

Multicultural policy for Victorian schools

Department of Education

MACLOTE and ESL

1997

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Department of Education, Victoria, 1997

ISBN 0 7306 9010 5

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Published by the Community Information Service, Department of Education, GPO Box 4367, Melbourne Vic 3001, Australia.

Contents



	Page
Introduction	4
Background	5
Multicultural Victoria	7
A multicultural policy for Victorian schools	8
Multicultural practice in Victorian schools	11
Multicultural perspectives—a whole-school approach	11
Intercultural studies—provision for all students	12
ESL—provision for students from language backgrounds other than English	13
LOTE—provision for all students	14
Respondents	15

Introduction

One of the policy commitments of this Government in the last election was the development of a multicultural education policy for school education which brings together and enhances all of the State Government's work in languages other than English, English as a second language and intercultural education. This policy represents the realisation of the policy commitment.

A philosophy of multiculturalism represents a viable course between the unacceptable extremes of racism and prejudice, and the equally blind ethnocentrism of separate development. Such a philosophy is applicable to all aspects of life but nowhere is it more important than in the education of our children.

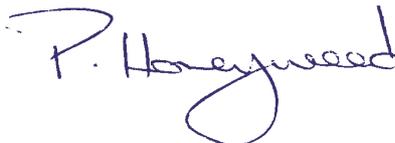
The *Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools* is a timely affirmation of the commitment of the Victorian Government to the ideal of cultural inclusiveness, and to the notions of equality, equity, choice and access as these are manifested in a truly multicultural society.

The policy is recommended to all schools, teachers and administrators, school communities and to the wider community. The document was developed by the Department of Education and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Languages other than English (LOTE) and English as a Second Language (ESL)—MACLOTE and ESL.

A draft of the policy was circulated for comment and a list of respondents is attached. We are grateful for the time and effort these people gave to their responses and feel that the document has benefited from their input.



Hon Phillip Gude, MP
Minister for Education



Hon Phil Honeywood, MP
Minister for Tertiary Education and Training
Chairman, MACLOTE and ESL

Background



The fact that Australia is and always has been a multicultural society is not a matter for debate. The cultural and linguistic diversity of the original Aboriginal population, the differences in ethnic origin, language and religion of the eighteenth and nineteenth century settlers, the variety of cultures and languages brought to Australia through post-World War II European immigration and more recent Asian, Pacific Islander, Latin American and African immigration are certainly testament to this fact.

However, acceptance of the concept of multiculturalism is relatively recent in our history. The 1950s and 1960s were periods in which assimilationist policies endeavoured to create a country that was culturally and linguistically homogeneous based on British heritage and traditions, and with English as the only language. The education sectors played a significant role in promoting the values and mores of the host Anglo–Australian culture, seeing it as unnecessary and divisive to provide special programs for students from language backgrounds other than English.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s Commonwealth government inquiries and reports such as the *Henderson Poverty Report*, 1966 and the *Karmel Report on Schooling in Australia*, 1973 indicated that not only did assimilationist policies disadvantage immigrants from language backgrounds other than English but that such policies were also inherently wasteful of the potential, talents and resources these immigrants could contribute to society.

The policy of integration—intended to enable people of all cultures to participate equally in mainstream social, political and economic institutions—gradually replaced assimilation. Again school education played a major role in implementing this policy largely through the introduction in 1970 of the Child Migrant Education Program (CMEP). The CMEP provided funding for teachers to conduct withdrawal English as a second language (ESL) classes in schools and for the delivery of inservice programs for teachers on what were perceived as migrant issues.

The move from integrationist policies to a concept of multiculturalism—a concept of valuing cultural and linguistic diversity within a context of unity—as the accepted approach to ethnic issues is attributed to various sources. However it was following the publication of the 1978 report of the review of post-arrival programs and services for migrants entitled *Migrant Services and Programs*, known as the Galbally Report, that multiculturalism became official government policy.

