



**Consultation Report**

**Draft Shape of the  
Australian Curriculum:  
Languages**



November 2011

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the key findings from the consultation feedback for the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* (hereafter the draft *Shape* paper).

### Key strengths

Respondents identified the following as strengths of the draft *Shape* paper:

- The strong positioning of languages within school education
- The development of language-specific curricula
- The strong positioning of Australian Languages
- The rationale for learning languages
- Key concepts and understandings in learning languages
- Recognition of the diversity of language learners and pathways
- The aims of learning languages
- The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages
- The discussion of general capabilities.

### Key Issues

Respondents identified the following as key issues:

- The staging of language-specific curriculum development
- Indicative hours
- The naming and description of learner groups
- Pathways for curriculum development
- The strand 'Reciprocating'
- The relationship between hours of study and achievement standards in the primary years
- Implementation and policy issues
- The language of the draft *Shape* paper

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Scope of consultation

The draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper was released for a 10 week period of public consultation from 31 January to 11 April 2011.

A wide range of stakeholders was invited to provide comment, including teachers, principals, parents, students, academics, state and territory education authorities, professional education associations, community groups and the broader public.

All feedback received during the consultation period was collated and analysed by an independent researcher. The findings from an analysis of this feedback form the basis of this report, which will be used to inform the revision of the draft *Shape* paper.

All suggestions of an editorial nature have been forwarded directly to the writing team for consideration.

The final *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper will guide the writing of the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

### 1.2 Methodology

#### 1.2.1 Methods

Feedback on the draft *Shape* paper was sought via:

- An online survey on the ACARA website, which enabled respondents to answer questions according to a four-point Likert rating scale ('strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'), provide demographic data and write open text comments
- Written submissions.

In addition, ACARA personnel were invited to attend several consultation meetings held by various education authorities, professional associations and community organisations. The records of these meetings have been included as consultation feedback.

Feedback was received from key stakeholders throughout Australia including:

- State and territory jurisdictions and curriculum and assessment authorities
- Organisations such as professional associations, schools, community organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, universities, ministerial committees, government boards, embassies and consulates
- Individuals including teachers (current and retired), school leaders, academics, members of parliament, parents, students and community members.

Feedback was also received from international academics, international professional associations and international government bodies.

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A list of respondents is provided in Appendix A.

The quantitative data from the online survey was analysed using the online survey software application Survey Methods and Microsoft Excel.

Qualitative data from the survey and submission responses were analysed using NVivo9 – a software program which facilitates coding of text and other qualitative data.

### **1.2.2 Missing data**

The survey was designed with no ‘middle’ level of agreement; that is, it was not possible to ‘neither agree nor disagree’.

Some respondents only partially completed the survey. On average 25-30% of respondents chose not to provide a response to a particular question. The questions with the highest percentage of missing data also tended to have a higher proportion of ‘agree’ responses to ‘strongly agree’ responses, and more critical or questioning comments.

Where more than 30% of data is missing, a high level of conditional approval or disapproval may be hidden, even where a relatively high score is achieved for total agreement (70-75% of total responses answering ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’).

### **1.2.3 Responses from community groups**

There was a strong response from many community groups in relation to the teaching of their particular language. This is evident in both the online survey responses and in the written submissions. A large number of responses were received from the Turkish, Hindi and Greek community groups. Thirty five per cent of all survey respondents to the draft *Shape* paper nominated their language as Turkish.

During the consultation it became clear that some members of the Turkish community interpreted the absence of Turkish from the list of languages for language-specific curriculum development as meaning that students would no longer be able to undertake the study of Turkish in schools, and in particularly at senior secondary level. This perception informed most of their comments, rather than the issue being addressed in each specific question.

Responses from this group were characterised by disappointment about the perceived ‘dropping’ of the Turkish language from the curriculum, as well as pride in their linguistic and cultural heritage. Often respondents told personal stories about their Turkish heritage, migration experience, feelings about Australia and their hopes for their children and grandchildren in Australia. The importance of language in personal and community identity is clear from these responses.

In the quantitative analysis of the responses to survey questions, it became clear that the Turkish responses were distributed differently from other responses, and that they were divergent in their comments to some specific questions. Therefore, for the purpose of analysis, the responses to questions 7 – 21 have been presented in distribution graphs showing the total responses less the Turkish data.

The Turkish community has presented a strong and clear message to ACARA about the importance of the study of the Turkish language for their personal, social and cultural

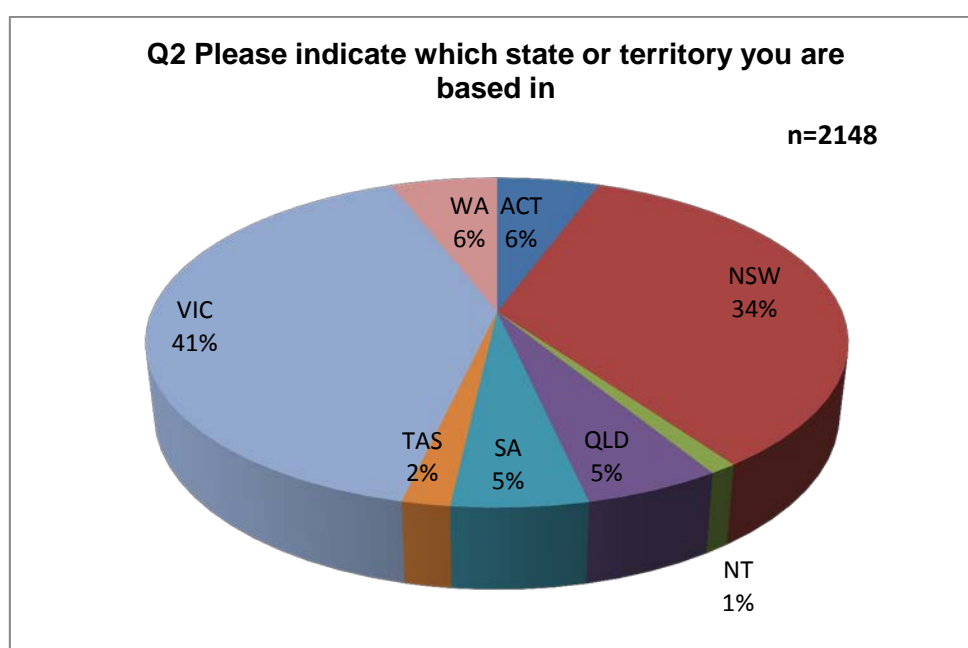
identities, and their desire for the Turkish language to be developed as part of the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

Community responses are discussed in more detail in the section 3.10.4 of this paper.

### 1.3 Summary of respondent demographics

Respondents were asked to specify on which language their response was based. The results are summarised by state and nationally in the table below.

State/territory	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total	Total as a %
<b>Survey responses</b>	121	741	23	114	113	40	870	126	2150	
<b>Arabic</b>	2	15	0	2	1	0	8	3	31	1%
<b>Australian Languages</b>	6	7	4	4	5	0	14	7	47	2%
<b>Chinese</b>	5	41	0	14	18	2	36	3	119	6%
<b>French</b>	13	104	2	19	28	7	69	16	258	12%
<b>German</b>	10	49	0	32	12	5	50	4	162	8%
<b>Indonesian</b>	4	23	2	7	3	3	35	3	80	4%
<b>Italian</b>	12	66	0	14	20	3	75	14	204	9%
<b>Japanese</b>	10	68	2	18	17	5	34	8	162	8%
<b>Korean</b>	1	75	0	0	1	2	4	0	83	4%
<b>Modern Greek</b>	1	16	0	2	12	0	26	2	59	3%
<b>Spanish</b>	13	32	1	11	12	18	156	2	245	11%
<b>Vietnamese</b>	0	4	0	2	0	0	3	0	7	0%
<b>All Languages</b>	16	50	1	9	9	1	40	7	134	6%
<b>If other, please specify</b>	61	383	10	28	22	7	495	76	1084	50%

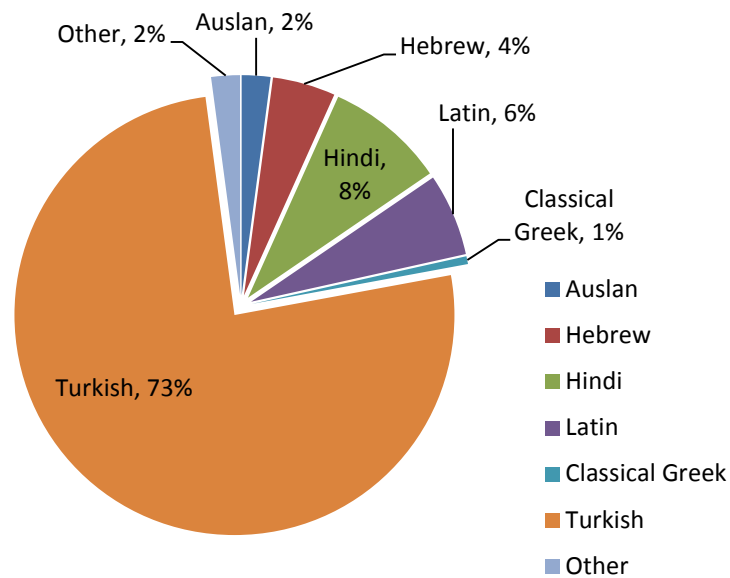




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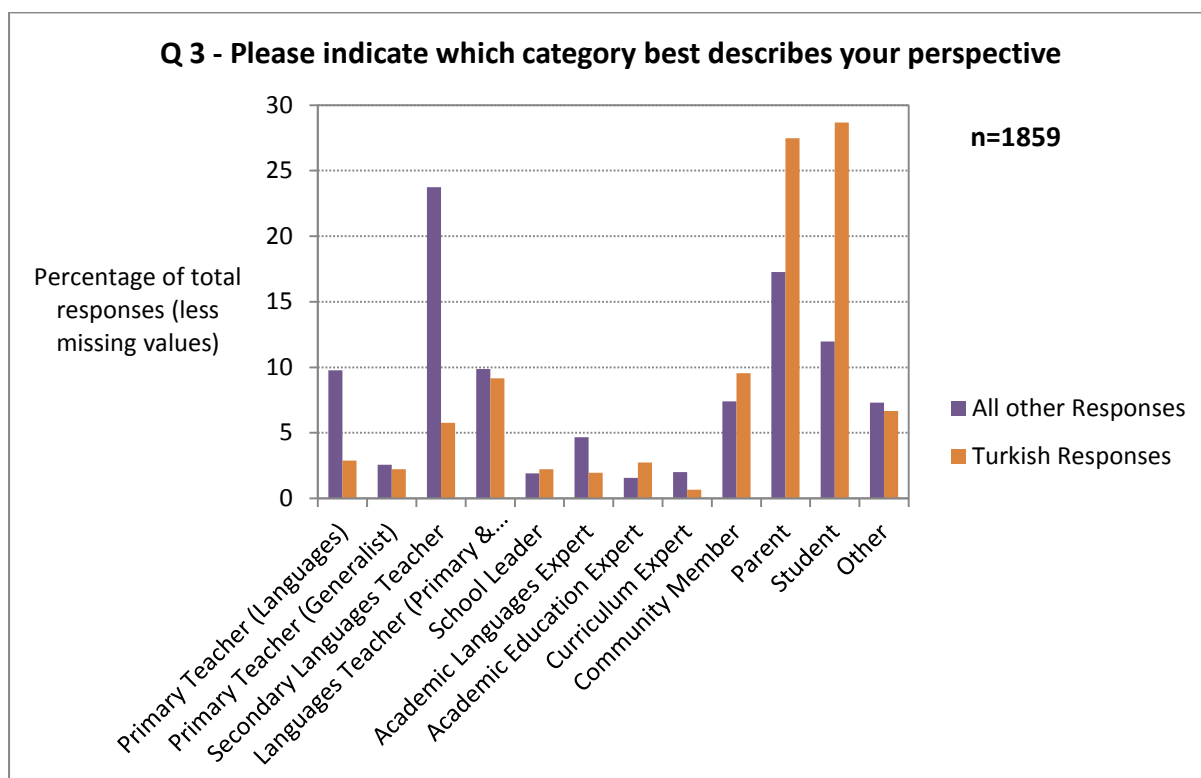
Half of the survey respondents nominated their language as 'other'. These are represented in the pie chart below. Three quarters of the 'other' respondents nominated their language as Turkish, which is approximately 35% of the total number of respondents to the survey.

**Languages nominated in 'other'**  
**(percentage of total 'other')**



The distribution of categories of respondents can be found in the following table and is represented in the bar graph below.

State/territory	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	AUS	AUS %
<b>Primary teacher (Languages)</b>	11	41	2	15	15	1	33	11	129	6%
<b>Primary teacher (generalist)</b>	3	13	0	1	4	0	21	3	45	2%
<b>Secondary teacher (Languages)</b>	18	123	3	22	21	3	105	9	304	15%
<b>Languages teacher (primary and secondary)</b>	7	55	3	15	9	6	81	2	178	9%
<b>School leader</b>	2	13	2	3	2	0	14	2	38	2%
<b>Academic languages expert</b>	14	15	1	5	1	1	26	3	66	3%
<b>Academic education expert</b>	2	13	1	0	1	1	18	2	38	2%
<b>Curriculum expert</b>	0	8	1	0	0	1	7	10	27	1%
<b>Community member</b>	4	68	1	1	1	7	51	21	154	7%
<b>Parent</b>	15	187	2	12	6	5	138	33	399	19%
<b>Student</b>	11	68	3	7	22	4	231	4	350	17%
<b>If other, please specify</b>	7	37	2	17	7	4	46	11	131	6%



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## 2. Major Findings

### 2.1. Key Strengths

Respondents identified the following as strengths of the draft *Shape* paper:

- The strong positioning of languages within school education
  - There was overwhelming support for the importance of language learning and the aim that ‘all students will learn languages across primary and secondary schooling and that the curriculum will provide for continued learning in different pathways through to the senior secondary years’ (Paragraph 9).
- The development of language-specific curricula
  - There was strong support for the development of language-specific curricula
  - The relatively large number of languages to be developed by ACARA for language-specific curricula was welcomed and applauded by many respondents.
- The strong positioning of Australian Languages
  - The strong positioning and foregrounding of Australian Languages within the paper was supported and applauded by respondents, with 78% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that Australian Languages are addressed appropriately in the paper.
- The rationale for learning languages
  - The rationale was broadly supported and considered a comprehensive summary of the reasons for and significance of languages learning
  - 85% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the survey question asking if the draft *Shape* paper captured the essential features of languages as a learning area and the rationale for learning them
  - The Lo Bianco quote, which heads this section, particularly received high praise from a large number of respondents as it was thought to capture the depth and nature of language learning.
- Key concepts and understandings in learning languages
  - The survey results point to strong support for the ‘*Key concepts and understandings*’ section of the paper. 85% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the draft *Shape* paper captures a contemporary understanding of language, culture and language learning
  - There was also strong support for this section of the draft *Shape* paper from individual survey respondents and from a broad range of submissions from Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia. The sections on ‘*Language*’, ‘*Culture*’ and ‘*Understanding language learning as an intercultural process*’ received high praise.

