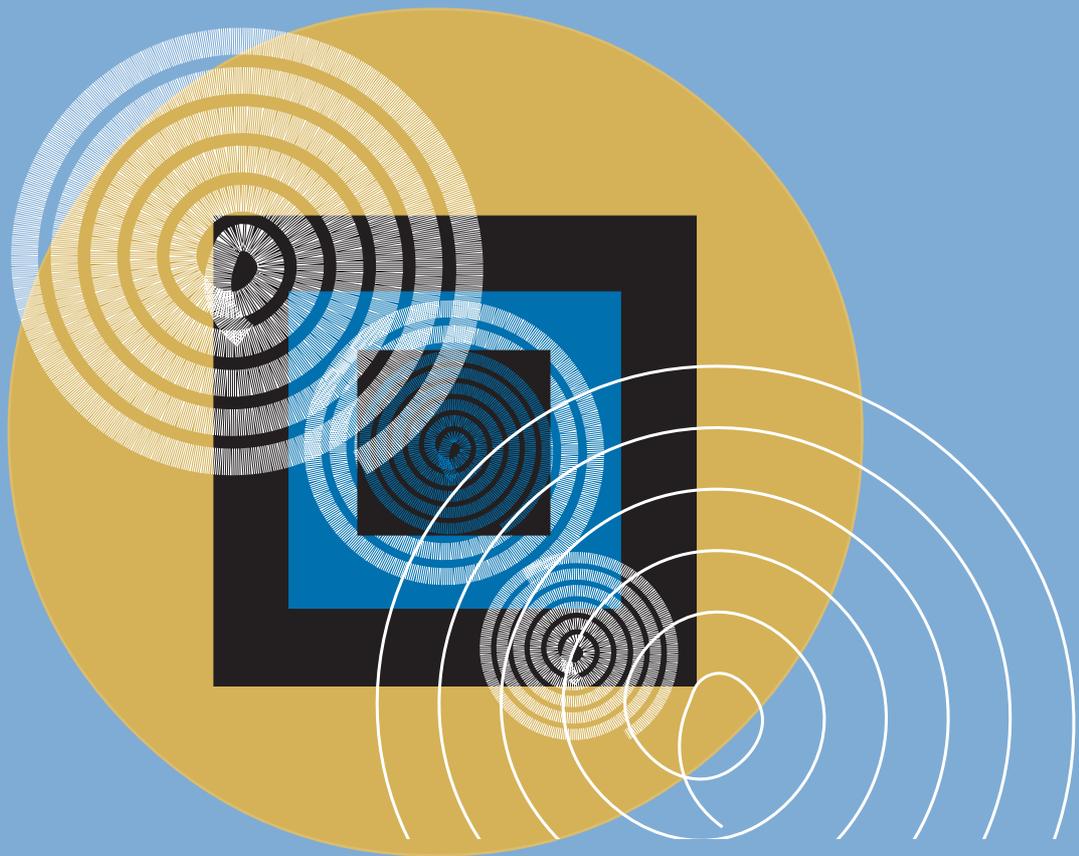


National Statement for

# Languages Education

in Australian Schools

National Plan for Languages Education  
in Australian Schools **2005–2008**



MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION,  
EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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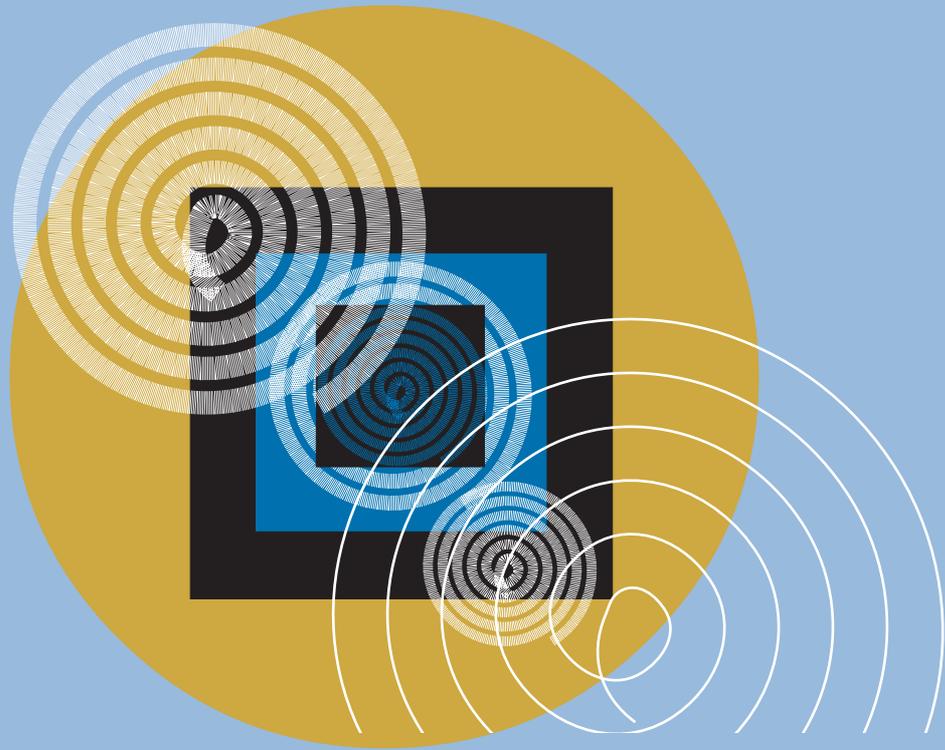
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# part 1

## **National Statement** for Languages Education in Australian Schools

# Purpose and nature of languages education

Ministers of Education are committed to the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country. We believe that through learning languages our students and the broader Australian community gain important benefits.

Learning languages:

- enriches our learners intellectually, educationally and culturally
- enables our learners to communicate across cultures
- contributes to social cohesiveness through better communication and understanding
- further develops the existing linguistic and cultural resources in our community
- contributes to our strategic, economic and international development
- enhances employment and career prospects for the individual.

Our learners are the future of our nation. Developing in them language skills and inter-cultural understanding is an investment in our national capability and a valuable resource. This was recognised in the 1989 National Goals for Schooling, and re-affirmed in the 1999 National Goals, where the Languages (Other Than English)<sup>1</sup> learning area was identified as one of the eight key learning areas, and one in which all learners are expected to attain high standards of knowledge, skills and understandings. This National Statement and National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools will further progress towards that goal.