The Galbally Report saw schools as critical in the creation of a climate in which the concept of multiculturalism could be understood and promoted. Multiculturalism became an influence in schooling with the establishment in 1978 of the Committee on Multicultural Education by the Commonwealth Schools Commission and the subsequent funding of the Commonwealth Multicultural Education Program (MEP).

The MEP enabled state and territory education jurisdictions to develop innovative programs in languages other than English for mother-tongue maintenance and development, for second language development and for bilingual education, for the delivery of multicultural perspectives across the school curriculum, and projects to encourage the participation of parents from language backgrounds other than English in

school life. It also supported projects to help school communities develop strategies to combat prejudice, racism and stereotyping.

However, although these programs and projects were welcome they were generally seen as peripheral to the main task of schooling. Most of them disappeared with the cessation of MEP funding and, while issues relevant to multiculturalism especially with regard to languages other than English programs, were recognised as important by most educators, they were rarely integrated into schools' mainstream curriculum or practices in a systematic way.

Since the early 1980s innumerable state and Commonwealth reports, policies and programs on issues to do with multicultural education have been developed and discussed, as have definitions of what 'multicultural education' is. What follows here is not a radical departure from this accumulated wisdom nor is it an attempt to develop a new educational focus. Rather it is a considered response to the reality of a linguistically and culturally diverse society and its aim is to see intercultural awareness and skills become natural outcomes of schooling.

Multicultural Victoria



Victoria is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse states in Australia and our schools reflect this. In 1997 almost one in four students in government and Catholic schools came from language backgrounds other than English. For statistical purposes, students from language backgrounds other than English are defined as those who were either born in a non-English speaking country or have one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country.

Victoria has a good record of seeking to meet the needs of these students and of providing culturally appropriate programs for all students. This Government is committed to the continued improvement of these important aspects of education and, more importantly, to the development of an education system in which awareness and appreciation of cultural and linguistic pluralism become accepted, normal aspects of schooling, including the employment, utilisation and development of staff from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This commitment is reflected in the high profile given to multicultural issues in this state.

In October 1995 the Multicultural Affairs Unit published *Working with Interpreters*. This initiative of the Inter-Departmental Multicultural Services Committee is designed to assist Government departments and agencies to better use interpreting and translation services in providing for their clients from language backgrounds other than English.

In 1995 the Premier commissioned the Victorian Multicultural Affairs Commission to review Government services for clients from language backgrounds other than English and the report of this inquiry, the *Multicultural Victoria Inquiry*, was published in November of that year. Among the issues addressed by the inquiry were the need to develop a specific multicultural education policy for schools, to provide intercultural education in primary and secondary schools, and to develop strategies to combat prejudice, racial tension or misunderstanding in schools.

The Government's response to this inquiry, which was launched on 13 December 1996, shows the significant progress made by Government departments in addressing the issues raised by the Commission.

A multicultural policy for Victorian schools

Multiculturalism is a public policy for all Victorians not just for those of language backgrounds other than English. Nor is it primarily one aimed at addressing issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, ethnic minority groups or recent arrivals from language backgrounds other than English—it is as much concerned with long-established settlers and the generations that have followed them. It is a policy that sees culture as an evolving phenomenon, cultural pluralism as a dynamic and enriching social value, and equality of access and opportunity as essential to the economic and social health of the State.

An effective multicultural policy is a policy that promotes respect by all cultures for all cultures, one that allows Australians the freedom to maintain and celebrate their languages and cultures within a socially cohesive framework of shared values, including respect for democratic processes and institutions, the rule of law and acknowledgment that English is the nation's common language. It respects the rights of people to form or join groups and to have targeted services provided where they are needed. It does not accept the sort of cultural separatism that confines minorities to ethno-specific structures.

