

South Australia strengthens ties with SE Asia with university MoU

THE NATION

DESPITE the tragic bombing last week, the Australian government is keen to stay invested in Thailand and Southeast Asia as a whole, Gail Gago, the South Australian Minister for Education, said on Thursday during an event in Bangkok to seal a cooperation pact between Thailand's Stamford International University and Torrens University Australia.

The future partnerships between Australia and Southeast Asia have potential, Gago said during a press conference to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two universities.

Gago was in Bangkok as part of a 100-strong delegation touring Southeast Asia. She said she was keen to promote ties between Australia and Thailand, in particular through educational institutions and partnerships such as the MOU between Stamford and Torrens.

Both universities are part of the global Laureate Education Network, which links 80 higher education institutions and has

over a million students.

Gago said she was confident about the increasingly global partnerships that are occurring in education.

"We live in really exciting times. We have become part of a global education economy that knows no borders, thanks to increasingly more sophisticated information technology. The opportunity for partnerships and exchange is increasing. Partnerships such as the one today between Stamford International University and Torrens University Australia are in everyone's interest."

The minister explained that South Australian education is hopeful about exchanges such as the one established between Stamford and Torrens.

"We are investing in our educational capabilities and devoting considerable resources to exchange programs."

Strengthening ties with Australia's Southeast Asian neighbours is the current priority, however.

"We have developed the South East Asian Engagement strategy. It is a strategy that recognises the importance of our neighbours and focuses on exploring part-

nerships. It prioritises Southeast Asia as our closest neighbours and Thailand is central to that."

Both Stamford International University and Torrens University Australia believe in the value of an international outlook among graduates. The MOU is designed to give students international exposure by providing the opportunity to study abroad, gain cross-cultural perspectives and the ability to work in any multicultural environment.

Gilles Mahe, the CEO of Laureate Thailand, joined Gago in witnessing the signing by Associate Professor Dr Boonmark Sirinaovakul, president of Stamford International University, together with Michael Mann, the chancellor of Torrens University Australia.

Gago added that even with the tragic events that have befallen Bangkok in recent days, the Australian government is keen to stay invested in Thailand and the region.

"We will support our neighbours and our neighbours' concerns," she said. "The sort of partnerships and opportunities that have been embraced here today will be seen more and more. It is in everyone's interest."