



Asia Education Foundation



# **Views of Members of the Executive of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents Council (APC) on Studies of Asia in Australian Schools**

**A study commissioned by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) in partnership with the ACSSO and APC**

**January 2006**

**Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd**

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# Views of Members of the Executive of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents Council (APC) on Studies of Asia in Australian Schools

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# Views of Members of the Executives of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents Council (APC) on studies of Asia in Australian Schools

## Executive Summary

### a) The Study

This study was commissioned by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) in partnership with the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council (APC). Funding was provided by the AEF. It is a scoping study in that the target group for the survey was limited to members of the executives of ACSSO and the APC. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the attitude of these parents in government and non-government schools towards the place of studies of Asia as a cross-curriculum initiative in Australian schools. It was also designed to inform the three organisations about how they may work together to develop strategies to ensure that studies of Asia penetrate school programs in a way that is broader, deeper and more sustained across schools than is the case at present.

The issue of Australia's relationship with Asia has been on the political agenda for a considerable time. The Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Science and Training formally recognised the importance of Australia's engagement with Asia by supporting the establishment of the AEF in 1992. Since then the AEF has supported education systems, schools and teachers to develop curriculum materials and teacher expertise central to the development of good relationships between the peoples of Australia and Asia.

The AEF is of the view that it is increasingly important that all Australian students possess knowledge of the Asia region and Australia's interaction with the region. While the economic, social and cultural imperatives that have driven the studies of Asia for the past 14 years remain, the rationale for studies of Asia has been strengthened by a changed and heightened security environment, developments in the Asia region that demand more informed and sophisticated understandings and responses and the impact of Asia on Australia's cultural and social landscape. This project, by seeking the views of key parent representatives on the place of studies of Asia in Australian schools is an important first step in building a collaborative response to these emerging needs.

300 members of the executives from ACSSO and APC received surveys. 137 responses were received and analysed. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 11 respondents to seek further information and clarification.

### b) Significant Findings

Parents strongly support policy initiatives to engage Australia and Australians with Asia, for example:

- 88% believed that the government should have a long term strategic plan to implement such a policy
- 92% acknowledged the importance of the business and economic ties linking Australia with the countries of Asia
- 91% believed that an important skill for all Australians to possess is an ability to communicate across cultures. 60% of parents responded that they would like their child to learn an Asian language
- 82% said that Australians needed to understand China as well as they understood Britain and the USA, although India did not feature as prominently in their thinking

- Approximately 74% agreed with the proposition that good relationships with Asian countries would assist in maintaining Australia's long term security

### **Australian culture and society**

In terms of the development of Australian culture and society, some 80% believed that people from Asia have played a significant role in shaping modern Australia; that Asian immigrants enrich our culture (86%) and that Australian society will continue to evolve as it responds to a growing Asian influence (79%). Despite this, 85% felt that many Australians did not understand Asian peoples and their cultures. Although 63% thought that there could be a conflict between Australian and Asian values, only 9% agreed with the proposition that we could learn more from developed European nations than from developed Asian nations. Interestingly, in this sample of national and state parent leaders, there was only 1 person in the study who claimed to have an Asian background, with 60% of respondents also believing that parents of Asian extraction were under-represented on school decision making bodies.

### **Parent involvement in schools**

This sample of parents want and expect to be involved in their children's schools with 94% stating that they should have a role in working with teachers on broad curriculum issues and decisions. Only 13% said that they would be comfortable in leaving all curriculum decisions to their children's teachers. The reality is however that less than 50% of schools routinely involve parents in their decision-making processes, and less than 20% of parents have participated in any discussions about studies of Asia in their children's schools. The fact that 80% of parents endorsed the proposition that all students should have the opportunity of learning an Asian language whilst at school is evidence that they see benefits for their children and those of future generations in being able to relate to this region.

### **Role of parent associations**

65% believed that national and state parent associations should have policies on the teaching of studies of Asia in Australian schools. 76% thought that an understanding of Asia would be an asset when their children enter the workforce, and 60% said that they would be concerned if their child's school did not engage their children with Asia through the curriculum. 68% supported an on-going teacher professional development program, whilst 72% agreed that each state and territory should monitor the level of provision of studies of Asia programs in their respective jurisdictions.

### **Studies of Asia in schools**

Despite acknowledging the need for Australians to engage with Asia, and the role that schools can play in supporting this imperative, a significant proportion of parents had difficulty in assessing how studies of Asia could be incorporated into the curriculum, with 58% stating that they would have difficulty in assigning a priority to it. Some 45% preferred that studies of Asia be regarded as an optional element of the curriculum. This response pattern, which also featured between 20% and 30% of respondents choosing to remain neutral on specific questions, seemed to arise from multiple interpretations of the term "studies of Asia", some of which did not reflect the cross-curriculum model preferred by the AEF. Follow up telephone interviews confirmed the view that most parents are unfamiliar with the work of the AEF.

## **c) Recommendations for Future Action**

Developing strategies to move forward in a collaborative way between the three organisations is not only desirable but possible, and may involve a number of different ways, on a number of different levels. Parents strongly articulated the need for Australia to positively engage with Asia, as a national priority. Co-existing with this general view, was a degree of reluctance to provide the same level of support for the incorporation of studies of Asia into the school curriculum. It is likely that the predominant reason explaining this reticence is that parents did not share a common understanding of the term "studies of Asia". Although many did grasp the concept of it being a cross-curriculum initiative, for some it was seen as a new subject, or even as a compulsory language. In the context of a school curriculum which is very crowded, it can be seen why there would be less than full support for something seen as an extra to be somehow

accommodated. A number of parents expressed a view that there could be some conflict with studies of Asia and the delivery of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Amongst those who did appreciate the ways in which it could be integrated into existing curricula, some raised the issue of balance in relation to studies of other regions of the world, whilst others expressed doubts in relation to academic rigour.

This leads to a conclusion that for parents to be in a position to provide their strong support for the work of the AEF, they need to have a clear understanding of the nature of studies of Asia. They need to understand what it is and what it is not. They need to understand how it can be resourced and how they can influence policies such as teacher preparation and in-service programs. Parents also need to be informed about the role of the AEF in promoting this aspect of the curriculum.

Ten recommendations that address the above issues are provided for consideration. These are:

**i) Establish an Implementation Group**

The AEF should convene a small implementation group to discuss, develop and prioritise actions that flow from this study. This group should be convened and chaired by the AEF, as it is the lead partner with the major responsibility for implementing studies of Asia in schools.

**ii) Develop an Information/Communication Strategy**

The December 2005 release of the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools is an ideal vehicle for opening dialogue with parent organisations on a wider scale than has been attempted previously. Parents are mentioned in the statement, so it would seem imperative to put them in the picture as early as possible in 2006.

In order for parents to be in a position to provide their strong support to the AEF, they need to have a clear understanding of the nature of studies of Asia. They need to understand what it is and what it is not. They need to understand how it can be resourced and how they can influence policies such as teacher preparation and in-service programs.

At the same time as talking about the National Statement, an information package outlining some of the key findings of the present study could be produced and disseminated. This group could also produce the text of a short publication which clearly defines studies of Asia, outlines the benefits of incorporating studies of Asia in the school curriculum and strategies to address barriers to the introduction of such programs.

**iii) Commission Targeted Research**

This study has pointed to the diversity of parental opinion around the concept of studies of Asia. Regionally distinct attitudes towards studies of Asia may well exist. Different schools will be at different stages of readiness to embrace studies of Asia. The AEF may want to assess the readiness of schools by commissioning some regionally based targeted research. For example, an analysis of schools which are involved in studies of Asia programs may reveal that there is little uptake in particular areas in particular States. Why is this? Are there particular attitudinal or other reasons for this level of uptake? What are the general community attitudes? Parent organisations could contribute to such research by assisting with the design of any survey instruments, provide contact details and possibly assist with some data gathering. Results of this kind of targeted research would provide the AEF with a better understanding of the local factors which may assist or act as barriers to the implementation of studies of Asia in particular locations.

**iv) Collaboratively Develop Curriculum**

The AEF has established over time a sophisticated mechanism for developing and evaluating new curriculum. A gap in this process however is the formal involvement of parents. The Implementation Group should look at ways to incorporate parental views, to make curriculum development a more collaborative exercise. Parents could have an appropriate level of input into;

- identifying gaps in the suite of available curriculum materials

- supporting change by identifying existing good teaching practice at the local level, with a view to the AEF documenting this for dissemination to other schools
- existing structures or groups that are used in the process of updating existing curriculum materials or in the production of new curriculum materials.

#### **v) Involve Asian Parents**

ACSSO and the APC could jointly or separately discuss and develop strategies to increase the involvement of parents of Asian backgrounds on school decision making bodies. Any strategies developed are likely to be in conjunction with state affiliates, and should be seen as part of a broader process to involve parents of all ethnicities in decision making processes.

#### **vi) Conferences and Workshops**

All parent organisations hold national and state conferences, as well as regular executive meetings. The work of the AEF could be explained in these forums. The Implementation Group could investigate applying for a grant to run a studies of Asia national conference, perhaps backing on to another national conference.

#### **vii) Involve Parents in AEF Activities**

Parent organisations could be invited to nominate representatives to receive information from the AEF. This could be formalized into AEF/Parent Information Network

These people could be linked to the State Advisers, and operate as a support and information exchange network. If funds were available, these people could meet once or twice a year.

Secondly, and in line with research findings on the importance of family/school partnerships as acknowledged by the Australian Government, funding could be provided for a limited number of parent places at teacher professional development programs – a parent could attend with a teacher from the same school. This parent would be expected to report back to a meeting of their Governing Council and P&C or P&F group.

#### **viii) Publications**

Both ACSSO and the APC publish newsletters. The AEF could provide regular copy for these publications, or authorise re-publication of items from its own newsletter. With the assistance of the parent organisations, the AEF should ensure that its own newsletter reaches all parent representatives in each State and Territory. As indicated in the response to one of the survey questions, parents would support the AEF in publicising examples of excellent studies of Asia programs.

#### **ix) Play an Advocacy Role**

The national parent organisations have an opportunity for influencing the Federal Government and bodies such as Teaching Australia and the Australian Principals' Association Professional Development Council. Issues such as resourcing, special grants, teacher training and professional development initiatives could be raised with these bodies. State parent bodies could also play a similar role with local jurisdictions and universities involved with teacher preparation and professional development. They may also want to invite their local education authority/Minister to provide a status report on the uptake of studies of Asia programs in their State/Territory.

#### **x) Develop Policy**

ACSSO and the APC could consider formulating policies that mirror and complement the National Statement. Such policies should be accompanied by action plans



# **Views of Members of the Executive of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents Council (APC) on studies of Asia in Australian Schools**

## **1. Background**

The Asia Education Foundation (AEF) recently completed a strategic planning process that identified parents as a key education stakeholder group that have not been directly engaged by the AEF in its work to promote study about Asia in Australian schools.

As a result of this process the AEF initiated discussions with the two peak parent bodies, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council (APC) to examine options. It was agreed that AEF, ACSSO and APC would collaborate on a project to seek the views of the executives of their organizations nationally on the importance of studies of Asia in Australian schools to inform the development of future strategies.

## **2. Project Partners**

### **a) AEF**

The AEF is a foundation of the Asialink Centre at the University of Melbourne and Curriculum Corporation and was established in 1993 by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to promote and support the studies of Asia in Australian schools.

The AEF receives core funding from DEST and works in partnership with schools, state and territory education agencies from the government and non-government sector, universities, philanthropic foundations and the corporate sector to:

- Promote and support the studies of Asia across all curriculum areas in Australian schools.
- Develop Asia-related curriculum materials for Australian school children.
- Promote the studies of Asia within teacher education.
- Educate the broader community about the importance of school students undertaking the studies of Asia.

The AEF has three major national strategies:

- Curriculum Development: produces national guidelines for the study of Asia and the Access Asia Series of print and electronic publications.
- Partnerships: initiates and resources a national network of 2,800 Access Asia schools to introduce and develop studies of Asia in all curriculum areas.
- Professional Development: develops strategic alliances with key organisations to support the studies of Asia in school through teacher professional development.

### **b) ACSSO**

ACSSO is the peak national parent organisation representing the interests of over two million children enrolled in government schools throughout Australia. ACSSO was formed in 1947 to develop national parent organisation policies in education and to represent these policies and the interests of its affiliates at the national level. It comprises ten government school parent organizations nationally and offers information and support to state/territory affiliates through diverse activities increasingly concerned with the policies and actions of governments including:

- submissions to the Federal Government on proposed policies and actions in the education area
- consultations with Federal Ministers for Education, Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and Commonwealth advisory bodies on education
- press statements and interviews on education matters

- contact with Parliamentarians and policy committees to ensure that ACSSO's policies and views are known to decision makers
- provision of nominees to represent parents' interests and viewpoints on a range of national bodies concerned with education
- provision of research and information material to affiliates on issues relating to its policies.

### c) APC

APC is the National Federation of Organisations representing parents of non-government school children and has been operating since 1962. It operates as a federation of eight state-wide parents organisations in every State and Territory of Australia and is recognised by the Federal Government as the peak national body representing parents of children attending non-government schools.

APC's mission is to promote choice and quality in schooling and to achieve for all students an equitable distribution of government funds. APC consults regularly with relevant members of Parliament on education policy issues and is represented on Government task forces and committees and conducts research and projects on issues affecting parents and the parent role in their children's education.

### d) Project Team

A Project Team consisting of representatives of all three organisations was formed. Maureen Welch from the AEF Chaired the group which also included Kurt Mullane (AEF) as contact person, Terry Aulich and Rupert Macgregor (ACSSO) and Ian Dalton (APC). Rob McConchie of Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd was selected to conduct the research, which was carried out in the period September 2005 through to December 2005.

## 3. Purpose

The issue of Australia's engagement with Asia has been on the political agenda for over 30 years. The Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training initiated the establishment of the AEF in 1993 to support education systems, schools and teachers to develop curriculum on Asia.

The AEF is of the view that it is increasingly important that all Australian students possess knowledge of the Asia region and Australia's interaction with the region. While the economic, social and cultural imperatives that have driven the studies of Asia for the past 14 years remain, the rationale for studies of Asia has been strengthened by a changed and heightened security environment, developments in the Asia region that demand more informed and sophisticated understandings and responses and the impact of Asia on Australia's cultural and social landscape.

This project, by seeking the views of key parent representatives, on their views on the importance of studies of Asia in Australian schools is an important first step in building a collaborative response to these emerging needs.

Parents play a vital role in supporting the development of their children's knowledge, understandings and skills in relation to Australia-Asia engagement.

This project will build on the recent involvement of ACSSO and APC in a number of key AEF activities including the 2003 National Summit, *Studies of Asia in Australian schools at a crossroad* and through their representation and input on the AEF's Advisory Board.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the views of parents in government and non-government schools towards the place of studies of Asia as a cross-curriculum initiative in Australian schools. It was also designed to inform the three organisations about how they may work together to develop strategies to ensure that studies of Asia penetrate school programs in a way that is broader, deeper and more sustained across schools than is the case at present.

## 4. Methodology

### a) The Survey

Centrepiece of this study was a survey of parents who are active in their national or state parent organisations by occupying positions within their formal structures such as committee or executive member. As the survey was limited to a target group of parent leaders, not the entire cohort of “parents”, the study should be regarded as a scoping exercise rather than as a definitive study of the views of all parents of Australian school children.

The survey was structured to gather baseline data about the target group and their opinions as citizens, as parents and as parent leaders. The survey consisted of a mix of question types, including a series of propositions using 5 point Likert scale and questions requiring free responses. All questions are available at Appendix B. Input to the survey was provided by the Steering Committee, which was subsequently validated in a workshop with a small group of Victorian parents.

### b) Distribution

Approximately 300 surveys were distributed initially. Four methods of distribution were utilised:

- Hand distributed at the ACSSO Annual Conference
- Direct mailing by the researcher using addresses supplied by several parent organisations
- Bulk mailing to State affiliate offices for distribution by that organisation
- An email reminder which contained the URL of the survey for people wanted to complete it electronically.

A small number of surveys were distributed to members of non-government parent organisations which have ties with but are not formally affiliated with the APC.

### c) Responses

There were 137 responses to the survey by the closing date, which was extended by 5 weeks into early December. Two responses were received after the close, so their quantitative data is not included but their written comments have been incorporated into the findings.

Within the 137 responses, 14 people completed the survey electronically by personally entering the data, whilst 123 respondents used the paper version of the survey. This data was then entered onto the database by the researcher. Using the distribution figure of 300, the response rate was calculated to be 46%.

Response rates for individual states and organisations was not calculated, although it was evident that where the parent organisation actively promoted the need to complete the survey the response was better than where it simply arrived unannounced.

### d) Validity

The pleasing response rate of 46% was above expectations, and provides a strong level of confidence in the validity of the data. To further strengthen the validity of the findings, where there was some apparent ambiguity in the data - for example the reasons for a strong neutral response on some questions or where there was a need to tease out meanings and interpretations - the survey was complemented by additional telephone interviews from respondents who provided their contact details. Eleven parents were telephoned in interviews that averaged 35-40 minutes, covering all areas except the NT and a cross section of urban and rural/regional/remote settings, and government and non-government schools. In particular, these parents were selected on the basis of their well articulated free responses whilst ensuring a balance between those appearing to be strongly supportive of studies of Asia and those who expressed reservations.

## e) Survey Software

Statistics and graphs were provided by *Questionpro.com*®, a commercial provider of web based survey administration software.

## 5. What have we learned from the survey about these parents?

### a) Who are they?

Section 1 of the survey gathered some baseline data about the target group, including;

- the schools and parent organisations with which they were **affiliated** and where they lived
- their personal and family **connections** and friendships with Asian people, through marriage, work or study
- extent of and reasons for any **travel to Asia**, including countries visited
- their **ability to speak an Asian language** and whether or not their children had studied an Asian language.

#### i. Affiliations (Survey questions 1, 2 and 3)

61% of respondents nominated that they were associated with government school organisations and 39% were drawn from the non-government sector. 66% said that they had close personal links with the government schooling sector, whilst 34% were associated with Catholic (20%) or Independent (14%) schools. These global figures closely match the proportion of children attending the various Australian schooling sectors. As the response rates varied between States and parent organisations, the residential location data was not necessarily proportional to the numbers of children attending school in each State or education sector in that State.

#### ii. Connections with Asian people (Survey questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8)

Only one parent reported that they had an Asian background, however 14% reported that a member of their family had an Asian heritage. 75% said that their children had developed friendships with young Asian people, whilst 84% of the parents themselves said that they had Asian friends at some period in their lives. Just under 50% reported that they worked with one or more Asian colleagues. These results taken together, provide a strong indication that people of Asian heritage are a normal part of mainstream adult Australian society, however there is an indication that they are under-represented on peak parent bodies.

#### iii. Travel (Survey questions 9, 10, 11 and 12)

The target group's direct experience with Asia was varied with a little under 50% having not visited Asia and the other 50% having typically travelled to China, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

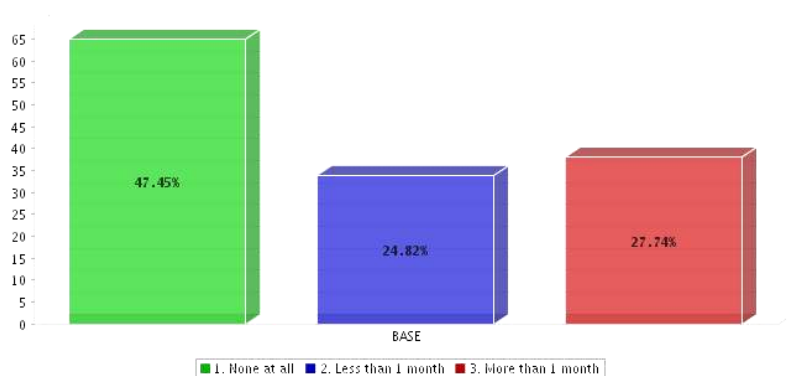


Fig.1.Q9. How much time have you spent in Asia?

Countries on the Indian sub-continent were rarely visited, as were some of the less well developed nations in SE Asia. Most had spent a cumulative 1-2 months visiting Asian destinations, and only a handful cited business reasons for their travel.

**iv. Asian languages (Survey questions 13 and 14)**

Typically most respondents could not speak an Asian language at all (74%), and 24% said that they knew a few words and phrases. In contrast, 60% reported that their children have studied or will study an Asian language at some period during their school lives.

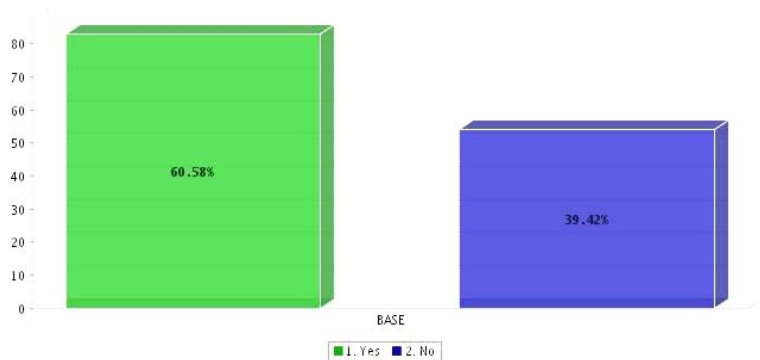


Fig.2. Q14. One or more of my children has studied or will study an Asian language at school

**b) What do parents think about Australia’s relationships with Asian countries, their people and their cultures?**

Section 2 of the survey explored attitudes and views about;

- the **impact** of immigration and tourism by Asian people on Australia’s development, values and culture
- the **extent that Australians understand** Asian peoples and their values and cultures
- the **link** between the **Australian and Asian economies**, and the extent that Australian **business needs** to understand how to do business with Asia
- the importance of Asia in terms of Australia’s **foreign policy and security**

**i. Impact on Australia (Survey questions 15, 17, 19 , 22, 23 and 25)**

Typically a strong majority (80%) supported the proposition that Asian people have played a significant role in the development of modern Australia, that Asian immigrants enrich our culture (86%) and that our society will continue to evolve as it responds to a growing Asian influence (79%). In looking at the impact of Asian cultures and values on Australian society, 63% felt that there may be a conflict between value systems, although 37% were not sure or even disagreed with the proposition. 85% said that they felt comfortable in relation to Asian people in a social setting.

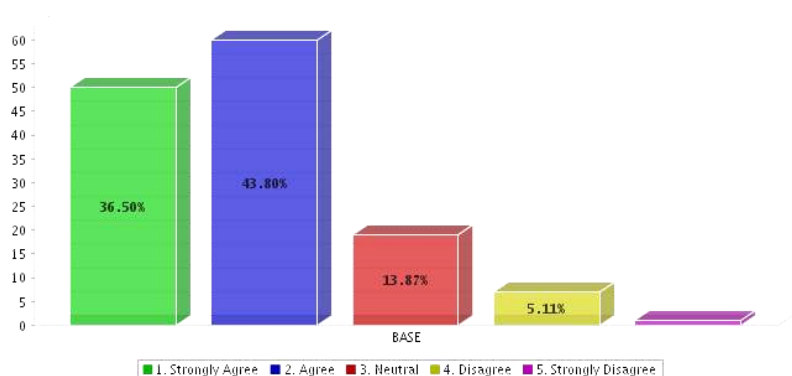


Fig.3. Q15. Immigrants from Asia have played a significant role in the development of Australia

When asked about the issue of maintaining Australia’s traditional identity in the context of continuing Immigration from Asia and other regions, 63% indicated that people who come to Australia should accept our values, whilst 37% expressed neutrality or disagreed with this proposition. Follow up telephone interviews revealed a more sophisticated view than might be obtained from taking these results on face value.

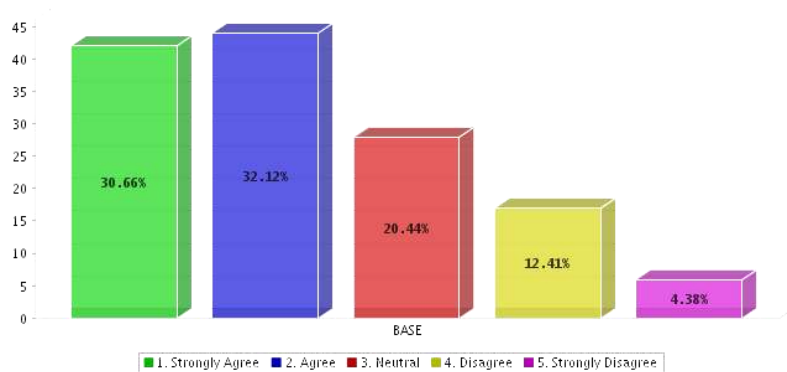


Fig.4. Q22. Australia needs to preserve its traditional identity. People who come here should accept our values

Some questioned whether Australia could have a traditional identity after only some 200 years of modern history, suggesting that it will continue to evolve. A number of people referred to the nuclear Australian family and of Australian individualism – features which provide strong contrast with Asian traditions of the extended family, the way that family members look after one another and the notion of “community” as a counterpoint to Australia’s individualised society. There was also a feeling that many Australians are comfortable with their own lifestyles and some may perceive a threat from the strong work ethic, and commitment to high educational standards that are evident in many Asian families.

Several people provided a view that at the most fundamental level, there was probably little difference between Asian and Australian cultures.

So whilst some differences in cultures were identified, there was little evidence of conflict, and it would seem that a number of people were suggesting that we could learn plenty from Asian cultures. The main message seemed to be one of supporting those values that have nurtured our society, but also acknowledging, respecting and even incorporating some of those that come to us from other cultures.

**ii. Extent of Australian’s understanding (Survey questions 20, 24, 27and 32)**

Some 50% of respondents felt that we could learn much from developed Asian countries, and only 9% indicated that there was little to learn. The fact that 40% of respondents did not provide an opinion may reflect the extent of their personal experience in visiting Asian countries. Follow up contact by telephone revealed that values identified as “Asian” were probably better regarded as being different, rather than necessarily as a source of conflict. Asian values around family and work ethic were highly regarded, although fear of the unknown seemed to be evident, especially in relation to the view expressed by 85% of parents that many Australians do not understand Asian peoples and their cultures.

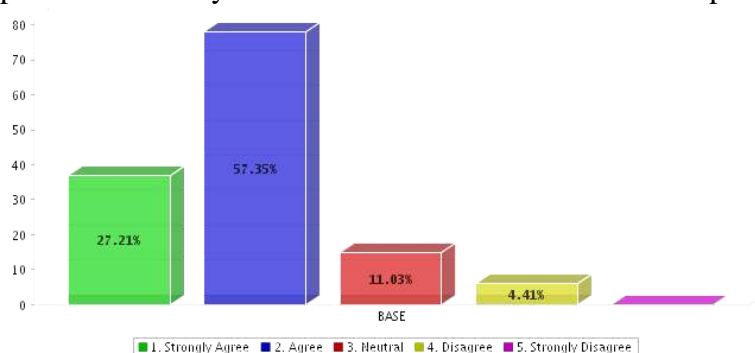


Fig.5. Q24 Many Australians do not understand Asian peoples and their cultures

If this is true, it represents a good case for the teaching of comparative values and beliefs in our school

systems. Religion was seen to underpin values, and whilst 70% believed that Australia would benefit from its citizens having a better understanding of Asian religious beliefs, there was a small minority who rejected the notion of teaching about these beliefs in their children’s schools. Whilst the sample size is too small to reach a definitive conclusion, there seems to be an indication that parents who send their children to Catholic schools are more supportive of teaching comparative religion than their government or independent school counterparts.

Implementing studies of Asia in our schools is strongly supported by the fact that over 91% of parents expressed the opinion that the ability to communicate across cultures was an important skill for all Australians to possess.

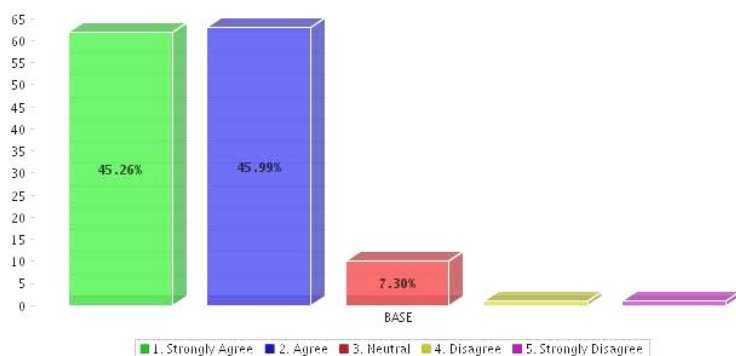


Fig.6. Q32 An important skill for Australians to have is the ability to communicate across different cultures

**iii. Economic and business links (Survey questions 16, 18, 26, 28 and 30)**

Respondents also acknowledged the important business and economic ties that Australia has with Asian nations, and how these will grow in importance in the future (92%). 66% believe that Australian and Asian businesses now compete with one another. In contrast however, only 36% agreed with the proposition that an understanding of Asia had assisted them in their own employment. Further information on this response pattern was sought via telephone interviews. These people indicated that personal experience was different to the more objective responses called for in relation to Australia’s business relationships with Asia. In a sense people recognised the importance of relating to Asia at government and business levels, without actually making a direct personal connection with their own employment.

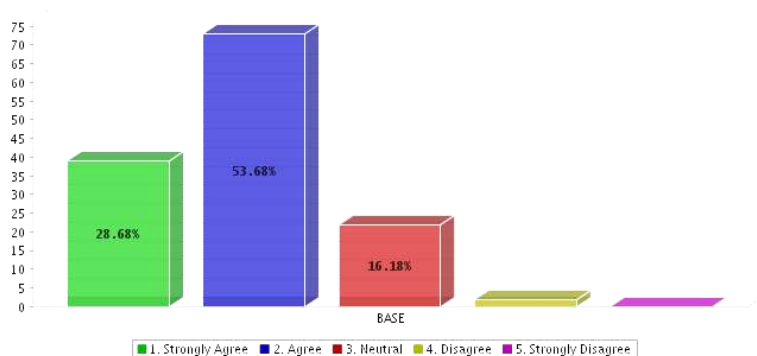


Fig.7. Q30 In the future Australians will need to understand China as well as they currently understand the US or UK

China was cited as a country that we needed to understand and develop strong relationships (82%), however India was not seen in the same light, as only 50% believed that we should strengthen our relationships with that country.

Analysis of the free response questions and telephone interviews provided some additional perspective on business, economic and future employment issues, and their relationship with Australian values. Several people recognised the inevitability of Asia taking a leading role in the global manufacturing industry as a result of lower costs of employment compared with Western nations. However they rejected the possibility that to compete with Asian countries that Australia should adopt Asian employment conditions or wages. There was some fear that immigration from Asia may contribute to a lowering of Australian wages and conditions, in the context of the new workplace relations legislation that was introduced into Federal parliament at the same time as the survey was being administered.

There were also several references to corporate governance, where it was perceived that the payment of officials to ensure a smooth path through regulatory or legal bodies was a fairly common way of doing business in Asia. One respondent provided extra information on the livestock export industry, and argued that a priority for Australia was to work with targeted Asian countries to establish good governance protocols. The need to understand the different customs, protocols and ways of doing business in Asia was also mentioned in several telephone interviews.

#### iv. Foreign policy and security (Survey questions 21, 29, and 31)

Over 90% said that it was important for the Australian Government to maintain strong diplomatic ties with Asian countries, however they were more circumspect in trying to judge whether Australia is well prepared to meet the future challenges of dealing with Asia, with 52% indicating that it was not well prepared. Approximately 74% agreed with the proposition that good relationships with Asian countries would assist in maintaining Australia’s long term national security.

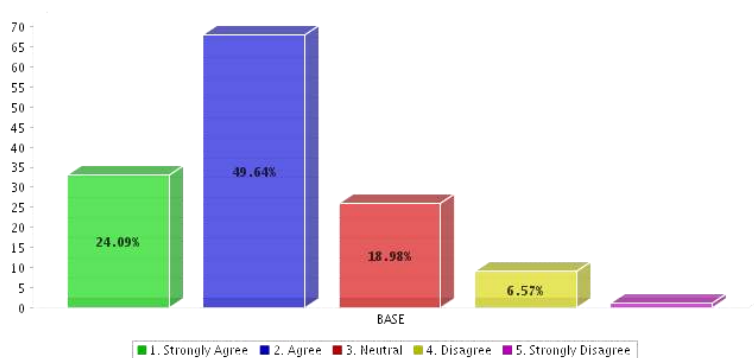


Fig.8. Q31 Australia's long term security is linked to its people being able to develop close and trusting relationships with Asia

#### c) What have they observed about how their children’s schools operate to engage parents, particularly in relation to studies of Asia?

Section 3 of the survey asked parents about their child’s school, in particular:

- **involvement of parents** in curriculum decision making
- the **extent** that studies of Asia is addressed by the school
- their attitudes towards the **value of studies of Asia** for their own child
- **the extent that Asian families are engaged** by the school

#### i. Involvement of parents (Survey questions 33, 35, 36, 37, 41 and 45)

For a school to engage parents about studies of Asia in the curriculum it would first need to have established a culture of working with parents on a range of curriculum issues. Whilst 61% said that they had a good knowledge of the curriculum of their child’s school, less than 50% of respondents agreed with the proposition that their child’s school routinely involved them in general discussion about curriculum. One could legitimately conclude that many parents are either by-passed, ignored or frozen out of such discussions in a significant number of Australian schools. This is despite the fact that 94% of these parents stated that they should have a role in working with teachers on broad curriculum issues and decisions. Only 13% said that they would be happy to leave all curriculum decisions to the teaching staff of their school.



