

National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools & National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools

Purpose and Nature of Languages Education

“Ministers of Education are committed to the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country. We believe that through learning languages our students and the broader Australian community gain important benefits.”

English is Australia’s national language. It is also growing as an international language of communication. But English alone is not enough for our learners. In our increasingly multi-lingual world, more people speak two languages than one, and contact with speakers of other languages is rapidly growing.

Inter-cultural language learning contributes to the overall education of learners, developing in them the capabilities live and work successfully as linguistically and culturally aware citizens of the world.

National Developments

“Quality languages education is not yet part of the learning experience of all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country. The challenge that must now be addressed is how best to further integrate quality languages education into the mainstream curriculum, and into program delivery by all schools.”

In 2003, the Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) undertook a Review of Languages Education in Australian Schools.

The Review found that the expansion of languages programs had created significant challenges which still need to be addressed. These include:

- the need for appropriately qualified and trained teachers
- continuity in languages learning within schools, and from primary to secondary levels and beyond
- adequate time allocations
- supportive timetabling practices
- resourcing
- whole school commitment.

Implications for jurisdictions and schools

“In order to realise the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country, jurisdictions and schools need to take into account matters relating to quality and provision.”

Quality

1. Quality programs and quality teachers
2. Cumulative nature of languages learning and
3. Whole school commitment to languages education

Provision

1. Choice of languages - All languages are equally valid.
2. A range of provision.
3. A distinct and explicit presence for Australian Indigenous Languages.

National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools

This National Plan, as an initial four-year Plan for 2005–2008, reflects an agreed commitment by all Ministers of Education to act together to address areas of common concern.

It aims to:

- establish long-term directions for languages education
- advance the implementation of high quality and sustainable programs
- maximise collaboration in the use of national, state and territory resources
- provide flexibility in implementation by individual jurisdictions.

The Plan focuses on six nationally agreed inter-dependent strategic areas. These are:

1. Strand one: Teaching and Learning

To strengthen and promote the quality of teaching and learning practices to ensure that all learners in Australian schools have the opportunity to achieve high level outcomes in languages learning.

2. Strand two: Teacher Supply and Retention

To enhance the provision of appropriately qualified teachers of languages in order to work towards addressing issues related to supply and demand.

3. Strand three: Professional Learning

To support the provision of high quality, ongoing and structured professional learning programs to further enhance the quality of teaching.

4. Strand four: Program Development

To enhance access, choice and continuity in languages learning in order to better meet a variety of learner needs.

5. Strand five: Quality Assurance

To monitor and evaluate the provision and quality of languages education at all levels.

6. Strand six: Advocacy and Promotion of Languages Learning

To promote the benefits of languages learning in order to develop and strengthen positive community attitudes and perceptions of the value of languages education.

Note: The *National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools* which includes the National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008 may be downloaded from:
http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/languageeducation_file.pdf