



KOREA-AUSTRALIA  
RELATIONS PROJECT

# Expanding Australia-Korea People-to-People Exchanges

한국-호주 인적교류 확대 방안

Dr Peter K. Lee

July 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

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KOREA AUSTRALIA  
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[thekarp.net](http://thekarp.net)

Policy Brief Design: Theo Mendez and Chris Erickson

For further information about this project and publication,  
please contact:

**Dr. Peter K. Lee**

*Korea Foundation Fellow at the University of Melbourne*

[peter.lee@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:peter.lee@unimelb.edu.au)





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## KARP: Behind the Logo



The central goal of the Korea-Australia Relations Project has been to better understand the role that people-to-people relationships between Koreans and Australians play in evolving the bilateral relationship.

In doing this, the project aimed to go beyond the 'high-level' rhetoric of international relations and instead understand how this important partnership is experienced by everyday individuals who interact with their Australian/Korean counterparts across a range of different scenarios.

We wanted to express this commitment to deepening Korea-Australia relations through the project's public image, and as such we aimed to construct a welcoming and inviting 'face' for the project that is instantly recognisable and understandable.

In constructing this face for the project, we began with a name. The somewhat lengthy 'Korea-Australia Relations Project' quite handily shortens to KARP, an easy to pronounce acronym that is also identical in pronunciation to 'carp', a group of fish from the cyprinidae family that are native to Europe and Australasia and commonly used in imagery throughout the Asian region. The KARP logo primarily takes inspiration from the interplay between KARP and carp.

Designed by Australian graphic designer Chris Erickson, the logo presents two carp circling each other in a way that is loosely symbolic of the taegeuk (태극), the traditional Korean symbol representing balance that appears on the Korean national flag. In presenting the two fish as harmoniously entwined, the logo builds upon our central theme of friendship and the importance of people-to-people relations in sustaining the bilateral relationship. The two fish themselves represent the Australian and Korean people, and the complimentary relationship between them that is of great importance to both groups.

The blue and red fish represents Korea, taking inspiration from the red and blue of the taegeuk, which represent the land and the sky respectively. The lines on the fish represent the four trigrams present in the corners of the Korean flag,

which are symbolic of movement, harmony, and the classical elements. The classical elements are often associated with their natural counterparts (heaven, fire, water, and earth) but have a variety of other representations including familial roles, cardinal directions, virtues, and seasons.

Rather than taking the blue/red/white colour scheme from the Australian flag, which would produce two quite similar-looking fish, the Australian fish instead takes inspiration from the country's national colours- green and gold, which are most commonly associated with Australian sporting culture but also reflect the country's national floral emblem- the wattle. The green is said to represent the forests, eucalyptus trees, and pastures of the Australian landscape, while the gold reflects Australian beaches, grain harvests, and the sheen of Australian wool. The gold in the KARP logo is presented as stars, in the formation of the Southern Cross constellation that appears on the Australian flag.

When viewed as a whole, the KARP logo is designed to reflect the core purpose of the project: deepening people-to-people relationships between Australia and Korea, in turn leading to a stronger foundation on which to enhance co-operation between the two countries.



## Contributors



### **A/Prof Jay Song**

#### *Project Director*

Jay is a Korea Foundation Associate Professor in Korean Studies and Research Coordinator for the Migration, Gender, and Environment cluster at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne. Song conducts research in the areas of North Korea, human rights and Asian migration. Her current research projects focus on Korean migration to Australia using complexity theory.

 [/jay-song-a881b848](#)



### **A/Prof Jeffrey Robertson**

#### *Project Partner*

Dr. Robertson is an Associate Professor of Diplomatic Studies at Yonsei University. He worked for the Australian Government in the field of foreign policy and North Asia, focusing on China, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan. His research interests include diplomatic practice, foreign policy, Korean peninsula affairs. His main research areas include diplomatic studies, foreign policy, and South Korea.

 [/junotane](#)



### **Dr. Peter K. Lee**

#### *Research Fellow*

Peter is a Korea Foundation Research Fellow, undertaking a policy project on "Korea-Australia Middle Power Collaboration" in March 2022 - May 2023. His research focuses on Korea-Australia relations, middle powers, and security cooperation. Peter is also a Research Fellow in the Foreign Policy and Defence Program at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. Previously, he was a Research Associate at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. He received a BA (Hons) and MIR from the University of Melbourne and his PhD from the Australian National University.

 [/peter-k-lee-6433b2239](#)



### **Theo Mendez**

#### *Research Assistant*

Theo is a PhD candidate at the Asia Institute and the Melbourne Climate Futures Hub, University of Melbourne. Theo researches the emergence of clean energy supply chains and green industrial policies in Asia and Australia, with a focus on Australia-Korea collaboration in hydrogen and critical minerals and its importance for both countries' transitions to net zero. Before joining the University of Melbourne, he received a BCom and BA(Hons) from the University of Western Australia in Economics and Asian Studies.

 [/theo-mendez](#)



## Acknowledgments

As a Korean-Australian scholar of Australia-Korea relations, this project was a true labour of love.

Dr Jay Song provided a welcome return to my alma mater at the University of Melbourne to undertake this project part time while I continued my job at the University of Sydney. Together with Theo Mendez and Jeffrey Robertson, our team was a great reflection of the bilateral relationship. Theo provided exceptional editorial and design assistance in producing this report.

The project was made possible thanks to the very generous support of the Korea Foundation at the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which funded my part-time fellowship. The Korea Foundation has supported my work since I was a PhD student and I appreciate their continued trust. President Kim Gheewhan as well as Kim Minjung, Jung Ju Heui, Do Hyun-ji, and Park Woojin from the Policy Research Grant Department and Lee Sooyeon and Lee Eunji from the KF Fellowships Department were all professional stewards and administrators.

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Many of the above officials generously provided feedback on the report. I thank my academic colleagues for kindly reading the final draft and offering constructive feedback. Any and all errors are mine alone, especially on topics where I have strayed far beyond my own area of expertise.

Finally, I would like to thank the almost 100 participants and interviewees who generously shared their time, experiences and advice throughout this project. Everybody had a unique and fascinating story to share. I hope the report reflects the splendid diversity of the modern Australia-Korea relationship.

**Dr Peter K. Lee**

July 2023



## About



### **The University of Melbourne**

The University of Melbourne convenes brilliant minds to address the important questions of our times. We equip our students with a future-facing education, enriched by global perspectives and embedded in research. We serve our communities, ensuring that education and research is inspired by need and for the benefit of society.

### **Asia Institute**

The Asia Institute is the University of Melbourne's key centre for studies in Asian languages, cultures and societies. Asia Institute academic staff have an array of research interests and specialisations and strive to provide leadership in the study of the intellectual, legal, politico-economic, cultural and religious traditions and transformations of Asia and the Islamic world. The Institute is committed to community engagement and offers a dynamic program of academic and community-focused events and cultural exchanges that aim to promote dialogue and debate.

### **The Korean Studies Research Hub**

The Korean Studies Research Hub is an inter-disciplinary virtual hub for collaborative research and networks on Korea at the University of Melbourne. Established in December 2020 with generous funding from the Academy of Korean Studies, the Hub is designed to promote local and international collaborations on contemporary Korean affairs and Australia-Korea relations. Our activities include undertaking team-based research projects, hosting high-profile speakers and visiting scholars, running seminar series and workshops, and fostering graduate research.

### **The Korea-Australia Relations Project (KARP)**

The Korea-Australia Relations Project (KARP) at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute seeks to enhance the Korea-Australia relationship with a particular focus on people-to-people links. The project encompasses a range of activities and events, including roundtables, distinguished lectures, media commentary, and academic and policy publications. The project's activities and publications can be viewed at: [thekarp.net](http://thekarp.net)





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## Executive Summary

- The 2021 Australia-Korea Comprehensive Strategic Partnership identifies people-to-people (P2P) links as the third pillar of the relationship alongside security and economic cooperation.
- Throughout 2022 and early 2023, the Korea-Australia Relations Project team at the University of Melbourne conducted interviews, fieldwork, and organised roundtables to better understand how P2P connections can be improved and expanded.
- Rather than a top-down approach of discussions with politicians, government officials or academics, the project focused on how Australian and Korean communities have themselves experienced the bilateral relationship. In total, over 50 Australians and Koreans participated in our roundtables and 43 people were interviewed in Australia and Korea.
- The report begins by situating the P2P pillar within the broader bilateral relationship and outlining how both governments could incorporate P2P cooperation alongside their public diplomacy efforts.
- It then introduces P2P perspectives across four areas based on roundtables and fieldwork: migration and diaspora; renewable energy and environment; agriculture and food security; and media and education.
- The first roundtable on migration and diaspora linkages heard from students, workers, adoptees, second and third generation diaspora, immigration agents, employers, and community leaders.
- The second roundtable on renewable energy and the environment brought together participants from the energy industry, researchers, community leaders, and environmental activists.
- The third roundtable on agriculture and food security featured cattle farmers, Koreans who work on Australian farms, mayors of regional councils, agricultural scientists, exporters and importers, and officials.
- The fourth roundtable on media and education involved Australian and Korean journalists, newspaper editors, teachers, students, and researchers.
- The final section reviews the key findings and common themes from across the four roundtables about how to improve P2P cooperation and exchanges. It offers five key recommendations that could guide how policymakers think about the P2P relationship.
- The report fills an important gap in the policy literature on the Australia-Korea relationship by examining the dynamics that shape closer P2P cooperation across a range of fields.

# Key Findings and Recommendations

## 1. P2P categories could be broadened.

P2P cooperation is far too narrowly understood by both governments. Important communities tend to fall outside of this scope and the connection mechanisms available to facilitate P2P links vary across groups.

*Recommendation: Establish working groups within the Socio-Cultural Committee to identify new P2P activities specifically targeted at local councils, regional communities, small and microbusinesses, selected non-profit organisations, and diaspora communities.*

## 2. Social license should be at the forefront of bilateral projects.

Public support and community trust in the actors who claim to be acting in the bilateral relationship's best interests must be earned and sustained. Policies and investments that will affect the livelihoods, environments, and sustainability of local communities need early engagement.

*Recommendation: Government and business forums and dialogues that are likely to affect local communities could undertake early outreach and engagement to involve communities in the scoping phase as well as hold preliminary town hall meetings.*

## 3. Sister City relationships could be revamped.

Sister city relationships are under-utilised springboards for P2P cooperation which could be reviewed and updated. There are currently 27 known sister city and friendship city relationships that have been entered into between Australia and Korea at the state, city, and council levels.

*Recommendation: A register of activities taking place under sister and friendship city relationships could be kept updated. A forum could be held with all LGA-District relationships to review where upgraded relationships are needed. New relationships could be explored, particularly in northern Australia.*

## 4. Bureaucratic over-regulation must be streamlined.

Participants across all roundtables expressed frustration at the onerous restrictions, costs, and wait times that often deterred them from longer-term commitments to either country.

*Recommendation: Visa processing fees, wait times, eligibility changes and work conditions all impose unnecessary burdens on would-be migrants and travellers and should be reduced wherever possible.*

## 5. Smaller but more numerous high-quality pilot projects are needed.

The major funding organisations in the bilateral relationship could discuss how to support smaller, but more numerous, pilot projects and initiatives. Pilot projects could include agriculture technology, research on visa employment outcomes, civil society dialogues and university-based forums.

*Recommendation: Funding organisations and industry groups could prioritise smaller, but more numerous, pilot projects that can increase the visibility of the bilateral relationship and help it stand out from the competition.*



## Korean Summary | 국문 개요

- 2021년 한국-호주 포괄적 전략 동반자 관계(CSP)는 인적 교류 증진을 안보 및 경제협력과 함께 한국-호주 관계 증진의 중요한 분야로 주목했다.
- 호주 멜버른 대학교의 한-호주 관계 프로젝트팀은 2022년부터 2023년 초까지 인터뷰, 현지 조사, 라운드테이블을 통해 인적교류를 증진하고 확대하는 방안을 모색했다.
- 기존의 정치인, 정부 인사 혹은 학자 등 엘리트 중심의 접근을 벗어나 본 프로젝트는 양국 관계를 직접 경험하는 한국인과 호주인 공동체에 초점을 맞추었다. 총 50여 명의 한국인과 호주인이 라운드테이블에 참여했고 한국과 호주에서 모두 43명을 인터뷰했다.
- 본 보고서는 인적교류 분야를 양국 관계 전반의 맥락에서 이해하는 데서 출발하고 있으며 왜 양국 정부가 공공외교 노력에 인적교류를 포함해야 하는지 설명한다.
- 본 보고서는 라운드테이블과 현지 조사를 기반으로 네 가지 분야 즉, 이민정책 및 해외 동포사회, 재생에너지 및 환경 보호, 농업 및 식량 안보, 언론 및 교육 협력 분야에서 인적교류에 대한 시각을 소개한다.
- 이민정책 및 해외 동포사회에 관한 첫 번째 라운드테이블에는 학생, 노동자, 입양인, 2세대와 3세대 동포, 이민 변호사, 고용주, 공동체 지도자 등이 참가했다.
- 재생에너지 및 환경 보호에 관한 두 번째 라운드테이블은 에너지 업계 관계자, 연구자, 공동체 지도자, 환경운동가 등이 참가했다.
- 농업 산업 및 식량안보에 관한 세 번째 라운드테이블에는 목장 주인, 호주 농장에서 일하는 한국인, 지자체 시장, 농학자, 수출입업자, 공무원 등이 참석했다.
- 언론 및 교육에 관한 마지막 라운드테이블은 호주와 한국의 언론인, 신문 편집자, 교사, 학생, 연구자 등이 참여했다.
- 결론에서는 다양한 참가자들 사이에서 발견된 주요 결과와 공통 주제를 검토한다. 이 부분에서 인적교류 협력 및 교류를 개선하기 위한 정책 입안자들이 고려해야 할 다섯 가지 정책 제안을 제시한다.
- 본 보고서는 다양한 분야에서 더욱 긴밀한 인적교류 협력을 형성하는 데 영향을 미치는 요소를 조사해 한-호주 관계에 대한 정책 관련 연구에 나타나는 중요한 공백을 메운다.





## 주요 연구 결과 및 정책 제안

### 1. 인적교류의 범위를 확대해야 한다.

현재 양국 정부는 인적 교류 범위를 너무 한정적으로 보고 있다. 중요한 집단들이 기존 인적 교류 범위에서 제외되어 있으며, 이 집단 간 인적교류를 활성화하는 메커니즘도 집단에 따라 서로 크게 다르다.

**정책 제안:** 한-호 사회문화위원회 내에 워킹그룹을 구성해서 지방자치단체, 중소기업 및 소규모 기업, 비영리 단체 및 해외 동포 사회를 대상으로 하는 새로운 인적교류 활동을 모색해야 한다.

### 2. 사회적 동기가 필수적이지만 쉽게 확보되는 것은 아니다.

양국 관계 증진을 위해 노력하는 행위자들에 대한 공공의 지지와 공동체의 신뢰가 확보되고 유지되어야 한다. 주민의 삶, 환경, 지역 공동체의 지속가능성에 영향을 줄 수 있는 정책과 투자에 관한 결정에 대해서는 논의 초기 단계부터 공동체 구성원의 참여가 보장되어야 한다.

**정책 제안:** 정부 및 기업 포럼에서 지역 사회에 영향을 미칠 가능성이 있는 대화가 이루어질 때 공동체에 일찍 이를 알려야 하고 사전기획 단계부터 상의해야 하며 사전 의견 청취 등이 있어야 한다.

### 3. 자매도시 관계를 개선해야 한다.

양국 협력에 자매 도시 관계들이 그동안 충분히 활용되지 못했으며, 재검토 및 개선되어야 한다. 호주와 한국 사이에 도청, 시청, 구청 수준에서 체결된 27개의 자매도시 및 우호 도시 관계가 형성되어 있다.

**정책 제안:** 자매 및 우호 도시 관계를 통해 이루어지는 활동들을 계속 업데이트 해야 한다. 관계 개선이 필요한 부분을 검토하기 위해 모든 지방자치단체를 망라한 포럼을 개최해야 한다. 특히 호주 북부지역에서 새로운 관계 형성을 도모해야 한다.

### 4. 관료주의적 과도 규제를 간소화해야 한다.

모든 라운드테이블 참가자는 양국 모두에서 장기적인 계획과 실행을 방해하는 복잡한 법과 규제, 비용 및 대기 시간에 대해 실망감을 표현했다.

**정책 제안:** 비자 처리 수수료, 대기 시간, 자격 요건 변경 및 근로 조건은 예비 이민자 및 여행자들에게 불필요한 부담을 주므로 가능한 한 줄여야 한다.

### 5. 더 작은 규모로 더 많은 시범 사업이 필요하다.

양국 주요 지원 기관들은 소규모 예산의 많은 시범 사업을 할 수 있는 방안을 모색해야 한다. 예를 들면 농업과학기술 협력, 취업비자 대상자 향후 직업 공동 조사, 양국 시민 사회 포럼, 대학 주최 포럼 등이 그런 소규모 시범사업이 될 수 있다.

**정책 제안:** 지원 기관과 산업 협회들은 양국 관계의 가시성을 높일 수 있도록 작지만, 더 많은 시범 사업에 우선순위를 부여해야 한다.

# INTRODUCTION

- 1. Why Australia-Korea Relations?*
- 2. Friends In Need: The AdBlue Crisis*
- 3. From Public Diplomacy to P2P Diplomacy*
- 4. Outline*







# INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Australia (hereafter Australia) and the Republic of Korea (hereafter ROK or South Korea) celebrated the 60th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2021, elevating their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).<sup>1</sup> The three pillars of the CSP are strategic and security cooperation; economic, innovation and technology cooperation; and enhancing people-to-people (P2P) links.