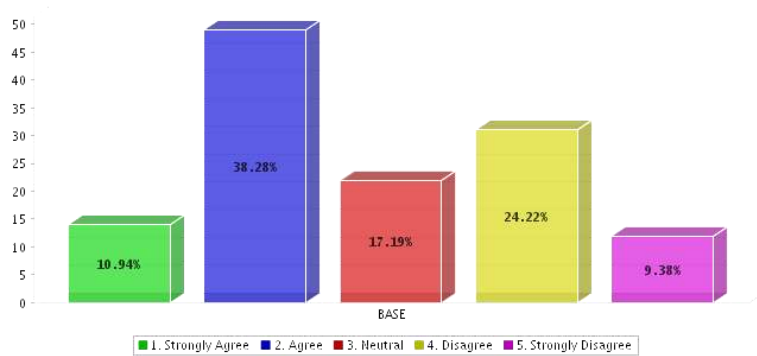


Fig.9. Q33 My child's school routinely involves parents in general discussions about curriculum

Whilst the results provide an indication that Government schools may involve parents on curriculum matters to a greater extent than Catholic schools, (see appendix), only 19% of all parents reported that their school had involved them in discussions relating to studies of Asia. Most (78%) reported that they would be happy to attend meetings on this topic.

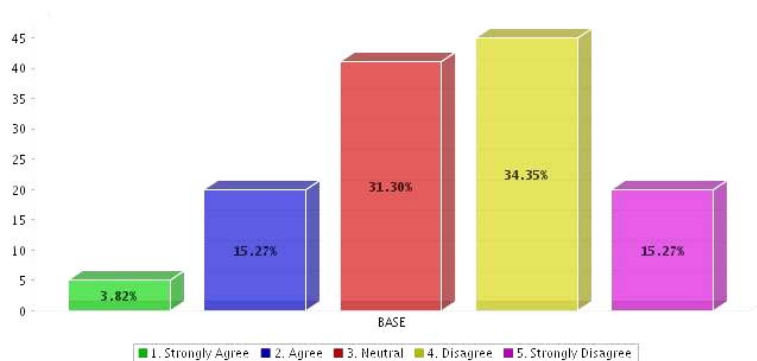


Fig.10. Q35 My child's school has involved parents in specific discussions about studies of Asia in the curriculum

**ii. Extent of studies of Asia (Survey questions 38, 40 and 42)**

Although studies of Asia does not seem to have been high on the agenda of their child's schools, and that only 30% appear to run special events with an Asian theme, 50% said that they were confident that their children would develop a good understanding of Asia as a result of curriculum experiences.

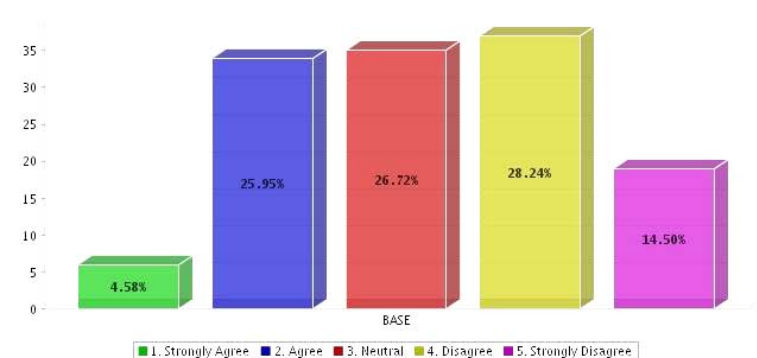


Fig.11. Q40 My child's school runs special events that are based on a studies of Asia theme

On a very positive note, 80% of respondents reported that their child's school was very accommodating of different beliefs and cultures within its own community.

**iii. Value of studies of Asia for their own children (Survey questions 39, 43 and 44)**

60% of respondents said they would be concerned if their child's school did not engage its students with Asia through the curriculum, and 76% thought that an understanding of Asia would be an asset when their children enter the workforce. 60% of parents responded that they would like their child to learn an Asian language. On the other hand, a minority could see limited value in learning an Asian language. This reaction may be attributed to some observations of poor language teaching, combined with a perceived lack of

continuity over time and between primary and high school. Another group believed that our schools' first priority was in developing basic literacy skills, and perceived that teaching any foreign language would be counter-productive to this fundamental mission.

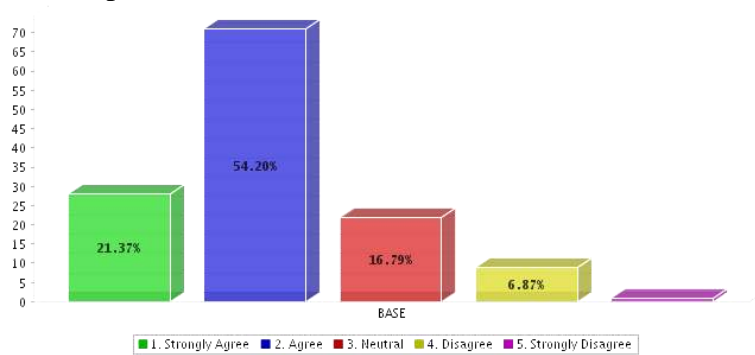


Fig.12. Q44 I expect that when my child enters the workforce, that a knowledge and understanding of Asia will be an asset

**iv. Extent of Asian family engagement (Survey questions 34 and 46)**

Close to 60% of parents believed that parents of Asian extraction were under-represented on their school's decision making bodies, whereas the opinion in relation to their participation in more general activities was mixed - 33% saying that their participation was comparable with, and 44% saying it was less than that of other parents.

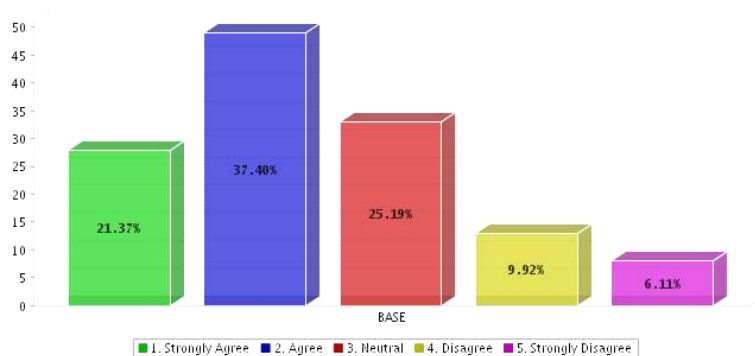


Fig.13. Q34 Parents with Asian backgrounds are under-represented in the decision making and parent bodies at my child's school

**d) What do parents think about the work of the Asia Education Foundation, the importance of studies about Asia in schools as a policy initiative and the role of parents' organisations?**

Section 4 of the parent survey explored opinions and attitudes relating to strategic initiatives to enhance the incorporation of studies of Asia into Australian school curricula. In particular it asked parents about;

- **policy development** and other actions that could be taken by governments
- **the role of parents** and their organisations
- **supporting** schools and teachers
- **the priority of studies of Asia** as a component of the curriculum

**i. Policy development and government actions (Survey questions 48, 53, 57 and 58)**

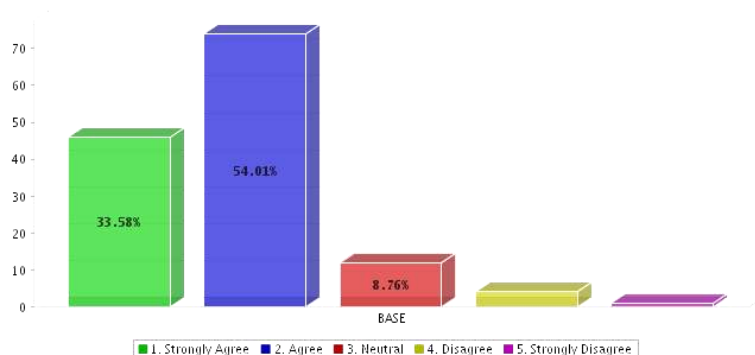


Fig.14. Q53 The Australian Government should have a long term strategic plan for engaging this country with Asia

Significantly, 88% of parents believe that the government should have a long term strategic plan for engaging Australia with Asia. Only 9% expressed neutrality on this issue. Somewhat surprisingly, this positive sentiment drops to 60%, and the neutral response lifts sharply to 24% when parents were asked their opinion on the role of schools in engaging students with Asia – even though this would support the same objective. 59% believed that State and Territory governments should have policies supporting the inclusion of studies of Asia in the curriculum and 72% said that these jurisdictions should monitor the provision of such programs in their schools.

**ii. Roles of parent organisations (Survey questions 47, 49 and 60)**

50% of respondents said that they would like to know more about the work of the AEF, and whilst only 11% said that they did not want more information, the neutral response was high (39%). The telephone interviews provided some extra light on this response pattern. Interviewees said that the response may have been more positive if parents were asked if they wanted to know more about curriculum, resources, support for schools, inter-cultural studies, and professional development for teachers and so on, rather than the acronym AEF.

The free responses later in the survey indicated that some parents had interpreted the work of the AEF as one of lobbying for an extra, high priority subject in the curriculum, or even the introduction of an “Asian-based” curriculum. It is understandable that this group might have some misgivings about the work of the AEF when interpreted in this way.

65% believed that national and state parent organisations should have policies on the teaching of studies of Asia, and 56% supported the notion that parent organisations could assist in promoting studies of Asia as a curriculum priority.

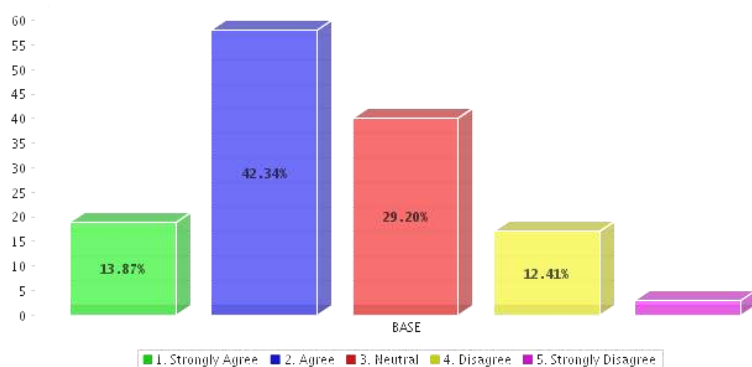


Fig.15. Q60 Ideally, parent organisations could assist in promoting the incorporation of studies of Asia as a curriculum priority.

**iii. Supporting schools and teachers (Survey questions 51, 52 and 59)**

Incorporating studies of Asia into teacher pre-service courses was supported by 54% of parents, whilst in-service support was more highly rated at 68%. A similar percentage (67%) of parents believed that schools with excellent studies of Asia programs should be identified, acknowledged and publicised.

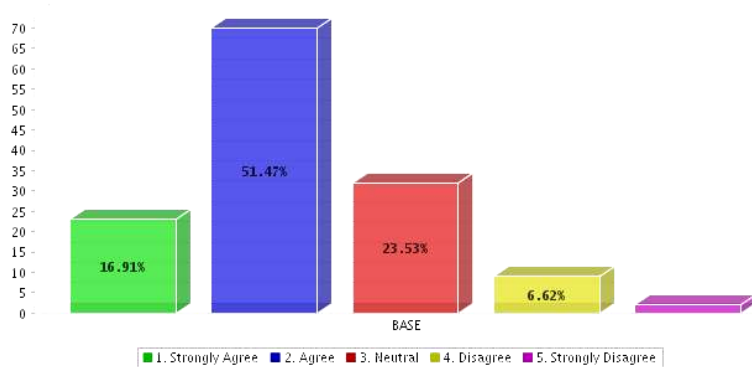


Fig.16. Q52 On-going professional development about introducing Asia into teaching programs should be provided by education authorities

#### iv. Priority of studies of Asia (Survey questions 50, 54, 55, 56 and 61)

Understanding the response patterns around the priority that should be accorded studies of Asia in the curriculum are pivotal in formulating future plans that may involve collaboration between parents and organisations such as the AEF. It became clear from the telephone interviews and an analysis of the free response questions that there were multiple interpretations of the term “studies of Asia”. It was observed that wherever the term was used in a question, around 60% of parents provided a supportive response, there was a consistent but small negative response and the remainder expressed neutrality. One can hypothesise that this relatively high (neutral) response was chosen as these people were either unsure of the precise nature of the proposition being put to them, or were wary about how their responses would be used later by the AEF.

Whilst 62% of parents expressed concern that around half Australian schools paid little or no attention to studies of Asia, personal interpretations of the term “studies of Asia” itself seemed to vary widely. For some it was understood to be a cross-curriculum initiative, but for others it was thought of as a language or even as a new subject like SOSE. Understandably, those who used the subject conceptualisation were quite naturally reluctant to express support. Another compulsory subject is something no-one wants! Some others who understood the intended cross-curriculum nature, expressed reservations about the academic rigour of teaching programs designed along these lines. Others were wary of providing support for the concept, in case such support was used to tip the curriculum balance too far, giving studies of Asia a priority that they felt was unwarranted. A number of parents spoke in terms of Australia being part of the wider world, not just the Asian region, and our school programs should reflect this reality.

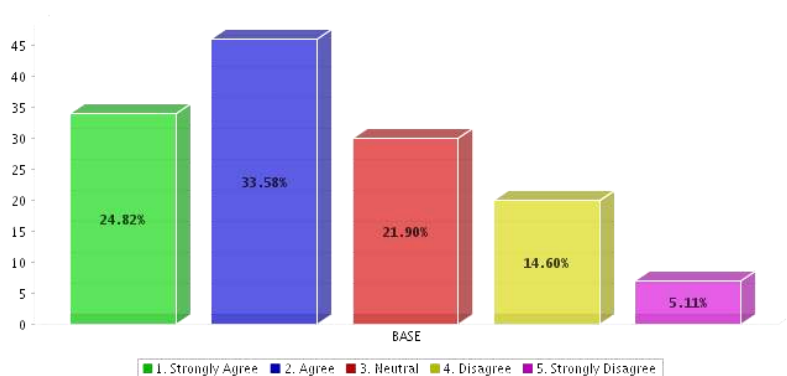


Fig.17. Q54 I find it difficult to assign a priority to studies of Asia when there are so many areas fighting for a place in a crowded school curriculum

Strong support (80%) was provided for the proposition that students should have an opportunity of studying an Asian language. Use of the term “opportunity” conveyed the notion of an optional, or elective status. Throughout the survey, studies of Asia was not generally couched in terms of being an option, but rather as something that would be desirable for all schools to embrace. When the idea of optional status was offered in one proposition, 45% agreed with it, perhaps seeing this as alternative as a way to resolve some of their concerns about its priority.

Had the survey been able to better convey the notion of a cross-curriculum program being interpreted by schools in ways that were variable and matched to their own resource capabilities, these reservations may well have been overcome. Support for this view was provided in the telephone interviews.

Similarly, the fact that 58% of respondents expressed difficulty in assigning a priority to studies of Asia, may have reflected the absence of a clear and unambiguous definition of the term in the minds of parents.

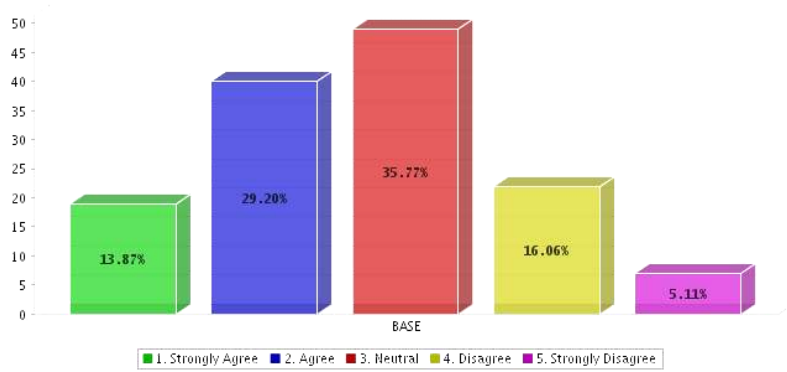


Fig.18. Q61 Studies of Asia should have a higher priority in Australian schools

When parents were asked about lifting the priority accorded to studies of Asia, it was evident that the same interpretation issues were at work as described earlier, but further complicated by use of the term “priority”. Did priority refer to a comparison with its own present status, or did it refer to status in relation to other “subjects” or other cross- curriculum initiatives? In moving forward, the development of a clear and unambiguous statement of how studies of Asia can be incorporated into school programs in a balanced way will be essential in the process of enlisting the support of parents.

**e) What did parents think were the arguments in favour and against studies of Asia having a prominent place in school curricular?**

Section 5, Question 62 of the parent survey asked respondents to consider a hypothetical situation and identify arguments for incorporating studies of Asia in the curriculum of a school that had previously not addressed this issue, and the likely barriers that the school would face in implementing this initiative.

The arguments put forward in favour included:

- Geographical proximity of Australia to much of Asia
- Immigration from Asian countries to Australia
- Numbers of Asian students studying in Australia
- Business, trade and economic relationships between Australia and Asian countries
- The need for Australians to understand cultural and religious differences, which in turn promotes peace and tolerance through valuing cultural diversity
- Tourism

The following barriers were identified:

- a basket of negative attitudes attributed to other people, (possibly other parents, teachers and general community), including bigotry, prejudice, fear, xenophobia, ignorance, racism, and ethnocentricity
- financial resources
- human resources – availability of well trained teachers
- teacher attitudes including resistance to change and apathy
- concerns about how the curriculum can be adjusted to accommodate studies of Asia
- fear that this area may detract from learning basic skills
- competition from other curriculum areas for resources and time
- small numbers of Asian students in some schools and levels of participation of parents of these students.

Sensitivity demanded that a survey of this nature could not directly probe whether the respondents personally manifested anti-Asian tendencies. The fact that “bigotry, prejudice, fear, xenophobia, ignorance, racism, and ethnocentricity” were terms used reasonably frequently to describe other peoples attitudes, would lead one to believe that these characteristics are indeed displayed in Australian society. In moving ahead to work with parents, the AEF may need to be cognizant of the following comment cited by one

parent as a barrier - “*anti-Asian prejudice masked by arguments concerning the competing merits of other educational priorities*”.

**f) What else did parents say?**

In Section 6, Question 63, a number of people took the opportunity to write extra comments, some of which are summarised below:

- How can schools maintain balance in the curriculum between studies of Asia, Australia and other parts of the world, given that we live in a global society, not just a regional one.
- Need to link studies of Asia with favourable student outcomes.
- If learning about doing business with Asia and competing with Asian businesses means that children are being prepared for a future of low wages, then this initiative will not be supported.
- Need to preserve positive benefits of local school curriculum decision making. Some concern was expressed about “national” curriculum priorities.
- How can continuity in language education can be maintained given that trained teachers are in short supply in some regions, particularly in the country?
- How can this message be sold to communities (often rural or remote) which have had little contact with Asian peoples or their cultures? How to convince rural people that this is not just another “city” based initiative?
- Are resources available to support the initiative?
- Parents may need to be involved in further discussions before committing to actively supporting studies of Asia?
- Teaching about unfamiliar religious beliefs is worrying for some parents.
- The key issue is about school decision making and governance. If schools do not genuinely engage with parents, then implementation of an initiative such as this will lack strength and sustainability. Sending out a glossy publication to parents who are associated with a school that does not engage them on curriculum issues will achieve little.

## 6. Follow up telephone interviews

Eleven respondents were contacted to explore in greater depth several areas of the survey where greater clarity was required. These people were a sample of urban and rural dwellers, covered both government and non-government school parents, and were drawn from each of the six states and the ACT – the NT was not contacted in this exercise.

Whilst acknowledging that eleven is a small sample, these interviews explored responses to the following statements in greater depth:

### **Q18. An understanding of Asia has helped me in my present or past employment**

Interviewees from rural areas (with one exception) saw little connection with their own work and links with Asia. One person worked in education and training and saw extensive links with their own employment. People acknowledged that this was an emerging area, and that future generations are more likely to see the direct links, benefits and opportunities in relation to employment. The high neutral response to this question can possibly be explained by people only experiencing tenuous connections between their own understanding of Asia and their personal employment circumstances. The fact that the percentage of respondents who expressed neutrality on question 18 was a close match with the percentage of parents who had never visited Asia, may be significant. Without direct personal experience it is more difficult to make the connections with employment envisaged in this question. On the other hand the strong positive response in relation to business opportunities and a future closely linked with Asia can be explained on the basis that these questions did not call for a personal response – rather an understanding of trends as can be gleaned from the media and other sources of information.

### **Q19. Asian values and cultures may conflict with Australia’s current values and culture**

### **Q20. Australia can learn more from developed Western countries than from developed Asian countries**

### **Q22. Australia needs to preserve its traditional identity. People who come here should accept our values**

### **Q24. Many Australians do not understand Asian peoples and their cultures**

These four questions called for a discussion of Australian values and culture and Asian values and cultures. In what ways are they different? Is Australia at risk of losing important values by engaging with Asia? Need we be afraid? What is our traditional identity? Do we really have one?

When one came to discussing values, it was interesting that few people expressed negative attitudes. Where people had difficulty in identifying specific Asian values and cultures, it was clear that some kind of fear of the unknown was uppermost in their minds, seemingly a result of religious differences. Several people suggested that life itself was less valued in some Asian societies. A number of people made distinctions between the values held by Asian governments at the political level did not necessarily reflect those held by individuals. The values that people identified as “Asian” were seen as different, even admirable. People spoke of the role of the family, reverence for older family members, strong work ethic, the value placed on education and sense of community and interdependence as opposed to Australian individualism as key Asian values. It was unclear how any of these values could threaten Australian society, and when asked, interviewees could not identify any specific threats. Several parents who commenced the discussion being somewhat negative concluded as very supportive of learning more about Asian cultures. A number of people expressed a belief that the base, underlying values of Australian society and Asian societies were likely to be the same. The issue of corruption in business, legal systems and government was raised by several people and identified as a value that they would not like to see extend to Australia.

A number of people questioned the notion of a traditional Australian identity. It was even suggested that as a young country it is probably a falsehood to identify any particular “Australian identity”. Is it a British identity, an Americanised identity, a European immigrant identity or an emerging Asian identity? A number

of respondents preferred to think of this country as having a rapidly evolving society that has been strongly influenced by immigration from Europe in the past and which will take on new values over time, many of which will be derived from Asia and the Pacific. It could be argued that this evolution is much more evident in the cities than in rural Australia. When questioned about this, rural parents who came to the cities for parent meetings expressed a view that their educational priorities were often in sharp contrast with their urban colleagues.

In relation to Australian values, people actually expressed some criticisms in relation to what they perceived as a downside of our society – a sense of “I’m alright Jack”, that we are a fortunate country with a reasonable standard of living and plenty of resources that can be sold offshore and where there is no real need to learn a second language because we speak English. However people alluded to a sense of unstated racial superiority that resides below the surface of Australian society, and a view by some that the “One Nation” political phenomenon in the 1990’s put Australia’s relationships with Asia at risk.

The most disturbing feature nominated by several interviewees was a proposition that many Australians exhibit intellectual laziness, a reluctance to fully inform themselves about different cultures and to be overly dependent on the popular media for information.

One can assume that the reason why a majority of respondents felt that there were things that we could learn from developed Asian nations, resulted from an analysis of those features of Asian culture that could be incorporated into our society.

#### **Q28. Australia should strengthen and deepen its relationships with India**

India is not on people’s mind in the same way as China. Respondents said that Australia has had a long association with China, commencing with the gold-rush and continuing over the past 150 years. China now has a high profile in the media, whilst India does not feature in the same way. A stereotypical image of India as being characterised by poverty and squalor seemed to override other images of this emerging nation.

#### **Q29. Australia is currently not well prepared to meet the future challenges of relating to Asia.**

This statement drew a strong neutral response. Telephone interviewees commented that the notion of “preparedness” on the national level may be somewhat abstract or unclear, hence the number of respondents who were reluctant to commit themselves.

#### **Q47. I would like to know more about the work of the AEF**

It was clear that many parents had not heard of the AEF before this survey was administered. It was possible that parents may have initially thought of the AEF as a business lobby group, without a practical role to play in education. There was also some suspicion that the organisation might not take a balanced view of curriculum, being motivated to push its priorities without giving due consideration to others area of learning. When the researcher described the work of the AEF, especially in relation to its support for schools and teachers and production of affordable resources, respondents expressed strong interest in and support for its role.

#### **Q54. I find it difficult to assign a priority to studies of Asia when there are so many areas fighting for a place in a crowded school curriculum**

The term “crowded curriculum” hit a strong chord with many respondents, who recycled it in good measure in the free response question 61b. It must be realized that parents do not necessarily fully appreciate the



variety of ways that curriculum can be organized and delivered. They do understand however that schools are expected to continually respond to a range of diverse needs identified by politicians, community leaders, education authorities and assorted lobby groups. Enter studies of Asia – a concept probably not on the horizon of these parents prior to the survey. It is not surprising that the proposition drew a positive response from parents who probably had little prior knowledge of how studies of Asia was already being addressed in a significant number of schools across the country.

When the concept of cross-curricular delivery by teachers was explored in more detail, parents appreciated how studies of Asia could be introduced without threatening resources, time or Key Learning Areas. Parents are opposed curriculum add-ons, but they will accept a well thought out cross curriculum strategy. They do need reassurance that any such strategy does not represent a diminishing of standards or academic rigour – there was some suggestion in the free responses that cross-curriculum approaches sometimes suffered from a superficial approach to student learning.

#### **Q56. Studies of Asia should always remain an optional element of the curriculum, as individual schools are in the best position to make decisions on resources and curriculum implementation**

Parents know that local school resources and capability do not always match centrally mandated curriculum initiatives. Interviewees were asked how agreement with the proposition could be reconciled with the fact that studies of Asia is not conceived as a “subject” that could be inserted into a suite of electives. In primary schools and the earlier high school years, most curriculum falls into the compulsory category. When parents were reassured that there is no intent to introduce a single, nationally mandated model, they appreciated how local curriculum decision making could sit comfortably within a policy of addressing studies of Asia across the curriculum, but in a way that was in harmony with the resources and ethos of the local school.

One view that came through several interviews as well as a number of written responses, was a belief that a school needed a significant number of Asian students and families before it should consider introducing any studies of Asia. Some felt that as Asian parents were not well represented on school decision making structures was reason enough for not addressing studies of Asia as a curriculum issue.

#### **Q61. Studies of Asia should have a higher priority in Australian schools.**

This was a summary proposition, but the data can only be relied upon if based on a universally held understanding of the meaning of studies of Asia, as well as a standard understanding of the word “priority”. As mentioned above, there were a variety of understandings in relation to studies of Asia, as well as some different interpretations of “priority”. The main issue with “priority” was an interpretation that the survey may have been seeking parental support for status level that may have resulted in existing curriculum priorities being pushed to one side. As with the previous questions, parent’s fears can be allayed when they fully understand the nature, extent and parameters of what is being proposed.

## 7. Respondents and their Geographical Location

The survey did not require respondents to identify their general or precise location within any State or Territory, however a number nominated the schools with which they were associated for an Asia Education Foundation award of curriculum materials. Others were willing to be contacted for follow up to the survey, thereby providing their contact details. These two types of information facilitated some cross matching of responses to geographical location. Whilst it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions, the following general observations can be made:

### a) Observations

i) People living in rural areas are less likely to have had direct contact with Asian people and communities in Australia. This group was also less likely to appreciate the value of studies of Asia as part of their children's curriculum, and also felt that it was more difficult for their schools to provide the level of resources required to implement studies of Asia.

ii) A number of Tasmanian respondents felt that as there were so few Asian people living in that State, and attending school, studies of Asia may not have the same priority as on the mainland.

iii) Supportive responses came from a number of large regional centres, such as Port Hedland and Townsville. Such locations have direct air and shipping links, industrial and economic links with Asia and have tertiary institutions enrolling large numbers of Asian students.

iv) Darwin based responses were supportive of studies of Asia, reflecting the close ties that that city enjoys with its Asian neighbours, and the curriculum response of the NT Department of Education.

v) Australia is a large country geographically, and as would be expected, location does seem to influence people's attitudes towards studies of Asia. Several respondents indicated that the attitude of the "town" may be prejudicial to the implementation of studies of Asia in the local schools. One such response came from remote Queensland, another from a regional Queensland centre and another from a small town in northern Victoria.

### b) Summary

It is highly likely that different communities across the country will exhibit different levels of support for studies of Asia, based on different attitudes towards Asian peoples and cultures based on their personal and community experiences. Any action strategy to further progress the incorporation of studies of Asia needs to consider such potential local differences. There may be some way of conducting a simple "attitudinal audit" before embarking on a strategy to work with a school community.

In particular, it would appear that a common misconception is that the relevance of studies of Asia in the curriculum is directly related to the numbers of Asian families and children attending the school. A communication/information strategy to counter this viewpoint should be considered.

## 8. Summary of Major Findings

### a) Relationships between Australia and Asia

- i) This parent group was strongly supportive of the need for Australia as a country and for its government to ensure that it maintained positive relationships with Asian countries. Most agreed with the proposition that Australia's long term security would be enhanced by maintaining strong ties with Asia
- ii) The group acknowledged that Asian people and their cultures had made a significant impact on the development of Australia as a nation, and that this impact would be on-going.
- iii) A majority of respondents felt that there may be some conflict between Asian and Australian cultures, and most believed that this country should preserve its own cultural traditions.
- iv) A majority were of the opinion that many Australians did not understand Asian peoples and their cultures, and related to this finding they were of the opinion that there was much that this country could learn from Asia and Asian peoples. Some suggested that as a result of this lack of understanding, that some Australians may feel threatened by cultural differences.
- v) The need for Australians to be able to communicate across cultures was strongly supported
- vi) The economic and business links between Australia and Asia were recognised, and seen to be growing over time. Several people expressed concern that Australia should be wary of adopting the low wage structures and working conditions of some Asian countries in order to compete with them.
- vii) Parents said that it would be an advantage for their children in terms of future employment that they should have a good understanding of Asia. They wanted their children to have the opportunity of learning an Asian language.

### b) Parents, Schools and Curriculum

- i) this group of parents take a keen interest in their children's education, and want to influence school curriculum decisions. They are not happy to leave all such decisions to schools. They would be pleased to be provided with an opportunity to discuss studies of Asia at their local schools.
- ii) notwithstanding this, many schools do not engage their parent groups in such decision making processes. Some parents suggested that the basic model of school governance involving parent participation in decision making processes needed to be addressed before studies of Asia as a specific initiative could gain any traction within a school.
- iii) many schools do not specifically address studies of Asia, however most parents felt that their children's schools successfully supported a wide range of cultural groups and different beliefs in their communities.

### c) Understanding the place of studies of Asia

- i) A majority of parents were concerned that around half of Australia's schools do not address studies of Asia in a systematic way. They would also be concerned if their own child's school paid little or no attention to incorporating Asia into its curriculum.
- ii) Despite acknowledging the need for Australians to engage with Asia, and their understanding the role that schools can play in supporting this imperative, a significant proportion of parents had difficulty in assessing how studies of Asia could be incorporated into the curriculum, and what kind of priority it should have, apart from having optional or elective status. Rather than choose not to support various measures to lift the profile of studies of Asia, a minority of around 25% chose to suspend judgment on a range of practical implementation steps offered to them. This decision appeared to stem from the following factors;
  - a lack of clarity as to the nature of studies of Asia as a cross-curricular program with flexible implementation models tailored to individual school circumstances

- concerns about academic rigour
- the belief that it was something new and untested
- uncertainty about how it should be resourced, in terms of teacher expertise and establishment costs
- a fear that its inclusion in the curriculum would result in the marginalization of some other important curriculum area, especially the “basics” of literacy and numeracy.
- a number of parents felt that the relevance of studies of Asia was linked to the number of Asian student attending a particular school.
- uncertainty about how balance could be maintained in the curriculum, between studies of Asia and studies of Australia itself and other regions of the world.

iii) this group clearly articulated the case for incorporating studies of Asia into school curricular, and the barriers that a school may face in implementing such a program.

iv) whilst there is no evidence to suggest that this group exhibits any racist or xenophobic tendencies, these were broadly identified by the group as potential societal barriers to the successful implementation of studies of Asia in some schools.

#### **d) Influence of local factors**

Every school and its community is different. Attitudes of parents, teachers, principals and the broader community cannot be assumed to be replicated from school to school across the nation, in relation to studies of Asia or any other curriculum initiative. Individual school programs are all products of central curriculum policies being interpreted in local ways in a local community context. Their commitment to involving parents in decision making processes will vary, governing councils and parent groups, if they exist, will differ in their capacities to influence school policies. School leadership practices will vary widely. All these factors need to be considered when considering any plans to involve local communities in any curriculum change exercise.

## 9. Parents and Parent Organisations

That parents are an extremely diverse group goes without saying. Parents occupy every societal niche. On the other hand, parents who elect to become involved in parent organisations are prepared to volunteer their time on behalf of other parents and their children – to add value to the schooling experience of Australia’s young people. But even within this altruistic group there would be a much greater diversity than would be evident within a group of teachers, or academics, or public servants and so on.

