



Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (Inc.)

**AFMLTA**

PO Box 758

Belconnen

ACT 2616

www.afmlta.asn.au

## **AFMLTA Response to the *Draft Shape Paper of the Australian Curriculum: Languages***

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The following is compiled from the AFMLTA executive and membership (the language teachers' associations of Australian states and territories) consultation and discussion on the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper. Because of the wide network of contributors, it canvasses a range of opinions on some issues, and common agreement on others. We ask that you consider this document along with the AFMLTA position paper on the development of an Australian curriculum for languages; and the AFMLTA (2005) *Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures*, both of which can be found on the AFMLTA website.

The response is framed with some opening/introductory comments, followed by responses relating to each section of the draft shape paper. These latter responses are from individuals and groups and are therefore sometimes voiced as 'I' or 'we' accordingly. Major issues and themes of the discussion are summarised at the end of the document.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Curriculum, policy, content and implementation: some introductory remarks**

We recognise that the draft shape paper is for a *curriculum* in languages, but note that curriculum does not exist in a policy void, even if the policy is unstated, and/or is different in different states and territories or jurisdictions. There is a need to address/revisit an agreed national languages education policy to sit with this document and the development of language specific curricula and achievement standards. We urgently seek progress in this regard, with wide consultation from stakeholders including the AFMLTA. Some of the issues commented on below relate to policy, because of the inevitable interrelationship of policy and curriculum and language teachers' perspectives on the relationship, and because of the inclusion of some policy issues within the draft shape paper.

As teachers of languages we are concerned with implementation issues- the *teaching* of languages in Australian schools. We realise that, as a *shape* paper, implementation issues are also not addressed, and, indeed, the *content* of curricula are also not included. We suggest that detail on implementation issues and especially on how these impact on workforce and workplace issues for teachers of languages be addressed at the earliest convenience, at national and state levels, and that the AFMLTA and its members contribute to this process in association with ACARA and DEEWR, and by extension with state and territory jurisdictions. We understand that an interim measure to be adopted by ACARA regarding languages (unlike other subject areas) will see the development of a set of procedures and processes for development of the language specific curricula following the approval of the shape paper; and that these processes will be followed by the development of content descriptions and achievement standards, initially in two, and later in further languages. We ask that the AFMLTA continue to be consulted and involved in these steps- language teachers will want to comment on content and

standards as they are drafted. Some comments within this response relate to implementation issues arising from issues and directions raised in the shape paper.

Issues widely commented on in responses, but which fall outside the focus of a curriculum shape paper include program provision options (e.g. mandated contact hours, and regularity and frequency of contact), teacher supply and working condition issues (e.g. training, recruitment, teacher/student ratios, itinerancy of teachers, and ongoing professional learning opportunities) and language program issues (for programs beyond those covered in this document). Experience tells us that insufficient consideration of these issues has sometimes led to poor program delivery and limited student achievement, and has contributed to a negative perception of languages as a learning area. To ensure quality languages programs are established and sustained, these issues must be considered hand-in-hand with development of a national curriculum.

### **Overarching comments**

We commend the work of the key writer and consultative advisers of the draft shape paper, for formulating an impressive and significant foundation document that will provide the basis for productively moving languages education in Australian schools forward. We find much about the draft shape paper to applaud. In particular, we welcome:

- The prominent positioning of languages as significant and influential to ALL OTHER curriculum areas (we take it as given that languages learning itself is necessarily core national curriculum) which will contribute to the wider national educational goals including those expressed in the Melbourne Declaration
- Taking the position that the learning of ALL languages is valuable and that the learning of all languages should be recognised in our Australian curriculum
- The inclusion of Australian languages, and the detail regarding program types in this area, including revival, home user, maintenance, ecology and second language learning
- Positioning the current discussions about languages education in Australia historically (and thus [re]placing languages policy on the table)
- Recognition of the complexity of languages as a learning area, involving
  - a diversity of learners from different backgrounds who bring a wide range of levels of experience and interest to languages classrooms
  - the diversity of languages, including Australian languages, classical languages, sign language and languages from around the world
  - the range of 'entry' points into languages and further complexity as learners may move between languages in different contexts and bands of schooling
  - current differences among program conditions, contexts of learning, learning time allocations, etc in different states and territories and systems (we look forward to

seeing how these will be reconciled in the development of content and achievement standards and processes to guide a national curriculum)

- the diversity of languages teachers, their backgrounds and experience and their range of currently different curriculum, pedagogies and assessment practices
- the impact and importance of community involvement and programs in languages
- diverse community views and expectations about languages learning- ranging across viewpoints and agendas, with negative, positive and ambivalent positions- some of which have been canvassed recently in the media following the release of the draft shape paper (we note considerable interest in the political questions of languages policy, more so than in the area of curriculum itself)

All these levels of complexity make the development of languages curriculum challenging and requiring careful consideration and planning, including wide consultation and input from key stakeholders, including languages teachers, whom we represent.

- The intention to develop language-specific curricula in a range of languages; and the inclusion of classical languages and sign language (Auslan), omissions in earlier drafts, to add to the range of languages with specific curricula, including Australian (Indigenous) languages and languages from around the world

The proposal to develop language-specific curricula is a significant and vital breakthrough in curriculum development. We hold that it is imperative that language-specific curricula be developed, in languages not limited to those listed in the draft shape paper; this process being an ongoing one for ACARA and jurisdictions, based on interest and needs for additional languages curricula that are informed by humanistic reasons for language inclusions, not only economic imperatives.

- The intention to develop different curriculum pathways and curricula for learners of different background groups and with different levels of experience and exposure to languages at school, in the home, in the community and from time spent outside Australia
- Indicative learning hours at the various levels of schooling (though there is concern about the amount of time and presentation of indicative times in ranges, rather than minima)
- Acknowledgment of and planning for learners beginning/continuing a language at different entry points

While we are pleased to see different entry points being acknowledged and planned for, we have concerns that opportunities for continuity of learning, across school bands (e.g. primary, middle years, senior secondary) be planned, so as to allow learners to engage in sustained programs over sufficient years for meaningful outcomes.

- Prominent positioning of the need to conceptualise the languages curriculum through the interrelationship of views about learners, language(s), culture(s) and learning; and to see

this as concerning *understanding* rather than prescription, and to be focused on dynamic, integrative views of language development rather than cumulative, add-on, skills-driven emphases

- The quote by Lo Bianco on p.9, which we endorse as a statement of a major rationale for learning languages
- The recognition that language learning strengthens literacy capabilities across the curriculum
- Specific mention of an ethical basis for languages curriculum development. Australia's plurilingual and pluricultural population and current and future needs of students and society require careful regard to this point, which can be amplified in other curriculum areas, using languages as a model. We think this aspect can be further developed in both the shaping paper and the final (pluri) curricula
- The noting of conditions for language programs to work well: community value; qualified teachers and ongoing professional learning; curriculum and assessment documentation and guidance; adequate resources; and appropriate time allocations, including regularity of lessons and continuity of programs

We hold that these considerations and implementation arising from them must be based on research and practice evidence and NOT on *ad hoc* or convenience decision-making. We look forward to seeing how these conditions will be taken into account in the next steps of curriculum development, and how the AFMLTA might contribute to ensuring the right conditions exist for sustainable programs.

