

**THEME: Australia's National Interests in Development, through Equal Partnerships**  
**KEY WORDS: Universities, Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Return on Investment**

**SUBMISSION: Australia's New International Development Policy.**

**14 February 2020.**

**FROM: Professor John Hearn**, Adjunct Professor UNSW Institute for Global Development; Emeritus Professor University of Sydney Medicine and Health; Co-Chair, Australia Africa Universities Network ([www.aaun.edu.au](http://www.aaun.edu.au)); International Consultant (4 Universities, 4 Governments - Australian DFAT-AGAAR (2015-19), British Council, Swedish Stint, Saudi MEP, 2 Agencies WHO, OECD), 2 Business – Talent. A summary bio is attached. I include several organisations that I represent, but opinions and actions proposed here are mine.

**NOTE:** I have kept this summary to two pages. If any of the content has merit, I am happy to provide support data and to participate in any initiative towards building international development and return on investment.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS: Australia's development policies are an integral part of our international strategy.**

**Australia's World View.** A middle power, engagement with Asia 50%, UK/EU 20%, US 20%, Africa-LATAM 10%

**Development Priorities.** As summarised on the DFAT website and Australian International Policy 2017.

**Australian Values.** Freedoms, engagement, fairness, rule of law, capacity and commitment – friendship.

**Strengths.** World class knowledge, technology and innovation in Medicine and Health, Environment Food and Nutrition, Education and Economic Development, Regulation and Governance, multi-cultural understanding.

**Strategy, Policy and Performance.** These can be strengthened to whole of government and sectoral partnerships, designed for global and regional challenges – aligned selectively with the SDGs and related policies. These should include a long-term view and trust, with short term critical mass, capacity and national teamwork to engage and profit from BREXIT, US, Belt and Road, EU. There is room for greater synergy and leverage.

**Budgets.** The Development budget of 4Bn is substantial if focussed. Major reductions in development budgets have caused dismay and are well below the OECD mean (which is not necessarily gospel – it is how you spend as much as what you spend). As our economy grows, a new indexation of development investment to GDP should be established. This needs rigorous criteria, regular performance review, and **control the point of spend!**

**2. CHARACTERISTICS: Australia is respected for its values and capacities to contribute internationally.**

**Soft Power.** Australia is well regarded as a strong partner, and partners enjoy working with Australian experts.

**Training and Exchange.** Established and Early Career researchers and teachers learn internationalisation through exchange, building respect and mutual objectives, shared approaches through the catalysis of different cultures.

**Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.** Along with the strengths noted above, Australia, Universities and agencies such as CSIRO, ACIAR and others have highly relevant knowledge and untapped potentials.

**Five Knowledge Securities.** Health, Environment and Food, Education, Employment, Economic Development. These sectors/dimensions should be integrated full in FTA's and related Trade Agreements. The real strengths of such expert soft power is to fly under the lowering clouds of geopolitics and above the rising tides of bureaucracy, so that research and education partnership are enduring diplomacy.

**Ambassadorship.** Australia's intelligent international engagement can enhance our reputation and return on investment externally, while helping us to develop as citizens and humans across Australia. Our Heads of Mission globally are a huge asset and should be highlighted, along with appropriate intelligence that can inform best fit.

**Communication.** Success requires clear international strategy and policy, buy-in from all citizens with awareness of international advantage, leadership from political and sector heads. A few words from the PM and Ministers, followed up in conventional and social media, could transform our national approach, formation and success.

**3. AFRICA – SPECIAL TOPIC: Australia has a long association with Africa that will be important in future.**

**Perspective.** It is short sighted to ignore the potential of Africa, and the potential for Australian strengths in equal partnerships in priority African Countries, principally Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, South Africa. The global influence and engagement of Africa will strengthen in the coming decade. Australia has been a "fair weather friend", providing scholarships and support when Africa voted for us in the UN Security Council,

and then withdrawing all but baseline assistance. The Australian HOMS in Africa and the African HOMS in Canberra are a major remaining asset and can contribute greatly to re-engagement. Australian knowledge and skills have been and are very significant – with similar challenges in Africa. African Alumni and Diaspora are underused assets. Cohesive long-term strategy is needed: a low cost and potentially high return opportunity.

