

*... we have much to learn from each other  
and much to share.<sup>1</sup>*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CULTURAL RELATIONS

7.1 Culture is not an easy term to define to everyone's satisfaction. For some the term means the sophisticated achievements of a society in literature, music, arts and drama. Others would include more popular activities like sport, jazz, folk and rock music, film and television.

7.2 The Committee sees culture in a broad sense, much in the way it is defined in the Macquarie Dictionary as "... the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings ..."<sup>2</sup> The Committee has taken the promotion of cultural relations as referring to the wide range of activities involved in acquiring, or exchanging, knowledge in respect to another society as well as the active promotion of an understanding of Australian culture in other societies.

7.3 The level of cultural interaction between Australia and Latin American countries is relatively low. There is limited contact between the two regions in virtually every sphere of activity.

7.4 This chapter looks at the various aspects of cultural contact and interchange between Australia and Latin America. In addition to the broad heading of cultural relations, the chapter deals with the question of Spanish and Portuguese language study in Australia and the role of academics in promoting knowledge about and contact with the region. The chapter also looks at the provision of Australian educational services to the Latin American region. A survey of the extent of contact at the political and parliamentary level rounds off the chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Macdonnell Promotions Pty Ltd, submission, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *The Macquarie Dictionary*, Second Revised Edition, Macquarie University, Sydney NSW, 1982, p. 448.

## Cultural Contacts

7.5 Government funding for cultural relations with the countries of Latin America is limited. In the case of the Department of Foreign Affairs it was a mere A\$10,000 in 1990-91.<sup>3</sup> In 1991-92, the allocation was doubled, to A\$20,000. Of this, each post in Latin America received A\$3,160 for expenditure on cultural activities at their discretion, with the balance of approximately A\$1,000 retained in Australia for expenditure on ad hoc post requirements, such as books, to be purchased in Australia.<sup>4</sup> The Australia Council has allocated a much more substantial sum, A\$183,775 for Australian artists and activities in Latin America so far this financial year. This is a marked increase on the A\$52,000 spent on grants for Australian artists/organisations and activities in Latin America by the Australia Council in 1990-91.<sup>5</sup> The Committee hopes that this increased commitment to Latin America will be maintained in future years.

7.6 The Australia-Council grants, which come under the Council's International Program are intended to "... enhance knowledge and appreciation by persons in other countries of Australian arts" and "... foster expression of a national identity."<sup>6</sup>

7.7 Most of the activities are being conducted under the auspices of the Performing Arts Board of the Council, although there are also activities being supported by the Literature Board, the Aboriginal Arts Committees and the Visual Arts and Crafts Board of the Council.<sup>7</sup>

7.8 The Committee was particularly interested in the Performing Arts Board's approach to international promotion. Mr Rodney Hall, Chairperson of the Australia Council advised that the focus of the Board is essentially twofold:

"The first is the development of viable and, in the long term, self sustaining markets for Australian performing arts. The second thrust is aimed at the area of cultural exchange."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> DFAT, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to the Committee, dated 8 April 1992, from Mr Con Chatham, Americas Liaison Officer, Cultural Relations Branch, DFAT.

<sup>5</sup> Recent cultural exchange activities that have been brought to the Committee's attention are set out in Appendix 13.

<sup>6</sup> Letter dated 19 February 1992 from Chairman, Australia Council for the Arts, to the Secretary of the Committee.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

7.9 The Committee commends this dual approach as very appropriate for the broadening of Australia's cultural link with Latin America. It also notes the observation made by Mr Justin Macdonnell, that Latin America is "the fastest growing cultural market" for Australian performing arts and artists.<sup>9</sup>

7.10 The Committee notes that, whereas in the past Australian cultural visits and activities were widely scattered throughout the Latin American region, the Council has, in this financial year, adopted an approach whereby one of the major allocations will go to Circus Oz for a tour of several South American countries. Most of the rest of the funding is being devoted to a wide range of activities in a concentrated effort in one country, namely Venezuela.

7.11 The Committee sees considerable advantage in this approach to the allocation of scarce resources. In this instance it will result in a strong focus on Australian performing arts at this year's Caracas International Festival, with five Australian companies - Chamber Made Opera, Sydney Dance Company, Circus Oz, Theatre of Image and Stretch Mark - presenting seasons. The ABC, radio and television, will participate by sending arts reporters and SBS may assist with the production of a major documentary. Other activities will include visits by three Australian playwrights and the translation of some of their plays into Spanish.