- Preparedness to engage in ongoing discussion about the changing needs of languages education and *languages educators* in Australian schools (i.e. recognising that this is an ongoing task and it will not be achieved in a single process of one-off curriculum development)

The AFMLTA represents language teachers through their state and territory professional bodies and must be included in the ongoing debate. As there is yet no detail on curriculum content, there remains much that teachers are interested in, and will wish to comment on as these steps are taken.

We have concerns regarding:

- The identified learning strands- in particular 'reciprocating', but also 'communicating' (see discussion below). We are deeply concerned that the term 'reciprocating' itself does not represent the aspect of learning that we see it is intended to explain- learners (and teachers) engaging with their own interpretation and deep reflection on themselves as language users and responding to others from this reflexive perspective. We feel teachers may find it

difficult to plan for and assess this strand in its current formulation. We suggest further thinking about what this strand might be, after further consultation (some alternative suggestions are made in the discussion below).

- The treatment of primary school language learning (see below), as we consider too much flexibility has been built in to the current formulation and will lead to providing avenues for schools to opt out (or in and out) of programs, without providing continuity and sustainability for learners and teachers. Assumptions made in a national policy vacuum (e.g. not knowing whether there will be policy to ensure programs, teachers, resources etc exist for primary programs) provide for too many and very different possibilities. As the shape paper will (we hope) assist in driving policy development, we want a clear and strong position for primary education outlined in the paper that assumes these conditions will exist.
- Insufficient time allocations, especially in the primary years, and un-evidenced claims for requisite numbers of hours for 'proficiency'
- Confusion over 'exit points' and the scope of the languages curriculum to these points (see below)
- An (unintended) underlying monolingual mindset that sets up plurilingualism as unusual and a new place to go; whereas we would argue it has always been the norm in human society, even in Australia despite educational and community pressures for monolingualism and monoculturalism. We feel this requires stronger positioning.
- The intense level of detail of justification for languages as a valued learning area- it is rightfully in the Melbourne Declaration and does not need to be forever claiming a place- this leads to a 'cringe' mentality and sets up opportunities for challenge (note that the other shape papers don't engage with this level of justification of the need for their curriculum area)
- The use of the term 'proficiency' without sufficient definition: is it 'native-speaker standard' (we would strongly argue against such a definition)? Is it the standard enunciated in NALSSP documents as a level sufficient to engage in economic or business dealings in nations that use the language (again totally unrealistic)? Or something else? We see it as a problematic term for use throughout the document and suggest either the provision of a realistic definition or that the term not be used.
- The terms 'communication' and 'communicating' are also not well explained, and their use suggests a common understanding of what these terms currently mean for all stakeholders. We know this is not the case. Interpretation of 'communicative language learning', for example, is problematic (see recent edition of Babel for a discussion of this point), let alone the term used as an aim, skill and strand as it is here. Better explanation of these terms is required, or alternative terminology sought.
- The spans of learning. Throughout the document, there are a number of different formulations for years (span) of learning. Though the initial message is that languages

should be learned by students from Foundation onwards, alternative suggestions of scope/span are made throughout the document. 'Flexible' primary programs are described, so that schools can opt to use the prescribed hours in any primary configuration (two suggested options are Years F-6 or Years 3-6). The latter of these does not mean students are learning from Foundation, and it is not a model we endorse. Point 58 talks of the assumption that all students will learn languages from Foundation to Year 8, with curriculum provisions beyond, to Year 12. The modelled diagrams and time allocations show cumulative totals of hours divided into F-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11-12, suggesting these are the four exit points endorsed. We do not support the 'compulsory years' (though no compulsion/mandating is mentioned) finishing at Year 8, as described in Point 58, but rather at Year 10, as per other curriculum areas. That is, our position is that languages should be learned by all students from F to Year 10.

Further, we would like to see discussion about the value of learning for the exit points at the end of primary (if learners are going to a school where another language is offered) and end of Year 10. The modelling and discussion in the diagrams of learner pathways privilege Year 12 as the only measure of 'proficient' achievement. While promoting opportunities and pathways for all learners to contribute through the senior secondary years, we do not wish to inculcate a view of 'failure' or irrelevance if students don't complete Year 12. We see the intercultural, linguistic and literacy gains of programs to Year 10, or of one language leading to another at the end of the primary years, as highly significant to students' capacities to engage meaningfully with the world and their futures.

- The pedagogical approach. It is clear that a specific pedagogical approach underpins the design of this curriculum but we feel it is never explicitly described as such. We would like this to be more explicit.
- Immersion and content based programs. We feel the paper is too vague about how this curriculum might apply to bilingual immersion, partial immersion or content-based programs, aside from a suggestion that indicative hours should be greater in such programs. We would like some indication of how these programs might be conceptualised and articulated within the languages curriculum.

Specific comments related to sections of the draft shape paper are included below. Some responses are from individuals (voiced as 'I'); others from groups (voiced as 'we').

**INTRODUCTION: HISTORY, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITY (pp. 3-6) and  
LANGUAGES AS A LEARNING AREA (pp.7-8)**

- *In general, we find the paper is an excellent document providing a positive statement of languages for the national curriculum*
- *It was noted that in developing a national curriculum, the languages teaching community should provide the case for the best outcomes for languages learning- the 'aspirational' picture, while*

*realising that this may not be achieved in all states and territories and jurisdictions. Common agreement on minima would, however, be expected*

- *The lengthy justification for languages is an invitation to those who don't support languages to build arguments for the exclusion of languages. **The reality is that languages is confirmed as a subject area in the national curriculum; there's no need to provide many pages of justification.** This has always been a problem for the languages field- that we feel we need to 'explain' why we're here. It's about time to just bite the bullet on this and take it as a given that languages will be studied, full stop.*
- *The rationale and justification in the first 25 pages is not necessary in such length. ACARA accepts languages as part of the curriculum and we don't have to justify it*
- *That Australian Languages have a voice is excellent*
- *In point 7, it might be worthwhile and avoid further confusion if 'world languages' is defined, as 'Australian' languages are. This would also help with understanding why 'classical' languages and Auslan are not 'world' languages, although we do support the specific and specified inclusion of these languages. We note that later, however, no plan for language-specific curricula development for classical languages or Auslan is included in the proposed plan of staged development. We would like processes for such development outlined.*
- *We are concerned that sign language is not included in the discussion of Australian (Indigenous) languages, as a lingua franca for these communities*
- *There is some confusion about how the progress of language learning is articulated throughout the paper, beginning with point 9. Too much flexibility is afforded to the primary years, such that it might be argued out of the curriculum for many of these years, which is contrary to the expressed desire elsewhere in the document for students to learn languages from Foundation to Year 12 in sustained programs. We believe that 300 hours is insufficient across the primary years, and that the indicative time should be referenced to research evidence of hours required for meaningful outcomes. We argue for the doubling of this figure, and a requirement to express it in terms of hours/week (or even per year would be better) over the whole period of primary education, rather than as a total across six or seven years of schooling.*
- *The mention of diverse program types in point 14 needs to be followed up with substantially more elaboration of such programs, including time on task and the recognition that other curriculum areas (in a 'crowded' curriculum) can be learned through partial immersion and content-based programs, for example.*

