

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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BUILDING THE LANGUAGES EDUCATION REVOLUTION

More support for students to learn Asian Languages

Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 15 February 2009

Australian students learning an Asian language this new school year will be the first to benefit from increased support and funding for their studies.

Following the commencement of the new National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) on 1 January 2009, greater funding will be provided to help Australian students learn the languages and cultures of our Asian neighbours, namely China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea.

By 2020, the Rudd Government aims to double the number of Australian Year 12 students exiting schooling with a fluency in one of these four target Asian languages.

The rollout of the program delivers on an election commitment to help give Australian school students the language skills to engage with our Asian neighbours.

The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program will provide funding for additional Asian languages classes in high schools; teacher training and support; and the development of specialist curriculum for students who display advanced abilities in Asian languages and studies.

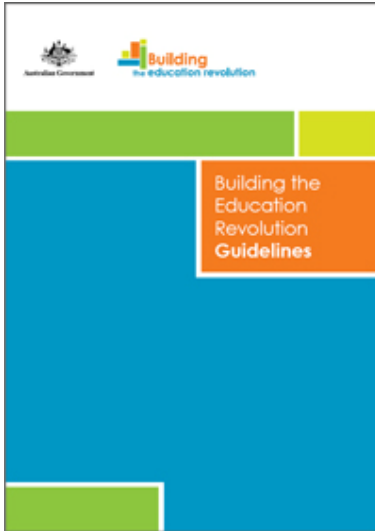
Read more at

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090216_095157.aspx

Further information on NALSSP is available at <http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/NALSSP>.

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Building the Education Revolution Guidelines Available



Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 24 February 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has today released guidelines that will assist schools around the nation to be part of the Rudd Government's \$14.7 billion Building the Education Revolution.

\$14.7 billion is now available to schools across Australia to build or upgrade existing facilities, including:

Primary Schools for the 21st Century - \$12.4 billion long term investment to build or upgrade large scale infrastructure, such as libraries and multi-purpose facilities in all primary schools, special schools and K-12 schools.

National School Pride Program - \$1.3 billion investment to refurbish and renew existing infrastructure and undertake minor building works in every Australian school.

Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Schools - \$1 billion long term investment to build around 500 new science and language laboratories in secondary schools.

Under the guidelines, schools will be required to make the new or refurbished facilities available for broader community use at no or low cost.

Preference will also be given tenders from businesses which demonstrate a commitment to retain and employ new trainees and apprentices.

The guidelines are available on the Building the Education Revolution website www.buildingtheeducationrevolution.gov.au together with a range of information material to assist schools and education authorities in the preparation of project proposals.

Read entire release at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Pages/default.aspx>

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ENGAGING WITH INDONESIA

Talking to our neighbours means learning their language

Hamish McDonald, Sydney Morning Herald, February 21, 2009

IT'S ABOUT time your columnist finds himself inside Kevin Rudd's tent, having strangely missed out on the 2020 Summit and other sessions of brainstorming.

The occasion is this week's conference on the Australia-Indonesia relationship, involving about 160 of the usual suspects from government, business, academia and the media sitting in Sydney's Hotel InterContinental and wondering how to take it further.

Things have never been better at top level, but the consensus is that the relationship leaves a lot to be desired in what's called the "people-to-people" level - despite record numbers of Australians visiting Indonesia, and more than 15,000 Indonesians studying here.

On the Australian side, the chief concern is the steady decline in the numbers of our children studying the Indonesian language in schools.

There is a decline in language study generally in our schools. In the 1960s about 40 per cent of year 12 students studied a second language. Now it is less than 15 per cent.

The decline is most evident in Indonesian, once the strongest Asian language by numbers in our schools.

Only about 1 per cent of those school leavers study Indonesian.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/world/talking-to-our-neighbours-means-learning-their-language-20090220-8dmf.html?page=-1>

Hamish McDonald is Asia-Pacific Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald.

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Safety warnings make it hard to learn about Indonesia

Adrian Vickers, Sydney Morning Herald, February 23, 2009

Hamish McDonald's warning about the decline of Indonesian language study in Australia is timely ("Talking to our neighbours means learning their language", February 21-22).

There are many reasons why Indonesian teachers have difficulty recruiting students.

As a high school student, I went to Indonesia on school excursions in 1972 and 1975. These experiences started my career of researching and teaching about Indonesia.

Now schools are not able to send such groups to Indonesia because the Federal Government's travel warning creates insurance and other problems.

