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CREST

AUSTRALIA'S LANGUAGE

THE AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY POLICY

Released by
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Minister for Employment, Education and Training

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FOREWORD

It is through language that we develop our thoughts, shape our experience, explore our customs, structure our community, construct our laws, articulate our values and express our hopes and ideals.

We should all aspire to an Australia whose citizens are literate and articulate: a nation of active and intelligent readers, writers, listeners and speakers. The knowledge, values and skills of Australian people will enable Australia to be well educated, cultured, humane and purposeful.

Australia's national identity is explored, expressed and enlivened through language. Australian English is our national language and the major vehicle for our language and literacy development. In addition, Australia's social, cultural, community and economic vitality draws upon a wide range of other languages. These include the indigenous languages of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens, as well as the European and Asian languages which have enriched our society and continue to play an ever-increasing role in the language and literacy fabric of the Australian community.

We have arrived at a decisive point in our language history. Building upon policy and program development of the recent past, facing the wide range of language and literacy imperatives of the present, and stimulated by the exciting challenges of the future, we now have the opportunity to implement a comprehensive national language and literacy policy.

As a nation we have become more aware of the importance of language and literacy issues over the last decade. Through a series of national reports during that time, the Commonwealth Government has strengthened the philosophical underpinnings of language and literacy policy. The general directions advocated in those reports are still valid.

Through the National Policy on Languages, adopted in 1987, and its support for a number of language and literacy programs, as well as through our participation in International Literacy Year, Australia has achieved a great deal. But we cannot afford to be complacent. In particular, research has shown that Australia-wide literacy in English, even among those who speak English as their first language, cannot be achieved simply through implementation of compulsory education. It is now time to focus and consolidate our efforts and build on the achievements of both the National Policy on Languages and the International Literacy Year, in the development of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy.

The literacy difficulties encountered by too many of our people have not previously received sufficient public attention. Yet the demands of our society for higher levels of proficiency in English literacy are increasing all the time: in the workplace, at home and in the community. We must accept that language and literacy development is a responsibility of the whole community. Governments must play their part, but contributions must come from industry and community agencies as well. Families and individuals should share this responsibility and make the most of opportunities for learning that are available.

Proficiency in our national language, Australian English, is obviously necessary for an individual to participate as fully as possible in Australian society. But necessary as it is, proficiency in Australian English alone is not sufficient to enable Australia to communicate with the rest of the world or, indeed, even within its own community. Australia must increase its strength in languages other than English. The demands of fostering a cultured, outward-looking and cohesive society, as well as of providing for our future economic well-being as a trading nation, make this an imperative. The nature of our multilingual and multi-ethnic population, both Aboriginal and from other countries, presents us with linguistic resources which must be valued and nurtured for the benefit of national and communal, as well as individual development. But it is not enough for us to rely simply on the skills of those who are already bilingual. It is imperative that many more Australians than at present learn a second language.

Since the release of my Discussion Paper in December 1991, we have all had a chance to reflect on how well or poorly language and literacy development is embedded in the structure of our public and national life. Indeed, despite having been the target of comparatively high levels of expenditure, issues of language and literacy have so far remained relatively peripheral to public policy. We have tended to take them for granted. The response to my Discussion Paper, however, indicates that there is a growing awareness among all sectors of society of their strategic importance, not just to Australia's national development, but also to the well-being of all individual Australians.

This Policy Information Paper outlines a package of programs and strategies which will be implemented from 1 January 1992. The total contribution to this national language and literacy effort through my Department and other Commonwealth departments will amount to more than \$280 million in 1991-92 alone.

Implementation of these proposals and strategies will allow us to achieve a better integration of language and literacy development in all sectors of Australian society. Language and literacy are now firmly on the agenda of all Governments and the major Commonwealth, State and Territory decision-making bodies, such as the Australian Education Council and the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training. We will work collaboratively through these forums and in partnership with business, industry, community and professional groups, with families, and with individuals to raise our national proficiency in English and other languages.

I would like to thank the many individuals and organisations who contributed their time and their ideas to the consultation process. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy has been significantly shaped through their personal efforts.

The Hon John Dawkins
Minister for Employment, Education and Training

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PREFACE

On 13 December 1990 the Minister for Employment, Education and Training released the Policy Discussion ('Green') Paper, entitled *The Language of Australia: Discussion Paper on an Australian Literacy and Language Policy for the 1990s*. The Discussion Paper identified needs for language and literacy education and proposed possible national goals and objectives, strategic directions and options for implementation.

This Policy Information ('White') Paper takes into account:

- the views expressed in consultations and the 343 written submissions received in response to the Discussion Paper; and
- the findings of other recent reviews of language and literacy needs and provision.

The Policy Information Paper presents the Commonwealth Government's proposals for a national collaborative effort to improve our language and literacy achievements in the 1990s. It delivers the Prime Minister's promise to maintain and develop the National Policy on Languages (NPL), incorporating the principles of the NPL into a new Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP). It incorporates the proposal for a national literacy strategy which was presented to the Australian Education Council (AEC).

