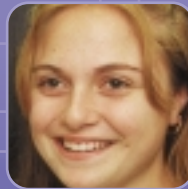


Languages for Victoria's future

An analysis of languages in government schools



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Chairperson's foreword

The Victorian Government's commitment to providing a world-class education for all students includes providing comprehensive and effective languages programs in Victorian schools.

In this context, the LOTE analysis was established in August 2001 to examine policy directions for languages education, including more appropriate accountability mechanisms, increased choice, access and equity for metropolitan and regional students, and enhanced delivery of language programs. As Parliamentary Secretary for Education at the time, I was appointed by the then Minister for Education and the Premier to chair the LOTE analysis steering committee.

A detailed LOTE analysis issues paper was released for widespread consultation in February 2002, and over 270 written submissions were received. In addition, consultations were undertaken with 13 key stakeholder groups, and community forums were conducted in each Department of Education & Training (DE&T) Region. The steering committee appreciates the wide range of views put forward by individuals, including many students who are studying languages in our schools, stakeholder groups who participated in the consultations and community forums, and those who made written submissions.

I am pleased to present this final report for consideration of the Minister for Education and Training and for the Government. The report outlines the steering committee's analysis of the extensive data gathered through the submissions and presents a series of detailed findings and recommendations.

In broad terms, the analysis found that the important economic, social and community benefits gained from learning languages are not widely understood both in schools and the wider community, particularly the benefits for literacy development in English and the development of cognitive skills. The report therefore recommends that the importance of languages as an essential skill in the curriculum of all students, and consequently, Languages as one of the 8 Key Learning Areas, be reaffirmed.

The analysis found that there is a need for greater coordination and planning of languages delivery at the local level and a particular need to promote and strengthen languages programs in country Victoria. The report recommends the direct involvement of the Regions and the newly formed school networks in developing Network Languages Plans, which will allow for improved planning and delivery of languages, including the sharing of resources. The report also emphasises that the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) and the after hours ethnic schools, as valued complementary providers of languages education, have an important role to play in supporting languages provision within the school networks.

Other key recommendations include:

- improving accountability including mechanisms to report on actual student performance, which will also apply to the VSL and ethnic schools
- considering the establishment of Centres of Excellence in Languages in schools in metropolitan Melbourne and country Victoria
- developing strategies and guidelines to address issues such as contact time, the frequency and spread of classes and development of students' communication skills, particularly oral skills
- improving the supply of languages teachers, and increased use of Information and Communication Technologies and online and multimedia materials for languages particularly in country Victoria.

The notion of increased cooperation and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders underpins this report. The non-government sector, local ethnic communities, cultural agencies, business and industry, the VSL, after-hours ethnic schools, local government, Regions and school networks all play a role in the important task of reshaping languages education in our schools.

I wish to thank all the members of the steering committee and my parliamentary colleagues, the Hon. Kaye Darveniza, the Hon. Elaine Carbines, the Hon. Carlo Carli and the Hon. Glenyys Romanes, who contributed much time and energy to this important analysis and to developing the report and recommendations. The LOTE analysis report is a significant starting point for setting future directions for the learning and teaching of languages, and for improving and strengthening languages programs in Victorian schools.



The Hon. Theo Theophanous, MLC



Executive summary

Education is the Victorian Government's highest priority. It has a commitment to providing comprehensive and effective languages programs in Victorian schools. The effective teaching of languages is important for Victoria's future and will allow us to engage economically and culturally with the world, while improving literacy and understanding of diverse cultures. The Government believes that languages are part of the core curriculum for all students in Victorian schools.

Victoria is fortunate in possessing a wide range of linguistic resources and has a strong foundation in delivering languages. The LOTE analysis found languages teaching is an area with great potential, but which needs special support to be able to achieve this potential. Enhanced languages programs will depend on research, promotion, quality teaching, and flexible and appropriate forms of delivery and the commitment of schools and the community.

In August 2001, an analysis of the delivery of languages other than English (LOTE) programs in government schools was established under the leadership of the Hon. Theo Theophanous, MLC, to identify ways of strengthening the learning and teaching of languages and to improve student outcomes in terms of proficiency and language confidence.

The LOTE analysis examined policy directions for languages, including more appropriate accountability mechanisms, increased choice, continuity of access, equity for metropolitan and regional students, and the enhanced delivery of languages programs. It considered whether the current recommended hours for languages programs in schools is appropriate given the wide variety of settings and whether increased flexibility accompanied by much greater accountability for actual student outcomes will improve the delivery of languages.

The LOTE analysis found that there are important economic, social and community benefits to be gained from learning languages, but these are not widely understood in schools and the community, particularly in relation to the benefits for literacy in English. Hence, there is a need to reaffirm the importance of language learning as an essential skill in the curriculum for all students.

Attitudes to language learning in schools and the community remain divided, with great supporters and advocates, but equally strident critics. Therefore, there is a challenge before us in convincing critics and promoting the widespread benefits of languages learning.

Languages programs in country Victoria are generally less robust than those in metropolitan Melbourne, with schools often providing less time for teaching and learning, making languages

elective beyond Year 8, and access to a range of languages being more limited. Considerable work needs to be done both to promote and strengthen languages programs in country Victoria. Consequently, there is a need for greater coordination and planning of languages delivery at the local level, with Regions and school networks playing a significant role in the development of comprehensive Network Languages Plans. The Victorian School of Languages (VSL) and after-hours ethnic schools have a significant role to play in supporting languages provision in school networks and collaboration with non-government schools is also necessary.

Support for retaining the recommended minimum time of 150 minutes per week is divided, with people from country Victoria being less supportive than those from metropolitan Melbourne. Nevertheless, it will be important to retain this recommended minimum to ensure that the outcomes from languages programs in terms of developing meaningful communication skills are achieved.

At present, there is only limited accountability at system level for student outcomes from languages programs. Accountability mechanisms also need to be considerably strengthened. The LOTE analysis recommends a number of strategies to achieve improved accountability.

There are currently few initiatives linking language learning to vocational skills development and there is considerable capacity to innovate in this area.

Information and communication technologies (ICT), online and multimedia resources for languages are under-utilised as a means of enriching languages programs; as a vehicle for greater student engagement, particularly for boys; and have the potential to particularly support teachers and students in country Victoria and those learning through distance education.

Partnerships between mainstream schools, the VSL and after-hours ethnic schools, as well as with business, community and cultural agencies, and local government will be important in continuing to strengthen and grow language learning across Victoria.

Reaffirmation of commitment at the highest level to languages as an essential element of the core curriculum will be a beacon, sending the message to schools and the wider community about the importance of language learning.

Greater promotion of the benefits of learning languages will see its importance in the provision of a broad general education for all students better understood and supported. The development of a coordinated approach, through school networks and clusters, to issues of support and delivery, including time, frequency, spread and continuity of languages programs, will lead to improved learning and teaching. The improved accountability mechanism will provide greater transparency and confidence in the achievements of individual language programs.

Continued cooperative partnerships between mainstream government and non-government schools, the VSL and after-hours ethnic schools, ethnic and community agencies, business and industry, and local government will lead to improved access, innovation and quality in languages education. The LOTE analysis marks a significant advance in providing all students with rich, high-quality language learning experiences and in achieving the ultimate goal of equipping young Victorians with effective communication and intercultural skills in languages other than English.



Findings and recommendations

Languages in the curriculum

Findings

- 1 The important economic, social and community benefits from the learning and teaching of languages are not widely understood in schools and the community.
- 2 There is a need for an explicit public statement from Government about the role and benefits of learning and teaching languages in the school curriculum as well as a national policy and implementation plan for languages.
- 3 There was considerable support for students across all the stages of schooling learning another language.

Recommendation 1

That the Government release a statement affirming the:

- Importance of languages in the core curriculum for all Victorian students
- Expectation that all students in the compulsory years of schooling (Years P–10) learn a language other than English
- Prime goal of language learning is the development of communication skills
- Benefits of languages for literacy in English, intercultural understanding, vocational and career purposes, and the maintenance of identity.

Recommendation 2

That the Government call for a national policy and implementation plan for languages to be developed through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

Recommendation 3

That schools should provide opportunities for all students in the Early, Middle and Later Years of schooling (Years P–10) to learn another language.

Attitudes to learning languages

Findings

- 4 In most cases, where there was high quality learning and teaching of languages, there was also a positive attitude to languages in the school and the community and a view that languages should have equal status with other Key Learning Areas (KLA).
- 5 Where the emphasis was on current shortcomings in delivery and outcomes from language programs, a more negative attitude to languages was displayed and the view was that languages were less important than other KLAs.
- 6 There was a widely held view that there is a need for the education system to provide high quality, innovative experiences for language students, if support for languages in the curriculum is to be more widespread in the future.
- 7 The importance of communication skills in languages is generally recognised; however, school language programs need strengthening so that meaningful communication skills can be developed.
- 8 While the research on the benefits of languages for literacy in development English is well known in academic and some educational circles, it is not generally understood in schools and the community.
- 9 There is a need to identify the reasons for boys' disengagement from learning languages and to develop strategies to promote languages to boys, particularly in the middle and later years of schooling.

Recommendation 4

That research findings on the benefits of learning languages, particularly for literacy in English, be disseminated through:

- Professional development for principals and school leadership teams
- Activities to re-engage Middle Years (Years 5–9) students, particularly boys, and to retain Year 10 students into the VCE
- Promoting language teaching as a career to undergraduates
- Providing parent information on the benefits of languages
- Publishing case studies of exemplary practice.



Models of provision

Findings

- 10 Schools need access to a greater range of models and structured advice in order to deliver appropriate language programs to various categories of students.
- 11 Centres of Excellence in Languages could provide an innovative model of languages provision, using a range of approaches, including information and communication technologies (ICT), for those with a special interest in, and aptitude for, languages.

Recommendation 5

That the feasibility and cost of establishing at least three Centres of Excellence in Languages in schools or clusters of schools at secondary level, two in metropolitan Melbourne and one to two in country Victoria be investigated and that they be identified through expressions of interest that encourage schools/clusters to secure substantial support and partnerships and take a lead in the innovative use of ICT, online and multimedia materials and act as lighthouse schools that promote ICT for languages and skill teachers in its use.

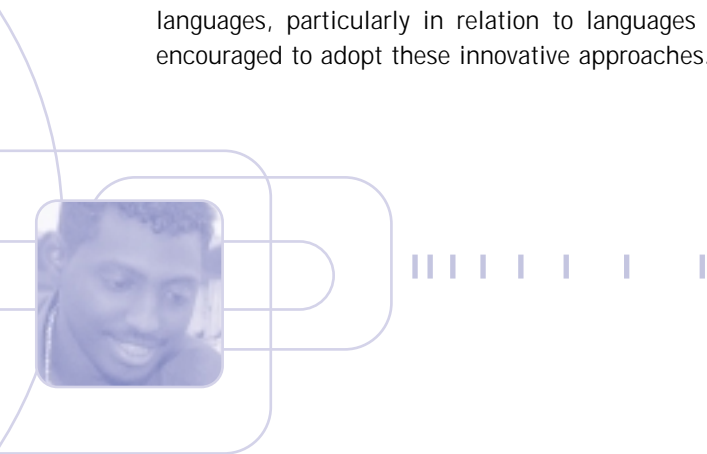
Integration of languages and other Key Learning Areas

Findings

- 12 The principles underpinning bilingual programs can be used to improve all languages programs.
- 13 At present, there are few initiatives linking language learning to vocational skill development and there is considerable capacity to innovate in this area.

