

**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

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<http://www.languageseducation.com/news1070412.pdf>

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Welcome to the Easter 2007 issue of the **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter**: keeping you informed 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.

We want this newsletter and the Languages Education in Australia website (<http://www.languageseducation.com>) 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. New Services added to National Languages Education Website.

Website News Feed - <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm>

In the right sidebar is an automatically updated selection of news headlines relating broadly to languages education in Australia. Click on a headline to read the full article at the source. For further information about this news, see the explanatory notes in the panel on the right below the feed itself. This news feed service is provided under contract by international news aggregators and media monitoring service Meltwater News – the feed you see is defined and refined by our own web staff to bring you key daily articles on languages education.

First of the show-and-tell good news stories from schools

Find out which school is the first to tell us about their languages education programs and the ways in which they work in partnership with their community to provide innovative opportunities for students.

We invite all other schools to write and tell us about your approaches, innovations, challenges and successes, and the ways in which you work with your community to provide stimulating and effective language learning opportunities. Send story and pictures to: info@languageseducation.com.

Opinion – Guest Columnists write on issues in languages education

Each month we will add further Opinion pieces on aspects and issues affecting languages education in Australia and around the world. You can check out this feature - and read a very recent piece by Michael Clyne, Roly Sussex and Anne Pauwels: "***A National Tragedy and an International Embarrassment***".

2. Letter to the Editor:

Judith Weeldon (Australian 23 Mar 2007) is to be applauded for her lucid description of the benefits of speaking another language, and the value of this to the community. She also highlighted the parlous state of language education in Australia, notwithstanding, might I add, that all Ministers for Education have agreed that languages education is one of eight key learning areas in Australian schools.

Ministers of Education issued a national statement in 2005 expressing commitment 'to the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country'. Unfortunately, that is all it is at the moment – a vision. Most Australian schools have piecemeal language programs, and the failure to deliver foreign languages, especially Asian languages, as an integral component of our education systems is a clear failing of the current arrangements.

The ease with which Europeans can move around the English-speaking world, and the economic, social and cultural advantages that they enjoy as a result, could be replicated here with a curriculum attuned to Australia's growing links with Asia, especially China. It would lead to Australians fluently and comfortably living and working in China and other Asian countries, with similar economic and social benefits.

The quality of school language programs varies significantly between States and Territories, though none have a program that seems to come anywhere near the standard of the European or Chinese second language programs. In the ACT, the only reason it is possible for a student to be taught continuously from primary school to Year 12 in any foreign language is that the French Government helps to fund a French language program in one of our schools. Apart from this one case, it is not possible to obtain a coordinated sequence of programs across school levels. For Canberra, which has long been a multi-lingual community, this is an appalling situation.

Kevin Rudd was a driving force for the implementation, in 1995, of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) program. This program resourced Australian schools to teach four Asian languages, including Mandarin. It was abolished in 2004, by the then Federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson.

For all the reasons expounded by Weeldon, and for many more, it is time for all Australian Governments to equip our children and our community with the language and cultural skills needed to deal intimately and effectively with our neighbours.

*Dr Mandy Scott
President
Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc.
<http://alma.anu.edu.au>*

3. Research

Dr Lindy Norris is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Murdoch University. She works in the areas of second language research, professional development for language educators, curriculum design, and program evaluation and change management.

In 2001, in association with the Centre for Learning Change and Development at Murdoch University, Dr Norris compiled **A Literature Search and Analysis of the Benefits of Learning a Language Other Than English to Literacy Development in English.**

A summary of the four parts of this document might best convey the breadth of research and depth of analysis:

- Literacy and Language learning: an exploration of the relationship between the two, based on the findings of the literature search presented "in a way that makes them accessible to the community at large".
- A Review and Analysis of the Literature
- Implications for Policy and Practice
- Recommendations for Research

You can download the report at

<http://www.languagesineducation.com/norris070412.pdf>.

4. Conference

Moving the boundaries of classroom learning: a capa y espada

Teachers from all states are invited to participate in the annual state conference for teachers of **Spanish** which will be held in Adelaide on 23 June 2007.

The opening key note talk is from Professor Mike Lawson of Flinders University on research into the key word method as a way of helping students to remember new vocabulary. The conference program moves from the theory, through to workshops in the practical, including using ICT, in both Spanish and English and concludes with the socio-cultural through music and dance and tapas y copas.

Workshops will include new resources for developing intercultural understandings via authentic texts by using advertisements and the surprise and success from using comics, both for unpacking la vida cotidiana, and much more. To find out details and information on registering for the conference and the dinner, email Maurene McEwen maurene.mcewen@nmhs.sa.edu.au.

5. Reminders

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

Conference: "The Language Connection", Modern Language Teachers Association of Western Australia, 11-14 July 2007, Perth, WA.

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