We live in times of rapid change. Information and communication technologies are accelerating the movement of people and ideas across the globe and expanding the range of communities in which people operate. Twenty-first century education needs to engage with, and be responsive to, this changing world. It needs to develop in learners the knowledge, understanding and attributes necessary for successful participation and engagement within and across local, regional and global communities, and in all spheres of activity.



*Language skills and cultural sensitivity will be the new currency of this world order<sup>2</sup>.*

English is Australia's national language. It is also growing as an international language of communication. But English alone is not enough for our learners. In our increasingly multi-lingual world, more people speak two languages than one, and contact with speakers of other languages is rapidly growing.

Australia must build on its diverse linguistic and cultural environment which is a result of its Indigenous history, geography and migration. Australian Indigenous Languages<sup>3</sup>, the languages of Australia's original inhabitants, are the nation's

<sup>1</sup> 'Languages' is used throughout this document in place of the term 'Languages Other Than English' and refers to all Languages other than English, including Australian Indigenous languages and AUSLAN.

<sup>2</sup> General Peter Cosgrove, Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council, 30 May 2002; and Asia Education Foundation National Summit, 26 November 2003.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'Australian Indigenous Languages' is used throughout this document to include the languages of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.



first languages. There are many active Australian Indigenous languages, dialects, creoles, pidgins and Aboriginal English dialects spoken in Australia. Their importance to Australian Indigenous people and to the broader community is acknowledged and valued. In addition, migration by people from across the globe has brought with it English and more than 150 additional languages. This is Australia's linguistic and cultural landscape. It is a valuable base from which to develop the linguistic capabilities necessary for Australia to be successful in the international community of the 21st century.