Recommendation 6

That research be undertaken and case studies published on schools successfully integrating languages across the curriculum as a way of complementing and enhancing the delivery of languages, particularly in relation to languages for vocational purposes and that schools be encouraged to adopt these innovative approaches.



Time allocation for language programs

Findings

- 14 Support for retaining the recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week was divided, with metropolitan Melbourne being more supportive than country Victoria.
- 15 Many language teachers indicated that it was not possible to teach languages successfully and develop meaningful communication skills with less than 150 minutes per week.
- 16 Schools in country Victoria, often provide less time for languages programs than those in metropolitan areas, with many schools only providing languages as electives beyond Year 8.

Recommendation 7

That strategies and guidelines be developed, which address:

- Frequency and spread of classes, with at least two sessions spread over the week
- The aim of language programs to develop communication skills, particularly oral skills
- Contact time, including retaining 150 minutes per week as a recommended minimum.



Choice and continuity of languages

Findings

17 There is considerable support for choice and continuity of languages, particularly from parents as well as more widely, and especially for:

- Greater choice of languages, particularly at Year 7
- Decisions about which language(s) to teach continuing to be made at the local level
- Students being able to continue the study of the same language to the end of primary or secondary school
- Students continuing with the language they learnt at primary school at the secondary level not having to start again at Year 7
- Greater coordination and planning at regional and school network level as well as more central oversight by the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) of the delivery of languages
- Involvement of local ethnic communities, cultural agencies, business and industry as well as partnerships with the non-government school sectors, the Victorian School of Languages (VSL), after-hours ethnic schools and local government to enhance and grow language programs.

Recommendation 8

That frameworks be developed, and demographic data and professional development be provided to Regions and school networks to assist them in developing Network Language Plans, which over time:

- Provide students with a choice of European and Asian languages
- Provide at least one language which is significant in the local community
- Develop meaningful communication skills in students
- Provide continuity in the language from primary school or choice of a different language at secondary school
- Provide pathways for studying languages to VCE level, which may involve collaboration with the VSL, ethnic schools and/or non-government schools.

Accountability and reporting

Findings

- 18 There is only limited accountability at present for student outcomes from languages programs and parents strongly support better accountability mechanisms.
- 19 Many language teachers and schools face difficulties in reporting against Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) levels because of the range of languages programs operating with different times and starting points.

Recommendation 9

That accountability and reporting mechanisms for languages be developed that report on actual student performance, which also apply to the VSL and ethnic schools, and include:

- Schools identifying CSF levels based on the particular circumstances of their language programs, e.g. time, starting point etc, and each year a representative, rolling sample of 100 schools report to DE&T against these CSF levels
- Reporting on languages in schools' Annual Reports, as part of enhanced accountability arrangements, which focus on outcomes.



Victorian School of Languages (VSL)

Findings

- 20 The VSL has a substantial role to play in supporting school networks to implement their Network Languages Plans, which needs to be further exploited.
- 21 Country students, particularly those accessing languages through distance education, particularly at the VCE level, need further support, including some access to face-to-face support.
- 22 There is also capacity for the VSL to provide leadership and support to mainstream schools and languages teachers in the use of information and communication technologies, including online delivery of languages.

Recommendation 10

That the role of the VSL in relation to languages provision in school networks be defined, including the development of procedures and guidelines for the:

- Introduction of new languages delivered by distance education
- Enrolment of individual primary students in distance education
- Induction of beginners transferring from other schools
- Delivery of languages to whole classes or whole schools
- Improved support for distance education students
- Provision of ICT support and online programs for languages.

Recommendation 11

That the feasibility and cost of increasing the number of VSL centres in non-metropolitan Regions to provide at least two geographically spread VSL centres in each Region over time be investigated, in order to provide greater access and support to country students.



After-hours ethnic schools

Findings

- 23 The role of after-hours ethnic schools as complementary providers of languages is not fully appreciated and needs to be reaffirmed to schools and school networks, and ethnic schools included in discussions on delivery options together with DE&T and the VSL.
- 24 The accreditation process for after-hours ethnic schools and the training and professional development program for ethnic school teachers have led to improved delivery of languages by that sector.
- 25 The use of rental agreements and charges for the use of government school facilities by after-hours ethnic schools varies significantly across the State, with many after-hours ethnic schools claiming that they are being over-charged.

Recommendation 12

That the learning and teaching of languages in after-hours ethnic schools be acknowledged and supported through:

- Notifying schools and school networks that, wherever possible, school facilities should be made available to ethnic schools
- Developing a schedule of charges, including a maximum rate for the use of government schools, together with principals' and school councils' organisations
- Encouraging school councils to waive or reduce charges for newly emerging ethnic communities that may not have access to alternative language classes
- Developing a standard rental agreement to be used by mainstream and ethnic schools for the rental of classrooms to ensure that mutual obligations are set out appropriately in order to protect school property and management of school facilities
- Developing guidelines and convening a working party of stakeholders to coordinate intra-provider issues
- Encouraging schools and school networks to include ethnic schools and the VSL in their Network Languages Plans
- Ensuring that any materials and professional development programs for languages are also accessible to ethnic schools and the VSL
- Developing mutually agreed mechanisms that would facilitate the inclusion of students' results in languages taken at after-hours ethnic schools and the VSL in their mainstream school reports.



Supply, training, recruitment and retention of languages teachers

Findings

- 26 There is capacity for school networks to develop staffing plans for languages as part of their Network Languages Plans, which include joint recruitment and sharing of staff.
- 27 Teachers reported that the content of university language and LOTE methodology courses for teachers were not always appropriate to their needs.
- 28 The end of Commonwealth funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy in December 2002 will adversely impact on the capacity of DE&T to continue to support the training and retraining of languages teachers.

Recommendation 13

That particular strategies for improving the supply of languages teachers, particularly for country Victoria, be identified and explored, including:

- Pursuing funding sources, including from the Commonwealth Government, to continue the Languages Training Program to train and retrain existing DE&T teachers as languages teachers, including targeting a proportion of scholarships for trainee teachers, perhaps 12.5 per cent, to those wishing to become languages teachers
- Negotiating with the Commonwealth to prioritise funding for teacher training to Victorian universities for the training of language teachers
- Pursuing ways of fast-tracking the recognition of overseas qualifications for language teachers and investigate ways of providing any retraining necessary to enable such teachers to effectively teach languages in Victorian schools.



Strengthening languages in country Victoria

Findings

- 29 Schools in country Victoria tend to provide less time for the learning and teaching of languages, more often make languages electives after Year 8, and the accessibility to a range of language options is more limited, than for those in metropolitan Melbourne. (See also Findings 13 and 14 above.)
- 30 The learning and teaching of languages in country Victoria is particularly fragile and requires targeted and local support to be strengthened and improved.

Recommendation 14

That research be undertaken and strategies developed for supporting languages in country Victoria, including considering:

- Targeted promotional activities for schools and their communities on the benefits of learning and teaching languages
- Strategies for improved language teacher supply, including targeted scholarships for trainee teachers prepared to teach in country Victoria (see also Recommendation 13)
- Investigating the feasibility and cost of providing incentives, such as travel allowances, relocation costs, ongoing positions, special payments etc. to languages and other teachers to teach in country Victoria.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) and online language resources and support

Finding

- 31 ICT, multimedia and online approaches for languages education are greatly under-utilised and would enhance delivery as well as being a vehicle for greater student engagement. They would particularly benefit teachers and students in country Victoria and those studying through distance education.

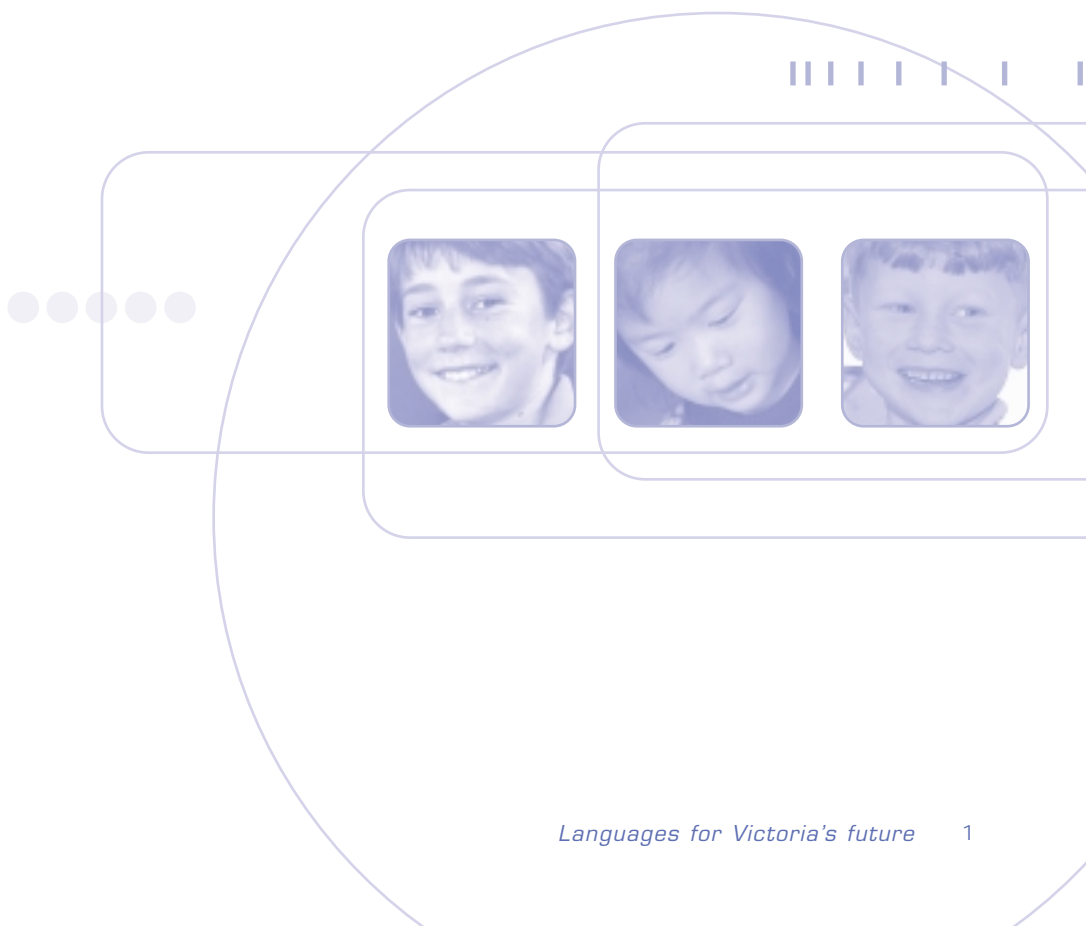
Recommendation 15

That a coordinated and systematic strategy for the development of ICT, online and multimedia materials for languages be developed, including building on the expertise in schools, the VSL and DE&T and taking into account developments at the national level.



Introduction

Education is the Government's highest priority and there is also a commitment to providing comprehensive and effective languages programs in Victorian schools. In announcing the LOTE analysis, it was stressed that languages will continue as one of the eight key learning areas (KLA) of the curriculum. This is because the effective teaching of languages is important for Victoria's future and will allow us to engage economically and culturally with the world, while improving literacy and understanding of diverse cultures. The Government believes that languages are part of the essential curriculum for all students in Victorian schools.





