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LABOR'S FUTUREASIA: A FOCUS ON ASIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERACY

A Shorten Labor Government will get more Australians studying Asian languages to ensure our next generation is prepared for the jobs and economic opportunities of the Asian century.

Asia is home to the fastest growing middle class on earth, and Australia is right on its doorstep.

Almost nine in 10 of the next billion middle class consumers will be Asian. For Australian business to realise the most economic benefit, we must urgently improve on Asian languages and literacy.

In recent years, the proportion of school students choosing to study Asian languages in Year 12 has stagnated, and in some cases gone backwards.

We must do better.

Labor will make Asian languages and literacy a national priority.

We will invest \$32 million to strengthen Asian languages and literacy education in schools.

Our plan is:

1. To boost the supply of Asian language teachers

Up to 100 scholarships a year for native language speakers in Australia and for top-performers in priority Asian languages in year 12 to study teaching qualifications.

2. Establish a new nationwide FutureAsia – Asia Capable Schools program

Intensive training for 5000 principals and senior teachers to drive sustained whole-of-school change by supporting them to make the necessary updates to their curriculum and teacher capability. The training will cover the skills students will need for the Australian jobs created in the Asian Century, as well as Asian languages, histories, geographies, arts, literature, and how these translate to the school curriculum.

Labor would also seek matching funding from the states so this program can be rolled out for all 10,000 Australian principals over a 5 year period.

3. Improve Asian languages curriculum materials from pre-school to year 12

This would build on the existing Early Language Literacy App and Language Learning Space. Hindi will be added as the first priority - Indonesian, Mandarin and Japanese are already covered.

4. Set ambitious targets and goals for Asian languages

Working with the state and territories through COAG, and with non-government schools too.

5. Collect better data about the take up of Asian languages in Australia

So we can more easily track the progress and the take up of Asian languages.

Since 2011, no detailed Australia wide data on Asian language study in schools has been collected.

6. Establish an Advisory Council on Asia Capabilities

Headed up by experts from academia, the education sector, business, and not-for-profits to drive research and generate new ideas to boost teaching and learning about Asia across all levels of Australia's education system.

7. Undertake a whole-of-government audit of Australian and state government policies and programs on Asian literacy and languages education

To stop costly duplication and to ensure government money is well targeted at achieving improved Asia capability.

8. Convene regular meetings of Indo-Pacific Education Ministers

To further strengthen educational links between Australia and our Asian neighbours. The meetings will discuss collaborative education initiatives, scholarships, and strengthening ties across school and post-secondary education systems.

One year ago, Labor announced a comprehensive policy approach to a deeper Asian engagement called 'FutureAsia'.

A Shorten Labor Government is determined to do more than pay lip-service to the Asian century. At a time when Scott Morrison is using foreign policy as a political tool, Labor is doing the work to put in place the foundations for a more prosperous relationship with our region.

Labor has continued to develop a fundamental whole-of-government, nationwide strategy to deepen and broaden our engagement with Asia.

The following FutureAsia policies have already been announced:

- Restoration of \$1.5 million in funding cut from the Asian Education Foundation
- Allocating \$3 million to boost the Asian capability of Australian boards, working with the Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Establishing the Australian-ASEAN Studies Centre
- Establishing an Asian Diaspora program
- Seek an agreement to establish an reciprocal internship program with China
- Make Australia Week in China an annual event
- Set up a team to tackle non-tariff barriers to trade
- Hold meetings of Asia-Pacific Finance Ministers in advance of the G20 Finance Ministers meeting
- Holding an annual 2 +2 of Australia's and Indonesia's Finance and Trade Ministers

- Report annually to the Parliament on progress in implementing FutureAsia
- Support-in-principle the 10 priority recommendations of Peter Varghese's Indian Economic Strategy
- Hold Annual Australia Week in India trade missions
- Establish an India/Australia reciprocal internship program.