

## Publication of the Proceedings of the National Seminar on Languages Education 30-31 October 2006

At last the news we have all been awaiting with increasingly avid anticipation. The Report on the National Seminar on Languages Education which was held in Canberra on 30 – 31 October 2006. has now been published. Under the title ***“Maximising the Opportunity”*** the resulting volume is elegantly presented and lavishly illustrated in full glorious colour on high quality paper, a triumph of the graphic designer’s art and modern techniques of photography, printing and production.

Turning now to the text. This tells us the forum brought together 140 representatives for two days of intensive discussion and workshops, aiming to translate enthusiasm for languages education into strategic priorities for action.

It notes these identified needs; to:

- Articulate a strong clear message for the value of languages learning, based on a strong educational and social rationale
- Build the capacity of the profession through investigation to attract and retain languages teachers
- Build strategic partnerships among key stakeholders at state and territory levels to take the statement and plan forward
- Explore innovative delivery mechanisms for languages education

And these priorities:

- Take the statement and plan forward at the local level with ***action plans developed by the state and territory teams***
- Clarify what is to be achieved through the national statement and plan (*sic*) and translate this into initiatives advocating languages education nationally
- Strengthen strategic partnerships across the three education sectors as well as with business and the wider community
- Tailor the message about the importance of languages learning to suit various audiences in the education community and beyond
- Increase the capacity of the profession by
  - Offering leadership from national and state political levels and within the school community
  - Investigating ways to address the problems of supply and retention
  - Improving the quality of teacher education
  - Ensuring the profession adheres to its standards
- Inspire creative delivery that
  - Encourages an intercultural approach to the teaching and learning of languages
  - Takes account of students’ learning styles and their demand that languages learning be real and relevant
  - Ensures languages learning is undertaken within the cultural context that is relevant to students’ lives and aspirations
  - Embraces e-learning

*“But,” I hear you remark: “Do not all of these eminently worthy aspirational statements bear a strong family resemblance to similar points made , for example, in the 1993 National Review, the 1996 National Review, the 2002 National Review, the 2002 National Languages Forum #1, the 2003 MCEETYA review, the 2004 National Languages Forum #2 and indeed in the Statement and Plan itself – which this Forum (#3) felt a need to clarify through some unspecified future process?”*

Well, yes. But an important difference here is that the document shows that each State and Territory has made a specific commitment to an Action Plan; and each of these is set out in the document itself: as follows;

#### **1. ACT committed to:**

- The capacity of technologies to enhance language programmes through innovative pedagogies;
- The need to strengthen the partnerships between Modern Language Teacher Associations and Education Systems;
- The need to heighten the involvement of key teacher education representatives in programme delivery; and
- The importance of continuing to provide professional learning around intercultural language learning

“Action moving forward will involve the establishment of a cross-cultural working group including government and non-government schools, the tertiary sector and professional associations. The working group will address the task of ensuring that the Territory’s own Language plan is informed by the six strands of the National Statement.”

#### **2. NSW committed to:**

- Draw on the knowledge and expertise of the NSW Distance Education Unit to consider options for access to languages programmes for all students and for professional learning for teachers and pre-service teachers;
- Build links with teacher educators to enhance both teacher in-service and pre-service teacher professional learning;
- Adopt a range of advocacy activities to promote the study of languages in schools.

#### **3. Northern Territory committed to:**

- Address the perception that English is the only language a student needs to engage with in their school life – via intercultural language learning approaches
- Advocacy for languages is a key priority, requiring identification and support of “champions”;
- Investigate possibilities for remote access to languages learning and flexible distance delivery options
- Embedding of intercultural language learning pedagogies into the new stratum of middle school currently being introduced across the Territory
- Consider assessment of intercultural language learning within the context of the NT Curriculum.

#### **4. Queensland committed to:**

- Targeted communication process to disseminate the messages of the National Statement & Plan to all stakeholders

- Closer collaboration between government and non-government education sectors re languages education;
- Heighten cross-sectoral communication via establishment of a working party to meet on a regular basis to share information and consider issues around programme provision ;
- Consider how nationally-funded projects can enhance the implementation of the Statement & Plan in Queensland
- Mobilise language teachers to take an active role in the advocacy of languages to a broad section of the community, including the “unconverted”.

#### **5. South Australia committed to:**

- Advocacy of messages of Statement and Plan to key stakeholders:
  - parents (forums);
  - school leaders (professional learning),
  - students (high profile role models)
- Business and community leaders, including politicians, have advocacy role to play
- Teaching standards should be enhanced by incentives to join, and those in the profession
- Partnerships between language teachers, schools and tertiary educators
- Focus on use of ICTs to enhance language programme delivery
- Cross-sectoral collaboration i.e. to deliver professional learning.

#### **6. Tasmania committed to:**

- To better engage students, parents and the community to increase demand
- To determine which languages should be taught and at what schools – or all schools
- To improve the status and profile of language teachers and support them to advocate for language education
  - Mentoring and support of pre-service teachers through UniTas and practising teachers (in-service training) to advocate in their own school context
  - Trial a range of innovative practices, such as immersion programmes, school cluster arrangements and approaches to E-learning (cf. NSW)
  - Continuing professional learning focused on inter-cultural language learning

#### **7. Victoria committed to:**

- Strategic need for whole-school community approaches and strong partnerships

- Build on internationalisation of curriculum and focus on students as “global citizens”
- Build research findings on effective practice and exemplary case studies to inform improved in-school practice.
- Build research findings on cognitive and wider benefits into effective advocacy
- Identify key partners among leaders in languages and wider community as key advocates
- Build on successful cross-sectoral collaborations

#### **8. Western Australia committed to:**

- Key challenge is the recruitment and retention of languages teachers
- Need to ensure the coherence and continuity of programmes
- Need to advocate and promote the value of languages education, especially via school leadership
- Support language teachers to develop creative, innovative pedagogies to enhance delivery
- On-going professional learning opportunities for language teachers and school leaders, with focus on intercultural language learning
- Draw on learnings from national projects to inform and enhance local implementation

As a further National Seminar (#4) is being planned to take place in November 2007, there will be opportunity for each State and Territory to provide that forum with an update on what has been achieved twelve months down the track.

As this further Seminar will presumably be by invitation (and the proceedings appear some time in 2008), ACSSO has now written to each State and Territory Education Minister and their CEO to advise that they are presenting a Round-up of those undertakings in this Newsletter, and inviting each of them to contribute an article on what has been achieved in the past twelve months, so that we can similarly present those actions and achievements in a future issue of the Newsletter. A bientot...

- *Scaramouche*

**NB: The Report is available online via the Asia Education Foundation, at: [http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public\\_html/reports.htm](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/reports.htm)**