, history and current issues – celebrate the stories and success of those now living in Tasmania as well as that of Tasmanians living and working overseas, and businesses and trade success stories.
- Understanding and respect must be developed for different cultural mores and behaviours at the everyday interaction level. Those intending to do business with Asia need opportunities to develop relevant cultural and institutional knowledge and experience.

- Asian languages may be only one element of developing Asian literacy in the broader sense, however they do provide an important discipline for learning to see the world through the eyes of another culture which is critical to building successful cultural and business exchanges.
- Of assistance would be a media strategy which supports the need for Increased Asian literacy and builds comfort about internationalism not as a threat but an opportunity. There is evidence of fear by some in the community of new cultures and an inward looking view that needs to be expanded.
- Other potential pathways to increasing Asian literacy include increasing migration, encouraging occupational participation in international conferences and exchanges, and undertaking visits to the region.
- When Tasmanians visit Asian countries as tourists they should be encouraged to experience more of the local culture.

The following options for schools could be considered:

- support increased study of Asian languages (and culture) in schools, and consider strategies for those schools where there is little community support or demand
- improve access to and the range of language choices that exist on-line – particularly Chinese (Mandarin) and consider a more focussed language approach using face to face teaching
- use more technology and on-line learning to reach Tasmanian students in rural or remote schools
- share existing practice associated with current use of interactive technologies such as the Asia Education Foundation's Bridge program which enables school partnerships with China, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand
- involvement in the Asia Literacy Ambassadors Program run by the Asia Education Foundation
- support more student tours and long term study exchanges (particularly students from low income families) as persuasive personal encounters have been shown to be effective in building demand and interest – these could be linked with the key decision points when attrition from language studies is most likely to occur
- a focus on parent information which addresses the value of language study and the support they can offer to encourage their child's persistence
- more Asian literacy professional learning for staff and more long term study exchanges
- people resident here from each community could be used as tutors or background speakers in school and colleges, especially to build conversation skills
- an off-shore study period could become compulsory in higher level language studies and this could be supported through the provision of government scholarships or awards (similar to the Frank McDonald Prizes) perhaps in partnership with Asian oriented businesses or UTAs

Education Services Australia is supporting and promoting the *Language Learning Space* which provides a video conferencing platform and spoken language practice. Because of all the work being undertaken nationally Tasmania is not necessarily reliant on its own resources for learning materials and platforms for students and professional learning for teachers and school leaders.

Identified challenges in increasing the uptake of Asian languages in Tasmanian schools include:

- The long term nature of developing effective and stable school policy and programs that can build up enrolments in language and cultural studies;
- The difficulty of recruiting skilled language teachers (or the capability through training) where a strong expatriate community is lacking; and
- The perception that learning languages, particularly Indonesian and Chinese, is not 'cool'.

Asian literacy is also reflected in the preparedness of employers to employ people with limited or strongly accented English. This may limit the accessibility to employment for Asian students.

In addition there are two actions where LINC Tasmania could assist.

Collection development

- LINC Tasmania actively promotes the cultural, economic, and social development and well-being of Tasmanians by providing access to knowledge, information, and creative literature.

- LINC Tasmania holds a small collection of non-English library resources books, magazines, newspapers and/or language learning resources in Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and Vietnamese. The collection is supported by a very small annual budget and the spread of languages covered (including several European ones) has been determined by population data reported in the Census.
- Additional funds would be required to extend coverage of this collection, but if this were forthcoming, there could be a targeted approach to increasing collections in Asian languages (across a number of formats) where there is demand. These items would be available to library members anywhere in Tasmania.

Community Learning - Asian Language Classes

- The current LearnXpress program is offering Asian language classes in Japanese, Mandarin, Chinese and Indonesian. Most classes are at introductory level for those wishing to learn basic words and phrases, with some classes providing intermediate-level courses. Courses are offered on a full cost recovery basis.
- LearnXpress classes in other Asian languages could be incorporated into the program where demand exists and tutors are available.

4.3 Could more use be made of students to improve Tasmania's Asian literacy?

Both international students and Tasmanian students undertaking Asian language or cultural studies could be involved in improving Tasmania's Asian literacy.

- The benefits of having International students in Tasmania should be utilised rather than seeing their presence simply as a business or marketing result.
- International students should be supported to become confident and active participants in community activities on an informal basis – such as local events and sporting clubs.
- Build a Tasmanian international student alumni program both for business networking and educational marketing purposes (in conjunction with any UTas networks).
- Look at the options for identifying student champions in Tasmania and in overseas countries.
- More Tasmanian students travelling off shore to Asia to study and on cultural exchanges could share their knowledge and experience with both other students and with other communities, particularly as international students usually attend a small number of schools.
- Over time Tasmanian students (under the Australian Curriculum) will gain better knowledge and understanding of Asian countries and cultures which should lead to broader community improvement beginning at the family level.
- Those students learning an Asian language could also share their cultural knowledge
- The Paranville development will provide additional residential and educational opportunities for Korean students and migrants and those who wish to learn about Korea and its culture.

Asia literacy provides students with the skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region.

4.4 Could more use be made of Tasmania's international migration program to improve Tasmania's Asian literacy?

The skilled migration program needs to be better supported. Successful outcomes can mean job creation as well as filling employment gaps. Seeing these benefits occur would assist in changing community attitudes from the view that skilled migrants take jobs from the local workforce to understand and valuing the businesses, economic growth and job opportunities skilled migrants create.

4.21 What strategies have your organisation adopted to manage risks associated with Asian growth?

International student enrolment in both VET and schools has reduced over the past few years, in Australia in general and Tasmania in particular. A range of factors have contributed to the decline.

- Australia's reputation as a safe and quality destination for study has been tainted by highly publicised attacks on international students and the failure and closure of a number of CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students).
- The high Australian Dollar has increased our relative price by a factor of over one third and made competitor countries, such as the US and UK more affordable than Australia.
- Changes to Australian migration laws have impacted on student visa grants and ongoing study or employment pathways for students entering the country. At the same time competitor countries such as the US and Canada have made student visa grants easier.
- Increasing marketing effort is in place from USA, Canada, UK and NZ.
- International education hubs have been developed in Singapore, China and Korea.

To ensure ongoing success with the international student market the Department is:

- working harder in existing markets and looking at emerging markets elsewhere such as South America;
- staying in touch with trends nationally in internationally;
- concentrating on high yield agents and providing agent incentives;
- investigating additional initiatives such as how students from here can study overseas and how study here can be transferrable such as through the International Baccalaureate or Tasmanian curriculum offers overseas;
- developing flexible course and study options with overseas partners, such as the use of on-line resources that can be deliver TCE subjects in Korea;
- seeking opportunities for teachers to have off shore experiences;
- expecting that the national broadband will enable better communications internationally including working relationships between schools; and
- building engagement at all levels – politically, departmentally and at the institution level.