Australian State based parent organisations also exhibit considerable diversity. Some are relatively large and financially secure, being able to employ research and administrative staff ensuring that they can be involved in a wide range of activities. Others are small and rely heavily on a small group of dedicated volunteers to carry on their work. These organisations are often stretched when asked to contribute to anything but a small set of core functions. Not all State based parent organisations have a communications infrastructure or membership base which allows them to communicate with every school in their State education sector.

The two national organisations, ACSSO and the APC are small from an administrative point of view, but both are in a position to establish national policies, lobby government, engage in some limited research, manage a limited number of projects, represent parents on national organisations and communicate with state affiliates. The two organisations have developed a capacity to work closely with one another on a range of issues and enjoy a sound level of credibility with the Commonwealth Government.

Parents who occupy executive positions on both state and national parent groups are volunteers, with families and jobs. As their children grow up and move out of the school systems, so these parents often move on and are replaced with new volunteers. So a typical group will have quite variable internal levels of experience and expertise.

Parents who work at the school base occupy a pivotal position. Schools and their classrooms are the places where curriculum is interpreted and delivered. Teachers can embrace or reject change. Principals can ensure that national priorities find a place in school programs, or they can quietly ignore them. Principals can nurture a culture of parental involvement, or keep parents at arm’s length.

Information overload is a phenomenon that affects all groups who work in Australian education. Both Federal and State Governments have their own agendas for change. New accountability measures occupy school leaders on a daily basis. It is very easy for parents to fall off the radar in the midst of this frantic pursuit of new policy objectives. Involved parents have seen new initiatives introduced before previous ones have been fully embedded. Parent groups often feel that governments give them impossibly short time-frames to respond to such matters as inquiries, new policies and new legislation. Such is the pace of change that many parents feel that genuine consultation has been replaced with tokenism. For parents to be engaged in supporting and promoting studies of Asia, it cannot be seen as the “latest new idea.” Fortunately the AEF has been operating for a number of years and can demonstrate a consistent track record of support for schools whilst maintaining political independence.

## 10. Where to next?

### a) What factors need to be considered?

In considering whether to enlist parental support in a more structured and planned way to promote studies of Asia in Australian schools, the following factors are relevant:

- i) An extensive research base exists which shows that family and parental involvement in education lifts student achievement. Where parents are involved in decisions about the curriculum offered in their children's schools, community support is more likely and programs are more sustainable.
- ii) This study has pointed to strong base level of support within parent organisations for studies of Asia. The way studies of Asia should be incorporated into the curriculum needs some clarification and individual concerns can be alleviated through a well structured communication and information strategy.
- iii) The capacity and willingness for parent organisations to become involved needs to be carefully assessed. Likewise, the AEF will need to set its own priorities, as adding a new layer of complexity to its existing operation will involve resource implications.
- iv) Schools and their communities exhibit considerable diversity. The greatest challenge for peak bodies is how to ensure that local parent groups receive information and become engaged in any action plan that may be formulated. Engaging parents in individual schools is likely to be resource intensive, either for the AEF or National/State parent bodies. This is further complicated by the fact that state parent bodies may insist on using their offices as the conduit for information flow.

### b) What practical steps can be taken now?

Developing strategies to move forward in a collaborative way between the three organisations is not only desirable but possible, and may involve a number of different ways, on a number of different levels. Parents strongly articulated the need for Australia to positively engage with Asia, as a national priority. Co-existing with this general view, was a degree of reluctance to provide the same level of support for the incorporation of studies of Asia into the school curriculum. It is likely that the predominant reason explaining this reticence is that parents did not share a common understanding of the term "studies of Asia". Although many did grasp the concept of it being a cross-curriculum initiative, for some it was seen as a new subject, or even as a compulsory language. In the context of a school curriculum which is very crowded, it can be seen why there would be less than full support for something seen as an extra to be somehow accommodated. A number of parents expressed a view that there could be some conflict with studies of Asia and the delivery of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Amongst those who did appreciate the ways in which it could be integrated into existing curricular, some raised the issue of balance in relation to studies of other regions of the world, whilst others expressed doubts in relation to academic rigour.

This leads to a conclusion that for parents to be in a position to provide their strong support to the AEF, they need to have a clear understanding of the nature of studies of Asia. They need to understand what it is and what it is not. They need to understand how it can be resourced and how they can influence policies such as teacher preparation and in-service programs. Parents also need to be informed about the role of the AEF in promoting this aspect of the curriculum.

Ten recommendations are provided for consideration. These are:

#### i) Establish an Implementation Group

The AEF should convene a small implementation group to discuss, develop and prioritise actions that flow from this study. This group should be convened and chaired by the AEF, as it is the lead partner with the major responsibility for implementing studies of Asia in schools.

### **ii) Develop an Information/Communication Strategy**

The December 2005 release of the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools is an ideal vehicle for opening dialogue with parent organisations on a wider scale than has been attempted previously. Parents are mentioned in the statement, so it would seem imperative to put them in the picture as early as possible in 2006.

At the same time as talking about the National Statement, an information package outlining some of the key findings of the present study could be produced and disseminated. This group could also produce the text of a short publication which clearly defines studies of Asia, outlines the benefits of incorporating studies of Asia in the school curriculum and strategies to address barriers to the introduction of such programs.

### **iii) Commission Targeted Research**

This study has pointed to the diversity of parental opinion around the concept of studies of Asia. Regionally distinct attitudes towards studies of Asia may well exist. Different schools will be at different stages of readiness to embrace studies of Asia. The AEF may want to assess the readiness of schools by commissioning some regionally based targeted research. For example, an analysis of schools which are involved in studies of Asia programs may reveal that there is little uptake in particular areas in particular States. Why is this? Are there particular attitudinal or other reasons for this level of uptake? What are the general community attitudes? Parent organisations could contribute to such research by assisting with the design of any survey instruments, provide contact details and possibly assist with some data gathering. Results of this kind of targeted research would provide the AEF with a better understanding of the local factors which may assist or act as barriers to the implementation of studies of Asia in particular locations.

### **iv) Collaboratively Develop Curriculum**

The AEF has established over time a sophisticated mechanism for developing and evaluating new curriculum. A gap in this process however is the formal involvement of parents. The Implementation Group should look at ways to incorporate parental views, to make curriculum development a more collaborative exercise. Parents could have an appropriate level of input into;

- identifying gaps in the suite of available curriculum materials
- supporting change by identifying existing good teaching practice at the local level, with a view to the AEF documenting this for dissemination to other schools
- existing structures or groups that are used in the process of updating existing curriculum materials or in the production of new curriculum materials.

### **v) Involve Asian Parents**

ACSSO and the APC could jointly or separately discuss and develop strategies to increase the involvement of parents of Asian backgrounds on school decision making bodies. Any strategies developed are likely to be in conjunction with state affiliates, and should be seen as part of a broader process to involve parents of all ethnicities in decision making processes.

### **vi) Conferences and Workshops**

All parent organisations hold national and state conferences, as well as regular executive meetings. The work of the AEF could be explained in these forums. The Implementation Group could investigate applying for a grant to run a studies of Asia national conference, perhaps backing on to another national conference.

### **vii) Involve Parents in AEF Activities**

Parent organisations could be invited to nominate representatives to receive information from the AEF. This could be formalized into AEF/Parent Information Network

These people could be linked to the State Advisers, and operate as a support and information exchange network. If funds were available, these people could meet once or twice a year.

Secondly, and in line with research findings on the importance of family/school partnerships as acknowledged by the Australian Government, funding could be provided for a limited number of parent places at teacher professional development programs – a parent could attend with a teacher from the same school. This parent would be expected to report back to a meeting of their Governing Council and P&C or P&F group.

**viii) Publications**

Both ACSSO and the APC publish newsletters. The AEF could provide regular copy for these publications, or authorise re-publication of items from its own newsletter. With the assistance of the parent organisations, the AEF should ensure that its own newsletter reaches all parent representatives in each State and Territory. As indicated in the response to one of the survey questions, parents would support the AEF in publicising examples of excellent studies of Asia programs.

**ix) Play an Advocacy Role**

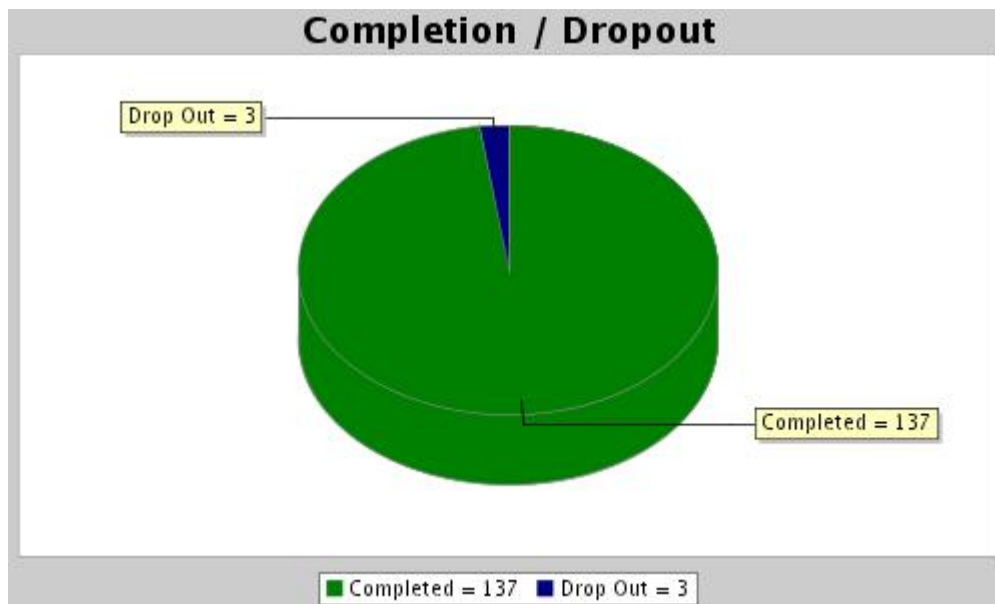
The national parent organisations have an opportunity for influencing the Federal Government and bodies such as Teaching Australia and the Australian Principals' Association Professional Development Council. Issues such as resourcing, special grants, teacher training and professional development initiatives could be raised with these bodies. State parent bodies could also play a similar role with local jurisdictions and universities involved with teacher preparation and professional development. They may also want to invite their local education authority/Minister to provide a status report on the uptake of studies of Asia programs in their State/Territory.

**x) Develop Policy**

ACSSO and the APC could consider formulating policies which mirror and complement the National Statement. Such policies should be accompanied by action plans



## Appendix A: Summary Data



### Target Group

Target group for this study were parents who are active in their national or state parent organisations. Surveys were distributed to members of the Executives of the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council and executive members/councillors of their state based affiliates. A small number of surveys were distributed to members of non-government parent organisations which are not formally affiliated with the APC.

### Responses

The graph above indicates that there were 137 responses to the survey. There were three additional log-ons to the website used for data entry, however these persons did not proceed to complete the survey on-line.

Within the 137 responses, 14 people completed the survey electronically by personally entering the data, whilst 123 respondents used the paper version of the survey. This data was then entered onto the database by the researcher.

Approximately 300 surveys were distributed initially. Four methods of distribution were utilised:

- Hand distributed at the ACSSO Annual Conference
- Direct mailing by the researcher using addresses supplied by the parent organisations
- Bulk mailing to State affiliate offices for distribution by that organisation
- An email reminder which contained the URL of the survey for electronic completion.

Using the distribution figure of 300, the response rate was calculated to be 46%

## **Appendix B**

### **Survey Response Data**

The survey was structured as follows:

#### **Introduction**

This section outlined the background and purpose of the survey, as well as providing definitions about Asia and studies of Asia.

#### **Section 1 – Questions 1 to 14**

This section collected baseline data about the respondents in terms of their parent organisation, the schools with which they are associated, and their connections with Asian people, Asian countries and Asian languages.

#### **Section 2 – Questions 15 to 32**

This section elicited information about the respondent's views as Australian citizens and about Australia's relationships with Asian countries, their people and their cultures.

#### **Section 3 – Questions 33 – 46**

This section asked for opinions and observations about studies of Asia in the children's schools with which the respondent was associated.

#### **Section 4 – Questions 47 – 61**

This section asked for opinions about the Asia Education Foundation and the importance of studies about Asia in schools.

#### **Section 5 – Question 62**

This section provided a scenario about the introduction and implementation of studies about Asia in a school. Through free response answers, respondents were asked to identify the main arguments in favour of the change, and the main barriers to its successful implementation.

#### **Section 6 – Question 63**

This question provided respondents with the opportunity of making an additional comment if they so desired.

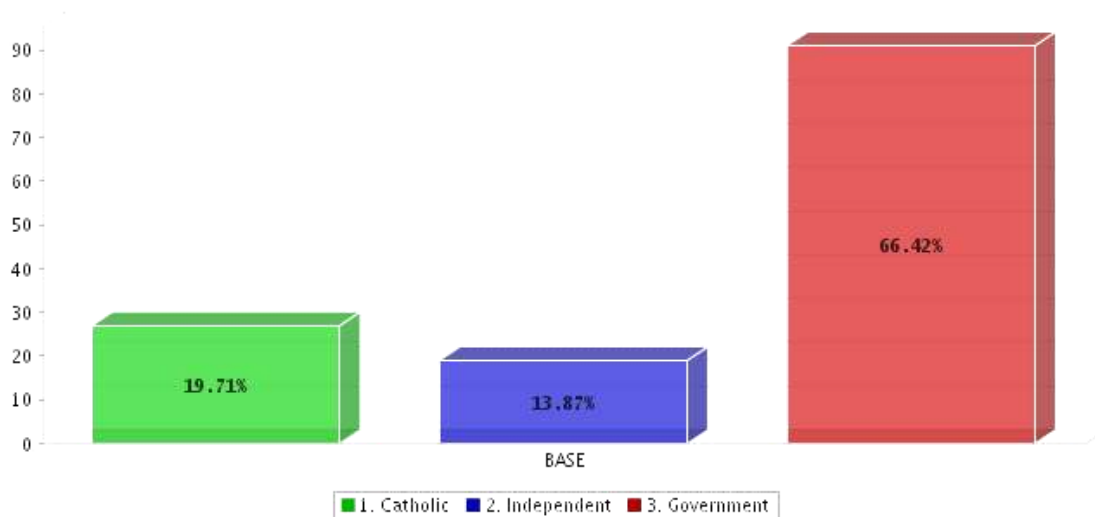
**1. My organisation is affiliated with**

	ACSSO	83	61.03%
	APC	44	32.35%
	Other non-govt	9	6.62%
Total		136	



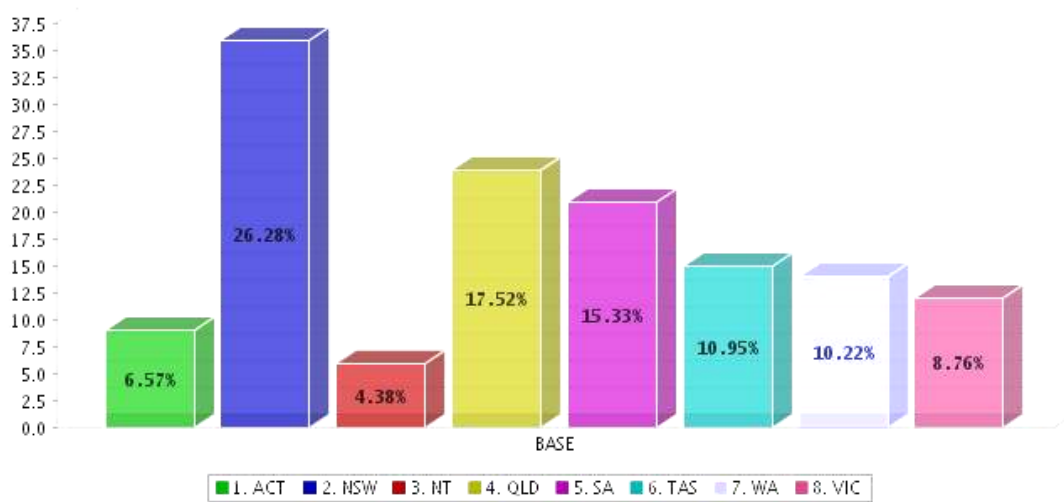
**2. The school sector where I have had the most personal association is the:**

	Catholic	27	19.71%
	Independent	19	13.87%
	Government	91	66.42%
Total		137	



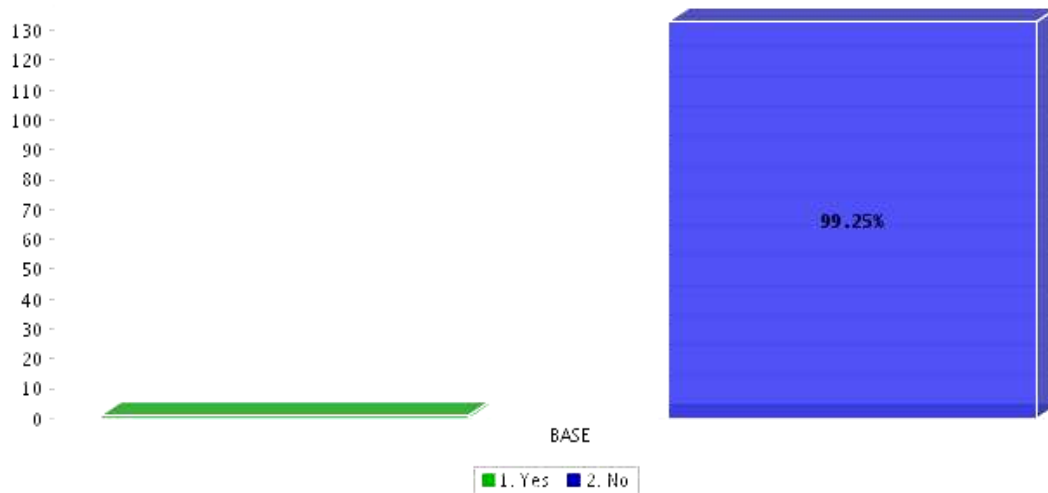
**3. I live in:**

	ACT	9	6.57%
	NSW	36	26.28%
	NT	6	4.38%
	QLD	24	17.52%
	SA	21	15.33%
	TAS	15	10.95%
	WA	14	10.22%
	VIC	12	8.76%
Total		137	



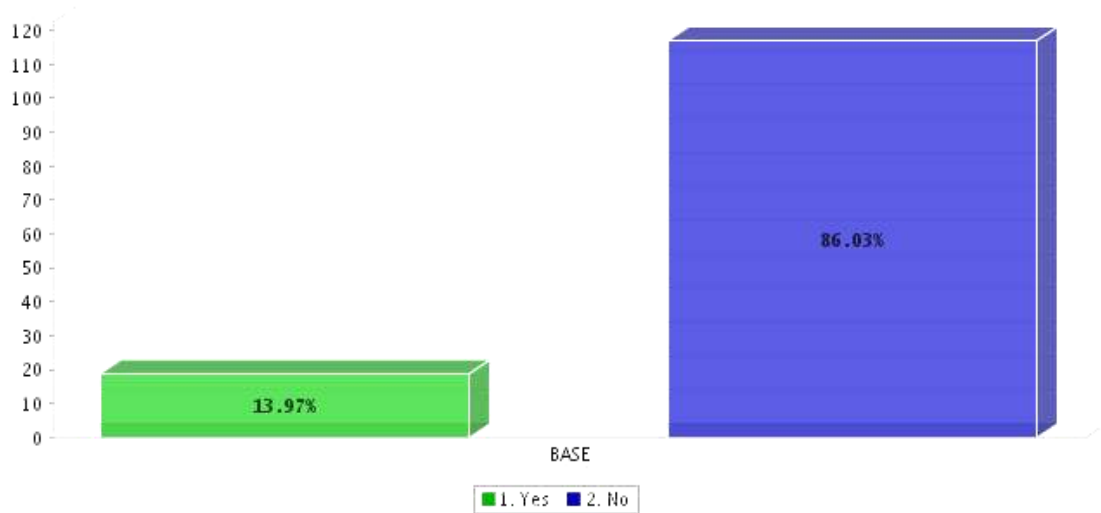
**4. I have an Asian background:**

	Yes	1	0.75%
	No	133	99.25%
Total		134	



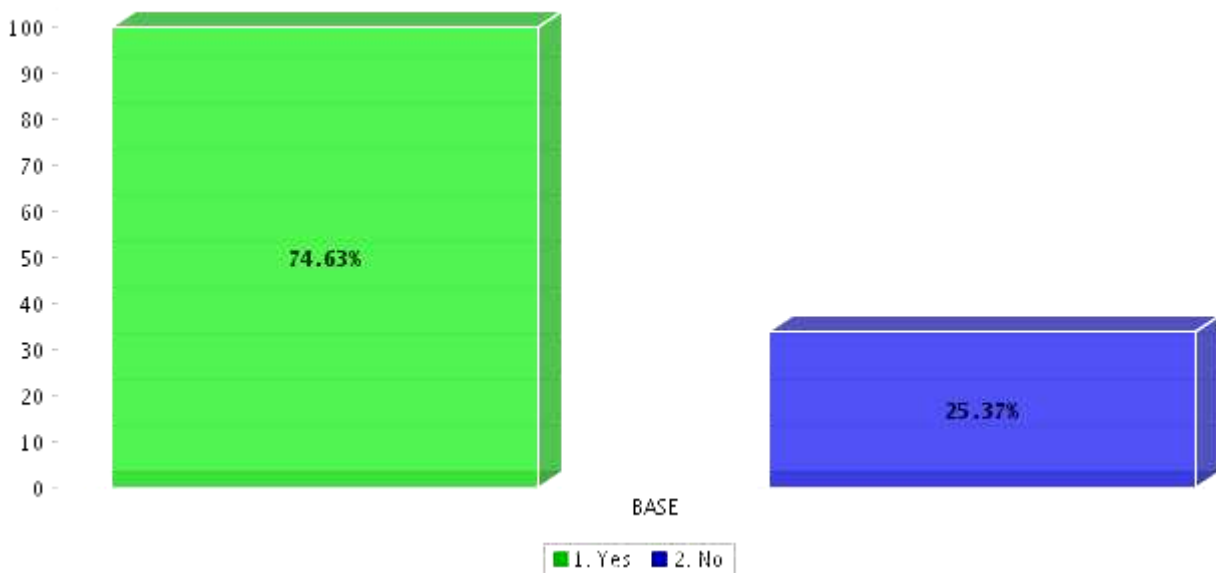
**5. There is at least one person with an Asian background in my immediate or extended family:**

	Yes	19	13.97%
	No	117	86.03%
Total		136	



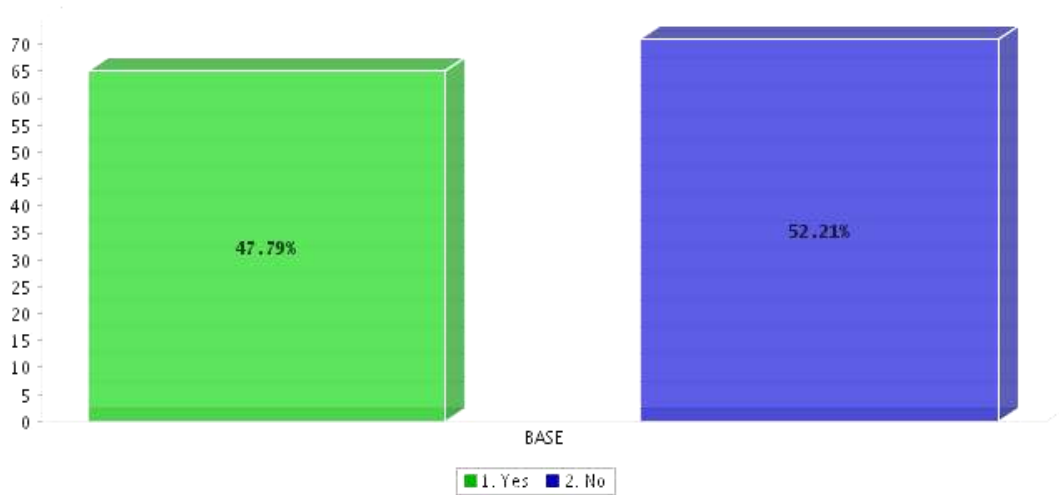
**6. My children have (or had) school or University friends from Asia or with Asian backgrounds:**

	Yes	100	74.63%
	No	34	25.37%
Total		134	



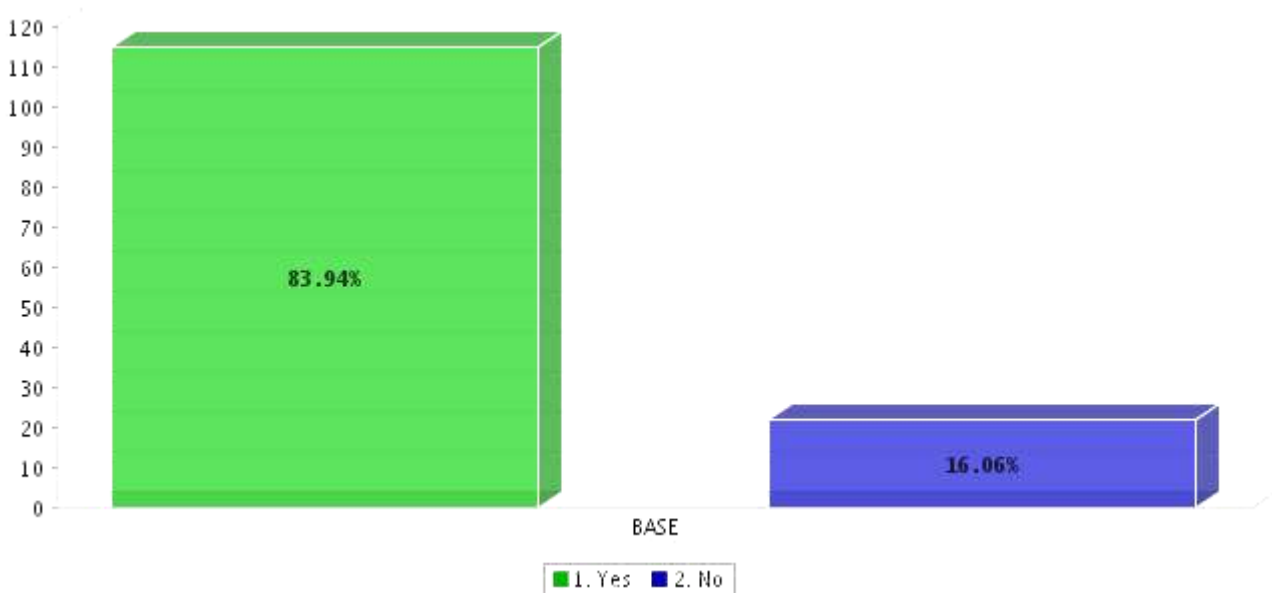
**7. I work with at least one colleague who has an Asian background:**

	Yes	65	47.79%
	No	71	52.21%
<b>Total</b>		<b>136</b>	



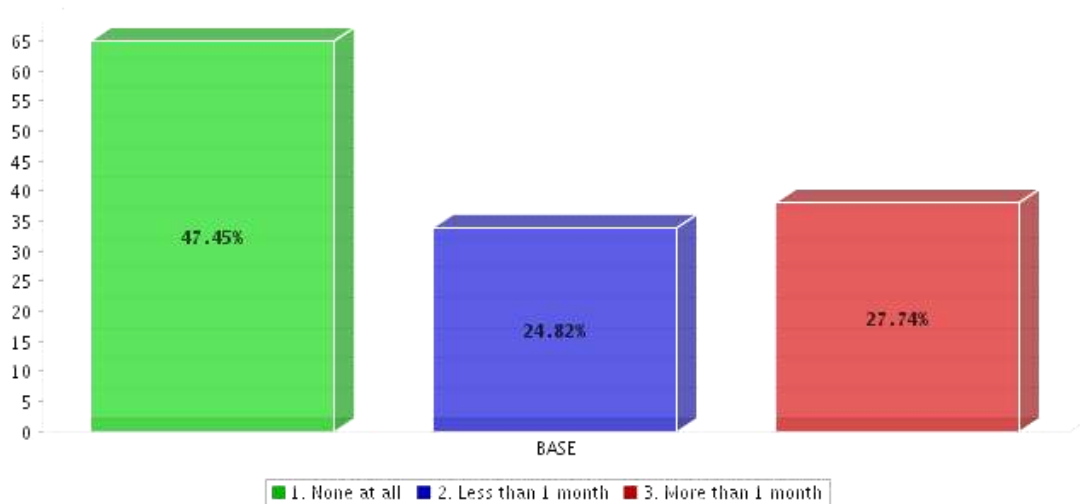
**8. I have (or have had) friends from Asia and/or friends with Asian backgrounds:**

	Yes	115	83.94%
	No	22	16.06%
<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	



**9. How much time have you spent in Asia?**

	None at all	65	47.45%
	Less than 1 month	34	24.82%
	More than 1 month	38	27.74%
<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	

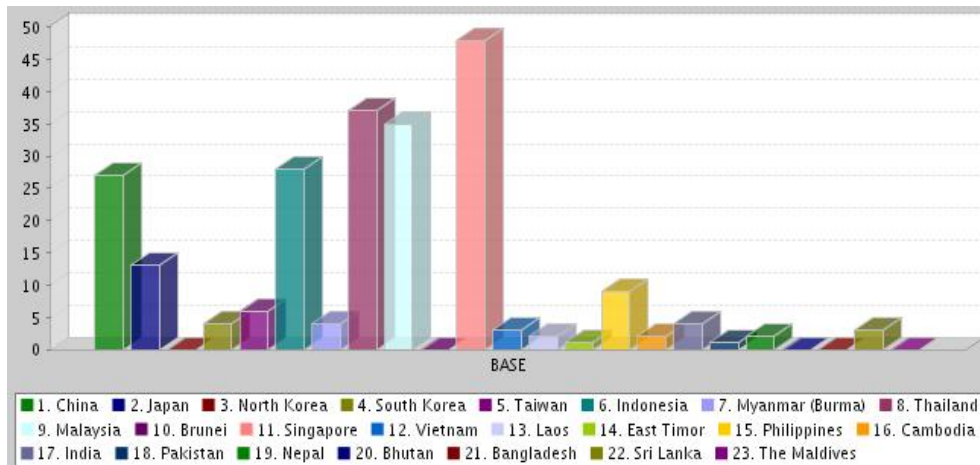


**10. If you answered “c” to Question 9 (ie you have spent more than 1 month in Asia):  
a) how much time have you spent in Asia? ..... months/years**

**11. If you have spent any time in Asia (ie you ticked 9b or 9c), what were your main reasons for being there?**

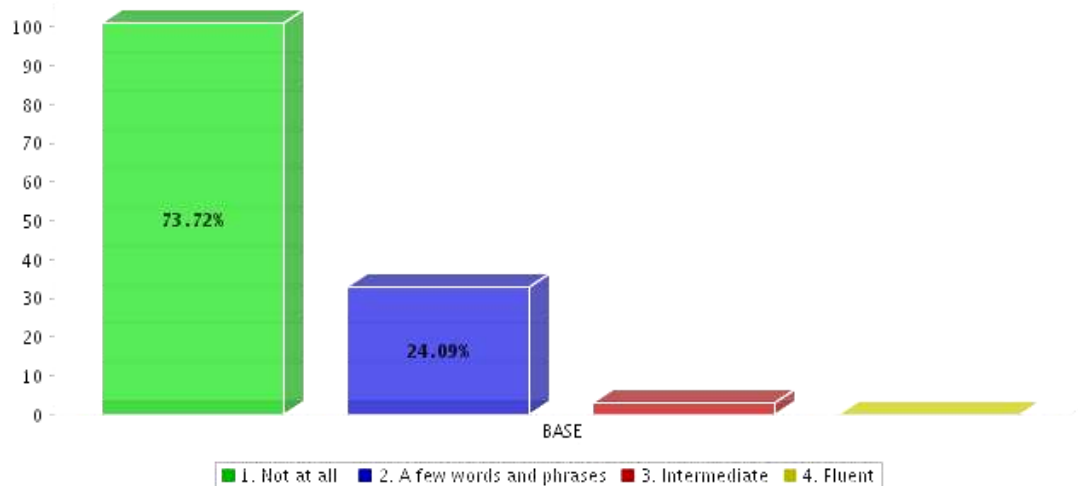
**12. If you answered Question 11, mark the Asian countries that you have either visited or lived in:**

	China	27	11.79%
	Japan	13	5.68%
	North Korea	0	0.00%
	South Korea	4	1.75%
	Taiwan	6	2.62%
	Indonesia	28	12.23%
	Myanmar (Burma)	4	1.75%
	Thailand	37	16.16%
	Malaysia	35	15.28%
	Brunei	0	0.00%
	Singapore	48	20.96%
	Vietnam	3	1.31%
	Laos	2	0.87%
	East Timor	1	0.44%
	Philippines	9	3.93%
	Cambodia	2	0.87%
	India	4	1.75%
	Pakistan	1	0.44%
	Nepal	2	0.87%
	Bhutan	0	0.00%
	Bangladesh	0	0.00%
	Sri Lanka	3	1.31%
	The Maldives	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>229</b>	



