



RESPONSE TO *NURTURING PASSION AND IGNITING WONDER*: NSW CURRICULUM REVIEW INTERIM REPORT

REFORMING THE CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM: A COMMON ENTITLEMENT

The Modern Language Teachers Association of NSW (MLTANSW) welcomes the recommendations in the NSW Curriculum Review Interim Report in relation to a **common entitlement** for students to curriculum content, and strongly supports the objective of the Review to significantly increase the learning of languages in NSW schools, and the opportunity to strengthen provision of quality languages programs in pre-school, primary and secondary schools. In particular, we applaud recognition of the following as key issues:

1. The need to **establish solid foundations in literacy and numeracy and social and emotional development**
2. The (current) common entitlement does not extend to the minimum level of achievement every student is expected to reach.... For example, **no student is expected to reach any particular level of language proficiency as a result of their mandated study of a language.**
3. (Each student should) **develop at least basic knowledge about, and appreciation of, Aboriginal languages, cultures and histories...** the Australian Curriculum's key concepts of Country/Place, Culture and People provide a useful organising framework. To achieve these objectives, time must be created within the curriculum.
4. (Every student should) **study a language other than English from primary school...** The Review is persuaded that an objective should be to increase significantly language learning in NSW schools. Currently, Australia lags many other countries, including major English-speaking countries, in the number of students studying a second language.
5. In an increasingly globalised world, **intercultural and language skills will be essential to international engagement and are likely to deliver social, political and economic benefits** to the state of NSW.
6. There is strong evidence that **language learning also increases students' understandings of their first language, improves literacy levels, and promotes a range of other cognitive skills.**
7. Importantly, **language learning should commence in the primary years (if not before),** as it does in many other countries. Research is clear on the **benefits of learning a language from a young age.**
8. **Continuity of language learning also is critical.** Considerable work has been done, especially in Europe, to develop progressions of increasing language proficiency to guide teaching and monitor developing language proficiency over time.
9. Rather than classifying students by their exposure to a language (such as 'second language', 'home user', and 'first language learner'), the **curriculum should be structured to target and recognise students' levels of language proficiency,** regardless of their ages, year levels and how those proficiency levels were achieved.
10. This proposal depends on **the availability of teachers able to teach languages other than English in primary and secondary schools, including priority languages of the region, such as Indonesian and Chinese.**
11. It is envisaged that **technologies could play a crucial role in supporting language learning in every NSW school.**
12. This proposal is viewed as an **objective** towards which schools and school authorities would need to work.

Below we offer responses to these key issues, and provide a summary of our recommendations, including key aspirational goals. We would welcome the opportunity to speak directly to the Review authors should this be considered useful, and urge the establishment of an expert Languages Advisory Panel as a first priority, to guide development of a Policy and Plan for Languages Education in NSW, together with an implementation plan. As the peak body for teachers of languages, we would seek to have a leading role in this expert group.

RESPONSES TO KEY ISSUES

1. SOLID FOUNDATIONS IN LITERACY, NUMERACY AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The research is unequivocal (e.g. CASLT, 2017; Morgan et al 2016; Murphy et al, 2014) that learning an additional language improves literacy outcomes in first and additional languages.
- Students with an additional language (especially those who use another language at home) outperform those without, as a cohort, in NAPLAN tests from Year 5 (and in some cohorts from Year 3), even when they begin school without knowledge of English, as their knowledge of another language and language systems directly impacts on English literacy development (ACARA, 2018).
- Languages programs that teach maths and science through languages increase numeracy outcomes and utilise class time more effectively through attending to both language learning and numeracy/STEM outcomes in the same lessons, with extended time periods for numeracy/STEM.
- Language learning leads to enhanced critical awareness of self and others, through new ways of understanding their own identity and culture, and cultural perspectives of others. Additional language learners demonstrate more positive attitudes and sensitivity to others, which contributes positively to social and emotional development (CASLT, 2017).
- International research is clear that children able to learn in and have support for their first languages (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community languages) have improved social and emotional development in relation to peers who do not have this support (Heugh, 2018).

