

**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 Five: 24 May 2007

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<http://www.languageseducation.com/news1070524.pdf>

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Welcome to the fifth 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 started as a monthly publication and is rapidly evolving to be a much more frequent 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.

We want this Newsletter, and our new 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

Note: Disclaimer - Any products or services mentioned in this Newsletter or on our Website are simply noted for your information; no such mention infers or provides any recommendation, guarantee or indemnity from ACSSO, APC or any of our members or employees in respect of any member of the public who may choose to follow up with that service or product.

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EDUCATION QUOTE OF THE YEAR

"We have not been presented yet with an overwhelming argument that we should change the current situation."

Variously attributed to Captain Smith of RMS Titanic (1912), George Armstrong Custer at Little Big Horn (1876), Field Marshal Douglas Haig (Loos 1915; Paschendael 1916 etc), and most recently to a generic Departmental spokesman quoted in the Herald-Sun on 4 May 2007 (q.v.). Originally an epitaph from the tomb of the Unknown Education Bureaucrat (Languages), date uncertain.
Scaramouche

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Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry Calls for Compulsory Languages Education

In a major policy paper launched on 26 April 2007 "**Skills for a Nation – A Blueprint for Improving Education and Training 2007 – 2017**" the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) has called for a shift to compulsory languages learning for all young people from age 7, or earlier.

This reflects a national need for young people to build the skills and capacity to communicate and operate effectively in a globalised world. Interestingly, this recommendation is linked in their paper with their view that every child should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument from an early age.

In advocating this and a range of other sensible reforms to improve our education systems and enhance the range of current and future opportunities available to young people across the country, ACCI recognises the need to build a sustainable platform for the future over an initial period of at least three years, in each of which an additional supporting investment of some \$2.9 billion should be agreed between the States and the Federal governments, to support the staged and progressive achievement of those objectives.

You can read the whole paper at:

<http://www.acci.asn.au/SkillsBlueprintMain.htm>

Survey of Attitudes to Languages Education in Australia – Discussion Paper

Between August and November 2006 ACSSO and APC ran a national online survey of attitudes to languages education, to highlight and explore the issues from the various perspectives of parents, students, teachers, principals, departmental bureaucrats and tertiary language instructors.

The analysis of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the 3,500 responses was completed earlier this year, and a Discussion Paper developed which was circulated to some 60 selected key stakeholders across the country for their response comments on any other aspects that should be investigated.

Because we want to give every family and school community the opportunity to comment, to ensure that there are no issues we have not yet identified or highlighted, we are now making the Discussion Paper available through our Website. Your comments by 20 June 2007 please. You can access the full Paper at http://www.languageseducation.com/attitudes_mcconchie.pdf.

To whet your appetite, the following is drawn from the **Executive Summary of Attitudes Towards the Study of Languages in Australian Schools**, subtitled **The National Statement and Plan - making a difference or another decade of indifference?**

***“Learning a language in Australia should be seen like learning Maths or English, kicking a ball at recess time or eating lunch – it is a normal part of the curriculum in which every student should participate. It is part of an education for life.”** Sadly, for many students in many Australian schools learning a language is not a normal part of the curriculum as envisaged by this South Australian teacher. The sub-title of this report is deliberately provocative*

– will the National and Statement and Plan be acted upon to make a difference to the state of language education in Australian schools; or will the next decade parallel the history of the last, when the momentum for change in relation to languages was gradually lost only to be replaced by an indifferent political and educational leadership and a generally apathetic public?

Language has been the Key Learning Area that has been politically easy to ignore. Languages have slipped off the education agenda over the last decade, and public debate has been virtually non-existent. No political party has sought votes for language education in the same way that other educational topics have been thrust into the spotlight from time to time. If anything, the present Federal government rhetoric has turned Australians more inward, through a focus on “Australian values and culture”, the primacy of learning English and emphasising the assimilation of new arrivals as opposed to the ideals of multiculturalism.

And the States, which have the fundamental responsibility for education in Australia, are just as complicit. They too have allowed languages to languish. The National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools represents another restart of the languages debate. If it was the first time that languages education had been placed on the agenda for priority action, it surely would have been met with considerable enthusiasm. However, a study of the recent history of this curriculum area reveals that languages education has been on a stop start pathway since the 1980's.

Read more at

http://www.languageseducation.com/attitudes_mcconchie.pdf

Learning Chinese – Student Volunteers Sought

An Australian business, **China Live**, has contacted us to advise they are developing in Internet based tutoring service, which uses live tutors who are native speakers of Mandarin, who are based in China.