Education in a global community brings with it an increasing need to focus on developing inter-cultural understanding. This involves the integration of language, culture and learning. Inter-cultural language learning helps learners to know and understand the world around them, and to understand commonality and difference, global connections and patterns. Learners will view the world, not from a single perspective of their own first language and culture, but from the multiple perspectives gained through the study of second and

subsequent languages and cultures. For learners who study their background or heritage language, it provides a strengthened sense of identity.

Inter-cultural language learning contributes to the overall education of learners, developing in them the capabilities to:

- communicate, interact and negotiate within and across languages and cultures
- understand their own and others' languages, thus extending their range of literacy skills, including skills in English literacy
- understand themselves and others, and to understand and use diverse ways of knowing, being and doing
- further develop their cognitive skills through thinking critically and analytically, solving problems, and making connections in their learning.

Such capabilities assist learners to live and work successfully as linguistically and culturally aware citizens of the world.

# National developments

Quality languages education is not yet part of the learning experience of all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country. The challenge that must now be addressed is how best to further integrate quality languages education into the mainstream curriculum, and into program delivery by all schools.

Languages education for all students is a relatively new concept in the history of Australian schooling. While the study of languages has long been an established part of the curriculum in many secondary schools, it was generally seen as an area of study for the academically able.

This view changed significantly in the 1990s when most states and territories introduced languages programs in primary schools as part of their commitment to the National Goals. Since then, a great deal of development has occurred in terms of numbers of programs, numbers of languages learners and the number of languages taught. In 2003, the Ministerial Council of Education,

Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) undertook a Review of Languages Education in Australian Schools. The Review found that nationally:

- approximately 50% of students were learning a language in mainstream schools
- there were 146 languages being taught in both mainstream and non-mainstream school settings. This included:
  - 103 languages (including 68 Australian Indigenous Languages) taught in government, Catholic and independent schools
  - 69 languages taught through after hours ethnic/community languages schooling.
- six languages emerged as the most commonly taught. These were, in order of enrolment numbers: Japanese, Italian, Indonesian, French, German and Chinese. More than 90% of languages learners were learning one of these languages.

The Review also found that the expansion of languages programs had created significant challenges which still need to be addressed. These include:

- the need for appropriately qualified and trained teachers
- continuity in languages learning within schools, and from primary to secondary levels and beyond
- adequate time allocations
- supportive timetabling practices
- resourcing
- whole school commitment.

There is also an ongoing need to convey to the broader community the real and achievable benefits of effective languages education for all learners.

The Review proposed that stronger collaboration at the national level was needed to further enhance the quality of the language learning experience and to make it a reality for all learners. Ministers of Education endorsed this call for a renewed national effort by agreeing to the development of a new National Statement for Languages Education, and an initial four-year National Plan for Languages Education.

# Implications for jurisdictions and schools

In order to realise the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country, jurisdictions and schools need to take into account matters relating to quality and provision.

## Quality

### Quality programs and quality teachers

Quality programs depend on quality teachers. Quality teachers need supportive program conditions and a professional working environment. They also need to be well-trained and have opportunities to participate in ongoing professional learning, which focuses on the development of their linguistic, cultural and pedagogical proficiencies.

### Cumulative nature of languages learning

Learning languages is a cumulative process. The development of deep understanding and language proficiency requires extensive engagement over a prolonged period of time. This means that sustained effort is essential, with frequent and regular lessons, appropriate time allocations, and with schools working together to improve continuity across the levels of schooling. Learners who begin languages study in preschool and the early years of schooling, and those who bring with them knowledge of other languages, are provided with a strong foundation for future languages learning.

### Whole school commitment to languages education

Effective languages programs require whole school support, particularly from school leaders. The involvement of community members, as well as collaboration between languages teachers and colleagues in other key learning areas, influences the extent to which languages are valued as an integral part of the mainstream curriculum.



