



Media Release – Call for more emphasis on language teaching in ACT schools

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A meeting of ACT language teachers, other educationalists and community leaders has called for a School of Languages to be set up in the ACT

This was one of several recommendation made at the end of the Canberra Region Languages Forum, organised jointly by the University of Canberra and the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum, today.

Earlier, delegates had heard one of Australia's foremost linguists, Professor Michael Clyne from the University of Melbourne, advocate a school of languages along the lines of others that operate around Australia.

Speaking specifically of the Victorian model, he said the teachers are appointed and paid by the State Education Department. The School of Languages operates, mainly at secondary level, with 39 schools in Melbourne and country centres and prepares students for the Year 12 examination.

After further discussions, the Languages Forum resolved to press for a School of Languages in the ACT, possibly operating out of one of the buildings made redundant by the latest round of school closures. It also agreed to formalise itself as a continuing group, holding regular meetings and establish links with Government, existing ethnic schools in the ACT and any other interested parties.

However, Professor Clyne outlined the difficulties to be overcome when he said that even in Victoria, which was supposed to be a national leader, just 0.0044 per cent of the student body was learning two languages other than English. This was in contrast to the European Union where two languages was the norm, and of similar policies being adopted in many Asian countries.

“For the last 10 to 15 years we have seen enormous cutbacks in the kinds of things we used to take for granted in Australia, particularly in education but also in other areas,” he said.

“We were once a model for the world. We are certainly not a model any more.

“We simply can't allow things to get any worse.”

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