## **A RATIONALE FOR LANGUAGES LEARNING (pp. 9-10)**

- *The paper captures essential features of a rationale for learning languages, but does not capture fully the essential features as a learning area. The flexible structure outlined neglects the condition of regularity of contact for programs to work well.*
- *That the draft shape identifies intercultural proficiency in the target language as the major rationale is appropriate and should have emphasis and remain an important and central reason for learning languages and curriculum design*
- *The major rationale given for learning languages (point 15) is that being able to communicate proficiently provides learners with essential communication skills in the target language, an intercultural capability, and an understanding of the role of language and culture in human communication.*

*This statement implies many things, but is unclear. We need a statement about the 'major rationale for learning languages' that comes from the profession. I suggest that the 'major rationale for learning languages is to learn the language of study' - this sounds circular but limiting the rationale to the idea of 'proficiently communicating' (which is hardly ever achieved, by any definition of 'proficient') negates all other imperatives such as 'learning languages as an intellectually challenging, central part of any student's education' or 'learning a language to have access to the rich, cultural patrimony of a culture', ideas contained in the quote by Lo Bianco.*

- *We endorse the Lo Bianco quote on p.9 as a statement of a major rationale for learning languages*
- *Statements such as '...a bilingual or plurilingual capability has become the norm in most parts of the world' (p.9) indicates a deep-rootedness in the monolingual mindset of the Anglophone world - plurilingualism has ALWAYS BEEN THE NORM. This statement implies that there was once a monolingual paradise which then fractured into bilingualism/plurilingualism - this is wrong. We suggest rewording point 16 to reflect the plurilingual nature of the world and the importance for Australia to engage with this position*
- *There is concern that this document does not look different enough from a number of curriculum documents which exist presently. If this is an opportunity for us to reconceptualise language learning in Australia, then I am not sure this has been brought home fully in this shape paper. If the writers do believe language learning is more than just about communication in the target language then this is not made clear. There is very little of substance that a current teacher can read and understand how teaching languages under the Australian curriculum may look. The rationale by J Lo Bianco used by the paper does not seem to be carried on in any serious way through the document. He states that the '...principal reason is to do with the deepest purposes of education itself, to instill knowledge, to deepen understanding, to stimulate reflection and to foster skills. Languages are intimately linked to the essentially humanistic, cultural and intellectual reasons for making education compulsory.'*

- *Ideally, languages should have greater visibility in (especially primary) schools and be recognised as one of the eight learning areas of the curriculum and be given due weight in school programs. All staff should have some knowledge of the language(s) taught in the school (just as all have to be familiar with numeracy and literacy aims, for example).*
- *Australian languages and Asian languages are rightfully given emphasis in the draft shape paper, but there is a potential to draw from this that other languages are less emphasised. We would support elaboration, on all occasions where the range of languages is referred to, to include other languages. We recognise that ‘world languages’ are mentioned throughout the paper, however, and a range of languages is included in the plan for development of specific curricula.*
- *Point 19 (on the rights of young Australian (Indigenous) language- speaking children to learn their own languages) could be followed by a similar paragraph echoing this point regarding the rights of all young Australians (and residents) to learn their own languages.*
- *There is some concern about the use of the term ‘Australian Languages’ to designate the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Though it is thought that the terminology decision should rest with the custodians of these languages and cultures, some alternative suggestions are ‘Australian Indigenous Languages’ or ‘Aboriginal Languages’*
- *Though teachers recognise that development of a national curriculum does not canvas policy issues, it is imperative that a languages policy needs to be developed to support the languages curriculum. This policy needs to include pre-service teachers learning a language/about languages learning; and that the time provided at tertiary level for pre-service teachers learning languages should be increased to achieve greater proficiency in language use and to explore intercultural understandings meaningfully.*

#### **THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF LANGUAGES IN THE CURRICULUM (pp. 11-12)**

- *We support the statements in this section, in particular recognition of the value of languages learning for the possibilities of experience and enrichment learning languages offers; for the challenges and pleasures of moving between different systems of meaning and the subsequent deepening of understanding this may bring; the metalinguistic benefits that are ‘transferable’ to other learning areas and to life; and for the integration of ‘real life’ into the classroom (although we think this is not limited to languages learning)*

#### **KEY CONCEPTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS IN LEARNING LANGUAGES (pp.13-20)**

- *The paper captures a contemporary understanding of language, culture and language learning*
- *The key concepts are largely well explained in this section, but we wonder at the need for such elaboration, and feel that the thinking underlying this section is not followed through in later parts of the shape paper, in particular in the strands. Though point 24, for instance, states that*

*the aspects that define languages curriculum design are language, culture, and understanding the relationship between the two, we feel this is not reflected adequately in the strands (see discussion below). Similarly, the intercultural process points (35-37) are not reflected adequately in the strands, with reference mostly to learning **about** intercultural exchange. I realise that the reciprocating strand is intended to capture these ideas, but feel it falls short of doing so.*

- In point 25 there are claims about what language is, which really need to be supported with references; for example, the third dot point is highly controversial in philosophy of language circles. I have some discomfort with a monolithic and closed representation of language*
- In point 26, attention to detail is lacking in the specification of systems - morphology and graphic should be mentioned at this point. They are included later, but it would be more consistent to include at this point as well.*
- In point 27, there are claims that language is 'uniquely human' - I think this can be challenged looking at animal communication. Is there a need to make such a claim either way? Also, the claim that 'through language...meaning is interpreted and created' ignores the role of the arts and music. Again, with these kinds of examples there is an emphasis on over-explanation and justification.*
- The relationship between languages and literacy is an important aspect to discuss, and the connection to all learning areas is well made. However, there is some feeling that point 41 has the potential to invite attacks on languages as being counterproductive to literacy development. It implies an approach to the teaching and learning of languages which is never explicitly discussed in the document. We think it would be better to be say that this curriculum is framed on the basis of an intercultural orientation to pedagogy, i.e. take the position explicitly, rather than suggesting alternative pedagogies such as the one in this point (deconstruction of code).*

*We note that later, where general capabilities and cross-curriculum perspectives of the Australian curriculum are discussed, numeracy is not included. We wondered at this absence, in noting that, for example, teacher registration in some states and territories requires mandatory links to both literacy and numeracy be made. There is a case to argue for language and numeracy links.*

- We welcome the discussion and inclusion of Australian languages and their significance to all Australians throughout the document. Further elaboration on the possibilities of all schools including Australian languages would be welcomed, although we recognise there are issues of protocol and cultural sensitivity.*

*The summary of key concepts (point 49) suggests these indicate advances in thinking and understanding about language learning. A number of our members, however, felt that it does not advance the thinking or planning.*

