

**Opening of “Measuring Quality Outcomes in Higher Education”
Australian High Commission Singapore 16th October 2015
Remarks by High Commissioner Philip Green**



Welcome guests to Singapore and to the Australian High Commission.

In this atrium, under our stylised Southern Cross, the symbol of our nation continent, we have the privilege to host a wide range of events- artistic, commercial, scholarly, diplomatic and some just social.

This forum today, measuring Quality Outcomes in Higher Education is a particularly worthy topic, and a privilege for us to be able to host.

I take this opportunity at the outset to thank our distinguished partners in this event. The European Commission Directorate- General for Education and Culture; and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. We are indeed in distinguished company and grateful to be working with global centres of excellence like yours.

Ladies and Gentlemen, higher education is a global endeavour. Participants to this forum today have come from across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, North and South America and Australia. They include representative of Governments, universities, quality assurance agencies, research organisations, and others. And we welcome in particular delegates from Singapore’s higher education sector.

There is a strong international interest in how we measure the quality of higher education teaching and learning.

Nations around the world are grappling with the challenge of building and sustaining high quality university systems that will position them for future economic growth.

Quality teaching is consequential for students, institutions, and national economies’ for international competitiveness.

Around the world, Governments, tax payers, and students and their families are paying more for education. They are ready to do so because there is now global recognition of the value of learning and scholarship. That is a good thing for us all. But with that high level of global interest, there naturally comes an intensifying demand to know the value of what is being taught and learned. Those in the field tell me that universities globally are better set up to measure the value of research, they are less well set up to measure the value of teaching.

As all of us rely more on education for our futures, and frankly as we pay more for it, it is natural that we want to know more about value of the education being delivered.

So your discussions today are important and topical and highly relevant, they are also challenging. How do we accurately measure the value of an education experience?

- It will be difficult to find measurements that capture the value of teaching across the astonishingly wide range of disciplines being taught in centres of learning globally.
- People from different perspectives will value different elements.

That is truly a challenging set of issues for you to grapple with today. Every student is different, a different context, a different outlook and a different aspiration. How do we measure the quality of an education against such a complex backdrop?

Ladies and gentlemen, it is particularly appropriate that your discussions are taking place here in Singapore, in the heart of vibrant Asia.

And here I want to take a moment to pay tribute to our own Professor Peter Coaldrake, Vice Chancellor of the Queensland University of Technology. It was his vision, as chairman of the IMHE board, to bring OECD Higher Education Future Conferences to this part of the world, to ensure that that major forum had the benefit of a backdrop to its discussions that is vibrant and focused on the future. And important too that Asia has the opportunity to benefit from the high level of expertise brought together by the OECD's peak forum on higher education.

I was with the Singapore Minister for Higher Education last night, and we discussed the significance of that conference and its being staged here. Congratulations and thank you Peter for that vision, and the way it has been delivered so successfully here in Singapore.

Let me return briefly to the significance of Asia as a backdrop to your work.

The locus of global influence is shifting decisively towards the Asia Pacific. Stationed here in Singapore, one feels the increasing centre-petal pull that Asia exhibits, as a rising centre in so many fields of human endeavour.

Economics are driving this dynamic...

- In our lifetimes, Asia's share of global GDP has doubled- from less than 20% in the 1960s to more than 40% now.
- And that trend line is set to continue. This year, the economic growth in emerging Asia will be around double that globally.
- Consider what that means for our futures, just a little way hence. Asia's total GDP will, on current trends, within a few short years, surpass the US and the EU combined.

Asia is truly becoming a vital, if not the vital, centre of global economic activity.

It seems to me that this phenomenon of Asia's rise will come to affect every part of human endeavour, not least the university sector. Sources of scholarship, sources of funding, sources of students, are going to become more focused on Asia, relentlessly, for as long as we can foresee.

For all of us, but perhaps particularly to Australians this phenomenon is pertinent. The greatest driver of global growth is right here in the region that abuts our continent.

That brings opportunity and challenge. Opportunity because a rising Asia will mean additional scope for collaboration and additional resources for Australians to engage with.... Challenge because Asia is learning, adapting, and improving faster than any rising continent in history.

This phenomenon is felt most strikingly in Singapore. Firstly because Singapore is a key hub for Asia - living here, we pick up insights from across the continent. What Sir Stamford Raffles sensed two centuries ago about the significance of Singapore's geography between India and China remains true today. Singapore is Asia's pulse.

And we feel the intensity of Asia's rise particularly because of the striking success that Singapore has had in so many fields of endeavour.

It has become a commonplace that Singapore has travelled the journey from Third World to First in the space of a generation.

In your field, of education, Singapore's success is perhaps particularly evident.

You will all know of rise and rise of Singapore's tertiary institutions.

You may also know of outstanding performance of Singapore students in the OECD PISA survey of school students.

And if you have not yet experienced Singapore's growing innovation precinct, I would encourage you to make the journey to Buona Vista, just a few short kilometres to our West, to see the way A*STAR, universities and industry are collaborating to bring to a reality Singapore's ambition to be a bigger part of global economy in the innovation age.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that your day here will be well spent. We are fortunate to have amongst us partners who are global leaders in their field. Your topic is one that is of increasing significance globally. And being here in vibrant Asia, you will feel the pulse, I think, of the significance of this region for all of our futures.

Under our Southern Cross, I wish all of you here a successful forum with a substantive discussion of these key and complex issues.