



Asia Education Foundation

**Asia Literacy  
Ambassadors**  
Partnering Businesses & Schools

## Opening minds

### Salesian College, VIC and Elly Patterson, Asialink

*Salesian College, Rupertswood, is a Catholic coeducational college located in Sunbury, Victoria. It provides secondary education for approximately 1,100 students in Years 7 to 12.*

Elly Patterson, Asialink's director of communications, thoroughly enjoyed her time spent with students at Salesian College. Her only regret was that there wasn't the opportunity to do more. "I went to the school for the first time and had a very good meeting with the teaching staff. We made a date for me to go back out and meet Year 9s, and that was a very positive session with the students – a really great conversation about their aspirations, my experiences, and the people I have met. It was a terrific opportunity to broaden the students' thinking about Asia.

"About half the students seemed to have set out their hearts on a career path, whether that was being a chef or a teacher. The other half were still looking for inspiration. I talked to them about new jobs in a wide range of areas that currently exist and will be created for future needs. Popular jobs in Japan right now for Australians are in tourism, finance, catering, teaching, trade, agriculture and other areas. In the future we will need more exchange in areas like energy and IT. Even space station companies offering tours to space!

"I went through a range of different industries and you could see their brains expanding. I was able to give them new ideas and it was great to reinforce their confidence; to say, 'if you know what you want to do, that's fine. If you don't, there are many more opportunities out there than you have imagined'."

#### **Juggling time and distance**

After this first successful visit, the project faltered. A critical member of the teaching staff went on sick leave; a boardroom lunch at Elly's place of work had to be cancelled by the replacement teacher, and it proved too difficult to juggle school and work diaries

**Asia Literacy:** knowledge, skills and understandings about the diverse countries of Asia  
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to schedule further meetings for our Asia Literacy Ambassador and the school. From Salesian College's perspective, it was difficult having an Ambassador who wasn't close by and able to dedicate more time to the project.

Grace Latina, LOTE coordinator at Salesian College, was disappointed that practical constraints prevented the relationship from coming to fruition. "I'd like to continue, but I think we need someone who is more local; someone who works for a Japanese company; someone who could maybe visit us once a month to talk to the Year 11 and 12 students who need help with their oral language skills; someone who could talk to the Year 10s about career opportunities, invite students to visit their workplace during the holiday; be part of our LOTE day in June and join our two-day language camp in August. I know people have busy diaries, but these are important events for us."

She believes that the project is a good idea, "Students hear the same thing over and over again from us and it ceases to have any meaning. The same thing from someone from outside has real impact."

### **Some thoughts about the future**

Elly had some thoughts about how the project could be strengthened. "I think there's a need for a 'safety net' approach, in case one of the key people has to drop out for unforeseen reasons. I'd also like to see ongoing administrative support if that's possible. We're all time poor and a lot of time went into trying to arrange visits that would fit around my job and around school times and term dates." Elly also mentioned distance as something to be considered. "I was two to three hours' drive from Salesian College. Maybe we need to have ambassadors who live nearer to their schools."

Although her relationship with Salesian College has come to an end, Elly continues to promote Asia literacy, both in her official position and in her free time. "The Asia Education Foundation recently had a teachers' conference about the importance of Asia literacy and several of us were able to share our experiences and the benefits of speaking an Asian language. This led to further opportunities through these teachers to speak with Year 9 students directly and inspire them to continue their studies. These opportunities for exchange are vital and reinforce the important work of the Business Ambassadors Project that the Asia Education Foundation runs, and all of us remain very much in support of these initiatives."