P2P cooperation has been recognised as important in strengthening the bilateral relationship. For example, the 1972 bilateral Cultural Agreement aimed to “strengthen the existing bonds of friendship between the peoples of their countries, and to further mutual understanding and knowledge” through education, translations, research exchanges, media engagement, and collaboration on the arts.<sup>2</sup>

Fifty years later, however, only four per cent of Australians considered Korea their “best friend in Asia”, far behind 44 per cent for Japan, 16 per cent for India, 15 per cent for Singapore, and even seven per cent who identified China, according to the Lowy Institute’s annual survey (Chart 1)<sup>3</sup>. By contrast, the limited evidence available suggests that the South Korean public has a very favourable view of Australia, with 19 per cent of respondents in a 2012 survey choosing Australia as their favourite country in the world, only behind the United States at 21.5 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, there is still work needed to improve public awareness and interest in the bilateral relationship. P2P links are essential for fostering what the CSP calls “mutual understanding” among the two countries’ peoples. These social connections shape attitudes towards each other as desirable partners and foster empathy and solidarity in times of national crisis. In the absence of historical, cultural or linguistic bonds that can organically sustain cross-national connections, the duty of fostering P2P links ultimately falls to governments.

P2P links are not just important for cultural or educational purposes; they underpin the “social license” to pursue many forms of bilateral cooperation. A social license to operate refers to “the perceptions of local stakeholders that a project, a company, or an industry that operates in a given area or region is socially acceptable or legitimate.”<sup>5</sup> These forms of cooperation will include military exercises across northern Australia and off the coast of Jeju Island, mining in the Pilbara and steel production

in Pohang, renewable energy hubs in Townsville, defence manufacturing facilities in Geelong and Changwon, research innovation partnerships in Sydney and Seoul, and many more. A higher level of bilateral cooperation as envisaged in the 2021 CSP will inevitably see the relationship play a larger role in local communities and the lives of citizens in Australia and Korea, whose continued support will be essential.

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*“P2P links are not just important for cultural or educational purposes; they underpin the social license to pursue many forms of bilateral cooperation.”*

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This report provides one of the first comprehensive reviews of P2P relations between Australia and Korea. It takes a bottom-up approach of gathering the stories and experiences of Australians and Koreans to understand the extent to which the bilateral relationship is living up to its potential and how it could better serve the needs of those most affected by policy changes. A bilateral relationship is often distilled into the visual image of two leaders shaking hands, but these high-level meetings are in fact underpinned by millions of bilateral relationships between Australians and Koreans who engage with each other every day, moulding the relationship from the ground-up. This report shares some of their perspectives.

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1. Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Australia-Republic of Korea Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,” December 2021. Available at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/republic-of-korea/republic-korea-south-korea/australia-republic-korea-comprehensive-strategic-partnership>.

2. Cultural Agreement between the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea. Available at: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1972/11.html>.

3. Lowy Institute for International Policy, “Lowy Institute Poll 2023.” Available at: <https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/report/2023/>.

4. Gallup Korea survey write-up available at: Nam Seung-mo, “Where would Koreans want to be reborn?”, SBS News, 6 August 2012. 남승모 기자, “한국인, 다시 태어나고 싶은 나라는?” SBS 뉴스. Available at: [https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news\\_id=N1001313205](https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1001313205).

5. Emmanuel Rafflet, Sofiane Baba, Claude Perras & Nolywé Delannoy, Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility (Springer 2013), pp 2223–2230. Available at: [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8\\_77](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_77).

## Why Australia-Korea Relations?

Almost every decade, experts have called for greater interest in the bilateral relationship and commitment of resources to improve cooperation.<sup>6</sup> As Korea's current foreign minister, Park Jin, wrote almost a decade ago, in the face of a changing regional order, "the two nations must think beyond their traditional friendship and take proactive steps toward building a multi-faceted strategic partnership for the Asian century."<sup>7</sup> This sentiment has been echoed in major bilateral statements and agreements over the decades, including the 2009 Joint Statement on Enhanced Global & Security Cooperation, the 2014 Vision Statement for a Secure, Peaceful and Prosperous Future, and 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial statements.

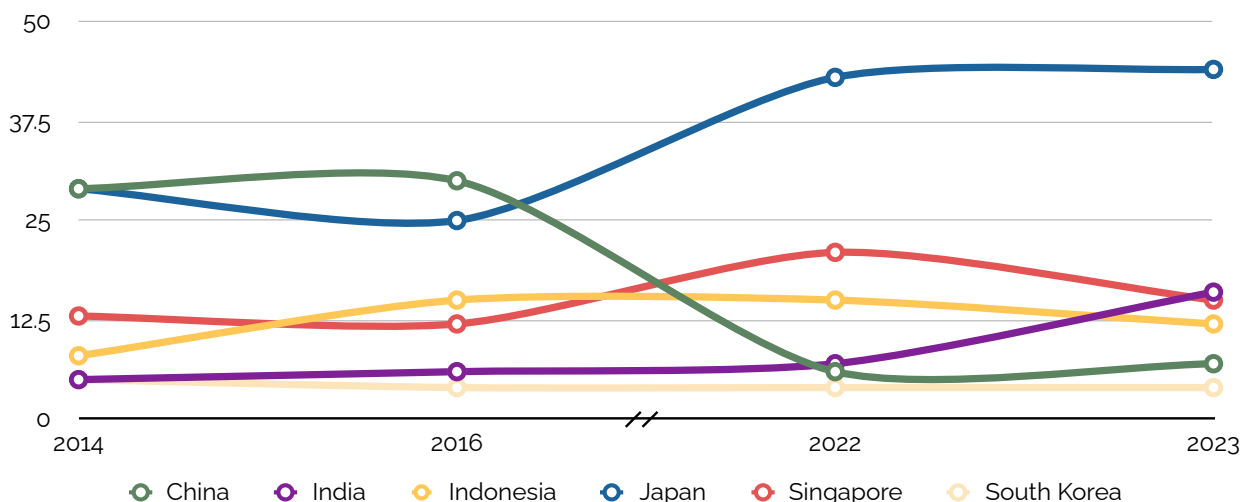
Given their limited capabilities, Australia and Korea naturally need to prioritise their choice of partners, since these countries will take up the bulk of their foreign policy attention, drive investment and trade, and facilitate travel and education links. In light of this, for example, Australian governments

have invested significantly more resources into understanding the relationship with Japan including the P2P dimensions.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Korea and Vietnam celebrated the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2022 and elevated their ties to a CSP while also establishing an Eminent Persons' group to oversee P2P cooperation.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore reasonable to ask: what outcomes might be expected from deepening the Australia-Korea bilateral relationship?

This bilateral relationship was one of the key beneficiaries of twentieth century strategic and economic trends. Australia and Korea's shared status as US treaty allies during the Cold War made them frontline states who fought against Communist forces not only on the Korean Peninsula, but also during the Vietnam War. They also enjoyed a virtuous circle of US-backed trade based on complementary industries that enriched both countries.<sup>10</sup>

Australia has long exported natural resources and energy commodities such as iron ores and concentrates, coal, natural gas, aluminium, gold and precious metals as well as agricultural products such as livestock, crops, and horticulture to Korea. In turn, Korea has exported to Australia manufactured goods such as motor vehicles, batteries, and electronics which are among Australia's top imports.<sup>11</sup>

Chart 1: Lowy Institute Poll: Which country is Australia's best friend in Asia? (2014-2023, % responding)<sup>3</sup>



6. Andrew Selth, "Australia and the Republic of Korea: Still Allies or Just Good Friends?" In Australia-Asia papers. Nathan, Qld: School of Modern Asian Studies, Centre for the Study of Australian-Asian Relations, 1985; Alan Dupont, "Australia's Relations with the Republic of Korea: An Emerging Partnership, Centre for the Study of Australian-Asian Relations," Griffith University, 1992; O Yul Kwon and Gregory J. Trotman, "Australian Perceptions of Korea: Need for Korean Studies," Korea Observer 33, no. 4 (2002); David Hundt, "Middle Powers and the Building of Regional Order: Australia and South Korea Compared," Korea Observer 42, no. 1 (2011); Lee Jaehyon, "A 2+2 for the Future: The First Korea-Australia Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting," Asan Issue Brief 64 (2013).

7. Park, Jin. "Korea and Australia in the New Asian Century," International Journal of Korean Unification Studies 22, no. 1 (2013): 140.

8. Shiro Armstrong, "Reimagining the Japan Relationship: An agenda for Australia's benchmark relationship in Asia," Australia-Japan Research Centre, The Australian National University, 2021. Available at: <https://ajrc.crawford.anu.edu.au/reimagining-japan-relationship>.

9. "Launch of ROK-Vietnam Eminent Persons Group to Mark the 30th Anniversary of ROK-Vietnam Relations in 2022," ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 March 2022, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m\\_4080/view.do?seq=372202&page=1](https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m_4080/view.do?seq=372202&page=1).

10. Dan Halvorson and Yul O. Kwon, "The Interface between Australia-Korea Economic Relations and Security Policy," The Journal of East Asian Affairs 24, no. 2 (2010); Hyun Seok Yu, "The Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement and Its Security Implications," Korea Observer 42, no. 1 (2011).

11. Austrade, "Republic of Korea Market Profile," <https://www.austrade.gov.au/australian/export/export-markets/countries/republic-of-korea/market-profile>.

A 2021 report by the Perth USAsia Centre released prior to the December 2021 CSP set out a number of practical recommendations designed to elevate the bilateral relationship.<sup>12</sup> In the subsequent two years, many of these recommendations have been implemented, such as dialogues, forums, and communications. President Yoon Suk-yeol and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, as well as their ministers and senior officials, have met on numerous occasions during the first year of their terms in office. South Korea's new Indo-Pacific Strategy promises to facilitate more cooperation with Australia, building on the former administration's New Southern Policy format as the country looks beyond Southeast Asia and prioritises working with other US allies.<sup>13</sup>

The bilateral relationship is entering a new phase of cooperation. Strategically, Australia and Korea are elevating defence cooperation in bilateral and minilateral contexts, pursuing new defence industrial partnerships, and trying to ensure a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific at a time of intense US-China competition. Economically, they are devising innovative solutions to the challenges posed by the renewable energy transition and digital revolution. This will see new trends reshape the Australia-Korea economic relationship, including critical minerals, renewable and low-emissions energy, smart farming technologies, scientific research collaboration, skilled labour flows, defence, space exploration, supply

chain resilience, regional development assistance, international norms and standards setting, among many more. Government departments, universities, and business councils like the Australia Korea Business Council are actively leading bilateral discussions on many of these topics, including through sub-committees and working groups.

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*"The bilateral relationship is entering a new phase of cooperation."*

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Korean and Australian air force personnel partake in Exercise Pitch Black in Darwin, Australia, 2022 (Source: defence.gov.au)

12. The recommendations included including the establishment of a Track 1.5 bilateral dialogue involving officials and experts, more regular leader-to-leader communication, South Korea's membership of the CPTPP, a Status of Forces agreements to provide legal oversight for military exchanges and exercises, a new hydrogen forum, discussions of regional contributions to infrastructure development and financing, coordinated efforts on governance of regional bodies like the AIIIB, a regular trilateral dialogue to include the United States, and more cooperation on defence industry. See Kyle Springer, "Peers not Partners? Towards a Deeper Korea-Australia Partnership," Perth USAsia Centre, June 2021. Available at: <https://perthusasia.edu.au/our-work/peers-not-partners-towards-a-deeper-australia-kor>

13. Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region," 28 December 2022. Available at: [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5676/view.do?seq=322133](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=322133)

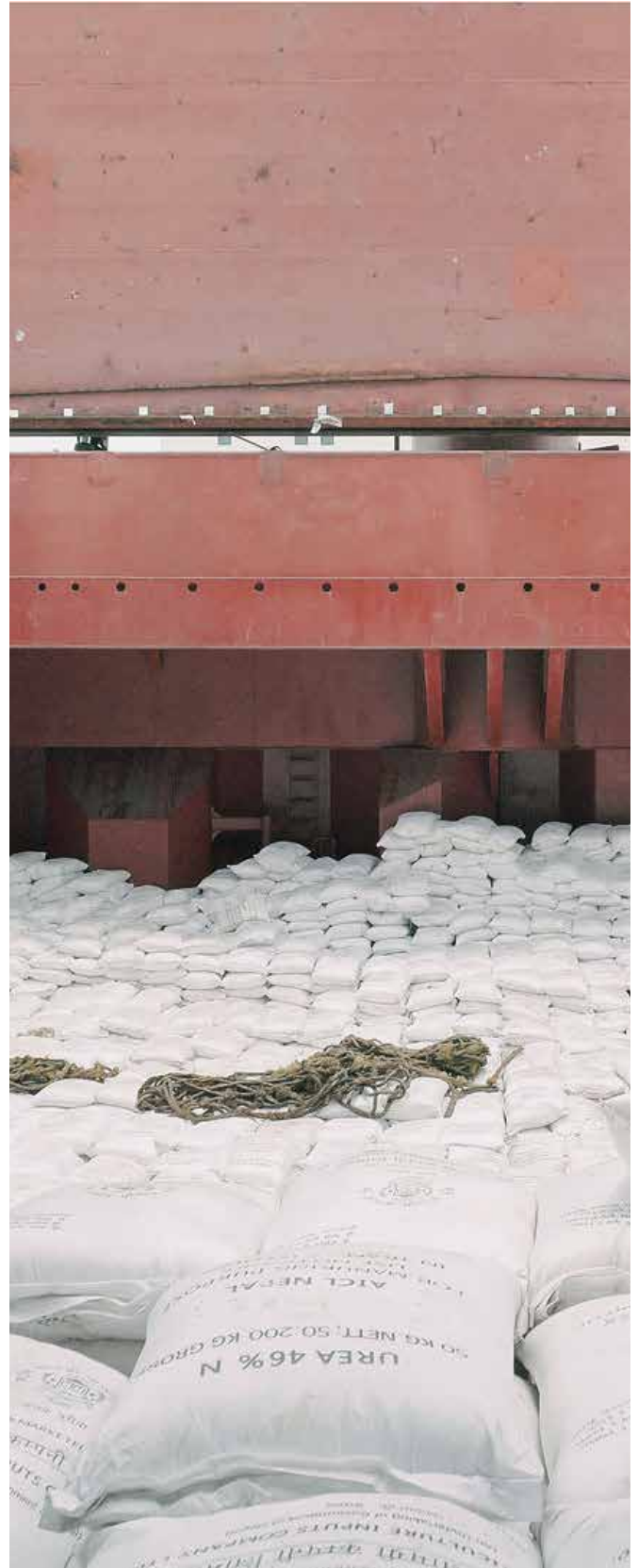
## Friends In Need: The AdBlue Crisis

We can only know the true value of a bilateral relationship when it is put to the test. As the author has previously argued,

“In times of crisis, it can be lonely being a middle power. International affairs is a perilous business where the rhetoric of friendship and like-mindedness can often ring hollow. Most of Australia’s neighbours have stayed on the sidelines in its ongoing crisis with China while Korea also found itself alone against China’s punishment during the 2016-17 THAAD crisis [...] Australia and South Korea have yet to realise the full strategic potential of their relationship. But, like in a true friendship, progress first requires some honest conversations.”<sup>14</sup>

For Australia and Korea, one such test came in late 2021. Korea used to produce urea, a chemical widely used in agricultural fertilisers and sold as a chemical additive known as AdBlue to reduce diesel exhaust emissions in vehicles, until Korean factories that manufactured urea closed down in the 2000s due to lower cost products made in China. By 2021, Korea found itself 97 per cent reliant upon Chinese imports of urea.<sup>15</sup> In 2021, during the pandemic, China halted all exports of urea due to its own domestic shortages, causing a massive shortage in Korea and forcing millions of cars, taxis, trucks and even ambulances off the road. Long lines formed at service stations nationwide as the economy teetered on the brink of crisis.

In response, Korea looked abroad for emergency supplies of urea. Australia answered the call, as diplomats and government officials worked together to send over 27,000 litres of urea from Australia’s own stockpiles in a matter of days.<sup>16</sup> This was collected on Korean military transport aircraft to use in Korea’s emergency vehicles. While the supply was only a tiny fraction of the 600,000 litres of urea that the Korean economy consumes every day,<sup>17</sup> it was a symbolic gesture of solidarity between like-minded partners in a crisis. More importantly, the AdBlue crisis has paved the way for more resilient supply chains with Korean firms such as Daelim Engineering and Construction subsequently entering into joint investment ventures with Australian manufacturers to build up Australia’s urea production capacity, backed by \$1.5 billion in financing from Korean banks.<sup>18</sup>



14. Peter K. Lee, "Friends in Need: Realigning the Australia-South Korea Partnership," Asialink Insights, 29 June 2021. Available at: <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/friends-in-need-realigning-the-australia-south-korea-partnership>

15. Kim Da-sol, "Korea's urea crisis," The Korea Herald, 9 November 2021. Available at: <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20211109000809>.

16. Sangmi Cha and Heekyong Yang, "Urea shortage threatens South Korea's transport, energy industries," Reuters, 10 November 2021. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/urea-shortage-threatens-south-koreas-transport-energy-industries-2021-11-09/>.

The AdBlue crisis illustrates the potential of the Australia-Korea bilateral relationship but also some of its fundamental constraints. Neither Australia nor Korea can ever be the principal economic or security guarantor for the other, but they can nonetheless be valued partners in times of need. US and Chinese unreliability and unilateralism in recent years has given non-great powers an impetus to diversify their partnerships and improve the resilience of their socio-economic systems. As the AdBlue crisis shows, Australia and Korea have demonstrated the capacity, credibility, and commitment to work together in pursuing these goals.

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*"The AdBlue crisis illustrates the potential of the Australia-Korea bilateral relationship but also some of its fundamental constraints."*

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### **From Public Diplomacy to P2P Diplomacy**

The narratives of mutual benefit, shared values and interests, and power similarity that both governments invoke to justify their bilateral cooperation such as in the case of the AdBlue crisis are important, but they are not sufficient foundations for a meaningful P2P relationship that stands as the third pillar of their CSP. What might sound logical and persuasive to policymakers and politicians as to why the two countries would cooperate might not necessarily resonate with the general public, for whom Korea and Australia are figuratively and literally distant.<sup>19</sup> The primary method by which both countries have tried to improve public knowledge of the importance of the bilateral relationship has been through public diplomacy (PD).<sup>20</sup> In public diplomacy, governments try to directly engage the counterpart country's population, influencing opinion and projecting their national image.