RECOMMENDATION 1: Languages learning be included as part of the ‘foundation’ curriculum (in pre-schools and K-2) to support literacy, numeracy and social and emotional development.

2. MINIMUM LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR LANGUAGES LEARNING

- The Australian Curriculum: Languages provides achievement standards for bands of school years based on a minimum time allocation per week, from F(K)-Year 10. Currently the NSW syllabuses for languages have outcomes predicated on different entry points into language programs, as NSW is without a mandate for languages in the curriculum except the 100 hours in Years 7/8.
- A long-term plan for languages learning in NSW that includes recognition of all language usage including additional languages in schools requires consideration of expectations and records of achievement. ‘Proficiency levels’, such as those measured in the EU Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, EU, 2019) are at this stage not applicable to the Australian context, and a proficiency model would need careful contextual and needs consideration.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Consideration of expectations of achievement for all languages use and learning be part of a long-term languages education plan for NSW and an item for the languages advisory panel.

3. DEVELOP AT LEAST BASIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT, AND APPRECIATION OF, ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND HISTORIES

- The Australian Curriculum’s key concepts of Country/Place, Culture and People, as suggested in the review, will provide a useful organising framework for including Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum, and do require space within the curriculum. As the connections between place, culture and language are critical, Aboriginal languages must be part of the curriculum plan.
- All students in NSW schools and pre-schools should have the opportunity to learn and engage with an Aboriginal language, in consultation with the relevant owners of that language.
- This goal will need to be included in the long-term plan for languages education for NSW, to consider resourcing and permission issues including provision of teachers of the languages,

selection of the language(s), years of teaching, time allocations, and relationship to broader curriculum planning.

RECOMMENDATION 3a: Appreciation of Aboriginal, languages, cultures and histories be included across the curriculum, with Aboriginal languages being understood as intrinsic to understanding Aboriginal cultures, histories and connection to country.

RECOMMENDATION 3b: A long-term languages education plan for NSW include opportunities for all NSW students to learn an Aboriginal language, in consultation with communities, as owners of the languages.

4. EVERY STUDENT SHOULD STUDY A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL

- The MLTANSW strongly supports the proposal that every student should study a language other than English from primary school, to significantly increase language learning in NSW schools.
- We agree Australia lags behind other countries, including major English-speaking countries, in the number of students studying a second language, and that this is impeding opportunities for employment, high-level achievement, and engagement with a globalised world.
- It is vital, however, that the approach to this long-term goal is underpinned by the development and implementation of a languages policy which dovetails with the national plan, the support for which has been announced by the Australian Government, and which should involve wide stakeholder consultation, including from relevant education and languages professional associations in NSW.
- The formation of an expert Advisory Panel to guide the development of a languages education policy and long-term plan for NSW schools and to oversee the strategic implementation and coordination of actions arising from the Curriculum Review is essential.
- A range of strategic and resource-possible approaches will need to be considered to support the growth of language programs in NSW schools, including short, medium and long-term strategies.
- A phased implementation of the Review's proposals will allow time for departments, education authorities and jurisdictions, schools and communities to develop strategies to strengthen and expand the provision of quality languages programs.
- The development of targeted strategies to support jurisdictions and schools to use flexible, locally driven approaches to provide high-quality languages education is vital.
- **This goal will be the major focus of a long-term plan for languages education in NSW.**

RECOMMENDATION 4a: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW be developed, with the objective of every student learning a language from at least primary school, aligned with the national plan and strategy for languages education when it is developed. The long-term plan should have short- and medium- term goals, and evaluation and review mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATION 4b: An expert advisory panel be formed to guide development of the NSW languages education plan.

5. IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED WORLD, INTERCULTURAL AND LANGUAGE SKILLS WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND ARE LIKELY TO DELIVER SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE STATE OF NSW

- Languages learning plays a central role in the development of competent and confident young people who possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to become global citizens and it equips them for a wide range of careers (CASLT, 2017; EU, 2018).
- We agree the ramifications of an approach that recognises the importance of intercultural languages skills are likely to deliver social, political and economic benefit to NSW

RECOMMENDATION 5: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW should be premised on the entitlement to an education that builds intercultural and language skills essential to international engagement, and broad academic, life and career choices.

6. THERE IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT LANGUAGE LEARNING ALSO INCREASES STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE, IMPROVES LITERACY LEVELS, AND PROMOTES A RANGE OF OTHER COGNITIVE SKILLS

- Research on languages learning unequivocally shows that languages learning has cognitive, academic, personal, societal, intercultural, and economic benefits, including understanding of first languages (CASLT, 2017; Morgan et al, 2016). NAPLAN results indicate this latter point convincingly.
- Denial of NSW children the right to the benefits of additional language learning afforded to children in other OECD including other English-speaking nations, disadvantages the children, the state and the nation.
- Improved PISA and similar test results is one potential outcome of providing meaningful language learning opportunities to all NSW students.

RECOMMENDATION 6: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW should recognise that languages learning has critical academic, cognitive, societal and economic benefits, that should not be denied to NSW students.

7. IMPORTANTLY, LANGUAGE LEARNING SHOULD COMMENCE IN THE PRIMARY YEARS (IF NOT BEFORE), AS IT DOES IN MANY OTHER COUNTRIES. RESEARCH IS CLEAR ON THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING A LANGUAGE FROM A YOUNG AGE.

- Research on the benefits of languages learning in the early years (pre-school to Year 2) strongly supports the introduction of language learning programs as early as possible (Morgan et al, 2016).
- The current ELLA apps programs for pre-schools should be a minimum requirement in pre-schools, progressing to many pre-schools having fully qualified languages educator-led programs, in a mix of language-as-subject (additional/second language learning) and immersion programs.
- The MTANSW strongly supports a primary years' starts to languages programs. It acknowledges a phasing-in process will be necessary as part of long-term plan for languages education in NSW. Short- and medium-term goals must include urgent introduction of languages programs in an initial quantum of primary schools, with the longer term plan ensuring all primary schools have languages programs, as other Australian states do.
- A languages Key Learning Area (KLA) must be included (mandated) in the primary curriculum for NSW. The current status of languages in the primary curriculum as an optional element of the HSIE syllabus must change, urgently. The creation of a languages KLA must include the following:
 - The clear understanding that **acquisition of a language** is the core of the KLA
 - Minimum mandated hours associated with the KLA. The research (Spada, 2018, in Morgan et al, 2018) indicates a minimum of 2 hours/week with at least two lessons per week for additional languages learning is required to ensure sufficient time to develop skills and achieve increasing levels of proficiency; with greater time allocations and frequency of lessons for content-based learning and immersion programs (from 25-30% of learning time for partial immersion to 50-60% of the learning time for full immersion bilingual programs) (Clyne, 1986; CASLT, 2017; Morgan et al, 2016). We note that partial and full immersion programs have very high level outcomes for overall student learning including high level proficiency in the target language, all subject areas, and notably English literacy (well above national means), but also understand that this is not a model suited to all school contexts, nor which can currently be resourced.
- Different program models must be included in the plan, to meet different community needs. Programs should include those developed for first and heritage language learners as well as additional language learners, using pedagogical models including additional language learning, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and immersion programs (30-60% of curriculum time in the additional language). Nations including Finland, Canada and Singapore provide examples of success across a range of program and background language models (Morgan, personal communication, 2019).
- Community understanding and support will need to be developed through targeted campaigns so parents understand the benefits of languages learning for all students. Support for languages

programs can be built through quality curriculum, quality teaching, by addressing real and perceived barriers, and by provision of incentives in contexts of most need.

RECOMMENDATION 7a: Languages be included as a key learning area (KLA) in the NSW curriculum, and align with best practice in other states of Australia and internationally.