For this pilot phase, they are actively looking for students who might like to practice their conversational chinese – at no cost! Lessons use internet video conferencing tools. Courses are based on popular text books. Lessons are recorded, so you can vieww them later to review how you are going.

If you are interested in following up to find out more details, contact **Jeremy Buckley** at China Live, mobile 0422 174 679, email pilot@chinalive.com.au; or web at <http://www.chinalive.com.au>.

Leading Languages Education – A National Project for School Leaders

The **Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council Inc** (APAPDC Inc) has been contracted by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training under the School Languages Programme to undertake an information and dissemination strategy for school principals and leaders in all education sectors. As a result school principals and leaders will be

informed and encouraged to play a constructive leadership role in facilitating quality improvement in Languages education.

The Leading Languages Education website is a resource and professional development site to support principals and school leaders in leading Languages education in Australian schools.

The development of this website, electronic newsletters, a series of forums in each state and territory and the publication of a Leadership in Languages Education Publication over the coming year will ensure that school leaders are informed and encouraged to play a constructive leadership role in the development and implementation of approaches to Languages education at the school level.

Read more at <http://www.apapdc.edu.au/leadinglanguages/>.

'Grassroots' Push for Multiculturalism in NT

April 23, 2007 – The Age

"Multiculturalism" may have been banished from the federal government's lexicon, but a remote mining town is fighting back.

As terrorism fears and Muslim immigration prompt new demands for migrants to integrate and learn English, a new TV advertising campaign backed by the Rotary Club of Nhulunbuy, in Arnhem Land, is urging Australians to respect each other's differences.

The ads, broadcast on commercial television, show a football team containing members with Aboriginal, Asian, Muslim and European backgrounds.

Despite their differing origins the team members unite, recognising that they're all on the same side, as the ad urges Australians to "give each other a fair go".

A second ad along similar lines has been produced and a third is in the pipeline, while T-shirts and posters also have been printed.

The idea for the national ad campaign came from Phil O'Brien, part-time pearl farmer and author of 101 Adventures That Got Me Absolutely Nowhere.

Mr O'Brien said his aim was to encourage respect and trust in an age when global conflict threatened to divide sections of the Australian community.

In January, Prime Minister John Howard removed the word "multicultural" from all government language and changed the name of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Labor leader Kevin Rudd established an opposition portfolio for integration while retaining multicultural affairs.

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<http://www.theage.com.au/news/National/Grassroots-push-for-multiculturalism/2007/04/23/1177180548969.html>

THE VIEW FROM THE USA

*Vivien Stewart is Vice President, Education, at the Asia Society in New York. She writes here for **Educational Leadership**, published by Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*

Becoming Citizens of the World

By Vivien Stewart

The future is here. It's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual. But are students ready for it?

The world into which today's high school students will graduate is fundamentally different from the one in which many of us grew up. We're increasingly living in a globalized society that has a whole new set of challenges. Four trends have brought us here.

The first trend is economic. The globalization of economies and the rise of Asia are central facts of the early 21st century. Since 1990, 3 billion people in China, India, and the former Soviet Union have moved from closed economies into a global one. The economies of China, India, and Japan, which represented 18 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004, are expected to represent 50 percent of the world's GDP within 30 years (Wilson, 2005). One in five U.S. jobs is now tied to international trade, a proportion that will continue to increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Moreover, most U.S. companies expect the majority of their growth to be in overseas markets, which means they will increasingly require a workforce with international competence. According to the Committee for Economic Development (2006),

To compete successfully in the global marketplace, both U.S.-based multinational corporations as well as small businesses increasingly need employees with knowledge of foreign languages and cultures to market products to customers around the globe and to work effectively with foreign employees and partners in other countries.

Science and technology are changing the world and represent a second trend ...

Read the whole article at:
http://www.ascd.org/authors/ed_lead/el200704_stewart.html

Reminders

Conference: "Moving the boundaries of classroom learning", Spanish Teachers Conference, 23 June 2007, Adelaide, SA.
maurene.mcewen@nmhs.sa.edu.au

Conference: Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators
biennial conference, 5-8 July 2007, Sunshine Coast, Qld.
<http://intranet.usc.edu.au/wacana/asile/>

Conference: "The Language Connection", Modern Language Teachers
Association of Western Australia, 11-14 July 2007, Perth, WA.
<http://www.mltawa.org/>

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