



Professor Rufus Black
Vice Chancellor and President
University of Tasmania

22 May 2025

Via email: ocvc@utas.edu.au

Dear Professor Black

The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) represents teachers of languages in the pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary and community school sectors. We have a membership of over 3500 teachers across the nation, as the umbrella association for languages teacher associations in all eight Australian states and territories.

AFMLTA provides vision, leadership, representation, advocacy, and support for quality teaching and learning of languages. We envision an Australia that embraces its plurilingual context and values the languages and cultures of all Australians and their entitlement to further Languages education and the benefits this brings to our world.

We strongly oppose the proposal of the University of Tasmania (UTAS) to discontinue Indonesian and German programs. We believe this proposal threatens to severely damage the breadth and variety of languages offered, not just at UTAS but in Australia, and to diminish opportunities for students to continue or begin their study of languages at tertiary level. It would have a negative impact on increasing availability and building capacity of the languages teaching and other professions in which proficiency in an additional language is perceived as a benefit.

AFMLTA believes that the proposed changes will undermine the value of language study, thus disregarding the socio-cultural implications of speaking a language, as well as the development of analytical skills and pedagogical considerations that take place in the language classroom. It also devalues the essential role language learning plays in developing intercultural communicative competence and the education of graduates who can be considered global citizens.

Given the close political, economic, and regional ties between Indonesia and Australia, it is vital to maintain strong cultural and linguistic connections. Additionally, Australia shares key democratic values with Germany. Therefore, maintaining Indonesian and German language education at the University of Tasmania is crucial to support deeper engagement, student exchange, and future collaboration.

We also believe that the proposed discontinuations will have a negative impact on literacy levels. Research shows that learning languages develops children's overall literacy, strengthening literacy-related capabilities that are transferable across learning areas. Tasmania's literacy levels are among the lowest in the country. The UTAS Education Faculty recently took a positive step toward improving literacy outcomes in schools by introducing Languages specialisations into its Master's of Primary Teaching courses. Research shows that study of languages increases literacy skills in not only the target language but also a person's native language. Moreover, for the Master of Secondary Teaching (Language specialisation), it is a requirement to major in a language—an essential element of the program. With fewer opportunities for teachers to specialise in languages and fewer school programs, students will have fewer avenues to build their literacy skills. Therefore, discontinuing language courses at UTAS would be inconsistent with its own educational priorities and commitments.

The University's *Strategic Plan: 2025 Refresh* acknowledges that if languages were no longer taught, the state would be "culturally and in many other ways be much poorer for it" (p. 12). The University's Strategic Plan emphasises a focus on "creating enduring partnerships" as a "central strategy of our mission focus." The AFMLTA encourages the university to pause the current proposal and work with Languages education stakeholders to strengthen program pathways and create sustainable programs. The AFMLTA encourages the University to pause the proposal for the duration of the current strategic plan and provide opportunities and avenues for increasing program vitality.

We strongly oppose this shortsighted and harmful decision and call on the administration of the University of Tasmania to reconsider its position on discontinuing currently offered courses. We encourage the university to maintain its commitment to being an institution with a multicultural and multilingual reputation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gillian Cordy".

Gillian Cordy
President
AFMLTA