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MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ASSOC. OF S.A. INC.
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The Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training

10 April 2005

Response to Inquiry into Teacher Education

This submission refers principally to Term of Reference number 7.

The standing committee is examining the preparedness of primary and secondary teaching graduates to teach literacy, numeracy and vocational educational courses, but no mention is made of their preparedness to teach languages.

In the present context when the National Statement and Plan on Languages Education has just been signed by all of the Ministers for Education in Australia the failure to plan for future teachers of languages in the workforce is a serious oversight.

The National Statement and Plan on Languages Education contains the following statement: "in order to realise the vision of quality languages education for all students in all schools, in all parts of the country, jurisdictions and schools need to take into account matters relating to quality and provision" (Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2005)

At present there is a shortage of qualified teachers of languages in primary schools and very few teaching graduates qualified to teach languages are emerging from universities.

A new national centre for the teaching of languages for vocational and business purposes will be opening in the near future. Who will staff this centre? Employing people in this centre who normally work in schools and universities will exacerbate the shortage of qualified language teachers and there is no evidence of forward-planning to deal with this shortage.

A very simple solution to the shortage of qualified teachers of languages is to make the learning of a language (other than English) a compulsory part of every teaching qualification.

The benefits of language learning in developing cognitive, literacy, interpersonal and intercultural skills are well known. Enhancing all teachers' linguistic skills will be of service to both future teachers and learners.

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