7.12 The Committee sees value in maximising public awareness of Australia by focussing effort in this way. The Committee would add two observations. Care will need to be taken to ensure that each of the Latin American countries of major interest to Australia receives a fair exposure to this kind of concentrated effort over time.

7.13 Second, the Committee strongly endorses the suggestion made by Justin Macdonnell in his submission that activities such as the Caracas International Theatre Festival '92, where Australian artists will have an opportunities to make a real impact

"... should also be followed by other cultural activities with a *trading* edge."<sup>10</sup>

Mr Macdonnell proposes activities such as book fairs, film festivals and new technology promotion. The Committee goes further. In its view the high profile that results from a concentrated high quality artistic effort should be followed or accompanied by an equally strong trade promotion effort in the same location. There is no question that the impact of each separate activity would multiply several fold if cultural exchanges and trade promotion were linked together in time and place.

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<sup>9</sup> Macdonnell, op. cit., p. 5. Mr Macdonnell, as Managing Director of an arts and entertainment consulting company, was commissioned by the Australia Council "as in effect, its representative in Latin America" in developing opportunities for Australian artists in the region.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

7.14 The Committee notes that the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories in its submission states that it encourages the use of exchanges in the arts, film cultural heritage areas, as well as sport:

"... as a useful adjunct to trade and commercial fairs or enterprises"<sup>11</sup>

**7.15 Recommendation thirty two:** The Committee recommends that the Australia Council, DFAT, Austrade and DASET make every effort to coordinate their activities in Latin America so as to maximise the impact of both cultural and trade promotion activities. Since the lead-times for such activities are long, the Committee recommends that the Australia Council, DFAT, Austrade and DASET develop coordinated, three year rolling plans for mutually supportive projects in Latin America. The possibility of integrating such activities with Ministerial and Parliamentary visits should also be fully explored.

7.16 The Committee was interested to learn that one of last year's important Australian cultural events in Latin America, the visit by the Camerata of the Australian Youth Orchestra was primarily sponsored from the Australian end by a private company, IBM, and the tour mounted with assistance from several companies and corporations in Latin America.<sup>12</sup> In 1990 a successful Australian Film Festival in the city of Mar del Plata in Argentina was sponsored by BHP and Qantas. The Australian national Music Camp Association sponsored a young Venezuelan musician to attend the 1992 summer camp in Australia. Such involvement of private organisations is to be encouraged.

7.17 The Committee is optimistic that, with Australian business interests in the Latin American region growing, so also opportunities for sponsorship of cultural activities will grow.

7.18 The Committee also believes that the responsibility for developing cultural links between Australia and Latin America should be shared. Reciprocity is important to maintain a healthy and mature relationship.

7.19 The Committee notes from Mr Macdonnell's submission his view that:

"Even where the Cultural Division of Foreign Affairs has not funds to expend, Australian missions in South America can

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<sup>11</sup> DASET, submission, p. 1. Since the submission was made the Department has been renamed the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (DASET).

<sup>12</sup> Macdonnell, op. cit., p. 11.

be a vital source of information and support on cultural matters, provided they are well briefed."<sup>13</sup>

The Committee has dealt extensively with the importance of information exchange elsewhere in this Report, particularly with regard to developing trade and investment links.

**7.20 Recommendation thirty three:** The Committee recommends that the responsibility for exchanging information on opportunities for cultural activities and exchanges should be more clearly identified and more widely shared between the bureaucracy and outside bodies. To that end the Committee recommends that the *joint responsibility* of key areas in the bureaucracy to keep each other - and bodies such as the Australia Council and private sector organisations, companies and academic institutions with an interest in Latin America - *informed of opportunities* in the cultural exchanges field be *clearly enunciated*. In particular, this responsibility should be clearly identified in the objectives and work programs of the relevant Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Branches (i.e. Americas, Overseas Information and Cultural Relations), Australian diplomatic missions in Latin American countries, and Austrade.

