

# LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume Two Number Three: 13 March 2008

Read this on the web at <http://www.languageseducation.com/news1080313.pdf>

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## Languages Matter!

*Welcome to our third edition in celebration of the International Year of Languages 2008. Features include:*

- 2007 Languages Summit
- Opinion: Language Death and Why it Matters
- National News (2 items)
- Around the States & Territories (1 item)
- Tales From Here & There (7 items)
- Resources (2 items)
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- The Language of Political Motions
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## 2007 LANGUAGES SUMMIT

### Full Proceedings of 2007 "Languages in Crisis" Summit Available Online

On 7 June 2007, the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Group of 8 Universities convened a Languages Education Summit at the National Press Club in Canberra.

This event also marked the launch of a discussion paper, "Languages in Crisis: A Rescue Plan for Australia",

The proceedings and publications at the Summit event are available online, with audio in MP3 format of all the presentations and keynote addresses, including those of Major Michael Stone and Professor Michael Worton of University College, London.

Listen online through your browser or download the files to play on your media player.

See: <http://www.humanities.org.au/Policy/Languages/MP3s/>

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## OPINION

### Language Death and Why it Matters

*Benjamin B Sargent 20 February 2008*

21 February 2008 is International Mother Language Day. In the grand scheme of the universe, we may have another billion years or so to colonize outside our solar system before the sun dies out, but probably only a few generations to devise a stable context for social continuity and the survival of our species.

Human population and planetary resource equations look uncertain at best: Climate change, pollution, and political/cultural/religious conflicts create a host of challenges for humankind in the next hundred years.

Establishing an economically and environmentally sustainable mesh of interconnected regional societies — avoiding catastrophic collapse — will require solving all of these problems and more. No one group of people has all of the answers or enough resources to solve these challenges on their own.

Recent research shows that a diverse group of actors is more effective at problem-solving than a smart group.

The smartest people will get stuck at the same place and are less likely to think themselves out of a box. Groups selected for diversity rather than smarts will get stuck more often, but get themselves unstuck more quickly, ultimately solving intractable problems with greater speed and higher success rates.

Languages represent vast storehouses of human knowledge. Most languages are not written down, but live only in the memories and cultural practices of human communities — groups of people who over millennia have devised unique systems of survival in difficult circumstances. Human languages are catalogs of plants, animals, insects, people's stories, weather patterns, diseases, social paradigms, songs, jokes, aphorisms, strategies for war and peace, practices of trade and negotiation.

Human language diversity was at its peak in pre-colonial times. It is now well past its prime. "Language death" has accelerated to a current rate of 2 languages lost per month. As last speakers die, carrying their languages to their graves, repositories of information and understanding that took thousands of years to gather... gone. From a probable peak of 20,000 we are already down to only 6 or 7 thousand extant languages. Experts estimate that of these, 3,000 more will become extinct in the next 30 years, further gutting the storehouse of human knowledge.

Read more at <http://globalwatchtower.com/2008/02/20/intl-mother-language/>

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## **NATIONAL NEWS**

### **Language curriculum reform call**

*Farrah Tomazin The Age February 9, 2008*

Learning a language should be compulsory and students should get university-entry bonuses if they complete the subject in VCE, educators are urging.

As the number of students studying languages continues to decline, experts warn Australia is at risk of falling behind because its school curriculum is too "Euro-centric".

Experts from the Australian Secondary Principals Association, the Asia Education Foundation and the Australian Council of State School Organisations have called for reforms to encourage more teachers and students to learn a language.

Some of the suggestions include:

- Reducing HECS debt for university students who take on a teaching degree in language.
- Expanding to other states the Victorian practice of giving high school graduates a bonus on university entry scores for doing a second language in year 12.
- Making language a compulsory subject in primary schools to year 10.

Figures show the rate of year 12 students graduating with a second language has dropped from 40% in the 1960s to 13% today — with Australian students spending less time learning a language than those in all other developed countries.

But the Victorian Government appears reluctant to change its status on the school curriculum. "We have struck the right balance," said Matt Nurse, spokesman for Education Minister Bronwyn Pike. Australian Secondary Principals Association president Andrew Blair said part of the problem was that instead of focusing on a few chosen languages, schools offered many choices but not enough emphasis on any of them.

In Victoria, 22 languages are taught in government primary schools, 19 in secondary colleges and 40 through the Victorian School of Languages.