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- Recognition of the diversity of language learners and pathways
    - There was strong support for the recognition of Australia’s multicultural society and the diverse language background of students. The recognition of the diversity of language learners and pathways was seen as a strength of the paper
    - There was also strong support for the recognition of the reality of classroom diversity, which was illustrated by personal anecdotes from teachers, students and parents in their responses.
  - The aims of learning languages
    - The aims were supported by around 80% of respondents to the online survey who judged them ‘comprehensive’, ‘modern’, ‘clear and relevant’. This view was also supported in submissions received.
  - The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages
    - Many respondents praised this section for its clarity, thoroughness and suitability as a frame for describing curriculum content.
  - The discussion of general capabilities
    - The feedback comments about the general capabilities were very positive and the level of agreement in the survey results was very high, with 85% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the general capabilities were effectively integrated within the paper.

## 2.2 Key issues

Respondents identified the following aspects of the draft *Shape* paper as requiring further development or more detailed explanation:

- The staging of language-specific curriculum development
  - The need for greater clarity on how the criteria have been applied in the staging of curriculum development, and the relative weighting of each of the criteria
  - The status of languages not included in the first three stages of curriculum development, for example Turkish, Hindi in particular, and to a lesser extent Auslan, classical languages and a range of other small candidature community languages
  - The desirability of staging; consideration of simultaneous development of all of the languages listed for development
  - Concern about the hierarchy of languages implied in the staging arrangements

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- Consideration of a fourth stage of development for Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL) small candidature languages
  - The need for a more detailed description of how the current CCAFL arrangements will enable ongoing provision of small candidature (community) languages and an assurance that CCAFL arrangements will continue.
  - Curriculum Design
    - The use of the term 'Australian languages'
    - The need for greater alignment between the key concepts and the curriculum organisers
    - The nature of the three strands 'Communicating', 'Understanding' and 'Reciprocating' and their relationship to each other and to the key concepts described.
    - Clearer explanation of the strand 'Reciprocating', how this works in practice, in particular the assessment and reporting of this strand
    - The omission of 'Numeracy' from the discussion of the general capabilities
    - The current cross curriculum priorities as a required design feature of the Australian Curriculum were contested.
  - Flexibility of provision in the primary years
    - Although the flexibility of delivery in the primary years is seen as respectful of schools and systems to determine how the indicative hours are spread across the Foundation to Year 6 span, there was genuine concern about the continuity and regularity of languages learning, the matching of curriculum content to students' cognitive development, and the relationship between hours of study and the achievement standards.
  - Expectations of the draft *Shape* paper
    - The expectation of a greater level of detail in relation to curriculum content and assessment
    - Expectations that the draft *Shape* paper should address policy, implementation and provision issues
    - The expectation that languages learning is made compulsory from Foundation to Year 10.
  - The language of the draft *Shape* paper
    - Concern about some of the terms and the complexity of language used
    - Explanation required about the purposes of various sections of the paper.

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## 2.3 Implementation and policy issues

Some concerns were raised in relation to implementation in many sections of the draft *Shape* paper. They can be summarised as concerns about:

- The need for a national languages policy
- Availability of qualified teachers
- Professional development of existing teachers to implement new concepts in the proposed curriculum
- Management of the multiple pathways within schools
- Eligibility requirements for entry into languages courses at senior secondary level.

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### 3. Analysis of responses to the draft Shape paper

*The document is one of the best framing documents I have ever read in the profession. The work is meaningful, innovative, and potentially of great impact. The systematic work with which ACARA is approaching the development of policies and practices and the far-reaching input it is seeking is commendable. A strong feature of the document is the persistent contextualisation of the plans in the Australian realities. The document argues that all thinking and efforts are guided by the history of, the present realities of, and rationale for the language policies in Australia. For me such contextualisation is the underpinning of what you call reciprocity. Reciprocity pertains to an overall theoretical orientation as well as the specifics of formulating curricula and activities. (International Academic Reviewer, USA)*

#### 3.1 Introduction: history challenge and an opportunity

The introductory section was generally viewed as being clear and useful. Respondents welcomed the clear articulation of the challenges faced in the languages learning area early in the paper.

*The draft Shape paper clearly sets out in paragraphs 1 to 10, the issues with which school leaders, policy writers, curriculum and assessment providers, teachers, and researchers have wrestled for at least the past 40 years. The draft Shape paper does not disguise the fragility of languages education in all phases of schooling in Australia, and the critical opportunity this reshaping of the Australian Curriculum brings to the access, provision, and sustainability of languages education in Australian schools. (SACE Board of South Australia)*

##### 3.1.1 The Assumption that all students will learn languages across primary and secondary schooling

There was overwhelming support for the importance of language learning and the aim that ‘all students will learn languages across primary and secondary schooling and that the curriculum will provide for continued learning in different pathways through to the senior secondary years’ (Paragraph 9). However, teachers nationally had concerns about this assumption, and some education authority submissions (in particular those from Tasmania, the Northern Territory and NSW) believed this assumption would be difficult to implement.

Many respondents from all states and territories urged the priority development of a national languages policy for Australia. The majority of these comments suggested the policy should mandate languages as a learning area, and ensure a strategic and funded implementation of compulsory language education from Foundation to Year 10. They did not see the inclusion of languages in the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals* as meeting this need. There was a genuine concern that the curriculum would remain ineffectual without such a mandate in the compulsory years of schooling.

Issues such as resourcing of schools, the ‘crowded curriculum’ and a lack of qualified teachers, as well as the low levels of existing languages teaching in many states and territories, were given as reasons why compulsory language learning in primary schools in particular will be difficult to achieve.

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*The assumption in point 9 on page 5 that all students will learn languages across primary and secondary schooling is not and will not be the reality. (Tasmanian State Response)*

*For 'all students in Australian schools' this is a big ask and currently not accessible to all students despite being in the Declaration of the National Goals for School Education. (Department of Education and Training, NT)*

Many respondents saw the draft *Shape* paper as a policy paper rather than one which provides the conceptual and organisational basis for curriculum development.

### **3.1.2 Conditions for a successful language program**

The summary of necessary conditions for language programs to work well (Paragraph 5) was welcomed by respondents and reflected their own experience. Several comments highlighted the importance of a supportive principal in the successful implementation of a primary school language program. The Australian Primary Principals Association provided its own 2002 survey data linking principal support for language programs to their capacity to provide specialist language teachers, coherent programs, appropriate funding and other key resources.

Respondents made numerous comments in relation to the indicative hours of study and flexibility of provision in primary years. These issues will be discussed in the section relating to Key Considerations. (Section 3.9)

## **3.2 Languages as a learning area in the Australian Curriculum**

### **3.2.1 Australian Languages**

The inclusion and strong positioning of Australian Languages in the curriculum and the associated discussion was welcomed, and ACARA was congratulated in this regard. The recognition of the uniqueness of Australian Languages and the acknowledgement of the 'right of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to learn their own languages' were seen as significant inclusions and important messages.

*We would like to commend ACARA on the recognition given to the importance of Australian- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages throughout the Languages Draft Shape paper, and for the processes of consultation which have ensured that Australian Indigenous language experts have been given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the paper. The draft Shape paper articulates a number of key concepts that reflect sound international practice in relation to delivery of Indigenous language teaching. (Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group)*

For a full discussion of the feedback regarding Australian Languages in the draft *Shape* paper refer to Section 3.6.

### **3.2.2 Australia's distinctive and dynamic migration history**

The statement 'Making languages a key learning area in the Australian curriculum recognises Australia's distinctive and dynamic migration history' (Paragraph 12) resonated with many respondents, particularly in survey responses and submissions from community organisations, schools and community members. Many respondents showed support for the



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role of language learning in acknowledging and strengthening Australia's multicultural society and confirming their personal cultural identity. The survey responses of individuals from particular language groups (for example from Turkish, Greek and Hindi backgrounds) revealed a strong desire for the language of their community to be recognised and offered to their children as part of their schooling.

*Turkish is spoken at my home on a regular basis and is fluently spoken by my grandparents and with the aid of learning Turkish at the VSL (Victorian School of Languages) I am able to understand both my parents and grandparents when they speak Turkish to me. Without the opportunity of learning Turkish at the VSL, I am fearful that I may lose part of my identity. (Student, Victoria)*

*Intergenerational communication and understanding is a key issue facing culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, with intergenerational conflict leading to youth social exclusion, homelessness, and lack of access to support services for both CALD youth and the ageing. Supporting own language learning through a national curriculum, and in particular the lesser-known languages often aligned with disadvantaged communities, can foster stronger intergenerational communication and promote social cohesiveness and inclusion. (Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia)*

*The Australian Hellenic Council agrees that the curriculum planning and development should take into account those languages which are currently taught in non-government schools as well as in ethnic and community schools. (Australian Hellenic Council)*

### **3.2.3 Diverse Program Types**

Paragraph 14 recognises diverse program types in language learning including language-as-subject, content-based and different types of bilingual programs.

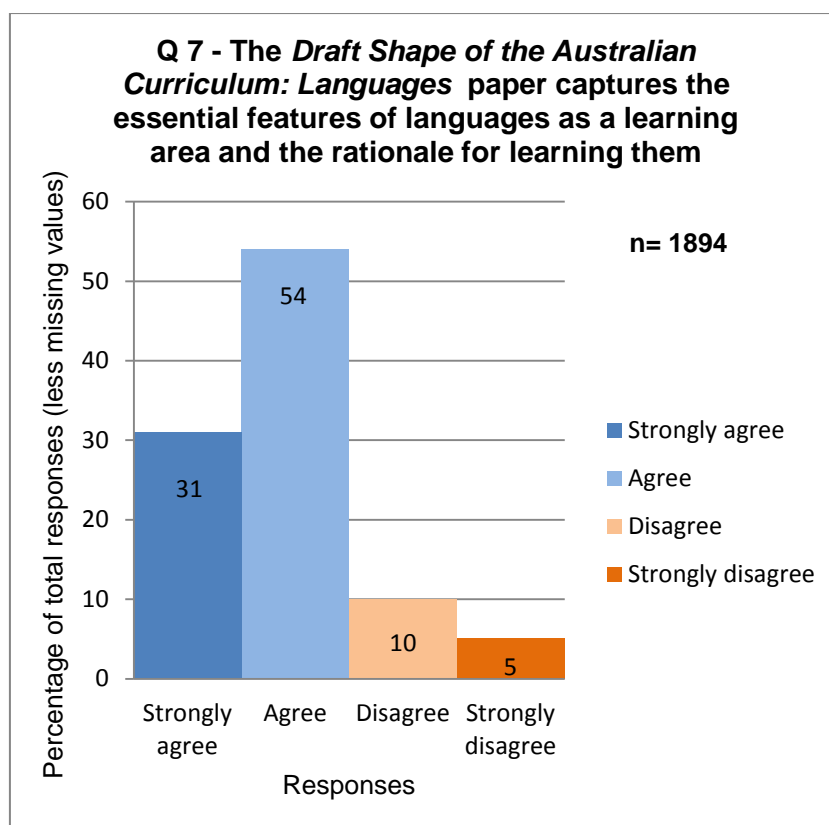
Many respondents applauded this recognition, however they requested that the various program types be described in more detail in the paper. Respondents sought elaboration on how these diverse program types would fit into the pathways and the achievement standards.

Further discussion on program types can be found in Section 3.7.6 'The learners, pathways and time on task in learning languages'.

## **3.3 A rationale for learning languages**

### **3.3.1 The Rationale**

The rationale was broadly supported and considered to be a comprehensive summary of the reasons for, and significance of, languages learning.



85% of respondents either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the survey question asking if the draft *Shape* paper captures the essential features of languages as a learning area and the rationale for learning them.

*Victoria strongly supports many aspects of the draft Shape paper. [This includes]: The strong rationale for the importance and value of learning languages, including the role that additional language learning and the acquisition of metalinguistics plays in the development of literacy. (Victorian State Response)*

*The draft Shape paper makes a detailed and compelling case for the value of language education, including the importance of the Languages learning area as a focus in Australian schools and the direction for the coming design of the curriculum. (Queensland State Response)*

*We are pleased that the draft Shape paper has avoided a narrowly focused, instrumental view of languages learning and, in contrast, offers a strongly articulated and broadly based perspective on the role of languages in students’ development and education. (Applied Linguistics Association of Australia)*

The Lo Bianco quote, which heads this section, received high praise from a large number of respondents as it was thought to capture the depth and nature of language learning.

Some respondents viewed the rationale as an extensive justification for the study of languages in the Australian Curriculum, and it was deemed to signal a somewhat defensive position. The reason given was that languages appears in the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals* as one of the designated learning areas. Some respondents commented that no other learning area’s *Shape* paper has included such an extensive rationale.

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There were criticisms from a few respondents that the rationale and other parts of the draft *Shape* paper read more like a policy document than a framework for curriculum development.

The statement 'bilingual or plurilingual capacity has become the norm in most parts of the world' (Paragraph 16) was contested; several respondents, including the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations and Australian Linguistic Society, argued that, in fact, it has always been the norm.

Some respondents would like to see the inclusion of the economic opportunities for non-Indigenous speakers of Australian Languages to work in education and training, health, justice and other areas included within the rationale.

*To keep with the pioneering potential of this document, the economic opportunities for non-Indigenous students of learning an Australian Language in Australian language speaking communities could be made in this broad conceptualisation. (Australian Linguistics Society)*

### **3.3.2 Being able to communicate proficiently**

The statement that 'the major rationale for learning languages is... being able to communicate proficiently...' (Paragraph 15) was contested. Many respondents, particularly the Modern Language Teachers Associations around Australia, were concerned about the word 'proficiently'. They wanted the term to be defined with regard to realistic student outcomes given the indicative time allocations, or maybe changed to encompass the idea of a range of proficiencies.