**13. My ability to speak an Asian language is best described as:**

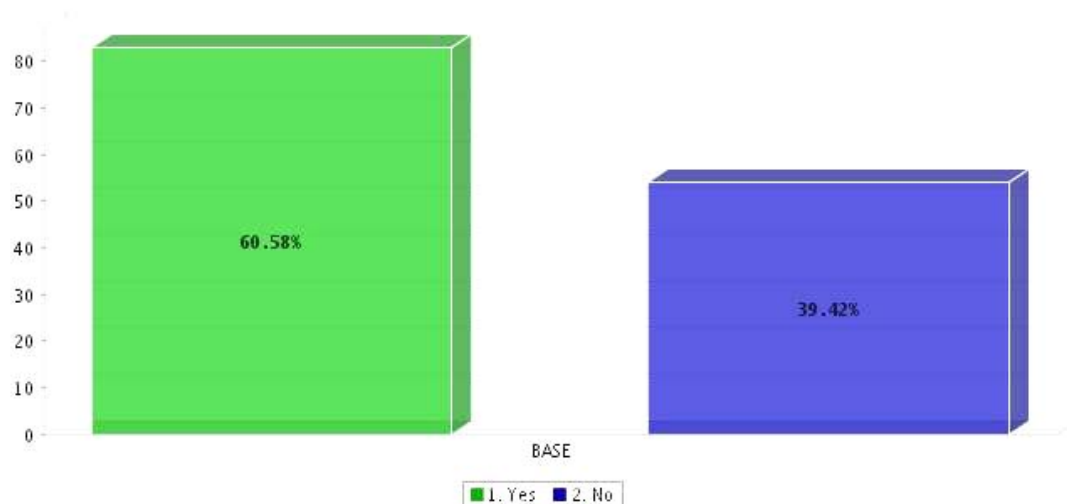
	Not at all	101	73.72%
	A few words and phrases	33	24.09%
	Intermediate	3	2.19%
	Fluent	0	0.00%
Total		137	





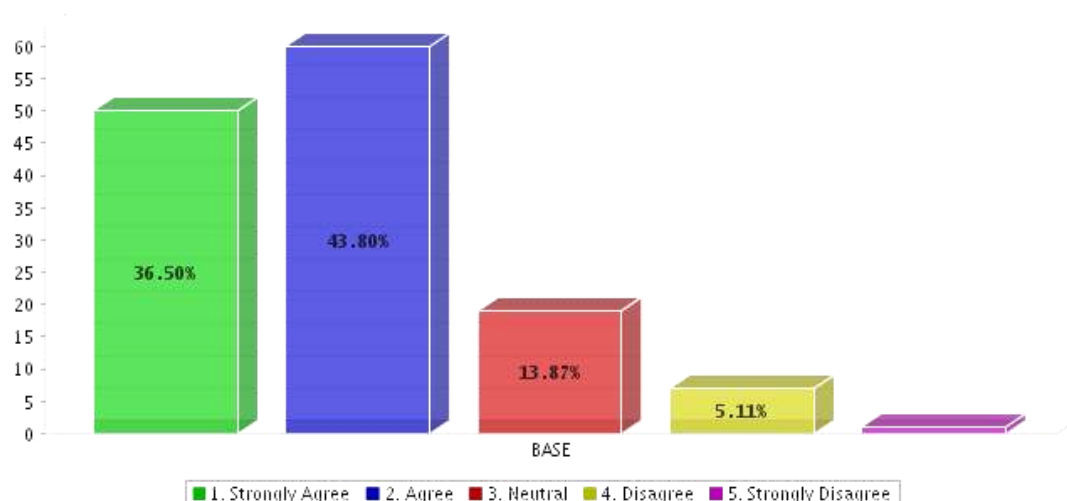
**14. One or more of my children has studied or will study an Asian language at school**

	Yes	83	60.58%
	No	54	39.42%
Total		137	



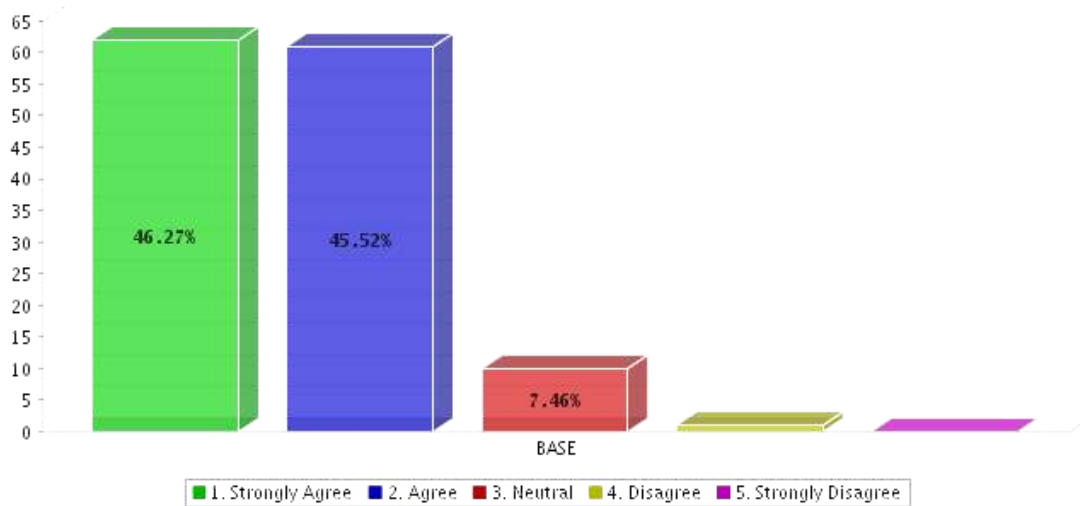
**15. Immigrants from Asia have played a significant role in the development of Australia**

	Strongly Agree	50	36.50%
	Agree	60	43.80%
	Neutral	19	13.87%
	Disagree	7	5.11%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
Total		137	



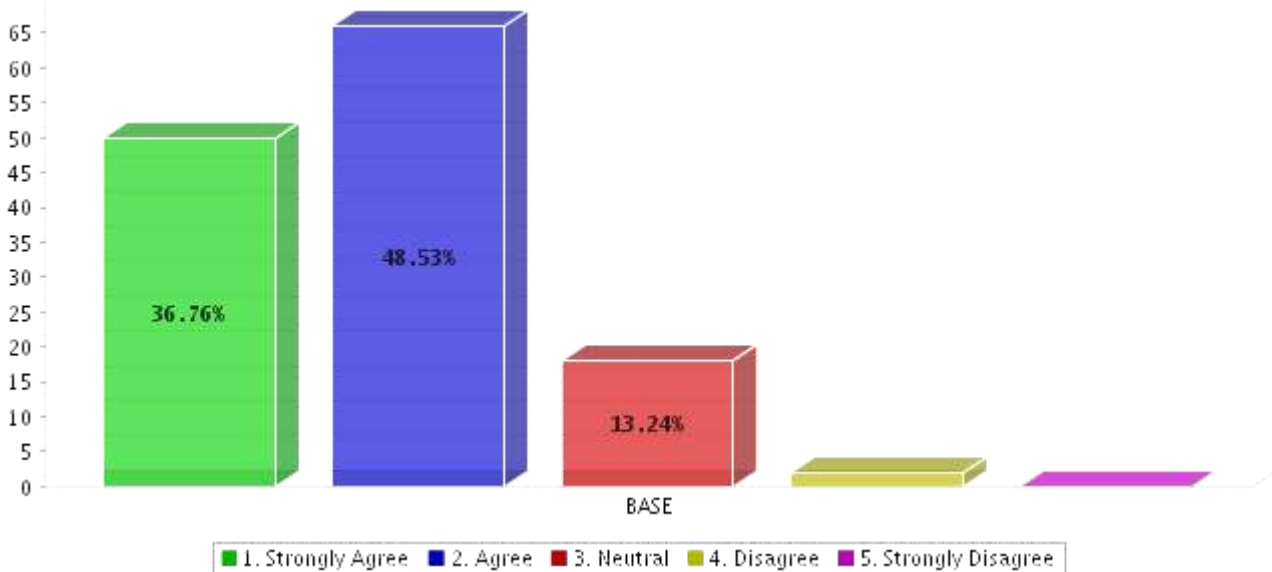
**16. For Australia, doing business with Asia will become increasingly important in the future**

	Strongly Agree	62	46.27%
	Agree	61	45.52%
	Neutral	10	7.46%
	Disagree	1	0.75%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>134</b>	



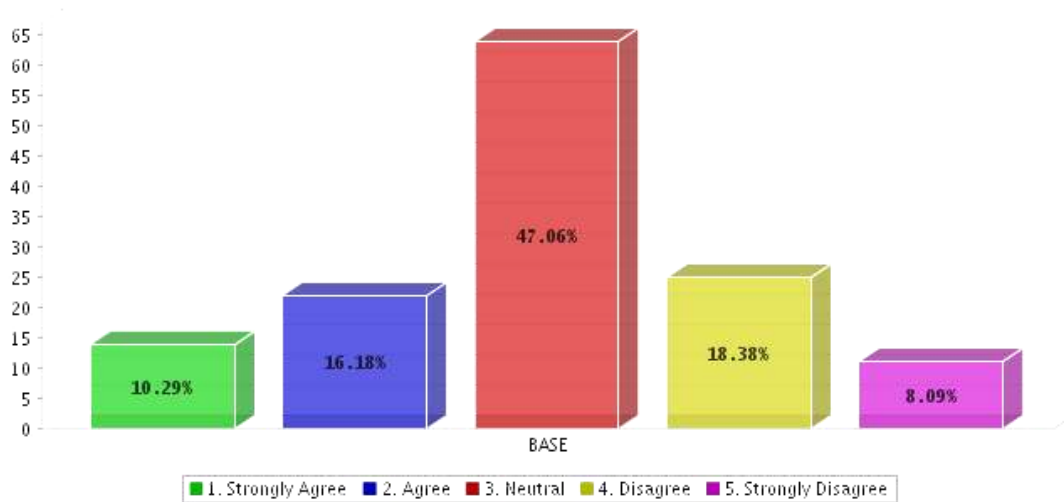
**17. I feel comfortable with people from an Asian background in a social setting**

	Strongly Agree	50	36.76%
	Agree	66	48.53%
	Neutral	18	13.24%
	Disagree	2	1.47%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>136</b>	



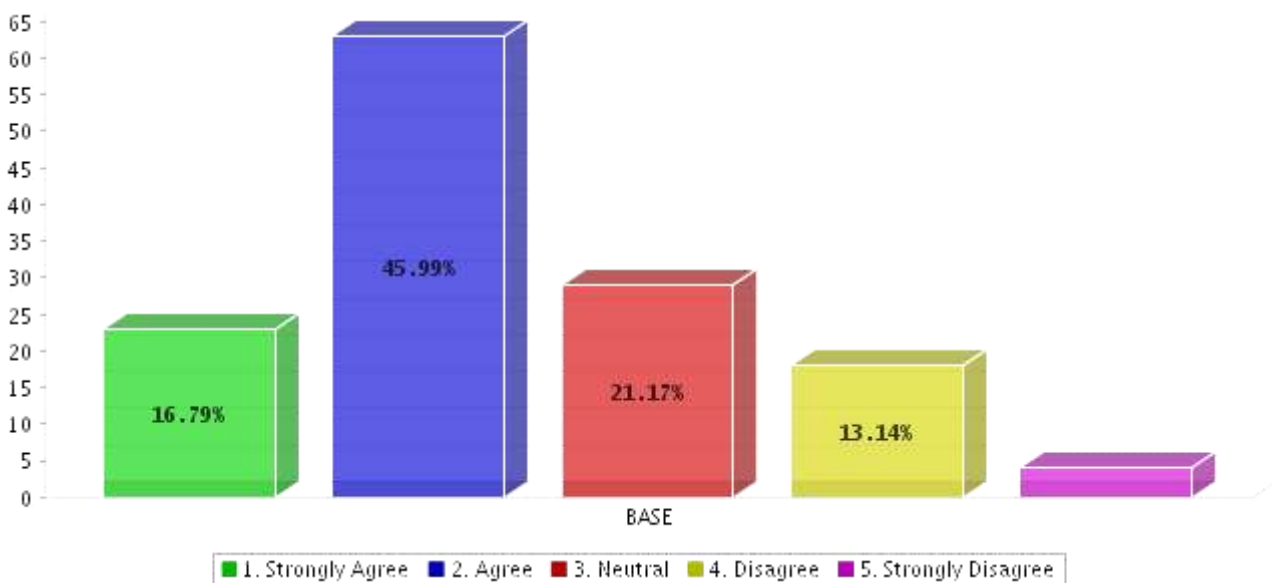
**18. An understanding of Asia has helped me in my present or past employment**

	Strongly Agree	14	10.29%
	Agree	22	16.18%
	Neutral	64	47.06%
	Disagree	25	18.38%
	Strongly Disagree	11	8.09%
<b>Total</b>		<b>136</b>	



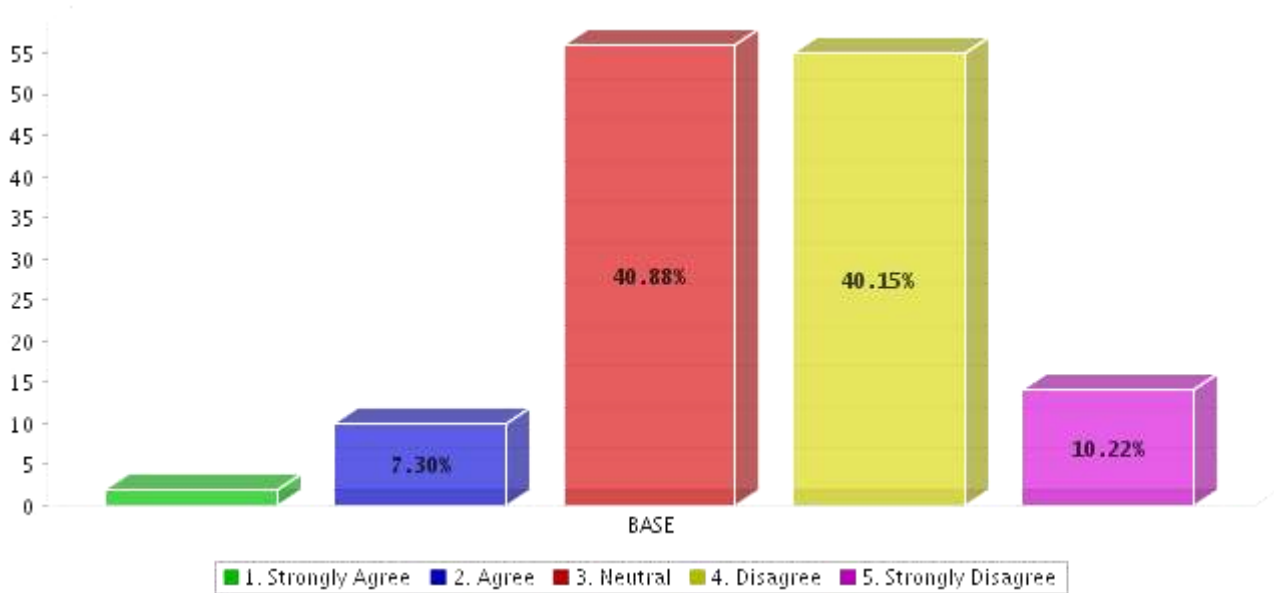
**19. Asian values and cultures may conflict with Australia's current values and culture**

	Strongly Agree	23	16.79%
	Agree	63	45.99%
	Neutral	29	21.17%
	Disagree	18	13.14%
	Strongly Disagree	4	2.92%
<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	



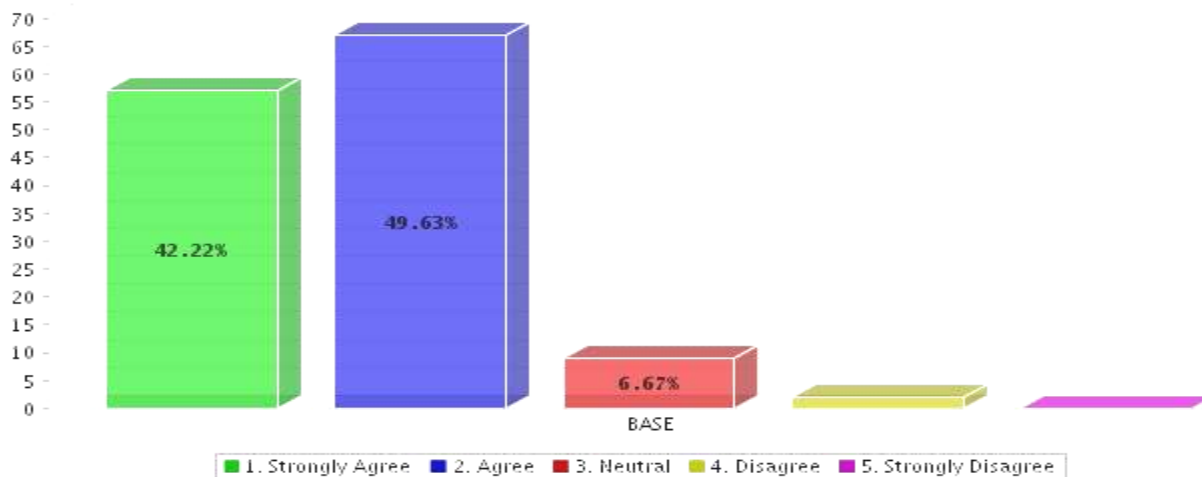
**20. Australia can learn more from developed Western countries than from developed Asian countries**

	Strongly Agree	2	1.46%
	Agree	10	7.30%
	Neutral	56	40.88%
	Disagree	55	40.15%
	Strongly Disagree	14	10.22%
<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	



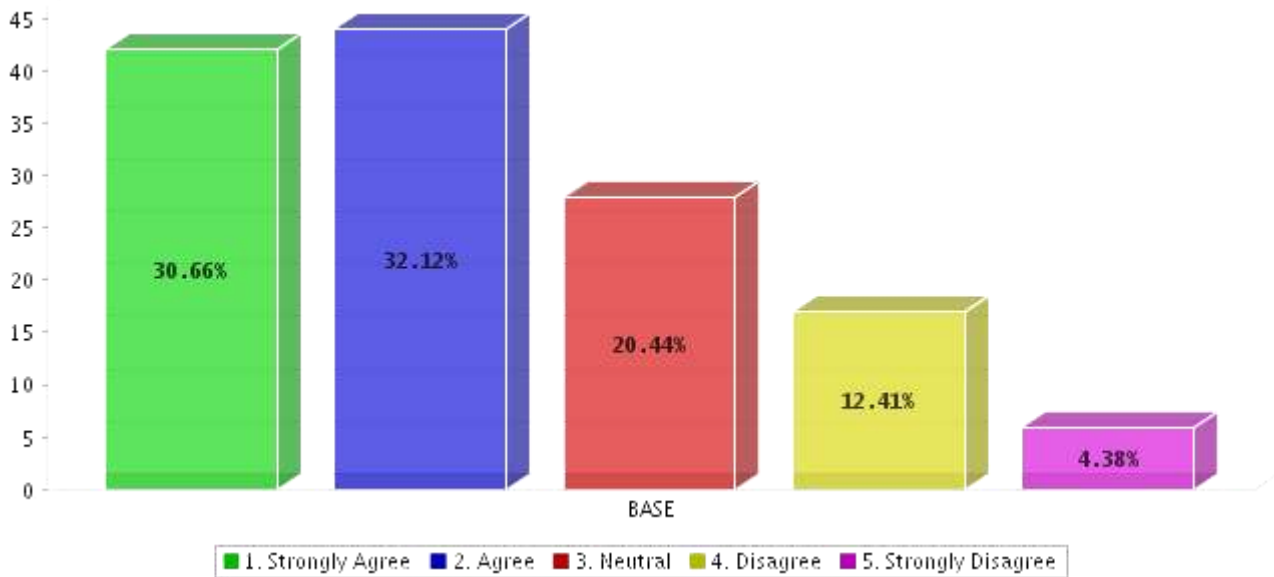
**21. Maintaining good relationships with Asia is an important foreign policy objective for Australia**

	Strongly Agree	57	42.22%
	Agree	67	49.63%
	Neutral	9	6.67%
	Disagree	2	1.48%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>135</b>	



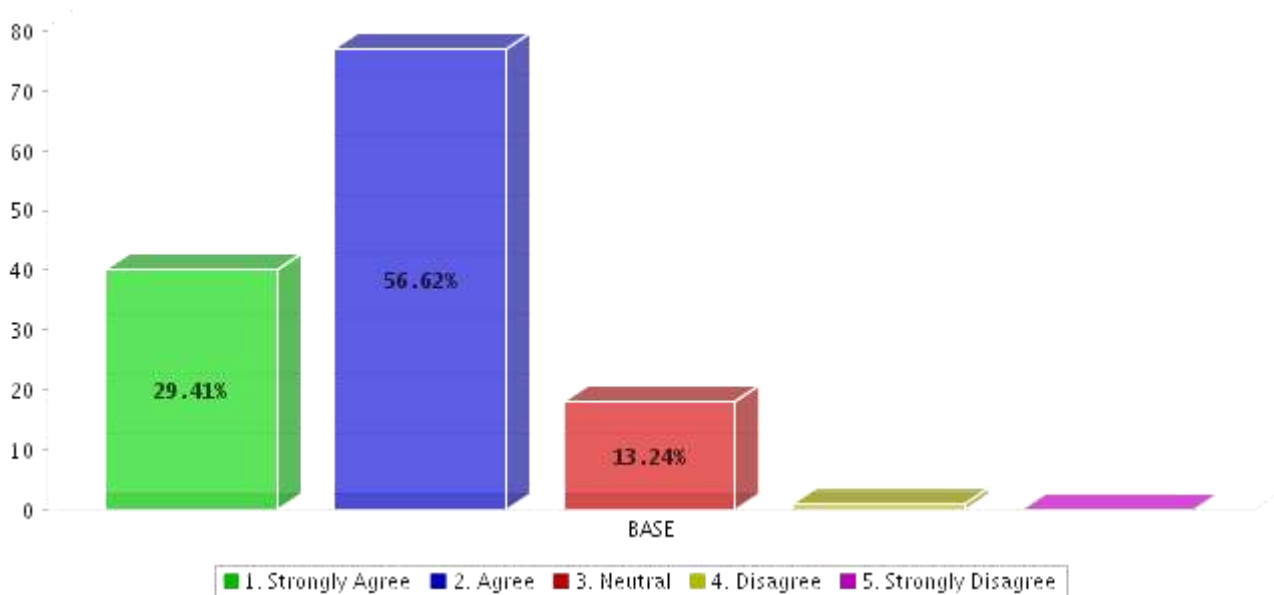
**22. Australia needs to preserve its traditional identity. People who come here should accept our values**

	Strongly Agree	42	30.66%
	Agree	44	32.12%
	Neutral	28	20.44%
	Disagree	17	12.41%
	Strongly Disagree	6	4.38%
Total		137	



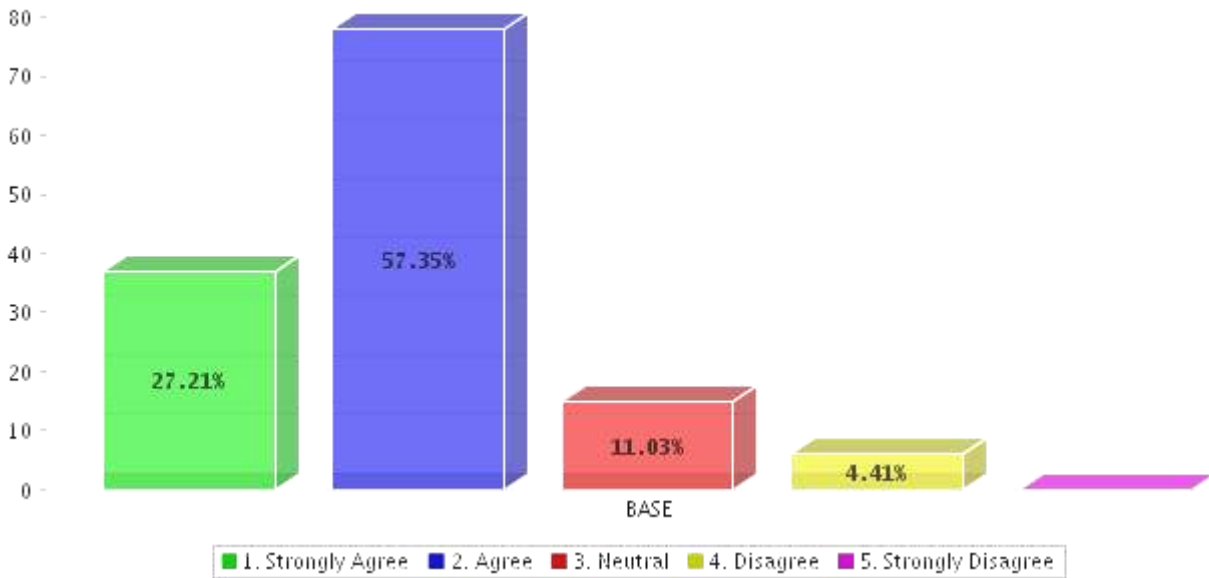
**23. Immigrants from Asia enrich our culture**

	Strongly Agree	40	29.41%
	Agree	77	56.62%
	Neutral	18	13.24%
	Disagree	1	0.74%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		136	



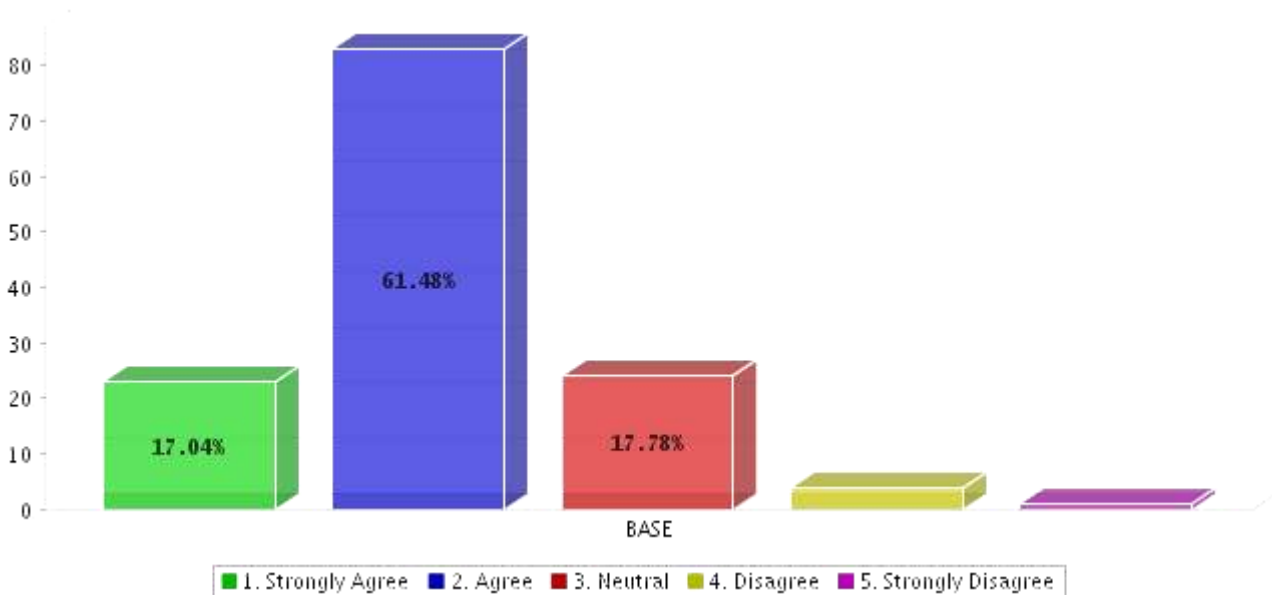
**24. Many Australians do not understand Asian peoples and their cultures**

	Strongly Agree	37	27.21%
	Agree	78	57.35%
	Neutral	15	11.03%
	Disagree	6	4.41%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		136	



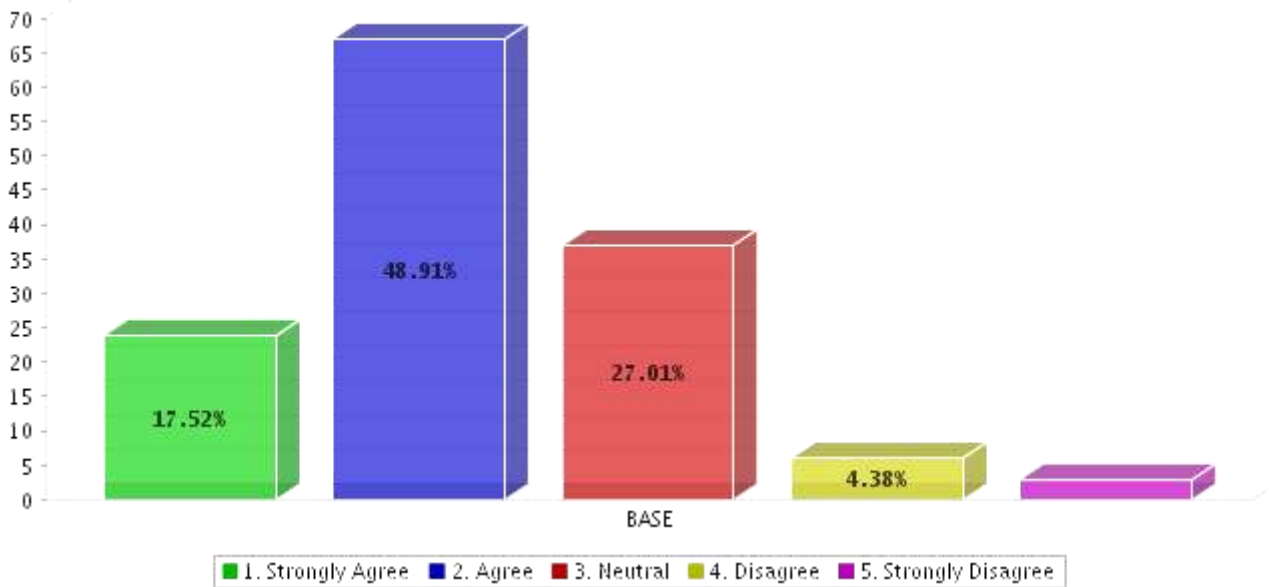
**25. An increase in immigration, investment, and tourism from Asia will progressively change Australian society**

	Strongly Agree	23	17.04%
	Agree	83	61.48%
	Neutral	24	17.78%
	Disagree	4	2.96%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.74%
Total		135	



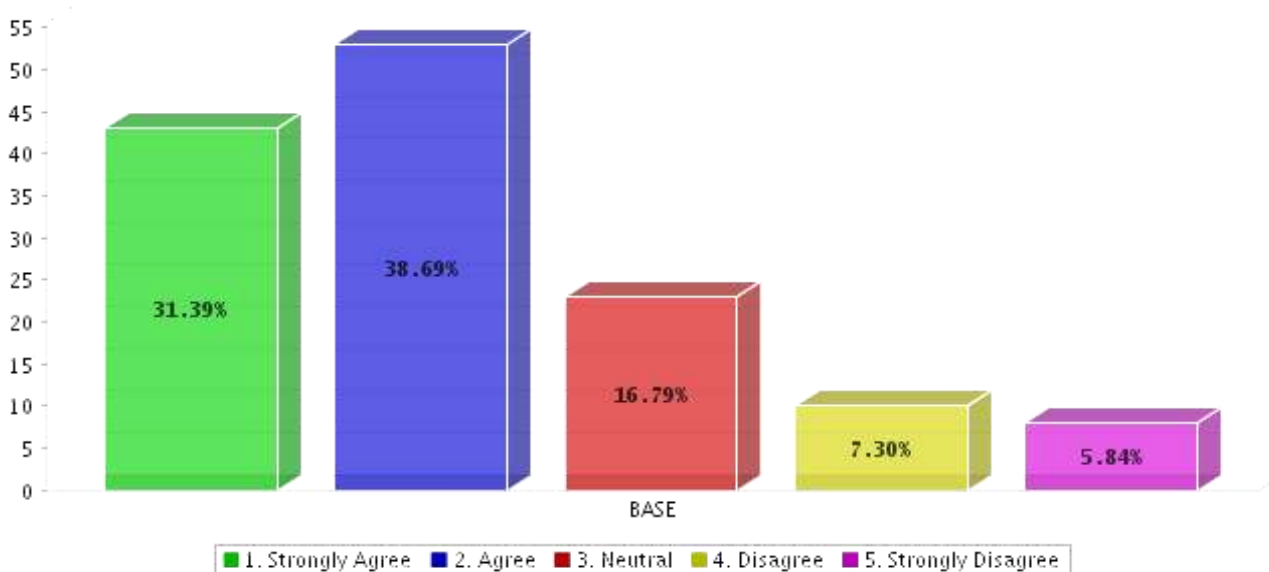
**26. Australian businesses are in ever increasing competition with businesses in Asia for the same markets**

	Strongly Agree	24	17.52%
	Agree	67	48.91%
	Neutral	37	27.01%
	Disagree	6	4.38%
	Strongly Disagree	3	2.19%
Total		137	



