



AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ASIA PACIFIC FUTURES RESEARCH NETWORK

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ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network

PROJECT SUMMARIES

Second Round 2006

PA20602

Applicant: Associate Professor Heather Goodall
Affiliation: University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
Project Title: "India-Australia: Cross Border Communications through media, environment and people"
Awarded: \$ 3000

This project brought together researchers and activists to examine questions concerning border crossings within and between India and Australia and to discuss research in the areas of media, environment and diasporic networks. It convened a forum to identify new possibilities for comparative learning and productive collaboration – from comparing models of development communication, to developing collaborative research around the joint management of national parks. The forum offered a rare and timely opportunity for involvement in comparative research between the two countries, particularly in the light of new forms of digital media which have intensified communication between India and Australia, and between Indigenous groups facing environmental challenges. Its thematic scope reached widely across geographic and cultural borders, to engage researchers from a range of institutional structures and disciplines with Australian Indigenous researchers and advocates. Sydney's significant South Asian population and non-academic audiences were provided access to the forum through media coverage of interviews and a public lecture given by visiting Professor Richard Grove (Sussex and ANU) on Environmental Politics. Under the guidance of senior researchers, training opportunities for postgraduate students and early career researchers were enhanced, during the preparation of related collaborative reviews and an online workshop for the publication of a referred electronic journal, *Transforming Cultures*.

PA20603

Applicant: Professor David Hill
Affiliation: Murdoch University
Project Title: Mediating Transition to Post-Authoritarian Indonesia
Awarded: \$ 10,000

This workshop assembled established and emerging scholars from Australia and South Asia to document and analyse the articulation of print and broadcast media into post-authoritarian politics in Indonesia since 1998. It addressed two specific questions: How is the media transformed, both in terms of its structure and its texts, by the changed political economy of post-New Order Indonesia? And how is the potential of this media enabled or hampered in

the development of a pluralist democracy in Indonesia? Selected papers from the workshop were included in an edited volume designed to provide a comprehensive description of post-1990 developments in the Indonesian media and useful insights into the relationship between media and democratic change. Australia leads the field of international research into media developments that have occurred since the fall of Suharto. The project reinforced this point by drawing upon proximate expertise in the region, strengthening links with pockets of research scholars in various Indonesian universities, as well as building links with the region's primary Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. It also supported the participation of postgraduate students and early career researchers across Australia and Southeast Asia, involving them in both the workshop proceedings and the publication of the collaborative volume. The professional connections established by the project provided a sound basis for future funding applications to be made by emerging scholars to major external bodies, both in Australia and abroad, creating new possibilities for further innovative research projects in the field.

PA20604

Applicant: Emeritus Professor Jan Currie
Affiliation: Murdoch University
Project Title: "Rankings, RAEs and RQFs: Their Impact on Asian and Australian Universities"
Awarded: \$ 3000

This two day symposium stimulated constructive dialogue between policy makers and academics on the use of rankings and research assessment exercises aimed at improving the quality of research in universities. It drew in presenters from across Asia and Australia, allowing policy makers to discuss the benefits of their models and problems encountered and inviting academics researching the field to reflect upon the models and their underlying rationales. Presentations and discussion addressed the following questions: How do nations in our region assess research in universities? What are the short and long term consequences of different approaches to research quality assessments for academics and universities? And are research assessments like the RAE and the RQF effective in improving the quality of research? Though research assessments and university rankings have existed in a variety of forms for at least two decades, they are an ever growing phenomenon in this region. Australian universities have entered a new phase in their attempt to measure research quality, while policy makers at other Asian universities are also examining possible future directions amidst competition for students and staff in an increasingly market oriented environment. This project therefore ultimately sought to ascertain the nature of the short-term and long-term consequences of different approaches for academics and universities. Postgraduate and postdoctoral students were invited to submit papers, register for free and to contribute to an edited book based on selected symposium proceedings.

PA20607

Applicant: Dr Mark McLelland
Affiliation: University of Wollongong
Project Title: "Understanding the Internet in Asia and the Pacific"
Awarded: \$ 3000

This project comprised a workshop for postgraduate students and early career researchers with three major aims: Firstly, to bring together leading Internet scholars working on Asia/Pacific Internet culture to discuss their work and highlight difficulties and particularities of researching the Internet in the region. Secondly, to give Australian postgraduate students and early career researchers working on Asia/Pacific Internet cultures the opportunity to present their work and receive feedback from leading experts in the field. And thirdly, to

produce an edited book, special journal edition or refereed online publication of papers, thus adding to our understanding of the specificities of the Internet as a medium of communication in the region and contributing to the career development of the ECR participants. The impetus for the project was the significant need to respond to the fundamental shift in the Internet's co-ordinates from English language to non-English language use, specifically the use of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and French. The workshop and discussion thus focused on issues related to the ramifications of English as a minority in terms of overall online language use upon concepts, methods, assumptions and frameworks used to study the Internet. Students were given detailed feedback by senior researchers following their presentation of papers. They were also offered mentoring during the editing and publishing process by Dr McLelland, a highly experienced and widely published academic.

PA20608

Applicant: Dr Julian Millie
Affiliation: Monash University
Project Title: "Islamic Culture(s), Nation-building and the Media: Contemporary Issues"
Awarded: \$ 10,000

This one day conference provided an opportunity for established and early career scholars to discuss the cultural influence of Islam on nation-building in the Asia-Pacific region. It deepened understandings of nation-building processes and prompt considerable reflection upon models, traditions and authoritative pasts associated with the Islamic world. With a number of Islamic states at critical stages in markedly diverse nation-building processes, some, such as Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, and Kosovo are currently implementing new national structures that constitute major breaks from previous social and political configurations. Others, such as Indonesia and Iran, are facing critical phases in the nation-building process due to a recent historical transformation in the political landscape. The conference was therefore specifically designed to bridge a conceptual gap that has traditionally separated the fields of academia and mass media - between the impartiality and scientific procedures academia pretends to prioritise and the politics of media representation, which require short, powerful analytical generalities that create the illusion of complete understanding in brief messages. A half day discussion followed the presentation of academic papers where journalists from newspapers, magazines, TV and radio voiced their opinions on two central topics: the obstacles to effective dialogue between the media and scholarly expertise and the specific ways in which the 'media frame contests over nation in Islamic countries'. Involvement of postgraduate students both as conference presenters and observers was also a key aspect of this project.

PA20616

Applicant: Dr Elizabeth Thompson
Affiliation: University of Wollongong
Project Title: "Media representations of Asian attitudes towards Australia and Australians"
Awarded: \$ 3000

This one day workshop followed a colloquium and edited collection that developed out of the collaborative effort, *The News Project* (a study of news coverage that investigates the ideologies behind 'reporter' voice in English, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Swedish, Vietnamese and Indonesian news articles). The aim of the workshop was to bring together multidisciplinary perspectives on the media in Indonesia, China and Japan to broaden our understanding of the context surrounding news reporting in these countries. By focusing on the nature of news as texts, it drew attention to their specific social and cultural contexts and

created a better understanding of news reporting in these regions. It gathered together multi-disciplinary scholars and postgraduate students from Australia and overseas to activate a dialogue between functional linguists and social scientists around the theme of media discourse studies. In addition to the important research training dimension of the workshop, it achieved two further significant objectives: the publication of workshop proceedings in a special journal issue of *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*, and the preparation of an ARC Discovery Grant on media representations of Asian attitudes towards Australia and Australians. Postgraduate students attended the workshop and were also mentored in the preparation of their papers for publication.