The goals of the policy are comprehensive and coherent. They encompass proficiency in spoken and written English for all Australians, the learning of languages other than English, and the maintenance and, where appropriate, recording of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. They address the needs of children and adults, of those in work, of those unemployed or not in the labour force, and of Australians from different ethnic backgrounds.

The Commonwealth is but one of many parties to the action required. The Paper acknowledges the vital roles of State and Territory governments, employers, unions, and critically, the supporting professionals - teachers, interpreters, translators, librarians and workers in the media - in the effective implementation of a language and literacy policy. Cooperation will be essential if goals are to be translated into effective action.

This Policy Information Paper describes the essential elements of the policy. A companion document discusses the policy in greater detail.

There are many important, inter-connected and changing priorities within this policy. Over time, some flexibility may be needed to adjust the level of funding between program components, in order to achieve the best outcome for the policy.

All costs for 1991-92 and subsequent years contained in the Policy Information Paper and companion volume are in Budget 1991-92 prices.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| AACLAME | Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education |
| AEC | Australian Education Council |
| AEMP | Advanced English for Migrants Program |
| ALLC | Australian Language and Literacy Council |
| ALLP | Australian Language and Literacy Policy |
| AMEP | Adult Migrant English Program |
| ASC | Asian Studies Council |
| ASLPR | Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale |
| DEET | Department of Employment, Education and Training |
| DILGEA | Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| ESP | Ethnic Schools Program |
| MOVEET | Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training |
| NCC for ILY | National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year |
| NLLIA | National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia |
| NPL | National Policy on Languages |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education College |

INTRODUCTION

Australia has embarked on a thorough-going appraisal of its education, vocational training and labour market preparation systems. Schools, TAFE, higher education, industry training and labour market programs have all been subject to major review. Governments have joined with educators, students, parents and business to rethink policies, programs and structures and to work towards national goals that will benefit the nation and better serve the needs of individuals. A heightened concern for quality has emerged - quality in content, in delivery, and in results.

Language and literacy issues are central to the reshaping and the improved performance of our education and training systems. Effective English literacy is a pre-condition for success in virtually all fields. A facility in languages other than English is an important asset both to the individuals concerned and to the nation as a whole.

Global economic forces are demanding changes in the structure of Australian industry, in our ability to compete in world markets, and in our readiness to adapt to new jobs, new career structures, and new technologies. These changes will require new skills in communication, understanding and cultural awareness, in the workplace as much as in the international marketplace. They will also place added pressures on our education and training systems.

There is a strong and well-demonstrated relationship between low levels of literacy or English language competence and high levels of unemployment and other forms of social disadvantage. To illustrate this, unemployment rates at the time of the 1986 Census varied from 8.6% for those who spoke English only, to 11% for those who used another language but spoke English 'well' or 'very well', to 20% and higher for those who spoke English poorly or not at all. While other factors also are involved, English language proficiency has a vital bearing on the labour market prospects and the general welfare of individual Australians.

Without appropriate intervention and assistance, those lacking effective English literacy are likely to become even more disadvantaged over time in a society which increasingly values skills and relevant employment experience. We cannot afford the inequities and inefficiencies which such a waste of human resources would entail.

The adequacy of our national efforts in language and literacy education has itself been subject to extensive review over recent years. Much valuable work has been done under the auspices

of bodies such as the AEC, the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME), the Asian Studies Council (ASC), the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year (NCC for ILY) and the House of Representatives Employment, Education and Training Committee (on Literacy in the Workplace). As a result, we now have a much better understanding than previously of the problems and possible solutions.

What is needed now is action rather than further analysis or review. The case for action is clear and compelling:

- approximately one million Australian adults have literacy problems which prevent them from participating effectively in the workforce, in education and training, and in community life;
- in the absence of some formal certification of literacy achievement at the exit points of primary and secondary education, we do not have a clear picture of the literacy levels of our children;
- approximately 360 000 adult immigrants have little, if any, English. Two-thirds of these are not in the labour force and the rest are mainly in low-skilled and poorly paid jobs, and are heavily at risk in the industry restructuring process;
- many children in our schools are involved in English as a second language (ESL) programs but more assistance is required;
- despite our multicultural society and our large number of speakers of languages other than English, Australians generally have a poor understanding of other languages, cultures and countries, particularly those of our own region;
- only one student in nine persists with the study of a language other than English to Year 12;
- we need to maintain, enhance, and prevent the further loss or neglect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, which are an essential part of our national heritage and culture.

Much, therefore, remains to be done. The issues at stake are genuinely national, and the responses needed will require a commitment and contribution from every sector of the Australian community in collaboration: governments, both State and national; education systems, teachers and other professionals; business and unions; and workers, students and the wider community.

State and Territory Governments have already initiated some of the reforms required, most recently through the development of their literacy and language strategies. In five of the eight States and Territories, for example, the teaching of languages other than English is being introduced systematically into the primary school curriculum, at an age when students are most ready to learn another language. There are other equally welcome signs of progress.

