

**Strengthening Japanese
Language Learning
In Support Of The
Australia-Japan Business And Academic
Relationship**

**Prepared for the Sixth Australia-Japan Conference
by a Joint Australia-Japan Working Group for the Promotion of Japanese
Language Education and People-to-People Exchange**

12 February 2010

Executive Summary

This report was prepared for the sixth Australia-Japan Conference (AJC6) by a bilateral working group comprising key representatives from business, education and government in Australia and Japan.

The report was prepared in response to the recommendations of the fifth Australia-Japan Conference (AJC5), which was held in Tokyo in November 2008, at which the then Japanese Prime Minister pointed out that Japanese language learning was currently underutilised in the exchange between the two countries in the areas of higher education and business (see Appendix III – A Snapshot of Japanese language learning in Australia). The AJC5 then decided to request a working group to submit to the Australia-Japan Conference recommendations on ways to further promote people-to-people exchanges in business and academia by building on the Japanese language education in Australia.

The Working Group (whose members are listed in Appendix II) discussed ways to enhance Japanese language learning in Australia in support of the people-to-people relationship, particularly in the fields of business and academia, under the terms of reference as attached in Appendix I.

During the course of drafting the report, the working group convened three bilateral conferences, in November 2009 in Tokyo, in December 2009 by video-conference, and in February 2010 in Canberra. Based on these discussions, the working group identified the following five key priorities where practical action may be taken by the Australian and Japanese governments, business, educational institutions and community groups that would enhance Japanese language learning in Australia in support of closer people-to-people ties.

Key Recommendations

1. Improvement in the supply and development of Japanese language teachers – quantity and quality.
2. Greater Japanese language resources for teachers and students.
3. Stronger continuity of Japanese language learning between the primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational levels in Australia.
4. Support for career opportunities and incentives for proficient Japanese language learners.
5. Better co-ordination between government and non-government organisations involved in aspects of the bilateral relationship, especially those with strong interests in Japanese language education.

The Working Group commends these recommendations to Governments, business and academia for their consideration.

Recommendations for Strengthening Japanese Language Learning

1: Improvement in the supply and development of Japanese language teachers – quantity and quality.

Australia and Japan should cooperate to improve the supply and development of Japanese language teachers in Australia - both in quality and quantity - through recruiting and training more high-quality teachers and supporting existing teachers. At the tertiary level, it is important to improve support for Japan-related university programs and facilities in Australia in order to develop Australia's analytical capacity with regard to Japan. We recommend that consideration be given to the following actions:

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant Partners</i>
(a) Investigate the feasibility of establishing a "reverse" Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET)-style program whereby Japanese citizens would be placed temporarily in Australian schools as Japanese language assistant teachers to support Australian teachers of Japanese.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian and Japanese educational institutions
(b) Explore the scope to offer Japanese trainee teachers the opportunity to gain credits towards their university degrees in Japan by working as teacher's assistants in Australian schools, and offering Australian trainee teachers the opportunity to gain credits towards their university degrees by working as teacher's assistants in Japanese schools.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian and Japanese educational institutions
(c) Establish and expand existing school-based bilateral teaching exchanges whereby teachers would work in the other country's school classrooms, building on, for example, existing sister school or sister city relationships, and utilising new technology.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian and Japanese educational institutions
(d) Consider how better to access the skills of Japanese international students studying at Australian universities in support of Japanese language teaching in a variety of settings.	Australian Government Australian educational institutions

2: Greater Japanese language resources for teachers and students.

Australian educational institutions and policy-makers should coordinate and standardise better the approaches adopted in the teaching of Japanese at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in Australia. The Japanese Government and educational institutions are encouraged to cooperate by providing advice and teaching materials. This should be done with reference to, and taking account of, existing initiatives. We recommend that consideration be given to the following actions:

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant Partners</i>
(a) Develop a national library of Japanese language teaching and classroom materials, drawing on existing collections and developing these further to include interactive and static e-materials accessible through the internet as a resource for all levels of Japanese learning.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian educational institutions
(b) Establish 'connected classrooms' between Australian and Japanese classrooms using the internet, smart boards and video-teleconferencing software to facilitate more regular, contemporary and sustainable contact and support between schools, teachers and students.	Australian Governments Australian and Japanese educational institutions
(c) Establish a central point of information and co-ordination in Australia to facilitate a greater number of teacher exchanges.	Australian Governments Australian educational institutions
(d) Periodically review existing and possible future support for Australian teachers of Japanese in consultation between the two countries with input from governments, business and academia.	Japanese Government Australian Governments Japanese and Australian business Japanese and Australian educational institutions

3: Stronger continuity of Japanese language learning between the primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational levels in Australia.