- *The Draft Shape Paper captures essential elements and rationale – if we want to do what we’ve always done. For many it is a restatement of a known rationale, however, I feel that it is very much a 20th century view. I understand, though, that for many of our colleagues, innovation and a reconceptualisation is not what is wanted/ expected/ desired.*
- *I am concerned that this document does not look different enough from a number of curriculum documents which exist presently. If this is an opportunity for us to reconceptualise language learning in Australia, then I am not sure this has been brought home fully in this shape paper. If the writers do believe language learning is more than just about communication in the target language then this is not made clear. There is very little of substance that a current teacher can read and understand how teaching languages under the Australian curriculum may look.*
- *I had hoped that we would get something which tried to move us away from the status quo but the more I look at this document the more it simply reinforces the situation we currently have.*

*Others were of the view that it does provide a picture of a their own role quite well*

- *Teachers can read the various parts of this document and see their own role deconstructed quite well*

*Others thought it jumped ahead too quickly, and was written in an academic style not sufficiently connected to the work of teachers*

- *My main concern is that the paper comes from an ‘academic’ perspective and teachers, let alone principals and leaders, will be left perplexed (not that the academic should not be considered but in comparison to other shape papers, this one inclines towards a revolution in the learning area and leaps too far too quickly).*
- *We note no reference to the future of languages education in this section and ask that not only a contemporary understanding of languages be represented, but that provision for the future (as far as it can be known) be included, in line with the Melbourne Declaration and ACARA’s overarching aims.*

## **THE LEARNERS, PATHWAYS AND TIME ON TASK IN LEARNING LANGUAGES (pp. 21-23)**

Learners

*Different perspectives were expressed about the need to understand learners’ backgrounds:*

- *Though we agree that it is important to understand the uniqueness of each learner and what he or she brings to the languages classroom, we are concerned that a requirement to know their biographies may be intrusive, and ask if it doesn’t occur, then what implications does this have for the languages program?*

- *It is essential, in providing an appropriate program for learners, to understand their backgrounds and what they each individually bring to the classroom*

## Pathways

- *We accept the three groupings of students: second, home and first language users; acknowledging that it is immensely difficult to deal with both naming and the overlaps of these groups. We recognise that learners may not be 'second' language learners (this being their third or fourth language, for example) and ask that the nomenclature 'additional language' be considered to replace 'second language', the alternative being a more inclusive term for all learners which doesn't assume a monolingual base ; 'home' use can mean a variable range of oral and literate skills and degrees of use and these vary immensely across languages; and that 'first' may not be a first but one of several languages that the learner uses or has used at home, or has been schooled in prior to reaching an Australian classroom, and again may include variable levels of oracy and literacy*
- *Learner groupings need ongoing reflection for the 'fit' with the contexts of Australian learners and for clarity across states and territories and in regard eligibility criteria. We regard this as a work in progress, requiring ongoing discussion and consultation.*
- *The groupings reflect the reality of Australia's multilingual society and the three groups identified in the paper are at the core of the distinct pathways identified. This is an essential part of the paper if an inclusive curriculum is to be developed for all learners in the Australian context. That the draft Shape identifies groupings of learners based on diverse cultural and linguistic background and recognises a further diversity within these groupings is significant, and a welcome addition to inform curriculum development. A more detailed description, particularly in relation to linguistic proficiency, is needed for the purpose of curriculum development so that curriculum is, in substance, sensitive to this diversity. A clearer framework for these descriptions should be included so that language-specific descriptions can be developed. This is of particular importance for home user learners of scripted languages where there is significant diversity in proficiency in reading and writing.*
- *One suggestion is to label the courses and not the learners, to avoid classifying all learners in the same way (e.g. as 'second' language learners). Practically, however, it is understood that this labelling would inevitably be used for the learner groups*
- *We are concerned that the discussion of pathways provides for all three groups, but that the modeling of programs (later in the document) does not include programs for first language users in the primary years. Research evidence on the benefit of schooling in first language in these years is widespread and should be considered in Australia, especially for, but not limited to, first users of languages of which there are considerable cohorts of students.*

- *'First' and 'second' language learner classifications need further explanation as they are somewhat simplistic and do not capture the middle cohort. The term 'second language' learner also does not capture the plural-lingual nature of some learners. It was felt that 'home' user also represented a very wide range of ability levels and identification issues, and will require careful use in development of pathways for relevant languages. In Italian for example, home users often speak an Italian dialect and not formal Italian. These users are therefore 'second' language learners in reality when learning Italian, although they do have some cognate advantage.*
- *Care will need to be taken that terminology is used consistently. We note that heritage learners (5 occurrences) and home user learners (10 occurrences) are used for the same group of learners. A glossary of terms may also be useful.*
- *We look forward to further elaboration of Australian language pathways in the Framework for Australian Languages, and how all Australian learners might have opportunities to benefit from this curriculum*
- *We respect the rights of ownership of their languages by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As such the appropriateness of any term to describe those languages must be determined by the owners. We are not in a position to determine whether Australian Languages have been addressed appropriately within the paper- this right lies with owners of the languages.*
- *Eligibility arrangements: These need to be in place prior to deciding to write curriculum in different levels. There seems little point in writing for home users and L1 when the courses won't filter students properly to these courses.*

*This last point reinforces the urgent need for policy formulation and consistent national direction.*

#### Time on task

- *We recognise that this may be an area of contention in what some claim to be a 'crowded curriculum', and that indicative hours may have been provided by ACARA. We believe that the significance of language education to all other curriculum areas and to literacy, intercultural understanding, critical and creative thinking, ethical behaviour and personal and social competence is such that adequate time allocations, based on research and practice evidence are justified and should be argued for strongly.*
- *The proposal for a flexible structure for organising the curriculum based on indicative hours of study, content and achievement standards neglects the condition of regularity identified as a condition for programs to work well (p.4). Time on task and regularity or frequency of this time are both essential features of languages as a learning area. The benefits of the former cannot be realised without the latter. They are an indivisible set. Assumptions included in the draft Shape about indicative hours of study must be coupled with assumptions about regularity or frequency of exposure to the target language.*

*Most respondents were unhappy with the primary years' allocation and flexible pathways outlined.*

- *The primary allocation of time is too small- less than existing recommended hours in Victoria, for example. Spread over seven years, 300-400 hours amounts to around an hour a week. We also think the range 300-400 is too great (25% difference between the minimum and maximum), and that a single minimum figure of hours should be given (and at the other levels too- too easy to weasel out of the top end of the range if a lower end is available). We suggest that 600 hours is a more appropriate time allocation for primary years, which would allow a little over two hours a week. We note that this is roughly the suggested allocation for arts, which nominally has 160+ hours per two year band*

*The Arts curriculum will be written on the assumption of about 160 hours in each band of schooling for all students, with schools and school systems able to add to this entitlement (ACARA [2011] *The draft shape of the Australian curriculum: The Arts*)*