Considering the complexity of the concepts about language learning articulated in the quote from Lo Bianco that sits above this paragraph, many respondents felt that limiting the major rationale of languages learning to 'communication' was somewhat contradictory. Many respondents wanted proficient communication to be defined as encompassing the broad concepts explained in *The distinctiveness of languages in the curriculum* section. It was also noted that the major rationale for learning languages as stated in the paper - 'being able to communicate proficiently' - does not satisfy the context of many Australian Languages.

*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 draft 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. (Modern Language Teachers' Association of South Australia)*

*The term 'proficiency' is used but discussion about the purpose of language learning clouds its meaning. If language learning is more than proficient communication in the target language, then this is not made clear. Or, if proficiency is to instil knowledge, to deepen understanding, to stimulate reflection and to foster skills, this should be explained concisely and communicated consistently throughout the document, particularly in reference to the achievement standards. (Queensland State Response)*

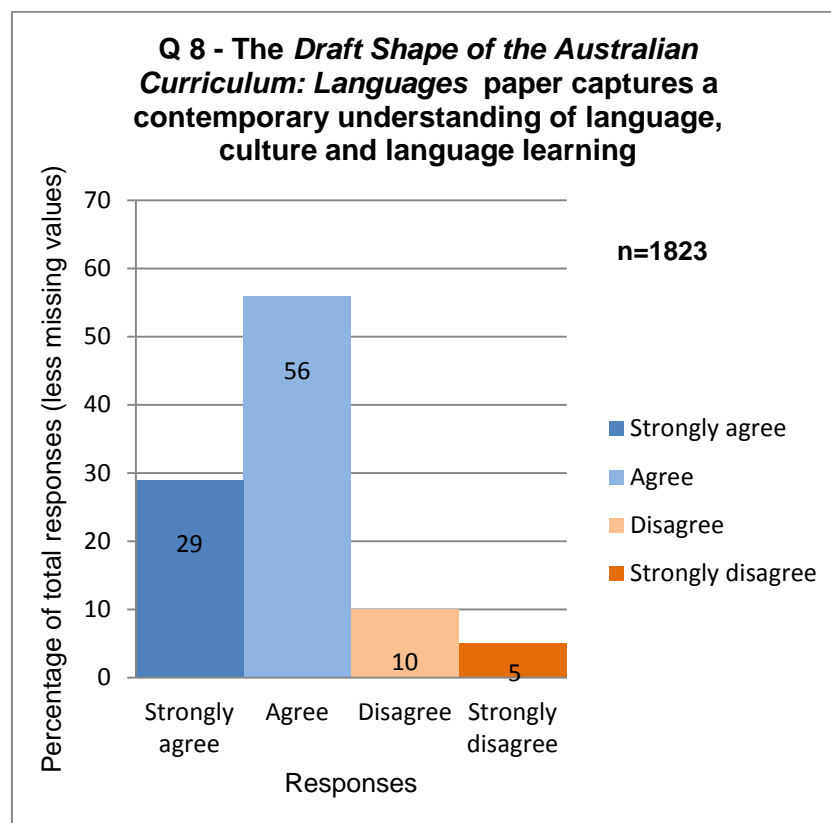
### 3.4 The distinctiveness of languages in the curriculum

This section of the draft *Shape* paper met with approval. Some respondents wanted more emphasis on the benefits of metalinguistic awareness, whilst a few others were concerned that this section made language learning sound too difficult or it could be construed as an unnecessary justification for language teaching.

*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. (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations)*

### 3.5 Key concepts and understandings in learning languages

The survey results point to strong support for the *Key concepts and understandings* section of the paper. 85% of respondents either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the draft *Shape* paper captures a contemporary understanding of language, culture and language learning.



There was also strong support for this section of the draft *Shape* paper from individual survey respondents and from a broad range of submissions from Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The sections on *Language, Culture and Understanding language learning as an intercultural process* received high praise.

Some respondents were concerned that what they perceived as a focus on culture in this section may mean schools would offer programs less directed to study of the target

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language itself and more focused on cultural studies conducted in English. Other concerns related to teachers' professional development and resource issues.

*We agree that the draft captures a contemporary understanding of language, culture and language learning. We welcome the shift in articulating how understanding of the concepts has changed, and, by extension, will influence how languages programs will be delivered, as well as valued by others. (Association of German Teachers of Victoria)*

*The sections on language, culture and the relationship between language and culture (paragraphs 25-34) mount a compelling case for language learning. The arguments for the nature of language and for the link between the practice of language and culture are well-constructed and convincing. (Australian Primary Principals Association)*

*The paper expresses an in-depth understanding of languages learning as an intercultural process (points 35-38 and 48, in particular). We strongly agree that the development of intercultural capability in communication and self-awareness in relation to others are integral aspects of learning languages. (Korean Language Teachers Association)*

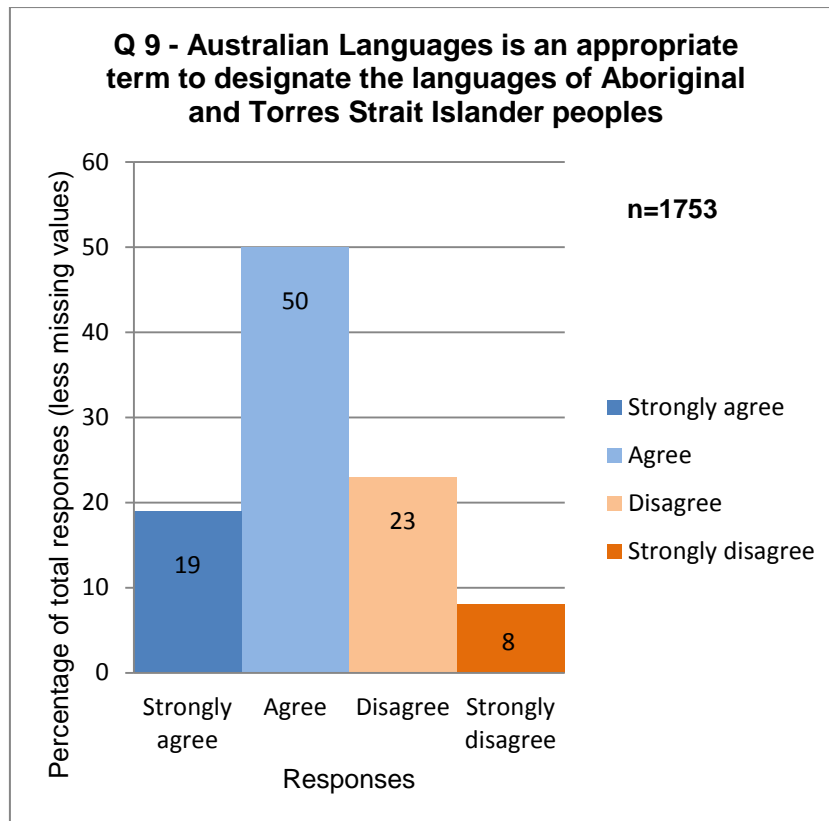
*Highlighting the connection between language-learning and literacy development is to be commended. (Individual Survey Respondent).*

*We support the strong intercultural emphasis in the proposed design features of the languages curriculum. The draft Shape paper reflects the current body of research and theory in languages education. However, elaboration and broadening is required in this regard. (Applied Linguistics Association of Australia)*

## **3.6 Australian Languages**

### **3.6.1 Terminology**

There was a reasonably high level of support for the term 'Australian Languages' to describe the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with close to 70% of total respondents agreeing with the statement put to them at Q9.



Some respondents found the term ‘Australian Languages’ confusing as they interpreted this term to mean all languages spoken by Australia’s linguistically diverse population.

The combination of various consultation processes, including the recent public consultation, meetings with community groups and submissions from peak bodies and authorities to date, indicate the clear preference is for each language to be named in its own right. However, as a framework is being developed around program types, a collective noun is required. Feedback to ACARA from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups has indicated that the term ‘Indigenous’ is no longer acceptable. There is concern that the term ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages’ will be reduced to an acronym. There was support for the term ‘Australian Languages’ from peak bodies and some school authorities, as this term has been in use among professionals working in the area for over 30 years.

Overall, respondents recognised that the final decision about the naming of Australian Languages should rest with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There were many comments supporting broad consultation on this issue with the custodians of these languages, and a willingness to accept whatever is decided through this process.

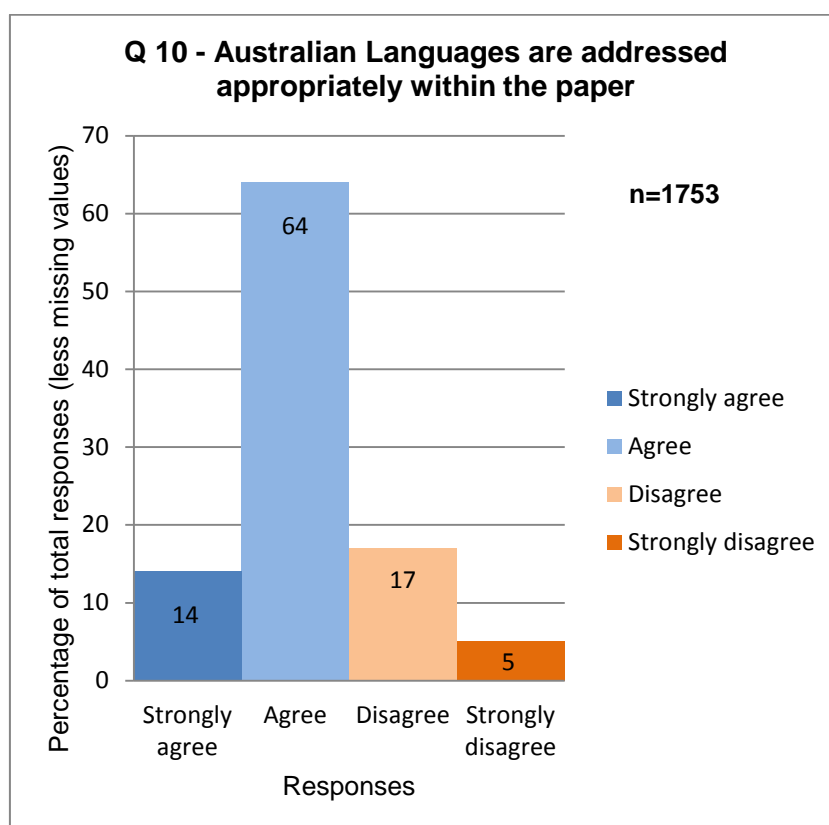
*As the draft Shape paper acknowledges, ownership of languages necessitates appropriate and respectful consultation. The appropriateness of any term to describe languages of the first Australians must be determined by the owners of the languages. (Survey Response)*

*The SACE Board strongly supports the use of the term ‘Australian Languages’. The teaching of ‘Australian Languages’ at senior secondary level in South Australia began in 1996, with the title ‘Australian indigenous Languages’. At the request of the Aboriginal communities in South Australia, the title was changed to ‘Australian Languages’ in 1999.*

*The title to the subject was considered to affirm the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as languages of the first peoples of Australia. (SACE Board of South Australia)*

*Confusing terminology when the terms Australian Languages is used in reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages but a similar term Australian Curriculum: Languages is used to mean all languages. (Survey Respondent).*

### 3.6.2 Australian Languages as a learning area



The strong positioning and foregrounding of Australian Languages within the paper was supported and applauded by respondents, with 78% either agreeing or strongly agreeing.

The following points within the document were particularly commended:

- The inclusion of Australian Languages within the general languages document, 'being together but distinct' was a key message
- The Australian Languages Framework in the first stage of curriculum development
- Recognition of Australia's language rights responsibilities
- Acknowledgement of the 'right of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to learn their own languages' (Paragraph 11)
- Recognition of the uniqueness of the learning of Australian Languages
- Recognition of: (i) the distinctiveness as well as (ii) the diverse contexts of Australian Languages



- Recognition of language as a subject, as well as content-based and bilingual programs
- The importance of literacy in first language in the development of literacy in second language
- Recognition that learning a new language does not mean forsaking one's first language
- Recognition of the importance of continued consultation with community, and the need for principles and protocols to guide teaching and learning in this area.

*The draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages is potentially an historic document for 'Australian Languages'. It is arguably the most positive and comprehensive statement since the Lo Bianco (1987) report. (Australian Linguistic Society)*

*The document sends a clear message through the acknowledgement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, that Australia does recognise the rights of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn their own languages within the Australian education framework. It gives recognition to the fact that the languages are unique to Australia and part of the heritage of all the people of Australia, and that the opportunity to learn the languages will benefit the education of all in sharing knowledge through the core element of the culture and history of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. (Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group)*

*The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is recognised as a significant milestone in the development of a national languages curriculum. (WA State Response)*

*For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, language studies offer a gateway to improved engagement with and benefits from mainstream education, through the implementation of well resourced and supported school based Indigenous language teaching programs. (Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee)*

### **3.6.3 Australian Languages Framework**

Statements about Australian Languages can be found throughout the draft *Shape* paper, articulating different aspects of the concepts underpinning what will become the Australian Languages Framework. However, many respondents requested further detail in relation to the Australian Languages Framework.

Respondents continually stressed that clear guidelines and protocols will need to be developed to give direction to schools about appropriate engagement with the community and seeking approval from language custodians for an Australian Language to be taught.

Concerns relating to implementation, resourcing, teacher availability and professional development were raised in relation to the teaching and learning of Australian Languages.

### **3.6.4 Bilingual Programs and literacy development**

There was a strong level of support for bilingual literacy programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the recognition that strengthening bilingual literacy for these



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students is essential to improving overall academic achievement and success. However, there were concerns about the resources available for implementation.

Respondents from WA would like the possibilities of bicultural and bidialectal learning to be taken into consideration.

*Opportunity for bilingual programs is currently limited and this will depend on system directions and resourcing. (Department of Education and Training, NT)*

There is a strong level of agreement with the ideas expressed about the tensions between oral languages and written literacy, and the challenges of teaching predominantly oral languages (paragraph 48).

*In Paragraph 48 of the draft document, the dichotomy of orality versus literacy which emerges when Aboriginal languages are integrated into the western education model is acknowledged as an ongoing challenge for the teaching of predominantly oral languages. The Board of Directors of the KLRC concurs that the development of literacy skills in Aboriginal languages is a significant outcome of Aboriginal language programs within the Western education system. They believe this will create opportunities in the future for the linguistic and anthropological materials created over the decades to be understood and accessed by further generations. They also acknowledge increased engagement with English literacy as an additional benefit which may result from the development of literacy in Aboriginal languages (paragraph 44). (Kimberley Language Research Centre)*

### **3.6.5 Learner Groups**

Refer to section 3.7.2 for a discussion on learner groupings in relation to Australian Languages.