Absurdly, because of these warnings, a federally funded scheme to give school teachers in-country experience of Indonesia has to send these teachers to Darwin.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/letters/safety-warnings-make-it-hard-to-learn-about-indonesia-20090222-8eo8.html>

Professor Adrian Vickers heads the School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney

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Foreign Affairs Minister says Australia 'needs new Indonesian cadres'

Sydney Morning Herald, February 20, 2009 (AAP)

Australia must develop a fresh nucleus of Indonesia-focused personnel to strengthen relations between the two countries, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith says.

Speaking on the first day of the Australia Indonesia Conference in Sydney, Mr. Smith said Australia's failure to regenerate its Indonesia specialists had impacted on interactions with its closest neighbour.

It was "people to people" exchanges in areas such as education, culture, business and the arts that underpinned the formal bilateral relationship, he said. "I think part of the capacity that Australia has lost in the recent period has been a cadre of Indonesian specialists who were hailed and regaled in their day."

"We need to start to have more of our students studying Indonesian culture and language, more of our students to be inspired to become experts in Indonesia, to start to become part of the modern day successors to the cadre of Indonesian specialists."

Embracing Mr. Smith's call to arms, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said specialists on Indonesia were not getting any younger.

Read more at <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/australia-needs-new-indonesian-cadres-20090220-8d6f.html>

Australia and Indonesia: Partners in a New Era

Hon Simon Crean MP, Minister for Trade — Speech 20 February 2009 Conference [Extract]

This conference highlights the importance of the business-to-government exchange in the trade and economic relationship, which is what I'd like to address in my remarks today.

There's one thing I'd like to say at the outset in the wake of the devastating bushfires. And I say it as a Victorian Minister but I know I speak on behalf of Australians throughout this country.

I am profoundly touched by the generosity of the Indonesian government who have offered \$1.5 million to refurbish fire-damaged schools in my home state. And for the generosity of the Indonesian people, who I'm told have collectively donated more than \$1m dollars to bushfire relief.

We also welcome the assistance from the Indonesian victim identification team who is now on the ground helping us with the difficult recovery ahead.

Once again, Australia and Indonesia are brought together by shared tragedy. And as we reach out to the many Australians who have lost friends, family and loved ones, we also extend our hand to support Indonesian authorities as they search for two Indonesian students who were in Marysville at the height of the fires and are still missing.

These are difficult times. Under the tragic circumstances that we have faced in the past week, the normal routines of government and business seem almost out of place.

Yet getting back to work is part of the rebuilding process.

So it was my great pleasure yesterday to be able to re-engage with Mari Pangestu on the important trade relationship between our two countries as part of the Eighth Australia-Indonesia Trade Ministers' Meeting.

Read entire speech at:

http://www.trademinister.gov.au/speeches/2009/090220_australia_indonesia_conference.html

Taking our relationship seriously

Hon Kevin Rudd MP: Prime Minister Speech to Australia-Indonesia dinner 19 February 2009

When I came here tonight I was accosted by Jamie Mackie, and he's entitled to do that. He's been around for a bit. And his question is - as always disarming but frank, 'How goes the relationship? Are you taking it seriously?'

My response to him was along these lines - that in the year 2008, the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and I met on seven occasions. We've now entered that into the Guinness Book of Records under the bilateral relations heading.

Stephen Smith, the Foreign Minister, says that in 2008 that the two-way traffic in terms of ministerial visits was 32. If you look at the official fabric of the relationship, there is a lot going on. And this is a very broad, important and vital relationship for us, as is reflected by that level of contact and having been myself to Indonesia three times in the last year.

What does all that mean? It means for us in our part of this relationship that it is of vital importance to Australia. It means therefore, that whatever challenges we face together in our region or the world at large, we in this country Australia have a first instinct, which is how do we work with Indonesia on this.

Read entire speech at: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2009/speech_0825.cfm

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Lost in Translation:

Despite the importance of relations with Indonesia, the government is not backing up its Asia-literacy rhetoric with funds

Edward Aspinall, Inside Story, 20 February 2009

My experiences in Banda Aceh suggest that in some ways the relations between Australia and Indonesia are much narrower and more fragile than they are often portrayed. But things could get worse still, as one of the unacknowledged foundations of good Australia—Indonesia relations is in crisis.

The study of Indonesian society and language has never reached critical mass in the Australian education system. It would be unusual to find an Indonesian speaker in any randomly selected group of twenty Australian professionals in any field.

But at least the study of Indonesian society and language has been available for many years to most Australian university students who want it.

Now, Indonesian studies at Australian universities is feeling the impact of a decade-long decline in funding and activity.