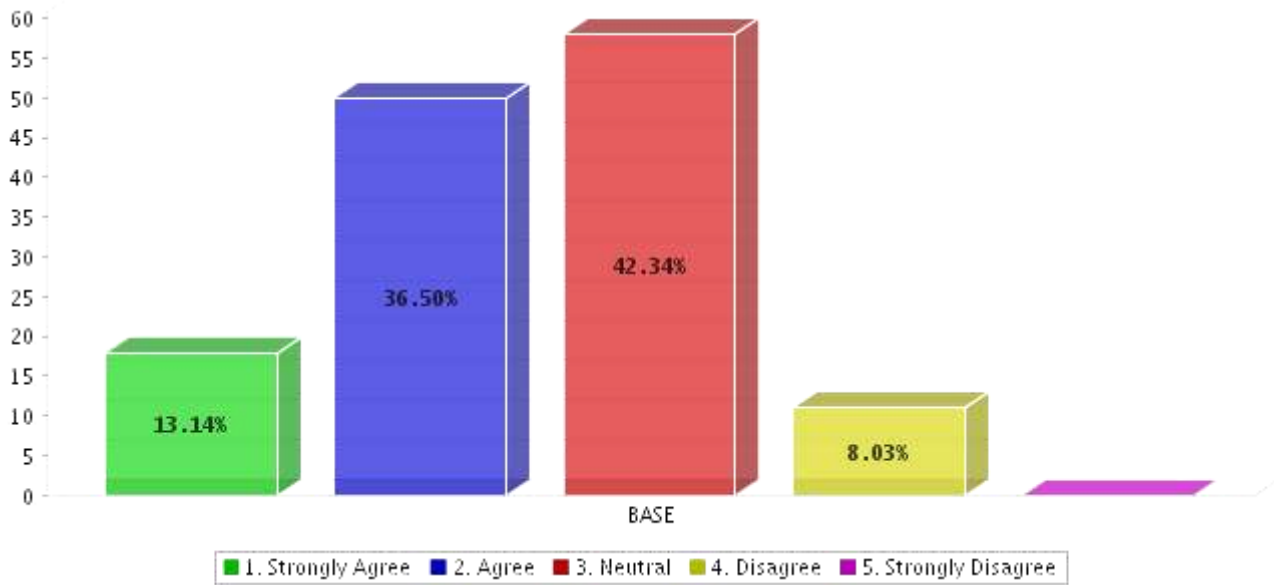
**27. Australia would benefit from its citizens having a better understanding of the religions from Asia, such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc.**

				Government		Catholic		Independent	
	Strongly Agree	43	31.39%	28	30.77%	11	40.74%	4	21.05%
	Agree	53	38.69%	35	38.46%	11	40.74%	7	36.84%
	Neutral	23	16.79%	16	17.58%	4	14.81%	3	15.79%
	Disagree	10	7.30%	7	7.69%	1	3.70%	2	10.53%
	Strongly Disagree	8	5.84%	5	5.49%	0	0.00%	3	15.79%
Total		137		91		27			



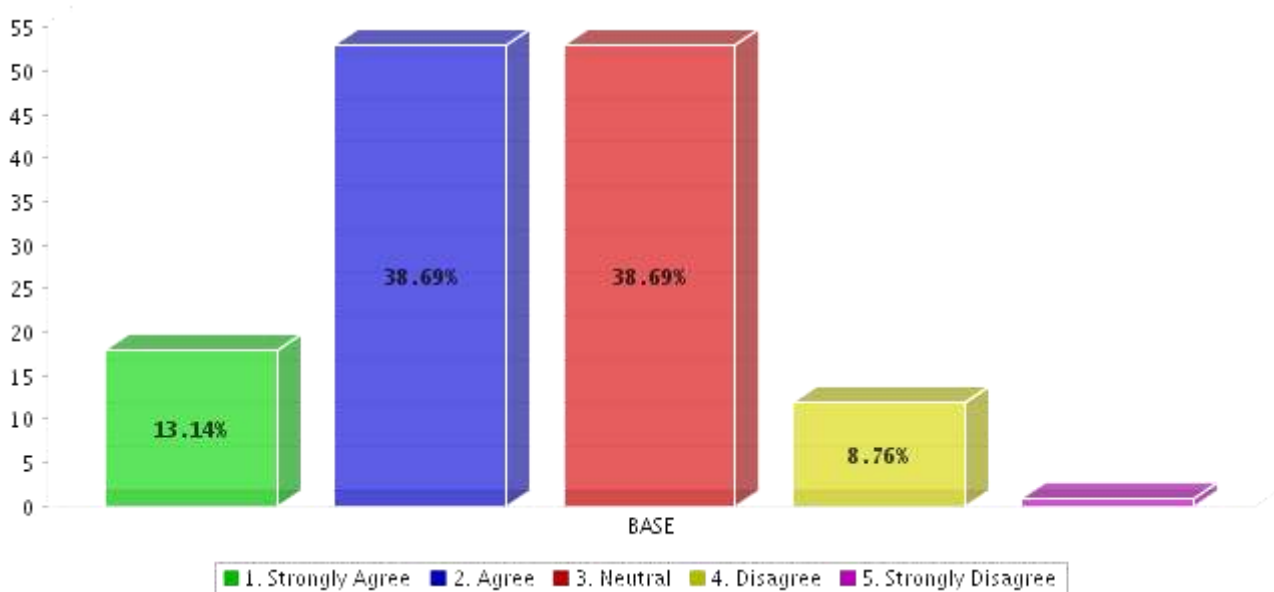
**28. Australia should strengthen and deepen its relationships with India**

	Strongly Agree	18	13.14%
	Agree	50	36.50%
	Neutral	58	42.34%
	Disagree	11	8.03%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	



**29. Australia is currently not well prepared to meet the future challenges of relating to Asia**

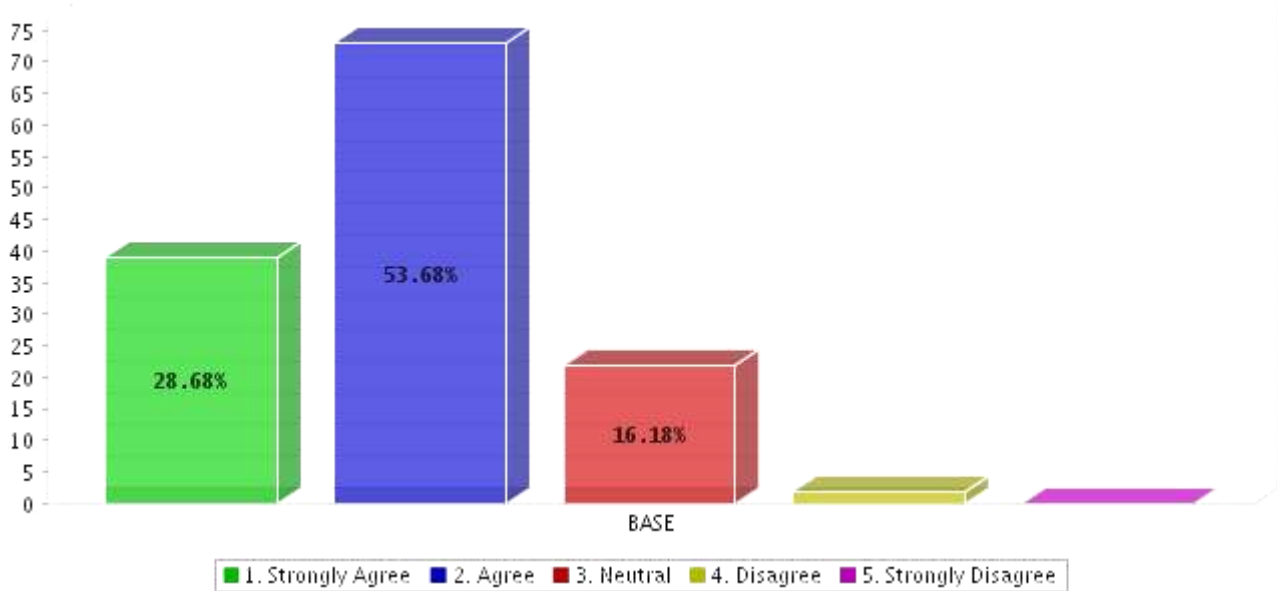
	Strongly Agree	18	13.14%
	Agree	53	38.69%
	Neutral	53	38.69%
	Disagree	12	8.76%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	





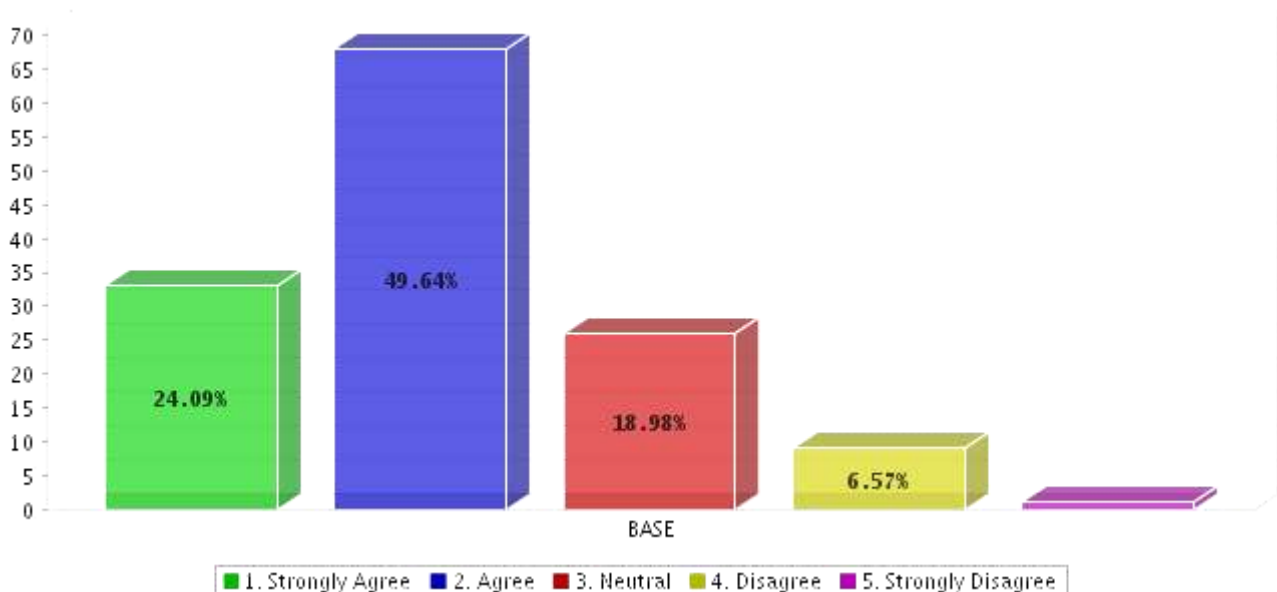
**30. In the future Australians will need to understand China as well as they currently understand the US or UK**

	Strongly Agree	39	28.68%
	Agree	73	53.68%
	Neutral	22	16.18%
	Disagree	2	1.47%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		136	



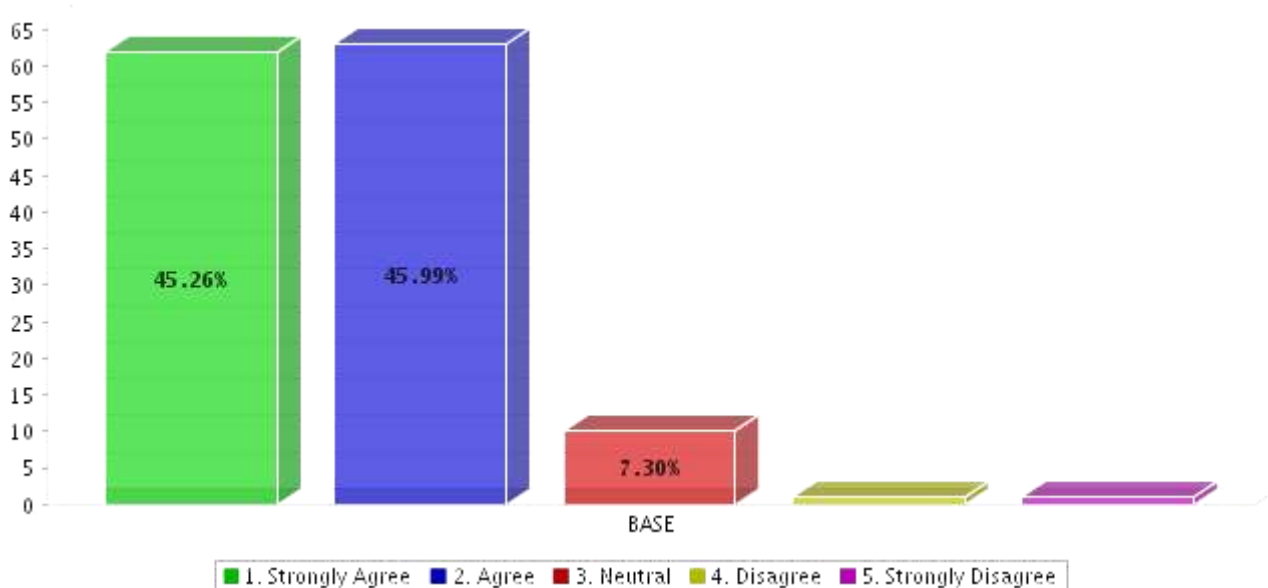
**31. Australia's long term security is linked to its people being able to develop close and trusting relationships with Asia**

	Strongly Agree	33	24.09%
	Agree	68	49.64%
	Neutral	26	18.98%
	Disagree	9	6.57%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
Total		137	



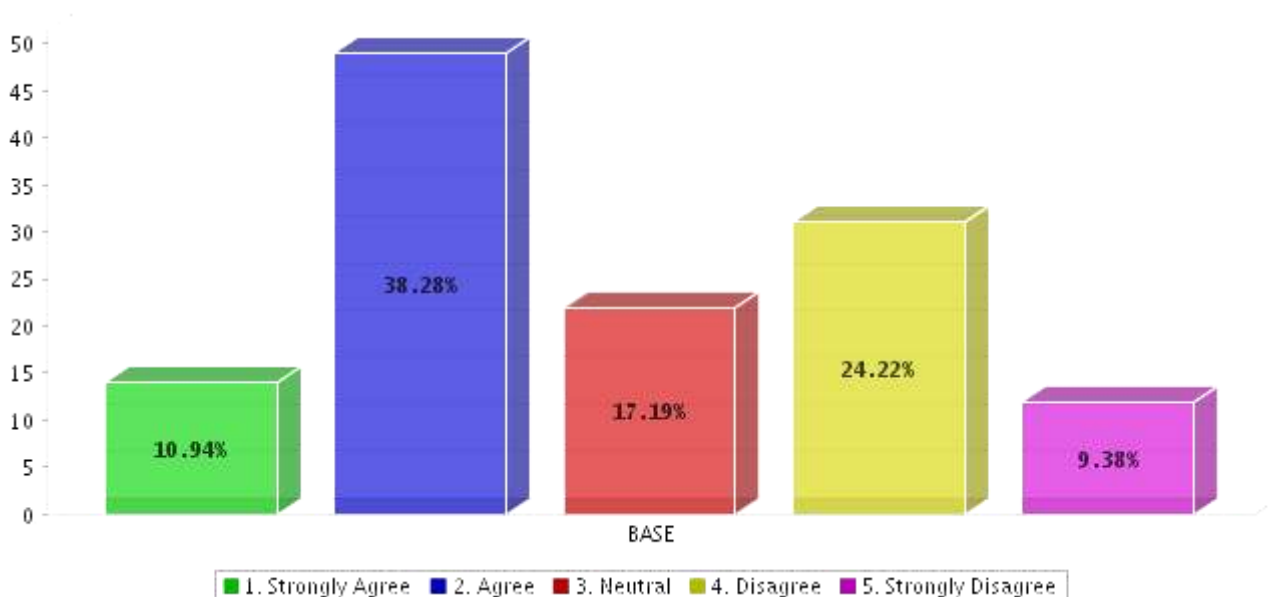
**32. An important skill for Australians to have is the ability to communicate across different cultures**

	Strongly Agree	62	45.26%
	Agree	63	45.99%
	Neutral	10	7.30%
	Disagree	1	0.73%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
Total		137	



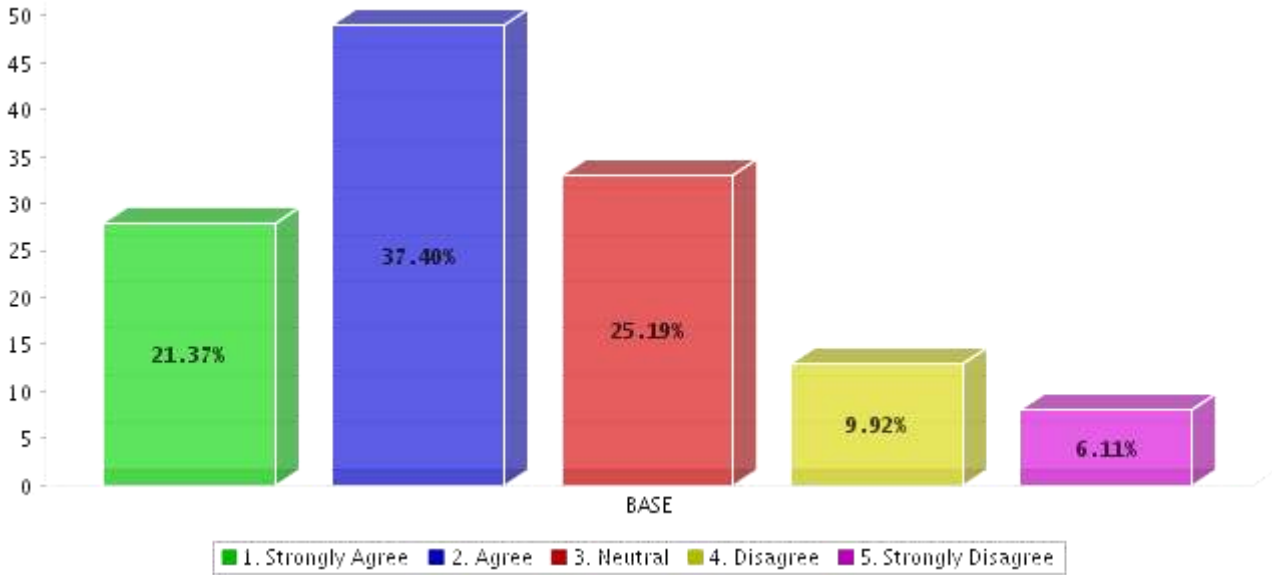
**33. My child's school routinely involves parents in general discussions about curriculum**

	All	Group ACSSO	Group APC	Group OTHER
Strongly Agree	14 10.94%	10 13.51%	3 6.82%	1 11.11%
Agree	49 38.28%	35 47.30%	9 20.45%	4 44.44%
Neutral	22 17.19%	12 16.22%	9 20.45%	1 11.11%
Disagree	31 24.22%	12 16.22%	16 36.36%	3 33.33%
Strongly Disagree	12 9.38%	5 6.76%	7 15.91%	0 0.00%
Total	128	74	44	9



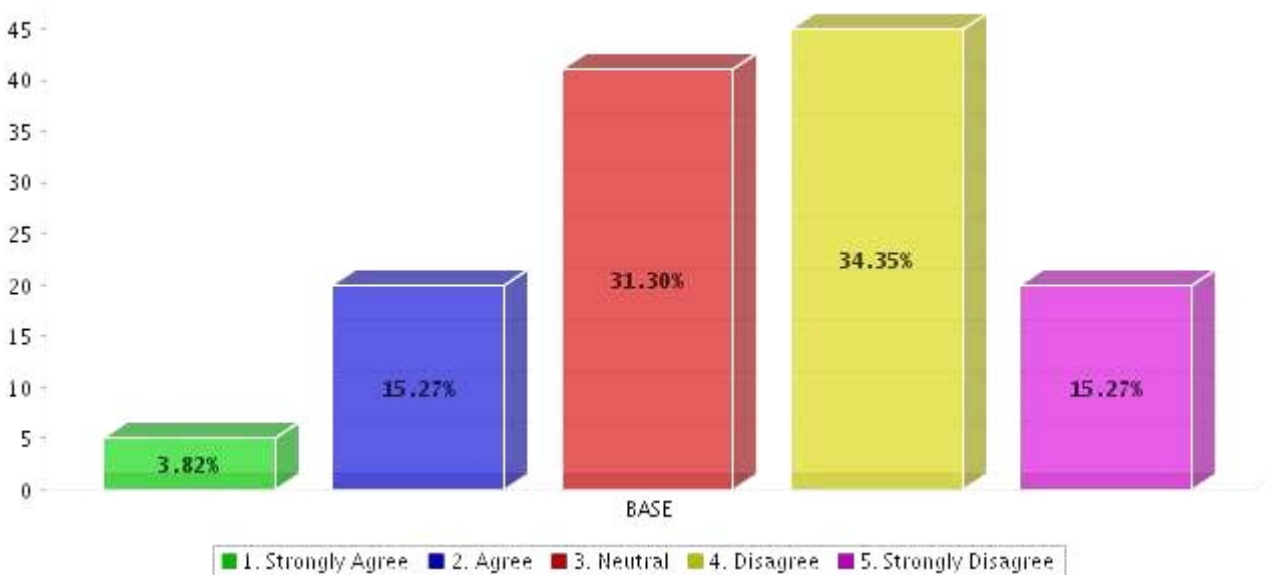
**34. Parents with Asian backgrounds are under- represented in the decision making and parent bodies at my child's school**

	Strongly Agree	28	21.37%
	Agree	49	37.40%
	Neutral	33	25.19%
	Disagree	13	9.92%
	Strongly Disagree	8	6.11%
Total		131	



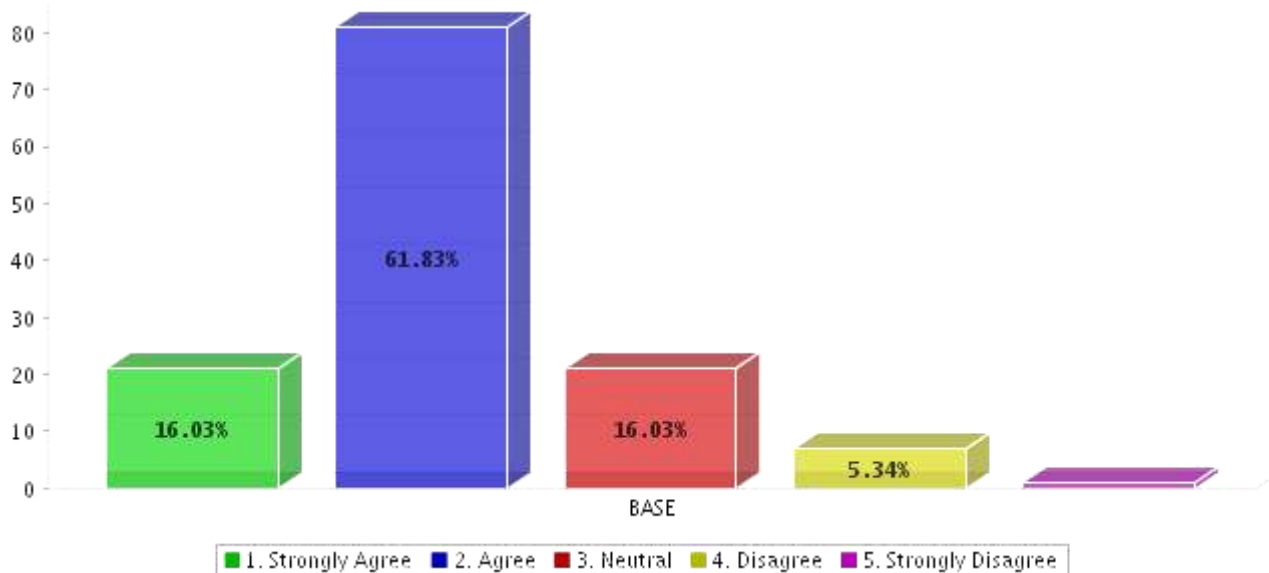
**35. My child's school has involved parents in specific discussions about studies of Asia in the curriculum**

	Strongly Agree	5	3.82%
	Agree	20	15.27%
	Neutral	41	31.30%
	Disagree	45	34.35%
	Strongly Disagree	20	15.27%
Total		131	



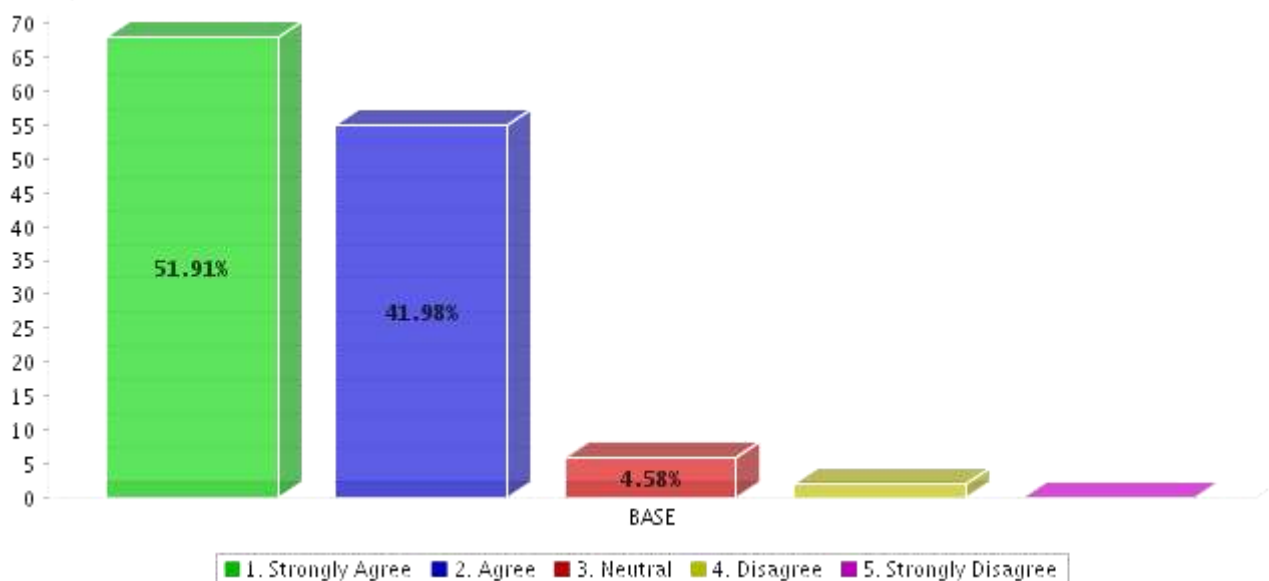
**36. I would be happy to attend meetings at my child's school to discuss studies of Asia**

	Strongly Agree	21	16.03%
	Agree	81	61.83%
	Neutral	21	16.03%
	Disagree	7	5.34%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.76%
Total		131	



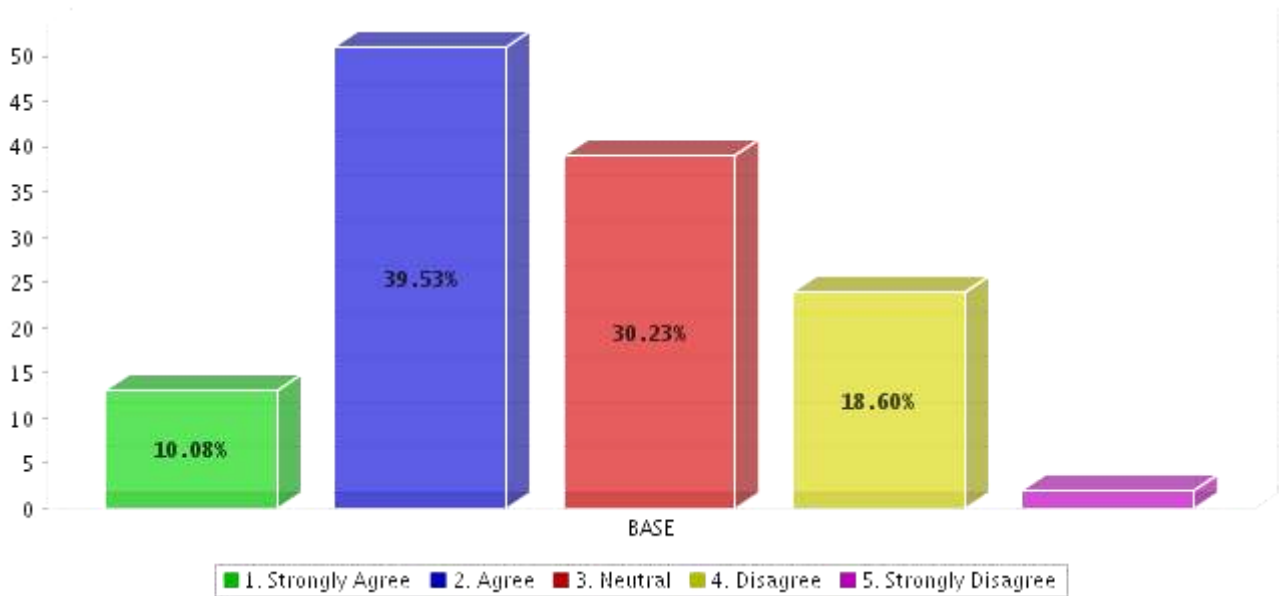
**37. Parents have a role to play in working with teachers on broad curriculum issues and decisions**

	Strongly Agree	68	51.91%
	Agree	55	41.98%
	Neutral	6	4.58%
	Disagree	2	1.53%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		131	



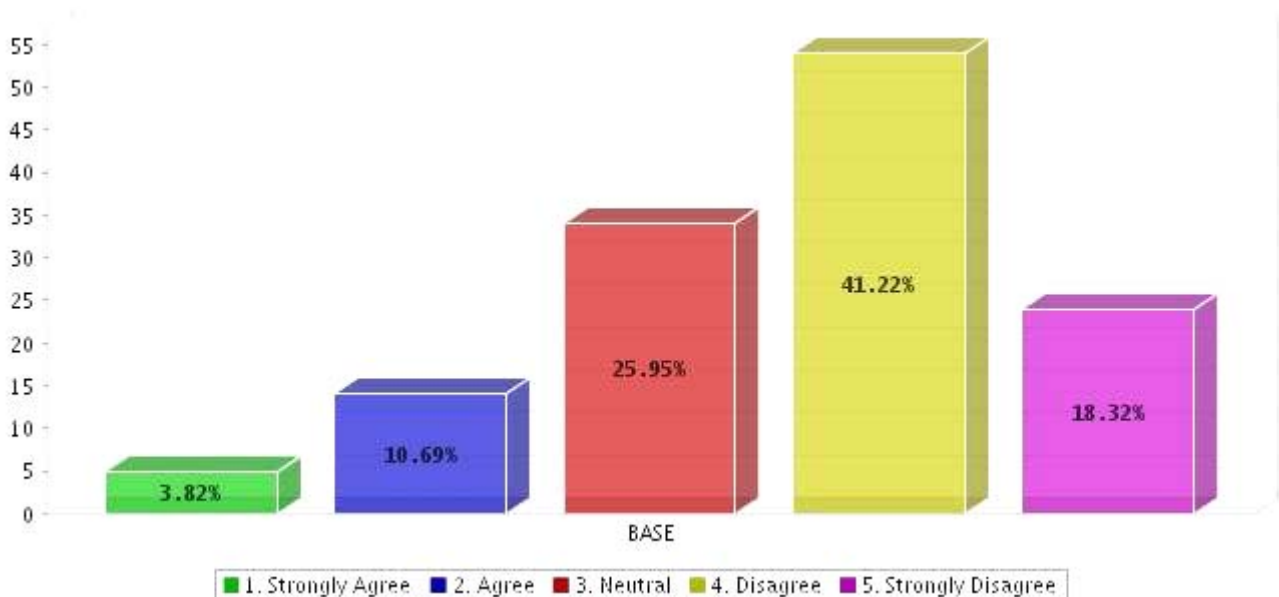
**38. I am confident that my child will develop a good understanding of Asia through their schooling experience**

	Strongly Agree	13	10.08%
	Agree	51	39.53%
	Neutral	39	30.23%
	Disagree	24	18.60%
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.55%
Total		129	



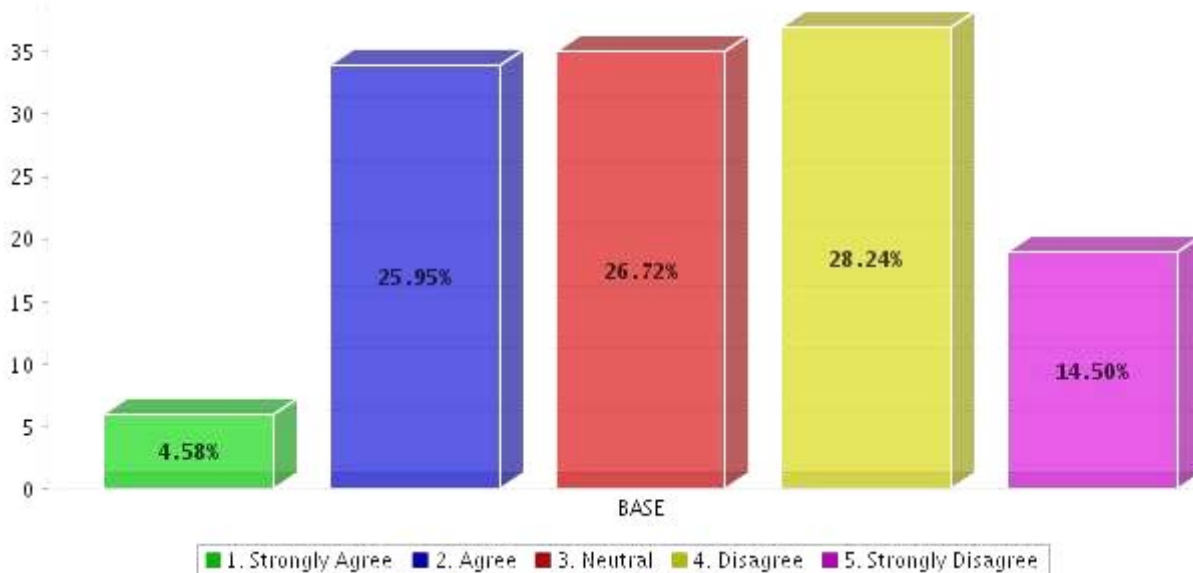
**39. I am not particularly concerned whether my child's school does or does not engage students with Asia through its curriculum**

