Australian Government

AUSTRALIA IN THE ASIAN CENTURY

White Paper

October 2012

Foreword

Predicting the future is fraught with risk, but the greater risk is in failing to plan for our destiny. As a nation, we face a choice: to drift into our future or to actively shape it.

That is why I commissioned the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper. I took a clear decision that our nation should actively plan for and shape our national future. Only by doing so can we realise our vision of being a land of increased opportunity, prosperity and fairness.

Whatever else this century brings, it will bring Asia's rise.

The transformation of the Asian region into the economic powerhouse of the world is not only unstoppable, it is gathering pace.

In this century, the region in which we live will become home to most of the world's middle class. Our region will be the world's largest producer of goods and services and the largest consumer of them.

History teaches us that as economic weight shifts, so does strategic weight.

Thriving in the Asian century therefore requires our nation to have a clear plan to seize the economic opportunities that will flow and manage the strategic challenges that will arise.

There are also great social and cultural benefits to be had from broadening and deepening our people-to-people links across the region.

Our nation has benefited from Asia's appetite for raw materials and energy. The challenge we must now address is how Australia can benefit from what Asia will need next.

Australians do not come to these tasks empty-handed.

Our economy is strong because over the past 30 years we have been prepared to do the things that are necessary to build for tomorrow. This approach has given us 21 years of continuous economic growth.

As a nation we pulled together during the Global Financial Crisis to successfully avoid recession and the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

As a result of our courage to shape the future and our decisive action during the Global Financial Crisis we come to this century of change with economic strength.

Government has shown the fortitude to identify the right changes and get them done, in order to give us a more prosperous tomorrow.

We also have the benefits that come from a track record of engagement with the nations of our region. Our principal relationships with China, India, Indonesia, Japan and the Republic of Korea have strengthened in recent years. Our alliance with the United States remains as strong as ever.

Our institutional regional engagement combines the ongoing strength of the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum with the now-developing East Asia Summit. Our people-to-people links are also expanding as business, travel, communications and study relationships in our region continue to grow.

But we must build on all of these strengths combined if we are to seize the opportunities of the Asian century.

I want our nation to be a winner as our region changes and I want every Australian to be a winner too.

Put simply, as a Labor Prime Minister I want the new opportunities that will come in this century to be seized and shared. I want us to take an approach to the looming change that is farsighted and focused on fairness.

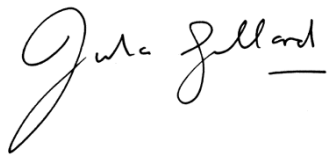
This White Paper is a plan to build on our strengths and shape our future.

It details how, by 2025, Australia can be a winner in this Asian century by becoming more prosperous, more resilient, and sharing the new opportunities.

It calls on all of us to play our part in becoming a more Asia-literate and Asia-capable nation.

The Australian Government will play its part in leading our nation to this vision of the future during a time of enormous change. Like past Labor governments, we will manage and shape change with the aim of providing better opportunities for all.

I commend this White Paper to you and ask you to play your part in shaping our future.



Julia Gillard

Prime Minister of Australia

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ISBN 978-1-921739-92-7 (print)
978-1-921739-93-4 (PDF)
978-1-921739-94-1 (HTML)

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