7.21 DFAT advised that there are at present no cultural agreements between Australia and Latin America.<sup>14</sup> DASETT said in its submission that:

"DASETT encourages the development of broad cultural agreements such as those that exist with many other countries."<sup>15</sup>

The Committee received little other comment on the value of cultural agreements. The Committee nevertheless formed the strong impression that in other areas, such as science and technology, the Latin America countries favour formal agreements because they simplify funding and approval processes by providing a legal base.

**7.22 Recommendation thirty four:** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government give consideration to, and actively explore with the Governments of the Republics of Latin America, the value and feasibility of cultural agreements as a means of facilitating cultural exchanges. Priority could be given to those with resident representation in Australia.

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Attachment 2.

<sup>14</sup> Committee Hansard, submission, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> DASETT, submission, p. 1.

## Language

7.23 The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Association (AFMLTA) drew attention to the importance of Spanish, not only as a regional but as a significant international language, and "... reportedly the fastest growing of all international languages."<sup>16</sup>

7.24 The importance of Spanish as a major international language is indisputable and is highlighted by the following:

- . the three most widely spoken languages in the world today are Chinese, English, and Spanish;
- . Spanish is spoken by over 300 million people;
- . by the year 2000 it is estimated that Spanish will have the second largest number of speakers in the world after Chinese.
- . Spanish is the official language of 22 countries;
- . Spanish is one of the official languages of the United Nations;
- . Spanish is a dominant language in much of the Pacific basin.<sup>17</sup>

7.25 Spanish is also an important community language in Australia. As of 1986, Spanish speakers formed the sixth largest group in the Australian community whose first language is not English.<sup>18</sup>

7.26 Professor Ingram, President of the Australian Federation of Modern Languages Teachers' Association, in evidence to the inquiry argued that:

"... the language education component of the curriculum has a major contribution [to make] to fostering cross-cultural understanding."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> AFMLTA, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1158. See also pp. 1160 and 1163.

<sup>17</sup> Professor P. Cryle, submission, pp. 1-2. According to *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1992*, World Almanac, New York, 1991 as of mid 1991 the three most widely spoken languages in the world were Mandarin (885 million speakers); English (450 million speakers); and Spanish (352 million speakers), pp. 573-4.

<sup>18</sup> Professor P. Cryle, submission, pp. 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 1160.

This cross-cultural understanding, and in particular knowledge in Australia about Latin America, in turn is important:

"... because of the size and importance of the region; because of the potential for furthering education exports; for the potential for trade, because they are competitors with us; and because it edges a part of the world that Australia aspires to influence, namely the Pacific."<sup>20</sup>

7.27 The inability of many Australian business people to use the Spanish language fluently in business activities in the countries of Latin America is widely regarded as an impediment to Australian businesses operating successfully in this market.

7.28 Several witnesses drew attention to the importance of language in general for achieving success in international business. Dr Estela Valverde of the School of Education and Language Studies at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur pointed to:

"... the well known fact that a knowledge of the languages of the clients increases the efficiency of the trade ..."

in her report *Language for Export*.<sup>21</sup>

7.29 Professor R.B. Leal, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at Macquarie University, in his submission to the inquiry stressed the necessity for Australian business people to have a good knowledge of the language and culture of the target country they are hoping to do business in. However, Professor Leal does not appear particularly optimistic in this respect since he stated:

"Cultural sensitivity appears to be a rare commodity among Australians abroad, a fact which contributes significantly to Australia's generally poor export performance."<sup>22</sup>

Professor Leal warns that Spanish speakers tend to be strongly nationalist and intensely proud of their language and do not take kindly to:

"... anglophone attitudes of cultural imperialism that expect everyone to use English ..."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Dr Estela Valverde, *Language for Export*, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Professor R.B. Leal, submission, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

7.30 The National Languages Institute of Australia (NLIA) also considers that English is not adequate for doing business in non-English speaking regions such as Latin America. The NLIA argues that business people trying to trade in this region have a great deal of difficulty in researching competing products, making business contacts and working out suitable promotion and distribution strategies for their own products if they do not have command of Spanish or Portuguese.<sup>24</sup> The NLIA points to the interesting finding of a survey of the finalists in the Austrade Export Awards in 1987 that the finalists for these awards employed significantly more foreign language speakers than non-finalists. The findings clearly support the view that there is a relationship between skills in language other than English and export success.<sup>25</sup>