	Strongly Agree	5	3.82%
	Agree	14	10.69%
	Neutral	34	25.95%
	Disagree	54	41.22%
	Strongly Disagree	24	18.32%
Total		131	



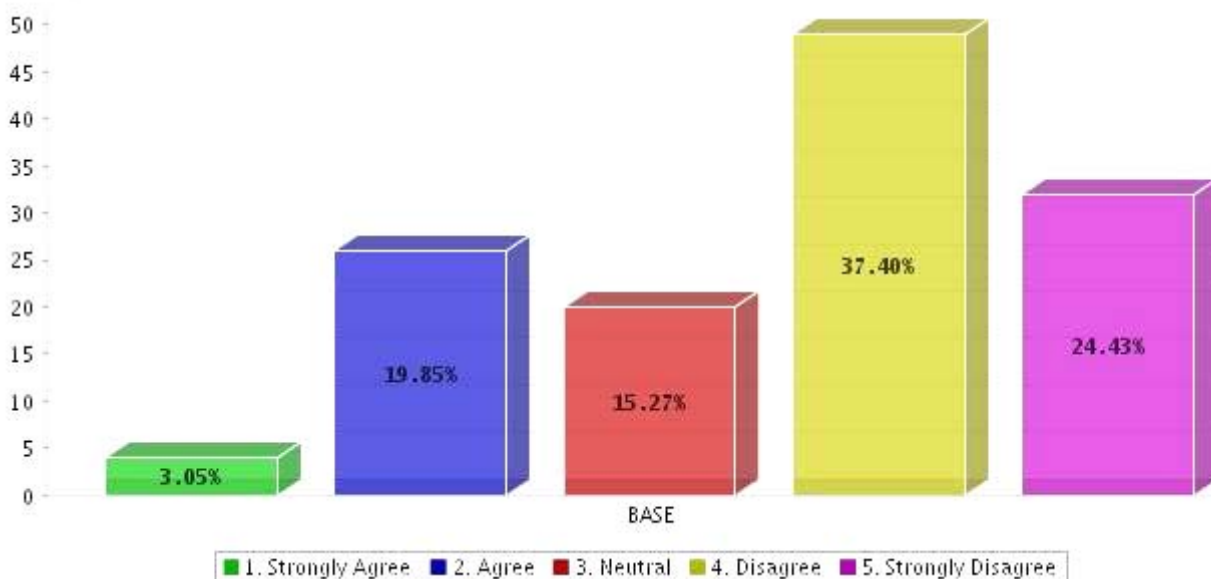
**40. My child's school runs special events that are based on a studies of Asia theme**

	Strongly Agree	6	4.58%
	Agree	34	25.95%
	Neutral	35	26.72%
	Disagree	37	28.24%
	Strongly Disagree	19	14.50%
Total		131	



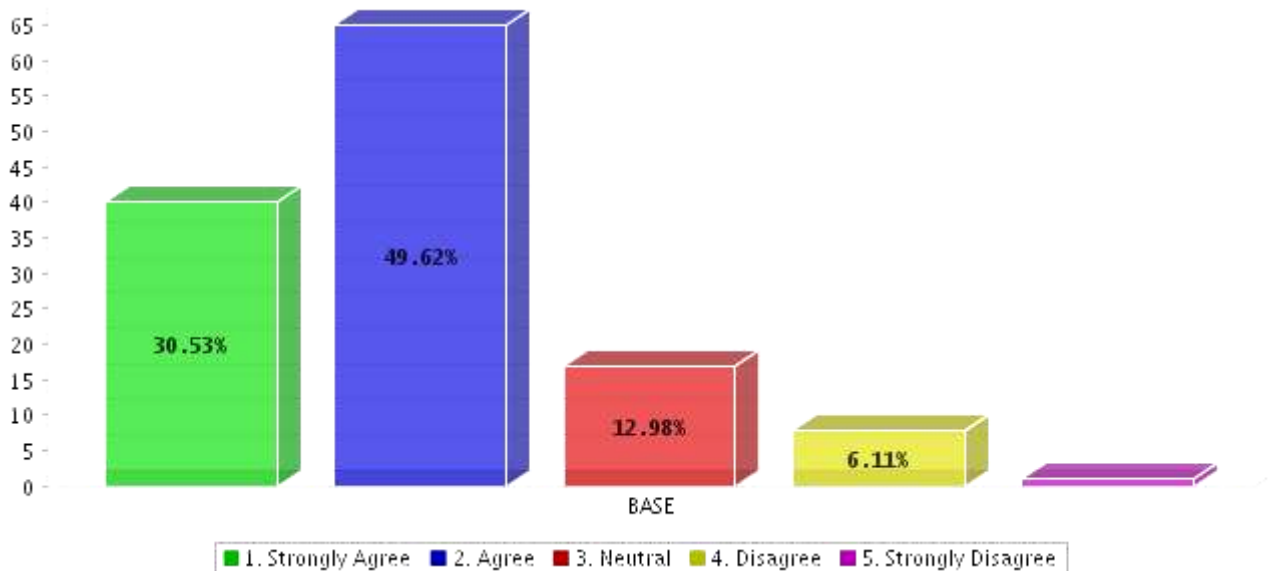
**41. My knowledge of the curriculum of my child's school, and its rationale, is limited**

	Strongly Agree	4	3.05%
	Agree	26	19.85%
	Neutral	20	15.27%
	Disagree	49	37.40%
	Strongly Disagree	32	24.43%
Total		131	



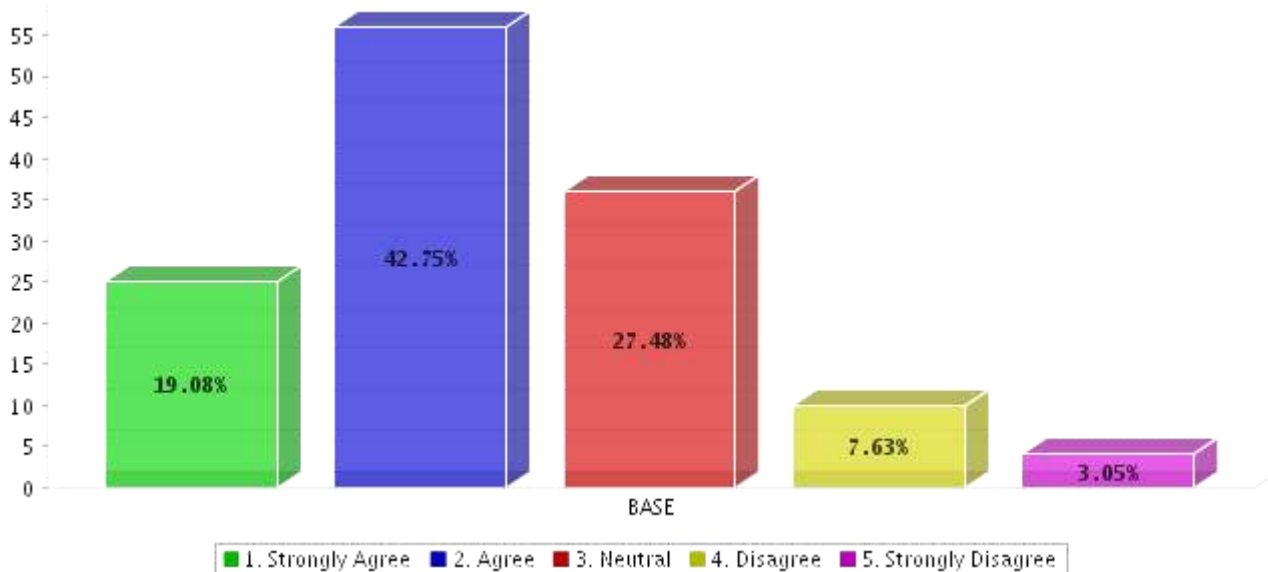
**42. My child's school is very accommodating of different beliefs and cultures within its community**

	Strongly Agree	40	30.53%
	Agree	65	49.62%
	Neutral	17	12.98%
	Disagree	8	6.11%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.76%
<b>Total</b>		<b>131</b>	



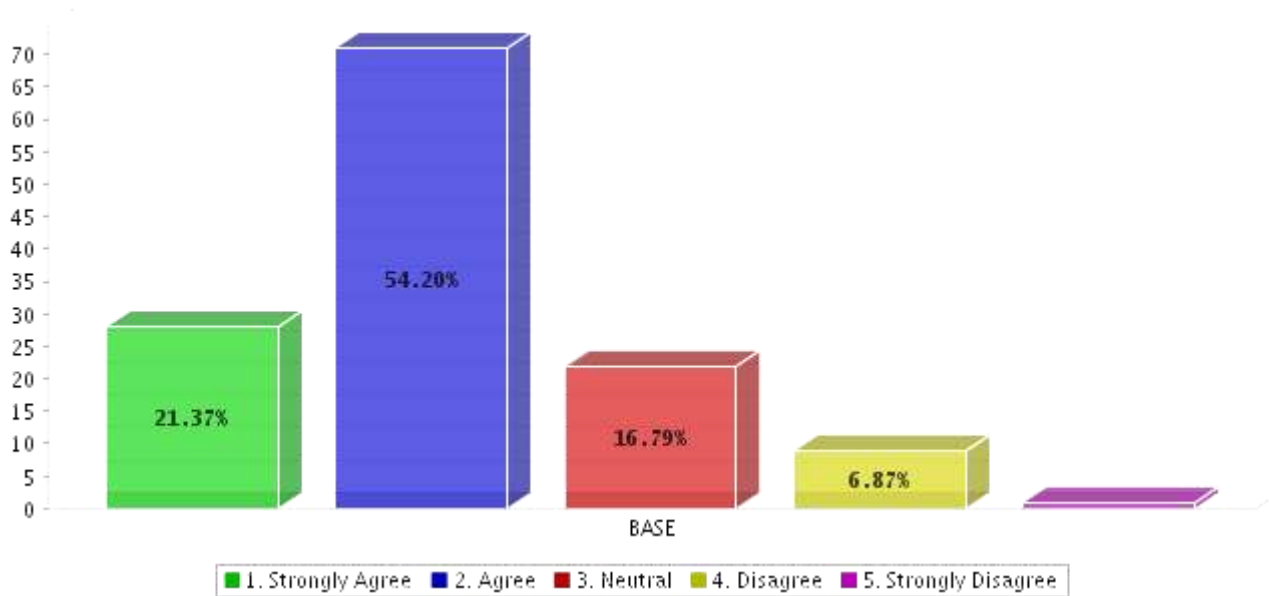
**43. I would like my child to learn an Asian language**

	Strongly Agree	25	19.08%
	Agree	56	42.75%
	Neutral	36	27.48%
	Disagree	10	7.63%
	Strongly Disagree	4	3.05%
<b>Total</b>		<b>131</b>	



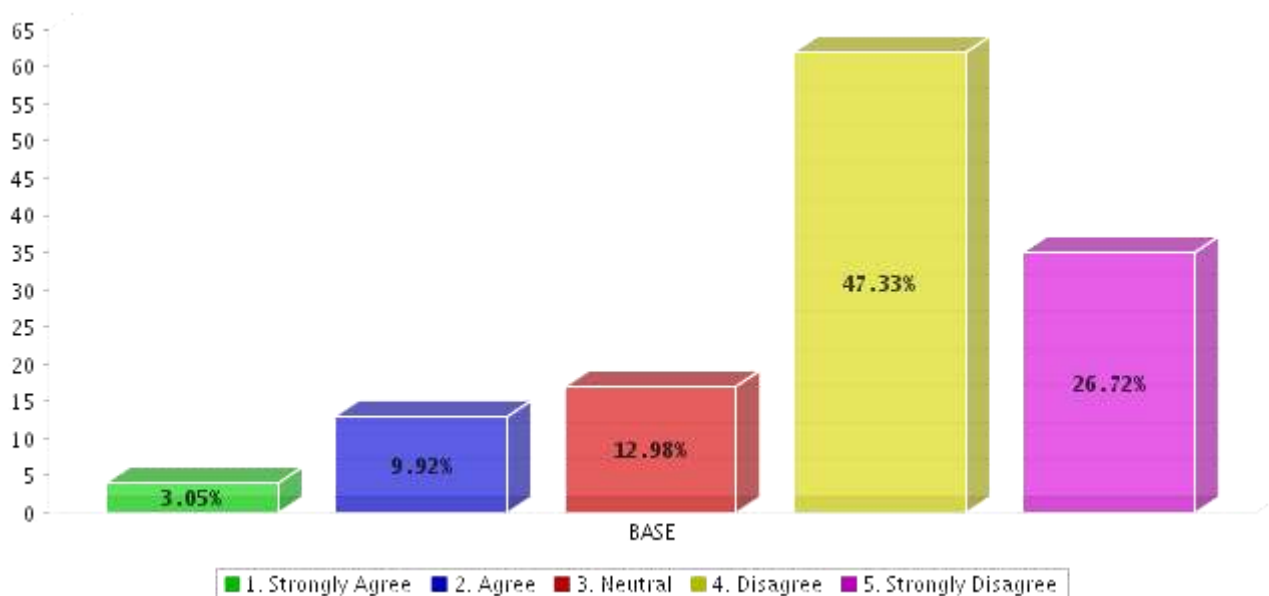
**44. I expect that when my child enters the workforce, that a knowledge and understanding of Asia will be an asset**

	Strongly Agree	28	21.37%
	Agree	71	54.20%
	Neutral	22	16.79%
	Disagree	9	6.87%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.76%
Total		131	



**45. I prefer to leave curriculum decisions to the teaching staff of the school**

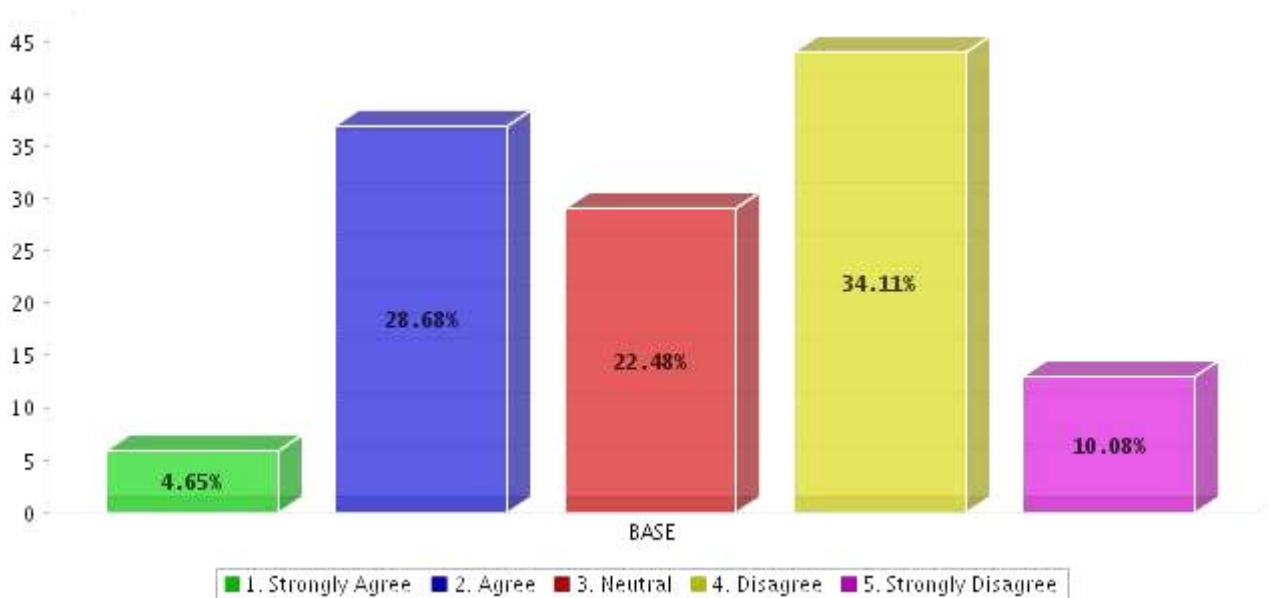
	Strongly Agree	4	3.05%
	Agree	13	9.92%
	Neutral	17	12.98%
	Disagree	62	47.33%
	Strongly Disagree	35	26.72%
Total		131	





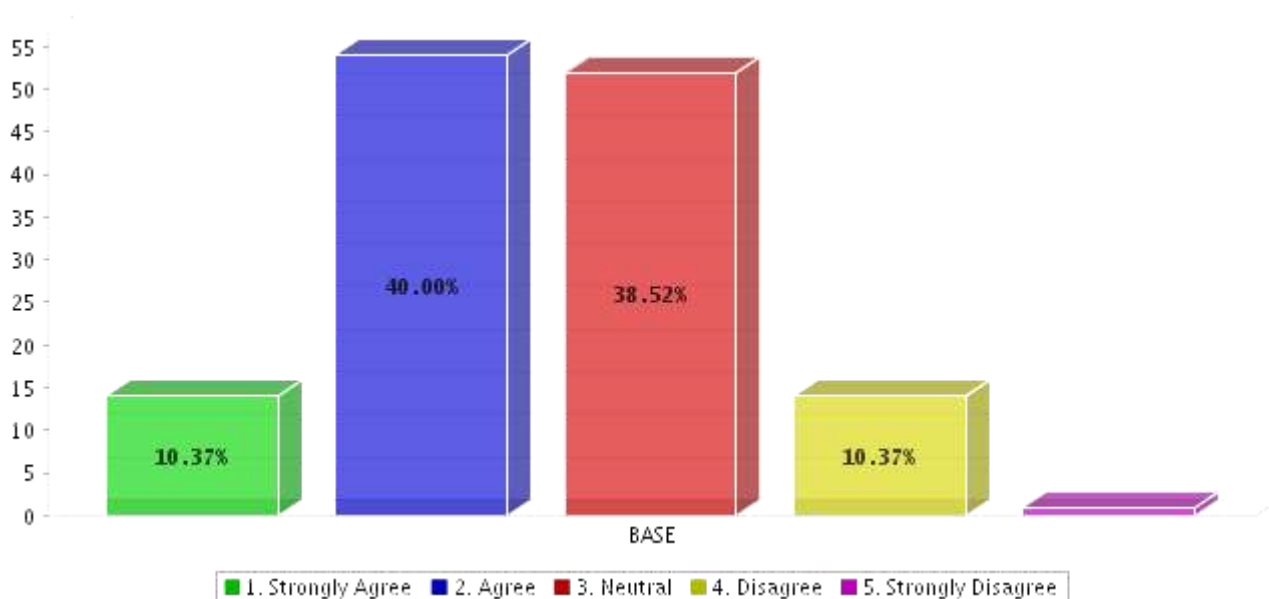
**46. Families with Asian backgrounds participate in school activities at my child's school to the same extent as families with non-Asian backgrounds.**

	Strongly Agree	6	4.65%
	Agree	37	28.68%
	Neutral	29	22.48%
	Disagree	44	34.11%
	Strongly Disagree	13	10.08%
Total		129	



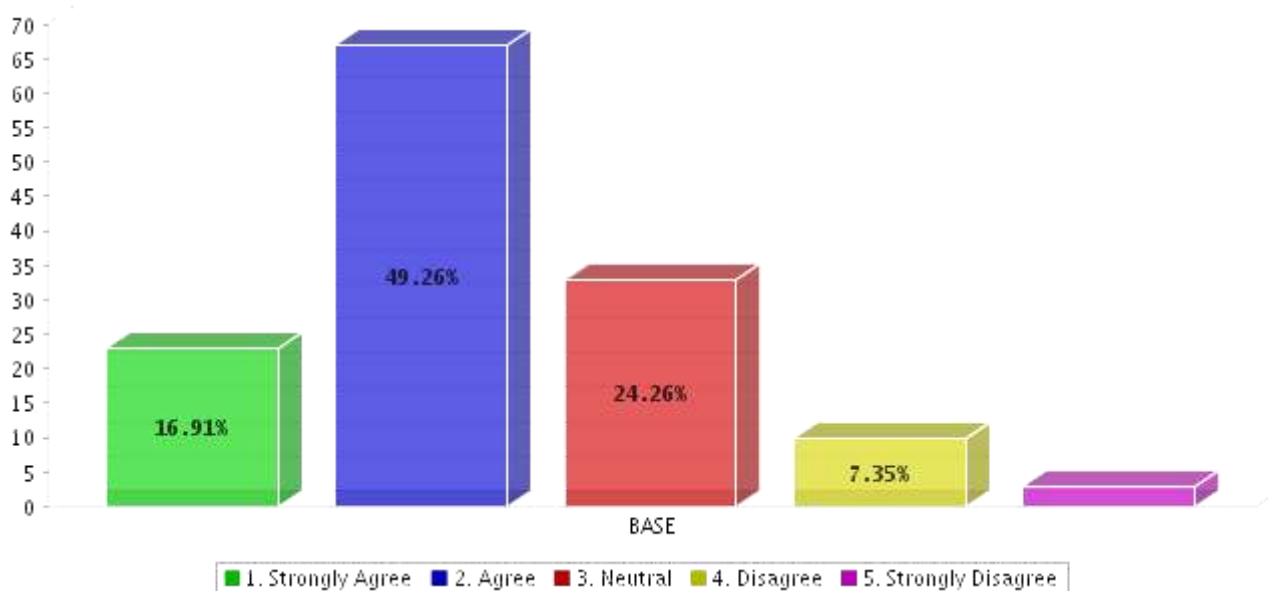
**47. I would like to know more about the work of the AEF**

	Strongly Agree	14	10.37%
	Agree	54	40.00%
	Neutral	52	38.52%
	Disagree	14	10.37%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.74%
Total		135	



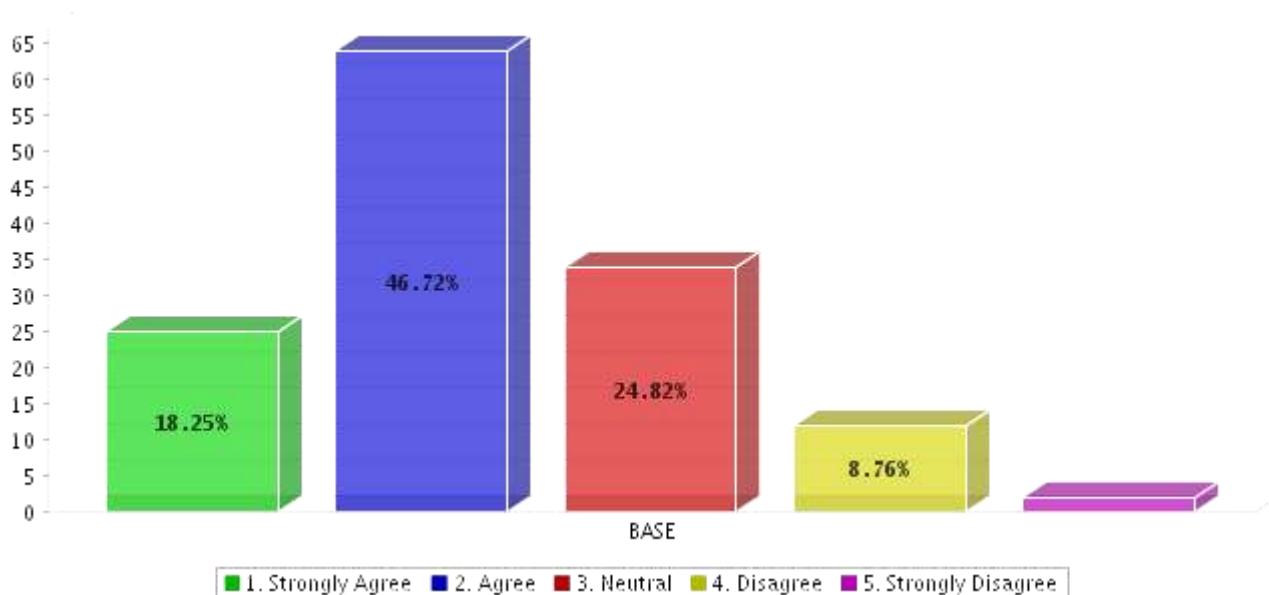
**48. There should be a nationally agreed policy on connecting Australian school students with Asia**

	Strongly Agree	23	16.91%
	Agree	67	49.26%
	Neutral	33	24.26%
	Disagree	10	7.35%
	Strongly Disagree	3	2.21%
Total		136	



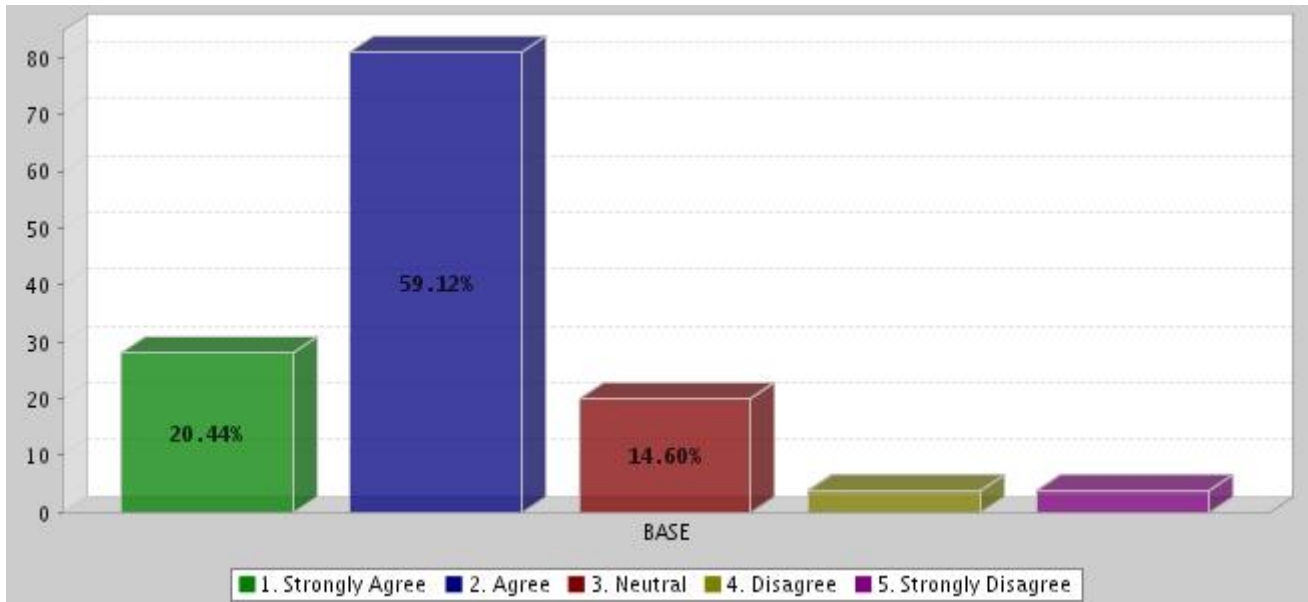
**49. State and national parent organisations should have policies on teaching studies of Asia in schools**

	Strongly Agree	25	18.25%
	Agree	64	46.72%
	Neutral	34	24.82%
	Disagree	12	8.76%
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.46%
Total		137	



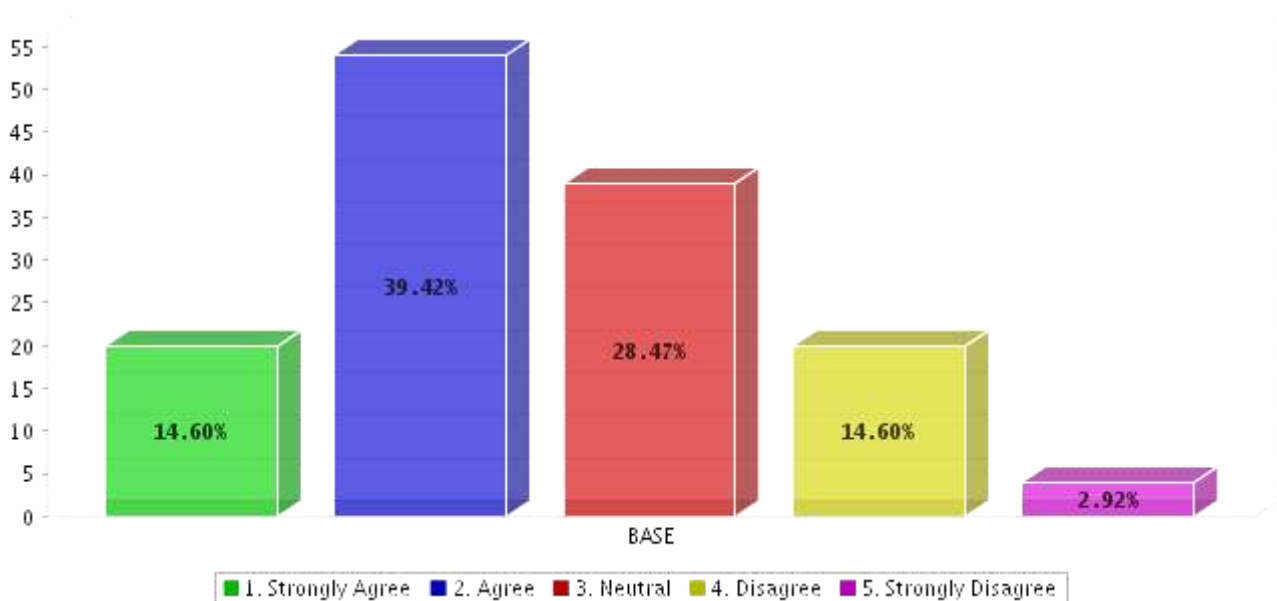
**50. Every Australian school student should have an opportunity to learn an Asian language at some time**

	Strongly Agree	28	20.44%
	Agree	81	59.12%
	Neutral	20	14.60%
	Disagree	4	2.92%
	Strongly Disagree	4	2.92%
Total		137	



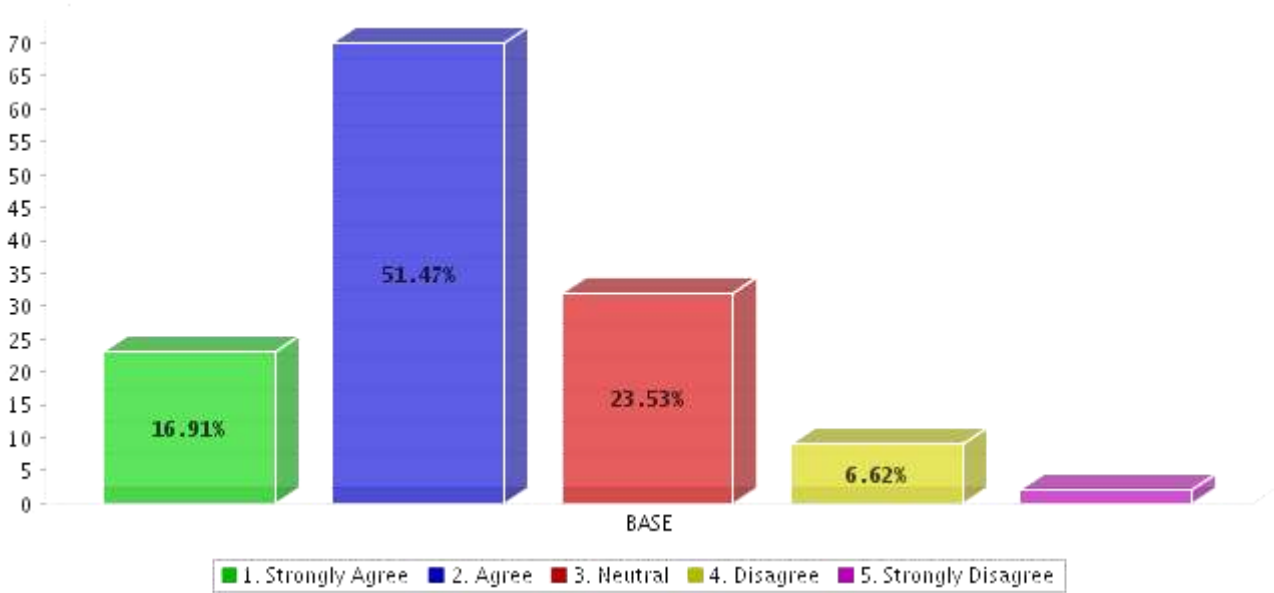
**51. Ways to incorporate teaching about Asia should be part of every teacher's pre-service preparation**

	Strongly Agree	20	14.60%
	Agree	54	39.42%
	Neutral	39	28.47%
	Disagree	20	14.60%
	Strongly Disagree	4	2.92%
Total		137	