But Mr Blair said the curriculum should contain six core languages other than English — Indonesian, Japanese, French, Mandarin, Spanish and German — with HECS support offered to university teaching students who studied one or more of the six.

"What we haven't been is sufficiently brave to grasp a solution that can at least guarantee continuity of teacher supply and of programs in schools across the country," Mr Blair said.

Terry Aulich, chief executive of key parent group Australian Council of State School Organisations, agreed, saying the shortage of language teachers was resulting in schools having to scrap programs.

In the lead-up to the election, Labor leader Kevin Rudd, who is fluent in Mandarin, pledged \$68 million to promote Asian languages in schools and tackle teacher shortages. But some have warned that the plan is just a starting point to rectify decades of government inaction.

Asia Education Foundation executive director Kathe Kirby called for a revival of the national Asian languages and studies in Australian schools strategy, which doubled the number of Asian language learners in schools in the 1990s, but was scrapped in 2002.

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/language-curriculum-reform-call/2008/02/08/1202234169459.html>

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## Primary school pupils 'need extra language'

*Lucy Hood, Adelaide Advertiser, February 25, 2008*

Students as young as four must learn a foreign language or the Australian workforce will lose its competitive edge, a report to the Federal Government warns.

The report, handed to the federal Education Department, is calling for an urgent overhaul of the national curriculum to make language study compulsory from kindergarten to Year 10.

The report's co-author, University of South Australia associate professor Angela Scarino, said Australian students were not being positioned for "global employment".

"They will be sitting around a table with people of multilingual capability and they will only have English - it's just not enough," she said. "We are going to have to decide as a nation whether we are going to be monolingual and be left behind or really embrace languages and cultures."

State Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith endorsed the study's findings, saying that learning a second language was increasingly important in a globalised economy.

Other key recommendations of the report, which is yet to be released, include:

**NURTURING** the use of a student's native language at school.

**RECOGNISING** indigenous languages as an integral part of the curriculum.

**ALLOWING** students to choose from a wide range of languages.

**ADDRESSING** language teacher shortages.

**MORE** training for teachers.

The \$2.2 million report, Investigation into the State and Nature of Languages Education in Australian Schooling, involved over 400 teachers in each state and territory.

Read more <http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,23269180-2682,00.html>

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## **AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES**

### **ACT Leaps into the International Year of Languages**

The first major event in Australia to mark the launch of the International Year of Languages was the ACT Government's "Languages Matter!" Forum, with guest speakers from UK, WA and Victoria. We will post further information on the IYL Website at <http://www.languages2008.org.au> as it comes to hand.

But a good deal more has also been happening in the National Capital:

- The vital role of languages in maintaining the many cultures celebrated at the Multicultural Festival was highlighted at the festival's launch on 1 February by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, John Hargreaves. The International Year of Languages was also acknowledged.
- On 8 February, an important step was taken to broaden the ACT government's approach to languages education. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) met with Community Languages Australia and the ACT Ethnic Schools Association, together with the Director of Curriculum Support and Professional Learning in the Department of Education (DET) and an adviser to the Minister for Education.

It was agreed that a Round Table discussion on language education involving a wide range of interested stakeholders be held. These would include DET, OMA, parent associations, primary and secondary principal associations, school council organisations, business leaders, and ethnic school and community representatives.

It was also agreed that language education would be part of a Multicultural Summit to be held later in the Year.

- On Sunday February 10, the ACT Bilingual Education Group had a steady stream of visitors to its information stall at Contact Canberra during the Multicultural Festival. Many were parents raising their children in two or three languages and/or looking for language programs for their children. The Group are planning to cooperate with the ACT Ethnic Schools Association next year to provide more comprehensive information.

They will also seek input from adult language providers since a surprising number of adults enquired about opportunities to learn another language or practice one they had learned previously.

- On 13 February, there was considerable discussion of languages in the ACT Legislative Assembly. Much personal experience of, and beliefs about, the benefits of learning and knowing languages other than English were revealed by all sides of politics. The government also outlined all its current initiatives in the area. See THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL MOTIONS elsewhere in this newsletter.

- ACT Department of Education & Training is organising a professional learning conference for language teachers and pre-service teachers in the ACT on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 March 2008 (teachers must attend both days).

