

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

**Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and
beyond**

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000030

MP Sam Birrell on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 3

Language enrolment data breakdown

Question

Mr BIRRELL: Given the answer you've given to the chair, it might be difficult for you to answer this in terms of the lack of data. I get that there's a drop in people studying a foreign language in the first place, but has there been a steeper drop in Asian languages than European languages? Do you have that data?

Ms Samuelson: We do probably.

Ms Forbes: We don't have a breakdown of the difference between Asian languages and other languages in terms of the drop-off.

Mr BIRRELL: That's okay. To assist the question a bit: as more schools, particularly, anecdotally, in the nineties, started to offer Asian languages such as Indonesian, Mandarin and others, which in general terms are possibly more complex for an English-speaking person to learn than French, German or Spanish, has that difficulty contributed to people not wanting to study another language? Is that an experience that you think happens?

Ms Forbes: I couldn't speak for everyone, but it does sound like a sensible experience. In terms of data about the drop-off, we actually do have something that ACARA has been able to provide. From looking at the percentage of students learning a language other than English in year 12, we do see that there is a drop in different languages. I can walk you through each language or I can provide this on notice, but, if we just look at the percentage of year 12 students enrolled in languages other than English in 2013, 2018 and 2023 and compare, for example, Chinese with Italian—just for my ease—then we see that, for Chinese, in 2013 there were year 12 enrolments of 19.1 per cent, which reduced by 2023 to 17.4 per cent. In Italian, we had it at 9.4 per cent in 2013, which reduced to 7.6 in 2023. I'm happy to provide this table. I think me rattling them off isn't that helpful, but we can definitely give you that.

Answer

Table 1: Breakdown of Year 12 LOTE enrolments by language is provided at [Attachment A](#).

Attachment A

Table 1: Breakdown of Year 12 LOTE enrolments by language, 2006-2023

Year	Arabic	Chinese	French	German	Greek	Indonesian	Italian	Japanese	Spanish	Vietnamese
2006	2.0	18.9	18.2	9.1	1.8	6.4	9.5	19.8	2.7	2.3
2007	1.9	19.0	18.7	9.4	2.5	5.8	9.1	18.6	2.8	2.6
2008	2.0	20.0	19.0	9.0	2.0	5.0	8.0	19.0	3.0	3.0
2009	1.7	22.3	18.5	7.7	2.1	4.6	8.6	19.3	2.7	3.2
2010	1.7	20.2	19.6	7.8	2.2	4.8	8.6	19.8	2.9	3.2
2011	1.9	19.7	20.1	7.6	2.0	4.5	9.0	19.7	2.8	3.5
2012	1.7	18.7	21.1	7.7	2.1	3.9	9.3	20.1	3.2	2.9
2013	1.7	19.1	20.9	7.5	2.2	4.2	9.4	19.7	3.0	2.9
2014	1.8	19.7	20.6	7.8	2.4	4.1	8.8	20.0	3.4	2.7
2015	1.7	20.0	20.1	7.2	2.3	4.0	9.8	20.7	3.1	2.3
2016	2.0	19.7	19.9	7.4	2.2	3.8	9.6	20.5	3.0	2.5
2017	2.2	21.0	18.5	7.1	2.2	3.8	8.9	20.6	3.6	2.8
2018	2.4	21.9	17.9	6.8	2.2	3.7	8.6	21.4	3.3	3.0
2019	2.9	21.9	18.1	6.3	2.3	3.4	8.5	20.2	3.8	3.4
2020	2.8	19.4	18.0	6.1	2.0	3.8	8.4	20.9	4.6	3.8
2021	2.6	19.6	18.9	6.7	1.9	3.3	8.2	20.8	4.7	3.6
2022	2.9	18.5	18.6	5.7	2.3	3.1	7.7	23.0	4.3	2.9
2023	2.8	17.4	19.3	6.4	2.4	3.0	7.6	22.6	4.2	2.9

Source: ACARA, National Report on Schooling in Australia, 2023 - www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/year-12-subject-enrolments

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000031

MP Zoe McKenzie on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 5

Visa category for language teachers

Question

Ms McKENZIE: ...Do we have a visa category that's specifically about language teachers or language assistants?

