



## Australian Network of Government Languages Schools

### Media Release – Response to “Investing in languages studies in Australia” announcement

The joint media release on Friday 2 August 2019 by Minister for Education Dan Tehan and Minister for Indigenous Affairs Ken Wyatt – *Investing in languages studies in Australia* (<https://ministers.education.gov.au/tehan/investing-languages-studies-australia>) – came at a highly relevant time in the lead-up to a national conference of educational leaders in Canberra.

The 2019 Australian Network of Government Languages Schools (ANGLS) Conference, hosted by Canberra Academy of Languages, was held on 15-16 August 2019 at Telopea Park School. It has members in Victoria, NSW, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT. “These schools teach languages to more than 25,000 students who don’t have their chosen language at their own school – some face to face and many via distance education” said Frank Keighley, Convener of Canberra Academy of Languages.

Discussion focussed on languages education with guest speakers from ACT Education Directorate, Australian National University and University of Canberra. Delegates also spoke with principals of schools with bilingual programs, with TIS National from Home Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Defence Recruiting, Department of Education, the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers’ Associations and the Canberra Region Languages Forum.

It is widely recognised that in terms of both global and local imperatives, Australia needs to do better in fostering languages learning by students, and in strengthening existing multilingual capacities of students who do already have languages skills, in all Australian school systems.

The Government announcement includes a recognition that more students need to be encouraged to study another language. It is positive news that funding has been announced for work on developing a strategy. It will be important to ensure, as well, that funding is also allocated to implement the strategy. The time is right for a new national languages strategy – not least because this is the International Year of Indigenous Languages. The last National Statement and Plan on Languages Education in Australian Schools ([http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/languageeducation\\_file.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/languageeducation_file.pdf)) was for 2005-2008 – more than ten years ago. Since then, Australia has had no national plan guiding languages education. Language proficiency contributes to combinations of skillsets that are of high value in employment in a range of fields and make a huge contribution to social cohesion.

Commonwealth funding for language teacher professional learning, for secondary and tertiary student incentive schemes, and language learning resource development has all but ceased. Hilary Hughes, President of ANGLS, urges all Australian governments to “recognise the huge benefits of helping our students become truly global citizens by boosting the status of language learning both in word and in deed”.

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