This Paper has been prepared following extensive consultation with State and Territory authorities, and takes forward the work upon which States and Territories have already embarked. Necessarily, the program initiatives and associated funding measures which it announces have been based on existing program arrangements, and assume a continuation of current funding and administrative responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the States. Where new arrangements are proposed, however, they involve fewer conditions and increased budgetary flexibility for States and Territories.

The issue of roles and responsibilities in education and training is currently subject to examination in the context of the wide-ranging review of Commonwealth/State relations initiated by the October 1990 Special Premiers' Conference. To the extent that wider changes in responsibilities may be agreed to by Heads of Government in that forum, the arrangements announced in this Paper will be reviewed and revised as necessary, within a framework of agreed national goals.

By way of leadership and direct involvement the Commonwealth Government, where appropriate, will play its part in improving national performance in literacy and languages. This Policy Information Paper testifies to that commitment. However, government action alone will not be enough. Other parties also need to share in the commitment to action. With a strong sense of shared commitment by all Australians, State-based and local initiatives will often contribute most to effective solutions.

NATIONAL GOALS

Responses to the Discussion Paper have revealed a high level of community support for four key goals of a national language and literacy policy. In summary form these are that:

1. all Australians should develop and maintain effective literacy in English to enable them to participate in Australian society;
2. the learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved;
3. those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages which are still transmitted should be maintained and developed, and those that are not should be recorded where appropriate;
4. language services provided by interpreters and translators, the print and electronic media and libraries should be expanded and improved.

The first three goals were accepted by all State and Territory Governments during the consultation phase and are consistent with their own policies and strategies. The fourth is a theme which was often raised during the consultative process and provides essential support for the education and training elements of the ALLP. These goals form the nucleus of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy, and provide the framework for the balance of this Policy Information Paper.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Goal 1: *All Australian residents should develop and maintain a level of spoken and written English which is appropriate for a range of contexts, with the support of education and training programs addressing their diverse learning needs.*

The achievement of this goal will require coordinated action in a range of areas, at different levels and by different parties:

- * in children's literacy, where State Governments and their education systems have the major role;

- * in adult literacy, where responsibilities are widely shared between TAFE systems, the adult and community education sector, the Commonwealth and other parties;
- * in Aboriginal literacy and ESL, where the Commonwealth has a special interest but States have a major role in program delivery;
- in ESL more generally, where the Commonwealth is heavily involved by virtue of its immigration responsibilities, but the States again play a major part in program delivery.

Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing. Effective literacy in English for all Australians is the goal ~~are~~ ALLP.

Children's Literacy

Effective literacy is a key to children's personal and vocational development, preparing them for further education and training, life in the community and the world of work. While the literacy development of children is a responsibility for the whole community, schools have a key role to play.

By international standards, Australia has an excellent record in basic literacy. However, as new demands emerge for higher levels of literacy competence for the mass of the population, we can no longer be satisfied with the standards of the past. We must clarify and refine our literacy goals and implement the best available teaching methods to support them. New measures will also be needed to assess our progress.

The early period of schooling is critical to literacy development. Evidence suggests that if children are not making appropriate literacy progress by the end of the third year of primary school, it is likely that they may not make up the gap through the rest of their schooling. The transition from primary to secondary school is another significant point in literacy development.

The Victorian Government has decided to record literacy profiles for every child at Years 3, 6 and 9 by the end of 1993, and the New South Wales Government has introduced basic skills testing in literacy for all children at Years 3 and 6.

As a high priority, we need nationally consistent guidelines which will enable authentic assessment of children's literacy skills to be undertaken. This, in turn, will also enable special support measures to be provided for those assessed as needing additional assistance.

It is unrealistic to expect that a target of 100% effective literacy can be achieved by every Australian child. The social circumstances of some children are such as to make effective learning virtually impossible, and it is unreasonable to expect that schools can compensate entirely for factors beyond their control. We should nevertheless aim high in the literacy goals we set for our children, recognising that a small minority will inevitably need access to further assistance as adults.

As its contribution to action in this area the Commonwealth will:

- * provide \$5.5 million over four years for the national development of a range of Early Intervention Strategies for use by teachers in helping junior primary school students with learning difficulties in literacy. This will be an extension of the Literacy and Learning Program. When it started in 1991, this Program was allocated \$15 million over three years and designed to assist junior secondary students, particularly those in disadvantaged schools, to cope with the literacy demands of the more specialised subjects studied at secondary schools. The new component will initially develop a national framework and a package of early intervention strategies at a cost of \$1 million in 1991-92. These will form the basis of professional development activity in the States and Territories;**
- * continue, under the auspices of the AEC, to collaborate with State and Territory Governments in:**

 - developing a national statement of curriculum principles for English;**
 - establishing national proficiency standards and achievement profiles relevant to the various stages of schooling; and**
 - developing arrangements for the comprehensive assessment of student proficiency in literacy, and for the regular national reporting on progress and results;**

- * in collaboration with the States and Territories, ensure that all children in need of additional literacy assistance are identified by assessment at the end of primary school and at Year 9, then assisted to achieve the skills which the assessment reveals they lack;
- * over the next three years, provide a total of \$150 000 to the Australian Literacy Federation, which includes the major professional associations of English teachers, to support the implementation of teacher development activities in line with the national English curriculum statement;
- * through the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning, and through a Special Conference of Teacher Training Providers to be held in 1991 in consultation with this Project, pursue the improvement of teacher training courses to ensure that English literacy education is properly addressed in the preparation of all teachers;
- * under the ALLP, provide \$380 000 in 1992-93, \$480 000 in 1993-94 and \$530 000 in 1994-95 for innovative projects, to stimulate national developments in children's literacy.