Ms Samuelson: We do have a visa category for teachers, but I'd have to take on notice whether we've got one for language proficiency.

Answer

This question is not within the Department of Education's remit and is a matter for the Department of Home Affairs. The Department of Home Affairs requests that any questions related to visa categories be raised directly with them so that they can provide appropriate advice.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000032

MP Carina Garland on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 5

International comparisons of language learning time

Question

Dr GARLAND: I think there's probably some variability between states and territories on this one, so I accept that you might not necessarily have all the answers. My question goes to when language curriculums are being put together and decisions are being made in the sense of the broader curriculum at schools. It goes beyond just the Asian languages and how much time is dedicated to teaching language. I also accept that not every school offers languages. How does Australia compare with other OECD nations in terms of how we are prioritising general language learning in classrooms?

Ms Samuelson: We don't have an international comparison. We do have some information about what is required in each of the—like the number of hours et cetera. It is what we've picked up through public information. I'm not aware of any international comparisons that are available now, but the OECD is currently doing a study looking at language proficiency. The deputy secretary and I were involved in a preliminary interview a couple of months ago. So there will be some work coming out of the OECD in that area. I'm not sure exactly where it's going to land, but I think it may cover some of those areas.

Dr GARLAND: I guess part of my question is that, just anecdotally understanding other education systems around the world, there seems to be a lot more time spent, for instance, on learning English in classrooms. That's much more embedded and integrated across the curriculum. I know not every school offers a language at all in Australia. That research sounds very interesting, because I think there probably is research that shows how many hours you need to be exposed to something to become—

Ms Samuelson: We'll have a look at it and see if we can get something. We haven't provided you our submission yet, so we'll have a look into that and see if we can find some international comparisons on the extent to which Australia devotes to language learning in schools versus other countries in the OECD.

Answer

The OECD's 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study of 15-year-old students has a number of relevant findings.

Foreign language compared to other lessons

- On average across OECD countries, the amount of time that students reported spending learning foreign languages in regular school lessons is, on average, as much as they spend on core subjects such as language-of-instruction, mathematics and reading (about 3.6 hours per week).
- In 28 countries and economies, students reported spending **more** time in foreign-language lessons than in language-of-instruction lessons

- In 45 countries and economies, students reported spending **less** time in foreign-language lessons than in language-of-instruction lessons

Learning time in foreign-language lessons

- The OECD average was around 3.6 hours per week, and the EU average was close to 4 hours per week
- The countries where students reported the **least** time in foreign-language classes were Australia and New Zealand (1.2 hours per week).
- The countries where students reported the longest time in foreign-language classes were Luxembourg (6.2 hours per week) and Costa Rica (5.4 hours).

Participation in foreign-language lessons

- On average across the OECD, only 12% of students reported not learning any foreign languages at school. The average across the EU was 1.8%.
- In Australia, 63.6% of students reported not learning any foreign languages at school. Similar percentages were found in the UK (64.5%) and New Zealand (62.3%). The percentage for Canada (32.9%) was about half those reported for Australia, the UK and NZ. No figure was reported for the United States.¹

The Australian Curriculum was developed based on an indicative allocation of hours. These indicative hours were provided to the curriculum writers and represented an assumption about time-on-task made only for the purposes of curriculum development. For the Languages Curriculum, these indicative times were:

- F-6: equivalent to 5% per year
- Y7-10: equivalent to 8% per year

ACARA provides indicative time allocations for all subjects as a guide for schools and education authorities. Time allocations for delivery of subjects in schools are determined by relevant education authorities in each state or territory, or by an individual school.

The 2024 AFMLTA report 'The State of Languages Education in Australia' includes survey data from Australian language teachers about the average teaching time per week for their language at their school.

- In a significant proportion of schools, survey respondents reported that the time allocation to teaching languages was below ACARA's indicative hours.
- In primary schools, the most commonly reported time allocation was 45–60 minutes per week
- In Years 7 and 8, the reported time allocation ranged from 60 to 180 minutes per week, with the most common time allocation 60–90 minutes.
- In Years 9 and 10, the reported time allocation was 90–180 minutes per week.

