



Asia Education Foundation

**Asia Literacy  
Ambassadors**  
Partnering Businesses & Schools

## Film maker's star performance

Macarthur Anglican School, NSW and Amy Frasca, ABC

*Macarthur Anglican School is an independent, co-educational school, established in 1984 by an Ordinance of the Anglican Church in Australia. It has 800 pupils, from pre-kindergarten to Year 12.*

Amy Frasca works for the ABC's Australia Network, an international television service, beaming 24/7 to more than 44 countries across Asia, the Pacific and Indian subcontinent. She says, "I have always been interested in Asia. My family travelled in the region when I was young. In high school I studied Japanese to Year 10 and regret to this day not continuing. As a filmmaker, the region has always held a strong pull for me. As well, being somebody who works in media and culture, I feel that Asia is within Australia. What I mean by that is that if we draw a line around what it means to be Australian, I think naturally this includes concepts of Asia. We synthesize from all cultures around the world and Asian cultures are a part of us, as we live the unique experience of being Australian."

She found out about the Ambassador program through the Asialink Leaders' group in 2010. "There were 20 of us in Sydney, from very diverse fields. In almost every group discussion, it would come around to the fact that there was a skills shortage in Australia; a shortage of people with knowledge and cultural competencies for Asia. The big answer would be for students to come out of school knowing about Asia. We want Asia literate graduates now, and even more so in the future. When the Ambassador program was explained to the group, it felt as though we would be able to do something that was concrete, that would contribute to what we, as a group, thought was needed."

### Valuing Asia literacy

Faculty head of foreign languages at Macarthur, Jo Fenton, thinks Amy is the perfect match for her school. "We are so lucky to have her. The Ambassadors program addresses a massive issue in our school – getting students to value Asia literacy. Most

**Asia Literacy:** knowledge, skills and understandings about the diverse countries of Asia  
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don't choose to study Indonesian in Years 11 and 12, and, although our headmaster speaks out about the importance of being Asia literate, and the staff as a whole are exceptionally supportive of Indonesian language studies, we don't have units of work in the curriculum with an Asia focus. It's knowledge in a vacuum."

Amy's first student talk and the follow up activity were a resounding success. "I visited the Year 10 Bahasa Indonesia class and it was exciting, nerve-wracking and wonderful. I showed excerpts of films. We also discussed things like democracy in Indonesia and the students shared with me the kinds of things they knew about life in Indonesia. They also shared with me their aspirations for careers in the future. I talked about my own media career and work with Australia Network. I explained what my role does and how we broadcast to the whole Asia Pacific region. We spoke about how it's vital in contributing to the programming of TV channel and online programs that entertain and inform such a vast audience- to have a sense of what kind of programs might be of interest. If you are Asia literate, it gives you an edge.

"After that, I invited two class reps to come to the ABC and do a day's work experience with our team. Even before they arrived I was impressed at how Jo Fenton and her class nominate the two students who would come to the ABC and represent them all. They all voted. It was very democratic. The students came and spent a fantastic day touring the different departments. Then they went back and gave a presentation to their classmates.

"The next plan is that I will visit Year 9 students and possibly the Year 11 students back at their school. We are also thinking of putting together a parents' careers information night."

After Amy's first visit, Jo surveyed the class to find out what impact it had had. One of her questions was "Has your understanding of the term 'Asia literacy' changed as a result of Amy's visit?" Eighteen of the students said that it had. Jo wrote in her notes, "It is clear that our students are not familiar with the concept of 'Asia literacy', much less that they can clearly articulate what the term means. I think I have assumed that they will make these connections themselves rather than showing them and teaching them to think this way. This is the huge potential benefit to me of involvement in the Asia Literacy Ambassador scheme."

### **Influencing career choices**

Jo and Amy are fired up to do more, even though it will take them over the three interactions required by the program. Amy explains, "I found it encouraging the level of interest that they showed. The feedback was that it was the first time they had thought about their careers in the sense that they might change course a number of times during their lives.

"We discussed how useful a language would be in any field they wanted to go into. It's a highly valued skill that would set them apart and would give so much back to their lives, not just their career. I also know my colleagues found it invigorating to share the story of what their work involves. It was a great experience for our channel.

"For me personally, at the outset it was challenging to present to one of the toughest audiences ever – a group of Year 10s! But during the first in class experience and reflecting on this afterwards, I find I'm genuinely happy that we all got the chance to think about things outside of the box- Asia Literacy, Indonesia and our futures.