### **3.6.6 Non-Indigenous learners of Australian Languages**

A number of respondents were very supportive and excited about the opportunity to learn Australian Languages. They saw this as a means of contributing to reconciliation by recognising the value of these languages through the act of studying them (subject to the approval of communities).

A number of people however asked if it would be possible for non-Indigenous students to learn Australian Languages as they did not find this aspect of the paper clear enough.

### **3.6.7 Other Comments**

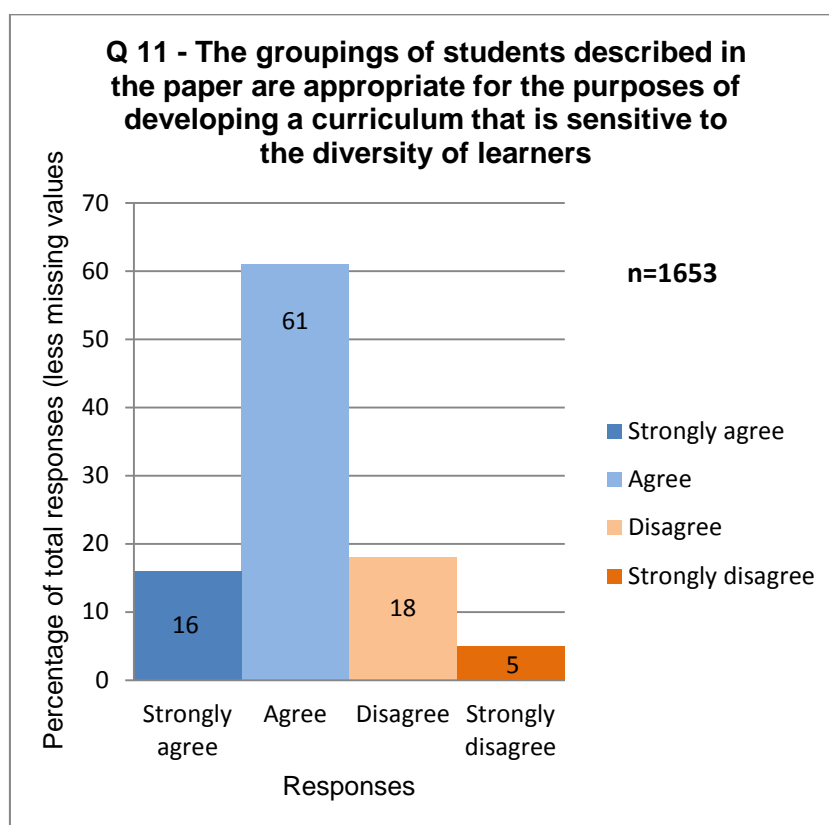
A small number of respondents considered that there was too much emphasis given to Australian Languages within the draft *Shape Paper*. They saw this as a form of ‘political correctness’.

## **3.7 The learners and pathways**

### **3.7.1 The learner groups**

Although 77% of survey respondents either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the proposed groupings of students for the Australian curriculum (first language learners, home user

learners and second language learners), the survey and submission comments revealed a range of opinions from strong support to concerns about terminology and implementation.



There was strong support for the recognition of Australia’s multicultural society and the diverse language backgrounds of students. The recognition of the diversity of language learners and pathways according to learner background was seen as a strength of the paper.

There was also strong support for the recognition of the reality of classroom diversity, which was illustrated by personal anecdotes from teachers, students and parents in their responses.

A group of respondents, notably from Victoria and the Victorian State Response, believed that groupings and pathways should be based on different levels of language competency and proficiency rather than learner background. ‘Basic’, ‘Intermediate’, and ‘Advanced’ were offered as alternative labels for pathways. Many of these respondents also argued for a broader definition of communication than ‘being able to communicate proficiently’ (paragraph 15).

There was broad support for the three learner categories. Respondents recognised the complexity of defining learner groups given the diverse backgrounds and experiences of learners, and acknowledged that, because of this, the descriptions of the learner groups needed to be broad. However, respondents were concerned that these broad categories would be open to interpretation. This particular concern was raised in relation to application of eligibility criteria for senior secondary courses. Most of this concern centred on the description of the ‘home user’ group, which respondents felt described a very wide range of levels compared to the other learner groups.

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Responses relating to Chinese emphasised that descriptions of learner groupings needed to reflect literacy levels as well as the oral/aural home usage requirement of literacy.

A small number of respondents believed that three learner groups were not sufficient to adequately capture all learner backgrounds and requested further groupings with finer distinctions, while other respondents argued that only two groupings were required. These respondents felt that achieving differentiated pathways, at least for first and second language learner groupings, would be more likely to succeed than trying for more language learner groups.

A small number of survey respondents wanted the curriculum to be focused primarily on second language learners, with less emphasis on first language and home user learners, whilst others believed that first language learners were not adequately catered for within the paper.

Some respondents felt that other learners, such as those with special education needs and those who enter secondary school following immersion or content-based programs in primary school, were missing from the list of major learner groupings.

In general, respondents called for improved descriptions in this section with more detail about each student group.

*The paper is commended for being inclusive of first language learners, second language learners and home user learners. It recognises the diversity of learner backgrounds through the provision of curriculum pathways that reflect the three main types of learner backgrounds. While not all schools will offer all pathways, they will have better information on which to base their decisions. (WA State Response)*

*The groupings do not reflect the complexity of learners. Especially, the category of 'home users' is not adequate as there are many levels of language competency amongst these learners. It also does not acknowledge the amount of time spent studying the language in weekend languages schools. (Survey Response)*

*The groupings of students described in the paper reflect the reality of Australia's multilingual society as the three groups identified in the paper are 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 into the Australian context. That the draft Shape paper identifies groupings of learners based on diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and recognises a further diversity within these groupings is significant, and a welcome addition to inform curriculum development. (Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland)*

*ALAA also strongly endorses the proposal to develop different pathways for learning and the recognition of different learning contexts and backgrounds as an important part of language curriculum development. The differentiation of learners into three groups (currently termed "first language learners", "second language learners" and "home-user learners") is very positive and reflects real curriculum needs in the languages area. However, we believe that these categories need further careful description and*

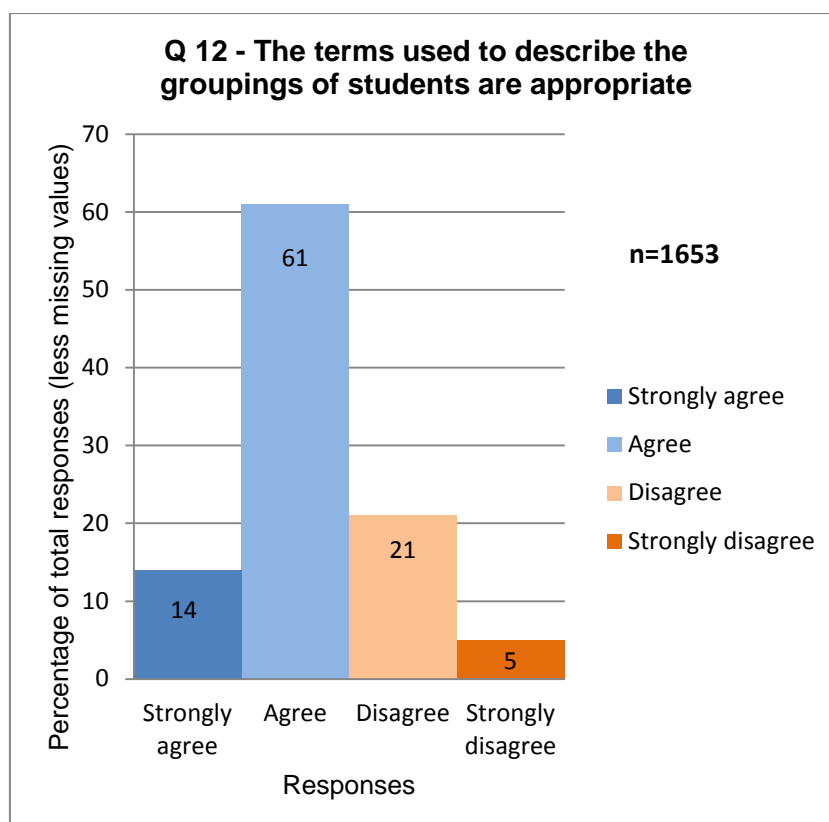
*refinement. At the same time we acknowledge some problems in the ways these are operationalised. (Applied Linguistics Association of Australia)*

### 3.7.2 Learner Groups and Australian Languages

Many respondents raised concern that the three learner grouping definitions did not easily fit the reality for many learners of Australian Languages. They were of the opinion that although young Aboriginal people do not meet the definition of ‘first language learner’ as described for other languages in terms of literacy, young Aboriginal people being taught in their first language – an Australian Language – are first language learners. Respondents found terminology in this section confusing, as it is used expressions to describe program types that had previously been used to describe language learners (Paragraph 57).

*Generally it is sensitive to the diversity of learners but we find it clumsy when trying to apply the groupings to students that make up a considerable cohort of the primary school population in the NT. These are the Indigenous primary students for whom an Indigenous language is both their 'mother tongue (first language)' and the lingua franca of the community. English is not widely used within these communities, particularly by younger children. Its main use is at school. In the definitions provided are they to be considered as 'home users'? We do not see how the definition in the second dot point includes these students. (Survey Comment, NT)*

### 3.7.3 Naming of learner groups



*Second language learners:* There was a strong call from respondents to use the term ‘additional language learners’ to describe this cohort of students. Alternative suggestions, although from fewer respondents, included ‘students learning a language other than their

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own' and 'new language learners'. In each case, the issue was that 'second language learners' assumes that students are from a monolingual base.

*Home user learners:* Respondents found this term confusing and offered a number of reasons why learners with this profile of language use are not strictly *home users*. The most frequently suggested alternatives included 'background' and 'heritage'. 'Heritage' was the preferred term in NSW, whilst Queensland particularly supported the use of the term 'home user'.

*First language learners:* A number of respondents did not agree with the use of the term 'first language learner'. This seems primarily to be because they required a stronger definition of first language learner, particularly in relation to the differences between a first language learner and a home user learner. Other respondents spoke of the difficulty of using the term when referring to students who are in fact bilingual or multilingual.

### 3.7.4 Implementation Issues

Implementation issues were raised as to whether and how schools will need and be able to run separate pathways for each group of learners, given the limited resources available for languages teaching and the challenges this presents. This was a particular concern from respondents in non-metropolitan areas of Australia.

Respondents requested further information about which curriculum pathways will be developed for specific languages and how these decisions will be made.

Other issues raised concerned how the pathways will be assessed in relation to each other at the end of schooling, and how universities will manage the variation in standards attained.

*Having differentiation acknowledges the diversity of students' needs in schools. The challenge remains for schools on how to administer these programs. (Independent Response)*

*While the Department acknowledges that it is neither practical or feasible to develop separate pathways for all languages, it is essential that the criteria used by ACARA to decide which pathways will be developed for each language in the Australian context are made clear. (ACT Education and Training)*

### 3.7.5 Eligibility

By far the most significant concern raised in relation to learner groups and pathways was that of eligibility. Many respondents assumed that it would be necessary to define eligibility criteria, and went on to raise concerns about how eligibility criteria will be determined for each group, how criteria will be applied, and the process for placing learners into appropriate pathways. Many of the concerns were raised in the context of existing eligibility criteria and practices in some states. These concerns were illustrated with personal anecdotes.

Some respondents understood that eligibility criteria would be implemented in all year levels Foundation to Year 12.

This issue was strongly represented from community school respondents in NSW, with many requests that the eligibility process be removed from all senior secondary language courses. This view was supported by many other community and parent survey and submission

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responses, with particular concern that currently eligibility requirements do not apply to all languages offered for study at senior secondary level in NSW.

*Queensland language syllabuses are designed for second language learners. An initiative to introduce a differentiated language curriculum will require legislation changes to include a provision or eligibility criteria. (Queensland State Response)*

Other respondents were supportive in principle of eligibility criteria as a means of encouraging second language learners to continue their study of the language through to senior secondary level. Many of the responses of this nature related to the study of Chinese. However these respondents would like to see explicit and comprehensive eligibility guidelines developed, including what evidence will be required on which to base decisions. Some respondents made a strong point that eligibility will need to be assessed on a case by case basis due to the diversity of home user learners.

Some respondents advocated a language skills placement testing system be developed to assist the fair placement of students according to their existing capacities for speaking and reading/writing.

*Development of multiple pathways for language learners and the development of curriculum for home user learners, first language or second language learners are seen as a positive step in catering for the needs of all learners. Further development of the student criteria aligned to these pathways may require consideration of antidiscrimination legislation. Defining these three groups clearly and considering the implications of implementation is required before the development of language specific curricula. (ACT Education and Training)*

### **3.7.6 Program types**

Program types elaborated in this section (Paragraph 23) currently only relate to program types for Australian Languages. Many respondents would like further elaboration in this section of the paper of the program types as described in Paragraph 14 of the draft *Shape* paper, such as language as content-based and different types of bilingual programs.

They would also like to see elaboration about how these diverse program types are expected to fit into the Australian Curriculum's pathways and achievement standards.

## **3.8 Curriculum design for languages**

Respondents requested greater alignment between the key concepts in learning languages, as described in an earlier section of the paper, and sections covering the aims, strands and the nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages.

There was some confusion as to how the aims, strands and the nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in the learning of languages described in this curriculum design section related to each other. In this context a number of respondents requested:

- Diagrammatic representation of the curriculum design elements
- A glossary of terms
- Multiple uses of the word 'understanding' to be addressed

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- Clarity about the function or purpose of particular parts of the paper.