## Provision

### Choice of languages

All languages are equally valid. Learners gain similar social, cognitive, linguistic and cultural benefits, regardless of the language studied. Decisions made by individual jurisdictions and schools regarding the languages to be offered and supported, need to take into account local contexts. Other important factors to consider are availability of teachers and resources, learner background, and continuity of languages learning, especially at transition points in schooling.

### A range of provision

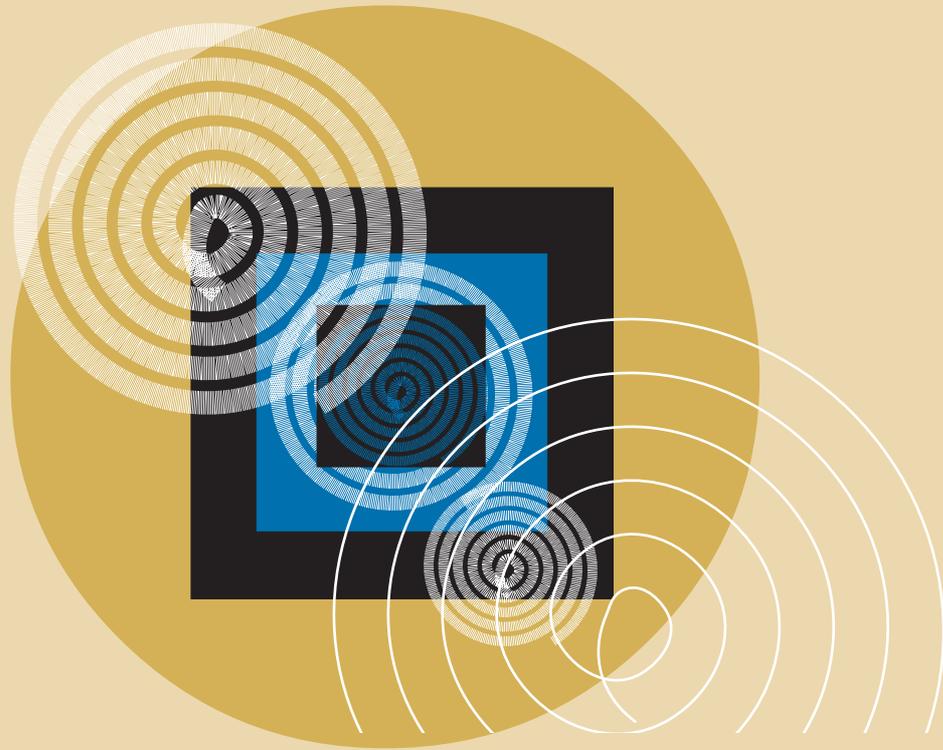
Mainstream schools alone cannot provide the entire range of languages that learners may wish to study. Providing a wide range of languages is achieved through:

- collaboration among mainstream schools, distance education providers and government schools of languages
- in the case of Australian Indigenous Languages, schools working in partnership with Indigenous communities
- after hours ethnic/community languages schooling.

### A distinct and explicit presence for Australian Indigenous Languages

Australian Indigenous Languages have a unique place in Australia's heritage and in its cultural and educational life. For Indigenous learners, they are fundamental to strengthening identity and self-esteem. For non-Indigenous learners, they provide a focus for development of cultural understanding and reconciliation. The choice of which Australian Indigenous Language should be offered requires careful negotiation with Indigenous people. It also requires recognition of protocols related to language ownership, language maintenance and revival; and acknowledgement of the cultural connections and contexts of languages within Australian Indigenous communities.





## **part 2**

### **National Plan**

for Languages Education in

Australian Schools 2005–2008



# Introduction

The National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools provides an overarching framework for State, Territory and Australian Government activities. It affirms the place of languages education in the school curriculum, and describes the purpose and nature of learning languages.

This National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools, as an initial four-year Plan for 2005–2008, reflects an agreed commitment by all Ministers of Education to act together to address areas of common concern. It aims to:

- establish long-term directions for languages education
- advance the implementation of high quality and sustainable programs
- maximise collaboration in the use of national, state and territory resources
- provide flexibility in implementation by individual jurisdictions.