Adult Literacy

Adult English literacy needs in Australia were identified in a national survey which was conducted in 1989. From that survey it can be estimated that at least 10% of adults are unable to perform everyday reading and writing tasks in English. Of these one million people, about 650 000 were of English-speaking background. In 1989 it was estimated that 44 000 people were enrolled in adult literacy programs.

Action to bridge this gap is now more urgent because the literacy demands of our society are continually increasing, for domestic, community and work purposes. Significant industry restructuring in Australia will mean that workers will have to retrain. Without appropriate English language and literacy skills, participation in such retraining will not be effective. Access to public life in Australia is severely restricted without effective literacy skills.

Responsibility for adult literacy development in Australia is fragmented. The adult and community education sector is an important provider, through its diverse network of community-based learning centres. TAFE institutions also play an important role. As part of its wider responsibilities for labour market programs, the Commonwealth funds bridging courses for jobseekers who need to improve their literacy skills in order to find a job or enter a training course. Industry also contributes to the provision of literacy programs within the workplace.

The roles of these various parties need to be more clearly defined and better coordinated. For example, to maximise the benefit provided under labour market programs, jobseekers need to have reached the level of literacy proficiency which one would expect to have been achieved at the end of compulsory schooling. Initial literacy needs are best met through mainstream education programs, and accordingly, jobseekers with fundamental literacy difficulties will in future be referred to TAFE and adult community education providers for assistance.

Workers with insufficient literacy proficiency are best assisted through courses that are relevant to their industry as well as their literacy needs. Literacy programs delivered through the workplace are beginning to grow in number but still need considerable expansion to meet national need.

Adult literacy has only recently emerged as an issue of significant community concern in Australia. Reflecting this, the infrastructure for its provision is still relatively under-developed.

There is a shortage of teachers with the specialist skills required. Curriculum development is poorly coordinated and lacks a national focus. Nationally consistent arrangements are urgently needed for the assessment and reporting of literacy achievement, especially for referral purposes.

There is little point in encouraging literacy development if we present people with public documents which are largely unreadable. To help people have better access to information, the use of plain English must be promoted. Support is also needed for publicity and public awareness of adult literacy issues in general, and for the development of innovative teaching techniques.

In response to this diversity of needs, the Commonwealth will:

- * increase by \$3.88 million, to \$11.51 million in 1991-92, its funding for general adult literacy provision and the development of adult literacy infrastructure in the States and Territories. Additional funding of \$12.75 million in 1992-93 and 1993-94, and \$13.0 million in 1994-95 will be provided, bringing the total to \$20.62 million in 1992-93, \$21.25 million in 1993-94 and \$21.55 million in 1994-95. These funds will be directed to both the TAFE and adult community education sectors for literacy courses and for purposes such as curriculum and teacher development;
 - * work with the States and Territories to develop national literacy proficiency scales which can be used to assess the competency levels of adults and refer them to education or training courses relevant to their particular needs and circumstances;
 - * collaborate with the States and Territories through the AEC and the Conference of Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) in establishing nationally consistent arrangements for curriculum development, teacher training, standards development, assessment and reporting;
 - * support training for teachers of adult literacy, through a variety of means, in TAFE and higher education.
- In TAFE, this will include the implementation of the new national Adult Literacy Teaching Curriculum and the provision of training programs for TAFE, industry and community trainers. The Government will provide \$0.5 million in 1991-92, rising to \$1.0 million in following years, for adult literacy professional development in TAFE.

- In higher education, the additional measures will include the Government's taking into account the need for more basic education courses in identifying priority areas for the funding of projects under the National Priority (Reserve) Fund and the need for an increased number of trained literacy workers in the allocation of any additional higher education student places which it funds.
- * refer jobseekers with less than minimum social literacy proficiency to TAFE/adult education providers as appropriate for assistance, with referral and placement procedures to be negotiated between the Commonwealth and States;
- * through labour market training programs, assist jobseekers who have at least minimum social literacy proficiency, but who need further language and literacy training for their proposed employment;
- * increase its own direct expenditure on the language and literacy elements of Commonwealth labour market programs. Job-related English language, literacy and numeracy assistance is provided to jobseekers as part of the Special Intervention Program. Overall, the Program has \$21.0 million available for these purposes in 1991-92. A further \$3.0 million will be available for adult literacy under the SkillShare Program in 1992;
- * through its Literacy in the Workplace Program (\$2.0 million in 1991-92, \$4.0 million in 1992-93, and \$5.0 million in 1993-94 and 1994-95), provide catalytic funding to help industry assess literacy competencies in the workplace, and to develop, deliver and evaluate training modules for workers in need of assistance. The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA), in consultation with Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) will jointly manage this Program with DILGEA's English in the Workplace Program as the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program; and

- * provide \$1.5 million per year to support innovative national projects in adult literacy, including funding for the development of a television literacy teaching series.