7.31 Austrade expressed the view to the Committee that one of the reasons why Australian businesses have not attempted to break into the Latin American market are problems associated with language. Mr Ian Taylor of Austrade, in evidence to the inquiry stated that:

"It is difficult for Australian companies, particularly those which are fairly new to the export business, to get into a market like that. Their attitude is why go through all this hassle with ... different language ... when they can go to closer markets such as South East Asia, New Zealand or whatever."<sup>26</sup>

7.32 Dr. John Brotherton of the School of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of New South Wales, argued that:

"To take advantage of trading possibilities, Australian business persons need to overcome cultural biases that have impeded the development of closer links. Stereotypical thinking about Latin America abounds, and there is a general reluctance to deal with peoples who speak different languages and whose history and culture do not spring from a British background."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> NLIA, submission, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 352. See also p. 359.

<sup>27</sup> School of Spanish and Latin American Studies, University of New South Wales, submission, p. 6.



7.33 In her report *Language for Export*, Dr Valverde pointed to research findings overseas that "... languages should be part of a broader framework of training for overseas trade if we are aiming at expanding our export sector."<sup>28</sup> Dr Valverde concluded that:

"Australian companies will not be able to respond rapidly to the pressing demands of the global economy if they do not incorporate in their export departments staff who are linguistically capable of breaking into new markets."<sup>29</sup>

In particular Dr Valverde drew attention to a well known trading axiom that "... you buy in your language, but you sell in the language of your customer."<sup>30</sup>

7.34 In her study, Dr Valverde also found that:

"... the main languages of the future according to the exporters should be Japanese, Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia and German, in that order of importance."<sup>31</sup>

7.35 Austrade too appears to be well aware of the importance of language skills for doing business in Latin America. The Deputy Managing Director of Austrade, Mr Donald Hunter stated that if Austrade were advising Australian business people contemplating going into the markets of Latin America:

"... we would certainly underline the importance of language capability, whether it be Spanish or Portuguese."<sup>32</sup>

7.36 Mr Hunter added that Austrade, in the future, would pay attention to language capability in sending people to Latin America from Australia. According to Mr Hunter:

"... when we get into a recruitment mode again that is the sort of thing that we will be taking into account".<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> D. Listen and N. Reeves, *Business Studies, Languages and Overseas Trade: A Study of Education and Training*, Macdonald and Evans, London, 1985, quoted in Dr Estela Valverde's Report on *Language for Export*, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> Dr E. Valverde, *Language for Export*, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup> Dr E. Valverde, submission, Appendix 5.

<sup>31</sup> Dr E. Valverde, *Language for Export*, p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 366.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 357-8.

7.37 Notwithstanding this broad recognition of the importance of the Spanish language, it is, according to Professor Ingram "grossly under-represented"<sup>34</sup> in the Australian education system. Professor Ingram elaborated on this in the Federation's submission as follows:

"The languages and cultures of Latin America are poorly represented in the Australian education system. Neither Spanish nor Portuguese is widely taught and though this might be defensible for Portuguese, it is very anomalous for Spanish ..."<sup>35</sup>

7.38 The Committee was encouraged to find that the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) appears to be moving towards a similar conclusion. At public hearings, a DEET representative said:

"... the more we look at Spanish and how its importance is growing as a world language, the more we realise that we need to have a better coverage."<sup>36</sup>

7.39 It is evident to the Committee, however, that Australia has along way to go. A concern currently being addressed by the Government in the White Paper *Australia's Language: the Australian Language and Literacy Policy* is the very low level of foreign language learning in Australian schools. Only 11.8% of year 12 students learn a foreign language.<sup>37</sup>

7.40 The Committee notes DEET's view that:

"... far greater numbers, at least double the number of students who are currently taking a language other than English should be taking such languages."<sup>38</sup>

Professor Ingram pointed out to the Committee that the Government's White Paper states that the:

"... aim is to increase the enrolment of year 12 [foreign language students] to 25% by the turn of the century."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1160.

<sup>35</sup> AFMLTA, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1158. See also Committee Hansard, p. 1163.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1428.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1160.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1441-2.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1161.