The report can be found at <https://nlps.afmlta.asn.au/>.

¹ OECD, [The socio-economic gap in foreign-language learning](#), PISA in Focus 2021/116 (November), 2021.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000033

MP Carina Garland on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 5-6

Objectives and prioritisation of language vs cultural learning in curriculum

Question

Dr GARLAND: I guess, from there, we can obviously look at the data between the Asian and non-Asian languages. That goes to the comments that were being made before around the kind of cross-curriculum learning and how we embed some of that teaching, because, obviously, learning about culture is not always the same as learning language.

Ms Samuelson: No.

Dr GARLAND: What are the objectives with both of them? They might have different objectives, too—to go to Ms McKenzie's question around proficiency—or is it about cognitive development? Is it about both, and how do those decisions get made in terms of where the priorities might be for someone designing a school curriculum? That's what I guess I'd be interested in getting too.

Ms Samuelson: We'll have a look into it.

Answer

The Australian Government is helping build Asian capability in the schooling sector through the Australian Curriculum.

The importance of Asia and Australia's engagement with the region is recognised in the Australian Curriculum as a cross-curriculum priority. This priority area is based on:

- Knowing Asia and its diversity
- Understanding Asia's global significance
- Growing Asia-Australia engagement

Cross-curriculum priorities support and deepen student engagement with learning area content and are best developed within the context of learning areas.

Students also learn how to navigate a diverse world and understand people from different backgrounds through the Curriculum. The Intercultural Understanding general capability helps students develop the knowledge and skills needed to reflect on culture and cultural diversity, engage with cultural and linguistic diversity, and navigate intercultural contexts.

The Australian Curriculum: Languages Key Learning Area recognises that language learning:

- provides the opportunity for students to engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world and its peoples
- broadens students' horizons in relation to personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities

- provides opportunities for the community to engage socially, culturally and economically in domains such as business, diplomacy, education, science, tourism and trade.

The aim of all languages curricula are that students develop linguistic competence, understand the interrelationship of language and culture and understand themselves as communicators. Learning language(s) also develops learners':

- communication skills
- literacy skills in their first and additional languages
- intercultural capabilities
- understanding of, and respect for, diversity and difference, and an openness to different experiences and perspectives
- understanding and appreciation of how culture shapes world views and extends their understanding of themselves, their own heritage, values, culture and identity
- critical and creative thinking.

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**Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and
beyond**

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000034

MP Kate Chaney on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 6

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations reports

Question

Ms CHANEY: I'm interested in understanding more about what research the department has done into the drivers for the drop in language study. It sounds like there are some supply drivers, in terms of access to teachers, but also some demand drivers with kids not speaking foreign languages at home as much or ATAR factors. What about technology? Firstly, my broad question is: has the department looked into why there might be less demand for those languages or not? Do you think technology plays a role too? You can plug anything into Google Translate, which undermines the perceived value of being able to do that without a computer.

Ms Samuelson: In 2019, the former government funded the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations to look in depth into language learning in school education. If you go to their website, they've got quite a lot of detail. They've got three papers. They've got a discussion paper, and they also have a detailed report on the state of language learning in Australia. It's a little bit old; it's probably based on 2021 data. So it's not that old. As part of that, they also developed a draft national languages strategy and plan to inform language teaching in Australia. That work, as I said, was commissioned back in 2019, and it provides some really comprehensive data on language learning. That's the only research that I'm aware of that we've commissioned within the department.

Ms CHANEY: Does that go into what's driving the decline?

Ms Samuelson: Some of the driving factors et cetera, yes. It's the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations. If you go to that website, there's a link that goes directly to the strategy and the plan. I can't remember what the link is off the top of my head, but you'll find it quite easily.

CHAIR: Can we ask for that on notice, just to share it with the committee?

Ms Samuelson: We can provide it to you. We can provide you with all of the reports, definitely.

Ms CHANEY: That would be the most recent analysis—

Ms Samuelson: That would be the most recent.

Ms CHANEY: of the drivers of the decline.

Ms Samuelson: Yes.