From a base of \$2.6 million in 1989-90, the Commonwealth's spending on programs which target adult literacy and the provision of basic education for jobseekers will rise to \$39.39 million in 1991-92. This will be made up of \$11.51 million support for adult literacy provision in the States and Territories, up to \$21 million for literacy, ESL and numeracy support under the Special Intervention Program for Jobseekers and \$3 million through SkillShare. A further \$2.0 million will be targeted specifically for Literacy in the Workplace programs, while \$1.5 million will be directed to national projects in adult literacy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Literacy and ESL

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a particular need for more English language and literacy assistance. In the last census, more than five per cent of Aboriginal Australians reported having little or no competency in English. Most Aboriginal adults have had little access to schooling beyond the primary years, and only limited access to post-school training opportunities.

To improve literacy provision and results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Commonwealth will:

- * target funds under the Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) from 1993 to improve the spoken and written English skills of Aboriginal primary and secondary students, particularly those whose first language is not English, and to provide English literacy courses for adults.

Under the AEP, a total of \$2.63 million will be provided for Aboriginal literacy, ESL and language education in 1992-93, rising to \$5.25 million in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Children's ESL

Although closely related to programs of general literacy education and development, the teaching of ESL is a specialist skill with its own particular requirements and demands. The clients of ESL programs are immigrants or their Australian-born children and some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Commonwealth makes a significant financial contribution to English programs for children from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Commonwealth funding is provided under the ESL Program in two parts: the New Arrivals element and the General Support element.

The New Arrivals element, through intensive ESL programs, assists education systems to teach English to children newly arrived in Australia. Per capita grants have been increased substantially since 1987, and total expenditure has risen from \$14.3 million in 1987 to \$45.3 million in 1991. An estimated 18 500 students will be assisted in 1991.

The General Support element assists other school-age students whose first language is not English and who need to improve their English skills. It assists both children from overseas and Australian-born children, including those whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language. It is estimated that \$48.3 million will be spent in 1991 to assist approximately 180 000 students.

The Commonwealth has commissioned an evaluation of these programs and will address issues arising from this evaluation once the study is completed. One requirement, however, is already clear. The funding formula for the General Support element is based on 1983 data, and needs to be updated to reflect the current distribution of enrolments between States and school systems. To provide for the necessary distributional adjustments, and to support an expansion of the program base, the Commonwealth will:

- * provide an additional \$10 million per calendar year nationally for the General Support element of the ESL Program from 1993; and**
- * work with the States and Territories to develop an agreed proficiency scale to enable schools to provide better targeted support to those in need.**

Adult ESL

The Commonwealth makes a significant financial contribution also to English programs for adult migrants. The principal program is the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), administered by DILGEA.

With a budget of \$78.4 million in 1990-91, excluding living allowances, the AMEP catered for about 70 000 participants. This included about 80% of the annual intake of newly arrived immigrants. However, the level of unmet demand is high, and there is an estimated backlog of 50 000 - 60 000 people with fundamental English language problems. Other agencies, notably TAFE, have moved to address the problem, but planning has been fragmented and provision ad hoc and inadequate.

The AMEP has become a highly structured national program, with a high level of support for professional and curriculum development. Under recent guidelines, however, the program has concentrated on a client group defined by period of residence in Australia rather than level of proficiency in English - in particular, on those immigrants resident in Australia for fewer than three years, and at a maximum, no more than five years.

This policy places significant pressure on other programs - both Commonwealth and State - when clients leave the AMEP without an adequate level of English language proficiency. In 1990, about 60% of AMEP clients left the program with competencies below the minimum social proficiency level in the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ASLPR 2).

As a complement to the AMEP, DEET has funded the Advanced English for Migrants Program (AEMP), with a budget of \$4.4 million, excluding living allowances, in 1990-91. Under its Special Intervention and Jobtrain programs, DEET also provides assistance for ESL programs for jobseekers.

In the past, the AEMP has not been well targeted. Some clients have been accepted with only minimal levels of proficiency in English. The overflow of excess demand and people completing the AMEP who still have inadequate English has placed added pressure also on DEET's labour market programs, which are generally not designed to meet basic educational requirements.

Consistent with wider moves to adopt a competency-based approach to training, the Commonwealth will:

- * provide additional funding for the AMEP (\$10.68 million in 1991-92, rising to \$22.76 million in 1992-93 and \$24.06 million in 1993-94) to enable it to meet its objective of taking all its clients to the ASLPR 2 proficiency level within an average of 510 hours of class time for each client. This will bring the total for the AMEP (excluding property operating expenses and living allowances) to \$89.18 million in 1991-92, \$100.76 million in 1992-93 and \$102.06 million in subsequent years;
- * ensure that the AMEP supports all jobseekers to achieve certificated social proficiency of ASLPR 2 while maintaining its efforts for other community members;
- * target English language support under Commonwealth labour market programs to clients with a certificated proficiency of ASLPR 2 or higher. Those migrants who have not reached that level will be referred to DILGEA for support under the AMEP. Priority will be given to clients referred with Newstart contracts;
- * from 1 January 1992, incorporate the AEMP and associated living allowances into mainstream labour market programs.

LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Goal 2: *The learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved to enhance educational outcomes and communication within both the Australian and the international community.*

Proficiency in languages other than English is important because it:

- enriches our community intellectually, educationally and culturally;

- contributes to economic, diplomatic, strategic, scientific and technological development; and
- contributes to social cohesiveness through better communication and understanding throughout the broader Australian community.

Despite these important benefits, the level of languages study in Australia has fallen dramatically in the last 25 years. In the 1960s, about 40% of final year school students studied a language other than English. Today fewer than 12% of Year 12 students do so, and many of these are native speakers of the language. Fewer than one per cent of all higher education students complete a language unit at any stage of their course.

Choice of language to study is also very uneven. For example, in Year 12, 24% of students study French while only about 6% study the Indonesian/Malaysian language. Of the students enrolled in modern languages in higher education, over half are studying either Japanese or French while the remainder are studying any one of another 28 languages, often in very small numbers.

Any strategy which seeks to increase the study of languages in Australia must strike a balance between the diversity of languages which could be taught and the limits of resources that are available. The establishment of priorities is complicated by the wide range of language groups represented in our own community. Notwithstanding these difficulties, some selection is inevitable in order to guide our efforts in curriculum development, teacher training and resource allocation. Priority attention must be given to languages of broader national interest to Australia.

Australia's location in the Asia-Pacific region and our patterns of overseas trade should continue to be a factor in this selection of priorities. Although English is widely used in the international business environment, mature trading relations require the depth of insight obtained through a grounding in the languages and cultures of other countries. Some languages relevant to Australia's place in the world are at present not widely taught because of a lack of teaching materials and appropriately qualified teaching staff. Work on curriculum development, teacher preparation and research into language education supported by the Commonwealth under the NPL and through the ASC, has begun to remedy the situation. This work needs to be sustained.

Language maintenance is valuable to Australia for a range of reasons. One important support for language maintenance is the provision of language maintenance classes by communities. These have been supported under the Commonwealth's Ethnic Schools Program (ESP), with supplementary assistance from State and Territory governments and, in some cases, foreign governments and cultural societies also. While Australia's ethnic communities have for many years played a key role in providing such classes, they have often not had access to the best teaching materials or the most effective teaching methods. In many cases, therefore, there is a need to improve the quality of provision under this Program.

As school-based support for many of the languages taught by ethnic schools is improving, it is desirable to link the ESP more closely with this provision to benefit both teachers and students. Accordingly, school systems will be asked to take over responsibility for the program, with some additional funding to enable them to make improvements. Systems will be encouraged to work closely with the relevant community groups in the provision of ethnic schools classes.

States and Territories have developed their own strategies for teaching languages other than English in their school systems. In most cases, priority languages are identified for more widespread teaching. Five languages (French, German, Japanese, Indonesian and Chinese) are priorities in all State and Territory strategies, while Italian and Modern Greek also receive special recognition. This selection of priorities accords well with our broader national interests. A report commissioned by AACLAME found that Australian exporters, for example, named Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Indonesian, Korean, Thai, Spanish, German and French, in that order, as the languages most in demand in a trading environment.

It is not feasible to expect that all languages can be taught on an Australia-wide basis. Nor is it desirable, given limited teaching, curriculum and financial resources, to spread them thinly in an attempt to accommodate all interests. Some concentration of effort is required. Accordingly, Commonwealth assistance will focus on a core of eight languages to be nominated by each State and Territory Minister from the following priority languages:

Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese.

The joint efforts of State and Territory Governments provide the basis for a substantial increase in the number of students studying languages, and should lead to long-term gains in the language proficiency of the Australian population. As a basis for action, the Commonwealth proposes that the proportion of Year 12 students studying a language other than English should be increased to 25% nationally by the year 2000.

To assist in achieving this goal, the Commonwealth will provide an annual block grant to State and Territory government and non-government education systems and non-systemic schools who will then have total flexibility in the expenditure of these funds. The grants will be calculated on the basis of \$300 per Year 12 student completing a priority language up to a ceiling of 25% of all Year 12 students within any given State or Territory government or non-government system or non-systemic school in the preceding school year. These grants will replace the funding now provided by the Australian Second Language Learning Program.

At the moment, the extent of language provision in schools is very uneven, and some languages are taught much more widely than others of arguably equal significance. It is important to encourage an appropriate balance of provision within each State and Territory's nominated priority languages. Accordingly, the Commonwealth will review the progress and impact of its National Strategy for Languages other than English in 1995 to ensure that its overall objectives are being achieved.

Growth in student demand at school level will, in turn, place pressure on higher education systems and on the supply of qualified language teachers at all levels. Already since 1988 there has been a strong increase - more than 50% - in the number of higher education students studying an Asian language.

