

CMCF - Canberra Region Languages Forum

This forum was held at the University of Canberra (UC) on 7 October 2007. It was organised by Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) in cooperation with the UC School of Languages and International Studies. The 50 participants who attended included teachers involved in languages education at preschool, school and/or tertiary level, community group leaders and members, service providers, parents and students.

After a preliminary overview of current language programs and resources in the region, the forum was addressed by Professor Michael Clyne from the University of Melbourne, and Dr Michael Kindler from the ACT Dept of Education and Training (DET).

Participants then discussed how to

- build on, and form better linkages between, current language programs
- raise awareness of the importance of languages amongst leaders and the general public
- make best use of the language resources in the local community (nearly one in five of the population speaks a language other than English at home).

The following action plan was drawn up at a final plenary session. It was also decided to organise another forum in a few months to review progress, continue to discuss items of mutual interest, and decide on future meetings and action.

Action Plan

1. Explore the possibility of establishing a School of Languages along the lines of those in other states. This could offer accredited programs in languages not otherwise available, especially at high school level.
2. Suggest the ACT join the Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages so a wider selection of languages can be recognised for university entrance
3. Support existing bilingual programs from preschool upwards, and consider how these can be continued to secondary level
4. Encourage cooperation between the ACT Department of Education and the University of Canberra to address the shortage of appropriately qualified teachers
5. Consider how attendance and performance at weekend or after hours ethnic schools can be recognised on school reports or in school programs
6. Increase awareness of the importance of languages in the general community by:
 - promoting languages as a more integral part of the Canberra Multicultural Festival
 - organising activities to celebrate the UN Year of Languages (2008)
 - encouraging employers to acknowledge the language skills of their staff
 - suggesting UC establish internships in which students can use their language skills
 - arranging regular story reading in languages other than English in public libraries
7. Suggest strategies to enable multilingual Australians help monolingual Australians learn and practice a language
8. Seek sources of funding for community activities from grants and sponsorships
9. Cooperate with groups who work with elderly speakers of other languages to meet their language needs and/or see the elderly as resources to help others practice the languages
10. Explore ways ethnic radio could help increase motivation to learn and use languages
11. Provide support to families raising children bilingually