RECOMMENDATION 7b: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW include short- and medium-term introductions of pre-school and primary languages programs, with a broader rollout over the longer term to include every NSW pre- and primary school.

RECOMMENDATION 7c: Languages be provided with sufficient learning time and frequency of lessons to make learning meaningful and proficiency gains possible.

RECOMMENDATION 7d: Different program models be included in the plan for languages education, such as language as subject, CLIL, and immersion programs.

RECOMMENDATION 7e: Students with different backgrounds are catered for in languages provision.

RECOMMENDATION 7f: A community awareness campaign is included in the languages plan to demonstrate the benefits of languages learning and involve communities in languages programs.

8. CONTINUITY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING ALSO IS CRITICAL. CONSIDERABLE WORK HAS BEEN DONE, ESPECIALLY IN EUROPE, TO DEVELOP PROGRESSIONS OF INCREASING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TO GUIDE TEACHING AND MONITOR DEVELOPING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OVER TIME.

- Strategies to identify and increase opportunities for continuity of languages learning K-12 need to be fostered. Access to continuity of learning is a critical factor if high level proficiency outcomes are the goal.
- THE MLTANSW acknowledges that not all learners will have the opportunity for continuity of the same language throughout the school years, but research also supports the learning of different languages and indeed any language as being of value to learners (Lo Bianco, 2019). Learners with experience in one additional language typically perform better when learning subsequent languages, and also benefit from development of intercultural insights and perspectives gained through meaningful language programs.
- Whilst considering flexibility for schools, a practical approach may be to provide nested/clustered programs in areas/regions of NSW (including metropolitan and regional areas) where one or two languages are taught in both primary and secondary schools in order to develop successful language learners and to strengthen opportunities for continuity of learning. Close consideration should be given to the languages of each region as well as community languages for such programs (see below, on targeted Indonesian and Chinese programs). What should also be borne in mind, however, is that international research shows that where the most options for languages are available, the best outcomes of languages learning occur, including through community buy-in (Lo Bianco, 2019).

RECOMMENDATION 8a: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW will include strategies to increase options for languages continuity, between early years, primary and secondary programs.

RECOMMENDATION 8b: The long-term plan should consider clusters of schools in the same region providing predominantly the same one or two languages. Community interests should be included in selection of languages. Cognisance of the benefits of the broadest offering of languages should inform this element of planning.

9. RATHER THAN CLASSIFYING STUDENTS BY THEIR EXPOSURE TO A LANGUAGE (SUCH AS 'SECOND LANGUAGE', 'HOME USER', AND 'FIRST LANGUAGE LEARNER'), THE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE STRUCTURED TO TARGET AND RECOGNISE STUDENTS' LEVELS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, REGARDLESS OF THEIR AGES, YEAR LEVELS AND HOW THOSE PROFICIENCY LEVELS WERE ACHIEVED

- The Australian Curriculum: Languages was developed with two entry levels- F and Year 7; and with different curricula (for some languages) for first, heritage/home user and second language learners, to target the different needs of learners with curricula that would be relevant to them as a learning cohort, and recognising entry and continuing proficiency levels. While this approach does 'classify' learners in relation to their exposure to language, it does allow for provision of curricula that

recognises students' levels of proficiency (however achieved), and provides sequenced curricula to address their learning needs.