*Paragraph 49 states the key concepts and understandings are the foundation of the curriculum while Paragraph 62 states that learning is organised through the strands. At no point in the paper is the relationship explained any further. In fact, after Paragraph 62 a further set of organisers — knowledge, skills and understanding — are introduced. Concepts are layered upon organisers and headings without regard for the clarity of interrelationship. (Queensland State Response).*

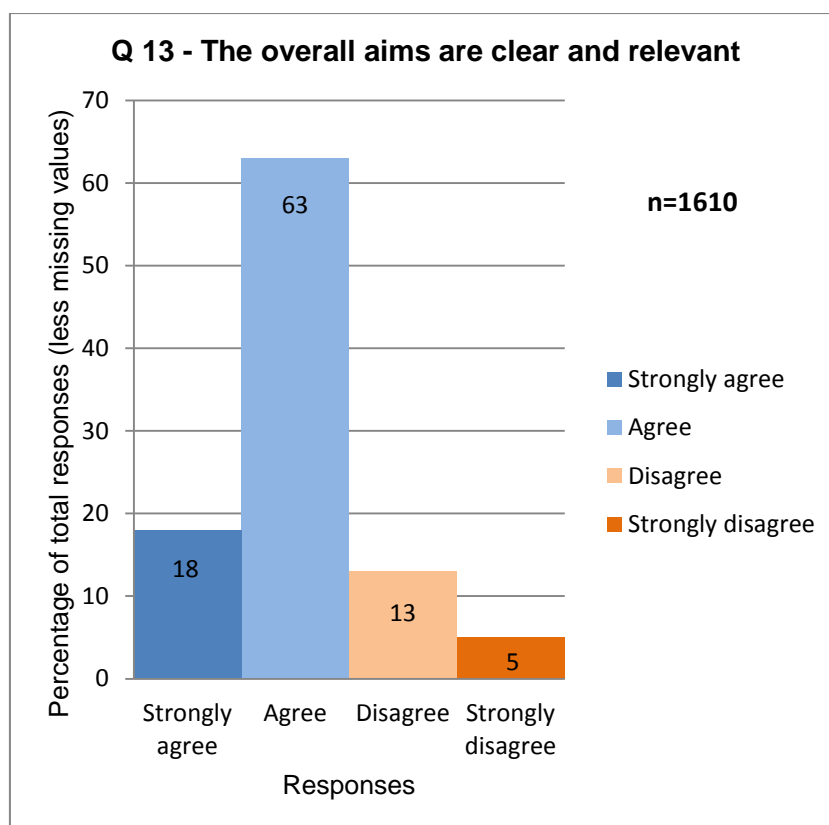
*There is a need for consistent terminology. The multiple meanings given to the terms understand/understanding; and communication/communicating contribute to the difficulty respondents have understanding the relationship between the aims, strands and the nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in the learning of languages sections (Survey respondent)*

*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. (Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland)*

### **3.8.1 The Aims of Learning a Language**

The aims were supported by around 80% of respondents to the online survey, who judged them 'comprehensive', 'modern', 'clear and relevant'.





The first two aims - (a) *communicating in the target language* and (b) *understanding language, culture and their relationship, and thereby developing an intercultural capability in communication* - were particularly supported. The third aim (c) *self-awareness* is not as strongly supported.

Issues raised in relation to the aims included:

- perceived overlap between aims (b) and (c)
- explicit references to grammar, language systems and literacy are required
- the language used to describe the aims is too complex
- the aims should more closely relate to the rationale
- the justification is needed for the aims matching the strands
- the balance or weighting of particular aims. For example, some respondents perceived aim (c) to be of less importance than aims (a) and (b).

*There needs to be clear alignment across the draft Shape paper of the purpose of learning a language and this should be clearly observable in the concepts and organisers that inform the curriculum. (Queensland State Response).*

*They aims are incredibly clear and bring a fantastic modernity to learning languages in the 21st century. (Survey Respondent)*



Although a small number of respondents singled out the aim of 'self awareness' for praise and declared it 'well-articulated', many respondents requested further elaboration of this particular aim.

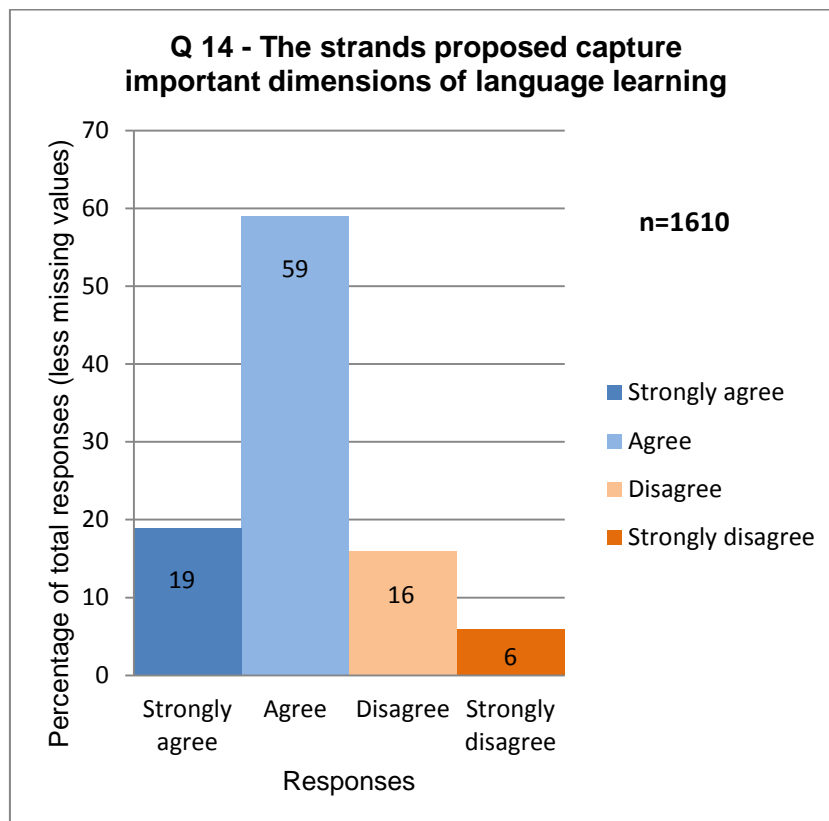
Issues with this aim included:

- The terms 'reciprocal' and 'self-awareness' are not clearly explained
- It is too theoretical and abstract
- It is unrealistic for young learners
- It is a necessary result of first two aims and does not need to be separately articulated
- Assessment of this aim.

*My difficulty stems from how we (as teachers) might establish whether or not or how a learner's self awareness is developing. As a language learner myself, I realise that this is something that we all do but how can an external person (the teacher) suppose to make a judgement on this. (French/Japanese teacher, NSW)*

*Self awareness is new and allows students to reflect on their own culture, language and practices in relation to communicating in another language. This is positive. (Individual Survey Response)*

### 3.8.2 The organisation of learning in languages: strands



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Although approximately 80% of respondents were in agreement that ‘the strands proposed capture important dimensions of language learning’, their comments signal more complexity.

While some believed the strands were hard to understand, complex and confusing, others were of the opinion that the strands embodied new concepts which just required clearer explanations. Some respondents were concerned that the strands were too abstract and philosophical to guide the writers of a practical curriculum, and requested further detail and explanation, particularly in relation to the assessment of the strands.

The issue of the weighting of the three strands within the curriculum was frequently raised. Whilst some respondents were concerned that there was too much emphasis on communication, others were concerned that the focus was too much on culture and intercultural processes at the expense of oral, aural and written communication. Many respondents noted that the final paragraph of this section, which states that the relative weighing of each strand will differ for different stages of learning and for different languages, is extremely important and needs to be retained and explained in further detail.

Some respondents interpreted communicating as oral interaction only, and other respondents, notably from NSW, did not see a place for the analysis of ‘literature’ within the strands.

A number of respondents advocated the strands which currently exist in their own state and territory curricula. All suggestions for alternative organisational strands have been forwarded to the writing team.

*We feel that the thinking underlying this section [Key concepts and understandings in learning languages] 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. (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations)*

*The strand Communicating is about communication in receptive and productive modes; Understanding is about the relationship of concepts, contexts and processes to the use of language when communicating; and Reciprocating is acting upon one’s own and others’ contributions when communicating. These are quite complex concepts and well described; however, the descriptions are dense and focus heavily on communication. (Survey Respondent)*

*A strength in the paper: The three strands which highlight 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. (Individual Submission)*

*The MLTAV is divided on whether the strands capture important dimensions of language learning. 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 the curriculum as well as in assessment and reporting. (Modern Language Teachers Association of Victoria)*

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## **Reciprocating: interpreting the self in relation to others as language users**

Respondents who supported this strand saw it as being instrumental in leading the field forward and in reforming teacher practice. They saw this strand as reflecting a more contemporary view of language learning, and addressing the 'identity piece'. They believed it shifted the focus from an acquisition view of languages to one also of participation and social practice.

*'It is a shift to the interpretative and involves playing with meanings, exchanging meanings, and one's own interpretation of meanings relative to the other'. (Leading Academic, Victoria)*

Many sought clarification on the relationship between reciprocating and the 'intercultural approach'. Many respondents saw reciprocating as the equivalent of intercultural understanding.

Many respondents acknowledged the innovative approach of this strand and supported its intent, but had difficulty imagining the strand in practice and requested greater clarity and further explanation and elaboration. The major concern was how this strand will be assessed and reported. Respondents requested further information in terms of what learning and evidence of student achievement might look like within this strand.

Other respondents believed that the concept of reciprocating could and should be covered through the 'Communicating' and 'Understanding' strands, and should not be a separate strand.

Some respondents saw this strand as relating only to oral communication and requiring a certain level of fluency, and therefore questioned its relevance to the early stages of learning, where they believed the focus is on rehearsed language patterns. Others were concerned that this strand will lead to rehearsed patterns and that coverage of this strand will be tokenistic.

Many respondents commented positively on the close alignment between the aims and the strands, but requested a closer alignment between aim (c) self awareness and the strand (c) 'reciprocating'.

Reciprocating was considered extremely appropriate for Australian Languages as it foregrounds identity. However some respondents indicated that 'reciprocating' has a particular meaning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts that is different from the meaning in the draft *Shape* paper and felt that this difference should be acknowledged and explained.

*Reciprocating is part of communicating and part of the intercultural. Why use this term when it has no currency for teachers? (Tasmanian State Response)*

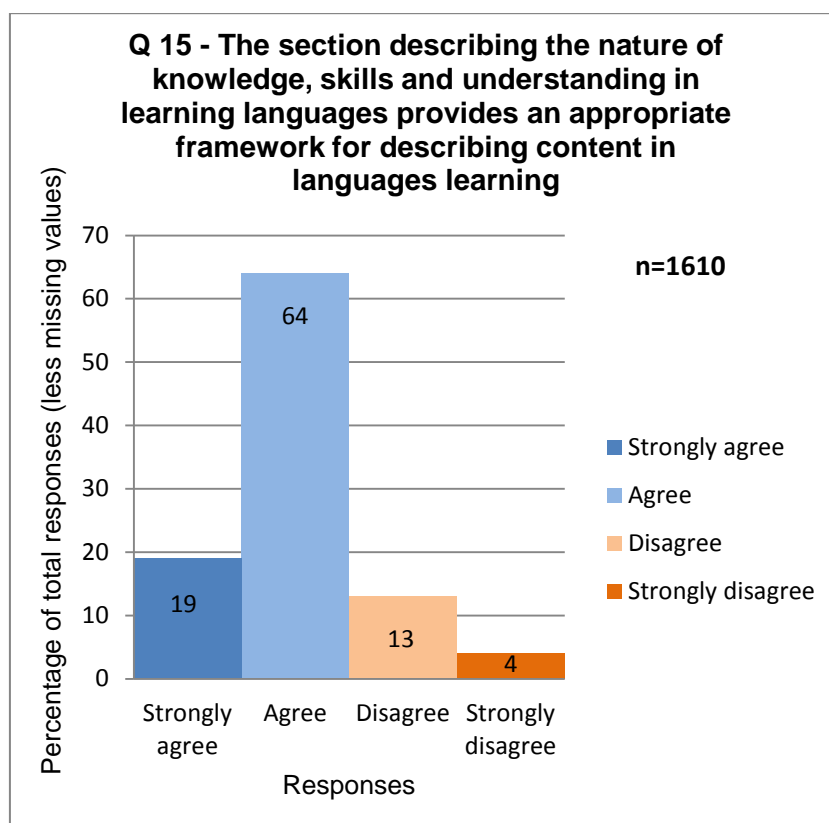
*While acknowledging the innovative approach represented by this proposition, in particular the inclusion of the concept of reciprocation, we think it is unnecessarily complex and unlikely to meet the key curriculum design test of transferability to effective classroom practice, including the assessment and reporting of student achievement. (Victorian State Response)*

*CESA commends the naming of the strands. It is a positive that an intercultural approach to language learning underpins all strands. Reciprocating acknowledges an aspect of language learning that has been taught, but not recognised explicitly in the past, particularly for primary school learners. However the definition requires clarity and simpler language as some teachers understood reciprocating to be part of communication... (Catholic Education of South Australia)*

*Reciprocity involves mutual interpretation of meaning and mediating across languages and cultures. This is a new concept in the languages discourse and provides much potential to open new teaching methodologies for teaching all languages in a range of learning contexts... However, how “reciprocity” is translated in the curriculum remains a challenge. (Multicultural Education Committee)*

### 3.8.3 The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages

Over 80% of respondents either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the section describing the knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages provided an appropriate framework for describing content in languages learning.



Many respondents praised this section for its clarity, thoroughness and suitability as a frame for describing curriculum content.

The main issues raised by respondents included:

- Questions about terminology, particularly regarding the different uses of the word ‘understanding’

- A concern that the points in Paragraph 65, ‘Understanding’ will be challenging for some students, particularly those in the early years
- More information is required about what will need to be taught and achieved
- A clearer explanation of the relationship between this section and the strands is required
- How the ‘nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages’ will be assessed.