It is approaching a terminal phase. And not only is the Rudd government doing nothing to save it, some of its policies are actually worsening the situation.

Kevin Rudd has said that promoting "Asia literacy" is a key goal of his government. In a speech in Singapore last August he declared that he was "committed to making Australia the most Asia-literate country in the collective West."

His vision, he said, was "for the next generation of Australian businessmen and women, economists, accountants, lawyers, architects, artists, film-makers and performers to develop language skills which open their region to them."

There are few signs that he has acted to make this happen.

Read entire article at: <http://inside.org.au/lost-in-translation/>

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COMMUNITY EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS

Melbourne's First Ever Language Picnic

Sunday 1 March 2009: Jells Park, Wheelers Hill — 11.00 am to 2.00 pm

Do you have an interest in language? Come along to Melbourne's first-ever Language Picnic — to be held on Sunday 1 March at Jells Park, Wheelers Hill, near the playground behind the café (Entry Waverley Rd

— Melways Ref: 71, J5)

Bring family and friends, some goodies, a rug, a chair — and

- Share your language experiences
- Swap ideas on raising children in more than one language
- Find out more about language learning
- Celebrate Australia's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Everyone welcome! To register your attendance — and specific language of interest — email Angela (dacafarella@optusnet.com.au) or ring Brigitte on 0408 991 894

This event is a non-profit initiative of the Languages Action Alliance — find out more about LAA at <http://www.lingo.org.au>

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Harmony Day

21 March 2009

Harmony Day is held each year on 21 March to celebrate the richness and diversity of our school communities — and the vibrant potential of our successful multicultural society.

Parent organisations in all parts of the country are encouraged to work with their school and wider community to make this an important and inclusive celebration of the cultural diversity that underpins and enriches each community.

For some school communities, Harmony Day is the "launching pad" for an ongoing series of activities and events right through the year and right across the curriculum.

Harmony Day is managed by the federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship for the Australian Government — and you are invited to visit the website at <http://www.harmony.gov.au> for ideas and suggestions on how to become involved.

Here you can register your school's events — and order free materials to make your event even more successful.

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RESEARCH

Community Languages Matter: Challenges and Opportunities facing the Community Languages Program in NSW

Cardona, Noble & Di Biase, 2008

More than 32,000 children, every Saturday, join a Community Language School class in one of 494 locations over New South Wales, conducted by one of the 2347 language teachers in one of 44 different languages. A parallel situation occurs in all the other Australian states and territories. Yet, despite decades of research into the educational, cognitive, linguistic and cultural benefits of multilingualism (Cummins 1984; 1996; Clyne 1991, 2003; Bialystock 2007), the teaching of Community Languages in Australia is at a crossroads.

Almost a decade ago Baldauf et al. (1998) had already pointed out that the wider Australian community was still not fully persuaded of their value: while surveys report general support for the learning of languages, this doesn't translate into significant mainstream status, sustainable funding, systematic coordination and administration, and adequate resourcing.

The economic and social benefits of multilingualism, central to the development of a languages policy in the 1980s (Lo Bianco 1987), are no longer taken for granted.

There are two key elements that have helped produced this sense of being at a crossroads.

On the one hand, an era of social and economic conservatism has increasingly shaped the management of cultural diversity. Economic rationalism and a 'user pays' ethos, for example, have increasingly permeated policies, including languages education, since the early 1990s (Di Biase, Andreoni, Andreoni & Dyson 1994, Djité 1994). While the claim that Australians have rejected multiculturalism is wildly exaggerated, there is a high degree of ambivalence about multicultural policies and programs (Ang, Brand, Noble & Wilding 2002).

On the other hand, the nature of cultural diversity has changed since the early days of multiculturalism and the community languages movement. There is increasing 'diversity within diversity' (Ang et al. 2002; Ang, Brand, Noble & Sternberg 2006) which challenges assumptions about cohesive language-based communities, let alone broader senses of ethnicity.

The increasingly complex landscape of Australian society has fuelled anxieties about cultural fragmentation. The occasionally strident attacks on multicultural policies have consequences for the perception of community languages: recent demands for English language tests and teaching for migrants, for example, have mistakenly assumed that the maintenance of the home language poses problems for social cohesion and national values (Daily Telegraph 2006a:3;2006b:13).

It is timely, then, to take stock of the position and functioning of community languages and to identify ways and means for their recognition in line with their growth and community needs.

The aim of this project was to contribute to this process by providing a scoping study of issues drawing on interviews with teachers, students and others involved in the NSW Community Languages Schools Program. We hope it contributes to shaping the debates about languages education and the resourcing of the Program.

