

Another outcome of my work in Indonesia was to be invited to join some cultural exchanges through the Australia-Indonesia Institute, in the Department of Foreign Affairs. This was established about 30 years ago to develop more broadly-based relationships between Australia and Indonesia, and to project, and develop, good images of Australia and Indonesia. It runs things like a Muslim Exchange Program, a Youth Exchange Program, a Senior Editors Program, where our senior editors in Australia, like Greg Sheridan, spend a lot of time with their senior editors, so that they understand each other.

They also have a strategy called the Bridge Program, building relations through intercultural dialogue and growing engagement. It funds visits by Indonesian teachers to Australian schools, and vice versa, and then school eTwinning and online collaborative structures, collaborative programs. There've been almost 200 school partnerships, and nearly 800 teachers influenced by this. It's been quite exciting, I must admit. It's 10 years old now.

These images, the cultural links, the fact that I've learned Indonesian means it kind of makes it easier for me to be involved in these cultural exchanges, and cultural activities. I've noticed that the Indonesians really do appreciate that I've bothered to learn their language. They're always respectful of anybody, but their faces light up when they see that I've tried to learn their language and can talk easily with them. That makes it much easier to learn and to share.

We have had many strategic meetings through the AII, mostly about developing partnerships. I did a tour with Nobel Laureate, Barry Marshall. A bit of a song and dance tour, if you like, trying to get Centers of Research Excellence equally partnered. Equal roles of Australia and Indonesia in that process, so that we could develop joint Centers of Research Excellence. There's also been lots of educational exchanges. I mentioned the things that we're doing in terms of school, partnering and teacher exchanges, et cetera.

Finally, the embassy has been crucial and might I say outstanding in facilitating all of these things. I always enjoy visiting the embassy. Sometimes it's business, but sometimes it's functions at the embassy. For example, Australian students on exchange, doing presentations with their Indonesian friends.