Comments from individual survey respondents included:

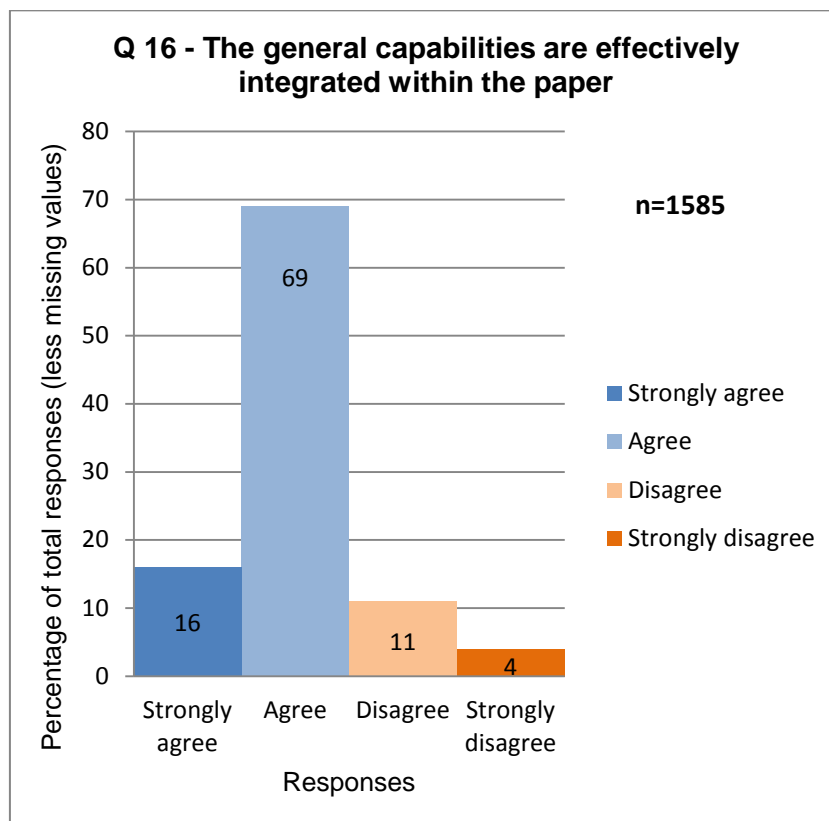
*It confirms and consolidates current teacher practice.*

*A good marrying of descriptive linguistics, social linguistics and applied systemic functional linguistics.*

*It is very comprehensive, but practically, is it achievable?*

*Some of the terminology requires further explanation.*

### 3.8.4 General capabilities and languages



The feedback comments about the general capabilities were very positive and the level of agreement in the survey results was very high, with 85% of respondents either ‘agreeing’ or ‘strongly agreeing’ that the general capabilities are effectively integrated within the paper.

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There was strong feedback from respondents that Numeracy must be included as a capability.

*There is no reference to the general capability of Numeracy: this is a serious omission. The inclusion of number skills and reference to number is fundamental to current language programs, especially in primary school. The language curriculum should reinforce numeracy ideas and provide opportunities for numeracy in action (for example, telling time, counting, categorising, order of magnitude). (Asia Education Foundation)*

Although the writers of the draft *Shape* paper asked readers to refer to earlier sections of the paper for further information about each of the capabilities, a number of respondents requested more detailed coverage to be provided in this part of the paper. It was clear that many respondents were reading each section of the draft *Shape* paper as a discrete section, rather than reading the paper as an integrated whole.

*Literacy*: The description of literacy was supported; some respondents requested that a summary of the points in Paragraphs 39-44 be included in this section.

*Information and communication technology skills*: The description of this capability is supported; some respondents requested that this particular capability be integrated better into the rest of the paper. On the other hand, a small number of respondents were concerned that there was too much emphasis on the use of ICT in the classroom.

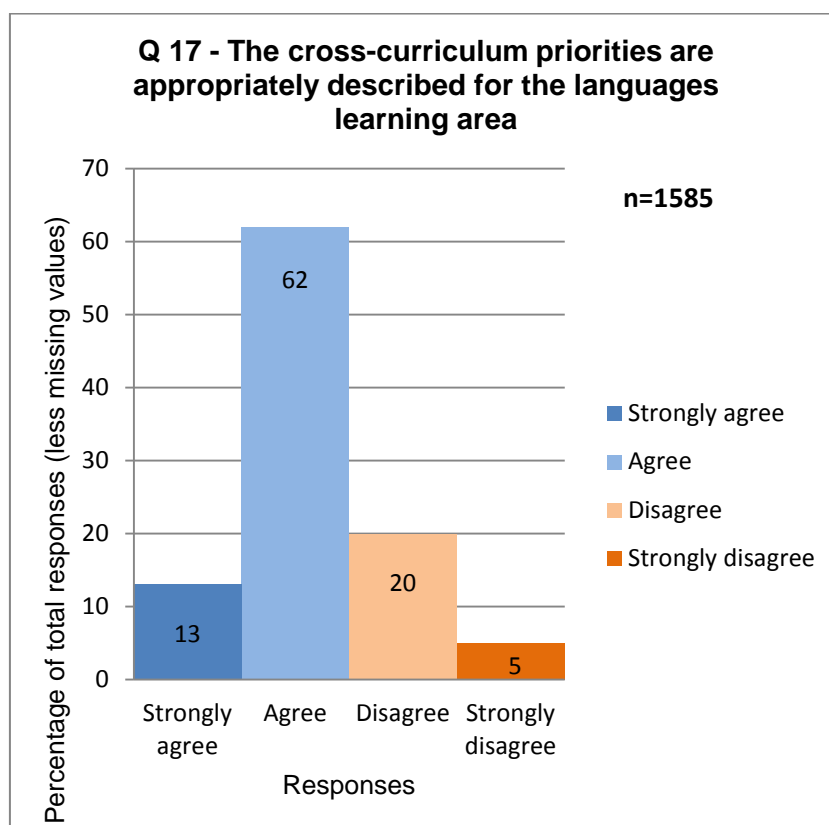
*Critical and creative thinking*: Generally supported, with comments that it needed to be embedded more into the rest of the paper and given greater prominence as a concept.

*Ethical behaviour*: Submissions from teachers' associations and state jurisdictions in particular were strongly supportive of the inclusion and the description of this capability. Respondents in relation to Australian Languages particularly commended its inclusion.

*Personal and social competence*: Although only a handful of responses mentioned this capability explicitly, those which did were supportive.

*Intercultural understanding*: As with literacy, the description of this capability was supported with a request for more detail to be provided at this point in the paper rather than a reference to an earlier section, in Paragraphs 35-38.

### 3.8.5 Cross-curriculum priorities



Most respondents gave conditional support to the section on cross-curriculum priorities. It was not generally understood that the three priorities: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*, *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* and *Sustainability* are a required design feature of the Australian Curriculum. Many respondents in fact contested the notion of cross-curriculum priorities. This was evidenced by comments from survey respondents such as:

*Why are the priorities limited to only three when languages learning has much greater cross-curriculum potential*

*The priorities are politically and ideologically driven - this ideology is not universally shared and will date*

*There is too much focus on Asia and Asian languages at the expense of European languages (thus failing to appropriately acknowledge Australia's European heritage). Rather than focussing on Asia, there should be a more global perspective.*

Some respondents were concerned that the priority *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* may be understood as only applying to students actually studying an Asian language. If this was the case, they felt the variety of cultures and languages in the region could not be known through exposure to only one language. Teachers of European languages were further concerned about teaching Asian content in their languages programs.

Some respondents were concerned about how to incorporate the priorities into their languages classrooms. Some respondents, for example, interpreted the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures* priority as a requirement that they must teach

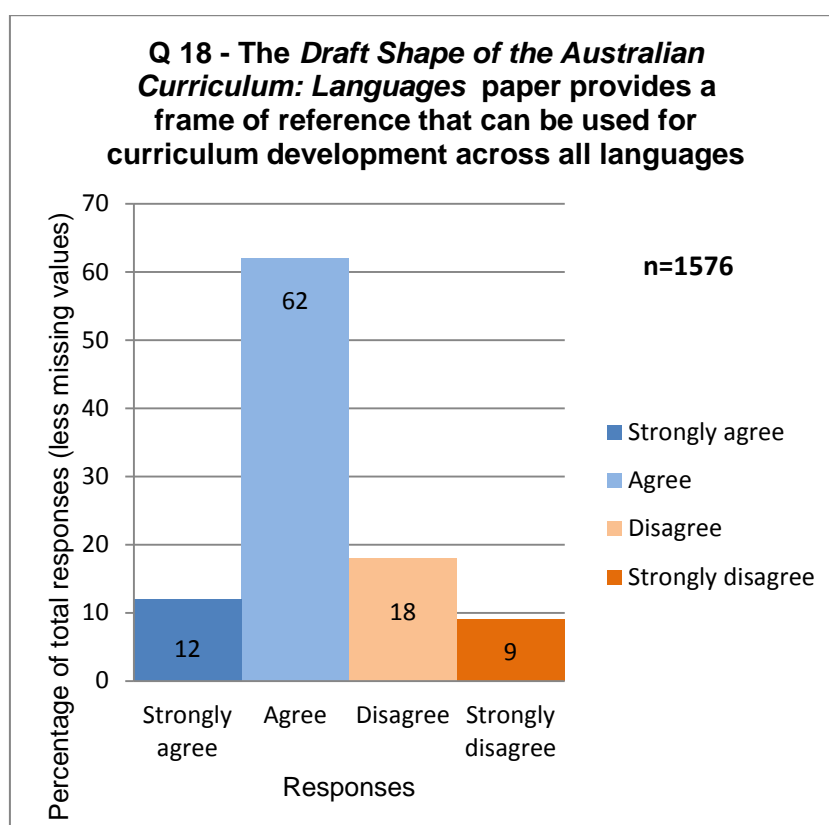
Australian Languages within the context of their language classes. There were concerns about teacher training and confidence and that teacher knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures is sufficient.

Some respondents requested further guidance and further elaboration of this section. A few respondents saw the descriptions of the cross-curriculum priorities as tokenistic.

*Concern was expressed by some respondents that teachers do not have the background understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders histories and cultures nor the understandings about Asia and its relationship with Australia to be able to make interlinguistic and intercultural comparisons across languages to illustrate concepts related to language and culture in general. Is this a realistic expectation for languages teachers? (Lutheran Education Australia)*

### 3.9 Key considerations for developing the Australian Curriculum

Although 74% of survey respondents who answered this question agreed or strongly agreed that the draft *Shape* paper provides a frame of reference for curriculum development across all languages, this result may hide a high level of conditional approval or disapproval due to the missing values.



Paragraph 75 (i): Some respondents wanted a stronger formulation of the key consideration 'That the Australian Curriculum: Languages is designed to enable all students to engage in learning a language in addition to English' and suggested changing 'enable' to a stronger word such as 'ensure'. Other respondents were concerned that gifted and talented learners and special needs learners were not catered for within the current paper.



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*Auslan is a language of vital importance to students who are deaf but also to students with disabilities, particularly those with speech and language difficulties or disorders. Disability is not mentioned at all in Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages, and while guidance has been provided for using the Australian Curriculum overall for students with special education needs, there are access and equity issues for students who are deaf which should be strengthened in a document which encompasses a language which forms their first language. (Deafness Foundation)*

Paragraph 75 (ii): Some respondents found the draft *Shape* paper too conceptual and abstract to be used as a frame of reference, and sought a greater level of detail in relation to curriculum content. Many respondents wanted to know how the concepts discussed in the paper will be translated into language-specific curricula. For some, the draft *Shape* paper was too open to interpretation.

*The concepts are given at such an abstracted level that they do not really give an adequate frame of reference for curriculum writing. (Survey Respondent, Victoria)*

There was particular concern that the draft *Shape* paper does not work as a frame of reference for curriculum development for classical languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit, where the focus is less on two-way communication and more on accessing literature. There were concerns that the understanding of culture within the draft *Shape* paper lacked any historical dimension, and these respondents did not see any focus on language learning as a means of accessing literature and literary traditions.

Paragraph 75 (iii): There was strong support for the development of language-specific curricula. However, there was a significant level of concern that classical languages, Auslan and a range of community languages, particularly Turkish and Hindi, were not listed for language-specific development. This issue is discussed further in section 3.7.

*The proposal that individualised curricula are developed for the nominated languages avoids the vagueness of previous languages education frameworks. (Department of Education and Children's Services SA)*

*We strongly support the intention to develop language specific curricula. This is an important move away from a generic curriculum for languages, which does not recognise the different characteristics, learning needs and processes related to different languages. We believe that this very positive move in the draft Shape paper represents a fundamental commitment to the way in which the languages area of the overall curriculum is understood. (Applied Linguistics Association of Australia)*

Paragraph 75 (iv): Achievement standards will be discussed in Section 3.9.2.

Paragraph 75 (v): The recognition of the diversity of language learners and pathways was seen as a strength and has been previously discussed in section 3.7.

Paragraph 75 (vi): Feedback relating to indicative number of hours (time on task) will be discussed in Section 3.9.1. There was widespread concern that leaving the 'systems and schools the flexibility to organise as appropriate' the sequence of learning and hours allocated will undermine the language learning objectives of the draft *Shape* paper. Respondents asked for more emphasis on frequency of contact and continuity to be included, to guide systems and schools to develop effective language programs.

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Paragraph 75 (viii): Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL).

Some respondents asked for clarification on the role of CCAFL in the development of the senior curriculum and the status of the CCAFL framework. The concern is that the small candidature nationally assessed CCAFL languages will be operating on a different conceptualisation of languages learning to the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

Some respondents believed a better description of how current CCAFL arrangements will ensure ongoing provision of the small candidature nationally assessed languages should be included in the *Shape* paper, as well as a clear statement that CCAFL arrangements will continue. It was further suggested that a list of the languages currently provided through CCAFL arrangements should be published as an Appendix to the *Shape* paper.

Many respondents called for more detail regarding senior secondary learning, and articulation to tertiary language study.

The Victorian State Response suggested that the *Shape* paper should be limited to a discussion of the F-10 curriculum.

Paragraph 75 (ix): Many respondents expressed interest in the nature and role of the procedures and guidelines document, and the opportunity to provide feedback on this document.

*We support the proposition (in Paragraph 75 (i)) that the curriculum be designed to 'enable all students to engage in learning a language other than English'. We agree that a common set of procedures and guidelines for language curriculum development is essential, and we congratulate ACARA on the establishment of a systematic approach to this area. (Australian Primary Principals Association)*

### **3.9.1 Indicative Hours**

The issue of indicative hours was raised throughout the paper. All feedback relating to this issue has been consolidated and is discussed in this section.

Respondents did not appreciate that the hours specified are for the purposes of curriculum writing, not necessarily for implementation.

A great deal of varying feedback was received relating to the indicative hours. This may be attributed to the variation between current practices in different states and territories and the proposed indicative hours. The indicative hours are below current practice in some states, for example Victoria, but exceed current delivery in other states, for example, NSW, Queensland and Tasmania.

Respondents generally welcomed the statement in Paragraph 10 that the Australian Curriculum: Languages 'expects a substantial time allocation'. However strong feedback was given that stronger statements needed to be made throughout the *Shape* paper in relation to the importance of lesson frequency and continuity of instruction when talking about indicative hours of study.

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*Along with the recommendations for indicative hours of study, there should be guidance about frequency, regularity and continuity of language learning...Frequency and continuity of study are crucial to successful programs. (Queensland State Response)*

There was overwhelming feedback from languages teachers and professional associations that the indicative hours as stated are insufficient for meaningful language learning to occur. There was also concern that the current range of indicative times did not cater for diverse program types such as content-based and different types of bilingual programs.