7.41 DEET told the Committee that, with regard to Spanish in Australian schools, there has been an upward trend, "... though the numbers are still not very great".<sup>40</sup> DEET gave the following figures:

"In 1969 about 360 school children in all were doing Spanish, and by 1988 it had grown to something like 9,000. It now constitutes about 2.6% of the LOTE [Languages other than English] students in year 12."<sup>41</sup>

7.42 At present there are 5,253 primary students doing Spanish and 3,333 secondary students.<sup>42</sup> By year 12, however, there are a mere 552 students still studying Spanish.<sup>43</sup>

7.43 The situation in the tertiary education sector is little better. Professor R. B. Leal, said in his submission that in 1990 Spanish was offered at only nine institutions of higher education in Australia with a full time student enrolment of 428 doing the language. Portuguese is offered at only two higher education institutions in this country with only eight students enrolled.<sup>44</sup> Professor Ingram said that Spanish was taught in only four Australian universities.<sup>45</sup> Neither Spanish nor Portuguese is offered anywhere by distance education.<sup>46</sup>

7.44 Dr Estela Valverde, in her submission to the inquiry, attached an appendix setting out statistical material dealing with the teaching of Spanish at Australian institutions of higher education. According to this appendix, in 1988 there was a total of 1077 students, full and part time, enrolled in Spanish language courses Australia wide. Of these students 82 per cent completed the Spanish units in which they were enrolled. The figure for enrolments in Spanish represented 0.3 per cent of all higher

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1427.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1427-8. According to the Government White Paper *Australia's Language and Literacy Policy*, DEET, Canberra, 1991, p. 15, 24% of language students in Year 12 study French.

<sup>42</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 1453. In percentage terms, primary school students of Spanish make up 2.3% of the primary LOTE students and in secondary schools students of Spanish represent .9% of the total LOTE student population.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1160.

<sup>44</sup> Professor R.B. Leal, submission, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 1160. In evidence to the Committee, DEET stated that there are 12 higher education institutions teaching Spanish in Australia. The apparent discrepancy in figures given by different witnesses may relate to different categories of tertiary institutions and may apply to different time periods. The Committee is aware that a number of tertiary institutions are seriously considering introducing Spanish.

<sup>46</sup> Professor R.B. Leal, submission, p. 2.

education students in 1988 and 4.5 per cent of all language students attending higher education institutions in Australia, making Spanish the sixth most popular language in terms of enrolments just above Indonesian and modern Greek.<sup>47</sup>

7.45 The federal system of government in Australia introduces complexities into the implementation of policy in respect to teaching foreign languages, including Spanish. The Commonwealth Government offers a selection of 14 languages from which the States choose eight for placement on their own list of priority languages at year 12 level. This selection attracts an incentive payment from the Federal Government.<sup>48</sup>

7.46 At the time of giving evidence to the Committee in November 1991, DEET advised that Spanish was then a priority language in the policies of five of the

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<sup>47</sup> Dr Estela Valverde, submission, appendix 2. DEET told the Committee that the majority of Spanish language students in higher education in Australia are from Spanish speaking backgrounds, Committee Hansard, p. 1455. This was not the experience of Dr Martin Schurrah of Flinders University, see his submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1659.

<sup>48</sup> The Government's White Paper *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, issued in August 1991 is not entirely clear on the priority to be accorded to Spanish learning in Australia. The Policy Information Paper (PIP) states the following:

"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, Indonesia, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese."

The Companion Volume to the PIP adds that:

"In recognition of the need to maintain diversity in language provision, those language which are common priorities in most States and Territories should be targeted for more support" Prime facie, the stated policy does not guarantee any increase in resources allocated to Spanish - it is left up to education systems and institutions in the States to make the selection of eight priority languages out of a possible 14 languages .

Australian States.<sup>49</sup> Portuguese was not a priority in any State but was identified as a middle ranking language.

7.47 In April 1992 DEET informed the Committee that New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT had nominated Spanish as a priority language for 1992.<sup>50</sup>

7.48 The fact that Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have not included Spanish in their choice of priority languages for 1992 seems at variance with the view expressed to the Committee by the NLIA, that:

"The development of Spanish has become a high priority."<sup>51</sup>

7.49 In evidence to the Committee, DEET indicated that it had been hoped that the incentive program for teaching languages in Australian schools would concentrate effort in the senior secondary part of schooling:

"... more towards languages that the Government considers to be priority languages."<sup>52</sup>

It appears to the Committee that while the federal incentive program may increase overall language study at the Year 12 level, it will do little to increase the number of students choosing to study Spanish.