Every year on 24 April, Australian officials travel to the small town of Gapyeong (Kapyong by McCune-Reischauer romanisation) in Gyeonggi Province to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong. Taking place during the Communist Spring Offensive in 1951 during the Korean War, a small contingent of Australian and Commonwealth troops defended the village and the route to Seoul in one of the fiercest battles of the war. Over the years, the Korean government through its Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs has invited hundreds

of Australian military veterans of the Korean War and their families and descendants back to Korea to thank them for their service. In addition, the Australian government offers scholarships to Korean students from Gapyeong Middle School after the annual service as a way to encourage ongoing interest and connection with Australia among the local community. These examples of public diplomacy have been the primary way in which Australian and Korean governments have sought to shape community attitudes of the bilateral relationship.

Interest from the Australian and Korean governments in promoting P2P links suggests a much more comprehensive effort to create a long-term basis for engagement between the two countries' populations themselves. Building P2P links means building millions of unique bilateral connections, experiences and memories by supporting activities and programs that bring the two societies together through sustained and meaningful contact rather than just via occasional bursts of government diplomacy. In turn, this promises to enrich both countries through new research, business, and social partnerships.<sup>21</sup> In some cases, P2P links are natural and self-sustaining, such as the high migration flows, shared history, language, and sporting culture that bind Australia and New Zealand so closely that governments do not need to invest in building P2P bridges. In most cases and for most countries, however, P2P links must be cultivated against the backdrop of a competitive landscape in which many countries are vying for the attention of each other.

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*"Promoting P2P links suggests a much more comprehensive effort to create a long-term basis for engagement between the two countries' populations themselves."*

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While the bilateral economic and strategic partnership depends on an alignment of national interests, the P2P relationship depends on an alignment of public sentiment based on mutual understanding. Additionally, P2P connections are not solely the remit of national governments, with other levels of government, industry, the non-government sector, and of course the people themselves all supporting such exchanges. Funding organisations in both countries have supported efforts to build P2P links on cross cultural collaborations, trade and commerce relationships, technological, scientific

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19. Jeffrey Robertson, "More Than Old Friends? Narrative in Australia's Relationship with Korea," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 63, no. 1 (2017).

20. Kadir Jun Ayhan, "The Boundaries of Public Diplomacy and Nonstate Actors: A Taxonomy of Perspectives," *International Studies Perspectives* 20, Issue 1, February 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky010>.

21. Minsoo Choi, Heejin Lee, and Hanah Zoo, "Scientific Knowledge Production and Research Collaboration between Australia and South Korea: Patterns and Dynamics Based on Co-Authorship," *Scientometrics* 126, no. 1 (2021).

and education innovation and strategic international relations, including by supporting projects such as this one.

As Jeffrey Robertson has argued, "If the Australia-Korea relationship is to grow to a level that can shoulder the highs and lows, and negate the need for 'windows of opportunity,' then there needs to be a serious rethink on how to strengthen people-to-people links, especially between Australians in Korea, Koreans in Australia, and that growing body of individuals with one foot in each country. Strong bilateral relationships are not built on 'comprehensive strategic partnerships' but ultimately on people-to-people links.<sup>22</sup> This report showcases key insights for how Australian and Korean governments could create the conditions for closer P2P connections and empower individuals to seize these opportunities.

## Outline

The following sections highlight the insights of a diverse range of Australians and Koreans who contribute to the bilateral relationship. The first section on migration and diaspora linkages synthesises the experiences of students, workers, adoptees, second and third generation diaspora, immigration agents, employers, and community leaders. The second section on renewable energy and the environment recounts the views of participants from the energy industry, researchers, community leaders, and environmental activists on the future of the Australia-Korea energy relationship in a net-zero world.

The third section on agriculture and food security reflects discussions with cattle farmers, Koreans who work on Australian farms, mayors of regional councils, agricultural scientists, exporters and importers, and officials. The final section on media and education outlines the role that Australian and Korean journalists, newspaper editors, teachers, students, and researchers play in enhancing mutual understanding, and the challenges they face in doing so. The report concludes with a summary of key findings and policy recommendations.

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*"Strong bilateral relationships are not built on 'comprehensive strategic partnerships' but ultimately on people-to-people links."*

**- Jeffrey Robertson**

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22. Jeffrey Robertson, "A Window of Opportunity in Australia-Korea Relations?," Australian Outlook, 11 April 2022. Available at: <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/window-of-opportunity-australia-korea-relations/>.

# MIGRATION & DIASPORA

- 1. Evolving Diaspora Identities*
- 2. Minorities Among Minorities*
- 3. Identification and Names*
- 4. Migration and Visa Policies*
- 5. Employment and Career Options*







# MIGRATION & DIASPORA

In 1876, before the Australian colonies had formed a Federation, a 17-year-old Korean boy arrived in Adelaide, South Australia, on a tea-trading ship called the *Lochiel*.<sup>23</sup> Taking the Western name John Corea, he worked as a sheep-shearer in the small town of Gol Gol on the Murray River next to the town of Mildura. John later became a miner in outback New South Wales, earning a small fortune but never marrying or fathering any children. He passed away in 1924, aged 65. He was buried in Mildura, where he had found his first job. John Corea's story was unknown until 2022, when Dr Jay Song of the University of Melbourne discovered it as part of her research into early Korean migration to Australia.<sup>24</sup> John is the first recorded Korean to set foot on Australian soil.

Meanwhile, the first Australians to visit Korea were widely acknowledged to be Protestant missionaries.

The first recorded visit was by Reverend Joseph Davies and his sister Mary Davies of Melbourne who arrived in Korea in 1889.<sup>25</sup> Dozens of Australian missionaries would go on to found many of Korea's first Western-style schools and hospitals,<sup>26</sup> including the Mackenzie family, who arrived in Korea in 1910. Reverend James Mackenzie, his wife Mary Jane Kelly, and their daughters Helen and Catherine devoted their lives to improving the Korean condition, including founding Korea's first hospital to treat leprosy, or Hansen's disease, in the port city of Busan. The Mackenzie family's multi-generational story was only fully appreciated when a 2022 exhibition at the Korean Culture Centre in Sydney unveiled thousands of newly discovered photographs by the Mackenzie sisters.

The project's first roundtable on migration and diaspora linkages set the scene for how different waves and types of migration and settlement have created new communities in both countries.<sup>27</sup> The roundtable explored the challenges and opportunities of various cohorts of Korean diasporas in Australia as well as Australian diasporas in South Korea. It also included those involved in facilitating and promoting these communities in a bilateral context such as immigration agents, employers, and community leaders.

## Evolving Diaspora Identities

Participants who identified as long-term migrants, meaning having resided abroad for ten or more years, all noted the significant evolution in the demographic profile of recent migrants over the last twenty years. For Koreans in Australia, this change was primarily in terms of the sheer growth in the number of Korean migrants in the past two decades and the emergence of large Korean communities in major Australian cities. According to the Department of Home Affairs, Korea was the fifth-largest group of working holiday-makers in 2019-20 and ninth-largest market of short-term visitors to Australia. The 2021 Australian Census recorded almost 140,000 Australians of Korean heritage, in addition to almost 30,000 Korean students, travellers, and working holidaymakers.<sup>28</sup> This has created new opportunities for representation and participation in mainstream society, politics, business, and media that did not exist twenty years ago.



John Corea's gravesite at Nichols Point Cemetery, Mildura (Source: Jay Song)

23. Jay Song, "Retracing the steps of John Corea, the 'first' Korean-Australian," SBS Australia Korean Program, 19 July 2022. Available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/korean/en/article/retracing-the-steps-of-john-corea-the-first-korean-australian/32r3bb0hz>.

24. Jay Song, "What a 19th-Century Shearer Can Teach Us About Korean-Australian Relations," Foreign Policy, 28 September 2022. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/28/south-korea-australia-relations-diplomacy-history-migration/>.

25. "Past and present, as seen by Australian missionaries," Korea.net, 20 May 2014. Available at: <https://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleid=119489>.

26. David Kim, "Australian Female Volunteerism in Modern Korea (1889-1941): An Enlightenment Campaign", *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2017).

27. For an overview, see Department of Home Affairs, South Korea-born Community Summary. Available at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-south-korea.PDF>.

28. "People in Australia who were born in Korea, Republic of (South)," Australian Bureau of Statistics. Available at: [https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/6203\\_AUS](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/6203_AUS).

For Australians in Korea, the evolution was primarily reflected in the profile of the small diaspora community that includes both Australians of Korean heritage as well as Australians of other ethnic backgrounds. The profile of Australians of non-Korean ancestry in particular was seen as having changed. Newer migrants were more consciously choosing to study, work and live in Korea compared to the past where teaching English was a key occupation. Consequently, they tended to have higher Korean-language proficiency, had studied tertiary education in Korea, and were able to better navigate Korean employment opportunities.

An important transformation within the diasporas has been greater mobility due to more affordable international travel and job opportunities. Many of the participants in these roundtables frequently travelled back and forth between the two countries for holiday and work. As such, their personal and professional connections tended to be much more transnational than in the past. As one participant observed: "Migration is no longer a one-way street anymore—moving from one country to another, and you permanently live there. It's not working that way anymore. There are multiple migrations back and forth, and with the skills and knowledge that you accumulate you can try different countries to live and stay and go for different citizenship [at] different life stages."



*"Migration is no longer a one-way street anymore ... There are multiple migrations back and forth."*

**- Korean migration expert**

## Minorities Among Minorities

A recurring point of discussion was how to appropriately acknowledge the wide range of identities within both diasporas. Many participants noted the fluidity in their identity and questioned being categorized as belonging to an "either-or" group, such as Korean, Korean-Australian, Australian-Korean, or Australian. The roundtable discussed how official rhetoric and discussions about the Korean community in Australia or Australian community in Korea were sometimes reduced to a stereotypical portrayal that obscured diversity within the diaspora. For example, the Korean community in western Sydney and the Anglo-European Australian community in Seoul tended to be synonymous with the entire diaspora.

In the Korean case, this tended to overlook second-generation Korean-Australians, Australians from non-Anglo-European backgrounds, adoptees of Korean ancestry living in Korea, as well as those of mixed Korean heritage. In the Australian case, this included Koreans living outside major cities; ethnic Koreans from China, Japan and Central Asia; those of mixed Korean heritage; adoptees of Korean ancestry; and North Korean refugees. LGBTQ+ Koreans and Australians are also largely absent from discourse on the bilateral relationship.

## Identification and Names

A challenge faced by many Australians in Korea is being able to register and standardise their personal identification across Korean government and public services. Specifically, existing Korean records systems are poorly equipped to register non-Korean names. This results in inconsistent and incorrect personal names being stored across services such as banking, healthcare, housing and schooling. As one participant explained: "Korea has a great and ubiquitous e-government system, but the downside of that is that it doesn't work very well for foreigners. Sometimes when I have to register myself on a government website, I'm not allowed to enter any spaces, so I have to enter all 21 letters as one block. Sometimes I'm allowed to enter spaces. Sometimes

I have to also enter the hyphen that the immigration department decided on their own volition to insert in my alien registration card. So, I'm always guessing what my name is when I'm trying to enter it into a website. And every week there's some frustration with trying to prove my identity."

In further interviews with Korean-Australians residing in Korea, the most common solution to this problem was for people to use their Korean names, rather than the English names they might have grown up with in Australia. Yet this also tended to produce other problems around having two distinct personal identities for legal purposes, and subsequent problems of cross-border standardisation of documents. Long-term Australian residents in Korea noted that they had also adopted Korean names to integrate into Korean society more easily, especially for anglophone names that were difficult to pronounce or phonetically long.

*"I'm always guessing what my name is when I'm trying to enter it into a website. And every week there's some frustration with trying to prove my identity."*

**- Australian expatriate in Korea**

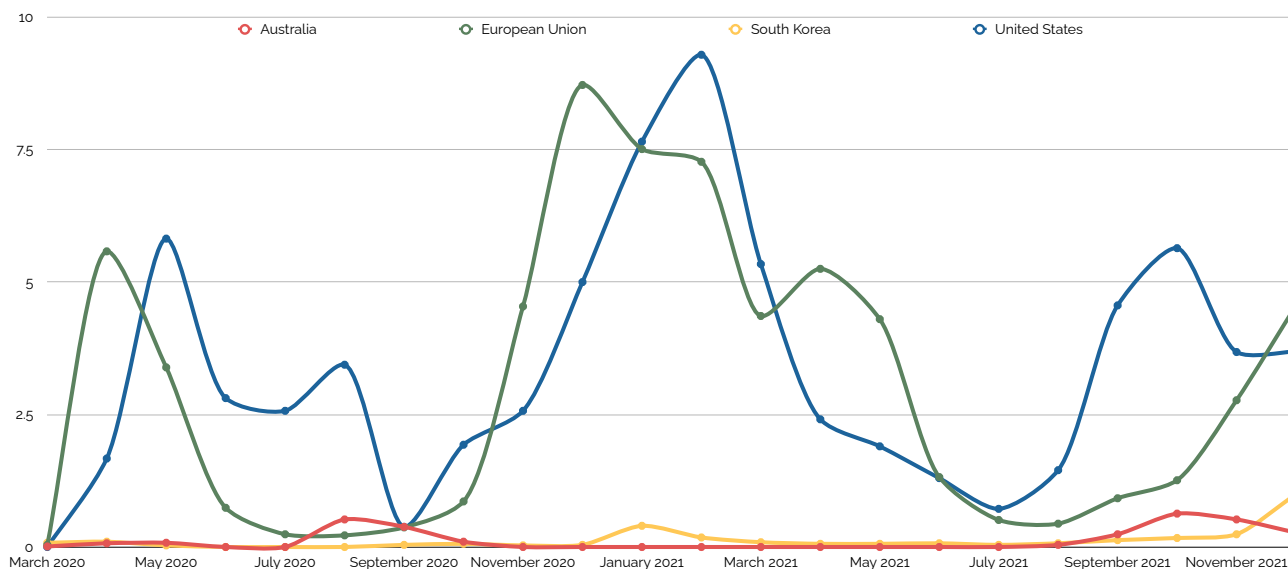
## Migration and Visa Policies

### *Inconsistent Pandemic Political Messaging*

The Korean and Australian government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic have been praised as among the best in the world. Despite their different approaches to public health, both countries suffered among the lowest death rates in the world (Chart 2) and were able to avoid economic recession during 2020-21. While acknowledging this success, participants noted the inconsistent and, at times harsh, government political messaging towards non-citizens.

In the case of Australia, the abrupt closure of all international borders in early 2020 saw Korean international students, working holidaymakers, and many skilled migrant visa holders barred from re-entering Australia. This was despite the fact that many skilled migrants who had been working towards permanent residency had invested years of their life in Australia and only gone back to Korea for a short holiday. The experience of those who remained in Australia was often no better, however. The Federal Government's comments to non-citizens living in Australia that it was "time to go home" were seen as insensitive.<sup>29</sup> All non-citizens were excluded from most government financial assistance during national and state lockdowns.

Chart 2: COVID-19 Deaths, Relative to Population, Select Countries and Regions: Mar 2020 - Dec 2021\*



\*Source: Our World in Data (2023), *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Deaths*. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths>

29. Jano Gibson and Alexis Moran, "As coronavirus spreads, 'it's time to go home' Scott Morrison tells visitors and international students." ABC News, 3 April 2020. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-03/coronavirus-pm-tells-international-students-time-to-go-to-home/12119568>

*"We did these things to help [Korean working holiday makers] endure a little longer, but by the end of the pandemic they had all left."*

**- Korean-Australian civil society leader**

For Koreans on the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa, who are among the youngest and often most vulnerable new Korean migrants to Australia, the pandemic was especially difficult. While most returned to Korea in early 2020, those who initially chose to wait out the pandemic had few support options. The steady arrival of new people to join existing working holiday makers on farms and in rural communities completely stopped. Travel restrictions, both inter-state and within states, severely limited the opportunities to travel and work. Korean-Australian civil society groups stepped in to help these young people on rural farms as best as they could by offering rental assistance and donating food and basic necessities as well as organising visits. But, as one Korean-Australian participant involved in supporting working holidaymakers commented: "we did these things to help them endure a little longer, but by the end of the pandemic they had all left."

In the case of Korea, which kept its borders open throughout the pandemic, provincial and central governments nonetheless also had inconsistent political messaging towards non-citizens. An Australian participant living in Seoul noted that in early 2021 there was Covid-19 outbreak at a factory in Gyeonggi Province, surrounding metropolitan Seoul. The Gyeonggi Provincial Government suddenly ordered all foreign workers in the province of over 13 million people to be tested, regardless of occupation or exposure risk levels. Other Metropolitan and Provincial Governments announced plans to also

implement the same policy. But following strong criticism from foreign residents and embassies, some of these governments rescinded the policy.

The most frustrating aspect of this incident was the opaque process by which the initial decision was made, with little central communication from health authorities, and the subsequent mixed response by different governments. As the participant concluded: "What I'm wondering is, where is the transparency with these processes and who is making these decisions?"

### *Navigating Complex Visa Systems*

A major source of frustration for both Korean and Australian participants and a point of unanimous agreement was the difficulty of navigating the visa process to live and work in both countries. As an Australian migration lawyer aptly summarised, "the visa issues, I think they're universal." In both countries, there is an alphabet soup of visa categories that are restricted to specific types of individuals with specific skill sets which last for specific periods of time. Moreover, eligibility and the application processes for these visas tends to change at short notice, giving applicants little time to adjust. In addition, the success or failure of a visa application was described by participants as often arbitrary and at the discretion of the reviewing case officer. Because the roundtable participants were selected for their unique migrant experiences, most had considered or achieved long-term residency status. This was an important theme for what the "end goal" of Korea-Australia migration involves.