Background to the LOTE analysis

The purpose of the LOTE analysis was to identify ways of strengthening the learning and teaching of languages and to improve student outcomes in terms of proficiency and language confidence. The LOTE analysis has examined policy directions for languages, including more appropriate accountability mechanisms, increased choice, continuity of access, equity for metropolitan and regional students, and the enhanced delivery of language programs. It has considered whether the current recommended hours for languages programs in schools is appropriate given the wide variety of settings and whether increased flexibility accompanied by much greater accountability for actual student outcomes will improve the delivery of languages.

Terms of reference

The Government established the following terms of reference for the LOTE analysis:

The Government is committed to retaining existing levels of budgetary support for LOTE and, in that context, the LOTE analysis will advise the Government on:

- The development of a coordinated policy and strategic directions for LOTE, including appropriate accountability mechanisms for the delivery of LOTE
- Teacher, student and parent attitudes to the current system of LOTE provision
- The relationship of current LOTE provision to the other seven key learning areas (in close collaboration with the general analysis of curriculum provision)
- The best organisational arrangements for the future delivery of LOTE programs to ensure equity between metropolitan and rural and regional Victoria
- How LOTE programs can contribute to improved outcomes in line with key targets established by Government.

Steering committee

An expert committee was established to guide the LOTE analysis, which comprised:

The Hon. Theo Theophanous, (Chair), former Parliamentary Secretary for Education and now Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and State and Regional Development

The Hon. Elaine Carbines, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Education

The Hon. Kaye Darveniza, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, including Multicultural Affairs

Mr Carlo Carli, MP, Member for Coburg

The Hon. Glenyys Romanes, MLC, Member for Melbourne Province

Ms Glenda Strong, General Manager, Learning and Teaching Innovation Division (L&TID), Department of Education & Training and Chair, Curriculum Provision Analysis

Ms Dina Guest, Deputy General Manager, Learning and Teaching Innovation Division, Department of Education & Training

Mr John Firth, Assistant General Manager, Curriculum, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Ms Anne O'Connell, Senior Project Officer, Policy, Planning and Accountability Division

Mr Frank Merlino, Principal, Victorian School of Languages

Mr Neil Jenkin, Principal, Lalor North Primary School

Dr Margaret Gearon, President, Modern Languages Teachers' Association of Victoria (MLTAV)

Mr George Lekakis, Chair, Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC)

Ms Elizabeth Jensen, Director, Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs

Mr Stefan Romaniw, President, Ethnic Schools' Association of Victoria (ESAV)

Professor Michael Clyne, Professorial Fellow in Linguistics, The University of Melbourne (Researcher to the LOTE analysis)

Ms Anne Eckstein, Acting Group Manager, Languages, ESL and Multicultural Education, L&TID (Executive Officer).

Issues paper

A comprehensive issues paper, which outlined the following key issues was released for widespread consultation on 5 February 2002:

- LOTE and the Government's goals for education
- The place of languages in schools
- The kinds of languages programs schools should offer
- Time allocation for languages programs

- Accountability and reporting for languages
- Choice of language(s)
- Continuity of learning over time
- Language teacher supply, training, recruitment and retention
- Strengthening languages in regional and rural Victoria.

Consultation process

Extensive consultation was undertaken, involving written submissions sought from school communities, community and business groups and individuals; as well as consultations with key stakeholder groups, and a community forum held in each DE&T Region.



Context

Languages and the Government's goals for education

Growing Victoria Together (2001) outlines the importance of lifelong education for our children's future and Victoria's prosperity. It provides three key targets for school education:

- Victorian primary school children will be at or above national benchmark levels for reading, writing and numeracy by 2005
- 90 per cent of young people in Victoria will successfully complete Year 12 or its equivalent by 2010
- The per centage of young people 15–19 in rural and regional Victoria engaged in education and training will rise by 6 per cent by 2005
- The proportion of young Victorians learning new skills will increase. (p. 8)

In addition, the Government:

...recognises that the diverse cultural backgrounds, languages and abilities of Victorians are some of the State's greatest strengths. (p. 26)

The provision of high-quality, innovative language programs, which respond to students' needs and interests will contribute to the achievement of the Government's goals and targets for education and in particular, to increased student retention and participation in education by young people in country Victoria. The benefits of learning languages for literacy development in English, which are outlined later in the report, mean that learning languages also contributes to the achievement of improved literacy levels.

Languages programs in Victorian government schools

In 2001, 18 languages were taught in government primary schools and 17 in secondary colleges. The most widely taught languages in mainstream schools were Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, French and German.

A total of 95 per cent of primary schools and 97 per cent of secondary colleges taught languages to 87 per cent of primary and 71 per cent of secondary students in the compulsory years (Years 7–10) in 2001 and to 52 per cent of secondary students overall. At VCE level, 15 per cent of Year 11 and 12 per cent of Year 12 students in government schools were studying languages.

In addition, the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) provided after-hours classes in 41 languages to almost 13,000 primary and secondary students in 32 centres across metropolitan and country Victoria, as well as distance education in 7 languages to over 1700 secondary students in 2001.

Community after-hours ethnic schools

In addition, almost 200 community after-hours ethnic schools provided over 50 languages to approximately 31,000 students each week. These providers have an important complementary role in the provision of languages for Victorian students.

The value of learning and teaching languages

Languages for the future

Intercultural understanding and skills in other languages are some of the essential skills and knowledge needed for effective participation in the workforce and in society generally, in an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse world. In the future, students will live and work in an increasingly shrinking world. They may need to interact regularly with people from other countries, including online. Therefore, students will need both languages other than English as well as the intercultural skills to deal respectfully and effectively with others. The schools of today will need to prepare the students of tomorrow to operate effectively for this culturally diverse and multilingual future.

Languages in multicultural Victoria

Victoria is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse Australian States or Territories. The 2001 census indicates that 23.4 per cent of Victorians were born overseas and that 20.4 per cent of Victorians aged 5 years or more spoke another language at home. The main languages spoken at home were Italian, Greek, and a Chinese language. The Government is committed to supporting communities from language backgrounds other than English to maintain their language, culture and ethnic identity, as well as to teaching languages to all Victorian students.

The learning of a wide range of languages is important to enhance communication in Victoria's multicultural community as well as to develop the linguistic and cultural skills necessary for Victoria's future economic development and international relationships. While English is the national language and a language of international importance, English alone will not be enough for Victorian students in the future.

Languages in the information age

In an age where information, communication and global markets are playing an ever-increasing role, the ability to communicate effectively in other languages and with people from other cultures has never been more important. For example, in 1997, English dominated the Internet, with over 80 per cent of home pages being in English (see Web Languages Hit Parade).

However, by 2001, it was estimated that only 43 per cent of the world's online population used English (see Global Internet Statistics at Global Reach). If this trend continues, countries, which have access to a variety of languages skills, will be significantly advantaged.

Languages and literacy

Literacy can be acquired in any language or in more than one language. Australian and international research has found that literacy skills are transferable from one language to another, and that there are benefits in developing literacy in more than one language. As well as enhancing the development of specific literacy skills, learning another language allows students to more easily decode language, make comparisons between languages and draw conclusions about how language works.

Languages and career opportunities

Skills in languages open doors to a wide range of career paths, both domestically and internationally. Australia's workforce of the future will need to be multilingual to meet the challenges ahead. In a recent survey of Chief Executive Officers from 28 countries, Australians feature at the bottom of the list, below Americans, the British and New Zealanders, with an average of 1.4 languages each. Dutch Chief Executive Officers topped the list with an average of 3.9 languages each (Rosen, Digh, Singer & Phillips 2000).

Languages in schools

Languages education is one of the eight key learning areas and the key competencies identified nationally for Australian schooling. Learning languages supports students' educational and personal development and enhances their vocational options. It broadens students' experience by giving them an insight into another culture(s) and develops their intercultural skills and understanding. High levels of bilingualism lead to better cognitive skills, that is, thinking and learning skills, such as problem solving.

Languages for students from language backgrounds other than English

For students from language backgrounds other than English, the ability to maintain their first language leads to improved communication within families and to greater self-esteem, which can lead to educational benefits, such as improved school performance.



Analysis of submissions and consultations

Of the 275 written submissions received, 70 per cent were from schools or teachers and 30 per cent were from individuals, organisations, tertiary institutions and students. Among the submissions from schools, 50 per cent came from schools and 41 per cent came from language teachers. Thirty-seven per cent of submissions represented primary school interests and 27 per cent secondary school interests, while 29 per cent came from non-metropolitan areas and 56 per cent from Melbourne. Also, representatives of 13 key stakeholder groups as well as students, parents, teachers and principals attended consultations and regional forums.

The issues that were raised most frequently in written submissions, key stakeholder consultations and regional forums included:

- language teacher supply and quality
- financial resources available for languages programs
- transition and continuity, particularly from primary to secondary school
- demands on the curriculum and timetabling
- the need for public promotion of languages.



Issues, findings and recommendations

Languages in the curriculum

Although the place of languages in the curriculum was a 'given' in the Issues paper, the vast majority of respondents (about 92 per cent) supported maintaining languages as one of the eight KLAs. Those who were against this usually referred to the 'crowded curriculum', saying that languages were less important than other KLAs, such as English, Mathematics and Science. Some said that while the place of languages was justified; there were difficulties in sustaining it due to insufficient support and resources:

If my school agreed to the extra half-hour for each class, they would need to employ me for an extra two hours per week or reduce the children's Art time, as I am also the teacher for that subject – an unlikely scenario. If LOTE competency is the priority, then 1.5 hours per week is inadequate.

Even seemingly positive responses suggested that languages were not really core:

The minimum recommended time that exists now of half an hour a day would be ideal. This can only happen if the program is adequately funded in terms of staff and not at the expense of core subjects.

Many submissions included comments about the wide range of demands on time available for teaching and learning in schools. This factor was also frequently mentioned by language teachers and other supporters of languages as one of the factors undermining languages in secondary schools and militating against compulsory languages programs beyond Year 8:

The crowded curriculum is due to the fact that too many government schools are trying to integrate what should be considered extra-curricular activities into the core curriculum.

The cumulative nature of language learning and teaching requires students to take the language in both semesters, making it less attractive for some students than the other subjects, which can be studied only in one semester, thereby adding to the range of electives that a student can take. Consequently, there is a danger that many students will not undertake any serious study of languages.

In an attempt to further engage their students and increase retention rates, some schools offer in Years 9 and 10, often as alternatives to languages or other KLAs, a range of perceived

vocationally relevant and interesting subjects, such as information technology, motor mechanics, airbrushing, sport, cake decoration, self-defence, ceramics, and photography. While disengagement and early school leaving are significant issues for some schools, languages programs should be seen as one of the ways of engaging such students in education, especially in the Middle Years (5–9), through innovative, high quality content and approaches to learning and teaching that address these particular students' needs and aspirations.

The vast majority of submissions identified the social and economic benefits to the community from learning languages, such as languages being an important skill in the knowledge economy, being an aid to the development of literacy in English and cognitive skills, and in terms of developing greater intercultural skills and understanding. These benefits are discussed in more detail later in the report.

All States and Territories support the learning and teaching of languages in schools:

Australian Capital Territory

There is an expectation languages will be offered in Australian Capital Territory primary and secondary schools. In the majority of primary schools languages are taught in Years 1–6. Most secondary schools make language study compulsory for Year 7, with some schools offering the opportunity to study two languages in one year, although not concurrently.

New South Wales

New South Wales students are expected to study 100 hours in one language each year at Years 7–10. Languages are optional in primary schools. The study of a language is compulsory for the award of a School Certificate in Year 10.