- *We suggest that indicative times for learning languages at all levels should be based on research evidence. We wonder where there is evidence that shows that in 760-960 hours a student can become 'proficient'. We understand that ACARA provided 'indicative times' based on what was seen as a suitable division of the total time available. We think languages needs to strongly argue that in this learning area there is research evidence for the number of hours needed for meaningful outcomes, and would ask ACARA to consider how languages are treated in European (for example Scandinavian or German) schools or in schools in the economically- advancing Asian nations (Singapore, China, Hong Kong, or Korea, for example), where there are often daily lessons of 40-60 minutes per language, and students may be studying as many as three or four languages.*
- *The notion that each group of learners is on a separate 'track' in learning languages is supported, but potentially highly problematic in high-stake senior secondary assessment contributing to tertiary entrance scores. A statement should be added to the paper, indicating how ACARA envisages this will play out. This is especially important given the special nature of the 'languages' learning area in comparison with other learning areas in this regard.*
- *Baseline minima for realisable aims in relation to time allocations and school level program commitments should be established. These are preferable to 'ranges' which will see some learners disadvantaged.*
- *The range of hours proposed for primary school is problematic and is a disappointment in regard to the prominence of languages in the curriculum. Ideally the time allocation for primary lessons should be increased.*
- *We would like to see the compulsory years for languages learning assumed to be F-Year 10. We understand that no 'mandated' years are being imposed on jurisdictions for implementation, but want languages equally represented with other curriculum areas as an essential part of the F-Year*

*10 curriculum. Languages at primary school level should not be any less significant as a learning area than others.*

- *The indicative hours F-6 allows for administrators **not** to deliver languages in the early years, for example, when research suggests it is the best time for children to learn a language*
- *Overall, it is not clear on what basis the allocation of hours is made. Are the 760-960 hours given in order to achieve 'proficiency' based on research?*
- *The proposed number of indicative hours for the Primary level is insufficient. Assuming that many schools will interpret these indicative hours as 'sufficient' maximum hours to achieve the Standards, the quality of programs may well suffer (i.e. program standards will be compromised, refer: [www.afmlta.asn.au/afmltadocuments/AFMLTA\\_Professional\\_Standards.pdf](http://www.afmlta.asn.au/afmltadocuments/AFMLTA_Professional_Standards.pdf)), e.g. a Foundation to Year 6 sequence will become a token program, with very short, infrequent, irregular classes or a Year 3-6 sequence, with frequent, regular classes of a suitable length will necessarily deny learners the significant advantages of starting their learning in the early Primary years*
- *Without a commitment to a greater number of learning hours, the task won't be one of trying to stuff in learning and say learners are proficient (without any clear definition of what that means), but it will be about describing what achievement are possible after 760 hours.*
- *The document undermines languages in primary school in two ways. Firstly, it says schools can effectively do what they want with the hours in primary. We need a strong statement about languages from foundation - not a concession to the nay-sayers of the 'crowded curriculum'. This weak position is disappointing. Secondly, if you look at the diagrams for the pathways (pp. 33-35), they show how 'Mickey Mouse' the conception of primary languages is. In diagram 1, achievement standard L2-1+ can either be achieved by 130-160 hours in Years 7-8 or by 300-400 hours in F-6. This is outrageous. Further, there is no primary provision for first language speakers - this is in conflict with the notions articulated in the paper that first language users still need to develop their language in domains which may not be catered for in their out of school usage.*

*There was some support for the current position, however:*

- *We need to support this version of the primary program unless we can suggest a viable alternative for the primary years. The position being described has shortcomings, BUT it does represent a SIGNIFICANT enhancement to what we have now in some states. It is better than the current stated positions by some states/territories that simply don't happen. If we can implement the hours described it would be great-and a much more solid platform from which to describe a truly good program of language learning.*
- *The timing allocations are reasonable given the entire allocations to the Australian Curriculum and other subjects released so far. However, this means that 'proficiency' and 'standards' need to be clearly defined. Again, if the time to become proficient to communicate is not possible (which*

*seems likely here) then the actual aims/skills and understandings taught and learned need to be carefully thought out.*

### **Senior Years**

*While we realise that the senior secondary years curriculum is an ongoing task for ACARA, we feel the direction of the curriculum for these years needs to be articulated more clearly:*

- There is scarce mention of any language curriculum being developed in the senior years and I find this section the most objectionable of the entire document. A strong statement indicating that standalone Australian curriculum (no relationship with CCAFL framework) will be developed in the 11 languages must be added. At present it simply says 'discussion will continue...'*
- I find it very strange that CCAFL arrangements for the smaller cohort languages is mentioned but not an intention to write materials in the senior years for the 11 identified languages. There is already an understanding that any subject not included under Australian curriculum can still be offered via states (see p.80) and CCAFL syllabuses would come under this banner, hence there should be no need to even mention it. In fact, the Australian curriculum framework should supersede and replace the current CCAFL framework...otherwise it seems we only have Languages F-10 and then CCAFL 11-12.*

### **CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR LANGUAGES**

*There is a general feeling of not understanding the differences and articulation of aims, strands and skills, and requests for more information on the 'what' of curriculum, not just the 'how'. While recognising that the development of the curriculum content and achievement standards will expand on these areas, it was felt that this section needs much more clarity for teachers about the directions this will take.*

*Aims/strands/knowledge, skills and understanding*

- The aims of learning languages reveal a particular view of languages education - this needs to be stated from the outset. I know my aims in my teaching are not captured by the three interrelated aims listed in the shape paper.*
- Point 59 final dot point (regarding identity) might benefit from the addition of 'recognise' or 'acknowledge' as well as 'construct', as a separate and important communicative function*
- Point 59 part C uses the term 'reciprocal' which may be difficult for many teachers to interpret. 'Interactive' or 'dynamic' are suggested as alternatives*
- Point 59 part C, second paragraph can strengthen the encouragement of ethical behaviours by including reference to ethical responsibility as global citizens*
- The aims are indistinct. The relationship between aims, skills and strands is unclear.*

- *The linking of the aims to the strands is clear in the content of each, although a very good understanding of current intercultural language learning terminology is presumed. It is, however, not made clear exactly how the strands relate to the next section entitled Knowledge, Skills and Understanding. This lack of connection is made more confusing by the re-use of the word 'understanding' in a different context. The nexus is unclear to many of us, despite our familiarity with modern curriculum developments. Whilst recognising that over-simplification would be a problem, we feel that the lack of explicit connections could hamper a shared understanding of the curriculum across states, sectors and individuals.*
- *There is not a clear understanding of how the 3 different aspects relate to each other. Does a teacher teach the skills? Why are the skills not clearly identified in the aims? Or are they just assumed to be by osmosis? If these are taught then surely they should be assessed. Do we assess the strands? Do we assess the aims? This section needs some work to make it clear.*
- *The strands are the strands - given that it will be the strands that form the basis of the program, I think most teachers can work with strands so long as they have a clear understanding of what they mean*
- *The aims of Communication, Understanding and Self-Awareness sound fine in capturing the intent. However, with the strands of Communicating, Understanding and Reciprocating, as potential assessment areas, teachers will not see how the nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in languages learning which has been part of their tool kit, will fit in with these strands.*
- *Our group is divided on the strands: on the one hand there is support for a construct which is new and forward thinking; each strand describes valuable aspects of learning in languages. On the other hand there is genuine concern that the names of the strands will lead to confusion for teachers, both in designing and delivering curriculum as well as in assessment and reporting.*
- *The strands in the English curriculum are much clearer and easier for teachers to work with*
- *From a pragmatic viewpoint the term 'reciprocating' is vague. While it cannot be argued that the descriptors as outlined in this strand are consistent with the language learning concept, surely they are aspects of understanding and communicating rather than a standalone strand. If it is to be considered as a standalone strand then there are massive implications for its teaching and assessment. Teachers of languages in the country will not be familiar with the separation of these aspects of language learning and communication. If, as the draft shaping paper states, that they should not always be viewed independently, then don't represent them as such but subsume aspects of reciprocating under communicating and understanding.*
- *Reciprocity is not evocative of any clear direction, and potential standards. The document assumes too much and is vague on pedagogy and assessment. The first round shape papers are much clearer in these respects.*

