

# 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 Twelve: 9 August 2007

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<http://www.languageseducation.com/news1070809.pdf>

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Welcome to 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 aims to inform school communities and other subscribers about events, activities and initiatives around the country related to languages education.

We want this Newsletter, and our 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](mailto: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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### Future Publication Schedule for this Newsletter

When we first launched this Newsletter, it was intended as a monthly publication. However, to reflect the pace and range of issues arising in relation to Languages Education over the past weeks, we have been publishing on a weekly basis to keep pace with the expanding debate about essential future directions, and to bring you updates as matters arise.

Now we have established the context and the significant ongoing issues in this vitally important national discussion, we are in a better position to plan a firm publishing schedule for the remainder of this year. Our "anchor" publication – the **Australian Education Digest** will continue to appear on Wednesday mornings. This **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter** will continue to appear on Friday mornings – but will alternate with our other more specifically oriented publications, which include at this point:

- **Ensemble: The Newsletter of Music Education in Australia** – which will be launched next week with the independent Website <http://www.ensemble.org.au>
- **Values in Education** – a quarterly which links with our website <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au>
- **Public Education Voice** – a quarterly which links with our core portal website at <http://www.acsso.org.au>

Each issue of each Newsletter will be numbered and dated, and with a live archive of back issues accessible on each of the websites quoted. This arrangement has been endorsed as the most manageable by a majority of subscribers, so that they receive only two comprehensive publications each week.

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## **HOT TOPIC: AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION**

### **Primary School Charter – A Blueprint for Future Primary Education**

*APPA Press Release - August 1, 2007*

A draft Primary School Charter that simplifies the curriculum and proposes core areas of learning has been released by the Australian Primary Principals' Association, which represents more than 7,000 Government, Independent and Catholic primary schools with a combined attendance of almost two million students.

The draft Charter is the result of a forum in Sydney in July where 35 of the nation's leading educationalists, including academics, principals, teachers and parents examined the question of what primary schools are and their role in the education system.

The National President of APPA, Leonie Trimper, said the draft Charter sought to answer two key questions: "What should primary schools be like" and "What is the purpose of primary schools". She said that the end result was a draft Charter that reflected the majority views arrived at by the forum, adding: "It would be wrong to say all attendees agreed with everything in the draft Charter.

The forum, funded by the Minister for Education, Ms Julie Bishop, concluded there were four prime core curriculum areas that were essential to primary education - English, Mathematics, Science and History.

Read more of the press release at <http://www.appa.asn.au/news/?IntCatId=16>

Download the Charter at

<http://www.appa.asn.au/cms/uploads/news/primaryedcharter2007.pdf>

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### **ACSSO Commentary**

In launching the draft Charter, APPA President Leonie Trimper has indicated they seek this document to provide the catalyst for a "wide-ranging, healthy and constructive debate that will result in a final charter that can truly become a blue-print for the future" in terms of primary schooling in all parts of the country. The Charter is an attempt by its authors to address these two admittedly very broad and rather general focusing questions: -

- What is the purpose of Primary Schools?; (and thus in turn)
- What should Primary schools "be like"?

The Draft Charter posits in response to the first question, that "the role of primary education is to ensure all children learn and gain a permanent love of learning,

characterised by high expectations and joy in learning; rich experiences and depth of understanding”.

All well and good. Then, in terms of the second question, in terms of what it is they will be learning, by means of which they will all develop this permanent love of learning, through rich experiences and depth of understanding, the Charter informs us that there are in fact only two aspects of knowledge and skill which are central and form “the heart of primary schooling”:

- English Literacy; and
- Numeracy & Mathematical Literacy.

Having thus firmly ensconced Reading Riting & Rithmetic as the fundamentals of a primary education, the Charter then recognises two other “significantly less central areas” which are nevertheless seen as having some subsidiary value:

- Science
- Australian History

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/acss070809.pdf>

Everyone with an interest in the future of education should access the Draft Charter on <http://www.appa.asn.au> and make your views known via the discussion process – APPA invites your input by 30 August 2007.

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## **Blueprint for a Monolingual and Parochial Australia?**

*by Michael Clyne*

A few days ago the Primary Principals’ Association released a draft charter which they claim is a ‘strategic, thoughtful and forward-looking statement of (the purposes of primary schooling)’, which begins to equip ‘our children...to lead the nation through the 21st century’.

These principles are sensible and commendable.

However, if we view the curriculum areas that are proposed as the core areas, which should ‘equip children to play a part in the world beyond the school’, they are narrow and limiting: English literacy, Mathematics (including numeracy), Science, and History (which ‘shows children their place in the world through learning about important stories, people and events from the history of Australia and Australians’).

