



**Submission of the Centre for Population Ageing Research (CEPAR)
at the University of New South Wales**

**Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia
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Building capabilities to understand and engage with Asian countries is a crucial element of Australia's potential to engage constructively in the region. To this end, knowledge of Asian institutions and socioeconomic conditions is vital to appreciating the role that emerging Asia plays and will play in our own country. A key megatrend shaping that role is the rapid demographic transition which is occurring rapidly in the Asian region. The Centre for Population Ageing Research (CEPAR) at UNSW has a dedicated research and engagement stream on demographic change in Asia and its socioeconomic impacts, particularly focused on the emerging economies of Asia. CEPAR is a multidisciplinary organisation, including demographers, economists, sociologists, public finance and public health experts, and others. The Asia team within CEPAR carries out research and policy dialogue and advisory work with a range of countries in the region, including China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Japan and Korea. It partners with national governments, regional and multilateral organisations, national researchers, and non-governmental organisations in the region.

CEPAR undertakes policy-oriented research which is intended to inform policy formulation in Asian countries, and to deepen Australia's understanding of socio-economic dynamics in the region. It receives funding from the federal Government, and has senior officials from multiple government agencies on its Advisory Board (including PM&C, Treasury, DFAT, Department of Social Services, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, ABS, and the Australian Human Rights Commission). CEPAR's Asia research and policy engagement includes demographic transition, macroeconomic and fiscal issues, labour markets and migration, social protection and pension systems, and health and care systems. Recent examples of engagement include analytical and policy advisory work with the State Council of China and the Asian Development Bank; inputs to the National Ageing Blueprint of the Government of Malaysia; and economic modelling work for Bappenas, the national planning agency of Indonesia.

In terms of building Asia capability within Australia, CEPAR staff guide PhD students working on Asia-related topics; employ postdoctoral fellows who engage in Asia research on the topics outlined above; arrange and contribute to conferences, workshops, policy dialogues and other events which include Asia-related themes; engage with counterparts in the federal government to disseminate CEPAR Asia research; and regularly host visiting delegations of officials from the Asian region who are keen to learn from Australia social policy experience and inform policy development in their own countries (recent visitors include delegations from China, Korea, and Vietnam).

A key insight from CEPAR's work is that building Asia capacity in Australia needs to be motivated by a deeper understanding of why Asia matters for us. Such understanding is not a luxury but increasingly a necessity, but one that is under-recognised. A critical social and economic dynamic within the region relates to demographic ageing. Rapid population ageing in Asia is very directly relevant to the evolution of the economic, political and social environment in Australia, and impacts us through a range of channels, including trade and investment (in both directions), immigration, security, and cultural exchanges. CEPAR's Asia team is dedicated to helping bridge the knowledge and capacity gaps on Asia.

We recommend that:

Government explicitly recognise the importance of demographic transition in emerging Asia, through in-country capacity building initiatives and in long-term domestic policy formulation. For example, the implications of population ageing in emerging Asia might be recognised by the Centre for Population in the Australian Treasury, and in documents such as the Intergenerational Report.