

Open Letter

4 January 2016

TO:

Professor Brian Schmidt,
Vice Chancellor (incoming)
Australian National University
brian.schmidt@anu.edu.au

CC:

Prof. Gareth Evans, Chancellor,
Australian National University
gareth.evans@anu.edu.au

Prof. Veronica Taylor,
Dean of ANU College of Asia & the Pacific
veronica.taylor@anu.edu.au

Dear Prof Schmidt, Prof Evans and Prof Taylor,

We are writing to express our concern about the prospect of debilitating staff cuts at the ANU's College of Asia and the Pacific. Our understanding is that members of the School of Culture, History and Language (CHL) have been told as many as one third of them may face dismissal next year.

CHL is among the highest performing academic units in the country and we can confirm that its members include many fellow anthropologists and scholars in related fields with international renown. CHL also has a high concentration of expertise on Asia. This expertise would seem worthy of preserving and nurturing as a national and international asset, in view of the rise of Asia as the world's economic center and foremost contributor to global growth. This historic shift is an opportunity as well as a challenge and in-depth knowledge of Asian societies and cultures would seem a vital prerequisite for informing appropriate state policies and developing the required skills among the younger generation. Well-researched reports by the Asian Studies Association of Australia have revealed that Asia expertise has been in decline in Australia, while the ANU has been rightly regarded

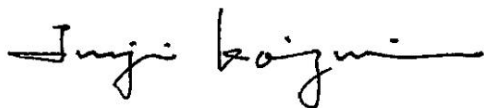
as a remaining bastion of strength until now. The loss of this strength will leave Australia poorly equipped to meet its future with confidence. While easy to dismantle, an established center of research, once disrupted, could take decades to rebuild its reputation and its ability to attract the best scholars from around the world and, meanwhile, remaining staff may be demoralized seeing their colleagues dismissed.

We thus would ask you to reconsider your strategy concerning the CHL, and explore alternative ways to address any underlying economic constraints.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Faye V. Harrison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof Faye V. Harrison, President, IUAES

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Junji Koizumi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof Junji Koizumi, Secretary-General, IUAES

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Reuter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof Thomas Reuter, Senior Vice President, IUAES (PhD ANU 1996)

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the IUAES