A former Korean working holidaymaker noted that: "I started with a working holiday visa when I was 20. I counted recently and I [have] had 10 different visas over the last 12 years. So, any kind of visa you



can imagine... I did it." After studying agriculture in Australia, the participant worked as a consultant on farms in rural Queensland. When about to change jobs to a different farm in Ipswich, a suburb in outer Brisbane, the participant discovered that because it was not classified as a rural area, the job would not qualify for a 491 Skilled Regional visa. They concluded: "Even though I studied agriculture and wanted to work in the agriculture industry, just because the farm is not in 'rural area,' I couldn't go on the 491 visa with that great job opportunity. I can work on the Sunshine Coast as a cleaner or taxi driver and I can apply for permanent residency, but I can't be an agricultural consultant in Ipswich."

Similarly, an Australian expatriate in Seoul noted: "I lived in Korea for 10 years. I've had about five or six different visas during my time in Korea. How long do I need to live here and how many hoops do I have to jump through to potentially be considered for a long-term visa? The frustration is, when am I ever going to be good enough potentially to have residency here that is stable and secure? I wanted to plan a business, I wanted to set out a long-term potential career path in Korea after living here for 10 years. All my income was in Korea, all my friends are in Korea, all my assets, all my furniture, everything of my life was in Korea, because I had moved over at such a young age, but I couldn't see a long-term pathway for me there that included me in society."

Another Australian expatriate who runs a business in Korea added: "One thing that is a constant cloud over your head here is your visa status and your opportunities for what you can do with your visa status. One thing I wish I had known was the certain steps in order to work towards to get a permanent residency visa. I've got [to] say, I still remember very clearly the day I got my F2-7 visa, [it] was such a wonderful day because I wanted to start my business, I wanted to have freedom from my employers, I wanted to feel stability and security."

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*"When am I ever going to be good enough potentially to have residency here that is stable and secure?"*

**- Long-term Australian resident in Seoul**

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For Australians of Korean heritage, this challenge is complicated by their unique, and perhaps privileged, status within the Korean visa hierarchy. The F-4

visa for overseas Koreans grants a wide range of employment and residency rights unavailable to non-ethnic Koreans. In the case of Korean-Australian adoptees, for example, there are additional options for dual citizenship that exist but which are not widely understood or accessed. The solutions to permanent residency that participants discussed ranged from settling in rural Australian communities where their contribution was considered a government priority to marriage migration visas in the case of Korea.

## Employment and Career Options

### *Surviving the Competition*

Korea is often depicted as a hyper-competitive society in contrast to Australia's relaxed and slow-paced lifestyle. Some Australian participants emphasised how Korea's competitiveness offers global international opportunities lacking in Australia. As one participant explained their decision to start their career in Korea: "The answer is simple: so much opportunity. Lots of global companies in Korea, lots of Korean companies looking to go global. As a young professional, it's just not comparable when it comes to what I can access. [Korean companies are] really looking for people who are new to the industry, who have new ideas, who have global experience."

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*"The answer is simple: so much opportunity.. As a young professional, it's just not comparable when it comes to what I can access."*

**- Australian resident in Seoul**

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The opportunity is not risk-free, however. Another participant added that, "For me, that competitiveness actually gave me some thrill or some excitement. And it was really enjoyable and it was a good experience. But, yes, you do find yourself in this really competitive society and that can have its own sort of negatives, like anxiety, stress, like how am I going to make this work, but to me it was the thrill as a young person, just jumping into the deep end."

There were also differences in how socioeconomic competition was perceived between the two countries. For Korean participants, Australia's perceived quality of life was highly valued but the migrant experience itself was seen as equally competitive compared to their lives in Korea.

As one participant noted: "When we talk about Korea as being a hyper competitive society that's true but, more for Koreans than it is for foreigners. There's a bit of a Western privilege in coming to Korea. You're actually outside of those expectations. It's easier, as a Korean speaking foreigner, to be a large fish in a small pond than it is for a Korean who wants to migrate to Australia, because they're a small fish in a very large pond that's very hyper competitive."

### *Sustainable Career Options*

Another issue that participants identified as a common challenge was how to build sustainable careers. Related to the problems of long-term visas and residency, many migrants had difficulty in pursuing new job opportunities or being promoted. Participants shared how the transition from gateway jobs, such as English-language teaching roles in Korea or temporary work sponsorship in Australia, into more stable long-term employment was often hard to navigate without a support network. There was an unspoken promotion ceiling in many large workplaces for foreign residents.

One participant noted that the type of work that Australian-Korean diaspora engaged in influenced how they evaluated the long-term prospects of their lives in Korea, with those in internationally-facing roles able to avoid some of the obstacles of Korean workplaces. A long-term resident explained: "I think having a business which is aimed globally has enabled me to live sustainably and very happily in Korea because there's a lot of those downfalls that I don't actually have to deal with." A younger Australian participant explained: "I can see the value of returning to Australia or returning to a slower lifestyle, because I can't quite handle it anymore. I think it's different for every person, but I think your migration journey or your experience in the country changes with your age and changes with your work experiences."



# RENEWABLE ENERGY & THE ENVIRONMENT

- 1. The Promise of Renewable Energy Cooperation*
- 2. Anxiety about Losing the Lead*
- 3. Barriers to be Overcome*
- 4. Community Expectations and Concerns*
- 5. Building Social Licence*







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# RENEWABLE ENERGY & THE ENVIRONMENT

One of the most exciting areas in Australia-Korea cooperation today is renewable energy. Australia's abundant natural resources and Korea's manufacturing excellence have fuelled their shared economic prosperity over the decades. As the world moves away from reliance on fossil fuels and towards a zero-emissions future, the two countries are once again at the forefront of an energy revolution. The second roundtable on renewable energy and the environment explored how high-level government interest in both countries is being received on the ground from those involved in and affected by the energy transition. The roundtable brought together participants from the energy industry, academic researchers, community leaders, and environmental activists to discuss how P2P cooperation is unfolding across different facets of the energy relationship.

## The Promise of Renewable Energy Cooperation

In recent years, a great deal of policy-focused research has been done on the enormous potential of the Australia-Korea relationship in renewable energy by think tanks, industry groups, and scholars.<sup>30</sup> As Dr Sung-Young Kim, one of the leading experts on the bilateral energy relationship, has written, there is an enormous opportunity "for the two countries to cooperate in developing and commercialising new renewable technologies."<sup>31</sup> To this end, the 2021 CSP expanded upon an Australia-Korea Low and Zero Emissions Technology Partnership announced earlier that year to work on the "supply of clean hydrogen (including hydrogen-based compounds), low emissions iron ore and steel, and carbon capture, use and storage."

Recent years have seen both countries lay the groundwork for close cooperation in clean energy. In the Korean case, ambitions to be a green manufacturing powerhouse date back to the first Green Growth Strategy launched by President Lee Myung-bak in 2008, which was enhanced in 2020 by President Moon Jae-in's commitment to a net zero target under his Green New Deal initiative.<sup>32</sup> For Australia, fragmented climate change politics gave way to meaningful progress on renewable energy development from 2019, with the National Hydrogen Strategy, which targeted East Asian markets with a goal of Australia becoming a top three exporter of hydrogen by 2030.<sup>33</sup> This has since been followed up by the current Labor government's

Powering Australia Plan, which seeks to increase the use of renewables to 82 per cent by 2030.<sup>34</sup> Inter-governmental cooperation does not only sit at the federal level but also encompasses Australian states, many of which have launched their own renewable hydrogen strategies and renewable energy projects. P2P cooperation is also growing in the renewable energy sector, with the Australia-ROK Science and Technology Bridge" (Tech-Bridge) as one example of enhanced research collaboration.

Industry participants shared a sense of excitement about the potential of the renewable energy partnership. As one Australian industry participant expressed, "If we are the 'lucky country', I suppose in the same respect, Korea may be regarded as one of the most 'unlucky' in terms of its natural endowments. What is exciting is the opportunity for Australia to, again, transition and to transform the bilateral relationship from one that has been underpinned by resources and fossil fuels, to one which can be underpinned by renewable energy and green hydrogen, and its derivatives."

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*"If we are the 'lucky country', I suppose in the same respect, Korea may be regarded as one of the most 'unlucky' in terms of its natural endowments."*

**- Australian industry participant**

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As the discussion shifted to batteries, another Australian industry participant observed that, "what is really exciting about the energy transition at the moment is simply the scale of the opportunity for batteries, and that is even compared to hydrogen. In a net zero 2050 scenario, batteries would capture around 60% of the global clean tech equipment market share, and that includes solar, wind, fuel cells, and electrolyzers, so it is such a massive opportunity. And where we really see the opportunity with the Australia-Korea relationship, is around technology development, partnerships both in research and development, in general manufacturing and processing, as well as skills and training."

30. Australia-Korea Business Council, "Mapping the Australia-Korea Hydrogen Intersections" (May 2021), <https://www.akbc.com.au/report/mapping-the-australia-korea-hydrogen-intersections-english/>; James Bowen and Kyle Springer, "Strategic Energy: The Emerging Australia-Korea Hydrogen Partnership," Perth USAsia Centre (March 2022), <https://perthusasia.edu.au/our-work/strategic-energy-the-emerging-australia-korea>.

31. Sung-young Kim, "Jump-starting Australia-ROK energy cooperation," East Asia Forum (4 October 2022). See also, Sung-Young Kim, "Hybridized industrial ecosystems and the makings of a new developmental infrastructure in East Asia's green energy sector," Review of International Political Economy, 26 (1), 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2018.1554540>.

32. Global Green Growth Institute, Korea's Green Growth Experience: Process, Outcomes and Lessons Learned (2015), [https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/download/resource/Koreas-Green-Growth-Experience\\_GGGI.pdf](https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/download/resource/Koreas-Green-Growth-Experience_GGGI.pdf); Elizabeth Thurbon, Sung-Young Kim, Hao Tan and John Mathews, "South Korea's Green New Deal: A Very Big Deal for Australia," Asia Society (15 June 2022), <https://asiasociety.org/australia/south-koreas-green-new-deal-very-big-deal-australia>.

33. COAG Energy Council, "Australia's National Hydrogen Strategy" (2019), <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/publications/australias-national-hydrogen-strategy>.

34. "Powering Australia," (2021), <https://www.energy.gov.au/government-priorities/australias-energy-strategies-and-frameworks/powering-australia>.



Port Hedland, one of Australia's busiest shipping ports for energy exports  
(Source: Pilbara Ports Authority)

## Anxiety about Losing the Lead

Just as the first roundtable on migration noted the pressures of international competition for skilled labour, renewable energy projects also exist in a global marketplace where competition is fierce. To emerge stronger from this transition, innovation must be fostered within the bilateral relationship in order to stay at the forefront of the renewable energy transition. One participant explained the need to 'pick winners' in this environment, noting that "playing it safe is okay sometimes. At this point in time, when Australia is at the leading edge of green hydrogen, we can maintain the lead. But when you have China, Germany, the United States and others [starting to invest], it concerns me that we're not doing enough. And it really concerns me that we're going to lose that leading edge within a few years. We really do need to start thinking about putting our eggs into the one basket."

The rapid acceleration of renewable energy development is acutely evident in the nascent hydrogen industry, where the number and scale of national strategies has ballooned since 2017, when Japan became the first country to release a national hydrogen strategy (Table 2).

One participant pointed to the experience of solar panels as illustrating how there is no guarantee that current efforts will succeed. "If we don't seize this opportunity now, we are going to lose it like we lost solar panels. Australia should have been at the forefront of the solar panel technology and we lost it because we did not act on it." Today, China produces over 80 per cent of the world's solar panel supply chain.<sup>35</sup> An Australian industry participant added, "This is an international proposition. And so, although Australia has advantages in solar and wind, if there isn't policy support that can be competitive with places like South America and the Middle East, and the United States, then it's going to be very difficult to compete economically."

Another participant noted that, "When I speak to Australian funding agencies, the buck stops with technology development and too often, it is sad to see technology development being funded with

taxpayer money, and then once you have a start-up or a promising technology that is ready to go, there is just nowhere for it to go in Australia. So too often I see a valuable technology developed in Australia, being commercialized by other companies, or the engineer moves to another company overseas, or the technology is bought out, and then we have already lost it."

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*"If we don't seize this opportunity now, we are going to lose it like we lost solar panels."*  
**- Australian energy expert**

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Exports in both a bilateral and multilateral format will also be crucial to the success of the renewable energy transition. One participant explained that "We are very focused on export. It is definitely on the off-take side and we feel that Korea, Japan, they're holding the cards in terms of how to make that relationship work. When you start talking about the scale of export and the money required to get an export project up, we are looking at partners at all parts of the supply chain, but definitely export is key to starting that."

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35. International Energy Agency, "Special Report on Solar PV Global Supply Chains" (July 2022), <https://www.iea.org/reports/solar-pv-global-supply-chains>.

Table 1. Battery Supply Chain Distribution\*

Phase	Australia	China	South Korea	Japan
Mining Raw Materials	50%	6%	0%	0%
Refining to Chemicals	0%	89%	0%	0%
Active Materials	0%	64%	10%	11%
Cell Manufacturing	0%	50%	20%	20%
Battery Pack Assembly	0%	20%	20%	53%
Integration, Service, and Maintenance	No dominant countries: highly localised			
Re-Use and Recycling	0%	45%	11%	11%

\*Source: Accenture. (2021). Future Charge: Building Australia's Battery Industries. Future Battery Industries CRC. <https://fbicrc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Future-Charge-Report-Final.pdf>

Table 2. Select National Hydrogen Strategies

Country	Year Announced	Strategy	Major Goal
Japan	2017	Basic Hydrogen Strategy	Become a "hydrogen society" by 2050
South Korea	2019	Hydrogen Economy Roadmap	Become the world's leading hydrogen economy by 2040
Australia	2019	National Hydrogen Strategy	Become one of the top three exporters of hydrogen to Asia by 2030
Germany	2020	National Hydrogen Strategy	Develop a domestic market for hydrogen technology in Germany and pave the way for imports
European Union	2020	European Green Deal	Reach climate targets by 2030 by increasing the share of renewables, including hydrogen, in the energy mix.
China	2021	Hydrogen Industry Development Plan (2021-2035)	Advancement of hydrogen as a "frontier" area for development, achieve widespread use of hydrogen in industrial processes by 2035
United Kingdom	2021	UK Hydrogen Strategy	2030 production target of 5GW, hydrogen as central to net zero commitments
Singapore	2022	National Hydrogen Strategy	Invest in hydrogen-related R&D, pursue international collaborations to enable hydrogen supply chains
United States	2022	Inflation Reduction Act	Become a major producer and user of green hydrogen, with tax credits of up to US\$3/kg to incentivise domestic production of hydrogen
India	2023	National Green Hydrogen Mission	Make India the 'global hub' for production, usage and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives

## Barriers to be Overcome

Often absent from government and industry statements about the energy relationship are some of the formidable barriers to be overcome. The roundtable sought to highlight some of these issues of concern which have also impeded closer business-to-business cooperation as well as P2P exchanges.

Regulatory barriers impede opportunities for businesses to explore new bilateral ventures. As an Australian industry participant noted, "Australia has got the upstream dominance in our critical mineral supply and Korea has a downstream dominance in cell manufacturing and battery pack and module manufacturing. There is this real opportunity to come together and collaborate in the midstream, which at the moment is completely dominated by China. The challenges that we really have in Australia though, are around the lack of onshore facilities to prototype, test and validate the chemicals and battery materials to secure off take, offshore into Korean cell and pack manufacturers. We want to get our materials, be it the chemicals or our anodes, our cathodes and our electrolytes into Korean cells and battery packs, but we can't get the materials validated, which is a huge issue."

Price competitiveness also remains a challenge for emerging businesses in both countries. As a Korean industry participant explained, "Australia is really fascinating because they are really focused on the hydrogen production and also they want to export their hydrogen to other countries. If we would like to be in that Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) stack market, hydrogen is essential. As we use the PEM stack or hydrogen applications, hydrogen should be there, so Australia is one of the big markets for us. But the problem of hydrogen production at the moment is it is really expensive and it uses a really large amount of electricity, up to three or four times more than the current cost of energy. We need to think about how we provide good quality and reasonably priced electricity to make and run electrolyzers and make hydrogen."

Australian government financial support and incentives for businesses to take the leap have also been limited. An Australian industry participant observed, "there is a lack of grants and finance for this. The ways that Australia could really help to facilitate these partnerships with Korea to collaborate

on that midstream battery industry development, one of the big ones is actually capital funding. If you want to build your refinery here, Australia has higher construction costs compared to elsewhere in the world. Where we really see one of the biggest challenges and one of the biggest opportunities for the government to really make a material difference is to actually get out there and invest in these sort of facilities, to provide the grants, funding or finance such that these facilities can be cost competitive globally, because otherwise, why would you build it here? Having a domestic supply guarantee would also de-risk refineries and help secure further finance."

The legacy of fossil fuel dependence must also be managed. While Korean and Australian governments have announced ambitious plans to transition to a zero-emissions economy, much of the economic relationship remains dominated by fossil fuels. As an experienced Korean industry expert cautioned, "I think the wake-up call for everyone should be the fact that of Australia's current exports to Korea, coal and liquified natural gas made up \$11 billion worth of exports. And if you then translate that to the number of jobs that have supported that, the reality is those exports and all those jobs that support that, are clearly now at risk. Similarly, in Australia, as we embark on this energy transition, we must absolutely electrify as much as we can. But there are certain sectors in the economy you cannot electrify, such as trucking. Hydrogen fuel cells, electric vehicles and trucks, particularly in that heavy application, that's the only way you're going to decarbonize those trucks. And we are a trucking nation."<sup>36</sup>

### *Environmental impacts*

As the renewable energy transition progresses, it will be increasingly important to ensure that environmental costs resulting from critical minerals extraction and renewable energy development are minimised. As a Korean activist explained, "I think, in Korea there is a more acute health concern for communities living near fossil fuel energy generation, due to the proximity between power generation and densely-populated communities in South Korea. While Australian communities and coal communities do suffer from chronic health concerns, such as asthma in the Gippsland in Victoria, this is less pronounced in media narratives or government policy considerations, compared to the jobs narrative."

36. For more, see, John Mathews, *A Solar-Hydrogen Economy: Driving the Green Hydrogen Industrial Revolution* (Anthem Press, February 2023).