Northern Territory

Northern Territory policy states that all schools should provide the opportunity for language study.

Queensland

Language study is compulsory in Years 6–8 in QLD.

South Australia

The South 2000–2007 Languages Plan makes languages compulsory in schools from R–10 by 2007.

Tasmania

Tasmanian primary schools begin LOTE study in Year 3 and about 75 per cent of all primary students are now learning a language. Most secondary school students are able to continue the language studied at primary level.

Victoria

There is an expectation that all Victorian government schools students. P–10 are learning another language.

Western Australia

It is compulsory for WA schools to offer languages in Years 3–8. From 2002, it will be compulsory for all schools to offer a language in Year 9, and from 2003 for Year 10.

The benefits of Australians developing better language skills has been recognised nationally for over a decade, with a number of Commonwealth programs supporting the learning and teaching of languages in mainstream schools as well as in the community through after-hours ethnic schools. However, the end of the Commonwealth National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) funding program in December 2002, foreshadows diminished Commonwealth support for languages and threatens to erode the substantial gain made in recent years, particularly in relation to Asian languages.

Given the diverse policies and approaches to languages across Australia, there is clearly an urgent need for a national approach to policy and planning for languages. While it is important for the various jurisdictions to have the flexibility to implement language policies and programs to suit their particular needs and circumstances, policy directions and implementation plan at the national level would provide common framework within which individual jurisdictions could plan delivery, and coordinate provision of support and share the development of language curriculum and materials. This would most effectively be undertaken through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and its Taskforces, which would ensure that all States and Territories were effectively represented.

Findings

- 1 The important economic, social and community benefits from the learning and teaching of languages are not widely understood in schools and the community.
- 2 There is a need for an explicit public statement from Government about the role and benefits of learning and teaching languages in the school curriculum as well as a national policy and implementation plan for languages.

Recommendation 1

The Government release a statement affirming the:

- Importance of languages in the core curriculum for all Victorian students
- Expectation that all students in the compulsory years of schooling (Years P–10) learn a language other than English
- Prime goal of language learning is the development of communication skills
- Benefits of languages for literacy in English, intercultural understanding, vocational and career purposes, and the maintenance of identity.

Recommendation 2

The Government call for a national policy and implementation plan for languages to be developed through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

Stages of schooling for learning languages

Most respondents believed that the learning of languages should begin in Prep, taking advantage of the enthusiasm and spontaneity of young children. Some however, preferred to start later in the Early Years of schooling, such as in Year 2 or 3 once students' English literacy skills had been consolidated. There was general support for learning languages in the Middle Years.

However, two of the culturally most diverse primary schools argued against languages study on the grounds that their children already had another language, one of them outlining its program in Cultures other than English.

We strongly support the notion of students identified as 'at risk' in English being exempted from LOTE programs. We believe that our first priority in primary schools should be the effective teaching of English.

Many of our students already have a second language (English) and the community is generally not interested in LOTE. ... with the increased standards in literacy (DE&T targets, AIM tests, etc.) our priority will always be English.

On the other hand, a Year 6 student wrote:

I am writing to you to let you know what I think about learning another language in primary school. I think is very good becoose (sic) if I din't (sic) learn another language I can't speak Japonese (sic) exemplo (sic). I came from Brazil and I come to Australia last year. I'm learning English and I like to lear Japonese (sic).

While languages are not compulsory beyond Year 8 in many schools, the submissions contained success stories of languages programs beyond that level. There was general consensus that a language should be taken in the Later Years, to at least Year 10 level. Some students argued that the greatest benefit of languages learning occurred after Year 8. Other respondents believed that *competition from background learners at VCE level* was a reason for discontinuing a particular language in Year 9. The difficulty of maintaining viable VCE classes was a concern of several submissions. Vertical acceleration was one suggested solution proposed:

Streaming, vertical acceleration or extension classes seem to be appropriate approaches if handled with sensitivity, that is, acceleration in the areas students are good at, consolidation in the areas that are not strongly developed (usually writing). At present this happens only in a few schools...

One school has implemented vertical streaming for languages, so that students who have taken the language at primary school form a separate group and proceed in a different way from and faster than the beginners' group. On the other hand, there were difficulties with small groups in the upper school. It should also be noted that that this involved a major change to the entire school, not just for the languages classes.

Finding

- 3 There was considerable support for students across all the stages of schooling learning another language.

Recommendation 3

Schools should provide opportunities for all students in the Early, Middle and Later Years of schooling (P–10) to learn another language.

Attitudes to learning languages

The consultation process has highlighted two essentially opposing positions. Those who are supportive of languages, see it as an important and obligatory area in the curriculum, with the same status as other KLAs. They stress the need for commitment and resources to languages to achieve improvements. Those who do not consider languages as important as other KLAs, emphasise current shortcomings in delivery and outcomes. Some commented on the discrepancy between the desirability of languages as a KLA and the challenges impeding its successful implementation.

One of the overwhelming challenges for motivating students to continue with learning languages is prevailing community attitudes, which extend to decision makers at all levels of education. Students not performing well in a language, being bored, or having succumbed to peer pressure are often sufficient reasons for a school not to require students to take a language. These same reasons, while also true for some other KLAs, would not be acceptable. There is a view that the demands on class time are too great to include languages, but not too great for other KLAs. There is also a longstanding myth summarised as follows in a submission to the Prime Minister made by the Australian Linguistic Society in October 1978:

It appears to be widely believed in Australia that foreign languages are essentially unlearnable to normal people, and that Australians have a special innate anti-talent for learning them. English, on the other hand, is learnable, and even those other languages which a normal person and especially an Australian could never learn, can be learnt easily and effortlessly by people whose first language is not English.

Many respondents identified attitudinal change in school leadership teams as imperative for the success of language programs in schools and provided numerous suggestions as to how attitudes, especially of principals and other teachers, but also of parents and students could be changed. These included classes for parents; school-community information sessions; showcasing exemplary programs, promoting the career options available to those with skills in languages, and promoting Victoria as a State of Excellence and Innovation in languages learning and teaching.

Findings

- 4** In most cases, where there was high quality learning and teaching of languages, there was also a positive attitude to languages in the school and the community and a view that languages should have equal status with other KLAs.
- 5** Where the emphasis was on current shortcomings in delivery and outcomes from language programs, a more negative attitude to languages was displayed and the view was that languages were less important than other KLAs.

There was a widely held view that there is a need for the education system to provide high quality, innovative experiences for language students, if support for languages in the curriculum is to be more widespread in the future.

Benefits of languages

The submissions ranked the benefits of languages learning suggested in the issues paper as follows:

- Communication skills
- Literacy in the LOTE
- Promoting understanding of different cultures
- Expanding knowledge about the culture and society
- Promoting intercultural awareness
- Expanding knowledge about how languages in general work
- Cognitive skills, such as problem solving
- Language skills for vocational and career purposes.

The ranking given to these areas by languages teachers as opposed to schools and others is outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Benefits of languages, as ranked by teachers and schools

Benefits	Language teachers	Schools	Others
Communication skills	1	1	1
Literacy in the LOTE	2	2	2
Cognitive skills, such as problem solving	3	4	7
Expanding knowledge about how languages in general work	5	2	5
Expanding knowledge about the culture and society	7	7	3
Language skills for vocational and career purposes	8	8	8
Promoting intercultural awareness	6	6	6
Promoting understanding of different cultures	4	5	4

All respondents ranked communication skills the highest and language skills for vocational and career purposes as the least important. The low rating of vocational skills among secondary teachers was particularly surprising, given the importance of the vocational aspects of secondary education. Generally, languages teachers found literacy in the language other than English and expanding knowledge about how languages in general work more important. However, promoting understanding of different cultures was considered a significant backdrop to the learning of a second language. Respondents associated with primary schools tended to rank literacy skills and promoting cultural understanding more highly, whereas respondents linked to secondary education emphasised the benefits for cognitive skills. Some submissions ranked all benefits as of equal importance and others grouped all the benefits related to culture together.

One stakeholder group noted that the Issues paper did not devote sufficient attention to cultural maintenance as a benefit of language learning and that community languages were in decline within the education system. As one submission stated:

Many schools in areas where the ethnic component of the local community and therefore the school population is very large fail to provide for LOTE for the relevant local community languages.

Another submission stated:

Newly arrived ESL learners need to maintain literacy skills in their first language in order to fully develop skills in English. Maintenance of first language skills embeds identity and helps promote social harmony and multiculturalism. Students who maintain their first language have healthier self-esteem and are more likely to reach their full potential.

The special position of Auslan as a community language and as a potential language for study by monolingual students, particularly in rural areas was mentioned. However, as for other languages, it is essential that teachers have adequate qualifications.

Finding

7 The importance of communication skills in languages is generally recognised, however, school language programs need strengthening so that meaningful communication skills can be developed.

Languages and literacy development in English

The majority of respondents saw a link between languages and literacy development in English. Some pointed to research findings that they were aware of, and many wrote from their own experience:

Current LOTE programs contribute to literacy and the effective learning of other KLA's by ... offering students the opportunity to build on structures and skills already in place from their first language.

Languages contribute to student literacy as they provide a structured approach to comparing and contrasting linguistic elements of English and other languages.

Senior students of languages have often commented to me that their understanding of English grammar has been greatly enhanced by their LOTE studies, and they write better in English as a consequence.

There were several references to the advantages of learning languages for English literacy continuing into the secondary school and that the best students in English were those who had continued with a language at Years 9 and 10. There was also a suggestion that the languages teacher should be a member of the school's literacy team.

The positive benefits of second language acquisition for literacy development were not always easy to grasp by some respondents, who argued that the level of English literacy was too low for some students to afford the time to acquire another language:

Please don't waste valuable time in the early years teaching LOTE to students who have poor English skills.

However, research has found that literacy skills are transferable because literacy requires an understanding of how language works (metalinguistic awareness) and bilinguals have two sets of representational symbols to use for learning and problem-solving and can switch effectively between these systems. They can separate form and content, that is, they have two words for 'window' or 'pencil'. (Leopold 1939–49; Ianco-Worrall 1972). They develop an analytic approach to language earlier because they focus on avoiding interference between their languages and pay attention to cues and hints (Ben-Zeev 1977 a & b). They also tend to be more divergent thinkers, which supports problem solving.

These benefits can be acquired even in a limited second language program. Learning a language in Prep and Year 1 was found to be enough to advance reading readiness in the English in Australian research by Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1983). Further advantages of bilingualism identified by Makin et al. (1995:38) include 'increased problem-solving abilities, cognitive flexibility, verbal creativity and greater metalinguistic awareness'.

The languages of a bilingual are interdependent in the person's processing of language (Cummins 1977, 1978) and each language can aid the other in language and cognitive development. Literacy skills acquired in one language can be transferred to the other. The skills and strategies needed to make meaning from text are common to all languages. This applies even to languages with different writing systems (Ovando & Collier). Recognition of the internal structure of a word is important for developing literacy skills (Koda 2002) and can be enhanced by the learning of additional languages. Research by Cummins and Swain (1989:82) into bilingual education has found a common underlying proficiency across all languages, where the literacy-related aspects in the first and second languages are common and interdependent.

Finding

8 While the research on the benefits of languages for literacy in development English is well known in academic and some educational circles, it is not generally understood in schools and the community.

Language learning for boys

Boys are largely under represented in languages programs once they become elective. In Years 7 and 8, when languages are generally compulsory, equivalent proportions of male and female students are learning languages. From Year 9 onwards, when languages are more often elective, the proportion of female students progressively rises. In Year 12, 70 per cent of languages students were female in 2001.