7.50 Professor Ingram pointed to the complexities of devising an appropriate and suitable language training policy in Australia:

"... the Australian language teaching system, although it is

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<sup>49</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 1428. In fact Spanish rated in the top six at that time in these states. See also Committee Hansard, p. 1455. DEET also hypothesised that "... because Latin American and Spanish migrants congregate in Melbourne and Sydney, in particular Sydney, that [Spanish] would be a language that would be better supported in New South Wales and to some extent in Victoria." *ibid.*, p. 1453.

<sup>50</sup> See also letter from Mr Ronald White which appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* on 21 February 1992. See also evidence from DEET, Committee Hansard, p. 1428. By declaring a language a priority language, the State attracts a payment of about \$300 from the Federal Government for each year 12 student studying that language. The funding is **not** tied to furthering the teaching of that language. The choice of languages offered to both primary and secondary students is a purely local decision made by each school. Letter to the Committee from DEET, dated 15 April 1992. As of April 1992 South Australia had not nominated its priority languages for 1992.

<sup>51</sup> NLIA, submission, p. 4. The NLIA is charged by its charter to provide national leadership in, and support for, language education in Australia.

<sup>52</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 1454.

extremely small, is very diverse and is necessarily diverse by world standards."<sup>53</sup>

7.51 Australia's population includes an exceptionally wide ethnic mix. It is also a fact of life that Australia's export markets will not always coincide with the ethnic origins of many of its people. The Committee accepts that this will inevitably result in competing pressures on Australian educational institutions providing language training.

7.52 The Committee acknowledges that many different reasons - cultural, educational, social, economic and political - will play a part in any single individual's choice of language other than English to study. The Committee also acknowledges the importance of freedom of choice in the selections made. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that the outcome of such choices should, as far as possible, also be in the wider national interest. In the view of the Committee, Spanish language training in Australia today at all levels of education systems does not reflect the present, or potential, importance of that language for Australia.

7.53 The Committee agrees with Professor Ingram that a way must be found of "setting priorities - encouraging a relatively small number of languages"<sup>54</sup> and giving individuals freedom to choose languages that are relevant to them.

**7.54 Recommendation thirty five: The Committee recommends that, in the implementation of the Government's Language Policy, the Federal and State Education Departments ensure that they themselves are fully aware, and ensure that potential students of foreign languages are made fully aware of the importance and value of Spanish as an international language.**

7.55 As previously indicated, the recent outcome in the choice of priority languages in several states and the way the program itself is structured raises serious questions about the extent to which the current incentive scheme will meet all the Government's objectives.

#### **How to improve Spanish language training**

7.56 When asked to indicate possible solutions to the present low level of Spanish language learning in Australia, Professor Ingram highlighted two requirements:

- . First, the need to devise a precise plan with a clear target; and
- . Second, the need to address the severe shortage of teachers in Spanish.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1170.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1170.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1179.

7.57 Professor Ingram proposed that Australian governments, both State and Federal should encourage institutions and universities to introduce Spanish with a specific target of producing a certain number of Spanish teachers by the year 2000.<sup>56</sup> The starting point for increasing the number of students doing Spanish in Australia should be the development of a "... rigorous and rational plan for the introduction of Spanish."<sup>57</sup> It was forcefully argued by Professor Ingram that:

"We need to take the specific decision at a State or a national level that by the year 2000 Spanish will be available in these schools. In the lead up to that, we need a supply of teachers. But that is the sort of detailed rigorous planning that is needed and without that it would be at best a haphazard, drip-feed approach. ... a certain number of teachers will be needed and we will need the training programs to cater for that."<sup>58</sup>

7.58 Professor Ingram believes that if the status of Spanish can be raised in Australia, enrolments in the language would equal those in French and Japanese by the turn of the century.<sup>59</sup>

7.59 In his *Report the Teaching of Modern Languages in Higher Education in Australia*, Professor Leal recommended that:

"... Spanish Language and cultural studies be designated a priority area in the next round of nominations for Key Centres of Teaching and Research."<sup>60</sup>

7.60 The Committee strongly endorses the emphasis Professor Leal has placed in his Report on the importance of improving Australia's Spanish language capabilities.