Schools play a very important role in the development of attitudes, values and critical thinking. The role of education in the implementation of a multicultural policy is to ensure that racism and prejudice do not develop to hinder individuals' participation, and that all students are assisted to develop the understandings and skills that will enable them to achieve their full potential, and to participate effectively and successfully in a multicultural society. These understandings and skills will derive from education programs and processes that accurately and positively reflect cultural pluralism, promote cultural inclusiveness and help all students to develop:

- proficiency in English
- competency in a language or languages other than English
- in-depth knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures
- an understanding of the multicultural nature of Australia's past and present history, and of the interdependence of cultures in the development of the nation
- skills and understandings to interact comfortably and competently in intercultural settings
- an awareness of the reality of the global village and national interdependence in areas of trade, finance, labour, politics and communications, and that the development of international understanding and cooperation is essential.

In the area of education in, and for, a multicultural Victoria this Government has given a high priority to LOTE programs, including those conducted by the Victorian School of Languages and after-hours ethnic schools, and to the provision of high quality ESL programs.



In March 1993, the Minister for Education established the Ministerial Advisory Council on Languages other than English (MACLOTE). The major task of the Council at that time was to propose policies and strategies to ensure the provision of high-quality language programs for all students in Years P–10 and to 25 per cent of students in Years 11–12 by 2000.

In 1995 the Council was made a standing body, given a similar responsibility for ESL provision and renamed the Ministerial Advisory Council on Languages other than English and English as a Second Language (MACLOTE and ESL). Among its responsibilities the new Council was asked to advise and recommend on the implementation of the *LOTE Strategy Plan*, the *MACLOTE Report*, the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy, and to develop a strategy plan for ESL.

However, the Government is aware that multicultural education is not simply about the provision of language programs, although it embraces them, and that ESL and LOTE programs do not equate with multicultural education. Multicultural education is not a part of the curriculum, in the way that Mathematics or Studies of Society and Environment are. It is a holistic approach to schooling that needs to permeate all parts of the curriculum and influence all school practices.

The Minister for Education therefore asked MACLOTE and ESL to oversee the development of the *Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools* and to develop strategies to ensure that such a policy can be implemented. The Council was also asked to ensure that the NALSAS Strategy, especially as regards Asian Studies, be encompassed within the overall multicultural policy and not marginalised as a separate study. The Council is charged with the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the policy, researching, identifying and describing best practice, and making recommendations to ensure quality of provision in multicultural education practices.

The primary target of this policy is to ensure that:

By 2006 all students P–12 will have multicultural perspectives delivered across all eight key learning areas (The Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, LOTE, Mathematics, Science, Study of Society and Environment, and Technology) and incorporated into all aspects of school life.

The following strategies will support the implementation of this target:

That when the Board of Studies reviews the Curriculum and Standards Frameworks for all key learning areas in 2000, it incorporates appropriate multicultural perspectives in each key learning area.

That a cooperative network across the key learning areas be established to assist in the development of integrated multicultural perspectives, possibly using the expertise of language teachers as a resource.

That teacher networks with a focus on multicultural education be established by regions across the three school sectors in the context of the Curriculum and Standards Frameworks Teacher Networks.

That negotiations be undertaken with tertiary institutions to ensure that preservice teacher training includes compulsory units designed to develop intercultural knowledge and awareness, and culturally-inclusive teaching skills, and that those units are well integrated in the overall course.

That credit-bearing units and courses designed to broaden intercultural knowledge and awareness, and culturally-inclusive teaching skills be offered by tertiary institutions at post-initial level.

That education sectors and tertiary institutions provide credit-bearing and non-credit bearing inservice programs designed to broaden intercultural knowledge and awareness, and culturally-inclusive teaching skills. ESL in the Mainstream could be a significant element in this provision.

That a national audit of existing, high-quality relevant teaching and learning materials be undertaken and an annotated bibliography produced by the Languages and Multicultural Education Resources Centre.

That school sectors mount materials development workshops targeted at resources for integrating multicultural perspectives across all curriculum areas and at the development of intercultural studies resources. Assistance in this task will be available from the consultancy and resources of the Languages and Multicultural Education Resources Centre.

That schools be required to address the Multicultural Policy in their school charters and report on the progress of its implementation through the first triennial school charter period after 2000.