Overall however, males outnumbered females in some languages in 2001, including Italian, Greek, Turkish, Maltese, Auslan, Vietnamese, Korean, German, Latin and Khmer. French, Japanese, Indonesian, Chinese and Arabic were the languages with more female students.

Finding

9 There is a need to identify the reasons for boys' disengagement from learning languages and to develop strategies to promote languages to boys, particularly in the Middle and Later Years of schooling.

Recommendation 4

Research findings on the benefits of learning languages, particularly for literacy in English, be disseminated through:

- Professional development for principals and school leadership teams
- Activities to re-engage Middle Years (Years 5–9) students, particularly boys, and to retain Year 10 students into the VCE
- Promoting language teaching as a career to undergraduates
- Providing parent information on the benefits of languages
- Publishing case studies of exemplary practice.

Language learning for newly arrived ESL students

Opinion varied as to whether some students, such as newly arrived English as a second language (ESL) learners should be exempted from languages programs. Many respondents suggested that exemption should only be given on a case-by-case basis for new arrivals, who need to quickly acquire the English. On the other hand, a number favoured including ESL students in the requirement for all students to learn languages, arguing that learning languages gives these students self-esteem that helps with general schooling and assists with developing problem solving skills. Another point made was that if recently arrived ESL students were exempted from languages programs until they were proficient in English, it would take all them longer to catch up:

Another problem with withdrawing a student from LOTE is that this may occur for six months or a year and then the student may commence/recommence LOTE. This is not very good for their self-esteem, as they are then way behind the other students in terms of skill and knowledge of content etc.

Some respondents argued that where students could learn their first language, they needed to maintain and develop it to the point where their English could benefit from cognitive transfer. Learning a third language can put ESL students on a 'level playing field' with other students, where they can benefit from the metalinguistic awareness flowing from their bilingualism. European countries have made three languages, including the first language, a normal part of the school curriculum (Cenoz & Jessner 2000). Also, local research (Clyne et al. 1995) suggests that third language learners from a range of backgrounds pushed the results of a limited Italian program well beyond expectations.

Language learning for students with disabilities

A number of responses cited either experientially or on the basis of research that disabled students or, indeed, students who were not performing well in other areas of the curriculum, often did well in languages. There was a feeling that those with disabilities should be exempted only on a case-by-case basis. However, it was argued that special consideration should be given to exempting the intellectually disabled. Only a minority of respondents supported providing any form of exemption.

Finding

10 Schools need access to a greater range of models and structured advice in order to deliver appropriate language programs to various categories of students.

Models of provision

Although languages programs are currently implemented in a range of ways, schools are sometimes unaware of all their various options for delivery. Some of the examples of innovative delivery models that have come to the attention of the LOTE analysis include:

- Bilingual programs
- Bilingual teaching through particular curriculum areas, e.g. Art, or across the curriculum
- Languages integrated into literacy activities
- Vertical streaming
- Block timetabling of languages
- Use of online and multimedia programs and resources
- Video-conferencing and telematics
- Shared language teachers across schools and/or clusters
- Outposting of secondary teachers to support feeder primary schools
- Extended school hours
- Support from the Victorian School of Languages and/or after-hours ethnic schools
- Languages linked to vocational skills and work experience.

Often schools use combinations of these delivery modes. For example, a school may use a face-to-face language teacher together with multimedia and online resources used by classroom teachers. Alternatively, a school may use video-conferencing delivered by a language teacher from another school together with some self-paced distance education or multimedia materials. While schools are generally aware of many of these delivery modes, providing them with more information about a greater range of options will assist them to make better decisions about the most appropriate delivery model for their particular circumstances.

Centres of Excellence in Languages

In recent years, the United Kingdom (UK) has embarked on a program of enabling some schools to develop as centres of excellence in particular areas of specialisation, including languages. Beginning with a small number of pilot schools some years ago, there are now 99 Languages Colleges. Such schools must raise the standards in the main languages they teach and increase the numbers of students gaining two language GCSEs at Key Stage 4 and studying at least one foreign language to an advanced level. Such colleges can choose which languages they offer but are expected to take into consideration languages spoken in their local community, and the official languages of the European Union and international commerce. Languages Colleges in the UK must attract substantial annual sponsorship and meet ambitious targets and performance measures in return for significant annual government funding for a 4-year period.

The establishment of Centres of Excellence in Languages in Victoria would benefit those with a special interest in, and aptitude for languages and could give students the opportunity to study several languages in-depth. Schools or clusters would form a centre of excellence for teaching six to eight languages where students could:

- Learn two or more languages
- Start a new language at Year 9 or Year 11
- Fast track language learning
- Undertake in-depth, intensive programs
- Undertake expeditions and exchanges that involve languages
- Use innovative information and communications technologies (ICT)
- Integrate languages in VET programs
- Undertake apprenticeships that involve languages as part of the development of the particular technical skills, e.g. an apprenticeship for Italian speaking chefs.

Guidelines for establishing such Centres of Excellence in Languages would need to include rigorous performance and accountability measures, and the schools encouraged to secure substantial support and partnerships. Schools and/or clusters supported as Centres of Excellence in Languages would also need to provide professional development and outreach support to other schools teaching languages. They should also build links with industry and employers through the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and local government partnerships, such as sister city agreements.

The Schools for Innovation and Excellence project, which is part of the Innovation and Excellence in the Middle Years Program provides opportunities for clusters of schools to develop this innovative, specialist focus on languages. In addition, it would be important for the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission to become involved in this initiative.

Finding

- 11** Centres of Excellence in Languages could provide an innovative model of languages provision, using a range of approaches including ICT, for those with a special interest in, and aptitude for languages.

Recommendation 5

The feasibility and cost of establishing at least three Centres of Excellence in Languages in schools or clusters of schools at secondary level, two in metropolitan Melbourne and one to two in country Victoria be investigated and that they be identified through expressions of interest that encourage schools/clusters to secure substantial support and partnerships and take a lead in the innovative use of information and communication technologies (ICT), online and multimedia materials and act as lighthouse schools that promote ICT for languages and skill teachers in its use.

Integration of languages and other KLAs

Many of the submissions indicated how languages and other KLAs were or could be integrated. Some examples included:

A Middle-Ages project which involves SOSE, LOTE, Science, Maths, Art, Foods and Textiles.

Integrated units which not only can integrate various subjects with LOTE but also with transition and cross-promotion e.g. students would play culturally appropriate sports, coached and umpired in the LOTE by an older student and play a match against a primary school teaching the same LOTE; another example is students read a LOTE text and then write and produce a play to be performed to primary schools and also other students in the school learning the same LOTE.

In SOSE (geography), it is possible to integrate the disaster theme/volcano process into a Year 9 LOTE syllabus.

Other examples involved the innovative use of ICT for integrating languages, literacy and cross curriculum content, the use of school intranets for developing school web pages for languages, and linking languages activities with excursions to such places as the zoo, Botanical Gardens, the National Gallery of Victoria and the museum etc.

Most respondents were aware of bilingual or immersion programs, where students learn curriculum content in, and through, both English and another language. These were seen as very effective, but requiring much extra resourcing, teacher qualifications and effort. Such programs were also seen as a way of managing the demands on class time.

Local research confirms that while a language can be integrated across the curriculum, it requires at least 4 hours per week and some concentration on teaching the language itself (Clyne et al. 1995: 172). However, the 'package' of subjects taught through the language other than English needs to be considered carefully, as different KLAs contribute differently to the language acquisition/development process and the value of some subjects may decline or increase over time.

For instance, the close link between language and conceptual development in Science combined with a strong non-verbal component, aids comprehension. SOSE and Music facilitate the link between language and culture. Health, Physical, Sport and Education (HPSE) promotes listening skills as well as introducing the language for the human body and movement. Art provides the language for colour, shape, size, texture, etc. However, both Art and HPSE outlive their usefulness some time after basic skills in the language have been acquired.

Merely teaching subjects such as Art, for example, in another language in such a way that students spend a lot of time painting rather than communicating about their paintings, will not necessarily result in high-level skills in the language. Drama, a subject involving role-play, becomes increasingly useful as children reach a developmental stage where their identities are challenged.

Language programs that link language learning to vocational skill development have the additional benefit of providing a meaningful context and motivating students to learn languages. At present, there are very few initiatives in this area. Consequently, there is considerable capacity develop to innovative programs in this area, including:

- Work experience linked to languages for students
- Languages programs that incorporate specific vocational language studies, e.g. German for Tourism
- Linking languages to VET in Schools programs
- Apprenticeship programs that include specific vocational language studies, e.g. Italian for Chefs
- Incorporating vocational language studies in the Victorian Certificate for Applied Learning (VCAL).

Such programs have the potential to engage or re-engage significant numbers of students, who at present see no purpose or long-term benefit in their continuing to learn another language.

Findings

- 12 The principles underpinning bilingual programs can be used to improve all languages programs.
- 13 At present, there are few initiatives linking language learning to vocational skill development and there is considerable capacity to innovate in this area.

Recommendation 6

Research be undertaken and case studies published on schools successfully integrating languages across the curriculum as a way of complementing and enhancing the delivery of languages, particularly in relation to languages for vocational purposes and that schools be encouraged to adopt these innovative approaches.

Time allocation for language programs

Currently there is a recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week for languages programs and 450 minutes for designated bilingual programs. The 150 minutes per week minimum time was based on research evidence, which indicated the benefits of daily contact, and enabled schools to provide at least half an hour per day each week. The minimum time was negotiated with teacher unions at a time when languages teachers were provided to a relatively small number of schools based on a submission process. When the previous Government extended languages learning to all students in all schools from Prep to Year 10, the minimum recommended time was retained.

However, the resources provided to schools through school global budgets (SGB) were never intended to provide schools' total language staffing needs. Where schools, particularly those in country Victoria, use only their SGB LOTE allocations to staff their language program,

they provide much less than the recommended 150 minutes per week. The average weekly time in 2001 in primary schools was only 66 minutes and in secondary schools was 127 minutes.

About 43 per cent of respondents agreed and 57 per cent disagreed with the current recommended minimum time. There were more submissions from country Victoria that disagreed with a minimum time allocation. The case for a minimum time for languages focussed on the need for adequate time to achieve the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) levels for languages and to provide a program of appropriate quality. Concern was expressed that, if the minimum recommended time was reduced, those schools currently adhering to it, would be under pressure to reduce the time they currently provide for languages. Those opposing a minimum time allocation pointed to the difficulties in implementation, and in particular, inadequate teacher supply, insufficient resources, and the competing demands on class time.

There were suggestions for a staggered time allocation, with most suggesting that Prep receive less time than the middle primary years, and that the amount of time allocated to languages should increase during secondary school. It was also suggested by some respondents and at consultations that part of the two-hour literacy block in primary schools be used for literacy-based languages activities, since second language study contributes to overall literacy development. In fact, this was already taking place in some schools.

The number of hours for languages should not be considered in isolation from two related questions: frequency and the spread of classes. Considerable concern was expressed about languages being timetabled in double periods and/or only once a week. Shorter, more frequent, preferably daily, language classes were favoured by teachers. Also, where schools elect to focus on the development of literacy in English in the early primary years, a commensurately greater focus and therefore increased time would need to be devoted to languages in the later years of primary school.

It should also be remembered that school language programs will not develop all students into highly proficient linguists, just as school music programs do not turn all students into great musicians. However, a base level of time on task is necessary if languages programs are to develop reasonable levels of communication skills, intercultural competence and metalinguistic awareness in students.