- *'Reciprocating' is a loaded term implying someone (the more powerful) sets the agenda and the interlocutor must reply on the terms of the first person- otherwise it is not reciprocal but a (infinitely variable) response. I suggest this term is rethought.*
- *Doesn't 'reciprocate' just mean 'to do/give back'? Isn't this 'communicating'?*
- *'Reciprocating' is problematic - for me the issue is in the description. If you read it closely, it is actually not about 'reciprocating' but about being 'self-reflexive', the idea of 'reciprocating' anything is very weak- the notion of reciprocal roles isn't strong as the whole description talks about the student taking on roles 'reflexively' in response to others. I would suggest, though, that there's been an attempt to capture something a bit more subtle than the broad and, in my view, semantically empty term 'communicating' doesn't capture.*
- *Why not 'communicating', 'understanding' and 'interpreting' as the three strands? Or better still, get rid of the overused and misunderstood 'communicating' and go with 'interacting'. 'Interacting' would include both receptive and productive skills (i.e. the processes of taking in [reading, viewing, listening etc], making sense of and producing output [writing, speaking, creating])- all aspects of actually 'using' language (alternatively this strand could be called 'using language'); 'understanding' would encompass all the processes of analysis to gain understanding- the language system, alphabets and character systems, cultural contexts of the language's use, the nature of intercultural exchange that occurs as you work across and between languages; and 'interpreting' would require going further and deeper than understanding, in that it would require that 'stepping out and looking in' process, being 'changed' by the experience of engaging in the learning of another language and about another culture, being reflexively self aware.*
- *It is possible that the second and third strands might go together- easier for teachers to write desired learning outcomes and to assess, as the overlap would be considerable. The danger is that the deeper understandings might be subsumed to more routine conceptions of understanding. Reciprocating doesn't work, however.*
- *I strongly urge a rephrasing or re-jigging of the strands to look something like:*
  - *Cultural interaction (the intercultural & reflective), Understanding (the analytic & interpretative) and Language (developing communication based on knowledge of vocab, structures & the macro-skills).*
  - *I think that could carry many of our colleagues along (including the classical languages) with the intent from Year 1, say, to Year 12 although you may think the Cultural Interaction is equally fraught with difficulty, but people are beginning to understand more of this and in my view the reciprocity idea is the intercultural anyway.*
  - *The other two strands are already within current practice and we have to be very pragmatic about capturing the imagination of language teachers, administrators and the public. I strongly concur with the observation that Jo Lo Bianco's thrust about*

*learning languages for educational and intellectual development reasons rather than proficiency in the intercultural and communication which could undo us again (we are critical of NALSSP's unrealistic goals for example). Not even the first round shape papers dare to be so bold within a 'schooling' context.*

- *Just two strands: interacting and interpreting (or using language and interpreting language use) - and encompass all these elements within the two? Needs more consideration.*
- *I suggest three strands: interacting, interpreting and creating, or at least further discussion about the strands so that they both capture the intentions expressed in the paper and are understood by teachers in a workable form*
- *The second strand should be renamed 'language awareness and intercultural exchange'; the third strand 'self in relation to others'*
- *There is too much in strand B- it tries to encompass too many aspects of learning languages; and should be divided into at least two sections*
- *The inclusion of the meta-linguistic/intercultural strands of 'understanding' and 'reciprocating' is important. With this in mind we feel that the following statements in point 62 need further explanation as they are highly relevant to curriculum and assessment developments:*
  - *In developing the curriculum, these three strands should not be seen as discrete, nor should they be given equal weighting. The relative contribution of each strand will differ for different stages of learning and for different languages.*
- *Whilst agreeing completely with the need to differentiate weighting to some extent, some extrapolation here could help avoid the still prevalent 'culture on a Friday afternoon' approach, particularly with beginner learners. It is hoped that clear exemplars of how to interweave the strands in the language specific curricula will be developed.*
- *If the learning is predicated on teachers building programs that allow for 'reciprocating', then there does need to be further deconstruction of the term to guide the language specific writers*
- *I think it would be useful to consider how other Anglophone countries deal with languages:*
  - *The American Standards for Foreign Language Learning use the notion of the 5 interlocking Cs: communication, comparisons, cultures, communities, connections - this is a fairly neat conceptualisation*
  - *In the UK, the National Languages Strategy outlines a framework for curriculum design which includes three core strands: Oracy, Literacy and Intercultural understanding; and two cross-cutting strands: Knowledge about language and Language learning strategies*
- *'Communication', like 'proficiency', is bandied about as if there is a shared view of what this is - my problem is that very few programs actually teach students to communicate in the language...sure, they can 'do things' in the language but is that 'communication'??*

- *In point 62a we see terms like 'meaning' (but whose meaning? the teacher's? the students'?) and the notion of communicating 'for real-world purposes' - what does this mean? How are these purposes articulated and by whom? Considerably more detail is required to understand these points.*
- *Not everyone accepts the use of the terms 'proficiency', 'communication' and 'communicating' as the major rationale for learning. These terms are not spelt out clearly. While 'proficiency' is only used sparingly in the Shape Paper, it is important that Principals, administrators and parents understand how it is being used and that unreasonable expectations are not established or assumed, especially in relation to time on task and realisable outcomes under different program conditions.*
- *The Strands are named as 'Communicating', 'Understanding' and 'Reciprocity' within the broad concept of the interrelationship of the learner's self-awareness as a communicator, the understanding he or she has of the language(s) and culture(s) and movement between them.*
- *'Reciprocity' is a difficult concept and can be interpreted differently for 'first' and 'second' language learners, and needs reconsideration. It is not evocative of any practical notion of achievement or standard. Some suggest an alternative name for 'Reciprocity' could be 'Cultural Interaction' or the 'Intercultural'.*
- *While ACARA's brief is not pedagogy, the concepts outlined about language are perhaps best understood as a pedagogical approach.*
- *We believe that the profession will require significant resourcing to undertake professional learning to further understand these concepts in the new curriculum.*
- *I think we need to consider that a national curriculum is about the 'what' and not just the 'how' - for me, this draft paper is embedded in an implicit, value-judgement about HOW languages should be taught; there's not enough substance concerning the WHAT should be taught. Obviously, it's difficult to articulate the WHAT across all languages but I wonder whether in hiding behind the argument that we need language-specific, a lot of commonalities are being ignored... (or a reluctance to specify the specifics?).*