The presenter is Dr Amanda Barton from the University of Manchester in the UK. Dr Barton is the author of 'Getting the Buggers Into Languages', which provides teachers with a range of practical

strategies to motivate students of all ages, especially boys (see <http://books.google.com/books?id=RaZ7D4zXbBcC&printsec=frontcover#PPP1,M1>)

For conference details contact Elizabeth Courtois, Languages Curriculum Executive Officer in Curriculum Support at DET on 6205 7164 before 14 March

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## **TALES FROM HERE AND THERE**

### **USA: Bilingual children have a distinct advantage**

*By Michael Escalante*

There is a very promising program that is just getting off the ground in our schools. It's called the Foreign Language Academy of Glendale, and it is based on a very educationally sound objective. Children who learn more than one language are better students, get better jobs and are generally better equipped to function in a world where knowledge of multiple languages is at a premium.

We'd like to eventually have all of our children in all of our schools be bilingual. English, of course, remains the centerpiece of language instruction in each and every school, but there is very solid evidence, based on mountains of research, that being bilingual provides an undeniable advantage to all of our students.

Before mentioning exactly what those advantages are, I want to be clear on one thing. It is our stated — and I must say, solemn — responsibility to provide every opportunity for our children to succeed in school. They deserve the very best we can offer, which includes providing them with tools to compete, to grow and to make the most of their potential. The world in which we live grows increasingly interdependent and competitive, and we can ill afford continuing to be "the most monolingual nation in the world."

But there are more compelling reasons for our kids to become multi-linguistic. Advanced knowledge of two languages has been shown to result in specific enhancements to brain activity. These would include increased test scores, greater creativity (which confers benefits to all subjects our children study) and flexibility and improved literacy skills.

Because they know two languages, bilingual students are much more sophisticated than monolingual students in terms of understanding something very important about how language works.

Read more at <http://www.glendalenewspress.com/articles/2008/02/27/opinion/gnp-comment0227.txt>

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### **Europe: Two Languages for All Basic to New Strategy**

*Davyth Hicks, Bruxelles, 24 February 2008*

Encouraging European citizens to learn two foreign languages should be the basis of the EU's new multilingualism strategy due in September, concluded a ministerial conference last week (15 February).

The need to promote 'regional or minority' languages was championed by Welsh Minister Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru) representing the UK, with strong support from Ireland, Finland, and Germany. This was coupled with the over-arching principle that

- no language, however small, should be disregarded,
- language is more than a communication tool, and
- English is not enough.

The Commission's Group of Experts Report recommending that people have a personal adoptive language received broad support. The results from the meeting will be discussed at the next EU Council meeting in May.

The conference gathered government ministers from a wide variety of EU member states and took place under the joint chairmanship of the European Commission and the Slovenian EU Presidency. It was the first time ministers have convened specifically to discuss multilingualism policy at EU level.

A starting point for the debate was the independent report by Group of Experts on Multilingualism – comprising a diverse range of figures including writers and philosophers – presented by Lebanese author Amin Maalouf.

The conference was set up to "identify areas where further action on languages is needed at both national and EU levels" and aimed to define common actions to be taken over the next three to five years. The Commission expects to use the results of the conference as the basis for its Communication to the Parliament and the Council proposing a comprehensive language policy to be published during 2008.

The new strategy will have a "management" aspect whereby the challenge would be to address the "sustainability" of EU language policy following the 2004 enlargement.

Currently, the bulk of the funding for the multilingualism portfolio, around 1 billion euro per year globally (1% of the EU budget), goes on translation and interpreting, with 15% available for the commissioner's own policies.

The strategy will also have a political aspect whereby the Commission would attempt to bring cultural, national identity and business issues - as well as those related to the integration of migrants - together into a "comprehensive" policy.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Orban supported a 'personal adoptive language' proposal contained in the report of the Group of Experts and reiterated that speaking two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue should be the goal for EU citizens.

A second, 'personal adoptive' foreign language could be a means of discovering the culture, history and literature of the country in which the language is spoken, he said. This view was echoed by Slovene Education Minister Milan Zver, who declared that the personal adoptive language idea was "the concept of the future".

The second foreign language would complement a first one most likely acquired for professional reasons. The conference also emphasised a lifelong learning aspect, identifying retired people and skilled workers as sections of the population who would benefit from an increased emphasis on language learning outside of formal educational settings.