From the introduction. You can access the full report at:

http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/46307/Community_Languages_Matter_Final_report.pdf

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NEWS FROM HERE & THERE

Multilingualism Brings Communities Closer Together

Science Daily: Feb. 10, 2009

Learning their community language outside the home enhances minority ethnic children's development, according to research led from the University of Birmingham.

The research, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, found that attending language classes at complementary schools has a positive impact on students.

Complementary schools provide out-of-school-hours community language learning for children and young people from minority groups. They aim to develop students' multilingualism, strengthen the link between home and the community, and connect them with wider social networks.

The study found that the parents believed that bilingualism had economic benefits for their children as it improved their chances of success in the global jobs market.

According to Angela Creese, Professor of Educational Linguistics, who led the research, there is a growing interest in complementary schools because they are unique, offering students the opportunity to develop their verbal and written language skills across a variety of languages

'It is rare to find an environment where two or more languages are used in teaching and learning,' she explains. 'Teachers and young people move between languages, and our findings show that the children are proud of their flexible language skills. One Turkish boy told us he was learning four languages and loved being able to show off to his friends.'

The research builds on an earlier study of complementary schools in Leicester that found significant evidence of the value of these schools.

Read more at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/02/090210092721.htm>

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UK: Foreign recruits boost language learning:

Schools toast revival of French assistante scheme in the classroom

Richard Garner, Independent, 16 February 2009

A pioneering initiative under which foreign students studying in the UK are hired to teach languages in secondary schools is having a dramatic effect in reviving language lessons in disadvantaged areas.

The scheme, reminiscent of the old-fashioned French assistantes, is being trialled in three secondary schools in Brighton and may spread to other parts of the country.

Each school is taking on between 12 and 15 international students at Sussex University who can engage youngsters in conversations in the language they are studying. Speaking is a major part of any GCSE in a modern foreign language, accounting for at least 25 per cent of the overall marks.

The scheme brings back echoes of the days when schools hired language assistantes from abroad to boost their language teaching. Many have scrapped this because languages have declined after the Government's decision to make the subject voluntary for children aged 14 to 16, which has cut GCSE take-up of the subject by half.

Read entire article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/foreign-recruits-boost-language-learning-1623000.html>

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UK: Need for intensive language classes

Roger Bloxham, The Times, 20 February 2009

Those wishing to improve language skills need to recognise the range of levels of skill that may be required.

I have been closely involved in teaching foreign languages to children for more than 40 years. I have seen the language-teaching wheel reinvented numerous times and, while pupils' skills may have improved in some areas of linguistic competence, I have yet to be convinced that the number of young people actively using those skills daily has increased beyond 2 or 3 per cent of the population.

I agree with Baroness Coussins (letter, Feb 18) that there are lateral benefits from the learning of a foreign language and, for that reason alone, would continue to support the place of modern foreign languages on the curriculum in the primary school.

However, from personal observation, I conclude that the frequent reinvention of the language teaching wheel has had little or no effect on the eventual proficiency of the students.

I have rarely, if ever, met a post-A-level student or a university graduate whose command of a foreign language was sufficient to make him or her employable where fluency in another language was essential.

Those who are employed usually acquire the necessary extra fluency in the first few weeks of the job. Or they move on.

Might the new 14-19 curriculum allow us to provide far more intensive language skills teaching to those students who have identified a future genuine need?

Read more at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/letters/article5768218.ece>

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UK: The Languages of Others:

Britain's reliance on foreigners' willingness to learn English is self-defeating

Editorial, The Times, 16 February 2009

Five years ago Estelle Morris, then the Education Secretary, ended the requirement for all GCSE students to learn at least one foreign language.

Last year she acknowledged that this had been a mistake, at least in its timing.

It was, in fact, disastrous in every respect.

As unemployment nudges two million and Gordon Brown's ill-judged and inflammatory pledge to create "British jobs for British workers" comes back to haunt him, it is clearer than ever that British workers' inability to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the world's largest single labour market - the EU - stems in large part from longstanding reluctance to make more than a token effort with foreign languages.

Britain has signed up to the official EU goal of teaching all schoolchildren two non-native European languages, but is resolutely monolingual. Numbers of pupils taking French and German GCSEs have fallen by nearly half since 2001, but were low even then at 347,000 and 135,000 respectively.

The scarcity of students specialising in languages at university and beyond is even more alarming. A grand total of 610 started degree courses in German in 2007, while British interpreters are now so rare in Brussels that most official EU translation into English is being done by non native-speakers.

