

## Government and community step in to save key national Indonesian studies program

**PERTH – Thursday, 20 August 2020.** The Australian Consortium for ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) secured a much-needed financial lifeline earlier this month with the Australian Government’s decision to adapt its New Colombo Plan initiative to global COVID-19 conditions and ongoing international travel restrictions.

Launched in 2014 by former Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, and administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs, the New Colombo Plan aims to encourage Australian undergraduate students to study and intern abroad in the Indo-Pacific by providing students with ‘mobility grants’ of between \$3,000 and \$7,000. The change to the scheme’s guidelines will temporarily allow students to receive (slightly smaller) New Colombo Plan mobility grants for undertaking virtual or online Indo-Pacific-focused study programs - including the Indonesia-focused programs run by ACICIS.

“I commend the Government’s decision,” said ACICIS Director, Liam Prince. “Allowing projects to proceed via virtual modes of delivery will ensure that the important work of public and cultural diplomacy made possible by the New Colombo Plan continues apace – even while international travel remains off limits to Australian students.”

ACICIS staff in Australia and Indonesia have been buoyed by the news of the Government’s decision and now look forward to knuckling down to the challenge of redesigning the consortium’s programs for virtual delivery, and to recruiting Australian undergraduate students to these NCP-supported, Indonesia-focused virtual experiences over the coming weeks and months.

Prior to the decision, ACICIS had been facing the prospect of closure later this year due to its income - and capacity to pay staff - remaining contingent on the ability of Australian students to physically travel to Indonesia. The organisation went as far as launching [a public fundraising campaign](#) in June - raising almost \$50,000 in donations from ACICIS’ network of 3,500 alumni. However having failed to secure meaningful emergency financial assistance from either government or the universities, in late July ACICIS proceeded with laying off 60% of its staff in both Australia and Indonesia in an effort to conserve the organisation’s dwindling cash reserves.

Mr Prince acknowledged it had been a rough four months for the organisation but also extremely heart-warming to witness ACICIS alumni and the organisation’s broader community of supporters in government and higher education rally around the organisation in its hour of need. “I am so grateful to everyone who has donated or actively campaigned for ACICIS over the past few months,” said Mr Prince. “These efforts have helped to keep the lights on at ACICIS during the biggest threat to the organisation’s existence since the Bali Bombing in 2002.”

While admitting that the level of student demand for virtual ACICIS programs is not yet known, Mr Prince expressed his confidence that the Government’s decision meant ACICIS now has a way of generating revenue while international borders remain closed, and a fighting chance of surviving the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit as a somewhat smaller organisation.

# ACICIS Study Indonesia

## Media release



“It’s a big relief,” said Mr Prince. “While not wanting to understate the amount of work ahead of us, I am confident in ACICIS’ ability to transform our in-country programs into engaging online educational experiences for Australian students.” “This is completely new terrain for us but I’m looking forward to ACICIS exploring the opportunities afforded by virtual program delivery,” added Mr Prince.

ACICIS intends to run a vigorous student recruitment campaign between August and October to attract Australian students to a suite of virtual language, internship and other Indonesia-focused programs planned for the upcoming Australian university summer vacation period (November - February).

Directing his message to alumni and supporters of the organisation interested in ensuring ACICIS’ survival, Mr Prince said “the most impactful thing you can do now is to encourage a friend, family member or colleague to enrol in a virtual ACICIS program over the upcoming summer.” “For Australian undergraduate students wanting to engage with Indonesia while knocking off a subject or two of their degree - with government funding support - an ACICIS virtual program could be the perfect way to spend this summer,” suggested Mr Prince.

Under the terms of the amended New Colombo Plan guidelines, Australian students who have previously received an NCP mobility grant to support offshore study in the Indo-Pacific remain eligible to receive an additional grant to support their participation in a virtual NCP experience.

*The Australian Consortium for ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies known as ACICIS (pronounced “Ah-Chee-Chis” as an Indonesian would) is a national, not-for-profit educational consortium that develops and facilitates study and internship programs for Australian university students in Indonesia. Since its establishment in 1995, more than 3,500 students have undertaken study in Indonesia through the consortium’s programs – including 517 students last year (2019) alone. Earlier this year (2020), ACICIS was recognised by DFAT [as a highlight of the first 70 years of bilateral relations](#) between Australian and Indonesia.*

For more information, please visit: [www.acicis.edu.au](http://www.acicis.edu.au)

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*The Australian Consortium for ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies known as ACICIS (pronounced “ah-chee-chis” as an Indonesian would) has been opening doors to tertiary institutions throughout Indonesia since 1994, offering a range of study options and in-country support to help students gain invaluable first-hand experience of one of the richest and most diverse countries in the world.*