Read more

[http://www.eurolang.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3031&Itemid=1&lang=en](http://www.eurolang.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3031&Itemid=1&lang=en) ]

Read Commissioner Orban's speech at

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/08/83&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Read the Group of Experts Report at [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages_en.html)

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## **USA: Teachers distribute bilingual brochures**

Members of the Beaver Dam Education Association will be distributing parent involvement brochures in both English and Spanish at parent teacher conferences this semester in schools through the Beaver Dam Unified School District.

"There are a number of parents in the district whose first language is Spanish," Heather Smith, who teaches English as a second language at Beaver Dam High School, said. "Having these brochures available in Spanish as well as English is just another way of letting the community know that we want to communicate with parents about how they can be involved in the educational process."

"Research shows that a home environment that encourages learning is more important to student learning than any other factor," Janet Shumaker, president of Beaver Dam Education Association said.

"As teachers, we recognize that great schools depend on teachers, parents, and the entire community working together to support our schools and to help students learn. The BDEA recognizes that Beaver Dam has great schools because we have all worked together for so many years."

The BDEA consists of more than 275 teachers and other certified professionals throughout the district.

"I am extremely proud to be a Beaver Dam teacher," Shumaker, who has taught English in the district for more than 39 years, said. "The BDEA's distribution of parent involvement brochures in both English and Spanish is another example of how Beaver Dam teachers and parents consistently work together to make every Beaver Dam school a great school. One reason why Beaver Dam schools have always been so good is that the community recognizes that great schools benefit everyone; and, therefore, support for public education is a high priority."

<http://www.wiscnews.com/bdc/news/274183>

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## **Canada: Second Language Schools**

*Vue Weekly (Canada) March 6, 2008*

In Alberta, Canada, children have a wide variety of choices when it comes to studying second or even third languages. Meyonohk Elementary School supports a Mandarin Chinese bilingual education program in which children receive 50% of their instruction in Mandarin and 50% in English. Escuela Mill Creek offers a Spanish/English bilingual program.

"We're a little community school. Everyone knows everyone. Our parents are phenomenal in supporting this program. They are here volunteering. They're behind the scenes working on things like the fiesta and the concerts. They're supporting their kids at home," said Principal Tanis Marshall.

At Meyokumin Elementary School, a large number of students come from Punjabi speaking backgrounds. Punjabi is offered at grades K-5, and students also have the option of a special program within the school where they can receive instruction in English, Punjabi, and French.

Read more at <http://www.vueweekly.com/article.php?id=8023>

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## **Europe: International Mother Language Day at Council of Europe in Paris**

*Davyth Hicks, Paris, 24 February 2008*

### **Frameworks for Languages and Cultures**

The effectiveness of international standard-setting tools related to multilingualism topped the agenda of an international workshop jointly organised by the Council of Europe and UNESCO in Paris this week (21 February) for International Mother Language Day.

Existing legal texts such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) of the Council of Europe and the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural

Heritage were examined by over 150 governmental and non-governmental experts attending the event.

"In order to protect all our languages as the expression of the cultural diversity of our continent we must take positive measures to promote their use," said Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, Council of Europe' Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport. "The Council of Europe pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures at local, national or European level."

At a pan-European level, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages - the only international treaty specifically devoted to the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages - is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. Ten years after its entry into force, the workshop provided the opportunity to assess how the Charter operates in practice and to what extent it protects European cultural heritage.

Read more at

[http://www.eurolang.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3032&Itemid=1&lang=en](http://www.eurolang.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3032&Itemid=1&lang=en)

See also: <http://www.coe.int/minlang/>

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## **USA: Language lab brings the world to Hempfield: Students connect with peers in other countries**

*Madelyn Penino, Intelligencer Journal, Feb 18, 2008*

Hempfield High School foreign language students don't have to leave their seats to feel what it's like to live in another country. Students are spending one class a week in the high school's updated language lab, which features 30 new computers equipped with a state-of-the-art foreign-language learning system. The Internet-based system allows students to watch foreign news broadcasts and movies and to instant message students in other countries. It also records voices and has online exercises for students to practice their verbal skills.

Cindy Minnich, foreign language department supervisor, said the lab is changing the way students study a foreign language. "It does everything the old lab did, plus a whole lot more," Minnich said. "It really goes along with the high school's move to differential instruction. Students who are interested in foreign music and art can study those things online. It's opened up all kinds of endless possibilities."

"It's so important for these students to understand that these countries and languages really exist," teacher Laura Klein said. "It gives them a purpose to their learning."

Klein also said advanced technology is crucial in foreign-language education.