7.61 The Committee welcomes the Government's goal as expressed in its White Paper *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* of substantially expanding and improving the learning of languages other than English in Australia.

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1162, see also pp. 1165-6.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1180.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1163.

<sup>60</sup> Professor R.B. Leal, submission, p. 2.

7.62 Recommendation thirty six: The Committee recommends that in the implementation of the White Paper *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, resources be allocated in such a way as to ensure that by the year 2000 the provision of Spanish language training in Australia brings the Spanish language more nearly towards that attained by the French language, both in numbers of students and level of proficiency.

The Committee emphasises that, in the light of the extremely low level of foreign language study, particularly in the secondary education sector, in Australia today, the extra effort required for the Spanish language should *not* be at the expense of any of the other priority languages, but a net addition to current efforts.

7.63 As regards teacher supply, Professor Ingram expressed the view that a shortage of teachers of Spanish, rather than shortage of funds is the key problem of the present time and that "Little can be done until teacher supply is improved."<sup>61</sup>

Professor Ingram, went so far as to say during his evidence to the inquiry, that

"... we are starting in fact from so far behind in the provision of teachers that it would probably be difficult even to spend more than is being allocated at the moment."<sup>62</sup>

7.64 Several ways of attacking the problem were suggested. Of particular interest was a suggestion by Professor Ingram that native speakers of Spanish should be employed as language teaching assistants in schools. Under this scheme these assistants would have the long term opportunity, if they wish, to train as teachers who would then be employed in the various state educational systems as registered teachers of Spanish.<sup>63</sup>

7.65 Recommendation thirty seven: The Committee recommends that DEET, in cooperation with State education authorities, institute a scheme whereby native Spanish speakers who do not have Australian teaching qualifications may be employed as assistants in the teaching of that language in Australian schools.

7.66 Another suggestion made by witnesses was the use of exchanges between Australian English language teachers and Spanish language teachers from Latin America.<sup>64</sup> Such an arrangement might well be facilitated if it was included in any

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<sup>61</sup> Committee Hansard, p. 1162.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1173.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1166-7. For information on the use of Latin American teachers to teach Spanish in Australian schools see evidence from DEET, Committee Hansard, pp. 1445, 1446.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1166.



cultural agreements or any other, more general, Memorandum of Understanding that might be negotiated with Latin American countries in the future.

7.67 The Committee understands that Spanish Government authorities have already offered assistance to the teaching of Spanish in Australian schools,<sup>65</sup> and recently arranged to subsidise the cost of some Spanish teachers in several Australian schools.<sup>66</sup> The Committee welcomes the increased opportunities for Australian students to develop language skills in Spanish through support such as that provided by the Spanish Government.

**7.68 Recommendation thirty eight: The Committee recommends that DEET in cooperation with State education authorities actively explore the possibility of arranging teacher exchanges between Australia and the countries of Latin America as a means of overcoming the serious shortage of Spanish language teachers in Australia.**

7.69 The under-utilisation of Spanish language skills already existing in the Australian community was a theme that occurred in several submissions to the inquiry.

7.70 In his evidence, Professor Ingram called for greater recognition of the value of peoples' language skills. Professor Ingram is concerned that such skills held by migrants or their children be maintained and furthered. These language skills are seen as being of benefit to Australia. According to Professor Ingram, these foreign language skills should be given formal recognition through an assessment process conducted by the NLIA's language testing centres. People should receive certificates recognising their language skills. These certificates could also possibly be used in support of applications for admission to institutions of higher education.<sup>67</sup>

7.71 The views of Professor Ingram were given qualified support by DEET, in its evidence to the inquiry. The Department agreed that:

"... children who have a first language which is not English represent a resource to the community and we should be doing more, clearly, to recognise that skill."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* See submission from Oscar A. Florez Marquez, p. 4 for details of such support from the Spanish Government.

<sup>66</sup> *Committee Hansard*, pp. 1453-4, the majority of these teachers are located in NSW with a smaller number in Victoria, the ACT and South Australia. The total number of teachers involved is about 20.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1167-9.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1444.

