

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS
(ACSSO)**
The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and
their school communities

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume One Number One: 29 March 2007

Welcome to the first issue of the **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter**. Produced by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) jointly with the Australian Parents Council (APC), this Newsletter will become a monthly event through 2007, to inform school communities and other subscribers with an interest in languages education, about events, activities and initiatives around the country in this vitally important field of learning and development – one with implications for the future of every student in our schools and for the future of our country in the modern world.

In particular, in this first issue, we include information on two important national Language Conferences coming up in July 2007! See Items 7 & 8 below:

We want this Newsletter, and our new Languages Education in Australia Website (see below) to become increasingly interactive, building two-way communication and providing a venue for school communities to put forward ideas, discussion topics, suggestions – and a gallery of good news stories and photos about how your school is engaging its community around languages education. **Contact us on:** info@languageseducation.com

1. Launch of National Languages Education Website.

ACSSO and APC have established and will maintain a dedicated and independent Website which we intend shall progressively develop to provide a useful national information resource on all aspects of languages education. It is intended to meet the information needs of: parents and families; students; teachers (Languages and other); principals; and the wider community. We intend this site to be increasingly interactive – with contributions from practitioners - and everyone who has an interest in languages education and inter-cultural communication. Visit the new site at: <http://www.languageseducation.com>

2. Show and Tell us about Languages in your School!

Like our Values in Education site, this site has a vast “good news gallery” section, which we want to fill with **stories** and **pictures** which describe your school's

approaches, innovations, challenges, successes and the ways in which you work with your school community to provide exciting and effective language learning opportunities for young people in your school community. Have space: will publish! **Send your contributions to:** info@languageseducation.com.

3. National Survey of Attitudes of Parents, Students and Educators to Languages Education.

Our thanks to everyone who participated in and contributed to this Survey: which ran online from early August to end November 2006. Some 3,500 completed surveys were lodged; and at least one-third of these contained further extensive written comments that will provide some extremely valuable data. Some preliminary findings were presented to the Dept of Education, Science & Training and the MCEETYA Working Party on Languages Education (see below) on 19 February 2007. The full Report will be published in early April 2007 and will be available online via the Languages Education in Australia website – further details in our next Newsletter. Meanwhile, a preview sketch of the first data was provided to MCRRTYA Working Party and a DEST Forum on 19 February. **Read that paper HERE: <http://www.languageseducation.com/dest070219.pdf>**

4. Winners of the \$500 Language Resources Prizes in the Survey Draw.

ACSSO and APC each contributed \$500.00 and survey participants could nominate a school of their choice to participate in a draw for each of these prizes. We congratulate the two winning schools:

- o **Caulfield Junior College**, Balaclava Road, CAULFIELDNORTH, VIC 3161
<http://www.caulfieldjc.org.au>
- o **Quinns Baptist College**, Salerno Drive, MINDARIE WA 6030
<http://www.qbcol.com.au/index.html>

5. Launch of "*Directory of Resources in Languages Education*".

In developing and publishing this Directory in both paper and electronic format, we aim to provide a basic resource that can help interested or curious families, students, teachers and community to explore a bit more widely, discover new aspects of languages education and practice, gain some further insights, and wider understanding or a basis for further and more scholarly exploration. In fact, the structure and content of the Directory provides the initial structure and content of our Website! We have already sought and are receiving input comments, suggestions and contributions for improvement of the Directory from jurisdictions and other stakeholders across the country: these will be incorporated into a Second Edition that will be published online in Term Two of this year. If you would like us to send you a paper copy of the first edition, please send us an email at: info@languageseducation.com

6. Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)

In late 2005, MCEETYA (all State and Territory Ministers and the Federal Minister for Education) formally adopted a National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools, and a National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008. This was published and distributed, and MCEETYA then set up a Working Party on Languages Education to advise DEST on the implementation of the Plan across the country. As a starting point, it was decided to hold a pool of some \$1 million each year for investment in a range of action research projects that would assist the States and Territories to implement the National Plan. Eight complementary national projects were endorsed and

commissioned in 2006; and a Progress Report on each was provided to the February 2007 meeting of the Working Party – see the link below. The next meeting of the Working Party will be in May 2007.

- The [National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools & National Plan for Languages Education 2005-2008](#) can be downloaded from the MCEETYA site at:
http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/languageeducation_file.pdf
- Background information about the [MCEETYA Working Party on Languages Education](#) can be accessed at:
<http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/default.asp?id=15338>
- Progress Report on each of the [initial eight action research projects](#) to assist in the implementation of the National Statement and Plan, is at:
http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/LEWP_Projects-Feb_2007.pdf

7. Conference: Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators biennial conference 5-8 July 2007 University of Sunshine Coast, Queensland.