"These students are the computer generation," Klein said. "Not only is it important these days to be bilingual or trilingual; it's important to be 'computer lingual.' Computer literacy and becoming fluent in another language go hand in hand."

Read entire article at: <http://articles.lancasteronline.com/local/4/216864>

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## **Chile: China exports language education to help quest for resources**

*Pav Jordan Reuters January 2, 2008*

Xiao Qiong stares intently at a group of Chilean teenagers, smiles and says with conviction: "Ni hao!" The disheveled boys and girls in front of her post exaggerated grins and reply in raucous but near-perfect unison, "Ni hao," Mandarin for "hello." The 28-year-old Beijing native, petite by comparison with many of her students, is the advance guard in China's patient push for access to South America's mineral resources.

The Mandarin classes were written into a 2006 free-trade accord between Chile and China. While China has its eye on Chilean copper, for Chile the accord is a chance to become Latin America's gateway to the Asia-Pacific region.

The Mandarin program is still small, with about 60 students in three public schools, but education officials say they want to expand it quickly, adding at least three more schools in March.

At least 20 Chilean universities are already offering Mandarin courses, as are many private language schools.

Panama is taking similar steps and hopes to implement a Mandarin program in public schools next year. Venezuela and China expect to begin a language exchange program in 2008.

"The world is opening up to China, and we have to accept the invitation to join them," said Magali Rozas, the principal of another school where Mandarin is taught.

Source: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/01/02/business/copper.php>

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## **RESOURCES**

### **Research eLert – February 2008**

This is the online journal of the Office for Policy Research & Innovation, Victorian Department of Education & Early Childhood Development.

"This edition of Research eLert makes a contribution to [the International Year of Languages] by exploring the local and international research on learning Languages Other Than English (LOTE) by school-age children.

"The report is also timely in that it engages with the current debate in the media regarding the relative merits of language learning in schools. While Victoria is leading the country in the number of students learning LOTE in schools, there are many issues to deal with around teacher availability, continuity in learning and the choice of languages to be taught.

"Australia is in a fortuitous position as an English-speaking country with a culturally and linguistically diverse population in the Asian region. We should be considering our future for LOTE in this context.

"The report draws on contemporary research to illustrate the profound impact that learning a second language has on students' capacity to conceptualise their native language and culture and improve literacy and learning skills across the curriculum.

"Significantly, the report discusses the importance of LOTE in the changed global context, drawing attention to the long term economic and employment benefits likely to accrue to those who learn languages other than English and the broader cultural competency this entails.

"I trust that you will find this report a useful resource for generating discussion in your school on the importance of LOTE learning and its place in the mainstream curriculum."

Download the report at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/publ/language-learning-report.pdf>

Download the Journal at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/nws/ResearcheLert-issue15-2008.pdf>

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### **"MyLanguage" Website**

How quickly we have learned to take the Internet for granted: need some information? Google it. But what of languages other than English? As a way of enriching Australia's linguistic and cultural cyberspace, seven State and Territory Libraries have created a national portal for multicultural Australians, whereby we can now search and find information on the Internet in over 60 languages.

MyLanguage.gov.au provides access to over six-million information links: search engines, web directories, government websites, digital library projects and syndicated news headlines available in nearly 60 languages other than English.

The MyLanguage concept was inspired by three key ideas: the first is that the Information Society is dependent on fostering access to and publication of multilingual and multicultural information; that libraries are crucial as gateways to multilingual information resources; and that technology and the Internet is a necessary component to developing access to information and resources for new and emergent communities.

MyLanguage is a partnership between the State Libraries of NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, and WA and the NT and ACT Library and Information Services.

Read (much, much) more at <http://www.mylanguage.gov.au/>

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## **YOUR SCHOOL**

### **The Victorian School of Languages**

The Victorian School of Languages is a government school with a strong history of commitment to the provision of language programs for students in Years 1-12 who do not have access to the study of those languages in their mainstream schools.

The school's program is delivered through face-to-face teaching in 36 language centres across the state – and also through distance education mode.

The school began in 1935 when it started Saturday Classes at MacRobertson Girls High School for pupils who wanted to learn modern languages. The first classes offered were in Italian and Japanese. Learning a language has been shown to have many benefits, including enhancing creativity, problem solving ability, literacy skills and the maintenance of cultural identity.

Languages provide advantages for employment, with an increasing number of companies seeking multilingual speakers to remain competitive in a global marketplace Languages increase the capacity to communicate in a range of forums and situations.