The Plan focuses on six nationally agreed inter-dependent strategic areas. These are:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Strand one:</b>   | <b>Teaching and Learning</b>                        |
| <b>Strand two:</b>   | <b>Teacher Supply and Retention</b>                 |
| <b>Strand three:</b> | <b>Professional Learning</b>                        |
| <b>Strand four:</b>  | <b>Program Development</b>                          |
| <b>Strand five:</b>  | <b>Quality Assurance</b>                            |
| <b>Strand six:</b>   | <b>Advocacy and Promotion of Languages Learning</b> |

At both national and individual jurisdictional level, efforts and resources will focus on the six strategic areas of the Plan, with yearly reports to MCEETYA to outline progress made, and a formal evaluation in the fourth year. The Plan reflects a commitment by Ministers of Education to work in partnership with the key stakeholders in languages education to implement and monitor the Plan. Its effectiveness will be measured through:

- the collection and analysis of student participation data
- the development of national sample assessment processes to determine the quality of student learning outcomes.

Details of the evaluation processes will be developed through national agreement with all jurisdictions.

## STRAND 1

# Teaching and learning

### Objective

To strengthen and promote the quality of teaching and learning practices to ensure that all learners in Australian schools have the opportunity to achieve high level outcomes in languages learning.

### Underpinning principle

All learners in Australian schools are entitled to participate in quality languages programs and to achieve high standards of knowledge, skills and understandings.



### Actions

- Develop strategies to increase participation in languages learning in the compulsory and non-compulsory years of schooling.
- Develop and implement a web-based strategy to disseminate information about relevant and recent Australian and international research and development and materials development, to support information exchange and to encourage ongoing collaboration.
- Share information about effective teaching practices, inter-cultural language learning and classroom based research, and promote through the web-based strategy.
- Consider areas for further research and development to provide opportunities for ideas and new programs to be developed and tested in challenging environments, to embed change at the local levels and to share the experience nationally. Areas to consider include:
  - the pedagogical and assessment implications of inter-cultural language learning
  - languages learning and literacy development
  - factors affecting long-term gains in languages learning
  - impact of program conditions and working environment on teaching and learning
  - factors which inhibit successful languages education
  - transition and continuity from primary to secondary schooling
  - the unique demands of teaching and learning in after hours ethnic/community languages schools
  - the unique demands of teaching and learning Australian Indigenous Languages
  - the contribution of Australian Indigenous Languages to community led maintenance and revival of Australian Indigenous Languages and cultures
  - current provision of languages at senior secondary level
  - languages learning in the early years of schooling
  - languages and vocational education
  - use of information and communication technologies in languages classrooms.

## STRAND 2

# Teacher supply and retention

### Objective

To enhance the provision of appropriately qualified teachers of languages in order to work towards addressing issues related to supply and demand.

### Underpinning principle

A well-qualified and prepared teacher work force; together with program conditions and deployment practices that support quality, consistency and continuity; are necessary in the provision of quality languages education.



### Actions

- Monitor and analyse data related to teacher supply and demand to support workforce planning at the jurisdiction level.
- Share information about effective workforce planning strategies currently being undertaken at jurisdiction level.
- Develop and implement initiatives to attract and retain more teachers of languages. Initiatives to consider include:
  - teaching scholarships to encourage school students to become teachers, particularly targeted at rural and remote areas
  - reimbursement of HECS fees
  - internships to students in final year of teacher training
  - scholarships for in-country training
  - additional tertiary places for languages education
  - incentive payments and career pathways
  - offers of permanent employment
  - recognition and support for overseas trained teachers
  - peer tutoring and mentoring programs
  - retraining opportunities.
- Review the content and structure of teacher education courses with a view to improving access to, and the quality of, preparation for languages teachers.
- Explore how to provide teacher preparation courses for Australian Indigenous Languages and for after hours ethnic/community languages schooling.
- Identify strategies to recognise and support speakers of Australian Indigenous Languages involved in school languages programs.
- Identify strategies to recognise and support community languages speakers teaching in after hours ethnic/community languages schooling.