The glaring omission in the draft charter is a recognition of the increasing trends towards globalization, and the fundamental need to equip students to participate in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world.

The need for the development of intercultural awareness and understanding through the study of languages has been incorporated into curriculum documents in Australia and in most other OECD countries.

General Peter Cosgrove, former head of the Australian Defence Forces has stated that: ‘Languages skills and cultural sensitivity will be the new currency of the world order’.

With a narrow emphasis on English literacy and the relegation of languages other than English to the category of 'supplementary subject', one might wonder how small the world is to which the principals are wishing to condemn future generations of Australians?

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/clyne070809.pdf>

*Professor Michael Clyne has most recently been Professorial Fellow in the School of Languages (attached to RUMACCC at the University of Melbourne) and also Emeritus Professor at Monash University. He is patron of the Victorian School of Languages. See <http://www.linguistics.unimelb.edu.au/about/staff/profiles/clyne/index.html>.*

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## **Lead art education body slams proposed 'back to basics' plan for schools**

Victoria's lead art education professional association, Art Education Victoria, today slammed the 'back to basics plan for schools' as myopic and backwards.

The plan, published in the Age on Thursday August 2nd and drafted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, proposed a new charter for key curriculum areas, with the focus on core areas such as English, Math, History and Science, leaving the other 'non-core' curriculum areas to the discretion of individual schools.

Art Education Victoria executive member Tania Tickyj, said "whilst we acknowledge the primary curriculum needs to be 'uncluttered', and the proposed core areas are important, it would appear that we are trying to travel back in time, rather than provide a curriculum that is forward looking".

"The so called 'non-core' curriculum areas such as the creative arts are essential, not only to a student's individual development but to society as a whole".

Ms Tickyj, the Curriculum Director of Mentone Girls Secondary College referred to a speech given at a business lunch last week by the ANZ bank's Chief economist Saul Eslake who said employers should look to the arts rather than other fields, for potential employees who have 'the skills and attributes required for contemporary businesses'.

"Mr Eslake told the lunch that businesses that wanted their managers to be critical thinkers, innovative, challenge conventional wisdom and have the capacity to look at familiar themes from new angles should look to role models from the arts."

"Schools must embrace the notion of creativity, the primary principals must also. The most effective way of doing this is to ensure that every school, primary and secondary provides a means for all students to study both art and music.

"The creative and dynamic curriculum offered in Visual art and Music prepares young people for the 21st century. If as Mr Eslake states, creative people give businesses the edge why are the primary principals ignoring this Key area of the curriculum?"

The Art Education Victoria website is at <http://www.aev.vic.edu.au>

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## **APPA's Draft Charter Captured by Federal Agenda**

*S.A. Progressive Educator 2 August 2007*

The Australian Primary Principal's Draft Charter on Primary Schooling seems to have taken an unexpected turn with a proposal that would be very encouraging for the Howard Federal government education agenda of attempting to control and limit curriculum that might cause students at any level to develop skills in critical analysis and independent thinking.

No surprises there since the development of the Draft Charter was funded by federal Education Minister Julie Bishop.

The draft errs from the outset by stating that, "the main purpose of primary schooling is ensuring that all children learn and gain a permanent love of learning."

Learn what though? No point at being good at learning if somebody has already made a decision about what should be learned. Surely the main purpose of schools (primary and secondary) is to educate. An educated individual would be recognised as one who has knowledge, skills and understandings in a broad range of disciplines.

Read more at <http://sa-progressiveeducator.blogspot.com/2007/08/appas-draft-charter-captured-by-federal.html>

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## **Legacy of Stupifying Mono-Lingualism**

*By Philip Mahnken*

In response to powerful comments about the real and present dangers of monolingualism on the ABC Breakfast program, Dr Philip Mahnken of USC wrote in appreciation:

The words that came from your guest, author Tim Weiner were music to the souls of Australia's beleaguered languages teachers. If we're lucky, this issue - the disastrous self-harming refusal to learn other languages and cultures - gets a 30 second blip on most broadcast media. Occasionally academics like Michael Clyne rail against persistent monolingualism in public print media but how many of the decision making elite or voting public and parents read these or academic articles or high-sounding policy which is never implemented?

So, well done, Tim Weiner - I will be quoting and linking to his half hour lashing of the CIA and the USA establishment who are "just guessing" how to influence, meddle in and run the world. Once proud multicultural Australia, with a National Languages Policy the world admired, is now a dismal, suspicious, "English first and integrate" country. "Ignorance as a Second Language," as Robin Jeffrey put it.

2008 is the UN Year of Languages and we plan to make as big a splash as we can!.

