



## QPLC DISCUSSION PAPER: INDONESIA and AUSTRALIA

### Introduction

This Discussion Paper covers the history and recent developments in Australia's relationship with Indonesia, taking into account the implications of the increasing level of surveillance, and the controversy over asylum seekers, for that relationship. It raises a number of points for consideration by Friends and Meetings.

### Background

In November 2013 it was revealed, by Edward Snowden who used to work for the US National Security Agency, that Australian security agencies had spied on President Yudhoyono, his wife and close associates in the Indonesian Government several years ago. The Prime Minister Tony Abbott chose to reaffirm a longstanding policy of not commenting on security matters, but this did not include an apology and was seen in Indonesia as an inadequate response. As a result, the Indonesian Government suspended military and political co-operation until a new 'intelligence accord' could be worked out, and the controversy may also affect the trade relationship adversely. Any new accord is likely to take some time. In the meantime a 'hotline' is being set up between the two governments.

In January 2014 the Australian Government admitted that naval and customs vessels intruded accidentally into Indonesian waters in order to send back a boat of asylum seekers. The Indonesian Government responded by calling for a halt to such operations, and indicated it would increase its own naval patrols. Allegations that some asylum seekers were physically harmed by Australian officials added to the tension.

### Indonesia-Australia Relationship

The history of the relationship can be summarised in the following way:

- Australia supported moves at the United Nations in 1947 to decolonize Indonesia from Dutch rule, and recognized it as the Republic of Indonesia in 1949.
- During the Confrontation (Konfrontasi) – Indonesia's undeclared war after the formation of Malaysia - from 1964 to 1966 Australia supported Malaysia but maintained trade and aid with Indonesia.

- One result of this history was the creation of the Five Power Defence Arrangements involving Australia, Britain, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore. Indonesia was and is excluded from this arrangement.
- When Paul Keating was Australian Prime Minister in the 1990s he initiated closer links with Indonesia and this led to some more formal processes for consultation and co-operation (eg Ministerial Forum, security pact, APEC).
- The conflict over East Timor's initially led to Australia assuring Indonesia it would not intervene (1975), but later to Australia's direct involvement in the international force to ensure East Timor's independence after the 1999 plebiscite.
- The Bali bombings in 2002 and the attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004 added stresses to the relationship, along with disagreements over the flow of asylum seekers in the region.
- Australia gave substantial aid to Indonesia in the wake of the 2004 tsunami and the 2008 global financial crisis.
- In 2004 the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade reported on the relationship and put a strong emphasis on rebuilding defence relations.
- In 2010 President Yudhoyono visited Australia and spoke of achieving a 'fair dinkum' partnership in the future.
- In 2011 an Australian media report on cruelty to cattle in some Indonesian abattoirs led to suspension of the live export trade, and although the trade was gradually restored (with more safeguards) tension has continued about the issue of live exports and the extent of Indonesia's dependence on Australian sources.
- Indonesia remains suspicious of Australia's intentions regarding the future of West Papua, despite official Australian affirmations of not questioning Indonesia's territorial integrity. Both major parties, while expressing general support for greater autonomy in the region, oppose independence. The Greens have favoured self-determination. NGOs within Australia have continued to raise concerns about human rights violations in West Papua.

The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT) gives the following overview of the relationship on its website ([www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au))

Indonesia is one of Australia's most important bilateral relationships. Our countries enjoy a highly productive and broad-based partnership that encompasses business, education, defence, security and people-to-people links. The strength of the relationship can be seen in the depth and breadth of high level exchanges between leaders, ministers and prominent people of both countries.

Australia and Indonesia cooperate in practical ways on a wide range of international and regional issues particularly in multilateral forums such as the East Asia Summit, the G20 and APEC. Australia is also committed to a long-term development partnership with Indonesia. In 2012-13, Australia's assistance to Indonesia was worth an estimated \$541.6 million, making it our largest bilateral aid program.

Close cooperation between Australia and Indonesia on security matters is underpinned by the Lombok Treaty (2006), which provides a treaty-level framework for addressing traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Australia and Indonesia signed a Defence Cooperation Arrangement in September 2012 and have agreed to increase defence collaboration.

