

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Organisation: Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations
(AFMLTA)

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AFMLTA

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AFMLTA SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOL CURRICULUM Portfolio Committee No.3 - Education

The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) is the peak national body representing teachers of all languages in Australia. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this Legislative Council Committee Inquiry into the NSW School Curriculum.

The AFMLTA commends the NSW Curriculum Review Final Report (the Report) and the Review Lead, Professor Geoff Masters for his nuanced recommendations around curriculum for NSW, and recognition of the importance of languages to all young learners, in particular. We believe that Professor Masters has effectively addressed the matters of curriculum content by offering practical suggestions for the decluttering of current syllabuses, prioritising the identification of essential learning and fostering deep learning over time, and making explicit in new syllabuses that skills (both subject-specific and more general capabilities) in applying knowledge are part of the intended learning. The recommendation that progression should be based on mastery of previous learning is also supported, as are the recommended provision of greater flexibility for teachers to respond to the learning needs of individual learners and the development of curriculum and pedagogy to meet the full range of students in our schools.

The Report is in accord with the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) findings published in *What Works Best - 2020 Update* as it also recognises high expectations, explicit teaching, effective feedback, the use of data to inform practice, assessment, attention to wellbeing and collaboration as essential elements in improving student outcomes.

In recommending the introduction of a new curriculum for NSW schools, from Kindergarten to Year 12, the Report advises that core content of new syllabuses be developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum and thus acknowledges the considerable research underpinning the development of this curriculum carried out by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

The MLTANSW and the AFMLTA have advocated strongly for the inclusion of languages in the primary curriculum throughout the review. It should be noted that NSW is currently the only Australian state or territory that does not mandate any study of Languages in the primary years. The many benefits of learning languages have been demonstrated repeatedly in research and practice literature. While language learning remains optional, many students in NSW continue to be denied the personal, social, future study and employment advantages that learning one's own or an additional language has to offer. Moreover, their ability to play a meaningful role in the global economy and in an increasingly interconnected world will also be reduced, making NSW students less competitive in comparison with their Australian and global peers.

The AFMLTA applauded the recommendations from the NSW Curriculum Review Interim Report in relation to a common *entitlement*, that students should be required to learn a language from primary school, or earlier. While we continue to support an earlier start for language learning, we nevertheless welcomed the inclusion in the Final Report of recommendation 5.2 which states that in the middle years of schooling every student should be required to commence learning a second language.

It is with great disappointment that we note that the NSW Government, in its Response to the Curriculum Review has simply 'noted' this recommendation and has indicated no positive action to implement it.

The Alice Springs (*Mparntwe*) Declaration of 2019 confirms Languages as one of eight learning areas and

recognises the entitlement of every student to have the opportunity to learn their community or home languages, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and additional languages and cultures. The NSW Government is again urged to include Languages as a Key Learning Area in the primary curriculum, in line with this future-focused national standard. According to recommendation 5.1 of the Report, the existing set of subjects mandated in the middle years of schooling should be maintained. In NSW the study of a language is only mandated for 100 hours in a single year between Years 7-10. It is the view of the AFMLTA that this is insufficient and unsatisfactory as it does not allow for smooth articulation between the primary and secondary years or for continuity of language study across the years of schooling. There is also a lack of clarity about the position of the 62 language courses currently available for study in the senior secondary curriculum in NSW.

The AFMLTA strongly urges the NSW Government give students in NSW the same opportunities as students in all other states and territories by addressing these issues and taking appropriate steps to develop a plan for languages education in NSW that will align with the National Plan and Strategy which is currently being developed.

We draw the attention of the Committee to the key aspirational goals identified by the MLTANSW in their submission to the Review which the AFMLTA continues to support:

KEY ASPIRATIONAL GOALS

- 1. 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. Develop a 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 Strategy for Languages Education when developed, and the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019).
- 4. Increase language 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 language 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.**

Nathan Harvey
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