That support documents be developed to help school principals and councils evaluate the school administrative processes and how they facilitate incorporating multicultural perspectives into school life.

Multicultural practice in Victorian schools



In the implementation of this policy there are many strategies that schools can adopt quickly. Indeed, some of these strategies will already be part of the philosophy and practice of many schools.

Multicultural perspectives—a whole-school approach

To develop a school ethos that reflects, responds to and values multiculturalism schools need to:

- identify and incorporate the diverse cultural perspectives of the school, its community and the nation, in its curriculum, processes, practices and programs
- identify and counter cultural bias and prejudice in the practices of the school, in the materials used for teaching and learning, and in the value systems and attitudes that constitute the school's 'hidden' curriculum
- ensure that learning experiences recognise, value and build on students' backgrounds and experiences
- ensure that the ethnic backgrounds of all students are acknowledged and appreciated, and that all students understand that their background is integral to Australian national identity
- ensure that the formal policies of the school—such as the code of conduct, the discipline policy and the dress code—and practices such as school assemblies, are appropriate for the school community, including the diverse religious and cultural practices of its members. Information relevant to the code of conduct has been translated by the Department of Education into eight major languages and guidelines on the dress code have addressed the issues raised by students' religious and cultural practices
- confront incidences of prejudice, racism and ethnic stereotyping, and deal with them overtly through facilitated interaction and negotiation
- acknowledge cultural diversity in the community and in the workforce when developing their school charter by articulating policies and practices which utilise the skills that diversity makes available
- ensure the participation of culturally diverse staff in both formal and informal staff development activities
- encourage all staff to undertake intercultural awareness inservice programs such as *ESL in the Mainstream* so that they become competent and confident in promoting multicultural values and attitudes

- encourage principals and senior teachers in government schools to take advantage of managing diversity training being conducted through regional initiatives. Managing diversity, which is one of the Government's four corporate goals, requires Government agencies to develop and sustain an organisational culture in which policies, practices and services are adapted to the needs of a diverse and evolving community
- assist all staff—teaching and non-teaching—to communicate effectively with parents and community members from language backgrounds other than English, and enable them to become actively involved in the life of the school and its decision-making processes. This includes providing translated written material which contains both English and the target language, and using interpreters where required to ensure mutual understanding. To support this strategy the Department of Education has distributed complimentary copies to government schools of the *Working with Interpreters* booklet and will maintain schools' access to the credit line for interpreting and translating services
- regularly review these practices to determine school community views related to levels of cooperation and the reduction of conflict evident within the school.

These perspectives need to permeate everything the school does, including the work of the school council, and those programs that constitute the formal curriculum response to multiculturalism such as Intercultural Studies, ESL and LOTE.

Intercultural studies—provision for all students

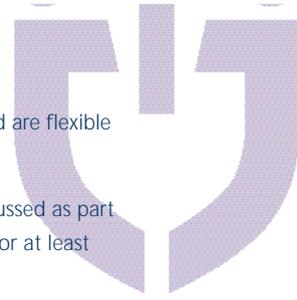
Provided such studies are rigorous and emphasise shared needs rather than the exotic or peripheral aspects of other cultures they can provide a powerful tool in developing positive attitudes to diversity by broadening the intercultural knowledge and understandings of students. However, such studies should not constitute a school's main or only response to multiculturalism but should be part of an overall approach.

Intercultural studies can also encourage students to open their own value systems and belief structures to critical and rational self-analysis—like any other social value, prejudice is learned and it can therefore be unlearned. Such studies need to be carefully designed and delivered and integrated with other curriculum areas. Simply providing information on the object of prejudice or scorn does not necessarily change attitudes—and may in fact reinforce them—nor does exposure of a one-off, marginalised or tokenistic kind.