- NSW, in its development of languages syllabuses, elected (against advice from professional teacher associations and tertiary advisers) to have one curriculum for each language, to serve K-10 in all contexts and all entry points, and to include 'differentiation' options for each objective to cater for learner differences/backgrounds. Outcome statements needed to be sufficiently loose to accommodate all learners at all levels of experience (e.g. in a Stage 4 class where there were students who had commenced in K, with six years experience, and those who were complete beginners at Year 7, in the 100 hours program). Content suggestions were drawn from across all Australian Curriculum: Languages (ACL) curricula as well as new content being developed, especially for languages not included in the ACL.
- It should be understood that students' ages do impact on determining languages curricula suited to them, and it is not the case that language learning is simply a proficiency progression identical in every case regardless of the point in their lives at which an individual commenced learning. Teenage beginners of language learning will engage more readily with texts on topics suited to and about teens rather than those developed for one to three-year olds (nursery rhymes, etc), even though the language to be learned initially is similarly basic. Even grammar lessons will be approached differently to reflect knowledge of language systems in first languages, for different aged learners.
- Furthermore, determining proficiency levels in languages is fraught and contested. Wholesale adoption of the CEFR, for example, or others for Chinese language (e.g. HSK) have contextual complications for Australia, and are also acknowledged by many as unsuitable for school aged learners, especially younger children. The question arises around what these proficiency levels would be used for, in terms of planning programs and ongoing language learning for individuals as well as classes. Recognising a learner has language skills at a particular level does not necessarily assist with planning for languages programs in schools, organising 'like' level classes, etc. 'Proficiency statements' in themselves may have uses, but most likely only at the higher levels of achievement and for reference moving into the senior years or into tertiary study.
- A broader discussion on this recommendation is needed, including what implications it would have for languages programs and the overarching languages plan.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The expert languages advisory panel be charged with determining how best to represent achievement and levels of language understanding, to inform languages curriculum design and content for all learners.

10. THIS PROPOSAL DEPENDS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF TEACHERS ABLE TO TEACH LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PRIORITY LANGUAGES OF THE REGION, SUCH AS INDONESIAN AND CHINESE

- Strategies to address the increased demand for the number of qualified languages teachers required to meet the growth in numbers of students studying a language should be explored, and included in the long-term plan for languages education in NSW, with short-, medium-, and long-term targets.
- Options such as sharing teachers across schools sites, further education of teachers without languages qualifications, and the possibility of partnering with universities offering specialist primary language teacher programs, to provide scholarships and acceleration pathways, could be investigated. A similar program operated under the NALSSP program in the early 2000s, to increase numbers of teachers for the target Asian languages of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean, with considerable success. New strategies could respond to the evaluations from these programs.
- Practices and approaches adopted in other states and territories should also be considered, such as the approach in WA to develop an online Indonesian program for very wide introduction of Indonesian into Years 3-6. The program is about to enter its third year, with Year 5 being rolled out to several hundred schools. Discussions with WA around access to the online program, and sharing knowledge of program parameters and resources, could be progressed. Victoria has also had considerable success with increasing programs in primary schools, and should be consulted.

Queensland has a staged approach in progress, and has explored options for increasing early years languages programs.

- The cultural and linguistic backgrounds of NSW public school teachers indicates that many teachers speak a language other than English as their first or an additional language, with about 100 different languages being spoken. With additional education and qualifications in language teaching and with contemporary practices and orientations to languages learning, including clear parameters around eligibility to teach, and to teach languages, these teachers may provide a to-date untapped resource for languages education provision, particularly in primary schools. It is important to understand that speaking a language does not mean one necessarily has the capacity or pedagogical orientation to teach languages in Australian schools.
- If clusters of schools offering the same one or two languages are introduced to assist with continuity issues, scholarship programs which involved collaborative networks of language teacher education students and in-service teachers could support increased numbers and coordinated professional learning.
- NSW universities have ample capacity to support priority languages, should these be identified, including Indonesian and Chinese, and also other high demand community languages.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The long-term plan for languages education in NSW consider multiple options and strategies to increase the number of languages teachers for primary classrooms.

11. IT IS ENVISAGED THAT TECHNOLOGIES COULD PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING LANGUAGE LEARNING IN EVERY NSW SCHOOL

- Technologies in languages education have undergone rapid change over recent decades.
- The ELLA program of pre-school apps and its trial in F-2 should be investigated for further uptake.
- The WA online Indonesian program and similar ‘distance’ offerings involving technology should be investigated.
- The literature on technology assisted language learning should be carefully interrogated for ‘what works’ (and what doesn’t).
- The primacy of a qualified languages teacher coordinating programs is critical, whatever the level of technology employed.
- The languages advisory panel should consider recommendations from a review of technology assisted language learning practices in Australia and internationally.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The long-term plan for languages education in NSW consider how technologies can support languages education in NSW.