### **General capabilities and cross-curriculum perspectives**

- *I find the statements which open points 72 and 73 problematic and, again, they reveal a certain viewpoint which is not necessarily shared*
- *Statements like 'Learning to communicate and to interact with intercultural sensitivity are fundamental to this engagement. These are the aims of the language learning area' (p. 29) are highly contentious for me - this reducing languages to a very narrow field - what about reading? What about 'understanding language'?*

- *The general capability of numeracy should be included; as learning in languages can contribute significantly to this capability*
- *The general capabilities of 'Information and communication technology skills' and 'Critical and creative thinking', whilst clearly described in this section of the draft Shape, are not particularly well integrated within the paper*
- *The general capabilities are reflected throughout the paper*
- *The cross-curriculum priorities are appropriately described for the languages learning area. The distinction between cross-curricular and cross curriculum priorities is noted. These priorities have been clearly flagged as priorities of the Commonwealth government in recent years. If the format permitted, this section could be enhanced by recognizing that Australia's multi-cultural identity extends to a wider local and global reality; the term 'Asia' strikes us as an odd over-simplification in the context of this otherwise carefully-worded document.*

### **Key considerations**

- *The document is very long and wafty and yet it is very, very sparse on detail. What are the achievement standards? How do the achievement standards of the three pathways differ? Or are they comparable (surely not?!)? Do the three cohorts have points of articulation - i.e. could proficient home users move into the first language stream? There is an urgent clarification needed regarding where the three cohorts of students end up at the end of schooling. Are the highest achievement standards in the three pathways equivalent for **university purposes**? This needs to be explicitly described because in many cases universities use the Year 12 certificate as a way of placing students in continuing language study.*
- *Para 76 is absolutely crucial to everything that follows. This paragraph highlights the relationship between indicative hours of study and achievement standards and the staging of development in specific languages.*
- *The use of tables to describe the relationship of hours of study and achievement standards is problematic. These suggest linear (cumulative, add-on, skills-based) understanding of what happens in languages learning. The kinds of learning happening in primary classes will look different from what happens in the first few years of secondary, because of the nature of learners of this age, what they are interested in, can cognitively work with, etc, yet these diagrams give both of these the same name and number, as if they are exactly the same. We know from observation and studies of learners using a first language that there are differences for different age groups in different settings, and that the process is not linear. A child who has spoken a first language for six years (to age six) will have fantastic language*

*skills, but not the same skills/achievement standards as someone who has learned that same language from ages 12-18. The cognitive and social (socio-cultural) differences are clear, and yet these ideas are being reduced in the diagrams to numerical scores*

- *The conceptualisation of time on task and achievement standards is embryonic, but clear. It would be helpful if the L1 and L2 achievement standards were distinguished by other than numerical values, which confuses their nature with the levels achieved. We salute the recognition of the separate pathways and similarly the appreciation of the need to distinguish between achievement standards for these groups*
- *The appropriateness of achievement standards depends on how they will be interpreted in a practical framework with due consideration of the three distinct pathways, time on task and policy. Achievement standards are not available at this stage of the curriculum development process. Consequently, no definite response can be provided to the question in the ACARA online survey about this issue. As this issue deals with policy rather than curriculum, it is not really a matter for ACARA to consider but one for jurisdictions in states and territories.*
- *Pathways diagrams similar to those in this paper have been used in some states before and have been found to be confusing. Few schools ever took account of these. It will therefore be of crucial importance that relevant authorities make adequate provisions for language teachers to encourage and enable schools to respect the different pathways in planning, delivery and evaluation of the teaching processes.*
- *The pathways as shown in the diagrams don't reflect the real situation in learning trajectories. It is too neat and convenient to show level progressions in this way, with numerical alignment, but achievement is not the same and not linear for different cohorts starting at different entry points. It suggests a tick box mentality of language learning that everyone will meet, which is not the spirit in the 'talk' in this document, which acknowledges individual achievements and understandings.*
- *Diagram 3 (p. 34) appears problematic in that First Language learners appear to be invisible in primary years F-6. Elsewhere these learners are acknowledged, but are not recognised until Year 7 in the diagram depicting relationship between hours of study and achievement standards. Recognition and inclusion of first language learners in development of curriculum and achievement standards during primary years of school F-6 is recommended.*
- *Primary standards shouldn't be mixed into all second-language learner standards as they are not the same as what you'd expect from secondary learners. They need a different code (PL2- 1, etc).*
- *Primary language learning is undermined by the suggestion that what takes 7 years to achieve in primary school can be done in two in Years 7-8. Are they even the same thing? Isn't this suggesting that primary learning is a waste of time, or is of such insignificance that it can be picked up in a year? This will lead to 'smart' school principals working out that they can begin in Year 6 and avoid the need for any other primary language offering.*

- *The Standard to be achieved after primary school does not sit well with the achievement standard for those beginning at Years 7-8. It suggests that what is achieved after 7 years at the primary level can be achieved in two years at 7-8. It again perpetuates the low standard of primary school language learning about which many raise criticisms. We recommend that ACARA considers how languages at both primary and secondary levels are treated in European schools or in the economically advancing Asian nations.*
- *It is recommended that a standard be developed for the end of the Junior Primary years.*
- *It is not clear how the standards for second language learners compare with those of home and first language learners.*
- *There are entry points for language students during F-6 and 7-8. However, there is no mention of entry points at Year 11 for the current 'national' beginner courses and the relevant standard for proficiency.*
- *The range of 200-240 hours at Years 11-12 may be a significant difference in determining the final proficiency level reached and standards for tertiary entrance.*
- *Bi-lingual, immersion, partial immersion and content-based programs get scant mention. How can these programs be conceptualised within the curriculum? What level of proficiency and what standards will apply in these cases?*
- *What kind of 'achievement' is being talked about in these tables and presumably the 'standards' that will be written for languages? What do the words 'achievement' and 'standards' mean? Is this described across all the subjects being developed by ACARA?*
- *Though time on task and background factors will certainly affect achievement standards, I'm not sure the diagrams capture this.*
- *If there is a range of hours available, especially at Year 12 level, won't those that do 200 instead of 240 hours (and reach level 5 not level 6) be disadvantaged? Will there be two exams to cope with this difference? Shouldn't this be a minimum number of hours? What happens if this has been compounded by receiving the minimum at each phase of schooling? What happens if it is a mixture (say 300 at primary, 130 at 7-8, 130 at 9-10 and 240 at 11-12)? Will all these different possibilities be catered for? How many different possibilities are there? What levels of achievement will be expected/count for senior secondary scores? Will students, yet again, be put off learning apparently 'difficult' languages because they are ill-prepared in terms of hours to compete with those better prepared, and fear they cannot do well in this subject?*
- *I agree with the staged development.*