Ms CHANEY: If that can be tabled—it sounded, from what you were reading out, that there may be no greater decline in Asian languages than there is in European languages.

Answer

The three papers produced by the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations are:

- The State of Languages Education in Australia: Provision and Participation (Research Project One)
- Futures of Languages Education in Australia: Policies, Plans and Processes (Research Project Two)
- Towards a National Plan and Strategy for Languages Education in Australia

They can be found at <https://nlps.afmlta.asn.au/>.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000035

MP Renee Coffey on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 7

Immersion programs in schools

Question

Ms COFFEY: I have a question around immersion programs, where students learn other areas of the curriculum in a foreign language. We've got a state school in my community in French—not in an Asian language. Does the department collect data on how many schools offer immersion programs and what the mechanism is for them to be able to take them on? Is there a certain framework they work within?

Ms Samuelson: We don't have that data, no. They'd be registered under the state authority.

Ms COFFEY: Would you have a sense, anecdotally, of how many schools offer immersion?

Ms Samuelson: Not off the top of my head, no. I know there are a few concentration language schools, but we can look into it and come back to you with some information.

Answer

The Australian Government Department of Education does not collect data on language immersion programs in Australian schools.

The table at [Attachment A](#) provides a list of early childhood centres and schools that offer immersion or bilingual language programs, identified through internet research by the department on 5 November 2025. The department makes no representation as to the nature or quality of the programs listed, or how many other schools and early childhood centres may also offer similar programs.

Full or partial immersion programs seem more likely to occur when there is a base of support from ethnic communities and/or countries which speak the language being taught.

Attachment A

Examples of immersion or bilingual language programs

Education Facility Name	Language	State/Territory
Early Childhood		
French-Australian Preschool	French	ACT
Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre	Chinese	ACT
St Nicholas Greek Australian Preschool and Childcare Centre	Greek	ACT
Galileo Spanish Australian Preschool	Spanish	ACT
Brookville Preschool	French	VIC
Renown Preschool	French	VIC
Almost French Preschool	French	VIC
La Grande Récré Preschool	French	VIC
F-12 Schools		
Telopea Park School (Lycée Franco-Australien de Canberra)	French	ACT
International French School of Sydney (Lycee Condorcet)	French	NSW
German International School	German	NSW
Sydney Japanese International School (K-9)	Japanese	NSW
International Grammar School	Chinese, French, German, Italian and Japanese	NSW
North Lakes State College	Italian	QLD
Varsity College	Chinese	QLD
Whites Hill State College	French	QLD
Primary Schools		
Mawson Primary School	Mandarin	ACT
Yarralumla Primary School	Italian	ACT
Killarney Heights Public School	French	NSW
Taren Point Public School (Kindergarten only)	French	NSW
Italian Bilingual School	Italian	NSW
Scotts Head Public School	Mandarin	NSW
Sydney Japanese International School (Years 1-9)	Japanese	NSW
Caulfield Junior College (Melbourne French School)	French	VIC
Caulfield Primary School	Japanese	VIC
Camberwell Primary School	French	VIC
Brunswick South Primary School	Italian	VIC
Abbotsford Primary School	Chinese	VIC
Footscray Primary School	Italian	VIC
Fitzroy Primary School	French	VIC
Huntingdale Primary School	Japanese	VIC
Bayswater South Primary School	German	VIC
Lalor North Primary School	Greek and Macedonian	VIC
Newlands Primary School	Spanish	VIC
Richmond West Primary School	Chinese and Vietnamese	VIC
Deutsche Schule Melbourne	German	VIC
Robertson State School	Chinese	QLD
Tingalpa State School	French	QLD
Wellers Hill State School	Japanese	QLD
Highgate School	French	SA
Oberthur Primary School	Chinese	WA
High Schools		
Auburn High School	French	VIC
Glen Eira College	French	VIC
Methodist Ladies College	French	VIC

Education Facility Name	Language	State/Territory
Benowa State High School	French	QLD
Mansfield State High School	French	QLD
Glennie School	French	QLD
Indooroopilly State High School	Spanish	QLD
Ferny Grove State High School	German	QLD
Kenmore State High School	German	QLD
Murrumba State Secondary College	Spanish	QLD
Robina State High School	Japanese	QLD
Unley High School	French	SA
Source: Internet research, 5 November 2025. The department makes no representation as to the nature or quality of the programs listed, or how many other schools and early childhood centres may also offer similar programs.		