In recognition of the importance of languages, Victorian students receive a bonus toward their VCE entry score.

The largest provider of language teaching in the State, VSL currently offers tuition in 43 languages – to 13,000 students in face-to-face classes and 1600 students in distance education

Read more at <http://www.vsl.vic.edu.au/Index.php>

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## **THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL MOTIONS**

### **ACT Legislative Assembly Backs Languages Education and IYL 2008**

Summary of debate in the Legislative Assembly for the ACT as recorded in Hansard 13 February 2008

1. The Assembly agreed to a motion put by Ms Porter (Labor) that

This assembly recognises the important role that languages play in maintaining the diverse cultures that enrich our multicultural way of life, in this the International Year of Languages.

Speaking to this motion:

Mrs Dunne (Liberal) said she had trained as a language teacher and had a son in the bilingual program at Lyons primary. She praised bilingual language teaching programs and was critical of plans to teach languages for only an hour a week in government primary schools.

Dr Foskey (Greens) spoke about the need to preserve languages, the advantages of being bilingual, and various ideas put forward at the October Language Forum at UC.

Mr Hargreaves (Labor, Minister for Multicultural Affairs ) reiterated the link between language and culture, praised the work of the ethnic schools, noted the role of the embassies, announced that a major emphasis of the upcoming Multicultural Summit would be community languages and that the Minister for Education (Andrew Barr) would be involved.

Mr Barr (Labor) noted the cross-portfolio cooperation, the federal money that would flow to the study of Asian languages, and provided detailed information about the relocation of the Italian program from Lyons to Yarralumla Primary in 2009.

In closing, Ms Porter asked for cross party support for the motion, and disclosed that both her sons had married German speakers and that she had spent some time in Aboriginal settlements where indigenous languages were spoken (but often not valued or encouraged).

2. Dr Foskey (Greens) put forward the motion that this Assembly

(1) Acknowledges

- (a) the significant social and economic benefits of a multilingual and multicultural society
- (b) the crucial role of high quality school language programs in supporting such a society; and
- (c) the need for all of us to engage with and learn from other cultures; and

(2) Calls on the ACT Government to ensure that

- (a) a key element of the curriculum delivered in ACT schools is an engagement with other cultures through learning an additional language
- (b) sustained, and meaningful language learning experiences are provided for all students in ACT schools
- (c) priority is given, through realistic funding and support, to attracting and retaining qualified and capable language teachers in ACT government schools

She congratulated the government on its efforts to improve language education in schools but suggested more could be done – as outlined in second part of her motion.

Speaking to this motion:

Mr Barr (Minister for Education) supported the first part of the motion and proposed an amendment to reflect the steps the government was taking to improve language teaching in schools by deleting paragraph (2) and substituting:

(2) and notes that the ACT Government:

- (a) has ensured a key element of the curriculum delivered in ACT schools is an engagement with other cultures through learning an additional language;
- (b) is providing sustained and meaningful language learning experiences for students in ACT schools;
- (c) has increased funding for languages in ACT schools and for professional development for teachers; and
- (d) has mandated that languages are taught in all ACT public schools by 2010.

He said, inter alia that “the ACT government ... [has] recognised that the study of language other than English is an educational requirement for students living in the 21st century”

Mr Seselja (Leader of the Opposition) fully endorsed the first half of the motion. While noting the need to more closely examine how to improve language studies, in both government and non-government schools, and how to make languages a more accepted part of mainstream curriculum, he broadly endorsed the sentiment behind the motion. He spoke of his own experience of growing up in a bilingual household, the value of being able to speak his family language, the value to society of diverse languages and cultures, and how language education in Australia compared unfavourably with Europe.

Speaking to the amendment:

Mr Barr noted a number of agreements with embassies which added to the government's initiatives to support language and intercultural understanding programs in schools.

Dr Foskey closed the debate by again pointing out the lack of emphasis on learning a language in the ACT schools curriculum and the need to encourage the community to see the value of learning other languages.

The Assembly then agreed to the amendment, and the motion as amended.

(A full transcript of the debate can be found at <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2008/links/download.htm> )

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## **CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

### **ACT Professional Learning Conference for Language Teachers**

*Friday 28 & Saturday 29 March 2008*

ACT Department of Education & Training is organising a professional learning conference for language teachers and pre-service teachers in the ACT on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 March 2008 (teachers must attend both days).