Asian studies, including Asian languages, has been identified as a priority area for the allocation of additional higher education student places funded by the Commonwealth since 1989. It is included in the priority areas for the current 1991-93 triennium, together with teacher education in languages other than English. Asian studies and Asian languages have also been identified as a priority area for the National Priority (Reserve) Fund, with a total of \$4.6 million provided for curriculum development projects since 1990.

The Government will continue to pay close attention to needs in these areas in identifying priorities for allocating any additional higher education student places which it funds and for funding projects under the National Priority (Reserve) Fund.

TAFE institutions, university extension services, cultural societies and adult education providers are also an important source of instruction in languages other than English. Courses are conducted, usually on a fee-paying basis, to meet a variety of individual language needs for personal development, leisure or business purposes. In both vocational and recreation courses there is a need for appropriate teaching materials.

The Commonwealth will contribute directly to a collaborative effort with the States and Territories to improve national proficiency in languages other than English. Specifically, it will:

- * provide to each State and Territory government or non-government education system or non-systemic school, an annual grant of \$300 for each Year 12 student, up to a ceiling of 25% of the Year 12 population, who completed, in the preceding school year, one of up to eight languages identified as priority languages by education systems;
- * increase funding for the ESP by 30%, to \$9.4 million in 1992, while simultaneously aligning the program with mainstream language programs conducted in schools. The funds previously paid for ESP insertion classes will be transferred to host government and non-government school systems, while funds for after-hours classes will be transferred to government systems;
- * take account of the continuing need to promote Asian languages and teacher education in languages other than English when identifying priority areas for allocating any additional student places which it funds in higher education and for funding projects under the National Priority (Reserve) Fund;
- * continue to give priority in funding allocations through the Australian Committee on TAFE Curriculum to the development of appropriate materials for the teaching of languages other than English in the TAFE and adult community education sectors; and
- * provide innovative funding of \$1 million per year to continue support for national developmental activities for teaching languages other than English, in particular the use of different delivery models such as distance education and improved teaching methodologies.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LANGUAGES

Goal 3: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained and developed where they are still transmitted. Other languages should be assisted in an appropriate way, for example, through recording. These activities should only occur where the speakers so desire and in consultation with their community, for the benefit of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.*

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are a major part of Australia's heritage. As underscored most recently by the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Aboriginal languages constitute a major vehicle for the conservation of Aboriginality and Aboriginal ways of thinking and constitute an important symbol of identity for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There were once more than 250 different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Many are no longer spoken and, therefore, are either no longer accessible or accessible only in a fragmented form. Of the remaining languages, some 90 or so are still being actively used by communities while others are still spoken by a handful of elderly people, and so are still open to recording and retrieval.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are becoming increasingly concerned to retrieve and retain whatever they can of their languages and to record and maintain the languages that are still being actively used. The Commonwealth shares this concern and will:

- * provide additional funding of \$0.75 million under the ALLP in 1991-92, rising to \$2.0 million in following years, to establish an Aboriginal Languages Initiatives Program (totalling \$1.75 million in 1991-92 and \$3.0 million from 1992-93, when combined with the \$1.0 million formerly available under the National Aboriginal Languages Program), in support of community-based language maintenance, development, research and retrieval. Funding will commence on 1 January 1992, following consultations with relevant Aboriginal organisations, including regional Aboriginal language centres;

- * target funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language education support under the Aboriginal Education Policy for the 1993-95 triennium. These funds will be used, for example, to develop curriculum materials in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages other than English, and to assist in training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in language education programs. Under the AEP, a total of \$2.63 million will be provided for Aboriginal literacy, ESL and language education in 1992-93, rising to \$5.25 million in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SERVICES

Goal 4: *Language services provided through interpreting and translating, print and electronic media and libraries should be expanded and improved.*

Language and literacy services provided through interpreters and translators, the print and electronic media, and libraries are essential components of the ALLP.

In consultation with relevant interest groups, the Commonwealth (through DILGEA), and State and Territory governments are currently developing an operational model for a national language services organisation. This should address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of non-English-speaking background and deaf people, as well as immigrants.

Governments are also collaborating to develop national registration for interpreters and translators. The need for a national training strategy for these professionals is acknowledged. The Commonwealth, in consultation with the States and Territories, will examine training needs and possible strategies.

The print and electronic media (including the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service) also play an important role in language and literacy education and development. Of special importance are those directly educational programs, in English and other languages, provided by the electronic media. As part of its innovative project funding for adult literacy in 1991-92, the Commonwealth will fund the development of television programs for teaching adult literacy.

Libraries contribute to literacy and ESL learning and promote skills in languages other than English by enhancing access to appropriate print and electronic resources. Library acquisitions policies should contribute more effectively to implementation of the other three goals of the ALLP by ensuring that library collections respond to the linguistic, cultural and educational needs of the relevant community.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY RESEARCH AND AWARENESS

A number of national agencies based in higher education institutions are undertaking research and information coordination and dissemination activities relevant to language and literacy. There are, however, some significant gaps, especially in the children's literacy and ESL areas and adult literacy.