Another Australian participant noted the potential impact on water supplies, "With the current scale of electrolysis in Australia, water is not such an issue. But when you start talking about gigawatts, then it does become an issue. If you use Western Australia as an example, development approvals, environmental approvals, and community consultations, I think for hydrogen, that question becomes about water and land. It's becoming evident that it's one of the most important factors."

*"With the current scale of electrolysis in Australia, water is not such an issue. But when you start talking about gigawatts, then it does become an issue."*

**- Australian industry expert**

On battery production there are opportunities to reduce longstanding health risks, if properly managed. An Australian industry participant noted that, "What is really important here is simply the scale of new mines that are going to be required to extract the minerals that are going to be needed to support clean technologies. It's not just batteries, it's also solar panels and wind farms. We are already experiencing supply gaps in some of these critical minerals. We're starting to see prices go up. And there's going to be supply gaps before 2030 in some of the key minerals like nickel and lithium. So, it's the number of new mines. Currently we're mining the minerals, but we're using diesel to do so [which impacts] the people working in and around the mining as well is simply, the diesel particulate matter in the air and also the diesel particulate matter in underground mining as well. If we can electrify our mines and its technology agnostic on how you do it, you can have significant health impacts, positive health impacts, on people."

### ***More Applied and Basic Research is Still Needed***

The research community also see barriers for both the renewable energy transition as well as the bilateral scientific collaboration that could accompany it. One participant observed that, "this is an industry that does not exist. The scale on which we will be producing renewable hydrogen is a scale which we haven't done before. We are building a new industry from scratch. I see a lot of technological challenges still. It all sounds great, but the devil is in the details and there are still a lot of challenges around budget and safety. How do we transport it in the most efficient way? How do we actually use it in the most efficient way? My impression is that in Korea, there's a lot of talk about fuel cells, but I don't see fuel cells being able to really provide the amount of energy needed to change the whole economy over."

"There are lots of technological challenges where even some fundamental research still needs to be done, and I certainly hope that universities can play a major role in some of that. We need more coordinated effort and funding to bring people together to work on the same problems. We shouldn't underestimate how many skilled people it's going to take to do all these things. We need to make sure that we have exchanges of researchers, that we have more student exchanges, so that we build capability and capacity in all the areas that are part of that whole chain. We need to develop more capabilities through education, so that people see the benefits of actually doing more than just shipping it out and having somebody else add value to it."

*"There are lots of technological challenges where even some fundamental research still needs to be done."*

**- Australian energy researcher**

### ***Getting Runs on the Board***

To succeed, there was a view that Australia needed to be prepared to make a bigger commitment to renewable energy in the bilateral relationship. As one participant summed it up, "The Australian government needs to pick a strategy and build a policy around it. Are we just going to keep supplying minerals, or are we actually going to start processing things here and how do we support industry to move downstream? The Australian Government has



announced an Australian Made Batteries policy and National Battery Strategy, but we're still waiting on the details on that, and it's hard for industry to act in the interim. What is missing are pilot scale facilities to prototype, test and validate Australian materials to feed into Korean cells. We simply don't have that capability at sufficient scale and that would enable Australian industry to validate materials and secure offtake agreements."

Emphasising the need for concrete strategies and investment, another participant added, "there is a real need in both Australia and Korea for credible intent. Intent from the Korean side that this is something that they want to make happen and that there's investment going into it. And then the same from the Australian side. And I think we see it at the moment more from the Korean side. Australia really needs to start acting as if this is something that they want to make happen. This won't happen without a really deep two-way relationship, deep understanding and willingness to cooperate, willingness at not just a national level, but the state level and the private level as well."

An important demonstration of this credible intent would be more pilot projects. An industry participant explained, "at the end of the day, we don't have enough tangible projects. This is the problem. There are not enough research projects or actual projects where we plan to produce green hydrogen, green ammonia, or generate the green electrons renewably. There are not enough tangible projects that both sides are working on. Look at how many Japanese trading houses and big strategic investors [there are] that have already put their foot on green hydrogen projects across Australia. They eclipse the number of Korean strategics. At the moment there's not a tangible project, hydrogen utility discussed export project in the Australia-Korea corridor. What is lacking is [something] that both sides can attach to. That is what we need to see more of."

## Community Expectations and Concerns

Regional and rural Australian communities in mining regions and export hubs will play a key role in the renewable energy transition. An important consideration will be ensuring that the benefits are appropriately distributed within both countries. As one Australian rural city councillor reflected on the discussions, "I really wasn't aware of just the significance of what is emerging. I would have to say,

very broadly, I don't think there is that awareness, certainly at a community level. For my community, it's been traditionally and historically overwhelmingly dominated by iron ore and Australia's relationship with China and our dependence on that economy. That's really what's defined it. Korea, I have to say, hasn't really featured. Moving forward, the challenge will be, how do you elevate that discussion? How do you elevate that relationship?"

The participant added, "I do note the enthusiasm and the excitement for what we anticipate the future to be, and the investment that comes, and the construction. When we hear about these massive investments that are coming online, part of what I think about is the pressure that puts on local government, the pressure that puts on the local economy, what that means for housing. Multi-billion-dollar mining projects have very real consequences for housing, to our service ability, and so forth. I would hope there's discussions about the social investment and how we manage the future impact, the social impact, that these types of developments are going to have on the local community."

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*"I would hope there's discussions about the social investment and how we manage the future impact, the social impact, that these types of [renewable energy] developments are going to have on the local community."*  
**- Australian rural city councillor**

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## Building Social Licence

One of the most high-profile and controversial projects in the bilateral energy relationship today is the Barossa Gas Project off the coast of Darwin in northern Australia. The multinational venture is led by Australian energy producer Santos, South Korea's SK E&S, and Japan's JERA. The project has been the subject of significant legal proceedings both in Korea and Australia by Tiwi Islands Indigenous traditional owners opposed to the development on the grounds that they were not appropriately consulted before approval was granted.<sup>37</sup> Beyond the specifics of the case, participants noted that there were important implications for the people-to-people relationship, especially in terms of community buy-in for renewable energy projects.

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37. For more on the project, see Jacqueline Breen and Samantha Dick, "Tiwi Islands traditional owners win court challenge against gas company Santos' massive Barossa offshore project," ABC News Australia (21 September 2022), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-21/nt-tiwi-islands-santos-barossa-court-decision/101462146>. For industry views, see Press Release, "SK E&S Writes New History in Resource Development. Opens low-carbon Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Era," <https://www.skens.com/en/sk/press/view.do?seq=3255&head=&keyword=&type=>. For community views, see <https://stopbarossagas.org/>.





An Australian environmental activist noted, "I think an important element that was highlighted was the need to have local community consultations - for which the awareness of timing is critical. The consultations need to take place before a project is locked in, considering FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) principles, so that the communities are engaged throughout the project planning and implementation stages. There was not enough community consultation done with the indigenous communities of Tiwi Islands off the coast of Darwin. This is now coming up as a major issue. The indigenous communities and civil society community groups involved are deeply passionate about these issues, which are linked to their livelihood and wellbeing, and feel a sense of frustration at being left out of the consultation process. They haven't been left with much choice at this stage other than to raise awareness through litigation and legal court cases."

Another environmental expert noted, "The bilateral relationship needs to consider the role of Australian First Nations communities to ensure supply of hydrogen at speed. Korea should seek more knowledge of Australia's First Nations as a part of its energy sector reform, including the process that will co-design the First Nations' Clean Energy Strategy as it develops under Australia's National Energy Transformation Partnership announced in August 2022."<sup>38</sup> Some regional communities are actually far ahead of the federal and state governments in incorporating Indigenous perspectives on renewable energy cooperation such as creating Aboriginal Partnerships Plans to ensure traditional owners are represented in decision making processes.

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*"The bilateral relationship needs to consider the role of Australian First Nations communities to ensure supply of hydrogen at speed."*

**- Australian environmental activist**

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Another issue that will face future Korean investment in Australia will be how to differentiate themselves from other Asian competitors. Country differentiation is a key area where further work is needed to inform community views. As a rural Australian participant stated, "Local communities in Australia would view Korea as indistinguishable from Asian trading countries like Japan or China." Another participant added, "Generally, there's really not that profile of Korea at the grassroots community level. That's what I would say. I think the opportunities would be to build that relationship through different exchanges, whether it be leadership or technical, possibly cultural."

Korean industry participants acknowledged that their presence was often not associated by the local community with Korea. As one explained, "Being deeply embedded in community is actually something that the group really values. We take that responsibility very sincerely. But even after being there for so long, which actually in a way, it's positive, that many locals, many of them are not aware of our Korean heritage. Going forward, social license and working closely with the community, with the traditional owners, with the landowners and landholders, we have got to really more actively work on that community engagement strategy and bring them along the journey. We will be the long-term owners and operators of these projects. Again, promises we make today, we've got to honour for the next 30 plus years, while we operate these projects. I think that commitment to the local community is something which we're very committed to."

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*"We will be the long-term owners and operators of these projects. Again, promises we make today, we've got to honour for the next 30 plus years."*

**- Korean industry expert**

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38. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, "National Energy Transformation Partnership" (12 August 2022), <https://www.energy.gov.au/government-priorities/energy-and-climate-change-ministerial-council/working-groups/national-energy-transformation-partnership>.

# AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY

- 1. Elevating Agriculture as a Bilateral Priority*
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# AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY

Agriculture is Australia's largest export sector to Korea after iron ore, coal, and natural gas. Despite the economic significance of the sector to the bilateral relationship, agriculture has long been one of the most sensitive areas for dialogue. This is because of the asymmetric trade balance in the agriculture sector.<sup>39</sup> Australia is one of the world's largest agricultural exporters endowed with rich natural resources while Korea's post-war quest for food self-sufficiency has meant it is deeply protective of its domestic industry. Despite this tension, agriculture is once again receiving interest as a priority for future Australia-Korea cooperation. In 2021, the two countries held the first ever ROK-Australia Committee on Agricultural Cooperation (COAC) and the CSP Joint Statement stated that, "the two governments agreed to collaborate in sustainable agriculture, biosecurity, food safety, agricultural innovation, resilient supply chains and mutual food security to deliver ongoing benefits to each country's agricultural sector."<sup>40</sup>

The third roundtable on agriculture and food security discussed the importance of the P2P exchanges that underpin agricultural cooperation. It brought together Australians and Koreans involved across the agriculture relationship, including cattle farmers, Koreans who work on Australian farms, mayors of regional councils, agricultural scientists, exporters and importers, officials and more to discuss how P2P cooperation and understanding can be fostered.

## Elevating Agriculture as a Bilateral Priority

Agriculture is one of the oldest bonds in the Australia-Korea relationship. In the aftermath of the Korean War, before the two countries had even established official diplomatic relations, Australia was sending shipments of wheat as part of its humanitarian assistance to aid South Korea's post-war recovery. In the 1970s, Australia contributed to the establishment of Korea's modern livestock industry by sending 2,500 Australian sheep, farming equipment and machinery, pasture seeds, veterinary vaccination and technical expertise to Korea under the Colombo Plan.<sup>41</sup>

*Agriculture rarely features in Korea-Australia policy conferences. This partly stems from a lack of expertise outside of the agriculture industry itself.*

Despite these early inroads, however, agriculture is rarely featured in contemporary Korea-Australia policy or academic conferences. This partly stems from a lack of expertise outside of the agriculture industry itself. For example, other sectors of the bilateral relationship such as migration, energy, or defence have experts from academia, think tanks, and civil society who study the bilateral relationship. This normally forms a parallel channel of dialogue



39. See, for example, Australia Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, "Australia's relationship with the Republic of Korea: and developments on the Korean peninsula (호주-한국 관계와 한반도 정세)," June 2006. [https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary\\_business/committees/house\\_of\\_representatives\\_committees?url=jfad/t/korea/report/fullreport.pdf](https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=jfad/t/korea/report/fullreport.pdf), p. 57-63.

40. "Australia-Republic of Korea Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," 13 December 2021, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/republic-of-korea/republic-korea-south-korea/australia-republic-korea-comprehensive-strategic-partnership>.

41. Hea-Jin Park, Joanna Elfvig-Hwang and Younghye Seo Whitney, "Why aid diplomacy eventually pays off: Lessons from Australia's Sheep Demonstration Farm Project in 1970s South Korea," Melbourne Asia Review, 26 October 2022. <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/why-aid-diplomacy-eventually-pays-off-lessons-from-australias-sheep-demonstration-farm-project-in-1970s-south-korea-2/>.

alongside the inter-governmental and business-to-business channels.

No comparable academic or policy community exists in the area of Korea-Australia agriculture cooperation. The agricultural science departments at Australian and Korean universities have very few academics who have published on the bilateral relationship or who are actively involved in promoting policy cooperation. Instead, much of this work is led by industry groups and business councils. Moreover, despite their crucial role in the food supply chain, Australian farmers and Korean retailers are far removed from the direct bilateral relationship and rarely encounter each other. Meanwhile, there are few bilateral or even regional forums where Australian and Korean agriculture officials, especially at the junior levels, can interact with each other. It is noteworthy that the first ever meeting of Committee on Agricultural Cooperation (COAC) between the Australian and Korean agriculture bureaucracies only took place in 2021.<sup>42</sup> There are no track 1.5 or track 2 forums bringing together current and former agriculture officials to discuss the bilateral relationship's progress and tasks ahead.

This lack of exchange is consequently reflected in the limited agricultural representation in key bilateral academic or grant-making bodies to date. Funding for projects related to bilateral agriculture cooperation is exceedingly rare compared to other sectors. The Australia-Korea Foundation is one of the few funding bodies to have provided grants related to bilateral agriculture cooperation.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, it only elected an actual farmer, Ms Robyn Bryant, to its board for the first time in its thirty-year history in 2022, reflecting the foundation's focus on other aspects of the bilateral relationship. In contrast, Korean research funding organisations have almost no recorded inclusion of agricultural voices or experts in their bilateral activities with Australia.

### Sister City Relationships in Practice

This roundtable included representation from Australian councils that have sister city relationships with Korea. As an Australian city councillor explained, "you have got to have an external view, not an internal view, and having a sister city relationship teaches us how to do that. We understand the culture, the way people do business. It can't be transactional. It's really a relationship based on understanding the culture and the history. It makes not just the governments,

but the companies more comfortable dealing with you."

*"You have got to have an external view, not an internal view, and having a sister city relationship teaches us how to do that. We understand the culture, the way people do business."*

**- Australian regional city councillor**

The experience of Townsville as well as its neighbouring councils such as Burdekin Shire Council suggests that P2P agriculture ties are best understood as part of a multi-faceted relationship encompassing tourism, migration, and other industries. For example, Sun Metals, a subsidiary of Korea Zinc, has operated a major zinc refinery in Townsville since 1996 and is one of the city's major employers. It has also brought Korean workers and their families to the region for many years. As a councillor elaborated, "we have had Koreans in our region now, for well over 20 years. They feel part of our community, and a lot of them want to stay. We have got a thriving, growing Korean community, and we think it's wonderful. We think it's great."

### Farm Labour and Korean Working Holiday Makers

Australia's Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program has been a pipeline for introducing tens of thousands of young Koreans to Australian farms and regional communities. The one-year visa allows Koreans under 30 to freely travel and work throughout Australia for one year and can be renewed for a second year if they undertake a three-month work placement in selected industries in regional Australia. Between 2015-2019 over 50,000 WHM visas were granted to South Korean citizens, representing roughly 10% of total WHM visas granted by the Australian government during this period (Chart 3).<sup>44</sup>

The shortage of skilled workers is a key priority for regional Australian industries like fruit picking and meat processing. Due to the endemic labour shortage in Australia's agriculture sector, many regional communities are vying to attract young people. Given that most Korean working holidaymakers arrive in the major cities, remote regional communities must compete to attract them for their visa extension placements.

42. "First meeting of the Committee on Agricultural Cooperation with Korea." Australia Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (14 April 2021). <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/news/media-releases/first-meeting-committee-on-agricultural-cooperation-korea>.

43. These include a 2022 grant for Building international relations between Southern Regional Queensland and Korea (AKF00861), a 2020 grant for Climate-Smart Agriculture Collaboration Strategy (AKF2020140), and a 2017 grant for Australia-Korea Digital Agriculture Collaboration Strategy See, "Australia-Korea Foundation grant recipients." Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/foundations-councils-institutes/australia-korea-foundation/grant-recipient>.

44. Department of Home Affairs, 2019, Working Holidaymaker Visa Program Report, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/working-holiday-report-dec-19.pdf>.

Some participants noted that Korean working holiday makers were highly regarded compared to travellers from other countries when undertaking their three-month agricultural assignments. As one participant explained, "Australian farmers are aware of the strengths and work ethic of working holidaymakers from different countries and regions. They are often specific in how they seek to recruit farmhands and understand what the worker is there for."

The experience of one Korean working holiday maker who ended up permanently settling on a farm in regional Australia was illustrative: "I didn't really have a plan to migrate to Australia. I came as a working holiday maker. If we want to extend our visa for another year, we have to work in the agriculture industry for three months. One of my friends from my military service in Korea had come to Australia before me and he had worked in Mildura so I followed him there. I started with very simple work, picking and packing fruit, driving tractors and forklifts.

Then, a few months later, I was given an opportunity to work as a supervisor on a farm. I had to communicate more with the farmers and study more about crops and farming skills. The farmers I worked for were great people and were always willing to teach me. A few years later, I wanted to stay in Australia so I asked my boss if they could sponsor me for a permanent visa. I worked for them for four years and they helped me get permanent residency in Australia."

*"I didn't really have a plan to migrate to Australia. One of my friends from my military service in Korea had come to Australia before me and he had worked in Mildura so I followed him there."*

**- Korean-Australian farm machinery operator**

Another Korean working holiday maker explained, "I had studied agriculture in Korea and then came to Australia on a working holiday. I went to Shepparton in Victoria to work on a pear and apple orchard to extend my visa for another year. I remember climbing up a ladder to pick apples, I saw endless farmland and I realised how big Australia is and how much potential it has. So, I transferred to the University of Adelaide and studied agricultural science here and then I got a job in Queensland as an agronomist."