The presenter is Dr Amanda Barton from the University of Manchester in the UK. Dr Barton is the author of 'Getting the Buggers Into Languages', which provides teachers with a range of practical strategies to motivate students of all ages, especially boys (see <http://books.google.com/books?id=RaZ7D4zXbBcC&printsec=frontcover#PPP1,M1>)

For conference details contact Elizabeth Courtois, Languages Curriculum Executive Officer in Curriculum Support at DET on 6205 7164 before 14 March

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### **"Celebrating the International Year of Languages"**

*Modern Language Teachers Association of Victoria (MLTAV) Annual Conference 2008*

*Friday 9th May, 8.45am-4.30pm*

Hemisphere Convention Centre 488 South Road Moorabbin (Melways 77, G5)

A highlight of the MLTAV 2008 Annual Conference will include presentations by teachers who have taken part in the Action Research Projects funded through the DEECD Strategic Partnerships Program.

Major Themes:

1. LOTE in VELs
2. Assessment for, as and of learning
3. Intercultural Language Learning
4. Interdisciplinary Learning in LOTE

5. VCE LOTE
6. Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers
7. Launch of Olympic Resources for Primary Languages Teachers to celebrate the International Year of Languages

Read more at <http://www.mltav.asn.au/content/view/168/>

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## **“Engaging with Languages Education in the 21st Century”**

***22-23 May 2008, Riverglen, Indooroopilly Queensland***

Independent Schools Queensland has organised a two-day forum for teachers. Speakers include:

- Professor Michael Clyne
- Professor Roly Sussex
- Assoc Professor Mike Levy
- Lia Tedesco
- Professor Ken Wiltshire

Read more at <http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/CalendarBook.aspx?category=1&element=23&PKID=447>

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## **LingFest 08 – Linguistics in Sydney**

***30 June–11 July 2008 at the University of Sydney***

Lingfest 2008 is a series of six linguistics events to be held 30 June - 11 July 2008 at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Here you will be able to find information about Lingfest 2008 events and register for any of the conferences.

You'll also be able to find information on accommodation, maps to Lingfest 2008 venues and more.

Read more at <http://www.lingfest.arts.usyd.edu.au/>

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## **XI I th Foundation for Endangered Languages Conference 2008**

***25-27 September 2008 – Leeuwarden, Netherlands***

Call for Proposals

In 2008 the Foundation will organise its Twelfth Conference in association with the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning and the Fryske Akademy.

The conference will be organised and sponsored in the framework of the jubilee program KNAW 200, the bicentenary celebration of the foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1808.

The United Nations' Year of the Languages will be celebrated in 2008. On the 26th of September 2008 it is the annual European Language Day and these two facts will be taken into account during the conference.

Theme of the conference: Endangered Languages and Language Learning

This theme is related to the profile of the Mercator European Research Centre, which gathers and mobilises expertise in the field of language learning at school, at home and through cultural participation in favour of linguistic diversity of Europe.

Read more at <http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm>

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## REMINDEERS

2-5 April - 42nd Annual TESOL Convention & Exhibit - New York, USA -  
[http://www.tesol.org/s\\_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=1518&DID=8281](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=1518&DID=8281)

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15-16 May - Open Road 2008 - Melbourne - <http://www.openroad.net.au/conferences/2008/>

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31 May-1 June - Central Association of Teachers of Japanese Annual Conference Madison, USA -  
<http://imp.lss.wisc.edu/catj2008>

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6-9 July - New Zealand Language Teachers Biennial Conference - Wellington, New Zealand -  
<http://www.nzalt.org.nz/conference>

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9-12 July - Australian Council of TESOL Associations International Conference - Alice Springs -  
<http://www.tesol.org.au/conference>

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7-9 August - Modern Language Teachers Assoc of Tasmania State Conference - Hobart -  
<mailto:suzette.holmes@education.tas.gov.au>

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3-5 October - Japan Studies Association of Canada 2008 Annual Conference - Waterloo, Canada -  
<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/asian/jsaa/JSAC.pdf>

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16-18 October - Immersion Education: Pathways to Bilingualism & Beyond - St Paul, USA -  
<http://www.carla.umn.edu/conferences/immersion2008/call.html>

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8-9 November - International Symposium on Japanese Studies and Japanese Language - Hong Kong -  
<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/asian/jsaa/hk-j.pdf>

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