



LANGUAGES AT THE NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

The National Multicultural Festival (NMF) is an ideal opportunity to showcase and celebrate the many languages spoken in Canberra. The festival probably brings together more speakers of more languages in one place than any other Canberra event. However, the central role of languages has not always been made explicit.

Why highlight languages?

- Over 20% of Canberrans speak a language other than English at home, and these languages are a vital part of family communication and cultural and personal identity.
- Valuing and sharing language skills fosters a more inclusive, cohesive and creative society.
- Developing skills in one or more other languages in addition to English also broadens personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities for all.
- It helps implement the current ACT Languages Policy, which states:

Canberra is a multilingual city “where different languages become part of the natural development of the community as a whole. It is where a range of languages are spoken at home, in public, in education and in the media, where a variety of languages are used, respected and referred to in our daily lives”. (2.1)

A range of languages and cultures serve to widen our daily experiences and thinking. Having knowledge of another language can increase our knowledge, cultural engagement and extend our thinking. (2.2)

The ACT Government will work with the ACT languages sector to develop a campaign to promote the benefits of languages education and influence positive attitudes towards languages education in our community (5.16).

Reference: <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/multicultural/publications/amended-act-languages-policy>

Suggestions for highlighting languages and demonstrating their value and importance

- Explicitly refer to ‘languages’ alongside ‘food’, ‘dance’, and ‘music’ in all NMF promotion, such as website, app, Facebook, program, at launch
- Use related words and phrases such as ‘multilingual community’, ‘diverse languages and cultures’, ‘multilingual Canberra’, ‘bilingual’/‘bilingualism’
- Link and promote activities at the 2019 NMF with a focus on language. These include:
 - Bilingual story times at Civic Library
 - Language-related activities at the Children’s Sanctuary
 - Activities proposed by the ACT Bilingual Education Alliance: ‘Meet our community, speak to the world’ competition and ‘Taste of Languages’ performance program
 - Mother Tongue Multilingual Poets
 - The Aboriginal Showcase may also have some relevant activities
- Cluster together any stalls with a language focus, ideally near the stage featuring ‘A Taste of Languages’

Outcomes of highlighting languages at the NMF

- Increased awareness of the diversity of languages in the Canberra region
- Increased understanding of the value and many benefits of knowing and learning other languages
- More interest in further developing a home language or acquiring skills in an additional language.

How to obtain evidence about these outcomes

There is no baseline against which to measure these outcomes. However, data could be collected for comparison with future festivals

- Number of attendees at library bilingual story times
- Number of people participating in the competition and language-related activities at the Children's Sanctuary
- Include questions about languages in the Festival evaluation

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