There were also concerns that the hours are expressed as a range; this comment was particularly related to the primary years. There were concerns that different schools programming different numbers of hours would lead to discrepancies in outcomes over Foundation to Year 12 and concerns that schools/jurisdictions would deliver the minimal allocation of hours as currently stated. There was a clear preference for hours to be stated as a minimum time per week to ensure regularity of contact and continuity of learning, and that the hours of instruction should be mandated.

A small number of respondents wanted the hours allocated to primary language study reduced in favour of an increase in secondary time allocation. This seemed to be based on a belief that the hours spent in language learning would be more rigorous and effective in secondary school.

Support for the indicative allocation of hours was qualified and either based on support for the inclusion of compulsory primary school language learning or on a pragmatic 'in many cases it's better than we currently have'.

*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. (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations)*

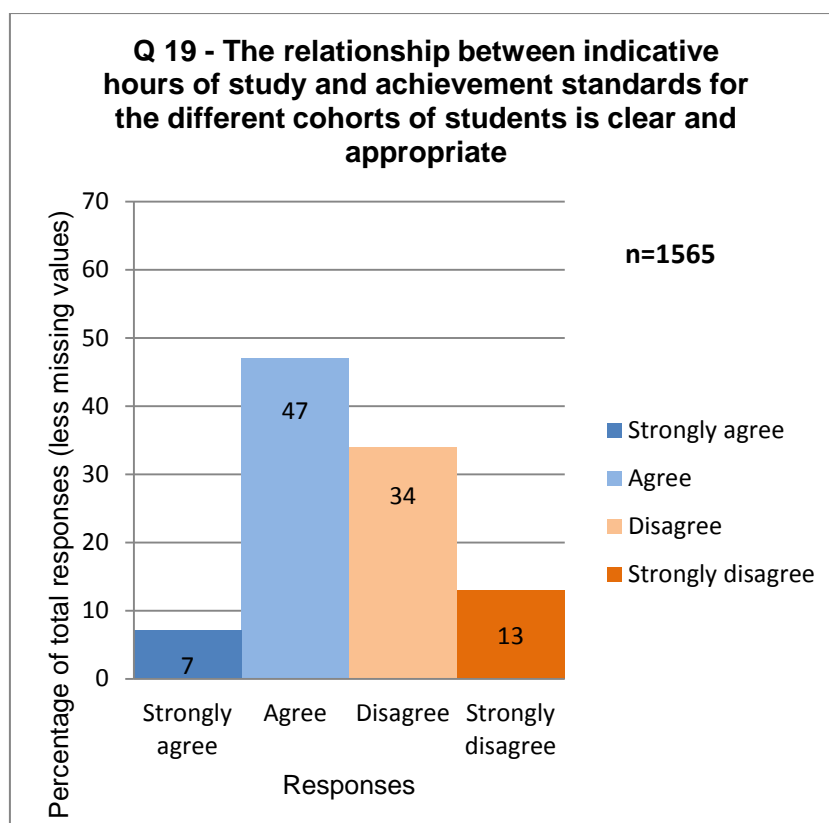
The Victorian State Response questioned the appropriateness of the *Shape* paper making any comment about indicative hours, as it considered this a matter for state and territory jurisdictions, and for decision making at the school level.

### **3.9.2 Relationship - indicative hours and achievement standards**

Respondents said they wanted to see more information on the proposed achievement standards before they could judge whether the 'relationship between indicative hours of study and achievement standards for the different cohorts of students is clear and appropriate'.

In this response it is difficult to disentangle: (i) concern about hours per se; and (ii) concern about the relationship between hours and achievement standards.

The survey results show relatively low levels of support, with only 54% of respondents supporting this statement.



Some respondents interpreted the achievement standards as being a generic set of achievement standards, rather than language-specific and pathway-specific achievement standards. As a result, concerns were raised about the significant variance in difficulty between some languages and the differences in eventual attainment between the three learner groups. Equity of treatment for the purposes of calculating tertiary entry scores was a particular issue raised in this context.

Other respondents were confused as to whether the achievement levels would be generated by ACARA, or if they in some way related to an existing system of levels such as the Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Achievement standards for Australian Languages were particularly welcomed by respondents, although it was recognised this presented a challenge in relation to languages currently in the process of being reclaimed.

A large number of respondents found the diagrams showing the relationship between hours of study and achievement standards hard to understand and requested more clarity.

Comments included:

- Uncertainty whether the achievement standards are pegged to year levels or hours of study
- Exit points (particularly at Year 8 level after learning is no longer compulsory) are not clear in the diagrams

- 
- There is no Year 11 entry point in the diagrams. Respondents, notably from SA, NSW and ACT, supported the inclusion of a beginners' level pathway with an entry point at Year 11 level
  - The relationship between the three diagrams and the proposed program types for Australian Languages was questioned
  - Advanced level courses such as extension courses in NSW are not represented in the diagrams
  - There is no recognition of pathways and achievement standards for students learning in immersion, bilingual or content-based courses
  - Lack of clarity about articulation into tertiary study.

The naming of pathways (L1, L2, HL) confused people and many respondents requested a key to assist with their understanding of the diagrams. There was a suggestion that L1 and L2 should be distinguished by other means than numerical values, which was thought to confuse their nature with the levels achieved.

*The articulation of the achievement standards was found to be confusing. Much more detailed information would need to be provided before an informed judgement could be made about the nature of the achievement standards. This would include clarification of the way in which it is envisaged that achievement standards will be expected to inform the development of the Languages curriculum design. (NSW State Response)*

### **Primary school language hours, achievement standards and flexible provision**

There was strong support for the teaching of languages in primary schools, but concerns about resources, timetabling, the 'crowded curriculum' and teacher availability were raised.

Concerns were raised that there is only one achievement standard in the primary years. Some respondents were concerned that having equivalent achievement standards at Year 6 (after 300-400 hours of study) and at Year 8 level (after only 130-160 hours) devalues what can be achieved in primary school languages education.

A few respondents were concerned that there was no pathway for first language learners in primary school, and that the current definition of first language learners did not allow for this possibility.

There was also concern that leaving systems and schools the flexibility to determine how the indicative hours are spread across the Foundation to Year 6 span; the sequence of learning, and the hours allocated will adversely affect outcomes and undermine the language learning objectives of the draft *Shape* paper. Other respondents commented that flexible provision will undermine the capacity of students to make smooth transitions between different schools and/or jurisdictions.

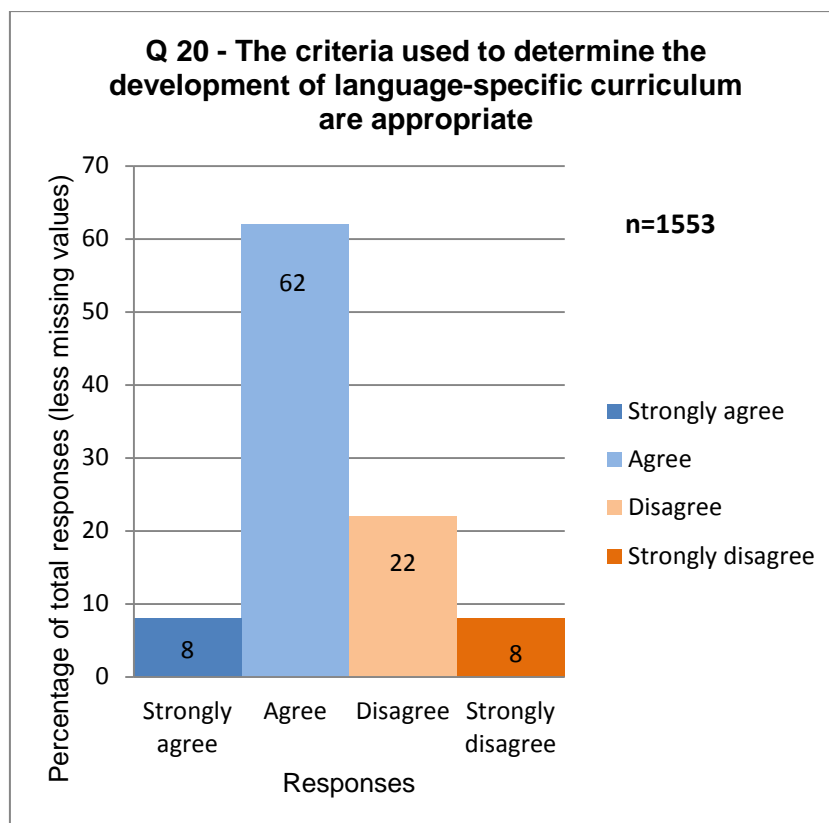
There was concern about the multiple entry points and support for languages learning to commence in Foundation and continue throughout primary school.

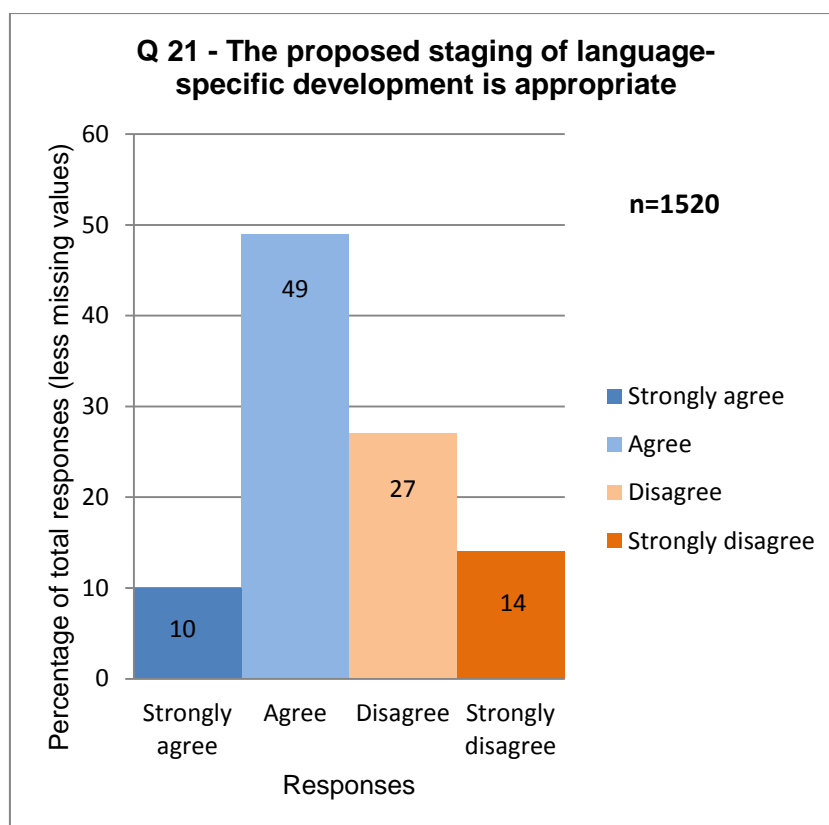
Respondents asked that specific guidelines for quality and sustained language programs are given to schools, reinforcing the importance of regularity and continuity of learning, as well as the advantages of commencing language learning at an early age.

*The commitment to system and local decision-making should not stand in the way of an approach to language learning that is based on research. (Australian Primary Principals Association)*

### 3.10 The staging of language-specific curriculum development

The two questions in the survey relating to the selection and staging of language-specific curriculum development had the highest percentages of missing data of all questions in the survey – 32% and 34% respectively. Both questions had relatively low levels of agreement in comparison to other questions (70% and 59% respectively). A number of respondents commented that they had wanted to be able to nominate a middle response as they had mixed feelings about the staging of language-specific curricula development.





### 3.10.1 Criteria

The first question asked whether the criteria used to determine the development of language-specific curriculum were appropriate.

The criteria as a set were generally supported, however respondents were not clear how the criteria had been applied in choosing the languages for each stage of development, and what was the relative weighting of each of the criteria. There were calls for greater transparency in this area.

Whilst a significant proportion of the disagreement was with certain criteria, and the application of criteria stems from some respondents wanting their own particular language listed for development or ranked more highly, this is certainly not universally the case.

Other comments by respondents included:

- The definitions of the criteria are not transparent. How is global importance defined? How is community support measured? How are the numbers calculated?
- There is not enough emphasis placed on future trade and immigration trends and too much by comparison on languages that are currently widely spoken, attract community support or are currently taught in schools
- A large number of respondents voiced their disagreement with the Federal Government's priority focus on the four Asian languages.

Other criteria suggested for selection of languages for staging included:



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- the availability of qualified teachers
  - whether the language is popular at both primary and secondary level
  - the proportion of students who continue the study of a particular language through to tertiary study.

### 3.10.2 Proposed staging of development

The relatively large number of language-specific curricula to be developed by ACARA was welcomed and applauded by many respondents. However there was great concern regarding the languages not currently listed for language-specific curriculum development. Refer to the discussion in section 3.10.4 relating to this issue.

Many respondents viewed the staging as a pragmatic approach to the management of the writing process, and on this premise supported the selection of languages at each stage as logical.

There was, however, a strong call for no staging of development, with many respondents being of the opinion that it was more appropriate to develop all curricula concurrently. The argument was the draft *Shape* paper provided the conceptual frame and together with the development of the common procedures and guidelines this should allow all language-specific curricula to be developed at the same time, assuming adequate consultation between the writers.

Many respondents interpreted staged development to also mean staged implementation and raised many concerns in relation to this issue. A number of respondents cited the experience of staged development and implementation of languages curricula in Western Australia.

There was a high degree of concern about a hierarchy of languages being implied by the staging arrangements, with concerns that this hierarchy would impact on implementation and may even influence how schools make decisions about which languages to teach. Many of the specific comments about staging referred to the languages chosen at each stage and the belief that one language had been decreed better or more important than another, through the application of the criteria. As a consequence, much of the feedback concerned whether a certain language should be 'higher' on the list, or another 'demoted'. However, many respondents were just pleased to see their particular language listed.

Respondents wanted to know if there would be opportunities for review and feedback after the first stage of development. Many respondents thought that the inclusion of a timeline of the staging process would alleviate many of their concerns.

#### ***First Stage of Development:***

The inclusion of the Australian Languages Framework within the first stage of development was widely supported and seen as significant.

A number of respondents supported what they presumed was a principle of selecting one European language and one Asian language for the first stage of development, however they felt that this should be explicitly stated. A number of respondents questioned Italian as a language which caters for the greatest range of learners in Australian education.