Themed on "*Indonesian Language Study: The Age of Uncertainty*", this Conference provides an excellent program of vitally important interest to everyone with an interest in Indonesian language and learning and the wider context of Australia's problematical approach to its engagement with Indonesia. See: <http://intranet.usc.edu.au/wacana/asile/> (and article below item 10)

This is the 9th ASILE Conference but the first to use **online audio-conferencing** to offer a blend of face-to-face and virtual participation. Some of our speakers and audience in Australia and Indonesia will join the conference by using Adobe Connect Professional or iVocalize, the online audio-graphic conferencing system we also used for the second **National Online Undergraduate Seminar - Indonesian Studies** (NOUS-IS) on 6 October 2006. You are urged to investigate the use of iVocalize before the Conference. Contact asile@usc.edu.au if you are interested to present or participate online.

8. Conference: "The Language Connection": 11-14 July 2007 at Burswood International Resort in Perth Western Australia

The Modern Language Teachers Association of Western Australia invites colleagues from all parts of the country, to their Conference in Perth - an event that is an essential part of the professional development of everyone working in languages education and of broader interest to everyone with an interest in the challenges and opportunities of languages education in this country. For full details visit the website at: <http://www.mltawa.org/>

9. Speaking in tongues OPINION - Judith Weeldon *Weekend Australian*, 24 March 2007

SHOCK! Horror! An Australian government minister has tried to learn some of another language, and a difficult one at that, to assist in her relationships with her Chinese-speaking counterparts. We have spent millions of dollars asking the barely articulate question "Where the bloody hell are you?" and now we complain about thousands of taxpayer dollars and significant personal effort the former

immigration minister Amanda Vanstone invested in developing positive relationships with Chinese speakers with whom she was doing government business.

Vanstone has been on the defensive. Instead, we should congratulate her and encourage more politicians, business executives and the public to make a similar effort.

It is often mentioned that Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd is fluent in Mandarin. Whether it is tall poppy syndrome or cultural cringe, the impression communicated at the same time is that somehow learning Chinese is a waste of time and that using it is showing off.

The implication is that fluency in a foreign language is a disqualification for, or at least irrelevant to, leading the Australian people and their government.

After a year of low-level debate about whether intending migrants and citizens should be required to speak English, attention should turn to the obverse issue: should Australians make the substantial effort required to speak a language other than English? **READ WHOLE ARTICLE:**

<http://www.languageseducation.com/weeldon070324.pdf>

10. Our neighbour, and yet we know little of them

by Mike Carlton (Sydney Morning Herald March 17, 2007)

And so once again we see Australian bodies coming home from Indonesia. It has happened so often. We have had the five journalists murdered at Balibo in Timor in 1975, presently the subject of a harrowing coronial inquiry. There have been the two Bali bombings; the death of nine defence personnel in the navy helicopter disaster at Nias in 2005, and now Wednesday's sombre return of the five killed in the Garuda crash in Yogyakarta.

Go back further, and we can add to this grim litany the 468 men who died in or after the sinking of the cruiser HMAS Perth in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra in 1942, and the hundreds massacred in Japanese prison camps on the island of Ambon.

And there could well be more to die soon. Six of the "Bali nine" drug smugglers jailed in Denpasar have been sentenced to death. It is as if our two countries are locked in some reluctant, fatal embrace, doomed only and forever to be bad news to each other.

Late last year I began shooting an SBS television documentary on the Australian relationship with Indonesia. It will be, in part, a memoir grounded in my three years as a foreign correspondent in Jakarta in the late 1960s. Doing the interviews, I was struck again and again by how much educated Indonesians know about us and, conversely, how little we Australians, educated or otherwise, know about them.

Paul Keating was spot on to say that no country is more important to Australia, yet our ignorance of this great neighbour is lamentable. Look north, and most of us see only mdeath and destruction, Islamist terrorism, or, at best, the cheap Bali holiday for the braided hair and the Bintang beer singlet.

For whatever reason, the Indonesian language is barely taught in our schools any more. I would be surprised if even one member of the Federal Parliament can speak it. Inevitably, all this week broadcast journalists managed to grossly mispronounce the Indonesian surname of Allison Sudradjat, the Australian aid worker killed in Yogyakarta.

The rich cultures of the archipelago are a closed book. We learn zilch of Indonesian history, nothing about Australia's honourable role as diplomatic midwife at the birth of the republic's independence from the Dutch in the late 1940s. And we have little comprehension of Indonesia's contemporary struggle to emerge from the shadows of dictatorship to re-invent itself, not as the Islamist caliphate we illogically fear but as a functioning democracy.

I confess a bias here. I like the Indonesian people; they are brave, resourceful, and generous of spirit, and their country fascinates me. We can, and must, do better by them than we do. Then, perhaps, the news from Indonesia would not always be so bad.

© Mike Carlton & Sydney Morning Herald 2007

To unsubscribe from ACSSO mailings click here:
<mailto:webmaster@acso.org.au?subject=unsubscribe>