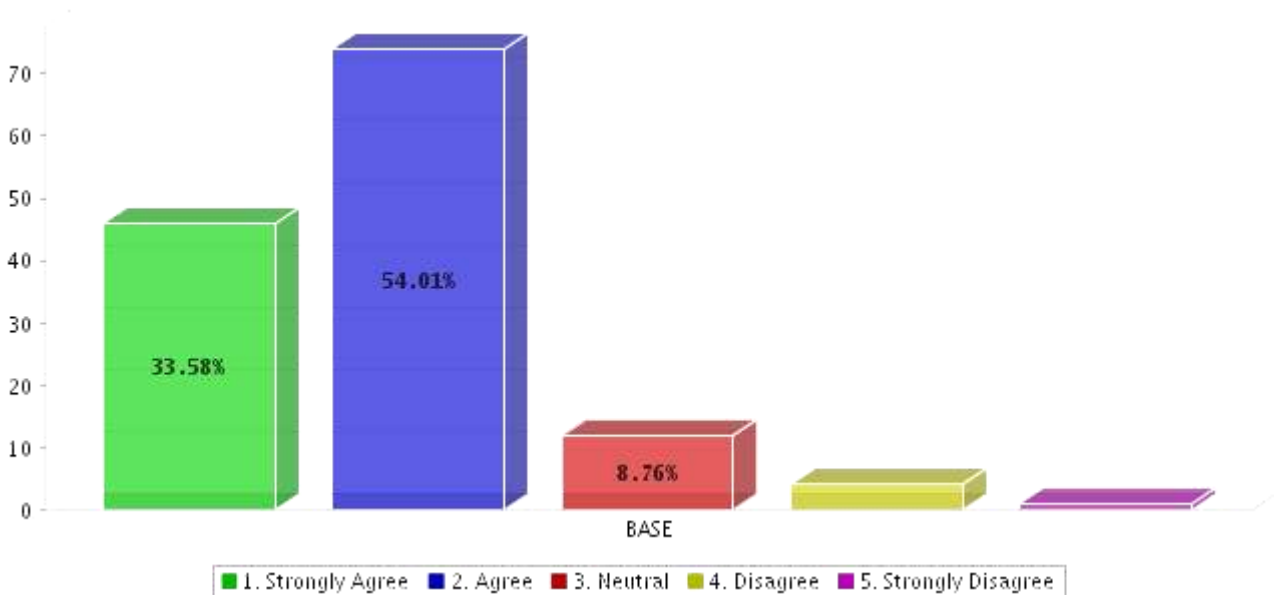
**52. On-going professional development about introducing Asia into teaching programs should be provided by education authorities**

	Strongly Agree	23	16.91%
	Agree	70	51.47%
	Neutral	32	23.53%
	Disagree	9	6.62%
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.47%
Total		136	



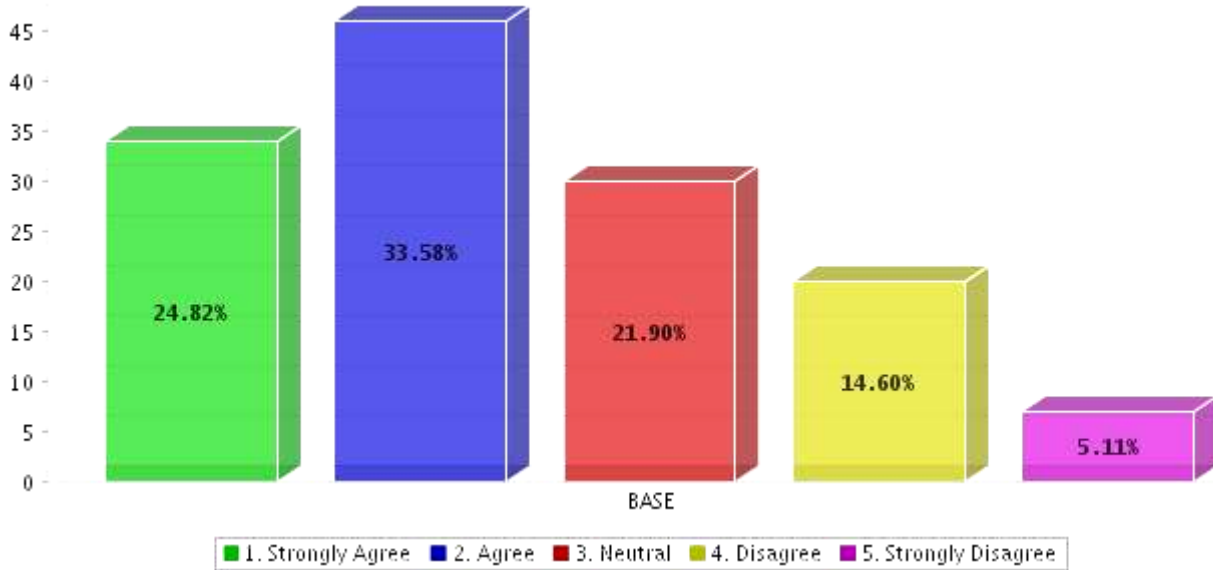
**53. The Australian Government should have a long term strategic plan for engaging this country with Asia**

	Strongly Agree	46	33.58%
	Agree	74	54.01%
	Neutral	12	8.76%
	Disagree	4	2.92%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
Total		137	



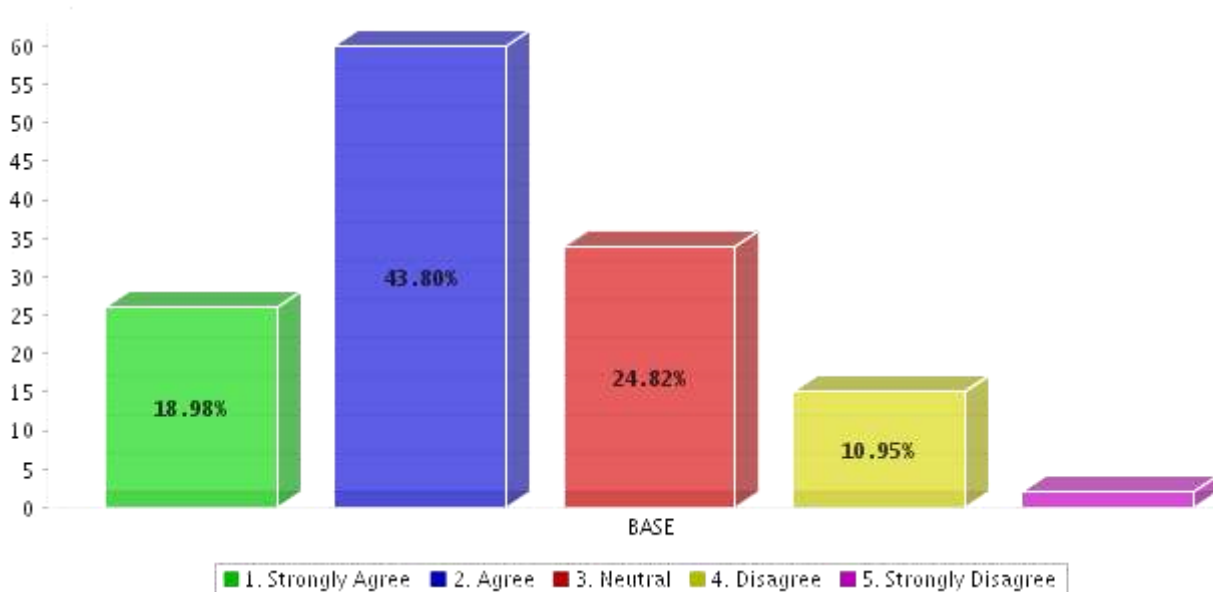
**54. I find it difficult to assign a priority to studies of Asia when there are so many areas fighting for a place in a crowded school curriculum**

	Strongly Agree	34	24.82%
	Agree	46	33.58%
	Neutral	30	21.90%
	Disagree	20	14.60%
	Strongly Disagree	7	5.11%
Total		137	



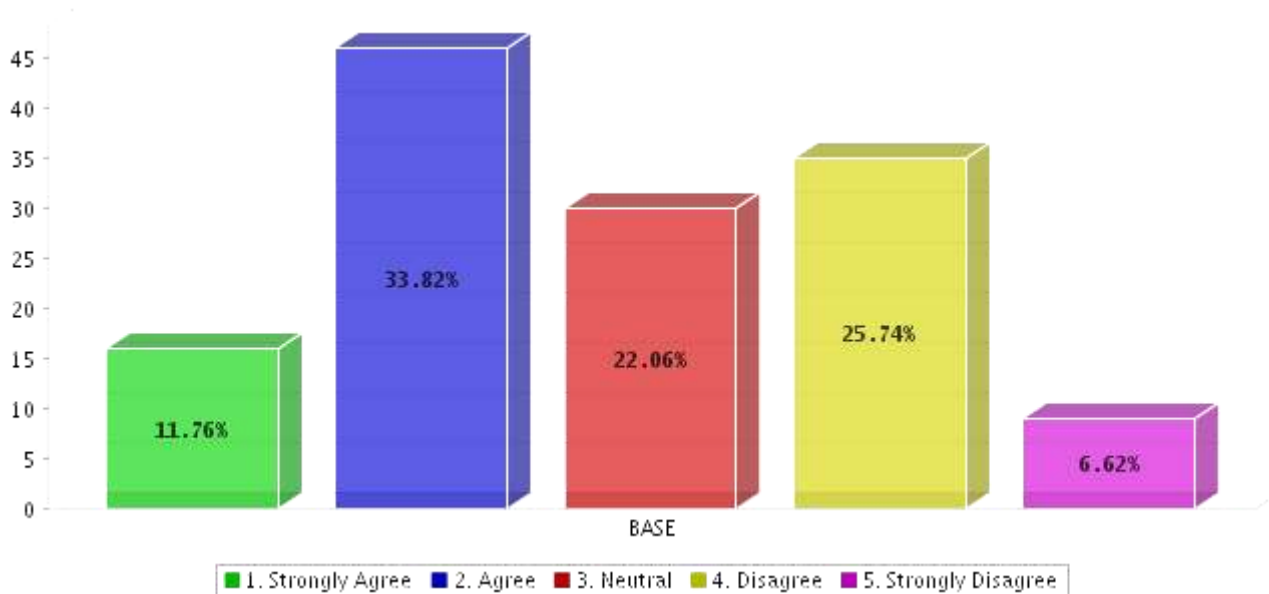
**55. I am concerned with the research finding that 50% of Australian schools choose not to incorporate any or little study of Asia into their curriculum**

	Strongly Agree	26	18.98%
	Agree	60	43.80%
	Neutral	34	24.82%
	Disagree	15	10.95%
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.46%
Total		137	



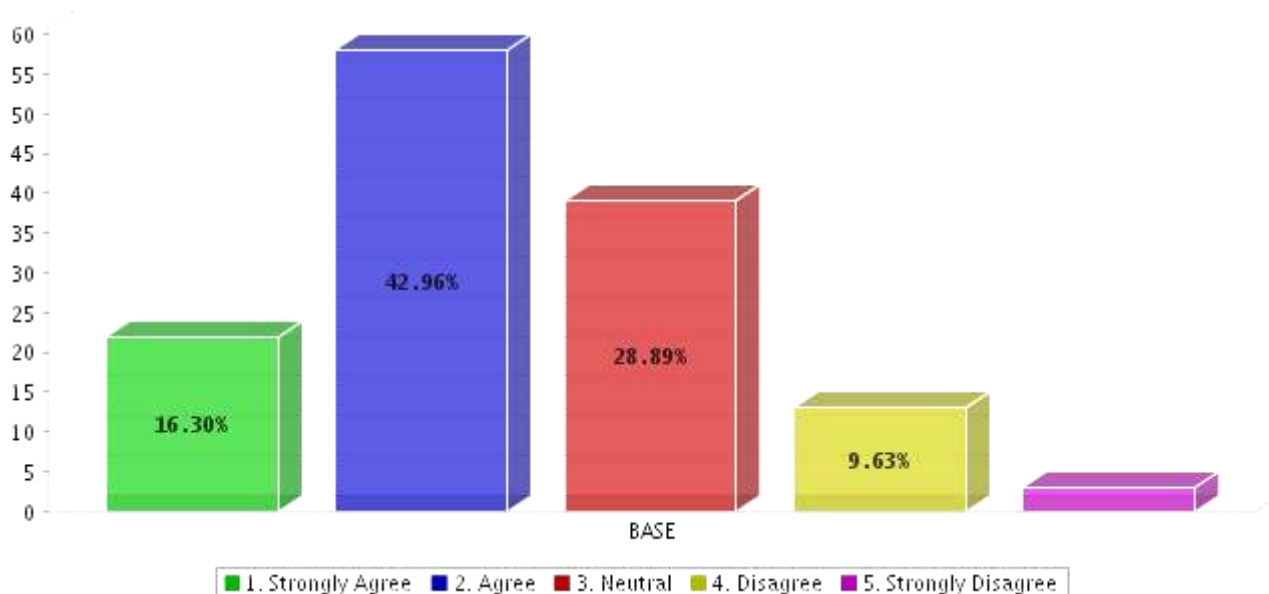
**56. Studies of Asia should always remain an optional element of the curriculum, as individual schools are in the best position to make decisions on resources and curriculum implementation**

	Strongly Agree	16	11.76%
	Agree	46	33.82%
	Neutral	30	22.06%
	Disagree	35	25.74%
	Strongly Disagree	9	6.62%
Total		136	



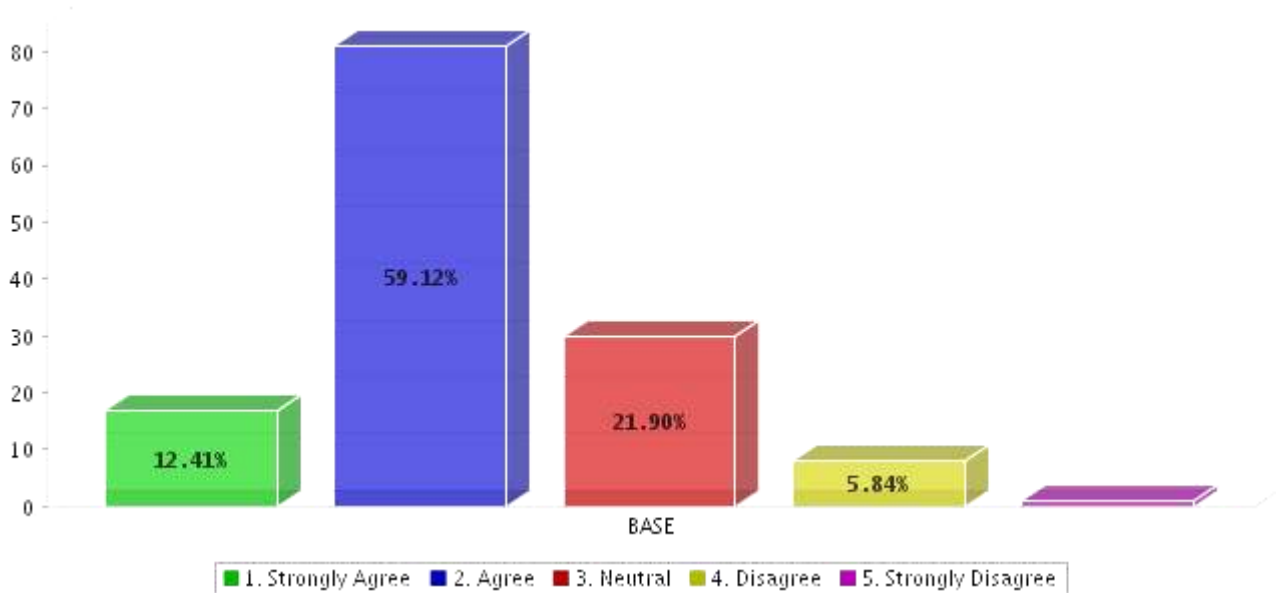
**57. Each state and territory should have a curriculum policy supporting the inclusion of studies of Asia in the curriculum of every school**

	Strongly Agree	22	16.30%
	Agree	58	42.96%
	Neutral	39	28.89%
	Disagree	13	9.63%
	Strongly Disagree	3	2.22%
Total		135	



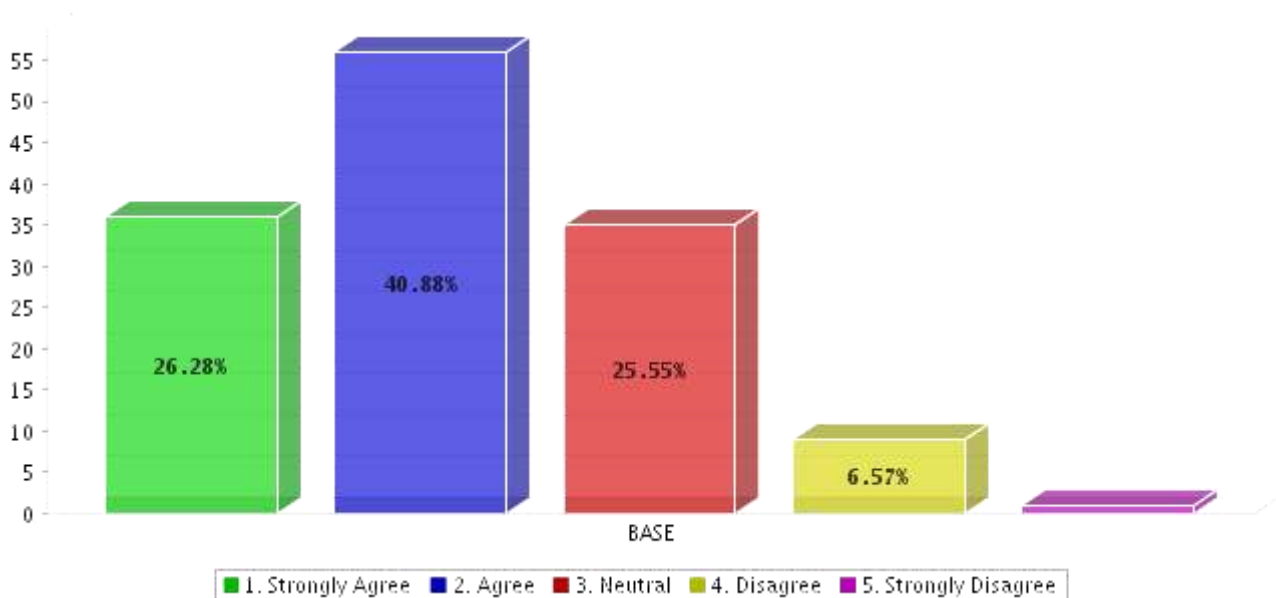
**58. Each state and territory should monitor the level of provision of programs being offered to connect students with Asia**

	Strongly Agree	17	12.41%
	Agree	81	59.12%
	Neutral	30	21.90%
	Disagree	8	5.84%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
Total		137	



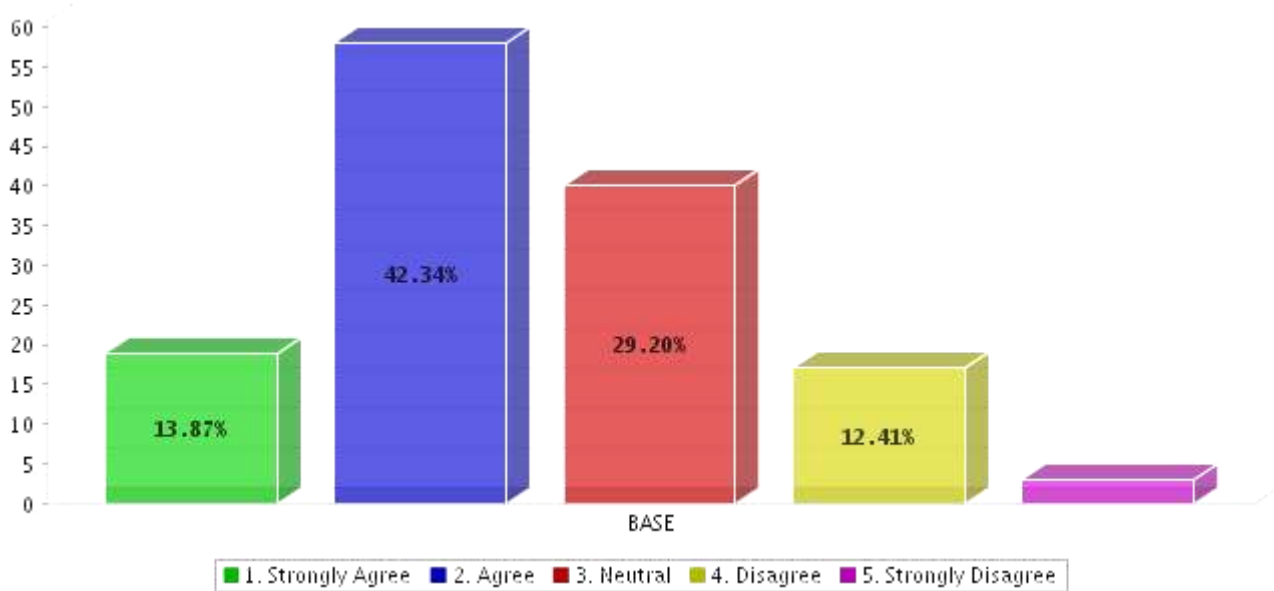
**59. Schools with excellent programs related to studies of Asia should be identified, acknowledged and publicised**

	Strongly Agree	36	26.28%
	Agree	56	40.88%
	Neutral	35	25.55%
	Disagree	9	6.57%
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.73%
Total		137	



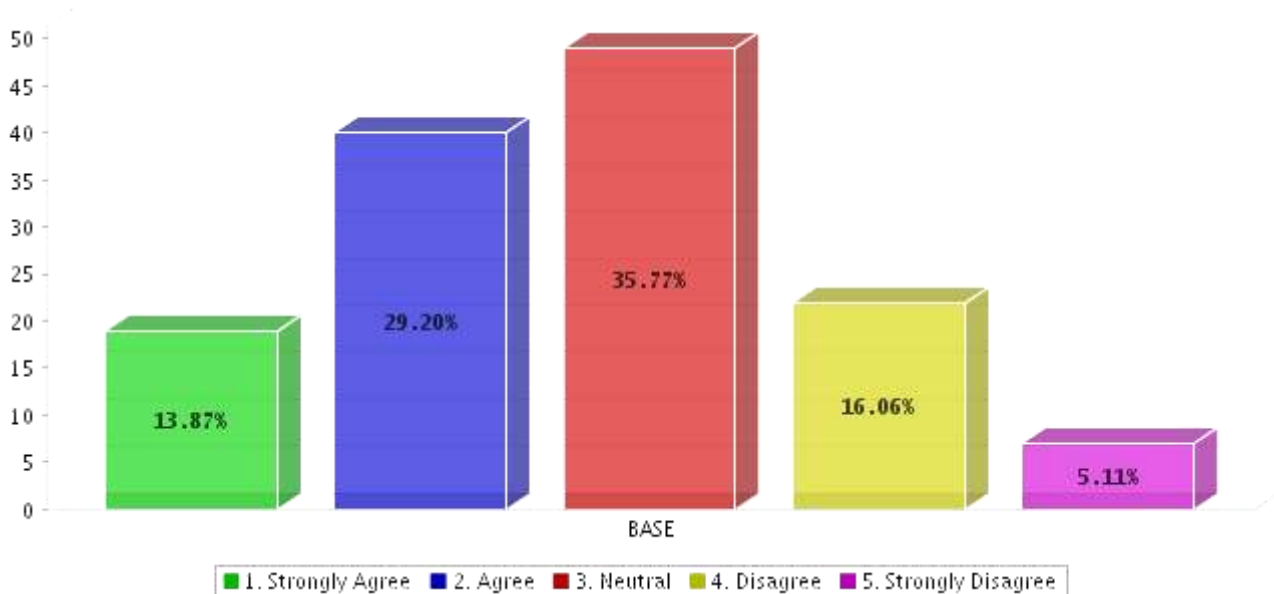
**60. Ideally, parent organisations could assist in promoting the incorporation of studies of Asia as a curriculum priority.**

	Strongly Agree	19	13.87%
	Agree	58	42.34%
	Neutral	40	29.20%
	Disagree	17	12.41%
	Strongly Disagree	3	2.19%
Total		137	



**61. Studies of Asia should have a higher priority in Australian schools**

	Strongly Agree	19	13.87%
	Agree	40	29.20%
	Neutral	49	35.77%
	Disagree	22	16.06%
	Strongly Disagree	7	5.11%
Total		137	





## All written responses recorded for Questions 62 and 63

62. Imagine that your child attends a school where studies of Asia are largely not touched in the curriculum. A new Principal is appointed, and decides to make some changes. You are contacted by the principal, who invites you on to a small group to develop and present a case to the governing council to allocate part of the school's budget specifically towards incorporating studies of Asia into the curriculum.

a) What are the key arguments you would use to support the case?

*“Australia's geographic location.*

*Australia's current and future trading relations with China, Japan and India.*

*Increase knowledge and decrease ignorance in relation to Asian religions and culture in order to facilitate peace.”*

*“Asia is our nearest neighbour and in order to have a peaceful, friendly, mutually advantageous relationship we need to understand their cultures and social systems.*

*Ignorance promotes the development of prejudice and discrimination. The future of our world depends on developing good relationships with all nations.”*

*“Proximity to Asia*

*Business/tourism links*

*Value of multicultural knowledge*

*Local business links to Asia*

*Cultural exchange opportunities*

*Employment opportunities”*

*“Importance of business relationships/economics to Australia*

*Demographic of Australian population - how the Asian population is represented in broader community*

*Benefit to students in studying alternate cultures/religion.”*

*“What are the outcomes or goals to be reached?*

*How these goals can benefit students*

*Not an extra curriculum subject but all subjects will have some elements relating to Asia”*

*“Close neighbours - should learn about them*

*Increase tolerance through understanding”*

*“The need of a knowledge of Asia”*

*“Cultural - the need to connect with immigrants and learn from them*

*Economic - it is economically foolish to ignore or, worse still, dislike, our neighbours”*

*“Future trading partners with Australia - preparation for work opportunities*

*French/German no longer relevant*

*“The need for Asia awareness to support student's future employment opportunity”*

*“Close neighbours*

*More children from Asian families live here now*

*Export/Import close from Asia*

*Travel”*

*“That children need to be exposed to a wide range of cultures and experiences throughout their lives”*

*“Because of the large input now and in the future Asia will put into Australia and that our children should learn for their future”*

*“Asia is our closest neighbour*

*Asian education would give an understanding of different cultures and reduce negative stereotyping  
Would provide better career opportunities later”*

*“Better job prospects for students if they do language and knowledge of Asia all their schooling life  
Better understanding and willingness to accept their fellow classmates from these countries  
Would attract students who want to study these subjects to the school”*

*“Closeness to Asia”*

*“Economic and social benefits to Australia  
Better cross-cultural understanding”*

*“Asia is where we live*

*Our knowledge of Asia will help overcome fears of the unknown”*

*“My main concern is that we have a curriculum that is already congested. Children who cannot read and write English, not enough funds to ensure children are educated without adding another large area of learning for children”*

*“Changing diversity of the world*

*Exposure to Asian culture, particularly at the more advanced levels, rather than the typical stereotypes of pandas and origami”*

*“Asia is our nearest neighbour and if we are to promote tolerance in a global world our children need to be educated about all cultures.*

*Asia is growing as a major economy and our students will be looking to them for employment in the future  
Asian explorers and inventors have played a major role in the development of modern technologies and we need to make our students aware of breaking down barriers of European dominance”*

*“Australia's future depends on it*

*It encourages tolerance, compassion*

*It expands student's minds*

*It is a balance to xenophobic governments”*

*“Australia's proximity to Asia*

*Increasing role of Asian countries on the world stage (population size, economy)*

*Large numbers of people of Asian descent in the Australian community*

*Rich and exciting study options”*

*“Part of Asian region*

*Career paths for students*

*Understanding of beliefs and values*

*Building relationships”*

*“Changes in the composition of our population in Australia*

*Need for our community to understand each other on the local community and the international community - the way the world is shrinking in relation to travel, internet etc  
Political and economic necessity to have good communication and understanding of Asian cultures  
Our geographic location and changes in trade partners”*

*“Our students live in an area highly dependent on tourism and a choice of languages/cultural studies of Asia, along with other European studies will increase their employability in the local area.  
For many careers and academic pathways the option of Asian studies will assist students achieve their life goals  
Asian studies provide a challenge for students to learn outside "traditional" areas  
Asian languages can also provide a challenge in the level of difficulty that can be rewarding for some students”*

*“Geographically close to Asia  
Students should learn about the nationalities in the school equally”*

*“To work in many fields of employment it will be necessary to have a knowledge of Asia - so many fields - computer related to clothing - in fact so much of manufacturing involves dealing with Asia - we need to know the cultures so as not to offend and be able to communicate successfully. Even on our own home soil we need to teach respect for those different from ourselves to prevent discrimination and racial tension.”*

*“Students need to have a knowledge of our region' including Papua, Pacific Islands. But I believe GLOBAL knowledge is essential and a priority to me.”*

*“I would suggest another parent be chosen as it should not be in my child's curriculum. I would move schools to one with a focus on academic subjects if it were to be forced on children.”*

*“Expanded opportunity - CHOICE - for students  
Geography  
Number of Asian immigrants - understanding, multiculturalism  
Need to have some knowledge of Asia and how Australians might benefit in the future.”*

*“I don't know. I'd ask the Principal to give me the key arguments.”*

*“Understanding diverse cultures leads to improved relations between people of different racial backgrounds  
Asian people comprise a significant proportion of our population.”*

*“Support the new Principal. Yes”*

*“Every child has a right to access Asian studies - no child should be thwarted in quest for knowledge by exclusion from the curriculum  
By acknowledging Asian component of society schools will attract larger Asia populations hence increase school population component in a competitive school marketplace.”*

*“Culturally we need to get away from our traditional predominantly "western" based culture if we are to understand and get on with our neighbours.  
The rapid economic expansion of Asian countries makes an understanding of their cultures and values essential if we are to get on with them in a businesslike way.  
We all have to live in this world and the more we know about each others cultures and values the easier this becomes.”*

*“An understanding of Asian cultures will be more important as more Australians interact with Asians either through trade and commerce or as immigrants  
Studies of Asia is not an additional subject, rather it is a vehicle for assisting many study areas including Maths, SOSE, Science, IT etc”*

*“Geographic*

*People need to be educated on the policies and penalties that can be breached and what happens to them if they do*

*We need to learn the basics of some of the main religions as these are usually the basis for how or why they are culturally different to Australians”*

*“I would have to decline the offer as I personally don't see the need for Asian studies for all students. This should be a specialised field/elective only.”*

*“Increasing demand from Asian countries for our products - interaction*

*Communication - understanding how their business works*

*Treating Asians with how they feel with regards - respect, customs, beliefs”*

*“Important for complete education*

*Broadens minds to different philosophy, ways of thinking*

*Provides more choice and value to students in their careers*

*Adds to the on-going maturity of Australia as a nation”*

*“Importance of Asia to Australia in terms of politics, geography and trade. Australia as a multicultural society must accept other cultures. Studies in school lead to understanding other cultures, decrease in racism, and increase in tolerance.”*

*“Due to many Asian immigrants it will be more prevalent that our children should understand culture, language, and religion to enable the most out of work and life encounters.”*

*“Tourism*

*Hospitality*

*Travel”*

*“Do not support so cannot provide.”*

*“As a parent I would like the opportunity for my child to learn a diverse range of education programs, all consideration for equal culture(s) should be given.”*

*“Australia is heading towards a more dominant Asian business contacts. We need to be teaching children of the benefits in Asian business, markets, foreign policy etc”*

*“Firstly - what is being done by individual teachers/faculties should be assessed - it is surprising what can be occurring in schools in regard to various programs.”*

*“Australia has a diverse multicultural population and teaching children about the culture, religions, differences and similarities of other nationalities foster better understanding and more respect for all people.”*

*“General educational value*

*Preparation for tertiary studies*

*Help in understanding region”*

*“Geographic location*

*Young Australians can benefit from a knowledge of the rich Asian cultures  
Australia's future economic growth and stability  
Improved social cohesion in Australia and in the region.”*

*“Our closest neighbours which means exposure to many Asians*

*Many Asians living in Australia now  
Help with tolerance and acceptance of all”*

*“Future economy tied to Asia*

*Better understanding of Asian culture  
Multinational population”*

*“Travel, shrinking world*

*Future - more technology being developed overseas - competition  
Multicultural society/school.”*

*“This is dependent on availability of teacher of which there is a shortage in language.”*

*“Proximity to Asia*

*Economic arguments  
Importance of cultural diversity.”*

*“Geographic proximity*

*Travel  
Many more immigrants from Asia coming to rural areas  
Diversity of peoples enriches the community  
Learn and understanding and tolerance of various cultures and religions and traditions  
Many more overseas students (esp Asian) at schools and Universities.”*

*“The number of Asian families in school and local area*

*Size of school - will depend on teacher availability  
Knowledge of different cultures important.”*

*“Explanation of the changes*

*The benefits of doing so  
Highlight examples where other schools have been successful  
Community opinion (assuming data has been collected)  
Table an outline of the proposal and a communication strategy.”*

*“How it would marriage into the current curriculum being taught and thus engaging more students.”*

*“China is likely to become the major economic engine in the world and we will be closer than ever to her.  
My son will visit these countries: some knowledge is essential.  
Fear of terrorism is grounded in ignorance of other cultures.”*

*“Trade partners*

*Asian population in Australia is increasing  
Geography - close neighbours  
We have a lot to learn from one another.”*

