



AFMLTA

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations

31 Hayman Rd
Boondall QLD 4034
www.afmlta.asn.au

The Honourable Kate Ellis MP
Shadow Minister for Education
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6022
Canberra ACT 2600

22 March, 2016

Dear Ms Ellis

I write on behalf of the Executive of the AFMLTA and our extensive membership of teachers of Languages across Australia. As the peak body for Languages education and educators in Australia, the AFMLTA was interested to read your report, *Growing Together*, an agenda for tackling inequality in Australia. We were pleased that this identified investment in education as a priority for a stronger and fairer Australia. However we were disappointed by some of the statements in the report relating to Languages education, potentially setting up a position of "Languages inequality" in Australia.

We endorse Labor's support of all Australian students having the opportunity to undertake a continuous course of language study throughout their years of schooling. However, we are very concerned about the statement on page 72 of the report:

Ensuring that all schools have the opportunity to engage with at least one school in Asia, including online, and that every Australian student will have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to undertake a continuous course of study in an Asian language or culture throughout their years of schooling.

We are concerned with the wording of the statement for two reasons:

- 1) It is important that the ALP be seen to be supporting ALL languages taught in schools, whilst perhaps continuing to actively support improving the quality and range of Asian languages available to learners, and the provision of courses at a range of levels, alongside other more traditional language offerings.
- 2) It is also important to avoid putting culture studies forward as an alternative to languages education. Whilst it might be difficult for some schools to offer language programs under current funding/staffing constraints, a culture studies course should not be promoted as a viable alternative to a well-developed and sustainable experience of language learning. Australian students' engagement with Asia should be included in all subject areas, as a cross-curriculum priority. Languages is a separate subject, and collapsing study of Asian cultures and languages, as suggested in the current wording, risks losing languages as a discrete and critical subject.

It is essential that the emphasis is on ensuring we, as a nation, are equipping our students to deal with the challenges of a globalised **world**.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these or other matters relating to Languages education in Australia, face-to-face, at your convenience.

We look forward to sharing your response to this letter with our membership as we agree about the urgency of this policy area.

Yours sincerely

Kylie Farmer

President

president@afmlta.asn.au