12. THIS PROPOSAL IS VIEWED AS AN OBJECTIVE TOWARDS WHICH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL AUTHORITIES WOULD NEED TO WORK

- The MLTANSW supports this recommendation.
- The establishment of a languages education advisory panel and the development of a policy and plan for languages education in NSW are critical first steps towards this objective.
- Connection to the national plan, when developed will be important.
- The involvement of the MLTANSW and other languages education experts in further planning is critical.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The long-term plan for languages education in NSW be developed to address the objective of increasing languages education in NSW schools. The MLTANSW should have a leadership role in this planning.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: Languages learning be included as part of the 'foundation' curriculum (in pre-schools and K-2) to support literacy, numeracy and social and emotional development (see recommended action list and timeline below).

RECOMMENDATION 2: Consideration of expectations of achievement for all languages use and learning be part of a long-term languages education plan for NSW and an item for the languages advisory panel.

RECOMMENDATION 3a: Appreciation of Aboriginal, languages, cultures and histories be included across the curriculum, with Aboriginal languages being understood as intrinsic to understanding Aboriginal cultures, histories and connection to country.

RECOMMENDATION 3b: A long-term languages education plan for NSW include opportunities for all NSW students to learn an Aboriginal language, in consultation with communities, as owners of the languages.

RECOMMENDATION 4a: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW be developed, with the objective of every student learning a language from at least primary school, aligned with the national plan and strategy for languages education when it is developed. The long-term plan should have short- and medium- term goals, and evaluation and review mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATION 4b: An expert advisory panel be formed to guide development of the NSW languages education plan.

RECOMMENDATION 5: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW should be premised on the entitlement to an education that builds intercultural and language skills essential to international engagement, and broad academic, life and career choices.

RECOMMENDATION 6: A long-term plan for languages education in NSW should recognise that languages learning has critical academic, cognitive, societal and economic benefits, that should not be denied to NSW students.

RECOMMENDATION 7a: Languages be included as a key learning area (KLA) in the NSW curriculum, and align with best practice in other states of Australia and internationally.

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RECOMMENDATION 11: The long-term plan for languages education in NSW consider how technologies can support languages education in NSW.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The long-term plan for languages education in NSW be developed to address the objective of increasing languages education in NSW schools. The MLTANSW should have a leadership role in this planning.

From these recommendations, we identify the following key aspirational goals.

KEY ASPIRATIONAL GOALS

- 1. Establish an expert NSW Languages Education Advisory Panel** with broad expertise in languages education to consider Review recommendations in relation to languages education, and advice on further developments and implementation of the Review recommendations.
2. Development of **NSW Languages Education Policy and Plan** to provide oversight for sustainable languages education in NSW. This plan would be aligned with both the National Plan and Strategies for Languages Education when developed, and the new Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council, 2019).
- 3. Adopt Languages as a Key Learning Area (KLA) in NSW**, in line with content recommendations from the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council, 2019), which lists languages as one of the eight key learning areas.
- 4. Increase languages programs in NSW pre-schools and primary schools**, with the explicit goal that within 5-8 years **all NSW primary schools have a sustainable languages program taught by qualified languages teachers** to ensure equity of access to the benefits of languages learning for all NSW students. A range of program and pedagogical models and approaches should be used, specific to local contexts.
- 5. Increase Aboriginal languages programs**, in consultation with communities, and embed Aboriginal place, language and culture perspectives across the curriculum.
- 6. Systematically increase the numbers of qualified languages teachers**, and resource languages teaching adequately for effective learning.
- 7. Provide languages programs that meet the needs of the diverse cohort of NSW learners.**

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