

## Hawker College

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# Launch of Australia-ASEAN-BRIDGE Project

On 30 May 2016, Hawker College was the venue for the launch of the next stage in the ASEAN-BRIDGE (Building Relations through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement) Project.

Through the project, a network of school partnerships will be established connecting teachers, students and communities with their counterparts in nine ASEAN member states – Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam in 2016, Brunei, Singapore and Philippines in 2017 and Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar in 2018. This is additional to the Indonesian BRIDGE connection in which our college has previously participated.



More than 70 guests attended the launch. Among them were seven ambassadors and other senior diplomats from the participating ASEAN countries; First Assistant Secretary South-East Asia Maritime Division Allaster Cox and colleagues including Geoff Brooks, Julia Landford and Kathryn Stacey (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade); Adam Luckhurst, Acting Group Manager, International Group, Australian Government Department of Education and Training;

Mr Kurt Mullane, Executive Director (Asia Education Foundation); Ms Christine Holgate, Chair of the Australia-ASEAN Council and other AAC Board members; Deputy Director-General Meredith Whitten (ACT Education Directorate); and BRIDGE teachers from throughout Australia and overseas.

The college has a well-established connection with the BRIDGE Project. Sheikh Faisal, our coordinator, has an active connection with the program going back several years and has organised video links and exchange visits between our college and schools in Indonesia and Thailand. Live video sessions at Hawker College focussed on areas including environmental and social issues, working through maths problems in online workshops and establishing friendly connections among students and teachers here and in our partner schools.

Our students were outstanding in representing the college at the launch and in the video conference. Robert Johnson did acknowledgement of country at the launch in the Hawker College Library. Jonah Morris and Ineka Voigt were MCs. Sam Nget welcomed guests in multiple languages. Jayden Goodrem played a didgeridoo item. Following lunch in Chinos Courtyard, organised by our DFAT colleagues, guests adjourned to the Science Lecture Theatre for the



teleconference via Adobe Connect with BRIDGE Program Thai partner schools Khao Saming Wittayakom School, Trat and Rajavinit Matthayom school, Bangkok. There was also a live video message from the First Secretary in the Australian Embassy in Bangkok. Anand Gupte, Jonah Morris, Sam Nget, Farhat Sheikh and Ineka Voigt spoke on the themes of “My favourite studies” and “What matters to me”.

Every visitor we spoke with commented on the calibre of our students and the inspirational stories they told. They also commended the smooth way the launch program ran, reflecting on the students as excellent representatives of our college as well as the impeccable organisation that is the hallmark of Chris Kenna’s work and Sheikh Faisal’s long and highly successful role in the BRIDGE Program, and his expertise with teleconferencing.

At Hawker College, this project is an opportunity for students to engage in authentic learning, which connects with a priority in our current strategic plan. Students will be able to interact in real time with their peers in South-East Asia, building their understanding of our region in the world and fostering their engagement with this region as global citizens.

Frank Keighley