Read more at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article5741122.ece

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USA: Early Launch for Language:

Young Children Have Advantage, but Linguists Say Lessons Benefit All

Valerie Strauss, Washington Post, February 16, 2009

Can kids learn anything if they are exposed to a subject for only half an hour a week, with no homework? When it comes to learning another language, educators say yes.

"The kids getting it for 30 minutes won't become fluent, but that's not the point of those programs," said Julie Sugarman, research associate at the non-profit Centre for Applied Linguistics in the District. "It's to give them exposure to the language. Just because kids aren't able to do calculus in sixth grade doesn't mean we shouldn't teach math in elementary school."

Foreign language instruction is considered more important than ever as the nation's demographics and national security issues change and the world's economies become intertwined.

Although new brain research is revealing secrets about how people acquire language, complex questions remain about what constitutes effective teaching. In the No Child Left Behind era, which has focused on basic reading and math skills, some educators say time for teaching foreign languages is scarce. That means aiming for a goal short of fluency.

Spanish teacher Lisa Vierya emphasizes basic conversational skills in the half-hour a week she has with a second-grade class at Evergreen Mill Elementary School in Loudoun County.

"They eventually pick it up," she said later. No homework is required, but students are encouraged to practice. First- and second-graders receive 30 minutes of instruction a week; children in grades 3 through 5 have two 30-minute classes weekly.

Assessments in fifth grade, she said, show that the program gives students a grounding in the language that allows them to converse.

"Yes, I'd like more time. But there is value in this," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/15/AR2009021501772.html>

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Uncle Sam offers recruits with languages skills a chance to fight for passport

The Age, February 16, 2009

STRETCHED thin in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US military will begin recruiting skilled immigrants living in the country on temporary visas, offering them a chance to become US citizens in as little as six months.

Immigrants who are permanent residents, with documents commonly known as green cards, have long been eligible to enlist. But the new effort will open the armed forces to temporary immigrants if they have lived in the US for two years.

Recruiters expect that the temporary immigrants will have more education, foreign language skills and professional expertise than many Americans, helping the military to fill shortages in medical care, language interpretation and field intelligence analysis.

"The American Army finds itself in a lot of different countries where cultural awareness is critical," said Lieutenant-General Benjamin Freakley, the top recruitment officer for the US Army, which is leading the pilot program. "There will be some very talented folks in this group."

The program will begin small — limited to 1000 enlistees nationwide in its first year, most for the army and some for other branches.

If the pilot program succeeds as Pentagon officials anticipate, it will expand to all branches of the military. It could eventually provide up to 14,000 volunteers a year, or about one in six recruits.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/world/uncle-sam-offers-recruits-chance-to-fight-for-passport-20090215-884s.html>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Puliima National Indigenous Languages & Information Technology Forum

1-2 April 2009, Melbourne, Victoria

We are pleased to inform you and announce that in April 2009 we will be hosting the 2nd Puliima National Indigenous Languages and Information Communication Technology Forum to be held in Melbourne, Victoria. The theme of the forum is "Modern Ways for Ancient Words".

Information will be posted to our website: <http://www.acra.org.au/puliima.html>. This site will continue to be updated as we lead up to the event. All the necessary information including accommodation will appear so bookmark the site and keep visiting.

You can join our mailing list and registration will be open very soon.

We are also calling for presenters for both an open forum environment and for hands on workshops.

Exhibit tables will also be available.

Puliima = Making Voice. All enquiries can be directed to us at <mailto:Puliima2009@acra.org.au>

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REMINDERS:

26-27 February - Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers Annual Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.mltav.asn.au/indonesian/content/view/146/163/>

1 May - Victorian Association of Teachers of Italian Annual Congress - Preston, Victoria - <http://www.vati.vic.edu.au/congress.html>

28-30 May - International Conference on Minority Languages - Tartu, Estonia - <http://www.icml.ut.ee>

28-30 May - International Conference on Language Teacher Education - Washington DC, USA - <http://www.nclrc.org/lte2009/>

23-26 June - International Association for Improvement of Mother Tongue Education - Toronto, Canada - <http://www.ilo.uva.nl/Projecten/Gert/iaimte/default.html>

9-12 July - AFMLTA Biennial National Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://www.mltansw.asn.au/afmltadetails.htm>

14-15 July - Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators Conference - Waverley, NSW - <http://mltansw.asn.au/asiletheme.htm>

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/aed.htm> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup.htm> (monthly)
- Values Education : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Languages Education : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- Ensemble - Music Education : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)
- Family School Partners : http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page_id=6 (quarterly)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au

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