Stronger continuity of Japanese language learning among different educational levels should enhance the overall effectiveness of Japanese language learning in Australia. It would also make the study of Japan’s economy, politics and government policy-making more accessible and better recognised for its importance to Australia. New activities should be consistent with existing initiatives which address supply and retention, course delivery and student demand for language courses. We recommend that consideration be given to the following actions:

Recommendations	Relevant Partners
(a) Enhance incentives to continue learning Japanese at universities by: (i) expanding short- and long-term opportunities to study in Japan by reinforcing student exchange programs (ii) encouraging wider use of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (iii) investigating the establishment of a Japan-Australia Student Conference, and (iv) making the study of Japanese more accessible at the tertiary level regardless of the student’s course of study.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian and Japanese educational institutions
(b) Enhance cooperation among the Australian Governments to assist and enable students to study Japanese continuously and sequentially throughout their schooling, and give immediate attention to attrition and lack of continuity occurring between the primary/secondary levels, and the secondary/tertiary levels.	Australian Governments
(c) Encourage all Australian universities to adopt university entrance score incentives for language exam scores, such as the “language bonus” implemented by universities in Victoria.	Australian educational institutions
(d) Encourage Australian universities to embrace further language learning as part of a whole-of-life discipline by both offering more Japanese-plus-one dual degrees as well as permitting course structures which encourage Japanese language studies without having to take dual degrees.	Australian Governments
(e) Strengthen inter-school and inter-university cooperation by encouraging those educational institutions which have well-developed Japanese language programs to assist better those institutions with under-developed or no Japanese teaching programs.	Australian educational institutions
(f) Provide strengthened opportunities and incentives to students and professional Japanese language students, including heritage students, to continue to develop their language skills to higher levels, including through targeted exchange programs and internships.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian educational institutions Japanese community in Australia
(g) Introduce nationwide tracking and monitoring of standards, trends, numbers, retention and outcomes for Japanese language studies across primary, secondary and tertiary sectors with the aim of providing meaningful data to teachers, education departments and	Australian Governments

prospective employers.	
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4: Support for career opportunities and incentives for proficient Japanese language learners.

The knowledge and experience of Japanese language learners graduating from Australian universities is not always providing them with a clear path to related employment. Australia and Japan should increase awareness in the business community of the international competitiveness of Australian graduates with highly proficient Japanese language skills and a good understanding of Japan, and promote initiatives to enhance opportunities for employment using the Japanese language skills acquired. We recommend that consideration be given to the following actions:

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant Partners</i>
(a) Develop stronger incentives to enhance and maintain Japanese language skills among students and employees, through holding employment seminars, providing internships and establishing career paths.	Australian business Japanese business Australian educational institutions
(b) Encourage Japanese business to adopt a more flexible recruitment schedule to address the mismatch with the Australian academic cycle.	Japanese business
(c) Further provide Japanese language learners with academic credits for their internships in Japanese companies.	Japanese business Australian and Japanese educational institutions
(d) Market Australian university graduates to Japanese companies in Japan, Australia and third countries (especially Asia) by convening recruitment fairs, facilitating employment seminars and internships, and encouraging closer engagement among Australian universities and business organisations.	Australian educational institutions Japanese business Australian and international businesses with links to Japan
(e) Explore the scope for an executive internship program, using the example of the EU-funded Executive Training Programme in Japan (ETP), which would be supported by selected learning institutions, senior business bodies and leading corporations in Australia and Japan, to offer young executives the opportunity to reside in Japan for extended periods to undertake business-oriented language study and internships designed to impart a knowledge of Japan's business practices and corporate culture.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian business Japanese business Australian educational institutions
(f) Expand and make better use of various invitations, exchange and scholarship programs targeted at students and teachers of both countries who are involved or interested in Japanese language learning and teaching.	Australian Governments Japanese Government Australian business Japanese business Australian and Japanese educational institutions Community organisations
(g) Develop communication channels between business bodies and media outlets regarding Australia-Japan relations to promote recognition of the importance of the economic, political and social relationship.	Australia-Japan Focus Reference Group (the role of this group is discussed in recommendation 5)

5: Better co-ordination between government and non-government organisations involved in aspects of the bilateral relationship with strong interests in Japanese language education.

For Australia and Japan there would be significant benefits gained by working with non-government organisations in both countries involved in the bilateral relationship. Both governments should explore mutually beneficial objectives for increasing Japanese language education in Australia and better coordinating efforts to achieve these objectives. Australian Governments, educational institutions and business should aim to equip young Australians with the knowledge, skills and cultural understanding that will allow them to engage with Japan. Both countries should initiate a “virtuous circle” whereby increasing investment in Japan-related subjects will stimulate more interest in learning the Japanese language, and vice-versa. We recommend that consideration be given to the following action:

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Relevant Partners</i>
<p>(a) Establish a national Australia-Japan Focus Reference Group (AJFRG) based in Australia comprising a secretariat and a committee of senior business, academic and community representatives to encourage activities in Australia to facilitate realisation of the recommendations listed in this report and to achieve the following related objectives:</p> <p>(i) to develop, across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Australia, advanced Japanese language proficiency among students that meet practical benchmarks which are easy to understand by future employers and academic supervisors and are linked to the national curriculum</p> <p>(ii) to develop opportunities for using acquired Japanese language proficiency in a professional capacity</p> <p>(iii) to enhance the analytical capacity in Australian universities with regard to Japan’s economy, politics and policy-making</p> <p>(iv) to act as the main consultative point for government departments and agencies, educational institutions, professional bodies and organisations which are active in the bilateral relationship on the above issues</p> <p>(v) to establish an internet portal that would connect relevant organisations; provide information on programs and resources; register Australian people working in Japan-related areas; provide relevant case stories; and provide a forum for discussions.</p>	<p>Australian Governments</p> <p>Embassy of Japan</p> <p>Australian business</p> <p>Australian educational institutions</p> <p>Japanese business</p>

Appendix I – Working Group Terms of Reference

**Japanese Language Learning Initiative to Support the Australia-Japan Bilateral Relationship
Working Group Terms of Reference**

The Governments of Australia and Japan recognise the important role that language plays in equipping young people for the globalised world and are committed to advancing foreign languages education. The Australia-Japan languages learning initiative aims to enhance and strengthen people-to-people ties between Australia and Japan, particularly in business and academia, by building on the Japanese language capability of Australian students. This initiative will further strengthen Australia-Japan relations.

At the fifth Australia-Japan Conference in November 2008, the then Prime Minister Taro Aso encouraged participants to explore ways of using the Japanese language to reinforce people-to-people ties between Australia and Japan. In April 2009, the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP welcomed cooperation in this area, and in May 2009, the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and former Foreign Minister Nakasone agreed to establish a bilateral working group to advance the initiative.

The Terms of Reference for the Australia-Japan Japanese Language Working Group (AJJLWG) are:

- To draft practical recommendations, in the form of a written paper, to be submitted for consideration by the Australia-Japan Conference in February 2010 on ways to enhance Japanese language learning in Australia that will support closer ties, particularly in the fields of business and academia.
- In connection with the above, to propose ways to enhance people-to-people ties, in particular, through advanced proficiency in Japanese and initiatives directed at promoting greater interest and appreciation of the benefits of Japanese proficiency as a means of enriching business, professional and social engagement.
- To prepare preliminary recommendations to the Governments of Australia and Japan for their information by December 2009.

Appendix II – Working Group Members

Australia

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Appendix III - A Snapshot of Japanese Language Learning in Australia

Australia is at a critical point in its development of language learning. From the 1970s until the early 2000s, the teaching of Japanese in Australia expanded rapidly, and it is now the most widely taught language in Australia, in both schools and universities. Japanese is taught across both the primary and secondary levels in all school sectors (government, independent and Catholic) and in all States and Territories. In 2006, 332,943 students learnt Japanese in all levels of schooling, down 20 per cent from 2000.¹ More than 90 per cent of these Japanese learners are primary and secondary students.²

In 2008 all Australian education ministers endorsed the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* with its acknowledgement of the need for young Australians to become Asia literate and be able to communicate with countries in Asia in their own language and with greater cultural understanding. The Government has committed \$62.4 million over four years through the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) to ensure that school students have the opportunity to study the languages and cultures of our Asian neighbours, namely Japan, China, Indonesia and Korea. All Australian governments committed to the NALSSP and agreed to a target that, by 2020, at least 12 per cent of students will graduate Year 12 fluent in a targeted Asian language.

In 2008, the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* reported that approximately 4,735 students studied Japanese at the Year 12 level. This represents 19 per cent of the 24,922 year 12 students who studied a language in 2008. Data about the retention of Japanese language students from Years 7 to 12 indicates decreasing numbers engaging at a senior secondary level, and attrition highest between year 10 and year 11. The supply of Japanese language teachers is adequate in most metropolitan areas of Australia, however, supply problems exist in some rural and remote locations. The recruitment and training of more Japanese teachers, and the retention and support of existing teachers will be critical to improving student attainment and retention. There is some divergence in teacher qualifications across jurisdictions.

At the university level in Australia, Japan Foundation data shows that, in 2006, there were about 9,000 students of Japanese. A survey of 33 Australian universities by the Australia Japan Research Centre of the Australian National University in 2004 showed that students of Japanese at the university level increased until 1996 and then declined until 2003, the final year of the survey. 330 Australian students were enrolled in Japanese universities in 2009, a figure which has remained steady since 2003.³

¹ Lo Bianco, J., Slaughter, Y., (2009) *Second Languages and Aust Schooling*, Aust Edn Rev, Aust Council for Edn Research; and Erebus Consulting Partners, (2002) *Evaluation of the Nat. Asian Languages and Studies in Aust. Schools Strategy*.

² *Survey Report on Japanese-Language Education Abroad 2006*, Japan Foundation, (2006).

³ Japan Student Services Association (2009).