However, the Department has not developed any scheme for recognising these language skills outside of the formal schooling system. Although the Department considered that "... it should not present a huge practical problem to actually implement a strategy,"<sup>69</sup> it did warn that:

"There might be all kinds of equity issues raised if, without going through courses, students were given credit which then counted for university entrance ..."<sup>70</sup>

**7.72 Recommendation thirty nine : The Committee recommends that DEET institute a system whereby language skills developed outside the formal schooling system can be assessed and acknowledged as a recognised education qualification.**

7.73 The NLIA suggested that native speakers of Spanish and Portuguese could be used to assist in the promotion of trade between Australia and the countries of Latin America. According to the NLIA:

"Australia has a considerable number of Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking citizens who constitute a readily adaptable resource for Australian businesses dealing in Latin America. Business needs to be encouraged to develop this resource. This will include not only the provision of appropriate training for professionals in the field of economics and commerce and who have language skills, but also appropriate rewards for those who use their bilingual skills in their work."<sup>71</sup>

7.74 In order to remove some of the impediments to trade between Australia and Latin America due to language difficulties the NLIA has suggested the establishment of Language for Export Centres. These centres would offer courses targeted at improving the language skills of Australian business people dealing with non-English speaking countries such as those in Latin America. The Committee understands that the NLIA is currently investigating the establishment of such centres at a variety of locations throughout Australia.<sup>72</sup>

7.75 A centre similar to those advocated by the NLIA, the *Language for Export Research Centre* has already been established at the University of Western Sydney.

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> NLIA, submission, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

According to the submission from Dr Estela Valverde, the Centre specialises in:

"... identifying and supporting the language needs of exporters to enable them to compete more efficiently in the international markets."<sup>73</sup>

The Centre will carry out research into:

- . the needs and use of languages other than English in the export and trading sectors in Australia;
- . the inter-cultural relationship dimension of language acquisition for export and trading purposes;
- . the potential for Australians, whose first language is not English to contribute to Australia's economic performance; and
- . English language as a potential commodity to be exported overseas.<sup>74</sup>

7.76 In addition to research, the submission states that the Centre provides the following services to the business community:

- . language and inter-cultural communication courses tailor made for clients;
- . international translation and interpreting services; and
- . acts as a referral centre for language related problems outside its realm of expertise.<sup>75</sup>

7.77 The Centre also engages in a range of liaison work with business, other universities and TAFE institutions as well as publishing papers and newsletters.<sup>76</sup>

7.78 The Committee believes that centres such as the Language for Export Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney have the potential to make a significant contribution to Australia's ability to do business in the countries of Latin America. The Committee is keen to see Language for Export Centres, as advocated by the NLIA, established throughout Australia.

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<sup>73</sup> Dr E. Valverde, submission, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

**7.79 Recommendation forty:** The Committee recommends that relevant Government Departments and authorities, such as DEET and Austrade, support, as a matter of priority, the inclusion of Spanish language training in the establishment and operation of Language Export Centres.

## Export of Australian Educational Services

7.80 Several of the submissions to the Committee referred to the potential for Australia to provide educational services, at all levels, including informal English language training and a wide range of post-graduate courses to Latin Americans.<sup>77</sup>

7.81 The provision of such services was seen as offering two major benefits for Australia. First, Australian institutions and companies providing such services would obviously benefit financially. Secondly, Australia's relations with Latin America, at a variety of levels, are likely to benefit significantly as a result of Latin Americans having the opportunity to visit and get to know Australia through their studies here.

7.82 Australia's share of the global international student market is estimated at about 2.5%, with experts believing that this could be increased to 5% by the end of the century.<sup>78</sup>

7.83 Although some institutions in Australia offering educational services to overseas students, such as English language colleges, have gone into a downturn over the last few years, universities are attracting significant numbers of foreign students. According to Mr Steve Lewis writing in the *Australian Financial Review* in August 1991:

"The Universities are now the fastest growing component of the export of education industry, and contribute a significant proportion of the almost \$1 billion a year earned in foreign revenue. ... The phenomenal growth in the export of education industry has also pushed a number of universities onto Australia's 'top 500' exporter list for the first time."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Insearch Language Centre, submission, Committee Hansard, pp. 952-3; AFMLTA, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1158. For the views of DEET on the education market in Latin America see Committee Hansard, p. 1430.

<sup>78</sup> *The Australian Financial Review*, 20 August 1991, p. 24.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*