## **CIA and the Legacy of Ashes**

*Program excerpt transcribed by Philip Mahnken*

Tim Weiner: "Just guessing" is not intelligence. The problem we as Americans have is that we project our power around the world, we're a superpower. And yet we do not really understand many of the countries that we want to command and contain and control. At root, the problem is we don't speak the language.

When the British ran their Empire in the 19th century, they lived for generations in the countries they wanted to command. India is a very good example. Generations after generations. We don't do generations. We do two year tours. And in the case of Iraq we do 90 days tours.

And if you cannot speak the language - you can build all the spy satellites you want, you can build all the electronic eavesdropping stations to pick up global telecommunications that you can afford. And we do at a cost of tens of billions of dollars - but in the end, the only way to know the enemy, the only to know another man's mind, is to talk to him.

And we can't speak the language.

We do not speak Arabic. We do not speak Chinese or Korean. Or Farsi, the language of Iran. Or Pushtu, the language of eastern Afghanistan.

And so we wind up buying our intelligence from "friendly" foreign intelligence services - and there *are* no friendly foreign intelligence services.

Fran Kelly: And this, as you document through the book, has led to spectacular surprises, if you like, for the CIA. The CIA missed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it missed the collapse of the Soviet Union, it missed the coming down of the Berlin wall, it missed the invasion of Kuwait, and it missed the fall of the Shah of Iran. I mean it goes on and on and on, the things that it missed. And you keep coming back to that thing, they didn't speak the language, they didn't understand the culture they dealing with.

Tim Weiner: Right and if we are going to continue as a superpower, I would argue we had better get back to basics and learn the languages.

Hear the whole interview at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/breakfast/stories/2007/1999482.htm>

*Tim Weiner is a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist from the New York Times. He's been covering the CIA for twenty years and has written its definitive history, A Legacy of Ashes.*

*Dr Phillip Mahnken is a teacher of languages: Australian born, currently teaching Indonesian language at the University of the Sunshine Coast and also has taught French previously in high schools and still in a community language program.*

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## **VIEW FROM THE USA**

### **Dual Language Learning Benefits Students**

*Quincy Herald Whig (IL) July 30, 2007*

Some schools teaching children from non-English speaking backgrounds are finding that the best programs to help children learn English also benefit the native English speakers.

In Beardstown, where 50 percent of the students are Hispanic, elementary students in the dual-language program made greater improvement in reading and oral fluency than did the students in the English-only classes including the native English speakers.

What is more, English-speaking students in the second-grade dual-language program outperformed students in the English-only program in every area.

In third grade, scores for the dual language group outperformed or were similar in almost all areas.

"This is the 'counter-intuitive' result," said Debra Cole, director of the Dual-Language Enrichment Program at Beardstown and regional coordinator for English language learners (ELL). "When Spanish speakers learn to read in both languages, they transfer skills to their new language much better, resulting in better English skills than if they weren't using their first language at school. ... It works in reverse for English-speaking kids learning Spanish."

Positive outcomes have been recorded for these programs around the nation.

Read more at <http://www.whig.com/289474339660330.php>

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## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS**

### **2008 Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships**

*Media Release, the Hon Julie Bishop, 9 August 2007*

Applications are now open for the 2008 Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships study awards, Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop, MP announced today.

"Up to 200 practising language teachers and trainee language teachers in Australia will be awarded one of these intensive short-term study programmes to improve language and cultural skills," Minister Bishop said.

"These important Fellowships are an Australian Government initiative, and in 2008 will offer seven overseas in-country programmes for Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish plus an onshore Indonesian language immersion programme in Australia."

Since 2004, 542 language teachers and trainee languages teachers have benefited from this professional learning opportunity to nine countries and in Australia.

Minister Bishop said she has received letters from past award recipients commending the benefits of the programme.

"They have returned with improved language skills and cultural knowledge, enthused with renewed confidence in their language teaching."

Two 2007 award recipients have spoken highly of their experience:

Adam Elliot, Trainee Language Teacher (Japan Programme) University of Ballarat said, "For my first time overseas and to finally experience first-hand Japanese culture and

language/ dialects has been incredible..... This has given me more confidence, and it is a necessity that a teacher has an in-country experience before teaching."

Laurina Barbetti, Practising Language Teacher, (Italy Programme) Marist College North Shore said, "This programme has been the most significant event in terms of my professional development as an Italian language teacher. As it was my first experience in the country, my approach to the subject has 'come alive' so to speak. Networking with other educators has also been invaluable."

Read more at

[http://www.endeavour.dest.gov.au/language\\_teacher\\_fellowships](http://www.endeavour.dest.gov.au/language_teacher_fellowships)

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