Findings

- 14** Support for retaining the recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week was divided, with metropolitan Melbourne being more supportive than country Victoria.
- 15** Many language teachers indicated that it was not possible to teach languages successfully and develop meaningful communication skills with less than 150 minutes per week.
- 16** Schools in country Victoria, often provide less time for languages programs than those in metropolitan areas, with many schools only providing languages as electives beyond Year 8.

Recommendation 7

Strategies and guidelines be developed, which address:

- Frequency and spread of classes, with at least two sessions spread over the week
- The aim of language programs to develop communication skills, particularly oral skills
- Time, including retaining 150 minutes per week, as a recommended minimum.

Such guidelines would provide a framework within which schools would establish targets and then report against these, thereby providing a context for accountability requirements. In addition, the time devoted to activities for developing literacy skills in languages should be considered to contribute to overall literacy development. This would then lead to the learning and teaching of languages becoming more widespread.

Choice and continuity of languages

Because English is the national language of Australia, there is no obligation to teach only one language in our schools. At the same time, Australia is fortunate in having in our community, resources in a wide range of languages from Asia, Europe, and other parts of the world on which it can build. Currently, individual schools determine which language(s) are to be offered. An important consideration for schools in choosing particular languages is teacher supply and continuity. Other considerations include the language(s) used in the school community, the perceived relative ease of acquisition, and the potential instrumental or vocational value of the language. The need for the teaching of Auslan, the language of the deaf community, and Australian indigenous languages should also be considered.

It was suggested by some respondents that parental consultation could result in a loss of established language programs:

A school council survey of parents indicated that they would prefer no LOTE, so after 6 years of teaching (language) to Grades 4, 5, 6 (2 hours contact per week) it was decided to abandon the program

Others stressed the need for a balance of Asian and European languages:

Secondary schools should offer one European and one Asian language each where numbers make this viable.

There was a minority view in the submissions that schools were teaching too many languages and that the number of languages taught should be limited. While a large number of languages are taught in Victorian government schools, some languages are offered in only one or a small number of schools. In fact, only eight languages are more or less widely taught in mainstream schools: Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, French, German, Chinese, Greek and Vietnamese. The majority supported the present arrangements; some saying that limiting the number of languages taught would not solve any problems. One group pointed out that no mainstream government school was now teaching a particular language and that:

By promoting one (language) in preference to another and by funding according to numbers, smaller languages cannot grow and are in fact dying.

There is clearly a need for skills in a range of languages in order to maintain and develop Victoria's domestic, trade and economic links. Teaching a balance of European and Asian languages, including maintaining the languages of our rich multicultural community will ensure that Victoria is well placed to exploit business and trade opportunities with a range of countries in our region and the world. In addition, it was apparent from consultations and regional forums that ethnic communities and their members are willing to actively support and become involved in the teaching of languages in schools. Such support can significantly enhance the learning of languages, by providing students with opportunities to use their language skills for meaningful communication purposes.

There was a strong call for more centralised planning of languages provision at the level of school networks or clusters, to assist with articulation between primary and secondary school. Some secondary schools reported as many as five languages represented among the languages taught in their feeder primary schools. Coordination of languages provision by school networks could provide a mechanism to ensure that there was both a balance of languages and better transition arrangements. School networks were also seen to be conducive to resource sharing, including sharing of teachers, particularly in the Middle Years (5–9).

There was a strong view that students should be able to continue at secondary school the study of a language, which they had begun at primary school. This means not only offering the language, but also offering it at an appropriate level. There was considerable discontent with programs that required students to start again from scratch when they had already been learning that language for 6 or 7 years.

It should also be noted that many families move house while their children are at primary school, and many children are moved from one school sector to another during primary schooling. According to one key stakeholder, 80 per cent of children attend more than one primary school. The consequence of this is that students frequently change languages, often when it is too late to catch up or because no provision is made for beginning learners.

A number of submissions saw opportunities for school networks and clusters to facilitate continuity of languages provision:

Networks of schools offer a range of languages, which gives students the opportunity to attend the relevant schools to access LOTE of their choice...

Primary and secondary schools in a cluster can work out a curriculum that enables students to use and extend their knowledge of a language rather than requiring students to start from the beginning as they enter Year 7.

A more effective transition program from primary to secondary schooling can be facilitated through clusters/school networks when teachers:

pass on assessment information and assign a level of competence to students, which could be used to determine groupings of students in secondary LOTE classes.

A minority of respondents indicated that continuity was not essential because the cognitive skills derived from learning one language were transferable to another. Research indicates that it is not absolutely necessary to continue with the primary school language at the secondary level as literacy skills in English and another language, as well as language acquisition strategies, are transferable and facilitate the acquisition of a third or any subsequent language(s):

The students of LOTE have been learning how to learn and have been exposed to other cultures and peoples, and this is not wasted if they change to another language.

There is also some evidence from a small-scale study (Kipp 1996) that children who had taken one language at primary school did better in another, unrelated language and continued with that second language longer at secondary school than those who had not previously taken a language at primary school.

It was also pointed out that some students preferred a change of language after primary school.

There is clearly a need for greater coordination and planning of delivery at the regional and school network/cluster level to provide greater choice and continuity of languages. In addition, increased central advice and oversight of planning and delivery will be necessary to support schools, school networks/clusters and Regions to undertake and manage the coordinated delivery of languages.

Partnerships between DE&T and the non-government schools sectors have been an important feature of the provision of support for languages in Victoria for many years. DE&T has collaborated successfully with the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV) on a range of initiatives to promote and support the learning and teaching of languages, as well as on professional development planning and coordination for languages and Asian studies.

However, there is further scope for effective collaboration between government and non-government schools at the local level. In some country areas, government and non-government schools already meet on a regular basis to share information and provide mutual support on issues affecting languages provision. Sometimes teachers are shared across government and non-government schools. Therefore, there is capacity for school networks to encourage non-government schools, if they wish, and indeed the VSL and after-hours ethnic schools, to participate in the development and implementation of their NLPs. This should lead to greater coordination of languages provision and increased opportunities for students to access languages programs.

Finding

17 There is considerable support for choice and continuity of languages, particularly from parents as well as more widely, and especially for:

- Greater choice of languages, particularly at Year 7
- Decisions about which language(s) to teach continuing to be made at the local level
- Students being able to continue the study of the same language to the end of primary or secondary school
- Students continuing with the language they learnt at primary school at the secondary level not having to start again at Year 7
- Greater coordination and planning at regional and school network level as well as more central oversight by DE&T of the delivery of languages

- Involvement of local ethnic communities, cultural agencies, business and industry as well as partnerships with the non-government school sectors, the Victorian School of Languages (VSL), after-hours ethnic schools and local government to enhance and grow languages programs.

Recommendation 8

Frameworks be developed, and demographic data and professional development be provided to Regions and school networks to assist them in developing Network Language Plans (NLP), which over time:

- Provide students with a choice of European and Asian languages
- Provide at least one language which is significant in the local community
- Develop meaningful communication skills in students
- Provide continuity in the language from primary school or choice of a different language at secondary school
- Provide pathways for studying languages to VCE level, which may involve collaboration with the VSL, ethnic schools and/or non-government schools.

Accountability and reporting

Currently, schools are required to report to parents twice a year on student progress in all KLAs, including languages. There is no requirement at present for schools to report to DE&T on the use of the school global budget (SGB) LOTE allocations, but an annual Languages Survey is conducted on program delivery, including the numbers of students learning particular languages at the different year levels. While there was a belief that some languages programs were not operating satisfactorily in some schools, there were not many suggestions in the submissions and consultations for new accountability measures.

There was some concern by languages teachers that a number of schools were using their SGB LOTE allocations for purposes other than those for which they were intended. However, some teachers did not realise that schools use these allocations to fund language teacher salaries. In addition, some primary schools were unaware that LOTE allocations were intended to 'kick start' their languages programs and not intended to fund their entire languages staffing needs. It should be stressed that the SGB LOTE allocations are supplementary and schools are expected to use them to provide languages programs.

Reporting to DE&T on student participation in languages programs was not contentious; however, there was little support for standardised tests. Testing student achievement against the CSF in a representative sample of schools and/or languages for benchmarking purposes received some cautious support, provided it did not make excessive demands on languages teachers. It was also suggested at the consultations that schools set targets for improvements each year and report on them though the school's annual report.

Parents were looking for greater accountability in terms of student outcomes. However, the general opinion of teachers and schools was that it was sufficient for principals to report to parents on the student progress against the CSF for languages. However, some respondents claimed that this was problematic because the CSF did not sufficiently differentiate for program time, entry point and prior knowledge of the language. Opinion was divided as to whether the CSF levels for languages were too demanding, too low in standard or just right. Deaf organisations and Auslan teachers pointed to the need for Auslan to be developed at all levels of the CSF.

Findings

- 18** There is only limited accountability at present for student outcomes from languages programs and parents strongly support better accountability mechanisms.
- 19** Many language teachers and schools face difficulties in reporting against CSF levels because of the range of languages programs operating with different times and starting points.

Recommendation 9

Accountability and reporting mechanisms for languages be developed that report on actual student performance, which also apply to the VSL and ethnic schools, and include:

- Schools identifying CSF levels based on the particular circumstances of their language programs, e.g. time, starting point etc, and each year a representative, rolling sample of 100 schools report to DE&T against these CSF levels
- Reporting on languages in schools' Annual Reports, as part of enhanced accountability arrangements, which focus on outcomes.

Victorian School of Languages (VSL)

The VSL is an essential resource for the learning and teaching of languages in Victoria and provides languages programs in a wide range of languages and is the only school offering some languages to Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) level. There was overwhelming support for the VSL in providing opportunities for learning languages not offered in mainstream schools, not offered in the student's school, maintaining the study of a language beyond the level at which the school has the resources to offer it, or to acquire an additional language.

The VSL also has a substantial role to play in Victoria's coordinated provision of languages. It could be a key player in supporting school networks implement their NPLs, particularly in terms of providing continuity of provision and access to languages programs at the senior secondary levels. The VSL could also play an important role in providing short, intensive programs to induct beginning students transferring from other schools. It may also have a role in maintaining mainstream programs through periods of teacher shortage, by providing distance delivery or classes during and after school.

The role of the VSL in the delivery of distance education programs for primary students needs to be further explored. While there are individual primary students wishing to undertake or continue with a language different from that offered at their school, the overwhelming demand at the

primary level is for the delivery of languages to whole classes through face-to-face delivery or to whole schools that are unable to recruit teachers. The VSL may have an important role in offering a range of tutoring, correction and other support for online materials, such as *Languages Online*, which is currently being developed by DE&T.

The VSL has taken the initiative to develop a number of online courses for distance delivery. In the last four years, the VSL has produced year-long online courses for Years 7 and 11 in German and for Year 10 in Indonesian. There is capacity for the VSL to further enhance its face-to-face classes and distance education programs through the use and further development of online and multimedia resources. As well, the VSL could provide leadership and support to mainstream schools and languages teachers in the use of ICT.

Distance education for country students

Distance education provision by the VSL is essential for some students in regional and rural Victoria to continue with their languages studies, particularly to VCE level. However, learning a language through distance education is never easy, particularly if students do not have access to advice and support locally. Some country students taking a language by distance education found this excessively difficult, despite access to telephone support from the VSL. 'It makes language learning ten times as hard', reported one student who had taken a language at Year 11 by distance mode and had decided not to continue it at Year 12. However, another preferred distance education to combined face-to-face classes such as Years 9 and 10.

