

Brisbane, Australia

4 April 2006

THE BRISBANE COMMUNIQUÉ

Issued by

The Ministers attending the Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting

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I. Introduction

1. Twenty-seven Ministers and senior officials, representing Education and Training portfolios from across the Asia-Pacific region, met in Brisbane, Australia on 3-4 April 2006. This was the inaugural meeting of this group, with representatives from Turkey through to the Pacific Islands. On this occasion the meeting also included an observer from Brazil. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training, Australian Government.
2. The meeting was held parallel with the International Education Forum, attended by over 900 delegates from around the world. Ministers attended the Forum sessions that were focused on future directions and influences on education and training over the next ten to twenty years.
3. The Ministers met under the following theme:

What actions on education and training can be agreed that will strengthen good relations in the region; and underpin its social and economic development, through the international mobility of students and research collaboration?
4. Ministers recognised the diversity of economies, resources, political structures and socio-cultural context as well as significant differences in education systems. Many countries' highest priorities still rest with the provision of basic education. Ministers also recognised the importance of vocational and technical education. They agreed that internationalisation is a necessary and critical element for all education systems within the region.
5. The mobility of students and academics which has taken place over many years is now on a massive scale. This requires a response from Ministers to ensure that frameworks of quality assurance and mutual recognition facilitate this mobility. Ministers agreed on the common goal of increasing greater student and academic mobility and transferability of qualifications, and greater integration or exchangeability of education frameworks.

6. Student and academic mobility and exchange are seen to provide the basis for friendship, mutual respect and understanding, just as education is the key to prosperity, security and peace in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Mobility and exchange lead to increased transferability of skills, and facilitate participation in the global workforce. Education and training linkages also include the development of strong research links, teacher exchanges and partnerships and scholastic networks.
7. Ministers agreed to actively encourage and facilitate regional student and academic mobility and exchange, and address barriers to these activities. They agreed that there are different but important issues in schooling, vocational and technical education and higher education. They agreed to collaborate on:
 - quality assurance frameworks for the region linked to international standards, including courses delivered online;
 - recognition of educational and professional qualifications;
 - common competency based standards for teachers, particularly in science and mathematics; and
 - the development of common recognition of technical skills across the region in order to better meet the overall skills needs of the economic base of the region.
8. The Ministers believe that the pursuit of the benefits of a region with greater transferability across education and training is an exciting and achievable goal that will greatly enhance education cooperation and cultural understanding in the region by:
 - building people to people links and institution to institution links;
 - promoting reform and improved education and governance;
 - enhanced mutual understanding, knowledge and innovation; and
 - helping to address regional skills needs.

II. A New Biennial Education Forum for the Asia-Pacific

9. The Ministers agreed to continue the Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting as a biennial meeting that will become a new forum to consider common education issues at ministerial level, throughout this extended region. It was agreed that the next Biennial Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting will take place in 2008.
10. The Ministers agreed to establish an Officials' Working Group convened by Australia. This group will provide an interim report to Ministers in twelve months. Ministers also agreed to invite other nations from the Asia-Pacific region that have expressed interest in the work programme but were unable to attend this meeting to join the working group.
11. The Officials' Working Group will maintain cognisance of future possibilities for compatibility with initiatives already in development such as the European Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

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