



Asia Education Foundation

**Asia Literacy  
Ambassadors**  
Partnering Businesses & Schools

## He is always there for us

Le Fevre High School, SA and Christian Bennett, Santos

*Le Fevre High School, in South Australia, celebrated its centenary in 2010. It is a co-educational secondary school in Port Adelaide and currently has around 530 students.*

Kylie Hill, who teaches Indonesian at Le Fevre High School, couldn't be happier about her Ambassador-school match. "Chris is great. I love the feedback he has given us. He feels comfortable in the school, he has been so accommodating. His sense of humour fits in with the kind of people we are, both the teachers and the students.

"The students thought he was great. He has opened their eyes to where their Indonesian can take them and he has connected it with other subjects, for example, science. He has explained how knowing the language and understanding the culture can take you to other places. So, even if you are science, maths or IT student, a language can be a tremendous asset.

### **Importance of cultural understanding**

Christian Bennett is Santos' head of gas marketing, based at the energy company's headquarters in Adelaide. His organisation has exploration, production and processing operations across Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

He began his Ambassador role with a meeting with the teaching staff and it has gone from there. "I met with the staff and had some very positive feedback from the headmaster. On Harmony Day (22 March) I then addressed the students about the importance of Asia literacy and cultural understanding. In particular, how these skills could support their future careers, whatever path they ultimately decided to choose."

"Asia literacy is not just about going overseas. It is as much about Asian people in Australia. It is very different working with communities of different ethnic origins, just in terms of hierarchy, decision-making and who says what around the table.

**Asia Literacy:** knowledge, skills and understandings about the diverse countries of Asia  
[ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au](http://ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au)



“For Harmony Day, I tried to keep it simple, using examples from my own career as to how a knowledge of Asia and foreign cultures opened new and exciting opportunities. I was keen to reinforce the students’ sense of purpose in studying an Asian language – why it’s worth persevering with Indonesian studies, even though it can be hard – as an additional arrow in their quiver for when they left school and had significant career decisions to make.

“It’s not just about language, though. Abroad, and domestically, people should understand that Asia literacy is a very useful skill set. You need it for understanding and working with an Asian agenda. I’ve had a broad range of experiences across the diplomatic and corporate space and I believe it doesn’t matter if a student is interested in becoming a sportsman, an artist or a lawyer, they will benefit from Asia literacy. It’s a very powerful option to have available given that so many roads increasingly lead to, or pass through, Asia.”

### **Project support**

Christian has appreciated the support of the Asia Education Foundation. He says, “The use of LinkedIn to connect ambassadors – it’s a very useful tool. I’ve been very impressed by the way the Foundation has thought through the whole program and wanting to ensure experiences across the Ambassador cohort were shared.”

There has also been support from Santos. “The Asia Ambassador Literacy program has corporate endorsement, and we’re looking at the students visiting Santos shortly. We will talk about how Asia literacy intersects with some of the other core curriculum topics that are relevant to our business – the sciences, for example. We will also highlight the opportunities that we have as a major Adelaide-based business to work at any one of our several operations throughout Asia, and most particularly in Indonesia.

“My involvement with the program has reinforced my early impressions about how challenging it is to teach Asia literacy in schools where funding is under such pressure. There is a real risk that Australia will miss out economically if we stop investing in Asian language and literacy teaching. Were Asian literacy to slip off the radar it would be a perverse outcome in view of the opportunities that present for Australian within Asia. If, as a result of my involvement, only one child continues to study Indonesian through to matriculation, it will have been worthwhile from my point of view.”

Kylie says she is excited about the visit to Santos, which will involve between 15 and 20 students. “We’ve put a piece in the newsletter to give this exposure to parents. Parents do understand the importance of Asia literacy now, although it hasn’t always been the case. Asia literacy is well embedded in the school culture and the Ambassador program complements this.

“I hope this is only the beginning of our Ambassador program. Chris has talked about mentoring a student if we notice a student who is particularly interested in language and science, and he is there for us, always at the end of an email and willing to help us through his contacts.”