On 1 October 2013, in a speech in Jakarta, Prime Minister Tony Abbott made the following comments about the relationship:

- "From Australia's perspective there should be an urgency to building this relationship while there's still so much that Australia has to give that Indonesian is keen to receive".

- A new Colombo Plan is being developed to “acknowledge how much the region can teach us as well as how much we can offer our region”. There is also to be a new Indonesian Australian Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiated.
- The Government is to fund a new Australian Centre for Indonesian Studies at Monash University to drive research and business initiatives and to strengthen the relationship. It will have links with ‘nodes’ at ANU, Melbourne University and CSIRO, and in due course with a network of universities and research centres in Indonesia. Particular areas of focus will include language and culture, food security, infrastructure, education, resources and health.

There are already various groups and projects that promote links between the two countries. These include the following:

- Australia-Indonesia Association which holds social events and offers language courses. See [www.australia-indonesia-association.com](http://www.australia-indonesia-association.com)
- Australia-Indonesia Youth Association which connects young people in the countries and encourages business and government to engage young people in their links. See [www.aiya.org.au](http://www.aiya.org.au)
- Indonesia-Australia Business Council (based in Indonesia) which represents private sector business interests in commercial relations. See [www.iabc.or.id](http://www.iabc.or.id)
- Australia-Indonesia Business Council (based in Australia) which promotes trade, commerce and investment between the countries. See [www.aibc.com.au](http://www.aibc.com.au)
- The Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement (BRIDGE) operates through the Australia-Indonesian Institute within DFAT to use technology to build links between teachers and students in the two countries. See [www.dfat.gov.au/aia](http://www.dfat.gov.au/aia)
- Periodic meetings of the Indonesia-Australia Dialogues are held to expand people to people links. The last one was held in March 2013 in Sydney.

Stephen Grenville, writing for *The Interpreter* website on 4 December 2012, drew attention to the success of some ventures such as John Howard arranging swaps between senior Australian and Indonesian officials in government departments. He writes that “the challenge...(is)...to foster such a dense interaction between the two countries that when interests diverge or viewpoints differ, these issues are muffled and contained by a spiderweb of mutually beneficial linkages”.

## Analysis and Commentary

On 22 November 2013, former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser wrote (*The Guardian* on-line) that Australia should follow the approach of President Obama in USA when he assured Angela Merkel (German President) that spying on her would not happen again. Malcolm Fraser said that the nature of spying has changed dramatically over the years, but that there was no justification for “snooping on the people whose trust one wants to win”. He also called for a review of Australia’s surveillance services to reassure the Australian community that those services have not ‘run amok’.

On 25 November 2013, Professor Joe Camilleri (International Relations, La Trobe University) reiterated the need for a review of surveillance operations, but said the most pressing question is “whether or not Australia is ready and able to develop a stable, close and mutually respectful relationship with Indonesia, its government, its leaders, and its people”. He said that Tony Abbott’s approach gave the message that (a) Australian sovereignty was superior to Indonesia’s, (b) the relationship was largely valued for serving Australia’s interests, and (c) the spying was done with

Indonesia's best interests at heart. Joe Camilleri prefers a different approach that would "cultivate a deeper understanding of our neighbour's interests, attitudes and perceptions". This would involve a ten-year strategy engaging educational institutions, governments, parliaments, media, business and the professions to raise the cultural and political literacy about Indonesia.

On 29 November 2013, Richard Tanter (Nautilus Institute) predicted that Australia would have difficulty negotiating a new intelligence accord with Indonesia because of the influence the US National Security Agency (NSA) has on Australia's Signals Directorate (ASD). He emphasized that Australia uses its embassies for spying, and that intelligence gained is automatically made available to the NSA. "Condescension, ethnocentrism and an often racialised view of cultural differences are never far from the surface in Australia's dealing with Asia". He said Indonesia needed Australia less than Australia needed Indonesia, and predicted that the fracture in the relationship would take considerable time to heal.