Findings

- 20** The VSL has a substantial role to play in supporting school networks to implement their Network Languages Plans, which needs to be further exploited.
- 21** Country students, particularly those accessing languages through distance education, particularly at the VCE level, need further support, including some access to face-to-face support.
- 22** There is also capacity for the VSL to provide leadership and support to mainstream schools and languages teachers in the use of information and communication technologies, including online delivery of languages.

Recommendation 10

The role of the VSL in relation to languages provision in school networks be defined, including the development of procedures and guidelines for the:

- Introduction of new languages delivered by distance education
- Enrolment of individual primary students in distance education
- Induction of beginners transferring from other schools
- Delivery of languages to whole classes or whole schools
- Improved support for distance education students
- Provision of ICT support and online programs for languages.

Recommendation 11

The feasibility and cost of increasing the number of VSL centres in non metropolitan Regions to provide at least two geographically spread VSL centres in each Region over time be investigated, in order to provide greater access and support to country students.

After-hours ethnic schools

After-hours ethnic schools play an important complementary role in maintaining and developing Victoria's rich linguistic and cultural heritage. They provide after-hours languages classes in over 50 languages, many of which are not available through mainstream schools and the VSL. However, this provision should not be seen as an alternative to the effective delivery of languages in mainstream schools. There was support from respondents to the LOTE analysis for a closer relationship between after-hours ethnic schools and mainstream schools, including in relation to reporting on progress to the mainstream school and through it to parents.

All after-hours ethnic schools need to be accredited by DE&T in order to receive government funding. This involves the ethnic school undertaking an extensive review of their policies and curriculum practices and developing a School Charter, a discipline policy, curriculum outlines for all year levels consistent with the CSF, as well as assessment and reporting policies in line with CSF requirements. In addition, accredited after-hours ethnic schools need to ensure that their teachers have attended at least 25 hours of approved professional development in language teaching methods.

Through the accreditation and accountability processes that have been negotiated between DE&T and the Ethnic Schools' Association of Victoria (ESAV), ethnic school programs have improved their provision significantly in terms of curriculum development linked to the CSF, teacher professional development and training, and materials development. The educational achievement of after-hours ethnic schools is evident in the number of ethnic school students who perform well at the VCE level. Therefore, it is important that the study of languages in after-hours ethnic schools is better recognised and student achievement in languages reported to parents in mainstream school reports. Mechanisms need to be developed to enable this to occur.

The coordinated provision of languages provides options for dealing with a range of issues, such as the rationalisation and sharing of resources and expertise. To achieve maximum return for the investment in languages, a coordinated and strategic process for planning programs, delivery options, and development of curriculum and student materials is needed. Encouraging schools and school networks to include ethnic schools and the VSL in their Network Languages Plans (see Recommendation 8) will be an important step towards achieving this. Because the accreditation process requires curriculum in after-hours ethnic schools to be in line with the CSF, the accountability and reporting requirements recommended above (see Recommendation 9) should not only apply to mainstream schools and the VSL, but also to after-hours ethnic schools. In addition guidelines need to be developed and a working party convened, comprising DE&T, VSL and ESAV representatives, to coordinate intra-provider issues.

Collaboration on materials development and the provision of professional development programs for languages teachers need to be encouraged wherever possible. Although, the time the

professional development is delivered may be an issue, language specific professional development should be accessible to teachers from mainstream schools, the VSL and after-hours ethnic schools, wherever possible. Also, materials developed by any of the providers should take into account their use and accessibility to all providers. This will ensure both a consistent approach to the learning and teaching of languages and effective use of the available resources, particularly given the wide range of languages provided by the VSL and after-hours ethnic schools.

The ESAV has requested clear guidelines in relation to the rental of school premises by ethnic schools. Finding and retaining suitable accommodation for classes at a reasonable cost is a perennial challenge for many ethnic schools. While some after-hours ethnic schools use their own premises, the majority of classes are accommodated in mainstream government and non-government schools. Government schools have been encouraged for many years to make their premises available to the community, including to after-hours ethnic schools.

Some ethnic schools report that they spend a significant proportion of the government annual per capita grant to after-hours ethnic schools, which is currently \$90 per student, on rental. School councils in government schools determine the amount charged for rent of premises to cover heating, lighting, cleaning, security costs etc. The varying circumstances of schools make it very difficult to set a standard rate. In addition, the establishment of standard charges may be problematic in the context of self-managing schools, as DE&T does not mandate any other school council charges.

However, Government policy on maximum community use of publicly owned premises means that schools have a community service obligation to make their facilities available to after-hours ethnic schools, wherever possible. It should therefore be possible to establish a standard suite of charges for the use of government school premises by after-hours ethnic schools that would apply to a range of circumstances, including a maximum rate that school councils may not exceed. It will also be important to seek agreement for these arrangements from principals' and school councils' organisations.

After-hours ethnic schools are an important mechanism for communities to maintain their language and culture and are often the focus of community development. It will be important to stress to schools and school councils that they need to consider waiving or reducing charges as part of their community service obligations wherever possible, particularly for newly emerging communities, such as the Somali, Oroma and Tigriwian communities. In addition, guidelines and a standard rental agreement, developed through DE&T's Legal Services Unit, which must be used by mainstream and ethnic schools for the rental of classrooms would give all parties security about the arrangements that had been agreed, thereby minimising disputes and ensuring harmonious relationships.

Findings

- 23** The role of after-hours ethnic schools as complementary providers of languages is not fully appreciated and needs to be reaffirmed to schools and school networks, and ethnic schools included in discussions on delivery options together with DE&T and the VSL.
- 24** The accreditation process for after-hours ethnic schools and the training and professional development program for ethnic school teachers have led to improved delivery of languages by that sector.

- 25** The use of rental agreements and charges for the use of government school facilities by after-hours ethnic schools varies significantly across the State, with many after-hours ethnic schools claiming that they are being over-charged.

Recommendation 12

Learning and teaching of languages in after-hours ethnic schools be acknowledged and supported through:

- Notifying schools and school networks, that wherever possible school facilities should be made available to ethnic schools
- Developing a schedule of charges, including a maximum rate for the use of government schools, together with principals' and school councils' organisations
- Encouraging school councils to waive or reduce charges for newly emerging ethnic communities that may not have access to alternative language classes
- Developing a standard rental agreement to be used by mainstream and ethnic schools for the rental of classrooms to ensure mutual obligations are set out appropriately in order to protect school property and management of school facilities
- Developing guidelines and convening a working party of stakeholders to coordinate intra-provider issues
- Encouraging schools and school networks to include ethnic schools and the VSL in their Network Languages Plans
- Ensuring that any materials and professional development programs for languages are also accessible to ethnic schools and the VSL
- Developing mutually agreed mechanisms that would facilitate the inclusion of students' results in languages taken at after-hours ethnic schools and the VSL in their mainstream school reports.

Supply, training, recruitment and retention of languages teachers

The issue of supply, training, recruitment and retention of languages teachers was widely identified as a crucial issue for successful languages programs, particularly in regional and rural Victoria. Reasons cited included:

- Demand for teachers, especially in some languages and at the primary level
- Decreasing numbers of graduates in some languages from teacher training
- Relatively few graduates with language majors going into teacher training
- The large-scale movement of languages teachers to other areas of teaching, with better prospects for promotion, or to more lucrative and less stressful professions.

Among the suggestions made to address this situation were to provide better employment conditions and incentives, such as:

- Better pre-service training in tertiary courses specifically designed for LOTE teachers, including skills for multi-level teaching
- Scholarship schemes for trainee language teachers
- Tertiary languages courses at country campuses
- Security of tenure and full-time employment for language teachers
- Financial incentives, such as salaries commensurate with those in industry
- Subsidised study tours and overseas travel, which are important for ongoing teacher professional development
- Better career paths and promotion opportunities.
- Better professional development, including refresher courses, overseas teaching fellowships, professional exchanges, in-country study opportunities etc
- Teacher networks, which are a source of much inspiration and innovation.

There is a need to raise the profile of language teachers, who feel they have to do and achieve much more than most other teachers. This is echoed in comments, such as:

We need to raise the profile of LOTE so that students see it as a very worthwhile subject, and teachers see it as a worthwhile vocation

Primary school language teachers teach at many different year levels, sometimes in several schools.

They have to act as advertising agents, community liaison officers, sometimes translators, and are often engaged in an unusually large amount of materials development, often in an environment of frustration and antagonism and with very limited promotion opportunities.

Other suggestions include promoting languages as a career to third year university students and providing a language bonus for students entering teacher training courses. DE&T and some schools are already providing scholarships for language teachers in training who undertake to teach in country schools.

DE&T's Languages Training Program has been an important mechanism for increasing the supply and quality of languages teachers in government schools for many years. Each year between 300–400 DE&T teachers have been supported to undertake credit-bearing training courses, which lead to approved qualifications in languages. In addition, teachers from Catholic and independent schools have been able to access these training courses on a cost recovery basis, subject to the availability of places. This program has been jointly resourced from Commonwealth and State funds. However, with the termination of Commonwealth funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy, DE&T's capacity to continue this program is severely curtailed.

Findings

- 26 There is capacity for school networks to develop staffing plans for languages as part of their NLP, which include joint recruitment and sharing of staff.
- 27 Teachers reported that the content of university language and LOTE methodology courses for teachers were not always appropriate to their needs.
- 28 The end of Commonwealth funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy in December 2002 will adversely impact on the capacity of DE&T to continue to support the training and retraining of languages teachers.

Recommendation 13

Particular strategies for improving the supply of languages teachers, particularly for country Victoria be identified and explored, including:

- Pursuing funding sources, including from the Commonwealth government, to continue the Languages Training Program to train and retrain existing DE&T teachers as languages teachers, including targeting a proportion of scholarships for trainee teachers, perhaps 12.5 per cent, to those wishing to become languages teachers
- Negotiating with the Commonwealth to prioritise funding for teacher training to Victorian universities for the training of language teachers
- Pursuing ways of fast-tracking the recognition of overseas qualifications for language teachers and investigate ways of providing any retraining necessary to enable such teachers to effectively teach languages in Victorian schools.

Strengthening languages in country Victoria

The biggest challenges for the learning and teaching of languages are in non-metropolitan schools, yet it was here that the least support was evident. This was in spite of the perceived need for languages by some respondents because:

The need for socio-cultural broadening is greater, rather than lesser, in rural areas.

The benefits of maintaining our compulsory LOTE 7–10 program both culturally, academically and socially have been outstanding to this isolated and small community.

It is on this note that I do indeed support and welcome the Government's commitment to LOTE.

Languages teachers are struggling to implement quality programs, often against strong resistance as well as resource constraints and problems of distance. It was reported that it was often difficult to retain languages teachers in regional and rural areas and as a result, some schools had to change languages often or suspend the program for a period of time.

Teachers and schools also indicated that they would prefer access to support based regionally. Teachers in remote areas often had to use their own time and money to attend professional development activities in Melbourne, and because of the distances involved, they could not attend activities during the week:

Easily accessible PD is vital. This means not just in the city at 4 pm on a week night.

Suggestions as to how to attract and retain teachers to country Victorian, included:

- Professional development provided locally, or through videoconferencing
- Reimbursement of travel expenses for teacher network meetings and to access professional development activities
- Incentives, including scholarships, for teachers willing to teach in regional areas:

It may be prudent to develop an 'incentive program' similar to the one developed to attract doctors to regional and rural communities.