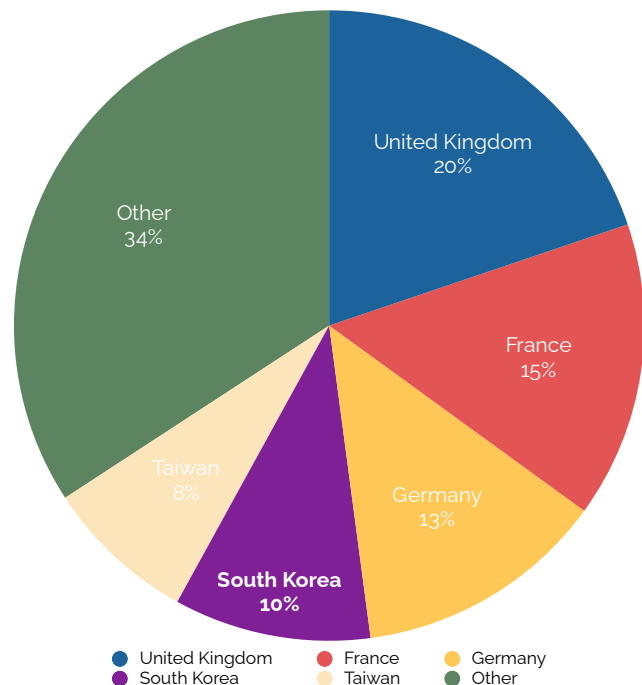
Despite these positive experiences, there remain challenges to overcome in attracting young Koreans to regional Australia. As the Korean participant explained, "Some regional towns have a bad reputation among Korean working holiday makers. Often this is because Korean contractors who introduce them to Australian farms cheat students out of pay." Such cases are communicated via social media and blogs, often tarnishing the reputations of entire towns or regions.

*"I remember climbing up a ladder to pick apples, I saw endless farmland and I realised how big Australia is and how much potential it has."*

**- Korean agriculture student**

Moreover, improvements and reforms to bad practices around pay and working conditions have struggled to be widely shared among working holidaymakers. An Australian farmer explained, "Australia unfortunately in some areas definitely has a bit of a bad rap in terms of how they have treated seasonal backpackers in the past. But that there has been quite a big shift in that space within

Chart 3: Percentage of WHM Visas Granted, 2019<sup>44</sup>



industry. The legislation and requirements around those spaces now have really shifted and there are a lot more stringent rules particularly on the farmer to provide above average wages, provide accommodation that's respectable and reasonable, and that has really shifted. But I don't know that that's actually got out into the broader community. There is still a bit of a reputation that goes with it. And some of those labour hire companies don't really help that situation in a number of ways. So, there's a lot of work that could be done in that space."

## National and Regional Branding

Australian agricultural exporters to Korea face stiff competition from the United States, Canada and New Zealand. Standing out from the crowd is a perennial challenge. As an Australian official explained, "hanging onto what we have in terms of market position is important but often taken for granted." Australia has worked hard to build a positive image with Korean consumers. In the 2000s, Korean consumers tended to view Australian beef as a cheaper, lower-quality product compared to domestic Korean beef known as hanwoo as well as US beef which had a higher marbling content. This was partly because Australian beef was grass-fed and was sold only as a frozen product due to import regulations. Changing that brand awareness among Korean consumers has been a key priority for Australian exporters since the 2014 Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement (KAFTA). Today, new categories of Australian beef such as organic, grain-fed and wagyu beef have entered Korea and the focus is on introducing Korean consumers to these products and informing them about their respective differences.

A promising model is the growing demand for Australian lamb. As a Korean industry participant with long-time experience in the Korean beef market explained, "We do not have any culture for lamb cuisine. In the past, lamb consumption in Korea was primarily by foreign workers. But today it is between 90 to 95 per cent for Korean consumers. There was quite a big change with the cultural understanding through cheaper international flights where people started to enjoy lamb in other countries. Then franchise restaurants started selling lamb skewers at restaurants. Then during Covid, people went outdoor camping which led to a big increase in lamb consumption."

Australia has been successful in building a national image as a source of clean, healthy, and reliable agricultural exports. What has been absent thus far is strong regional brands that complement the overall national brand in building consumer awareness. Efforts that have been made in this regard are often led by the various industry bodies in these regions that bring together businesses from diverse sectors, such as the Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise, Townsville Enterprise, and the Margaret River Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

The issue of regional branding is complicated more by the fact that Korean consumers do not currently have familiarity with specific Australian regions and the agricultural output they produce. An Australian exporter noted that the current interest is in expanding awareness of these differences: "we have a very strong 'Australian' brand. We've been debating how to build a strong 'regional' brand. It would be helpful to have more detailed information on consumer trends in Korea. That is something that many of our exporters simply don't have capacity to find out, and we wouldn't even know where to look. For example, the breakdowns of specifics like organic or grass-fed beef consumption. We have Austrade consumer trends, which is great, but it is more high level and it doesn't help us prioritise who goes along on trade missions."

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*"We have a very strong 'Australian' brand. We've been debating how to build a strong 'regional' brand."*

**- Australia export representative**

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## Adding Value to Agricultural Trade

Launched by Hite Jinro in 2019, Terra beer has become one of Korea's best-selling beers.<sup>45</sup> Made from Australian barley, Terra is an example of Australian and Korean businesses adding value to agricultural cooperation through new manufacturing and processing. There are major opportunities to replicate Terra's success and add value to the agricultural supply chain in order to meet Korean and Australian consumer demand.

Farmers and producers are quite adaptive to what Korean and Australian consumers are looking for. An Australian exporter explained, "There actually is quite a sophisticated understanding of Australia's markets

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45. Andrew Hobbs, "How Korea Sees Australian Food," Trade Farm Machinery.com.au, 10 March 2020, <https://www.tradefarmmachinery.com.au/features/2003/how-korea-sees-australian-food>.

and what they are pursuing and that includes cultural understanding of differences between various North Asian markets. A lot of the producers have a keen interest in where their product goes, the quality that they are producing, and are proud of that. They are very keen to highlight the differences for the markets that they are producing. It's not a potluck sort of thing."

Moving up the value chain through creating new products like beef jerky or flavoured macadamia nuts not only benefits the producers, but it also fosters new cross-national business partnerships. As one industry participant explained, "There is a real opportunity here in Australia to add value to our agricultural products. We feed a huge proportion of people outside of our country every day. Adding value is going to be really important for agriculture going forward. It is an area that will take time to develop, but it is definitely something that I think Korea also has a number of skills in. They have quite a [large] manufacturing industry. So there is a lot of opportunity in that space to develop. I think, and learn from the Korean manufacturing space as well."

## Food and Supply Chain Security

Korean and Australian interest in closer agriculture cooperation today is being driven by concerns about food and supply chain security. Global supply chains have been disrupted in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, China's economic coercion against Australia's agriculture sector, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine which has sparked a global food crisis. Consequently, at the inaugural Australia-ROK Trade Ministers' Meeting held in October 2022, the new Australian and Korean governments further committed to "expanding high-quality agricultural exports" as one of the bilateral trade relationship's key priorities, alongside critical minerals, renewable energy, and emerging technology cooperation.<sup>46</sup> Australia's reputation for food safety can be an important area for closer cooperation, especially in areas like biosecurity, pest control, and regulatory safeguards.

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*"Australia's reputation for food safety can be an important area for closer cooperation."*

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46. Australia-ROK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Trade Ministers' Meeting, 13 October 2022. <https://www.trademinister.gov.au/minister/don-farrell/media-release/australia-rok-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-trade-ministers-meeting>.



Reducing transport shipping times is another key priority as both countries look to reopen border travel. For example, there are still delays in shipping products and high container costs. Some participants estimated that chilled beef used to take 30 days to be shipped by sea to Korea, but it now takes on average up to 50 days due to delays at abattoirs, customs and quarantine clearance, and transits through China because many carriers are Chinese companies. For products with an even shorter shelf-life such as fresh fruit and vegetables, direct flights may be the only option to maintain viability for the Korean retail market. Even this mode of transportation is hindered, however, by the reduction in direct flights between Australia and Korea during the pandemic which has seen routes outside of more frequent Melbourne/Sydney to Seoul flights struggle to reach pre-pandemic frequencies.

Accreditation and regulatory approvals are another area that holds back many farmers and businesses from exploring export opportunities. As one participant explained, "Because lots of our farming businesses are operated by families that work a lot of time in the business and not on the business, they don't actually have time necessarily getting all of their accreditation for export and meeting all the requirements. They need someone to assist in the transition from selling to the Australian market to selling internationally."

*"Family businesses don't actually have time necessarily getting all of their accreditation for export."*

*- Australian regional city councillor*

## The Ag-Tech Revolution and Scientific Collaboration

While the bilateral agriculture relationship heavily leans in Australia's favour, Korea offers world-class scientific expertise in agricultural technology (AgTech) and smart farming that can benefit Australia. As an Australian participant noted, there are new opportunities to cooperate between Australian exporters and Korean micro-farms. "We have deemed it a really large priority and a massive opportunity because AgTech is a hand-in-hand service product whereas with food it is a

straightforward product. It's an unknown, but it's an exciting area for us going forward. For example, Korea is interested in ear tags for their livestock, weighing systems for their farms."

"Australia has a developing AgTech industry in things like remote water and crop monitoring. But one of our challenges here is actually the skills and understanding of the technology. Korea as a tech-based country has access to a lot of that. There are real opportunities to develop those relationships to build the Australian AgTech companies which could then obviously also work back into agriculture in Korea as well. Developing some of those really exciting monitoring systems that could potentially work for both countries and assist in both of those spaces."

*"There are real opportunities to develop those relationships to build the Australian AgTech companies which could then obviously also work back into agriculture in Korea as well."*

*- Australian cattle farmer*

One interesting observation was the vastly different scales at which AgTech is expected to be deployed in Australia and Korea. In Korea, smart farming is primarily focused on micro-farms, urban rooftop gardens, and vertical farming. In Australia, many farms are larger than South Korean cities. The discussion of using drones as monitoring platforms was illustrative. An Australian farmer explained, "As you know, drones are good for a certain distance and certain timeframe. One of the challenges once you get out into regional and particularly remote areas is the watering points or gateways could be 50 or 100 kilometres from your home base. One of our biggest challenges in remote areas is access to mobile networks and things like that are really challenging. So being able to access satellite is important. A lot of it is around distances. On properties that are 200,000 plus hectares it's very hard to get people on the ground to actually do water runs and things and their day-to-day necessities for most places. So having the technology at a price that's reasonable in some of those places is going to be incredibly important."

Leveraging Korea's agricultural science and technology strengths can also create new opportunities for bilateral scientific collaboration in third countries. Korea-Australia cooperation is increasingly focused not just on bilateral issues but on how these two middle powers can play a constructive role in delivering prosperity and security to their regional neighbours. This new form of cooperation has already been seen in the joint distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in Southeast Asia, interest in climate cooperation in the South Pacific, and even exchanges on environmental research in Antarctica. There are strong synergies for collaboration on agriculture investment, aid, and education and training in developing countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and parts of the Pacific Islands.

For example, an Australian agricultural scientist emphasised how Australian and Korean scientists had long been working towards similar goals in developing countries but without any dialogue of their own. "Korean scientists are helping Bangladesh with a cattle genetics. We are all about the preservation of those indigenous or native genetics. We are working towards feeding systems for those animals in this country and how to help train local scientists. There is an opportunity for Korea and Australia to be jointly training Bangladeshis. There could be coordination of the funding between the two countries in terms of what is already being done so that us, as scientists, can work together towards the common goal, instead of working in parallel."

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*"There could be coordination of the funding between the two countries in terms of what is already being done so that us, as scientists, can work together towards the common goal, instead of working in parallel."*

**- Australian agricultural scientist**

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# MEDIA & EDUCATION

- 1. Bilateral Media Cooperation*
- 2. Covering Korea for Australians*
- 3. Covering Australia for Koreans*
- 4. Bilateral Education Cooperation*
- 5. Teaching Korea in Australia*
- 6. Teaching Australia in Korea*





# MEDIA & EDUCATION

South Korea is Australia's eighth-largest source of international students, with over 18,000 Korean students studying in Australia in 2020. There are over 300 formal university partnerships between Australian and Korean institutions. Since 2014, the New Colombo Plan has awarded more than 2,000 scholarships and mobility grants to Australians studying in Korea. The final roundtable on media and education discussed the importance of P2P exchanges in informing and educating the Korean and Australian publics about the bilateral relationship. It brought together Australian and Korean journalists, newspaper editors, teachers, students, and researchers to discuss what progress has been made in recent years, especially in the context of post-COVID border reopening and market changes re-shaping demand for media coverage and education services.

## Bilateral Media Cooperation

How can Korea and Australia stay informed and interested in each other in a competitive global market for news? International news coverage in both countries is only a small portion of the daily media content, and most of that is dominated by stories about the United States, China and global crises. Yet without news coverage about important, but also interesting, developments taking place in each other's countries, the Korea-Australia relationship will always suffer from a knowledge gap and lack of public awareness. Building and sustaining media interest in the bilateral relationship therefore underpins a robust P2P relationship.

One example of how this engagement is currently fostered is the Australia-Korea Media Exchange Program run by the Walkley Foundation that takes prominent Australian journalists to Korea each year, supported by the Australia Korea Foundation.<sup>47</sup> The 2023 cohort of six journalists produced stories about Australian military personnel serving in Korea as well as trends in renewable energy.<sup>48</sup> The Australian government also invites Korean journalists to visit Australia. For example, a 2023 visit by the Korean Women Journalists Association covered topics such as Australia's Indo-Pacific strategy, cultural ties, and defence industry. The Korea Foundation also supports the Korea Australia Community Service (KACS) to send delegations of Australian university students majoring in media and journalism to visit Korea on study tours.

*"The Australia-Korea Media Exchange Program run by the Walkley Foundation takes prominent Australian journalists to Korea each year"*

## Covering Korea for Australians

As one print journalist noted, Australian newspapers are "really neglecting Korea in our coverage. A lot of Australians aren't really aware of what is happening in Korea. There is a huge interest in Korean [popular] culture and regional security issues with China and Japan and how Korea fits into that. But there doesn't seem to be a lot of interest in Korea's stories even though it is our fourth largest trading partner." Understanding why this is the case is at the core of understanding how Australia and Korea can increase media awareness of each other. There is a dilemma at the core of this issue: does a lack of coverage persist due to a lack of public demand, or is there no public demand because there is no coverage in the first place? A better understanding of this may help in balancing limited resources for international media coverage in both countries between bilateral coverage and the larger powers.

In the Australian case, North Asia coverage is heavily focused on China, then Japan and North Korea, leaving only a tiny portion left to cover South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia or other stories. As one participant noted, "I spend 80 per cent of my time writing about China, and they are the stories that my editors want and that our readers want. That is partly because China is just a big economy and there is so much news coming out of China. It doesn't mean anything is wrong with Korea at all, but I guess there is just less going on in Korea or Japan than China."

*"I spend 80 per cent of my time writing about China, and they are the stories that my editors want and that our readers want."*

Part of this death of media coverage can be attributed to a straightforward business trade-off. Most Australian media outlets have only one journalist covering all of the North Asia, if at all. That person can only file so many articles each week and editors will tend to prioritise the urgent crisis or issue of the day over other stories. As journalist participants agreed, the best thing would be to have more

47. The Walkley Foundation, "Australia-Korea Media Exchange Program." Available at: [https://www.walkleys.com/supporting-journalism/korea-media-exchange/?mc\\_cid=bebcbdb806&mc\\_eid=366c45d70f&mc\\_cid=bebcbdb806&mc\\_eid=366c45d70f](https://www.walkleys.com/supporting-journalism/korea-media-exchange/?mc_cid=bebcbdb806&mc_eid=366c45d70f&mc_cid=bebcbdb806&mc_eid=366c45d70f).

48. Sarah Dingle, "70th anniversary of North and South Korea armistice looms," ABC Radio National, 15 May 2023. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/70th-anniversary-of-north-and-south-korea-armistice-looms/102345374>; Rachel Pupazzoni, "Australian hydrogen in demand as South Korean manufacturers look to reach renewable energy target by 2050," ABC News Australia, 15 May 2023. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-15/south-korea-hydrogen-clean-energy-manufacturing-australia/102345294>.

correspondents in Northeast Asia and also based in Korea, but there are limited resources for media outlets to support such an expansion.

No Australian journalists are currently based in Seoul. Instead, they are based in Tokyo or Taipei, or even back in Australia, and have limited travel budgets to regularly visit Korea. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, most media outlets had been even more focused on China, supported by invited media tours, business delegations with accompanying journalists, and regular forums and conferences. Another Australian journalist participant explained the differences in media engagement between North Asian countries as follows: On Korea, "I guess I haven't tried very hard to get in there and do some stories, but then certainly no one has approached me. Whereas all the bodies I deal with in terms of China are very active. In Japan, there is a lot more engagement, but that depends on if you are physically there. And then Taiwan is the other extreme end of the spectrum where the government is helpful in lining up interviews. Going into Taiwan to do any reporting is quite easy; you get a lot of help."

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*"No Australian journalists are based in Seoul. Instead, they are based in Tokyo or Taipei, or even back in Australia, and have limited travel budgets to regularly visit Korea."*

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There are unique challenges for foreign journalists in covering Korean stories for an international audience. As a television journalist participant explained, "Obviously, you have got language issues and finding good people to work with there – what in the industry are called 'fixers', someone who has worked with television, has worked with crews, who knows how you get around and what you need logistically and also acts as a translator. In Korea that can be sometimes tricky for television." An Australian participant noted, "when you have never been to Korea, it's very hard to know where to start. Really, you need to get introduced to people in the system. I've tried to approach the Korean government and ministries and you get absolutely nothing. Korea has been a brick wall at the moment."

