



# CANBERRA REGION LANGUAGES FORUM UPDATE

April 2020

## 1. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

The covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of quality professional language services in Australia as well as the value of in-depth knowledge and understanding of the needs - and the resources - in our multilingual society. Accurate, reliable and timely information about what is happening nationally and locally, and ways to communicate this to all sectors of society - no matter what language or dialect they speak – is a vital part emergency planning and response.

Recognition of this has been seen on many levels in Australia. This includes increased visibility of Auslan interpreters, multilingual information on government websites, and effective use of the resources of the SBS, both through radio and TV. Our multilingual community has also swung into action. Multicultural organisations, cultural groups and ethnic broadcasters, for example, are helping to disseminate national and specific state/territory information to their communities, and to provide feedback to authorities on how the message is getting across.

For an example of a community health message in Fitzroy Valley (or Kimberley) Kriol, a dialect of the most widely spoken language in Aboriginal communities in Australia, see <https://www.facebook.com/KAMSCOV19/videos/210405250413211/>

For interesting reflections on the role of linguists and language services in China during the pandemic, see 'Language lessons of covid-19 and linguistic disaster preparedness', and 'Coronavirus meets linguistic diversity' on the Languages on the Move website at <https://www.languageonthemove.com/>

## 2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND PRACTICE

No need to let physical distancing measures or staying at home prevent you from starting to learn a new language or develop skills in a language you already have some knowledge of. Our interconnected online world means there are lots of opportunities for online learning or meet-ups. Term two for many programs starts soon, so check out languages you are interested in through the links listed on the ACT Bilingual Education Alliance (ACTBEA) website:

- Language programs for adults in the ACT area: <https://actbilingual.weebly.com/other-language-programs.html>
- Programs for children in the ACT area <https://actbilingual.weebly.com/language-programs-for-children.html>

For links to fun songs and stories in various languages for children on You Tube, follow the ACTBEA Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ACTBEA/>

## 3. MOTHER TONGUE - MULTILINGUAL POETRY

Missing the chance to share your poems in other languages or to hear poetry in other tongues?

Keep an eye on the Mother Tongue Facebook page to read or hear some local multilingual poets sharing in the languages they love and for news of possible online mother tongue events: <https://www.facebook.com/mothertonguemic/>

#### **4. RESULTS OF LANGUAGES AT THE FESTIVAL COMPETITION**

The ACT Bilingual Education Alliance was pleased at the response to the Languages at the Festival competition they ran at the National Multicultural Festival in February this year. Entries demonstrated that festival goers had spoken to stall holders or performers to obtain information about the languages they photographed, showed how the competition encouraged reflection on cultural identity and life in Australia, and/or indicated research about the language photographed and its associated historical or cultural significance. Entries from secondary school students, in particular, showed how they linked the living languages they could see and hear around them with languages they were learning in school.

An official presentation of certificates to the 3 major winners and all the shortlisted finalists will be held later in 2020, when it is hoped that all their entries can be on public display. Meanwhile the three major prize winning entries can be seen at <https://actbilingual.weebly.com/news.html>

#### **5. INDEPENDENT REVIEW ON INVESTMENT IN ACT COMMUNITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

A public tender “to engage a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to undertake an independent review on investment in ACT Community Language Schools” opened on Friday 20 December 2019 and closed on Tuesday 28 January.

In early March we were advised that, due to the delay caused by the fire and smoke response, the Assessment Panel were still in the process of assessing the tenders received. The current emergency has obviously delayed things even further, but we look forward to finding out about the successful tenderer and the start date for the review in due course .

#### **6. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY/HERITAGE LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

Due to be held at the University of Sydney in early July, this conference has now been postponed until 2021.

#### **FEEDBACK AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTURE UPDATES WELCOME**

Copies of previous Forum Updates are available at <https://canberralanguages.blogspot.com/p/forum-updates.html>