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The languages which were most supported for inclusion in the first stage of development - and which are not currently included - were Japanese and Spanish, (8% and 11% of survey respondents respectively). Many respondents requested more languages be developed in this stage.

Tasmania and the Northern Territory indicated some disappointment with the selection of Chinese and Italian in the first stage of development, as both of these languages are not widely taught in their respective state and territory. Both were keen for their teachers to engage with initial discussions in the development of the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

*There was strong support for the development of language-specific documents although some disappointment at the choice of the first two languages that are not widely taught in Tasmania. (Tasmanian State Response)*

### **Second Stage of Development:**

There was some support for Greek to be added to the languages developed at stage two, notably within responses from the Greek community.

### **Third Stage of Development:**

The inclusion of Arabic at stage three was generally supported, with some respondents arguing that it should be developed in stage two because of its global importance.

### **Fourth Stage of Development:**

There was a recommendation from a number of respondents that a fourth stage of curriculum development be added to manage the development of the nationally assessed 'small candidature' languages as well as 'emerging' languages, and that this was best achieved through national collaboration.

*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. (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations)*

*Neither the proposed staging of development of the languages curriculum nor staged implementation is supported. The Shape paper is intended to provide a broad conceptualisation of the entire languages learning area. Therefore, all languages should be developed concurrently to ensure that any writing issues that arise can be considered concurrently across the different languages. (WA State Response)*

*We strongly support that languages are different in what they look like, in their underlying cultures and in their histories in the Australian education context. While they constitute a common learning area, the differences between respective languages need to be recognised. (Korean Language Teachers Association)*

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*The paper reflects current literature and research in its embedded intercultural approach. It acknowledges that this approach necessitates language specific curriculum design. (Brisbane Girls Grammar School)*

*We strongly support the writers' position that recognises the need for language-specific curriculum, and that defines the curriculum in relation to language-specific achievement standards. (Open High School, NSW)*

### **3.10.3 Framework**

There was strong support for the development of language-specific curriculum. However some respondents saw the development of a generic framework as a means of catering for the languages not currently listed for development, whilst others believed that the *Shape* paper and the proposed *Procedures and Guidelines* document would serve this same purpose. Others suggested that a more detailed account of CCAFL arrangements within the paper would address this issue.

The NSW state response advocated for the development of a languages framework for all languages.

### **3.10.4 Languages not listed for language-specific curriculum development**

There were heartfelt and emotional responses from communities whose languages were not listed for curriculum development.

Some of the concern stemmed from a misunderstanding that the teaching of their particular language was to be removed from schools. Another issue was that recognition within the national curriculum is symbolic to communities and emblematic of status. Communities view recognition within a national curriculum as a marker of greater esteem and status being accorded to their language within Australian education than recognition within the curriculum at the state and territory level.

Languages not included in the staging that had most support for inclusion from the survey and submission feedback included Turkish, Hindi, Auslan and classical languages. There were numerous responses from the Greek community delighted to see modern Greek as one of the languages.

*We the undersigned express our disappointment for non-inclusion of Hindi language in the Australian Curriculum and request you to review the position of Hindi and include it in the Australian Curriculum. (Petition from various organisations and individuals in the Hindi Community)*

There was a large number of responses from the Turkish and Hindi communities. Submissions were received from numerous community organisations, individuals including parents, community members and politicians, and community petitions. A significant number of Turkish responses was received from students currently learning Turkish at school.

Hindi gained additional support from other respondents who believed that it should be included as an emerging language of importance in the Australian context and that it should qualify for inclusion based on the criteria of immigration trends and economic significance.

The inclusion of Auslan as part of the Australian Curriculum was argued on equity grounds.

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Overall, teachers accept the 11 languages targeted for development. However, there is concern that the lack of support for the 'non-targeted languages' will result in their demise. (Open High School, NSW)

In order to give a complete picture about all languages in Australia, one cannot simply assume that the existing system for national collaboration as being complete and able to cater for all emerging languages. A much stronger statement needs to be added to the paper about emerging languages and CCAFL languages especially as it claims to provide direction for the curriculum development for all languages. The prioritisation of languages is causing much angst amongst our language communities. Again much firmer reassurance needs to be given to those language speaking communities who have not had their language prioritised as part of the national curriculum. (Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia)

The theoretical commitment to linguistic diversity is not visible in the curriculum design section where 11 languages are targeted for specific curriculum development. To ensure a demonstrated commitment to linguistic diversity, it is recommended that a general Languages Framework, like that for Australian Languages, be developed. (Department of Education and Children's Services, SA)

The draft paper proposal that the language-specific curriculum be developed in three stages is supported. But Queensland participants felt there should be a fourth stage that allows other languages not currently identified to be included as needed. This would give some voice to statements in the earlier part of the document about the diversity of cultures and languages in Australia. (Queensland State Response)

The paper is far reaching and positive in that it aims to describe a language curriculum for ALL languages and ALL students/learners in the Australian curriculum (3.1). However, this aim is not sufficiently explored in section 6 on pathways and in section 7 curriculum design for languages. Having language specific curricula is welcomed, but the languages curriculum described appears to accommodate mainstream languages only. Discussion related to the place and development of community languages that is languages outside the prescribed curriculum, could be further articulated throughout the whole document. (Multicultural Education Committee)

A much stronger statement needs to be added to the paper about emerging languages and CCAFL languages especially as it claims to provide direction for the curriculum development for all languages. The prioritisation of languages is causing much angst amongst our language communities. Again much firmer reassurance needs to be given to those language speaking communities who have not had their language prioritised as part of the national curriculum.

Paragraph 79 – the proposed stages of development. Our membership is divided as to where French ought to lie in the implementation phases. We see benefit in being in the first phase, however are also happy to be in the second phase so long as it is NOT a drawn out process. Also, we do not want the first phase to dictate the format of the French syllabus. (Teachers of French Association of Western Australia)

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### 3.11 The language of the draft *Shape* paper

There were many comments about the language of the draft *Shape* paper, particularly from survey respondents variously describing the paper as verbose, too complex, confusing, too academic and hard to understand. The majority of these comments were of a very general nature, with only a few respondents highlighting sections or phrases which require specific attention.

Some respondents suggested that a glossary would assist readers. Others suggested an Executive Summary and more explanation about the function of different sections of the paper would help to communicate the content to a non-specialist audience. Others recommended that more common terms should be used as alternatives.

*The language in most parts of the document is relatively clear, concise and accessible. The language in some parts of the document, however, is very technical and specialised. (Australian Primary Principals Association)*

### 3.12 Implementation and Policy Issues

#### 3.12.1 The need for a national language policy

As discussed in section 3.1.1, many respondents urged the priority development of an Australian national languages policy that should be supported by all the states and territories. The majority of these comments suggested that the policy should mandate languages learning in schools from Foundation to Year 10, and ensure a strategic and funded implementation of compulsory languages education.

*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. (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations)*

*Throughout the reading of the paper it was necessary to constantly remind ourselves that this paper is a template for a National Curriculum for Languages. It is not a policy paper. Clearly the task of writing this paper would have been much easier if it had been drafted against the backdrop of a national policy on languages teaching and learning. (Ethnic Schools Board South Australia)*

#### 3.13.2 Implementation – resources and quality teaching

Around Australia, and especially in non-metropolitan areas, there are considerable concerns about the resources required to implement language learning for all, particularly in primary schools. The main issues were:

- The lack of quality qualified language teachers in Australia and a corresponding lack of sufficient tertiary languages students to meet future demand for teachers
- Professional development of existing teachers in order for them to teach the new curricula
- Lack of support and resources – with several respondents linking their comments back to Paragraph 5 of the draft *Shape* paper itself, which outlines the conditions required for successful language programs.

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### 3.13.3 Other Issues

- A small number of respondents did not believe languages should be compulsory at all, but rather that a strong languages program and tertiary entrance score 'bonus' incentives should be used to attract students to language courses
- The Victorian state response indicated that the *Shape* paper should not discuss the question of mandatory participation in languages at different stages of schooling as it is outside its scope
- The Victorian School of Languages highlighted the difficulty that newly emerging languages have gaining accreditation across multiple state jurisdictions, and would like to see ACARA play a role in developing a system which will make it easier for students to study these languages as they become part of the Australian community
- Some respondents noted that insufficient reference is made in the draft *Shape* paper to the important role community language schools currently have in language education and the potential for them to be integrated more formally in order to offer students and schools more flexibility in the languages that are available for study
- Some respondents advocated a role for collaboration between local language communities and mainstream schools in the delivery of language learning
- The point was made that students wishing to study some languages need to do so on weekends, which makes it difficult for them to play sport or participate in other activities with their peers, and this impacts on enrolments
- Some mainstream schools do not give 'credit' to students who are enrolled in community language schools and planning to sit the Year 12 exams in that language, meaning that they are unfairly 'loaded with units'.

## 4 Conclusion

This *Consultation Feedback Report* has summarised the comments from the online survey, written submissions and consultation meetings.

The statistics indicate a very high level of support for many sections of the paper including the *Introduction*, *Languages as a learning area*, *Rationale* and *Key concepts and understandings in learning languages* sections. It is important to keep this in mind when reviewing the feedback comments. Often respondents only tended to provide comment when they disagreed rather than when they agreed with what was being proposed.

The questions relating to hours of instruction and the staging of language-specific curriculum development received a lower level of support.

Other concerns stemmed from respondents' desire for a greater level of detail in relation to curriculum content and assessment, and concerns about how key aspects of the paper will be implemented.

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Respondents have generally commented that they have welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback and would like to continue being consulted as ACARA further develops the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

*My overall assessment is, however, a very positive one and it confirms in my view that Australia continues to lead the world in sensitive and sensible thinking about languages in the school curriculum. (International Reviewer, Academic, United Kingdom)*

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1 – List of Submissions

#### State and Territory Education Authorities

ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (ACT BSSS)

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA)

Board of Studies New South Wales (BOSNSW)

Catholic Education Office NSW Diocese of Wollongong

The Department of Education and Training, ACT

Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)

Government of Western Australia Curriculum Council in partnership with Department of Education, Catholic Education Office of WA, Association of Independent Schools of WA

Lutheran Education Australia

Lutheran Education Queensland

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET NT)

Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) in partnership with Education Queensland (EQ), Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ)

SACE Board of South Australia

Tasmanian Department of Education and the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Tasmania

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) in partnership with and on behalf of: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV), Independent Schools Victoria

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations and Languages Centres

Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group

Kimberley Language Resource Centre

Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee

#### Academic Institutions and Universities

Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)



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Combined submission from academics from the University of Melbourne, Australian National University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the University of Wollongong  
University of Queensland, School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies

### **Community organisations**

All World Gayatri Pariwar Australia (petition with 13 signatories)

Australian Hellenic Council

Australian Hindi Committee (submission supported by 37 community groups and community schools)

Australian Hindi Indian Association (AHIA) – Seniors Forum (44 signatories supporting the Australian Hindi Committee’s submission)

Chios Brotherhood of Melbourne-Victoria “O Korais” LTD.

Council of Indian Australians Inc.

Cretan Elderly Club of Melbourne & Victoria

Cyprus Community of Melbourne & Victoria

The Cyprus Community of NSW

Darebin Greek Women Senior Citizen's Group

Federation of Australian Hellenic Culture

Federation of Cyprus Communities of Australia and New Zealand

Greek Elderly Citizens Club Northcote

Hellenic Writers’ Association

NSW Turkish Educational and Cultural Association

Pammessinian Brotherhood “Papaflessas” Ltd.

Pan Korinthian Association of Melbourne & Victoria

Pontian Association of Whittlesea “Panagia Soumela”

Turkish community (petition with 78 signatures)

Turkish community (petition with more than 10,000 signatures)

### **Ethnic/Community Schools**

Assyrian Diqlat School

Bhanin El-Minieh Saturday Arabic School

Bonnyrigg School of Turkish Language and Culture



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Buddharangsee Thai Community Language School  
Hanaro Korean School  
Happy Chinese Language School Associated Inc  
Hornsby Chinese Education Centre Inc  
Indo-Aust Bal Bharathi Vidyalaya-Hindi School Inc.  
Ivirua Community of NSW - Ivirua Academy School  
New South Wales Federation of Community Languages Schools  
North Cyprus Chipping Norton and Dulwich Hill Turkish Schools  
Parramatta School Inc  
Sydney Taiwanese School  
Tamil Study Centre Mount Druitt

### **Embassy**

Embassy of Ecuador  
Embassy of the Argentine Republic

### **Government organisations/Committees**

Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales  
Community Languages Australia (Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations)  
Ethnic Schools Board of South Australia  
Financial Literacy Board  
Government of South Australia, Multicultural Education Committee (MEC)

### **Individuals**

56 Individual responses (including five international responses)

### **Media**

Hindi-Pushp, *South Asia Times* (petition 118 signatures)

SBS

### **Parliamentary Response**

The Hellenic Parliament

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## **Professional Associations/Teacher Association**

Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALLA)

Asia Education Foundation (AEF)

Association of French Teachers in Victoria (AFTV)

Association of German Teachers of Victoria Inc. (AGTV)

Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc. (ALMA)

Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL), Northern Territory

Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA)

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations Inc. (AFMLTA)

Australian Linguistic Society (ALS)

Australian Primary Principals Association

Deafness Foundation

Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA)

Federation of Associations of Teachers of French in Australia (FATFA)

Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales

Goethe-Institut Australien, Melbourne

Korean Language Teachers Association of Australia

The Modern Language Teachers Association NSW (MLTA of NSW)

The Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland Inc. (MLTAQ)

Modern Languages Teachers' Association of South Australia (MLTASA)

Modern Languages Teachers Association of Tasmania Inc. - North-Western Branch

Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc. (MLTAV)

Modern Language Teachers Association of Western Australia (Incorporated) (MLTAWA)

New South Wales Community Languages School Board

NSW Federation of Community Language Schools

Teachers of French Association of Western Australia (TOFA)

The Deaf Society of New South Wales

Turkish Language Committee

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Turkish Teachers Association of Victoria

Westralian Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (WATESOL)

### **Schools**

Brisbane Girls Grammar School

Cook Islands School of Languages, Culture & Arts Inc.

Cooroy State School P & C Association

Erasmus School

Isik College

Kedron State High School, QLD

Meriden School

Open High School, NSW

School of Languages, South Australia

St Catherine Greek Orthodox College

Victorian School of Languages (VSL)

Victorian School of Languages, Sunshine campus

### **Youth organisation**

Leading Youth Inc

### **Students**

441 letters from students about the study of Turkish

Essendon Keilor College

Isik College

Unnamed Turkish Schools