An interesting subset of the media coverage of Korea is the focus on stories with direct bilateral substance. Most of these are positive stories raising awareness of the close and mutually beneficial connections between the two countries, such as legacies of the Korean War, Korean-Australian performers achieving success, cooperation on renewable energy, and bilateral engagements. But there are also important public interest stories that shed light on uncomfortable or previously unknown scandals. In the past, stories have included the gross underpayment of Korean working holiday makers, debt bondage and sex trafficking of Korean women in Australia, and the stories of Korean victims of abuse and alleged perpetrators who fled to Australia.<sup>49</sup>



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49. Felicity Caldwell, "Korean backpackers underpaid thousands of dollars on Qld farm," The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 September 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/korean-backpackers-underpaid-thousands-of-dollars-on-qld-farm-20160921-grkwys.html>; Nick McKenzie, "I begged him for my life. I cried begging him to open the door," The Age, 30 October 2022, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/i-begged-him-for-my-life-i-cried-begging-him-to-open-the-door-20221025-p5bsmc.html>; Mary Ann Jolley and Susan Kim, "Secrets of South Korea's house of horrors hidden in Australia," Al Jazeera, 10 December 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/12/10/secrets-of-south-koreas-house-of-horrors-hidden-in-australia>.

In these cases, journalists face significant resistance in reporting. Recalling one such story, a participant explained, “there is obviously a big South Korean community in Australia, but it was really difficult to get some of those people to talk. Largely because they were really concerned about bringing this issue out in public because they felt as though even though they knew it was terrible, what these people had done, they felt it was going to bring shame on their community and their country. So, they didn’t want to. They were very reluctant to talk to us initially. It took a lot of persuading and I think that sometimes is the issue that we have a different view about what is shameful for a country and what is not.”

### Covering Australia for Koreans

The difficulties of Australian media coverage of Korea are exacerbated significantly in the opposite case of Korean media coverage of Australia. Korean news outlets are overwhelmingly focused on domestic politics, with international coverage almost exclusively devoted to its great power neighbours. Stories or articles about Southeast Asia, Oceania or the wider Indo-Pacific tend to be the exception rather than the norm.

But there is one unique factor that drives Korean media interest in Australia: the Korean diaspora in Australia. As with other countries that host large overseas communities of Korean nationality and heritage, news stories affecting or involving these groups are widely reported in Korean news outlets, shaping Korean public perceptions about other countries. In Australia, this role is played by a combination of contracted freelance journalists who report for Korean news outlets such as Yonhap News, Korean-Australian journalists working for Korean community newspapers, and the Korean-language program at SBS Australia, an Australian government supported news outlet.

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*“But there is one unique factor that drives Korean media interest in Australia: the Korean diaspora in Australia.”*

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Korean participants noted that this meant most Australia-based news outlets needed to tailor their content to a Korean-Australian audience. In providing a native-language source of information to Australians of Korean heritage as well as Korean nationals studying and working in Australia, these outlets tend to prioritise local issues such as immigration policy, tax policy, social welfare topics, education, health, traffic regulations, and community events. The bulk of this work is translating and redistributing Australian news in Korean.





As a Korean-Australian newspaper editor explained, “we encourage Korean-Australian readers to participate in local communities and mainstream society as much as they can and eventually settle into Australia as good citizens and as active members of the community.” Because the main audience is the Korean Australian community, the market is fundamentally constrained. This limits advertising or sponsorship revenue, putting pressure on newspapers’ capacity to hire more journalists or produce original content.

*“We encourage Korean-Australian readers to participate in local communities and mainstream society as much as they can and eventually settle into Australia as good citizens and as active members of the community.”*

*- Korean-Australian newspaper editor*

In order to overcome these challenges, outlets are working to broaden their readership to engage the much larger global Korean-language readership and listeners, with about 51 million in South Korea, but also over 7 million Korean diaspora around the world. To reach this group, Australian outlets need to navigate Korean portal sites such as Naver and Daum through which most online searches are processed akin to Google’s role in Australia. This creates obstacles for overseas media to post their articles and reach Korean readers in the absence of content partnership agreements.

## Bilateral Education Cooperation

Together with informing Australians and Koreans about the importance of the bilateral relationship, it is also necessary to educate and train the next generation to effectively manage and sustain bilateral ties. The second half of the roundtable focused on the lessons and insights of educators in both countries who have devoted their careers to improving Korean studies in Australia and Australian studies in Korea. At the heart of this is language proficiency, but it encompasses a wider breadth of education, knowledge, and practical exposure. The 2010 Joint Statement of the Track 1.5 Korea-Australia Dialogue had as its first recommendation, the “Promotion of Korean Studies in Australia and Australian Studies in Korea and expansion of

government support for Korean and Australian Studies Centres in both countries.”<sup>50</sup>

## Teaching Korea in Australia

In the 1980s, the first Korean language programs were introduced at Australian universities. In 1993, the National Korean Studies Centre was established as a consortium of La Trobe University, Monash University, Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Melbourne. In 1994, the Australian National University established the ANU Centre for Korean Studies. Despite these early developments, Korean studies, whether language or the broader socio-cultural, historical, or politico-economic aspects of Korea, remained nascent, overshadowed by university and government funding support for Southeast Asia, China and Japan in Asian Studies departments.

Today, Korean studies in Australia is finally booming. As Ruth Barraclough has recently written in a review of the field, “Korean Studies has always had the advantage that there is something there for everyone: an ingenious language system; the pointy end of global politics and security studies; South Korea as a unique test case for rapid industrialisation; and of course studies of culture in literature, cinema, K-pop, dramas, food, fashion and translation.”<sup>51</sup> In 2019, there were over 5,000 students enrolled in Korean studies programs across Australian universities.

Underpinning much of this growth has been a deliberate funding strategy by the Korean government and its key organisations such as the Korea Foundation and Academy of Korean Studies to support the hiring of Korean studies academics at universities, endowed chairs, and competitive grant programs with separate quotas for Oceania. Korean studies units such as the Australian National University and University of Queensland have also received substantial corporate endowments from Korean and Australian businesses and philanthropists to support fellowships and scholarships. Korean studies participants expressed optimism that current trends would continue. A priority in the coming years would be expanding the “learner base and ensure Australian students could start learning Korean in primary school” and carry that through to tertiary education.<sup>52</sup>

50. Joint Statement of the 2010 Korea-Australia Dialogue. Available at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/republic-of-korea/Pages/joint-statement-of-the-2010-korea-australia-dialogue>.

51. Ruth Barraclough, “20 Years of Korean Studies in Australia,” Asian Studies Association of Australia, 23 March 2020. Available at: <https://asaa.asn.au/20-years-of-korean-studies-in-australia/>.

52. This problem is not unique to Korean language but across all Asian languages in Australia. See, Edward Aspinall and Melissa Crouch, “Australia’s Asia Education Imperative: Trends in the Study of Asia and Pathways for the Future,” Asian Studies Association of Australia, Canberra, Australia, 2023. <http://doi.org/10.26190/ha4q-dm52>

## Teaching Australia in Korea

Compared to the exponential growth in Korean studies programs across Australia, the study of Australia in Korea still has a long way to go. For example, there are over 34 Australian Studies centres and institutes at Chinese universities and think tanks.<sup>53</sup> Japan has had an Australian Studies Association of Japan since 1989.<sup>54</sup> While the Australian government has invested heavily in supporting Australian students to learn Asian languages and cultures, including through the New Colombo Plan,<sup>55</sup> successive South Korean governments have not responded similarly in preparing their students to engage with Australia. Instead, the onus has largely fallen on Australia to also cultivate Korean interest in Australia.

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*“Compared to the exponential growth in Korean studies programs across Australia, the study of Australia in Korea still has a long way to go.”*

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To this date, the only Australian Studies centre in a Korean university has been at Yonsei University. The Centre for Australian Studies was established in 2008 and has hosted major lectures by Australian leaders, such as by Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2012, but continues to be a small organisation led by Professor Lee Heejin and associates.<sup>56</sup> In 2022, the Australian government's Australia-Korea Foundation, together with Woodside Energy, announced the establishment of a Visiting Professorship of Australian Studies at Seoul National University, to commence in 2023. Participants agreed, at least in the interim, an important opportunity for growth was for universities, vocational colleges, think tanks and other non-governmental organisations to establish more formal memorandums of cooperation rather than just rely on periodic visits to sustain bilateral ties.

During this roundtable, Korean studies academics expressed being constantly torn between their work on Korean studies and their adjacent disciplinary expertise and interests, such as linguistics, humanities, social sciences, or history. The same problem affects academics trying to develop Australian studies in Korea, where most are not trained in Australian history or culture, but rather work on economics, international relations, or other social sciences. The lack of available experts

residing in Korea, or willing to relocate to Korea, who would be considered world-leading experts on Australian politics or history and able to effectively communicate this knowledge to a Korean student audience is very apparent.

Participants described this situation as akin to a chicken-or-egg problem in which it is hard to tell whether a lack of student interest has meant that Korean universities are unwilling to create new courses and majors for Australian studies, or the lack of course offerings has kept interest among Korean students low. As one academic noted, Australian studies need to be seen differently to Korean studies, in which language instruction is the core curriculum, given that learning Australian English (as opposed to the American variety) will not be a similarly attractive drawcard in Korean society. Rather, topics related to contemporary Australia such as trade, energy, agriculture, security and science could be used as course offerings to encourage students to view Australia not just as a place to study, but as a place worth studying and engaging with.

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53. Australian Embassy in China, "Australian Studies Centres in China," <https://china.embassy.gov.au/bjng/studycenter.html>.

54. Australian Studies Association of Japan, [http://www.australianstudies.jp/about/objectives\\_of\\_the\\_association\\_e.html](http://www.australianstudies.jp/about/objectives_of_the_association_e.html).

55. Since 2014, the New Colombo Plan has awarded 104 scholarships and 2266 mobility grants for Australian undergraduates to undertake study and work-based experiences in the Republic of Korea.

56. Julia Gillard, 'Australia and Korea: Partners and Friends', Speech to Yonsei University, Seoul, 26 March 2021. <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-18466>.



# KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. P2P categories could be broadened*
- 2. Social license should be at the forefront of bilateral projects*
- 3. Sister City relationships could be revamped*
- 4. Bureaucratic over-regulation could be streamlined*
- 5. Smaller but more numerous high-quality pilot projects are needed*





# KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesises the key factors that could determine the success or failure of closer P2P cooperation between Australia and Korea. There are several common themes that emerge from the roundtable discussions about how governments can more effectively support individuals and communities to take advantage of existing cooperation mechanisms and also pursue new lines of collaboration.

## 1. P2P categories could be broadened

P2P links between Australia and Korea are guided by the 2021 Memorandum of Understanding on Socio-Cultural Cooperation.<sup>57</sup> The MOU focuses on supporting cultural and creative industries; education exchanges; and social exchanges including sport, cuisine, and women's empowerment. P2P cooperation is far too narrowly understood by both countries at the government level. Important communities tend to fall outside of this scope, including local councils, regional communities, small and microbusinesses, some non-profit organisations, and diaspora communities.

As Table 3 illustrates, the connection mechanisms available to facilitate P2P links vary across groups. For many regional, rural and remote communities there are simply no P2P mechanisms that could be used even to identify a suitable counterpart, let alone pursue bilateral activities. Similarly, diaspora communities are generally focused on their home governments rather than establishing connections with their counterpart diaspora communities.

**Recommendation: Establish working groups within the Socio-Cultural Committee to identify new P2P activities specifically targeted at local councils, regional communities, small and microbusinesses, selected non-profit organisations, and diaspora communities.**

*"For many regional, rural and remote communities there are simply no P2P mechanisms that could be used even to identify a suitable counterpart, let alone pursue bilateral activities."*

For example, Australian diaspora associations in Korea collaborate with expatriates from other countries such as New Zealand,<sup>58</sup> while Australians of Korean heritage residing in Korea tend to form informal social networks of their own. This is a reminder that P2P links are not always needed bilaterally and cross-nationally. Rather, in the case of diaspora groups, the focus could actually be in facilitating opportunities for different Australian and Korean diaspora communities to meet each other through networking or events.

57. Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia on Socio-Cultural Cooperation. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/mou-republic-of-korea-and-dfat-socio-cultural-cooperation>.

58. See, for example, The Australia and New Zealand Association, Korea (ANZA) Association. <https://www.anzakorea.com/>

**Table 3. P2P entities and connection mechanisms**

Connection Type	Australian Entity	Korean Entity	Connection Mechanisms
<b>Government-to-Government (G2G)</b>	Prime Minister and Federal government departments	Prime Minister and Federal government departments	Embassies, sideline/regular meetings, working groups, taskforces
	Premiers and state governments	Governors and provincial governments	
<b>Business-to-Business (B2B)</b>	Australian businesses	Korean businesses	Overseas offices, regional headquarters, industry associations, conferences
	Relevant trade, export, and import authorities	Relevant trade, export, and import authorities	
<b>People-to-People (P2P)</b>	City and local councils	City Halls and District Offices	Sister cities and friendship cities
	Regional, rural, and remote communities	Regional, rural, and remote communities	No direct mechanisms, except through sister cities
	Small business enterprises (e.g. sole traders, farmers, tech start-ups)	Small business enterprises (e.g. sole traders, farmers, tech start-ups)	Joint pilot projects, trade missions
	Non-profit organisations (e.g. schools, institutes, universities)	Non-profit organisations (e.g. schools, institutes, universities)	MOUs, exchanges, joint programs
	Civil society organisations (e.g. activist groups, volunteer groups, sporting clubs)	Civil society organisations (e.g. activist groups, volunteer groups, sporting clubs)	Transnational networks
	Diaspora community (Australian short and long-term residents, students)	Diaspora community (Korean overseas residents, students, WHMs)	No direct mechanisms and limited intra-community mechanisms
	General public	General public	Tourism, education, sports diplomacy, cultural exchange, language studies, exhibitions, concerts

*Source: Author research and consultations*

*Note: Visits are a key mechanism but shared across all entities.*

## 2. Social license should be at the forefront of bilateral projects

Public support and community trust in the actors who claim to be acting in the bilateral relationship's best interests must be earned and sustained. This applies to governments and businesses alike. For example, local communities should be among the biggest beneficiaries of the renewable energy revolution taking place. Industry could be making the long-term investments in these communities and giving back through education and employment programs whilst also addressing the potential health and environmental concerns that may arise. In reality, many local communities have had little engagement with Korean or Australian industry, let alone formed an understanding of their community's importance to the bilateral relationship.

*"In reality, many local communities have had little engagement with Korean or Australian industry, let alone formed an understanding of their community's importance to the bilateral relationship."*

Policies and investments that will affect the livelihoods, environments, and sustainability of local communities need to be backed up by early community engagement. There are companies that have built a long-term presence in Australia or Korea, created manufacturing and employment hubs that sustain entire communities, and also practise exemplary environmental, social, and corporate governance. Such companies are eventually seen as genuine partners in which workforce and management are often bilaterally hybridised. These companies give back to the community through scholarships, sponsorships, travel programs, and other philanthropy and are enmeshed in local schools, hospitals and sporting clubs. When they weigh up future investments, they endeavour to bring their host communities with them, with town councillors often their strongest advocates. Without the above connections and social license to operate, even the largest of corporate investments or government announcements can find it difficult to proceed.

**Recommendation: Government and business forums and dialogues that are likely to affect local communities could undertake early outreach and engagement to involve communities in the scoping phase as well as hold preliminary town hall meetings.**



(L to R): Featherdale employee Rosa Ko with Councillors Chang Ki Lee and Boo Yun Lee holding a koala. This 1994 visit marked the declaration of a sister city relationship between Daegu City and Blacktown City (Source: Blacktown Memories)



### 3. Sister City relationships could be revamped

Sister city relationships are under-utilised springboards for cooperation which could be reviewed and updated. Australia has over 550 sister city relationships around the world. Tables 4 and 5 outline the 27 known sister city and friendship city relationships that have been entered into between Australia and Korea at the state, city, and council levels. The main difference between sister city and friendship city relationships is that for the latter, "the agreement often does not include community based objectives, it is more around local government or economic development activities and outcomes, and is often confirmed by signing a joint Memorandum of Understanding."<sup>59</sup> For example, the sister city relationship between Sydney's Blacktown City Council and Daegu's Suseong District dates back to 1994 and is perhaps one of the most successful examples of such relationships, with a regular exchanges of visitors, musicians, performers, and more over nearly 30 years.

*"Sister city relationships are under-utilised springboards for cooperation which could be reviewed and updated."*



59. 2021 Directory of Australian Sister City and Friendship City Affiliations, p. 40. Available at: [https://www.sistercitiesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Aust\\_SCA\\_Affiliations.pdf](https://www.sistercitiesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Aust_SCA_Affiliations.pdf).

Table 4. Australia-Korea sister and friendship states<sup>60</sup>

No.	Australian Counterpart	Korean Counterpart	자치단체명	Date Established	Type*
1	New South Wales	Seoul Special Administrative City	서울특별시 분청	1991	S
2	Victoria	Busan Special Administrative City	부산광역시 분청	1994	S
3	Queensland	Gyeonggi Province	경기도 분청	1997	S
4	South Australia	Chungcheongnam Province	충청남도 분청	1999	S
5	Tasmania	Jeju Special Administrative City	제주특별자치도 분청	1997	F
6	Western Australia	Jeju Special Administrative City	경상북도 분청	2007	F
7	Queensland	South Gyeongsang Province	경상남도 분청	2008	F

\*type refers to: S = Sister City Relationship, F = Friendship City Relationship

60. Compiled from 2021 Directory of Australian Sister City and Friendship City Affiliations and the Governors Association of the Republic of Korea database of sister city relationships, and cross-checked with relevant councils and newspaper articles. Available at: [https://www.sistercitiesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Aust\\_SCA\\_Affiliations.pdf](https://www.sistercitiesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Aust_SCA_Affiliations.pdf), <https://www.gaok.or.kr/gaok/exchange/listRegion.do?menuNo=200160>.