To encourage a more comprehensive effort in language and literacy research, the Commonwealth will:

- * provide funding to the National Languages Institute of Australia - to be renamed the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) - to enhance its role in stimulating and coordinating research into language and literacy. Total funding for the NLLIA will be \$1.75 million in 1991-92, rising to \$2.25 million in subsequent years;**
- * ask the NLLIA to establish two new centres to host research networks, which will address needs in children's literacy and ESL, and adult literacy. Up to \$250 000 will be made available to each network from within the NLLIA's annual allocation;**
- * ask the NLLIA to provide \$100 000 annually to assist the Style Council consolidate and expand the work it currently undertakes to promote high standards of use of Australian English in all public and professional contexts.**

The policy goals outlined in this Policy Information Paper will be effectively realised only if they are clearly understood and widely supported by the Australian community. Better public information is also needed on the programs and assistance available to support language and literacy development. The advantages of using plain English and the means of achieving it also need promotion. In support of such measures the Commonwealth will:

- * provide \$0.5 million in 1991-92 and \$0.4 million in subsequent years for awareness activities associated with the ALLP.**

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ADVISORY BODIES

At Commonwealth level, three advisory councils have reported to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training on language and literacy issues: the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME), the Asian Studies Council (ASC), and the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year (NCC for ILY). All three Councils completed their terms of office on 30 June 1991, each with an outstanding record of contribution to the development of national policy.

With the implementation of the new ALLP, the Government considers it timely to establish a new advisory mechanism which is national and broadly-based in its composition and charter. Accordingly, the Government will:

- * establish a new Australian Language and Literacy Council (ALLC) within the National Board of Employment Education and Training with terms of reference as follows:**
 - (i) to provide policy advice, including advice on priorities, strategies and targets, relevant to the implementation and further development of all aspects of the ALLP;**
 - (ii) to establish links between business, industry, government, unions and all education sectors to promote awareness of needs for literacy, ESL, languages other than English and Aboriginal languages, and to advise on appropriate strategies; and**
 - (iii) to monitor and advise on the effectiveness of the ALLP.**

The Commonwealth also proposes that national collaboration between governments in addressing the goals of the ALLP should occur at Ministerial level through the AEC and the Conference of MOVEET.

The Government is strongly committed to redressing imbalances that are legacies of our past by raising our national awareness of Asia, and of the potential benefits to Australia of developing an enhanced role in the Asia-Pacific region. There is a need to take forward the work started by the Government through the ASC. To enable this to be done, the Commonwealth will:

- * establish an Asia in Australia Council to:**
 - (i) advise the Government, through the Minister for Employment, Education and Training and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, on employment, education and training priorities and strategies for fostering more effective links between Australia and Asia;**
 - (ii) advise on ways in which education and training institutions can advance the development of national awareness of Asia in Australia;**
 - (iii) promote an information exchange on employment, education and training relevant to Asian-Australian economic and commercial relations; and**
 - (iv) encourage the education and training of Asia-competent leaders in all fields, particularly industry.**

In considering its new language policies and programs, the Government has been conscious of the need to continue the work it initiated through the ASC in promoting awareness and study of Asia through the school curriculum. While Asian languages will be dealt with through the ALLP, Asian studies will continue to require a specific focus in order to meet the Government's overall objectives in promoting an effective understanding of Asia.

There remains an urgent need to promote changes to educational curricula which adequately reflect regional factors. In order to support this objective, the Government will:

- * fund an independent Asia Education Foundation to promote the study of Asia in schools in Australia. The Foundation will receive a grant of \$0.5 million 1991-92, rising to \$1 million per year from 1992-93.

FINANCIAL PROGRAM SUMMARY

Table 1 summarises the financial allocations to be provided for Commonwealth language and literacy programs administered by DEET, as well as DILGEA's AMEP, from 1 January 1992.

**TOTAL FUNDING: ALLP PACKAGE
(DEET PROGRAMS & DILGEA'S
ADULT MIGRANT ENGLISH PROGRAM ONLY)**

| | 1990-91 \$m | 1991-92 \$m | 1992-93 \$m | 1993-94 \$m |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Children's literacy | 2.68 | 6.76 | 7.87 | 5.10 |
| Adult literacy | 18.02 | 39.39 | 51.12 | 52.63 |
| Children's ESL | 92.95 | 97.96 | 107.07 | 117.76 |
| Adult ESL | 94.40 | 106.42 | 118.46 | 120.35 |
| Children's languages other than English (LOTE) | 16.90 | 14.29 | 17.59 | 17.45 |
| Adult LOTE | 5.29 | 6.25 | 6.33 | 5.35 |
| Aboriginal literacy and language | 1.00 | 1.75 | 5.63 | 8.25 |
| Advisory councils/research/ other | 2.11 | 5.64 | 6.44 | 6.44 |
| TOTAL | 233.35 | 278.46 | 320.51 | 333.33 |

All costs for 1991-92 and subsequent years contained in the Policy Information Paper and companion volume are in Budget 1991-92 prices.