## STRAND 3

# Professional learning

### Objective

To support the provision of high quality, ongoing and structured professional learning programs to further enhance the quality of teaching.

### Underpinning principle

Ongoing and sustained professional learning programs are essential to quality teaching and learning.



### Actions

- Consider the development of structured and ongoing professional learning programs for teachers of languages, in order to maintain and strengthen their linguistic proficiency, and develop understandings of inter-cultural language learning and curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment, through opportunities such as:
  - accredited tertiary study
  - immersion weekends
  - vacation workshops
  - in-country study and exchange programs
  - community experience for teachers involved in Australian Indigenous Languages programs
  - accredited school based research projects which encourage reflection, dialogue and innovation
  - mentoring opportunities.
- Share information about successful models of professional learning at a national and state level.
- Promote incentives and initiatives aimed at encouraging teacher participation in ongoing and sustained professional learning programs, such as:
  - reimbursement of university fees for postgraduate study
  - study release time to facilitate postgraduate study
  - subsidies for in-country study and study tours
  - sabbaticals
  - optional tertiary accreditation
  - recognition of postgraduate qualifications.
- Explore how to enhance professional learning for personnel involved in the delivery of Australian Indigenous Languages, and of languages taught through after hours ethnic/community languages schooling.
- Consider the development of professional learning programs for school leaders to support them in their role of providing direction and managing quality languages programs.

## STRAND 4

# Program development

### Objective

To enhance access, choice and continuity in languages learning in order to better meet a variety of learner needs.

### Underpinning principle

Program structures need to be flexible to cater for the range of learners across the years of schooling; and take into account the cumulative nature of language learning.



### Actions

- Share information about existing strategies and publications that support access, choice and continuity at the school and jurisdictional level, and promote through the web-based strategy.
- Consider documenting and disseminating models of good practice and effective operational management of languages education in a variety of school contexts and settings.
- Consider the development of curriculum materials to support the provision of a range of languages.
- Explore the scope for sharing existing distance education courses, and for collaborating in future developments to address gaps in the provision of distance education.
- Consider the use and future development of flexible learning technologies for the delivery of languages programs.
- Explore initiatives that strengthen connections between languages and the world of work (eg: development and articulation of pathways for languages learning in the Vocational Education and Training sector).

## STRAND 5

# Quality assurance

### Objective

To monitor and evaluate the provision and quality of languages education at all levels.

### Underpinning principle

Monitoring and evaluation processes which engage jurisdictions and schools in reflection and dialogue will support provision of quality languages education.



### Actions

- Develop a detailed evaluation strategy to monitor the implementation of this Plan.
- Collect and analyse student participation data on an annual basis for national planning purposes and to enable current provision to be measured.
- Explore the possibility of reporting participation data on languages through the Annual National Report on Schooling.
- Explore the development and use of student standards, program standards and teacher standards to support evaluation processes.
- Develop national sample assessment processes to determine student learning outcomes.
- Share information about effective evaluation processes implemented at jurisdiction and school level, and promote through the web-based strategy.

## STRAND 6

# Advocacy and promotion of languages learning

### Objective

To promote the benefits of languages learning in order to develop and strengthen positive community attitudes and perceptions of the value of languages education.

### Underpinning principle

Leadership and advocacy at all levels, including high profile community members, educational leaders, teachers and students, are required to facilitate quality improvement in languages education.



### Actions

- Consider initiatives to promote the educational, cognitive, social and career benefits of languages learning, for example:
  - identify national champions from various walks of life
  - produce print and electronic publications and promotional materials
  - organise national forums and public meetings
  - designate an Australian Year of Languages to mark the importance of languages learning
  - enlist the participation of the media in developing a positive profile for languages.
- Share information about successful promotional activities undertaken at state, territory and individual school level.
- Consider initiatives to enhance student motivation and improve student retention in the schooling sector and into the tertiary sector (eg: bonus points, transition programs, exchanges, study tours, sister school arrangements, tertiary scholarships).