- *Stage development of language specific curricula is acknowledged as practicable. It is hoped that there will not be a big time lag between the phases, however, as it will be seen as 'privileging' some languages over others. What do you hope to learn from developing Chinese and Italian first? Models for others? If not, why not do them all at once- or in groups of 4, 4 and 3? The rationale for beginning with 2 is not clear, even if the criteria for choosing these are sound enough. Will those languages developed in phases one and two be revised after the development of those in phase 3 and beyond?*
- *The criteria used to determine which languages are chosen for development are all sound ideals, theoretically. It must be noted that these criteria can only be successfully applied if sufficient human resources, training and support can be guaranteed throughout and after the development process. Whereas we recognize that this idea cannot be regarded as a criterion for curriculum development, this is a sine qua non for successfully developing and implementing any language curriculum.*
- *The criteria for development of the language specific curricula are not fully agreed. Although there is strong support for a wider range of language specific curricula, the criteria used for some being developed earlier than others are unfortunate, as they apply equally to other languages. e.g. the criterion of the 'greatest range of learner' is given for both Chinese and Italian. Whilst this may be substantially correct for Chinese, this criterion applies equally to many of the languages listed in the second and third stages of development, as to Italian. The single mention of the criterion 'of global importance' is unfortunate. This criterion clearly applies to all the languages listed. The criterion 'most commonly spoken languages at home in Australia and... also supported by community schools' also applies to many of the languages listed.*
- *What timeframe is envisaged for the different stages of language specific curriculum development? What process will occur for reviewing the first two developed?*
- *As the world of languages education is as diverse as the global reality it represents, it will be surprising if the choice of languages for the three stages of development would not be attacked as problematic or inappropriate by those who feel excluded from what is perceived as a greater priority. This consideration aside, the stages reflect a pragmatic and cautious approach to the development and implementation of what is an ambitious curriculum development and it is this approach which makes the staging appropriate.*
- *Will the Australian Languages Framework be developed into language specific curricula?*
- *Why is there no mention of the planned 'processes and procedures' phase of development?*
- *It is crucial that greater clarity be provided to all stakeholders through consistent and succinct use of the relevant terminology. Perhaps a glossary of terms should be provided.*

- *Insufficient detail is given regarding the staging of the development of languages curricula. A more detailed timeline is expected (none is indicated), and an outline of the planning phases is also needed. Why three stages? This is not clear. If the first languages developed are a 'trial', what will the feedback process and timeframe be?*
- *The Australian Curriculum for Languages must be designed not solely to enable all students to engage in learning a language in addition to English but also to give them the opportunity to progress in that language. Learning programs delivered in disjointed and irregular ways will meet the requirements of the former but not the latter outcome. We believe this second outcome should be included.*
- *Two essential features of languages as a learning area, 'time on task' and 'regularity' are not clearly defined and deserve greater emphasis. There must be clear and consistent understanding of these elements appropriate for specific languages (scripted and non-scripted) before curriculum development*
- *Languages curriculum decisions must be supported by research and practice evidence for their effectiveness, and be provided within program conditions that allow for achievement of stated aims. The AFMLTA's (2005) Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of Languages and Cultures provides such standards (for program conditions), and these should be used as a reference in developing the languages curriculum and by jurisdictions in establishing programs.*
- *Whilst this paper provides a framework for curriculum development, ACARA does not have jurisdiction over implementation policy. Thus, it is left to the flexibility of systems and schools to organise an appropriate sequence of learning, groupings and program type.*

*Unfortunately this leaves room for state and local systems to make decisions that are not in the best interest of language learning and curriculum delivery. Student achievement will be adversely affected if procedures and guidelines for continuity and quantity of instruction are not included in the final shape paper and agreed by all states and territories. Without this, ultimately there will be disparity in retention rates across states and systems.*

- *There is no mention of the intended development of the many small candidature languages. These are bundled under the CCAFL framework. This suggests we will have a national curriculum F-10 and CCAFL, which is, to us, unsatisfactory. We believe that these other languages need further consideration.*

## **Summary**

We hope that the suggestions and queries in this response will be taken in the spirit intended- to find out more about the ongoing development of the languages curriculum and to contribute to this very sound base for the best outcomes in terms of languages education curriculum for Australian learners and teachers of languages. The summary of positive responses to the draft shape paper, at the

beginning of this document, and the detail of responses received from AFMLTA members indicates the level of excitement and high regard for advances made in this paper, in particular in recognition of the need for language-specific curricula, the recognition and inclusion of Australian languages, the recognition of the value of all languages learning, and of the diversity of learners and their different learning needs in terms of pathways and achievement standards. These advances cannot be underestimated for their potential positive impact and for the future of languages education in Australia.

The main issues for ongoing discussion, arising from this response, can be summarised as follows:

1. Issues related to time on task

As the many responses to this section of the paper suggest, there is considerable concern about not only allocated indicative hours, but also about the use of a 'range' of hours and the duration and frequency of lessons. An overwhelming response is that primary years' time allocations are too low and too flexible to guarantee sound, sustainable and meaningful programs for all primary learners. There is also strong support for the determination of all indicative hours to be research-driven, and for the assumed compulsory years to be F- Year10.

2. Curriculum design, structures and content

The major areas of discussion in relation to curriculum design are the links between aims, strands, and skills, knowledge and understanding; and the naming and descriptions of the strands. The differences and links between these sections of the paper are not clear to all, and there is widespread confusion and opposition to the 'reciprocating' strand. Designing programs and assessment in relation to the strands as they are currently conceived was seen as problematic. As there is not yet any proposed curriculum content (as this is a shape paper), this issue is compounded. Many teachers cannot see how these ideas will be realised in curriculum described in these ways.

3. Learner pathways

Differentiated pathways for different learner groups are very much applauded in the responses. Discussion of the naming and clear guidelines about the different groups will be needed. The learner pathway diagrams were thought by many to create more problems than they clarified in describing/indicating learner pathways. Differentiating between learning that occurs in different pathways in terms other than numerical representations was seen as desirable. 'Comparable' achievements despite different numbers of years of learning; and movement between pathways were also seen as problematic as represented in these diagrams. The absence of an identified first language primary pathway in the diagrams was disappointing.

4. Languages in the primary school

Much of the discussion about the treatment of the primary years languages curriculum centred on the issue of time on task, but the problem was seen to be deeper than this, with the time on task issue being symptomatic of an overall view of primary programs expressed in the paper. Although there is support in the discussion about the rationale for languages learning for

sustainable programs, the 'flexibility' of primary programs later described provided a view that languages learning was not necessary across the primary years, but could be collapsed into variable programs of very different intensity and duration. There were strong objections to this conception, albeit with some voices arguing for this being an improvement on what currently happens in their or other states and territories. It was felt that there was a need to stake a strong claim for full primary years' programs, of sufficient intensity and frequency for meaningful outcomes, as per all other areas of the curriculum so far developed/shaped.

5. Definitions and nomenclature

A number of terms were seen as difficult in terms of interpretation of meaning and unclear definitions. These included 'proficiency', 'communicating', 'understanding', 'achievement', 'standards', 'reciprocating' and the different learner group terms ('home', 'first' and 'second'). There was concern that these terms will be interpreted by different audiences in different ways that may lead to misunderstandings and widely varied expectations of learners and programs. There were suggestions for a glossary to be provided, and for the terms to be more clearly explained.

6. Plan for curriculum development

Detail on the planned 'roll out' of development of language-specific curricula was considered sparse. Further detail about this process and timelines was requested.

We look forward to the ongoing dialogue.