Schools need to ensure that:

- all staff have the opportunity to attend professional development programs targeted at incorporating multicultural perspectives across the curriculum
- intercultural studies take a whole-school approach, with all staff members being responsible and with regular reports on the area provided to school council
- the studies include the cultures present in the school population and present a balance of Aboriginal, European—including Anglo-Celtic —Asian, Middle Eastern, African, South American and Pacific Islander cultures

- the materials used are well-researched and academically interesting and challenging, and are flexible enough to potentially embrace all cultures
- where units dealing with topics such as 'racism' or 'stereotyping' are used, they are discussed as part of a well-planned program incorporating other aspects of the curriculum and delivered, or at least acknowledged as significant, by all staff.



ESL—provision for students from language backgrounds other than English

The provision of ESL programs is an obvious and necessary response to the equity needs of students from language backgrounds other than English. All students must acquire proficiency in English if they are to function adequately in their schooling, in their vocational training and their employment, and in the socio-political spheres of their lives. However, the whole-school attitude to ESL provision will determine its success.

Schools need to ensure that ESL provision:

- emphasises 'second language' rather than 'English', thereby removing the 'remedial' taint that can affect ESL programs and the deficit label sometimes applied to the students
- acknowledges the first-language skills and cultural experiences of the students as assets, and values them as a sound basis for the teaching and learning of English
- helps ESL learners access the mainstream curriculum and achieve the educational goals of all students
- ensures that multicultural perspectives are included in the content
- is combined wherever possible with continuing concept development in their first language for young students with little or no English, to enable them to develop conceptually with their peers
- is designed to provide for the needs of all students from language backgrounds other than English—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Auslan signers, recent arrivals, less recent arrivals and those students born in Australia to parents from language backgrounds other than English. The ESL needs of this latter group may in some instances overlap, but should not be confused with those of students requiring remedial assistance. The varying needs of groups of ESL learners may not be easily identified but strategies need to be put in place to ensure that they are.

LOTE—provision for all students

LOTE programs use a variety of teaching and learning strategies to meet a range of student needs. Strategies include content-based programs, language-as-object programs, and a range of distance education and multimedia technologies for delivering LOTE programs.

The student needs targeted by these programs include mother-tongue maintenance and development for students from language backgrounds other than English (first, second and third generation), second language development for monolingual English-speaking background students, and third and subsequent language acquisition.

The primary aim of all LOTE programs whatever their teaching strategy or student target, is the development of student competence and confidence in the use of the language being taught for communicative purposes. However there are many other potential benefits to be derived from language learning. These include benefits such as broadening cultural horizons, developing intercultural skills and understandings, and raising students' awareness of the limiting effects of prejudice and stereotyping.

To elicit these benefits programs need to:

- ensure that multicultural perspectives are included in the content of the provision
- ensure that the culture of the target language is explored in depth—both in the LOTE classes and across other curriculum areas
- ensure that all languages represented in the Victorian community are valued and that the perceived emphasis on so-called languages of economic importance is seen as part of Victoria's balanced policy on languages, and in the context of remedying a long-term under-provision of Asian languages in Victorian schools
- ensure that LOTE programs deal with other cultures—as well as that of the LOTE being studied—accurately, analytically and in a culturally sensitive, non-stereotypical way. This is particularly important in bilingual programs where other curriculum areas are taught in and through the LOTE.

Respondents



Association of Independent Schools of Victoria

Patricia Amos, LOTE teacher

Catholic Education Office, Melbourne

Deakin University, Faculty of Education

Ann Duffield, Assistant Secretary, Multicultural Affairs Unit

Language Australia, Victoria Office

Language Australia, National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia

Margaret McGregor, Board of Studies

Merit and Equity Unit, Department of Education

Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc

Monash University, Faculty of Education

Monash University, Language Studies

Monash University, Peninsula Campus

Museum of Victoria

North West Metropolitan Region, Department of Education

Jane Orton, Department of Language, Literacy and Arts Education, The University of Melbourne

Nick Stone, Office of Training and Further Education

Fred Tucker, President, Mount Waverley Branch, Liberal Party of Australia, Victorian Division

Victorian Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education Inc.

Victorian Multicultural Commission

Victorian School of Languages

Western Melbourne Institute of TAFE

Alan Williams, Lecturer TESOL, La Trobe University