Zoe Kenny has done an analysis of the issues affecting women in Indonesia in an article "Fighting for women's rights in Indonesia" (*Direct Action*, March 2011). She points out that (a) during President Sukarno's time, there was an increasing involvement of women in public life; (b) President Suharto emphasized the role of women in domestic life and undermined many NGO initiatives to focus on rights; (c) since Suharto left, women have continued to be oppressed, having fewer job opportunities in the face of Chinese imports and being vulnerable as migrant workers in other countries, and (d) there remain active women's groups working to challenge the capitalist system, patriarchal culture and militarism.

Thomas Reuter (*The Conversation* 1 December 2013) recalls that Australian forces had some part in supporting the Dutch colonial power suppressing Indonesian moves for independence after World War 2, and says that during President Sukarno's time in power Australia was at least complicit in the Suharto-led moves to topple him and therefore in the massacres that took place in 1965. He believes there remains ambivalence among the Indonesian elite towards Australia, and that after President Yodhoyono's term finishes this year a more nationalistic attitude may come to the fore.

John Blaxland from the ANU Strategic and Defence Studies Centre wrote in *The Canberra Times* on 19 December 2013 that Indonesia is the key to security co-operation being enhanced in South East Asia. "From Australia's perspective, there is a growing need to work with Indonesia with empathy and understanding to formulate a new arrangement to address concerns more comprehensively, enabling the coordination of efforts with those undertaken alongside Malaysia and Singapore as well". He envisages Australia taking the initiative to create a new security forum including Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore.

Commenting on the intrusion of Australian vessels into Indonesian waters, David Wroe (*The Canberra Times*, 22 January 2014) quoted Benjamin Schreer of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute as saying that Jakarta's tough response was aimed largely at a domestic audience. "The protocols are well established. I also think there is sufficient trust established between these two navies who actually know each other quite well". In the same article, Dave McRae of the Lowy Institute was quoted as saying the response was "damaging imagery" for the relationship.

In an article published in the Fairfax press (*The Canberra Times*, 17 February 2014), Philip Dorling and Michael Bachelard reported that further evidence from Edward Snowden's 'leaks' showed that "Australia's intelligence efforts against Indonesia involve a massive penetration of its phone networks and widespread data collection, and are not just targeting suspected terrorists or key political figures". They point out that the Australian Signals Directorate has accessed data from Indonesia's domestic satellite communications network and shared that information with the US National Security Agency. There is a claim (denied by the Australian Government) that some of the information collected was for commercial purposes (ie spying on a trade competitor for the US).

The ABC Radio's *Rear Vision* (16 February 2014) discussed the history of the relationship between Indonesia and Australia (see [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)). Adrian Vickers, professor of Southeast Asian Studies at Sydney University, said the important thing is that the two countries have a shared history and need to have greater knowledge of each other, for example through Indonesian history being taught in our schools. Evi Fitriani of the University of Indonesia said Indonesia and Australia have no choice but to make the relationship work, and interactions among the people of both regions need to increase.

## Quakers and Indonesia

In September 1965 two Australian Quakers, Richard Meredith and Eric Pollard, together with Mary Campbell from New Zealand YM, visited Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore bringing a message of peace and support during the period of Confrontation in the region. They met with senior government officials, members of Parliament, party leaders, social workers, educationists, newspaper editors, religious leaders, and trade union leaders. On their return they put a series of recommendations to Friends including:

- Bahasa Indonesian should be taught in Australian schools;
- Visits to Indonesia should be encouraged, especially by young people;
- Government and Parliamentary visits should occur regularly;
- Public policy towards Indonesia should be based on positive goodwill and co-operation;
- Development assistance programs should be extended;
- The idea of a Quaker centre in Indonesia could be explored.

Between 1990 and 2002, Quaker Service Australia (QSA) had a series of projects in Indonesia. These focused on providing school equipment at Ulakan High School, an information/education/training program for the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, re-forestation at Tenganan Village on Bali, agroforestry in Kupang (Timor), agrarian reform in Bandung, and food and water security in Dili (East Timor).

For 12 years from 1997, Robert Howell (Aotearoa/New Zealand YM) worked with a team from Gadjah Mada University to introduce non-violent conflict resolution to the Indonesian police. The New Zealand Government still supports a community policing program in eastern Indonesia, although this has been criticized as inadequate to challenge the prevailing police and military culture.