- A languages teacher register for temporary employment
- Permanent, ongoing appointments (not yearly contracts) to:
ensure permanency of positions. LOTE teachers are getting tired of fighting to run their programs through lack of support both physical and psychological.
- Exchanges between teachers in urban and rural schools, which might encourage city teachers to move to the country.

Teacher and school networks were seen as useful for planning purposes, to pool resources and skills, to organise a wide variety of student activities, and to share teachers between schools. The clusters to be established through the Innovation and Access to Excellence in the Middle Years initiative also provide an opportunity to strengthen languages provision in country Victoria. Sister school relationships between rural and regional schools or between a city and a country school were also frequently cited.

Other suggestions for strengthening languages in regional and rural Victoria included:

- Identification of regional model schools
- Inviting guest speakers
- Exchanges via the Internet and visits to city schools
- Utilisation of community resources, especially elderly bilinguals.

There were offers of support for languages programs in schools from local ethnic community groups at several regional forums, in particular for senior secondary students learning languages by distance education.

Findings

29 Schools in country Victoria tend to provide less time for the learning and teaching of languages, more often make languages electives after Year 8, and the accessibility to a range of language options is more limited, than for those in metropolitan Melbourne. (See also Findings 13 and 14 above.)

- 30 The learning and teaching of languages in country Victoria is particularly fragile and requires targeted and local support to be strengthened and improved.

Recommendation 14

Research be undertaken and strategies developed for supporting languages in country Victoria, including considering:

- Targeted promotional activities for schools and their communities on the benefits of learning and teaching languages
- Strategies for improved language teacher supply, including targeted scholarships for trainee teachers prepared to teach in country Victoria (see also Recommendation 13)
- Investigating the feasibility and cost of providing incentives, such as travel allowances, relocation costs, ongoing positions, special payments etc to languages and other teachers to teach in country Victoria.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) and online languages resources and support

There was a recognition that ICT and online resources were a valuable complement to face-to-face teaching of languages by schools. The further development and utilisation of ICT represents an important opportunity to enrich and provide innovative languages programs, but not to replace face-to-face teaching. This included languages websites, the delivery of languages through video-conferencing, chat-rooms for languages teachers and a help-line with mother tongue consultants. It is important to ensure that languages teachers in country areas are given access to the latest ICT provision, both in terms of hardware, bandwidth and programs. Professional development programs on the use of technology for languages teaching, which include approaches to using the technology as well as on evaluating the specific materials available from commercial and other sources are also needed. The publication of Internet Guides for teachers for the most widely taught languages would also be useful.

While the development of online languages materials and programs is still in its infancy, both the VSL and the Languages Strategy Team in DE&T have begun to develop some innovative online and multimedia materials in a number of languages. In the last four years, the VSL has produced year-long online courses for Years 7 and 11 in German and for Year 10 in Indonesian. The Learning and Teaching Innovation Division (L&TID) of DE&T is also developing online materials for primary students in Years 3–6 in Indonesian, French, German and Italian. The successful *Where's English?* interactive multimedia materials are also currently being adapted into Indonesian and Italian. There is also collaboration at the national level on the development of online resources in three Asian languages through The Learning Federation. In addition, there are innovative approaches to the use of ICT and resources being developed by languages teachers in schools, which could be made more widely accessible, such as delivery through video conferencing, use of school intranets to develop school web pages for languages, which provide information about and enhance communication opportunities in languages, etc.

High quality online and multimedia materials can be important resources for country teachers and students, providing access to native speaker models and opportunities for independent learning. They can provide a sound basis for distance delivery together with telephone tutoring or after-hours classes through the VSL. In addition, the use of ICT can be an important vehicle for engaging students in language learning, particularly in the Middle and Later Years of schooling and for boys, who may be more interested in the use of technology. The clusters to be established through the Innovation and Access to Excellence in the Middle Years initiative provide an opportunity to use ICT in an innovative way to improve the provision of languages and other KLAs in country Victoria. In addition the Centres of Excellence in Languages (see Recommendation 5 above) will need to develop innovative approaches to using ICT, online and multimedia materials and act as lighthouse schools, which promote the use of ICT among languages teachers in other schools and skill them in its most effective use.

In light of the innovative initiatives in ICT already underway at the VSL, in L&TID and in a number of schools, Victoria is well placed to position itself to take a leading edge in the development of high quality ICT materials in languages. However, unless action is taken to develop multimedia materials and online courses in a systematic manner, Victoria may lose its advantage to other States. Sponsorship and partnerships with industry and community groups could also be sought to support the development of these materials.

Finding

31 ICT, multimedia and online approaches for languages education are greatly under-utilised and would enhance delivery as well as being a vehicle for greater student engagement. They would particularly benefit teachers and students in country Victoria and those studying through distance education.

Recommendation 15

A coordinated and systematic strategy for the development of ICT, online and multimedia materials for languages be developed, including building on the expertise in schools, the VSL and DE&T and taking into account developments at the national level.



Conclusion

Victoria is fortunate in possessing a wide range of linguistic resources. Enabling students with a background in a particular language to build on it, supporting language maintenance efforts in the home and the community, and catering for varying skills in the language are among the challenges of implementing language programs.

Victoria has a strong foundation in delivering languages. The LOTE analysis has found languages to be an area with great potential, but characterised by great vulnerability, one that has become a KLA in name and in intent, but in many places needing special support to be able to achieve its full potential and parity with other KLAs. Enhanced languages programs will depend on further research, promotion, quality teaching, and flexible and appropriate forms of delivery. The commitment of the Government, schools and the community is essential.

The findings and recommendations of the LOTE analysis will foreshadow a new era for access, innovation and excellence in the learning and teaching of languages in Victorian schools. Reaffirmation of commitment at the highest level to languages as an essential element of the core curriculum will be a beacon, sending the message to schools and the wider community about the importance of language learning.

Greater promotion of the benefits of learning languages will see its importance in the provision of a broad general education for all students better understood and supported. The development of a coordinated approach through school networks and clusters to issues of support and delivery, including time, frequency, spread and continuity of languages programs, will lead to improved learning and teaching. The improved accountability mechanism will provide greater transparency and confidence in the achievements of individual language programs.

Continued cooperative partnerships between mainstream government and non-government schools, the VSL and after-hours ethnic schools as well as with ethnic and community agencies, business and industry, and with local government will improve access, innovation and excellence in languages education. The LOTE analysis marks a significant advance in providing all students with rich, high quality language learning experiences and in achieving the ultimate goal of equipping young Victorians with effective communication and intercultural skills in languages other than English.



Appendices

Glossary of terms

Bilingual programs	Programs where teaching of curriculum content is conducted in, and through, the medium of English and another language.
CSF II	The Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) II contains the curriculum focus and outcomes for Years Prep to 10.
DE&T	Department of Education & Training
Ethnic schools	After-hours language classes provided by ethnic community groups and individuals.
ICT	information and communications technologies
KLAs	key learning areas
Language awareness programs	Programs where students only gain a general awareness of another language, very limited skills in the language and some understanding of the culture associated with the language. Such programs usually provide an hour a week or less for instruction.
LOTE	Languages other than English
Metalinguistic awareness	The ability to understand and discuss how language operates.
PENG	<i>Public Education: the Next Generation</i> , a report commissioned by the Minister of Education and Training on government school education in 2000.
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education, the Victorian certificate for Years 11–12.
SGB	School Global Budget
VSL	Victorian School of Languages

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Consultations with key stakeholders

Consultations with the following key stakeholders were undertaken:

- Victorian Council of School Organisations (VICCSO)
- Parents Victoria
- Association of School Councils in Victoria (ASCIV)
- Australian Education Union (AEU)
- Victorian Primary Principals Association (VPPA)
- Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP)
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)
- Ethnic Schools' Association of Victoria (ESAV)
- Committee for the Promotion of Greek and other languages in Victorian's State Schools
- Modern Languages Teachers' Association of Victoria (MLTAV) and language-specific teacher associations that have requested a hearing
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV)
- Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV)
- Joint Systems and Tertiary Institution LOTE Committee (JESTILC) representatives from Victorian universities.

Tables

Table 1a: Source of submissions

Total	Submissions from schools			Submissions from other sources						
	Primary	Secondary	P-12	Stake-holders	Individuals	Tertiary	Students	DE&T	Anonymous	Parents
275	101	73	19	23	3	5	32	8	5	6
% of total	37%	27%	7%	8%	1%	2%	12%	3%	2%	2%
Total	193			82						
% of Total	70%			30%						

Table 1b: Submissions from schools

Schools	Language teachers	Classroom teachers	Principals	Total
96	79	4	14	193
50%	41%	2%	7%	% of Total

Table 1c: Regional and metropolitan breakdown of submissions

Metropolitan Total = 154		Regional Total = 81	
Northern Metropolitan Region	21	Barwon South Western	9
Southern Metropolitan Region	66	Central Highlands Wimmera	10
Eastern Metropolitan Region	42	Loddon Campaspe Mallee	19
Western Metropolitan Region	25	Goulburn North Eastern	16
		Gippsland	27

Table 1d: Total submissions

Metropolitan submissions	154	56 %
Regional submissions	81	29 %
Unknown	40	15 %
Total submissions	231	100 %

Table 2: Ranking of the benefits of languages by source of submission

Benefits	Primary	Secondary	P-12	Others	Total
Communication skills	58	48	207	165	478
Literacy in the LOTE	39	33	149	109	330
Cognitive skills, such as problem solving	24	27	118	101	270
Expanding knowledge about how languages in general work	22	33	119	101	275
Expanding knowledge about the culture and society	45	39	137	92	313
Language skills for vocational and career purposes	30	5	29	50	114
Promoting intercultural awareness	44	32	130	95	301
Promoting understanding of different cultures	49	35	150	101	335

Table 3: Ranking of the benefits of teachers versus others*

Benefits	Language teachers	Schools	Others	Total
Communication skills	196	76	206	478
Literacy in the LOTE	143	43	144	330
Cognitive skills, such as problem solving	132	33	105	270
Expanding knowledge about how languages in general work	138	32	105	275
Expanding knowledge about the culture and society	112	60	141	313
Language skills for vocational and career purposes	36	31	47	114
Promoting intercultural awareness	139	59	103	301
Promoting understanding of different cultures	142	61	132	335

* Of the 150 submissions that responded to this issue, only 86 completed ranking all the benefits. There were a number of submissions, which are not included in the above analysis. A total of 42 submissions ranked all benefits as of equal importance and 22 did not complete the ranking, and include which some grouped all the benefits related to culture together.

Table 4: Minimum recommended time for languages – Metropolitan versus country Victoria

Support for minimum time		Opposed to minimum time		Total response
Metropolitan	47 (30%)	Metropolitan	48 (31%)	155 (100%)
Regional	20 (13%)	Regional	40 (26%)	
	67 (43%)		88 (57%)	

Table 5: Main languages in Victorian government schools 2001

Language	Primary Schools	Secondary Colleges	Total schools*	Primary students	Secondary students	Total students
Indonesian	398	137	535	82,421	29,082	111,503
Italian	305	90	395	78,167	21,384	99,551
Japanese	245	103	348	56,261	22,485	78,746
French	98	114	212	16,820	23,776	40,596
German	114	75	189	23,493	17,008	40,501
Chinese	37	29	66	8,781	3,657	12,438
Greek	21	16	37	3,736	1,229	4,965
Vietnamese	10	13	23	2,490	1,048	3,538
Total	1,228	577	1,805	272,169	119,669	391,838

* Note: Some schools offer more than one language.