Chart 4. Australia-Korea sister and friendship states

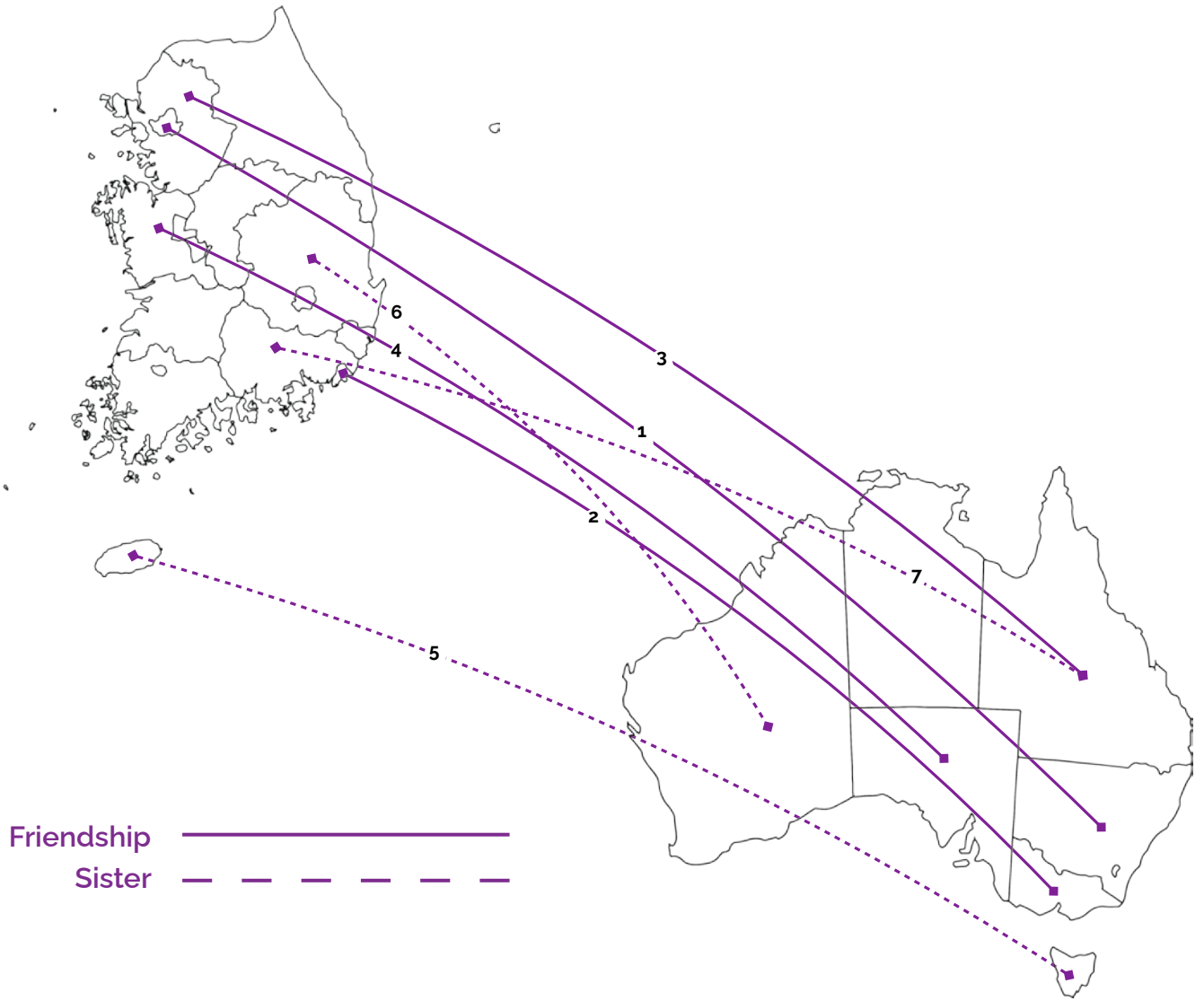
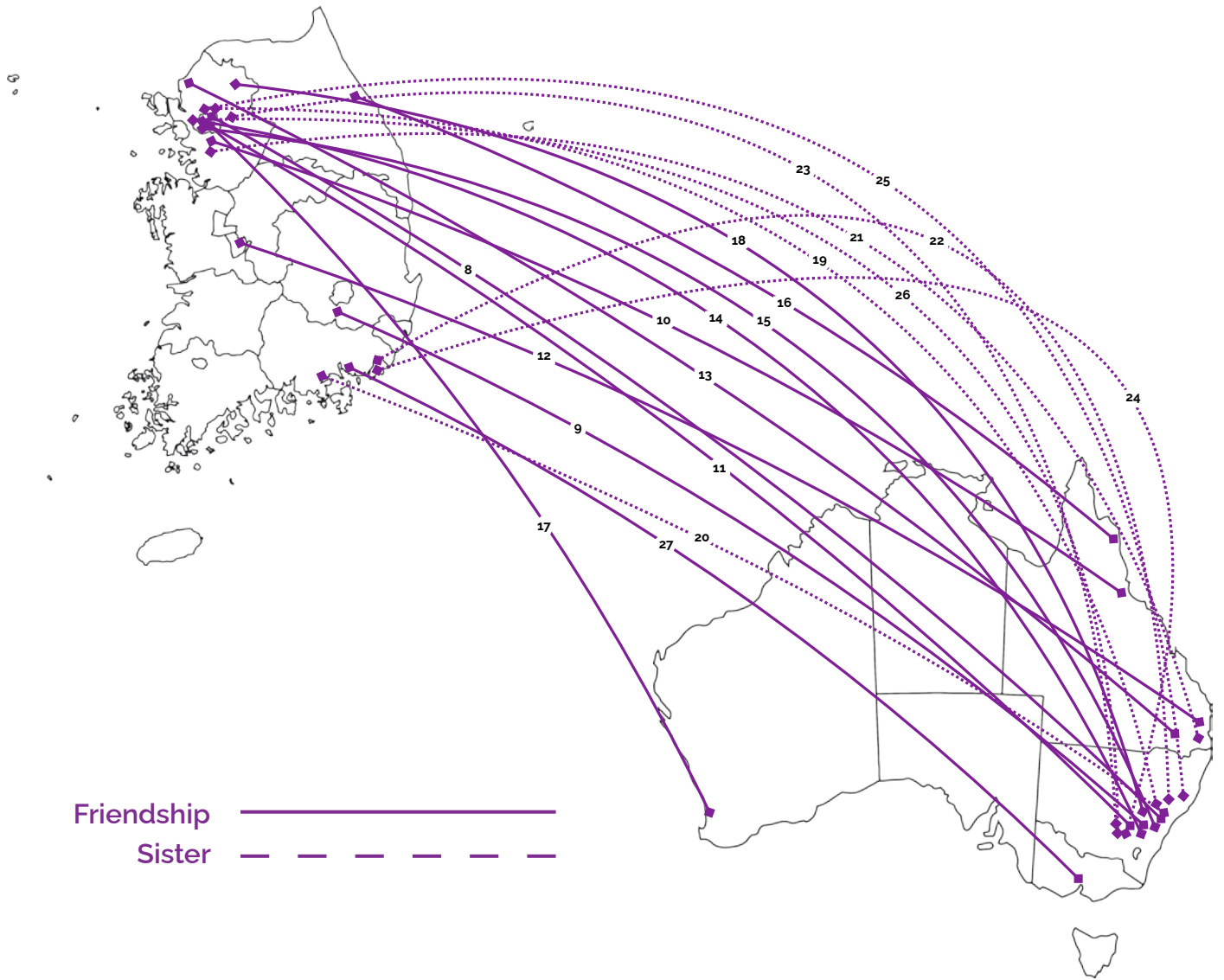


Table 5. Australia-Korea sister and friendship cities

No.	Australian Counterpart	Korean Counterpart	자치단체명	Date Established	Type*
8	Canterbury-Bankstown, Sydney, NSW	Eunpyeong District, Seoul	서울특별시 은평구	1988	S
9	Blacktown, Sydney	Suseong District, Daegu	대구광역시 수성구	1994	S
10	Townsville, QLD	Suwon City	경기도 수원시	1997	S
11	Parramatta Council, Sydney, NSW	Jung District, Seoul	서울특별시 중구	1998	S
12	Brisbane, QLD	Daejeon City	대전광역시 본청	2002	S
13	Toowoomba, QLD	Paju City	경기도 파주시	2002	S
14	Canterbury-Bankstown, Sydney, NSW	Yangcheon District, Seoul	서울특별시 양천구	2002	S
15	Burwood, Sydney	Geumcheon District, Seoul	서울특별시 금천구	2003	S
16	Mareeba Shire Council, QLD	Samcheok City, Gangwon Province	강원도 삼척시	2004	S
17	Perth, WA	Seocho District, Seoul	서울특별시 서초구	2008	S
18	Strathfield Council, Sydney, NSW	Gapyeong County, Gyeonggi Province	경기도 가평군	2011	S
19	Penrith City Council, Sydney, NSW	Gangseo District, Seoul	서울특별시 강서구	1994	F
20	Blue Mountains Council, NSW	Goseong District, South Gyeongsang Province	경상남도 고성군	2007	F
21	Redland City Council, QLD	Yongin City, Gyeonggi Province	경기도 용인시	2008	F
22	Northern Beaches Council, Sydney, NSW	Yongdo District, Busan	부산광역시 영도구	2009	F
23	Willoughby City Council, Sydney, NSW	Gangdong District, Seoul	서울특별시 강동구	2011	F
24	Cumberland City Council	Suyeong District, Busan	부산광역시 수영구	2015	F
25	Singleton, NSW	Dongjak District, Seoul	서울특별시 동작구	2016	F
26	Ryde, Sydney	Jongro-gu District	서울특별시 종로구	2019	F
27	Greater Geelong, VIC	Changwon City, South Gyeongsang Province	경상남도 창원시	2022	F

\*type refers to: S = Sister City Relationship, F = Friendship City Relationship

Chart 5. Australia-Korea sister and friendship cities



As chart 5 shows, there is a heavy concentration of LGA level relationships in Sydney, reflecting the strong Korean-Australian community presence there. While conventional wisdom would perhaps conclude that the most activity takes place in sister city relationships between major cities, it is actually relationships between regional Australian councils and smaller Korean cities and districts where most interest is concentrated. State and local governments could therefore explore how to leverage sister city relationships to offer combined programs that include tourism, education, and short-term work experience opportunities that then lead to pathways for further visits and ongoing engagement.

There is room for other local councils and regional cities to create new sister and friendship city relationships, especially where there are shared experiences and industries. For example, northern Australian towns such as Port Hedland are key export ports to Korea while south-eastern cities like Ulsan and Pohang are key import destinations. These communities share similar experiences of energy production, employment and environmental protection. Government exchange programs to connect city councillors between these two regions would help build relationships at all levels of government and refine solutions to pressing challenges. To widen community buy-in for sister city relationships, high-level activities could also be complemented by an industry-supported program of vocational training and short-term work opportunities as well as cultural and sporting events such as Indigenous footballers visiting Korea and Korean Taekwondo performances in northern Australia.

*“There is room for other local councils and regional cities to create new sister and friendship city relationships.”*

**Recommendation: A register of activities taking place under sister and friendship city relationships could be kept updated. A forum could be held with all LGA-District relationships to review where upgraded relationships are needed. New relationships could be explored in northern Australia.**

#### 4. Bureaucratic over-regulation could be streamlined

Compared to many other countries, the Australia-Korea relationship is fairly open to travel and exchanges. But participants across all roundtables expressed frustration at the onerous restrictions, costs, and wait times that often deterred them from longer-term commitments to either country. Three examples stand out.

*“Participants across all roundtables expressed frustration at the onerous restrictions, costs, and wait times that often deterred them from longer-term commitments to either country.”*

First, the Working Holiday Maker visa application fee is currently \$500 AUD, a large sum for most 20-year-old Korean students saving to come to Australia for the first time. The Working Holiday Maker visa’s agricultural work extension could be reviewed to identify how it could create pathways for ongoing work placements in regional Australia. Existing permanent residency requirements have special conditions for those seeking to settle in regional and rural Australia, such as lower English proficiency testing requirements. Similarly, there could be ways to grant more favourable working holiday maker visa conditions for those willing to venture farther from major cities, stay longer in farming communities, undertake English or vocational training outside cities, or return for seasonal work opportunities.

Second, more flexible visa categories are needed to encourage work opportunities in the start-up and emerging technologies sector. Visa categories are currently constrained to large employers and could be adapted to promote greater temporary mobility for individuals seeking to create cross-national businesses to encourage joint innovation and enterprises. Business-to-business relations can be accelerated most quickly by the removal of existing barriers so that businesses are able to hire talent between the two countries.

Finally, clearer and earlier communication about changes to visa eligibility and application criteria is needed. Both governments, and especially the Department of Home Affairs and Korea Immigration Service, are urged to provide sufficient advance

notice prior to changing the eligibility requirements for visa categories, including application fees and income thresholds. Clearer pathways to permanent residency could also be made clearly available on government websites, outlining exactly how individual temporary visas can or cannot be transitioned to longer-term pathways. For example, the F-6 visa (Marriage Migrant Visa) currently requires annual renewal for those visa holders who do not have children, but those who do are exempt. This double-standard should be abolished.

**Recommendation: Visa processing fees, wait times, eligibility changes and work conditions all impose unnecessary burdens on would-be migrants and travellers and could be reduced wherever possible.**

## 5. Smaller but more numerous high-quality pilot projects are needed

A key theme throughout this project was the struggle for Australia and Korea to stand out in a crowded field of countries competing for the attention of each nation. Australians in Korea face stiff competition from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, whilst Koreans in Australia are constantly pitted against China and Japan. Projects and initiatives that publicise the unique strengths and attributes of the bilateral relationship should be prioritised.

*A key theme was the struggle for Australia and Korea to stand out in a crowded field of countries competing for the attention of each nation.*

The major funding organisations in the bilateral relationship could discuss how to support smaller, but more numerous, pilot projects and initiatives that can increase the visibility of the bilateral relationship. While this would obviously be more difficult from an administrative perspective, involving the management of a greater number of smaller grants, there is a benefit to testing new proposals at a preliminary phase before risking investments further down the track. For example, funding is needed to build a bilateral agricultural expert community.

Specific grants dedicated to agriculture could be included in the annual grant-making funding rounds of key foundations to encourage Australian and Korean agricultural researchers to start collaborating with each other and building connections to industry. Early career researchers as well as academics could be priority recipients. Alongside this, there should also be support for funding recipients to communicate their work to a general audience at bilateral policy forums.

A joint research study into long-term occupational outcomes among Koreans in Australia would help better understand how to attract skilled workers in priority industries and outline what their career trajectories look like once in Australia. For example, surveying the career trajectories of Korean-Australian diaspora who were sponsored on 457 work visas to understand how many recipients subsequently remained in their industry of employment would help to better guide recruitment and facilitate greater retention. This would complement the Australian government's new migration strategy which promises to "simplify the system to make it easier and faster for the people with the skills we need."<sup>61</sup> Similarly, surveys of Australians who have taught English in Korea and their subsequent ongoing connections with Korea would be valuable in reviewing future work programs.

Pilot funding could also go towards civil society groups to help them establish bilateral dialogues of their own. Much like local communities, environmental activist networks are largely siloed off from each other. While there is considerable collaboration on specific thematic projects, such as power market reforms or green finance, most of this is multi-national rather than geared around the bilateral relationship specifically. An Australia-Korea environmental dialogue would be a valuable forum to bring together local community leaders, traditional landowners, environmental activists and others to discuss specific bilateral projects and their community impacts in both countries.

Universities have a role to play not only in terms of producing research that is industry relevant, but also as convening hubs for frank discussions among different stakeholders. Units such as the Melbourne Energy Institute based at the University of Melbourne could host vibrant bilateral debates and forums in ways that business councils or track 1 inter-governmental dialogues cannot. Other sectors

61. Australian Government, "A Migration System for a More Prosperous and Secure Australia - Outline of the Government's Migration Strategy," Department of Home Affairs, May 2023, <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/migration-strategy/the-migration-strategy>, p. 3.

provide illustrative examples: this is something that is well established in the bilateral security and trade sectors, where government officials, industry representatives, scholars, and community leaders frequently discuss key issues both publicly and in closed-door settings.

**Recommendation: Funding organisations and industry groups could prioritise smaller, but more numerous, pilot projects that can increase the visibility of the bilateral relationship and help it stand out from the competition.**







# CONCLUSION





# CONCLUSION

This report has examined how the bilateral relationship between Australia and South Korea is being experienced by the people who live it every day. The voices of academics, officials, and industry are prominently covered in shaping the bilateral narrative, but there are many more perspectives and stories that often go untold. These stories are important: those of the young Koreans who fell in love with the bush as working holidaymakers and decided to stay, or the starry-eyed Australians who ventured to the sprawling metropolis of Seoul. They include the scientists developing clean energy technologies upon which new supply chains will be based, the journalists covering exciting developments in the relationship, and the community leaders in regional, rural and remote towns from whose lands we draw our prosperity. This report is about their perspectives.

The participants that were interviewed as part of this project are all keen to see the relationship grow, and their assessments and suggestions are based on personal and professional experience. It is important to note, however, that this report is not a comprehensive survey of every industry and social sector, nor does it claim to fully represent the full diversity of views within any given facet of the Australia-Korea relationship. Moreover, there was an obvious sampling bias in that only those individuals interested in the bilateral relationship responded to requests for interviews or attended the roundtables, hence omitting the many others working on, but perhaps not interested in, the bilateral relationship.

Nonetheless, the report will hopefully be a useful reference as scholars and experts investigate different fields of the bilateral P2P relationship not covered here. These include finance and banking; the digital economy; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; marine research; military personnel and veterans; aerospace and space; law; sporting groups; hospitality; and tourism. It is likely that the stories in those fields will bear some similarity to the insights uncovered in this report; about the gaps in rhetoric, about representation and visibility of voices, about onerous regulations, and about scarce resources to do exciting work on the bilateral relationship.

If this report has highlighted one thing, it is that there must be continued efforts to capture the imaginations, endorsement, and buy-in of the wider Australian and Korean publics if people-to-people cooperation is to stand confidently as a third pillar of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Public support is the social license through which the bilateral relationship will reach its full potential. The future of Australia-Korea relations is undoubtedly bright, with new challenges presenting unique opportunities for Australians and Koreans to work together in building a prosperous, safe, and green world. If they are nurtured well, closer people-to-people relations will stand as one of the finest legacies of this grand undertaking.







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