**Australia Africa Universities Network.** This consortium of ten Australian and twelve African Universities is focused on research and education, building equal partnerships to address mutual global challenges. Launched in 2012, and funded by the university partners, DFAT, ACIAR and the National Research Council of South Africa, the Network is dedicated to shared mutual knowledge and innovation. The strengthening of Universities, as national contributors to human and economic development, is a priority in AAUN strategic plans and action plans. There are 53 established research teams and programs across Australia and Africa. Among special programs and priorities in the research portfolio are the advancement of women in the academic workplace; the development of new foods and nutrition; and the development of entrepreneurs and innovators to encourage new business, employment and sustainable economies.

**Recommendation.** We request the Australian government to rethink its attitude and engagement with Africa, recognising the medium to longer term potential, and to maintain modest but effective support to retain existing assets and build future success. There are strategic advantages in including Africa (especially East and South) in the Indo-Pacific Rim Strategies and Policies of Australia. There are huge energies in current partnerships and close friendships over 50 years and more, that can be maintained with very modest support. These should not be allowed to wither from short sighted lack of interest. In this joined up world, low priority in 2020 could easily be high priority in 2030.

#### **4. INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE: Australia is a global player and can learn with others to innovate.**

**Australia's global presence and reach.** As a medium sized country, with our total population similar to that of Beijing, Shanghai, Jakarta or Calcutta, we can strengthen our knowledge partnerships, influence and impact. A lot has been done, with the amazing Colombo Plan, which could now be extended beyond Asia to Africa (and South America). The Australia Awards programs have been major achievements and could be expanded. These programs may be restructured to require matching funding, doubling their capacity. Australian Universities and agencies such as ACIAR and CSIRO are world leaders. But time and tide change – we must review new instruments for 2020-2030, allied but not inhibited by the Sustainable Development Goals and other global policies and events. How about an Australian International Partnerships and Development Policy 2020-30 that really engages our assets, joins up the dots, contributes to our international partners and our own sense of global citizenship?

**Free Trade Agreements.** Australia's government and diplomats have achieved a strong portfolio of FTA's, but have we engaged and incorporated the relevant sectors sufficiently to ensure maximal competitiveness, national interest and return on investment. Can we rethink and reshape our national teamwork for greater success?

**International Models.** I wonder sometimes if we are too proud to learn from the strengths and failures of others. Is there a focused unit, or collaborative/coordinated network across Australia, that examines international strategies, policies and instruments, not to duplicate, but to refine our own instruments for the future? A brief consideration of such assets and experience might be as follows: (i) For **national innovation** strategies, the US, UK, Singapore, Korea, Japan and especially Israel. (ii) for **detailed Planning**, long term, short term and flexible to cope with change – China. Their Higher Education, Science, Technology and innovation plans and resourcing are outstanding. Their 30 year background for development is astounding. Their 30 year forward planning for national, international and global engagement are challenging. We need to take time to understand the historic, cultural and aspirational dimensions, with our government, diplomats, universities and agencies being realistic rather than reactionary. Chinese international development is a significant factor, especially in Africa and the Pacific.

#### **5. OBSTACLES: The world is often a choice between the better or lesser of evils, but we can engage for good.**

**International Development** must be reinvented and reformed. The "Aid" industry has lost objectivity, credibility, accountability, efficiency and delivery. Much good is done by many players, but all are underperforming.

**Rhetoric and Realities.** At all levels, we must challenge our assumptions and employ our experience if we are not to miss opportunities and repeat mistakes. In international development, there are also realities with corruption, public disorders, crime, economic migration, drugs, and cybersecurity that cannot be ignored. These realities must somehow be understood and contained, while not being allowed to inhibit the achievements.