Friends Peace Teams work in Indonesia. There is a program of workshops and activities around healing, discernment, conscience, nonviolence, development play for peace, and water filters. Nadine Hoover (USA) has been part of the team that has helped develop these programs with a focus on peace with the earth and peace with each other. The main areas are Aceh, North Sumatra, West Java and Central Java.

Since 1987 there has been a branch of the Evangelical Friends Church in Indonesia. There are 40 churches and 4500 members (including children). They are affiliated informally to the Asia-West Pacific Section (AWPS) of FWCC. The secretary of the Church visited Australia as guest of Yearly Meeting in January 2012. In the AWPS newsletter (June 2012), Arbiter Simorankir (secretary) says there is an annual growth rate of 5% in membership, and keeping links across 12 provinces is a challenge. Projects supported include a peace building to care for homeless children, medical programs for poor people, and promoting peace in school communities.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) works with local partner organisations to empower communities, bridge conflict divides, and mobilise a movement to protect and celebrate Indonesia's rich diversity. AFSC particularly assists young peacemakers to respond to rising intolerance, discrimination, and communal violence between ethnic and religious groups in Aceh, West Timor, and Jogjakarta. A diversity of youth movements and groups paying focused attention to the protection of pluralism aim to change both the local and the national socio-political climate, currently under increasing influence of extremist groups and ultra-conservative political parties. AFSC has helped to organize a peace torch celebration in Manado, Jogjakarta and Aceh, and is also involved in the planning of a national level peace torch event to take place in Jakarta in November 2014. Last year Jiway Tung, Indonesia Country Representative, and two young Indonesian campaigners attended the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Poland (November 2013), joining an AFSC delegation. These strong leaders spoke out about their experiences of being discriminated against owing to their sexual orientation very powerfully, moving many participants. (Note: this information was prepared by AFSC).

Some Australian Friends (notably Jason MacLeod of Qld RM) have an ongoing commitment to supporting West Papuans in their struggle for a just and sustainable peace. They have proposed tying Australian aid funding to Indonesia to encouraging special autonomy for West Papua, seeking greater access to the region and release of political prisoners. There is currently a proposal for a Quaker-led delegation to West Papua to inform and engage Australian Friends about what is happening there, provide support for the nonviolent action movement there, and identify appropriate models for resolving the conflict.

## POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

Friends are encouraged to learn more about Australia's connections with Indonesia. To assist this, here are some questions that are worth considering.

- Intelligence/Surveillance. Can the relationship be strengthened by a full review of what our security agencies are doing and by developing new protocols that set limits on intelligence gathering and use?
- Building Trust. What steps would help in creating better mutual awareness among Australians and Indonesians? What agencies can help?

- Promoting Understanding. Are you willing to take specific action yourself to learn more about Indonesian language, history and culture? Would you be interested in serving on a Friends Peace Team?
- Defence Links. Can Australia continue to train Indonesian military forces without being complicit in human rights violations in such places as West Papua?
- Trade and Aid. How much priority must be given to, for example, the live export trade with Indonesia, given its well-documented stress and cruel practices on animals?
- Women's Rights. What could Australian Friends do to support women in Indonesia in their advocacy for rights and security?
- Asylum Seekers. What prospects are there for a regional agreement with Indonesia (and Malaysia) that might enable a fairer processing of asylum seekers in the region? What conditions would be needed to satisfy the International Refugee Convention? What initiatives could Australia take to begin a dialogue about this urgent issue?
- West Papua. What are the most constructive ways in which Australians can support West Papuans in their nonviolent struggle for justice and peace?
- Government Initiatives. What do you know and think of the new Colombo Plan or other proposals supported by the Coalition? See [www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au)

In thinking about these matters, you may be assisted by reference to the websites listed earlier in this discussion paper, as well as the following:

[www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)

[www.fwccworld.org](http://www.fwccworld.org)

[www.infopapua.org](http://www.infopapua.org)

[www.freewestpapua.org](http://www.freewestpapua.org)

The Asia West Pacific Section of FWCC can be source of information through its newsletter and website: [www.fwccawps.org](http://www.fwccawps.org)

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