*“Personal and national benefits  
Effectiveness of bilingual education eg in an Asian language.”*

*“That what is being proposed is part of SACSA that is being overlooked through:  
Lack of qualified teachers  
Lack of Dept/Government financial support - financially and policy  
Links to overall curriculum and school vision – planning.”*

*“We are irrevocably part of the Pacific Rim and its patterns of human migration and commerce.  
Tourism, business, cultural and other opportunities are enhanced by increasing our understanding of other  
Asian countries and cultures.  
Language is a core element of any culture and a key to understanding it.”*

*“Asian countries are key economic partners to Australia  
Australia is a multicultural society with a large (and growing %) of families from Asian background.  
Increasing our understanding of Asian values, cultures and languages will lead to improved connections  
between cultures, greater understanding, tolerance and respect.  
Fits in with Catholic ethos of accepting and celebrating diversity.”*

*“The importance of knowledge about our close neighbours  
The future of the region (Asia/Pacific) and the future of our children are closely linked.”*

*“I would not support the case.”*

*“We are geographically located in Asia and it makes sense to be able to skill the future generation to  
communicate effectively within the region.  
Trade between Australia and Asia is increasingly important. The future generations will be advantaged in a  
knowledge of this region.  
Asia is a diverse and interesting region in great contrast to an Anglo-Saxon background and deserves to be  
studied.”*

*“Our children's future will be more closely linked with Asia than ours, and they are best able to optimise  
this if they have been educated about Asia and its cultures.”*

*“Australia is effectively part of Asia  
Ties will be closer in the future  
So our children need this in the curriculum now.”*

*“Understanding our geological/economic position in the world  
Language relevant to students travel destinations  
Communication with Asian students joining the Australian education system.”*

*“Increasing interconnectedness of our region and the extent to which the future of business, employment,  
economic development and the future careers of all young people directly and indirectly will be impacted  
upon by our interactions with Asia - clearly demonstrable in terms of developments in Indonesia, India,  
China in particular as well as Japan and the other economies eg Vietnam, Malaysia  
To equip young people to operate effectively in this context, a knowledge and understanding of the history,  
cultures traditions and societies and languages will be important  
Accessibility of those countries and information and opportunities to establish "partnership" relations, as  
already demonstrated in a range of schools emphasises the ways in which this can be cost-effectively  
developed not as additions to the curriculum but as integral elements of curriculum in operation.”*



*“Globalisation is making it imperative that we have good relationships with all other cultures. The Asian culture is a large body of people. Much trade and business is done with Asian countries, a good understanding and appreciation of that culture goes a long way to harmonious working relationships.”*

*“Wouldn't”*

*“We are close to Asia, and need to know more about our neighbours.  
We are tied economically to Asia.”*

*“I am not sure about this question even though my children attend such a school. I would have to put it in the context of lifelong learning and that we all have a desire to make sense of our world. Asia is part of that world as are other countries lets make sure we give children breadth and depth around these things. Superficially we explore Christmas and Easter let's look at other religious celebrations and cultural festivals etc.*

*The obvious one we live close to Asia. Let's get to know it like you would a neighbour in your street. You don't necessarily need money to do this.”*

*“Australia's current and future prosperity and growth is linked to Asia.”*

*“Better understanding of cultures  
Making good judgments to produce well rounded students  
Enrich the curriculum.”*

*“Parent thoughts on the proposal  
Principal's reason.”*

*“Our closest neighbours  
Help for tourism in future.”*

*“Australia is located in/near Asia region and Australia's children need to have a better understanding of their neighbours.*

*A vehicle for decreasing prejudice and negative stereotyping amongst students.*

*Competitive advantage in appealing to parents of Asian background to choose the school.”*

*“No Comment.”*

*“Children benefit from a broad range of learning areas including Asian studies.”*

*“Australia sits in the world geographically very close to Asia and so we should be teaching our children more about this diverse area. In an age with so much suspicion about people of other religions (especially Islam) I think education is the key to better understanding and inclusion of all people living in Australia.”*

*“Opportunity for students to learn language skills  
Ability to learn about other cultures  
Diversity in curriculum.”*

*“Connection with neighbours (countries) and immigrants  
Australia is in the Asian region and must inevitably look more and more closely with these countries and will need the depth of expertise to do so.  
Develop tolerance and understanding  
Develop a real interest in these countries, not just a project approach.”*

*“The closeness of our countries  
The importance of living and integrating  
Major trading partners and for expansion of our industry and opportunities for our children  
Reduces possible conflict with close countries.”*

*“Learning an Asia language should be compulsory in schools.”*

*“Promote tolerance and understanding  
Develop links with neighbouring countries  
Increasing business connections.”*

*“The children get a inside look at some of Asian studies eg culture, food, families, way of life, language etc.  
Never been done on Asian Studies.”*

*“Students need to be exposed to as wide an educational base  
Industry/trade with Asia  
Tourism industry  
Current holiday destination and therefore need to understand them especially legal system.”*

*“I wouldn't necessarily support the case. School budgets are tight and unless extra would be given in most cases this would mean that something else would have to go.”*

*“It is shameful that we know less about a nearest neighbour's culture and identity than that of other as significant trading partners 10 times the distance from us. It is nearly as disgraceful as the average Australian being able to name the first USA President but not our own first Prime Minister. As a multicultural country it is vital that our future citizens are aware of the many cultures who immigrate here. Education is the key weapon against racism. Economically Australia must enter the Asian market for it to guard against any economic downturn but alas we are probably already 10 years behind where we should be. For instance China is an emerging market that has the potential of unprecedented size and opportunity.”*

*“Very important to establish a sense of being part of the global community - cannot have a "west" centric view.  
Part of our student body is Asian - Asian studies acknowledges their history and importance  
Builds knowledge and skills our children will need as adults  
Very enriching for all of us to have an appreciation of different cultures - inspiring, builds perspective and understanding of our situation.”*

*“We need to provide learning resources about our neighbouring countries as they are very important trading countries.”*

*“Enhance cultural upbringing  
Encourage children to be multi-lingual to create job opportunities  
The more languages or musical instruments one learns, the easier it is to pick up therefore developing multi-skilling.”*

*“Australian children are at a major disadvantage compared to children from many other developed nations in the fact that the majority of Australian born children can only speak English. By having Asian studies as part of the curriculum this would be one way of fixing this problem.”*

*“Make sure there is no bias either way. Children should be given enough information to keep them up to info on trade needs, little culture, tourism needs for both countries. But be very aware of terrorism type teaching.”*



*“Location - near Asia*

*Increasing number of Asian residents*

*Closer business links*

*The need to develop better understandings between our cultures*

*Australia needs to be better positioned to influence the nations of Asia if we are to maintain and develop peace in the region. Peace, freedom and prosperity are interlinked.”*

*“My support would be linked to educating children in a business sense with Asia - and language is part of this process.*

*Educating our school children in Asian studies is as much about educating Asian students in our schools about our Australian culture (two-way street).”*

*“Australia is geographically close to Indonesia*

*China has the largest population in the world.”*

*“There would be heaps? Depending on what your schools are teaching.”*

*“Future of Australia and its people*

*Development of children*

*Australian history - eg Chinese miners.”*

*“Intercultural understanding*

*Global society*

*Geographic proximity*

*Tolerance and positive valuing of diversity.”*

*“Ratio of Asian students within the school, language and wider horizons for students.”*

*“Australia is part of Asian basin.*

*Tourism \$ generator*

*Proximity of Australia to Indonesia*

*Townsville - trade base to Asia - Sunmetals (Korea Zinc) is a significant employer*

*James Cook University - percentage of Asian students, studies of Asia.”*

*“Our need to have a good understanding of Asian countries and their cultures for the future*

*With economic policies gearing more to the Asia Pacific market our children need the knowledge to play a part in this.*

*Learning about other religions and cultures is very important.”*

*“Proximity of Asian neighbours*

*Number of Asian migrants in Australia*

*Backdrop of so called "War on Terror" and many Muslim neighbours.”*

*“Helps understanding of own and other culture.*

*Helps establish grounding for teaching of tolerance.*

*Helps understanding of own language.”*

*“Some curriculum studies in cultural/geographical.”*

*“Geographical proximity - trade and tourism*

*Developing importance of China and India as manufacturing powerhouses.”*

*“Our place in Asia and the developing and increasingly important role of China in the region.”*

*“More people in Australia and South Australia from Asian countries.*

*It is part of our world*

*It is close to us.”*

*“We are a diverse nation*

*Not a burden to bear for the future.”*

**b) What do you anticipate will be the main barriers to the success of the case?**

*“I imagine that one of the barriers will be the perception that we are being asked to compete industrially with Asia ie. more hours, less pay and conditions, standard of living, family friendly conditions - sometimes that makes me very antsy and resistant and I am married to an Asian and have 3 Eurasian children.”*

*“Ignorance*

*Prejudice*

*Narrow mindedness*

*Difficulty in re-allocating priority in curriculum.”*

*“Low number of students in local schools as compared with other groups eg ATSI*

*Low level of multicultural understanding in community*

*Prejudice*

*Lack of representation in school community of Asians.”*

*“What area of the budget will lose for that money to be resourced into something new?*

*Teachers will consider it yet another imposition on their already crowded curriculum.”*

*“Hostility to the idea from some parents*

*Budget already stretched to limit”*

*“More important studies in the curriculum”*

*“Lack of imagination*

*Lack of professional teaching skill.”*

*“Over-crowded curriculum*

*Number of Asian students at the school*

*Willingness to look at the big picture.”*

*“Lack of teachers*

*Lack of teacher skills*

*Lack of funding.”*

*“Ignorance, prejudice*

*Budgets*

*Accessibility to resources*

*Lack of participation.”*

*“Crowded curriculum. Who will be teaching Asian languages? (Shortage of language teachers).”*

*“That why only support the curriculum on just Asia when we are a multi-cultural country and our school has many different countries and cultures.”*

*“Concerns over a crowded curriculum*

*Fear of the loss of Australian traditions and culture.”*

*“Funds*

*Narrow minded council members.”*

*“Cost*

*Prejudice.”*

*“An overloaded curriculum  
Lack of teachers”*

*“Ignorance  
Other priorities.”*

*“Bringing Asia studies into a school in a big way MUST be linked to current curriculum - I am not opposed to the study/curriculum. My concern is how much more our children are expected to learn.”*

*“Tasmania has a very limited Asian population, therefore people don't see the need for education in this area, particularly in the light of the extremely crowded curriculum.”*

*“I would hope that in the year 2005 and beyond that I would not face any barriers once parents had been educated about the importance of Asia as a trading partner and place of rich culture. The key is education of all.”*

*“General apathy  
General hostility to Asia and Asians.”*

*“No government funding  
Competition in the curriculum.”*

*“Conflicting priorities eg indigenous studies not mandated, why should Asian studies be?  
Inconsistency within departments eg no benefit in teaching an Asian language if there is no continuity. 1 yr Japanese, 1 yr German then Italian and Mandarin at HS.  
Concerns re political/human rights issues in parts of Asia.”*

*“Resources, time, skills, interest.”*

*“Overloaded curriculum  
Lack of funding, resources and properly trained teachers  
Asian studies may be given a lower priority within the curriculum.”*

*“Teachers/parents who are stuck in traditional moulds of what should be taught at school  
Finding new staff or challenging existing staff who will teach in new areas of the curriculum  
Parents who will reject cultural/religious studies of Asia fearing what their children may learn  
Cost concerns with establishing something new”.*

*The Anglo-Saxon viewpoint that we are all white.”*

*“Too much already in curriculum  
Resistance to being forced to put something compulsory on the agenda when schools are continually wanting to have the freedom to teach whatever they feel like.”*

*“The huge variety of learning areas needed to prepare students for the future. Time if we can instill curiosity and hunger to learn lifelong I am sure Australians will continue to learn and feel that Australia is part of Asia.”*

*“Finding enough parents to present a positive case to the Board.  
There is too much emphasis on non-academic subjects as it is.*

*This subject has very limited appeal.”*

*“Staff shortage  
Lack of PD opportunities  
Sustainability/funding  
Resources and funds for resources  
Parents/students may need to be "convinced" of worthiness of the course.”*

*“What would be needed are clear logical arguments supporting the case. Clear objectives of the initiative would need to be identified, and the feasibility of achieving them tested.*

*Depends on focus and intent. Lots of opportunities to hear about/learn about Asia. Regular part of history, geography, economics, art, commerce etc  
Fear of the unknown  
Historical factors  
Schools that have no students from Asian backgrounds may see Asian studies as irrelevant to their situation.”*

*“Parents not having adequate information re changes to help make an informed decision.”*

*“Establishment costs - eg language labs  
Availability of teacher training courses  
Lack of professional mentors to help guide schools through Asia studies setup.”*

*“Lack of curriculum and resources including staff - continuity of Asian Studies is threatened if this is not assured. Some people will need to be "won over" to the realisation that the balance of international influence (economically and socially) is changing.”*

*“Additional complexity in the curriculum  
May lead students to question religious education/Christian doctrine due to exposure to other belief systems.  
Perceived as a threat to a Christian school's underlying mission.”*

*“Cost  
Overcrowded curriculum  
Lack of teaching staff including language teachers.”*

*“Not all students will need or want to take Asian studies. Teaching correct grammar is far more important and also pronunciation - would outweigh Asian studies in our schools*

*“Schools' ability to resource such a program.”*

*“Relevancy  
Cost of establishment  
On-going costs and scarce resources.”*

*“Racism of our own community  
Space in the curriculum - always more to teach than time available.”*

*“More money should be spent on education for children with disabilities (paraphrased).”*

*“Teachers who don't want change  
Parents and teachers who discriminate*

### *Lack of funds*

*Time - where do we fit it in?"*

*"Community conception, need greater community education of trust and understanding. However not compromising our true Australian values. Recent events overseas can create divisions in communities Religion. People are too scared to learn about other religions. Terrorism scares people, and they all think that foreign religions and foreign people all agree with it. The ability to get people past that barrier is essential."*

*"Lack of interest in learning a language by students. In my view there is no point in teaching a language when children enter HS across the whole school. Some children are still struggling with English literacy and therefore do not cope with extra expectations."*

*"The general apathy of the community and their reluctance to do something different from the way "it has always been done."*

*"Cultural clash."*

*"Pockets of ignorance and intolerance*

*Australian's having an inherent feeling of "superiority" to Asians (education can help to overcome this)  
Lack of leadership from governments (Australian)."*

*"Parent support - as most people have their own agendas*

*Picking which Asian language."*

*"Funding and resources."*

*"Lack of teaching resources/funds*

*Lack of fully trained language teachers*

*Some racism/criticism of overseas teachers - how good/clear is their English."*

*"Teacher shortage."*

*"Lack of support from Asian families due to communication difficulties."*

*"Crowded curriculum*

*Lack of qualified teaching staff*

*Huge diversity of "Asia" and need to focus on certain parts for language learning etc."*

*"Financial resources*

*Availability of expert teachers*

*"Small town mentality" - "that can happen in the city"*

*Lack of knowledge of the potential benefits."*

*"Interest of current students*

*Which language?*

*Who chooses length of study?"*

*"Competition from other curriculum areas."*

*"Personal opinion and reluctance to give it a go*

*Lack of data and preparation if time has not been provided*

*Bias or other loyalties to other curriculum areas."*

*“Parents and uninterested teachers.”*

*“Ill educated Principal.”*

*“Introductory costs*

*Disruption to current curriculum*

*Curriculum already too full*

*Finding appropriately qualified teachers in country areas.”*

*“Inertia, funding, professional expertise lacking ie shortage of trained teachers.”*

*“Three points (mentioned in part a) ie.*

*Lack of qualified teachers*

*Lack of Department/Government financial support - financially and policy*

*Links to overall curriculum and school vision – planning.”*

*“Availability of funding and other resources*

*School community dissent.”*

*“Existing biases and ignorant parents*

*Fear of change*

*Fear of loss of identity.”*

*“Not wanting to change things because things work well at the moment*

*Lack of teacher knowledge and resources*

*Some may not see it as important.”*

*“Competition for funds, perceptions of an already overcrowded curriculum.”*

*“Crowded curriculum*

*Competing with other disciplines for resources*

*Perception that Asian languages are "difficult" and therefore less interest amongst students*

*Immediate advantages of studying Asian language, history and culture not necessarily appreciated by many.”*

*“Fear and competing for limited resources.”*

*“Other areas of the curriculum competing for funds and time.*

*Racism fears/terrorism fears*

*Shortage of teachers.”*

*“Mono-cultural and mono-linguistic mindset;*

*Lack of understanding of Asia fuelled by old stereotypes, prejudices and fears fuelled by "terrorism" and negativist images of "Islam"*

*Perceptions this is an additional range of activities that will compete for time, money, people resources with "overcrowded curriculum" and displace "traditional" elements - cuckoo in the nest mindset.”*

*“Ethnocentric ideology!”*

*“The fact that literacy has already been identified as being of the utmost concern for most parents. It seems ridiculous to spend 6 months teaching a child Japanese which is promptly forgotten in a month when kids can't read and write.”*

*“There are so many other worthy subjects trying to get a spot in the curriculum.”*

*“People's lack of understanding about the breadth and depth we need to explore in order to develop deep understandings. In an overcrowded curriculum you often get surface learning.  
There needs to be a genuine commitment to find out about ASIA not just because one group or government says so.”*

*“Getting teachers to (become) familiar with Asian studies, because other schools in the "cluster" do not teach Asian studies we would be disadvantaging our student's future academic progress.”*

*“Change  
Limited knowledge of the curriculum therefore apathy etc  
Teacher workload.”*

*“Parents of course.”*

*“Taking funds from other learning areas  
Other priorities for basic learning areas”*

*“Anti-Asian prejudice masked by arguments concerning the competing merits of other educational priorities.”*

*“No comment.”*

*“There are so many areas to cover that schools should choose to make Asian Studies a specialised option.  
Teacher/Parent acceptance  
Schools on tight budgets - always other needs to be addressed.”*

*“There are so many important things for children to learn that the school day is already crowded.  
Funding and facilities.”*

*“Teacher willingness/expertise/comfort levels  
Depth of accessible resources  
Competition for curriculum space  
Eurocentric parent pressure.”*

*“The older set who were brought up under a White Australia policy but due to our multicultural society these are now in the minority.”*

*“None it won't.”*

*“Money needed for other areas of the curriculum.  
Let's learn about Australia first - our history and current affairs are not taught to our children.”*

*“Not having done that study before might be more benefit for the children.”*

*“Whole community (town) attitude  
Overcrowded curriculum*



*Higher priority and needs of students (time and resources)  
Student's inability to learn current work  
Ability of staff to implement a comprehensive study."*

*"Money."*

*"Bigoted opinion which is really based on a lack of knowledge and understanding of the culture - very similar to the European immigration of the 50's."*

*"Depending how to incorporate studies of Asia into the curriculum - getting resources to assist with time - good educational resources that are easy to pick up and incorporate.  
Teachers with the appropriate knowledge and background especially, in relation to languages."*

*"Bias or past ideals."*

*"Lack of teachers of Asian (Studies),  
If non-Asian-speaking teachers teach from a textbook only, then the cause is lost."*

*"Lack of support from home due to the parents being unable to speak the language."*

*"The not so good Muslim connection."*

*"Lack of involvement by those with Asian backgrounds  
Changes to the curriculum would need to drive the changes. Asian studies should be an HSC (final year) subject accepted by Universities as a key requirement for entry into selected subjects.  
Lack of teacher training and crowded curriculum."*

*"Not sure that wider community is accepting of the fact that dealing with Asia is a fact of life these days  
People see Asians as "taking over" the country of Australia, no effort to integrate (ghettos) and increasing crimes with Asian involvement."*

*"Prejudice*

*So many other curriculum subjects to learn such as Science, Maths, English, PE, Geography, Tech."*

*That is not always going to suit every school community*

*"Australian Government attitude - (other policies)  
Impact on people - life experience of people - narrow minded - lack of understanding."*

*"Racism*

*Competitive curriculum*

*Examination systems*

*National testing*

*Ethnocentric."*

*"Lack of resources and funding. Lack of qualified people to teach on Asia."*

*"Time - where to complement/incorporate into the current curriculum?  
Money - relief pool required to allow teachers to access PD and specialist teachers."*

*"Parents worried about their children learning too much about other religions in particular."*

*“Xenophobia, Kevin Donnelly type mentality, "back to basics" fraternity.”*

*“Ignorance*

*Resources - money*

*Resources – people.”*

*“An over-crowded curriculum”*

*“Crowded curriculum*

*Availability of suitably trained and motivated staff.”*

*“Competition for resources on other areas of the curriculum\old attitudes”*

*“Ignorance.*

*Never needed it before, why change?”*

*“Racism*

*Loss of Australian values.”*

**Q 63. Additional Comment (optional).**

**Please use the space below to record any additional thoughts you have on the issues raised in this survey or to summarise your position in relation to the incorporation of studies of Asia into Australian schools.**

*"I can think of many positive reasons to adopt Asian studies - geography, promoting peace, trade relations - and would support AEF on these grounds. I would not support it however with a view to making the Australian workplace industrially competitive with China and India."*

*"Whilst I am not averse to additional curriculum offerings, I am concerned about making some subjects mandatory. As a language illiterate person who struggled with learning a language at school, I feel for students who don't possess the skills to master a language."*

*"I am very supportive of incorporating Asian studies. Given the demographic of the two schools I am involved in, I would be very surprised if the academic staff would support any move in this direction. The Asian community is very lowly represented."*

*"Few parents at this stage would have any idea if and how Asia is included in the curriculum anyway. Curriculum authorities would need to do a lot of groundwork on what's already out there before thinking of implementing such a broad topic into what we know is a hefty curriculum now."*

*"Incorporation of studies of Asia into Australian schools is critical and essential. AEF is strategically poised to contribute to this end."*

*"I feel it is important to include Asian studies and know my daughter has enjoyed her school studies. My only problem is there are other important areas also - Australia and New Zealand. My other point is a lot of Asian people do not become involved at school level."*

*"I do not believe we should be supporting this. The current curriculum is full. There are a lot of students that still need assistance with basic English. This is Australia not Asia. If students want to study Asia it should be an elective subject only, not for all students."*

*"I can't stress enough remove the current "clutter" from the curriculum before anything else is crammed in."*

*"Our future lies in the region yet Federal Governments maintain a fawning subservience to all things American. To promote Asia will go some way to achieving balance in our national outlook."*

*"I strongly believe in the benefits of learning a second language, am myself bilingual and have children who have studied Mandarin for up to 7 years. However the current ad hoc approach to LOTE in Australian schools does no favours to anyone. Financial support needs to be given to schools wishing to offer immersion programs, but not exclusively Asian."*

*"I am sure that there are creative ways for parents to assist with increasing understanding and awareness of Asian studies in schools to a much greater degree - multicultural days are popular social events in many schools but many opportunities to present serious and rigorous learning opportunities are lost. Asian studies should be incorporated into the existing curriculum for English, Maths, Science etc etc in ALL schools, not just those with high LBOTE populations. Schools should plan across the curriculum/cross faculty projects with a real world focus - eg the Tsunami - and present to the whole school."*

*"In a global world, all areas are equally important. The important thing is to achieve balance in the curriculum, not to push one area at the expense of another (paraphrased)."*

*Do not support "national" curriculum priorities or outcomes  
All curriculum should be equally accessible and monitored  
Parent organisations are not in the business of promoting one area of the curriculum over another."*

*"There is a large barrier of not understanding between some Asians and Australians. This is more so with some nationalities than others."*

*"Incorporate Asian studies into SOSE (compulsory Australia wide) and with a separate elective - if country specific, not just language but language and culture - Full immersion, not so heavily content based such as Japanese in the past. Language lab/computer options now available."*

*"I wouldn't like to place Asian Studies ahead of Australian and Global knowledge. Please incorporate Asia in our world; let us encourage GLOBAL studies and understanding, tolerance, humanity, cultures and different societies. I believe in personal choice, not a prescribed rigid attitude in education."*

*"My children are now in High School. This subject may fit into primary "social studies". I cannot visualise it in a senior curriculum."*

*"There should be a nationally agreed policy, uniform across the nation, not fragmented as much of the current curriculum is.*

*Support right of students to access an Asian Language - disagree with Indonesian being forced on NSW students. Teachers do a TOY course and are then expected to teach other teachers. Badly taught, variable across the school, not retained.*

*Prefer learning about cultures/mesh with regular curriculum - rather than foisting a foreign language on students.*

*Opposed to incorporating studies of Asia into teacher preparation courses - low priority  
PD is a huge issue."*

*"I felt that some of the questions in this survey were directed at getting responses in favour of increasing studies of Asia in Australian schools. If that was indeed the case I suggest some effort should be put into linking such studies with favourable outcomes."*

*"I believe my education provided a basis for appreciating and understanding Asia. Families have lots of other opportunities besides school for learning."*

*"The ability to communicate effectively with whomever we are dealing is the key to success in any enterprise and knowledge of their language and culture is essential for this to occur."*

*"Should be incorporated as a contextual vehicle in traditional subjects, rather than as a separate subject area."*

*"We live in Australia - teach our students about Australian history and our ways thoroughly before concerning them with other countries. Make Asian studies an elective not a core subject."*

*"With increasing relations with Asian countries our ability to tap into the dollars that are there, we must be able to relate to how their society works, even if we can't speak the language."*

*"This is an important area but I feel it may not be an advantage to have a universal approach for all our schools and children."*

*“If these studies can reveal to students how the majority of the planets citizens live in varying degrees of poverty in large part due to colonisation (by European, English) and exploitation by "Western Powers" we may start to understand hoe terrorists and anarchists can flourish in these environments.”*

*“A lot of Asian parents culture is that we don't question the teachers, so therefore we don't get as much outside help as we need.”*

*“People who come to Australia must understand we have a unique outlook and lifestyle. Choosing to live/work in this great country must come as a culture shock to some. Trying to change our culture can sometimes create tension in communities. Tolerance and understanding must work both ways.”*

*“If wanting to teach languages we must start at an earlier age, but ensure that communication skills in English are a priority as well.”*

*(Respondent then mentions how Studies of Asia are incorporated across the curriculum in their school, exchange students and a Japanese sister school.)*

*“I think we need to not have knee jerk reactions on these issues. There are many varieties of Asian cultures and languages and having had a daughter that has so far studied German, French, Chinese, Japanese (up till Yr 8) and a son who is doing Japanese in Kindy, I think a more uniform plan would be helpful. We do run the risk of becoming too encapsulated in a specific area.”*

*“It's an excellent idea but the current curriculum is quite crowded. Some students query why do they need maths, history, geography when they aren't interested in "old stuff" (history). There just doesn't seem to be enough hours in the day.”*

*“There is a range of issues involved in this which affects different areas yet a language is important to our communication and culture long term and to argue for it is not my area of expertise.”*

*“Strongly support language teaching of any sort - great benefits also in learning Latin based languages because of flow on effect to English grammar. Need for greater intensity of language teaching - one hour a week is not enough and not integrated into learning areas across curriculum.”*

*“At one time, studies of Asia (Indonesian) was introduced into schools in this region and the difficulties of having and maintaining staff restricted its success. Added pressure was experienced when an "excursion" to Indonesia was being prepared. Any study should not attract added financial burden for families in rural and low socio-economic areas.”*

*“In Vic how does this sit with the VELs?*

*Some schools don't have the leadership or teachers with a "studies of Asia" enthusiasm so how do we transform them?”*

*“I would find it hard to support an Asian based curriculum in our schools if KLA were not up to standard ie like literacy and numeracy within our own cultural.”*

*“Living in an isolated rural community we do not encounter many Asians. However when my older children have gone to University they have developed friendships with many Asians - having studied Asian languages in school has I believe helped them in the transition.”*

*“Note that in city areas the Asian population over the past generation has increased markedly, but in country areas we find that our exposure to information about Asia is good, but in most areas the influx of Asians in the community is still comparatively small.”*

*“I am strongly in favour of solid Asian studies programs in primary and secondary schools. I have A BSc and my career has mainly been as a teacher of science and maths.”*

*“I am very supportive of the Asia in Schools program. Its very relevant to here and now as well as in the future.”*

*“I think that all kids from early childhood onwards benefit from learning a LOTE but don't care whether it is an Asian or European language. I have found that my 4 children have been taught a lot of Aboriginal history and Asian history, but have been taught no European history at all. Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water!”*

*“The question is too broad. Incorporation into Australian schools could mean 1 period a year or 5 periods per week or more. Then of course there's the question of the quality of the content.”*

*“It seems clear from previous reviews that effective and productive (“transformative”) Asian studies programs operate sustainably only when parents, students, teachers and principals have a shared understanding and commitment to work in whole of school community partnership to make them happen. This scoping study should inform more extensive national research to explore the attitudes, beliefs, awareness and understanding levels, expectations and information and other needs and priorities of families across the country - which in turn should inform an extensive information and marketing campaign to address those information and other needs. All parents and families need to understand why they need an informed understanding and extensive awareness of Asia and why this is (“cultural and language literacy”) is an increasingly essential element of the learning and personal development of all young people. This will necessarily involve making other communities aware of the successful ways in which effective schools have incorporated learning and understanding of Asia across all aspects of the curriculum and school operations and activities. Inculcating awareness of the “how” and that “they can do that too” is as important as the “why” in terms of facilitating long term cultural and mindset change.”*

*“I have no problems with students learning about the world but can not see why the focus has to be solely Asian let them learn about any other cultures that engage their interest. On the subject of languages - my 5 children have variously been taught for anywhere between 6 months to 3 years – French, Korean, Japanese and German. Not one of them can speak a language other than English. I would suggest that kids be taught Spanish - it's relatively easy to learn and is spoken in many places in the world.”*

*“We need to highlight the fact that all communities need to be involved in the setting of education policy in schools. This needs to be done at a local level through effective governance. If you have effective governance that is truly representative of all members of the community then we would have in our schools a more authentic and integrated focus on Asia because we have a fairly large Asian population who in turn would be influencing education/curriculum policy in their schools.*

*Our research in Victoria showed that we do not have this kind of representation. The profession well intentioned though they are largely dominates curriculum decisions in our schools which is also interfered with by politicians. We need to challenge this.*

*I don't want to see schools get another package of materials telling them how to focus on ASIA in their schools it would be more useful to have a discussion about governance.”*

*“For state schools this has to be a government resource supported program. The only explanation I get from the primary schools in our cluster for teaching German is that the high school teaches German. The high school does this because there is no call for an Asian language because the feeder schools teach German. One reason given is that it is almost impossible to find Asian language teachers within the system.*



*Interestingly our high school teaches German but has a sister school relationship (and students from that school visit here annually) with a school in an Asian country, and not with a German school.”*

*“I believe we should learn our aboriginal native language first choice then Asian studies.”*

*“Questions on Asian family participation may suggest that they are left out, however my experience in 3 schools is that they choose not to be involved in extra-curricula activities, focussing mainly on academic studies. All Asian children however have always fitted in and their beliefs and culture embraced by the school community.”*

*“I would like more discussion on this issue before deciding if parent bodies have a role in "pushing" for this inclusion in the curriculum. ie making it a strategic focus.”*

*“The schools which I am involved in have approximately 70 nationalities attending of which a large % is Asian or of Asian descent. Tolerance and acceptance is the normal way of life for these students.”*

*“Not so sure about having all Asian focus in all key learning areas  
Definitely do not agree with the teaching of the Religious side of Asian studies, being part of general subjects.”*

*“My children have always interacted with Asian students, have studied SOSE through a normal curriculum and have had Japanese language classes through primary school, as part of their curriculum. They had choices for high school; one chose to continue Japanese, the others didn't. I believe that choices should be theirs not ours to dictate.”*

*“Whilst I obviously support the inclusion of Asian studies I feel that I must qualify my self by adding that as we become a world society it is incumbent upon us all to expose or students to the cultures of the world. But agree that our nearest neighbours are a very high priority.”*

*“A big issue for me is the most effective way to incorporate studies. A national and state/territory government policy would provide impetus, but has to be approached carefully - a top down approach may not work if not done bottom up as well.*

*Teaching a language in a primary school can be very difficult with changing student populations.”*

*“Asia Studies are important but not paramount.”*

*“Ethnic and cultural diversity are becoming increasingly important. Managing cultural diversity has become essential as businesses expand their operations into foreign countries or develop strategic alliances with foreign owned firms. Australia has a key role in educating under-developed Asian regions on the need for good governance at all levels (see attachment).”*

*“Possibly keep it at the University level. There is room for language to be taught but leave religion until University level.”*

*“Australia needs to re-assess its position and direction including the centralisation of population into 2/3 cities. Government needs to deliver programs to combat this trend as it leads to separate communities who do not understand each other.”*

*“I would rather see a civics and values class in our high schools where our students are taught about Australian history, constitution and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”*

*“Some implementations of studies of Asia are somewhat trivial, without much depth, especially cross-curricular. This is written from the perspective of a junior secondary teacher.”*

*“While I think it is important to teach an understanding of Asian culture, Asian languages are very difficult for Anglo-Saxon communities (no back-up from home with language skills).”*

*“Only if Asia understands us and we understand them can we live cooperatively in the region.”*

*“My first thought was - we don't have anything on Asia in the primary school, but then, individual terms came back - there is always something. One teacher (Year 4) always does a Thai Prayer House, bits on Japan. Its low profile (or no fuss was made)*

*We travelled to England in 1989 - it was a shock (to discover) Asian meant Indian. Keep countries separate - they are different. And how do religions and their differences enter this?”*