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000036

MP Carina Garland on 29 October 2025, Proof Hansard page 8-9

University language data

Question

Dr GARLAND: I've got some questions for higher education too, it turns out! I've got two questions; they're connected. Firstly, what is data on people learning languages at university—obviously, for the purposes of this inquiry, specifically Asian languages? Secondly, is there any kind of outreach with those students who are learning languages to encourage them to.

Dr Hartmann: On the first one, I do have some numbers across different language groups—northern European; I've also got the Southeast Asian languages. I've got those trends. Across the board—I think you guys know this already—there has been a decline in students studying language at university, but it differs by language. We do have those numbers. On the second part of your question about if we, as a department, encourage the uptake of further study, that's not something that we, as a government agency, play a role in. We put that responsibility on the institutions, on the universities, in terms of how they structure their course offering in line with student demand. A lot of what we're seeing in the languages reflects that decline in demand for studying languages.

Answer

Higher Education Domestic Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL): Language studies.

Language Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Northern European Languages	921	842	838	818	745	604	496	435	390	366
Southern European Languages	3,235	3,015	2,958	2,751	2,526	2,338	2,217	1,871	1,813	1,812
Eastern European Languages	85	88	93	85	81	68	52	48	43	45
Southwest Asian and North African Languages	193	194	209	195	196	162	176	141	129	134
Southern Asian Languages	39	34	26	23	19	16	17	13	12	11
Southeast Asian Languages	332	300	277	236	209	181	159	140	135	130

Eastern Asian Languages	3,013	3,049	3,007	2,944	2,754	2,435	2,414	2,057	1,868	1,790
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Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Higher Education Statistics Collection – student data.

Notes:

1. Trends in domestic enrolments were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Caution should be used when interpreting trends over this period.
2. Data relate to all units of study classified to Australian Standard Classification of Education Narrow field of Education “0915 Language studies”
3. Languages included in the groups presented in the table can be found at: [Narrow Field 0915 Language and Literature | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000037

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Trend data on student enrolment in Asian languages

Question

1. What trend data is available to track the number of students studying Asian languages at primary schools overtime?
2. What trend data is available to track the number of students studying Asian languages at secondary schools overtime?
3. What trend data is available to track the number of students studying Asian languages at senior secondary schools particularly at year 12 level overtime?
4. What trend data is available to track the number of students (broken down by background-language and first-language learners as identified in the Australian Curriculum) studying Asian languages at senior secondary schools particularly at year 12 level?

Answer

1. The Australian Government does not collect data on the number of students studying Asian languages at primary schools.
2. The Australian Government does not collect data on the number of students studying Asian languages at secondary schools (to Year 10).
3. ACARA Year 12 subject enrolments data includes information about students enrolling in courses in the Languages other than English (LOTE) Learning Area. This data can be found on ACARA's website: www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/year-12-subject-enrolments.
4. The ACARA Year 12 subject enrolment data can be broken down by the language being studied, but not by background-language or first-language learners.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000038

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Trend data on schools offering Asian languages

Question

1. What trend data is available to track the number of primary schools offering Asian languages overtime?
2. What trend data is available to track the number of secondary schools offering Asian languages overtime?
3. What trend data is available to track the number of senior secondary schools offering Asian languages overtime?
4. What trend data is available to track the schools which have switched from offering Asian languages to offering European languages overtime?
5. What trend data is available to track enrolments at Community language schools?

Answer

The Australian Government does not collect data on the number of:

- primary schools offering Asian languages
- secondary schools offering Asian languages
- senior secondary schools offering Asian languages.

The Australian Government also does not collect data on the languages which schools offer, or schools which change the language they are offering schools, including those which have switched from offering Asian languages to offering European languages overtime.

State, territory and non-government education authorities make their own decisions about collecting and tracking this information for their schools.

The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for the funding of Community Language Schools. The Community Languages Australia (CLA) Annual Report 2023, published in October 2024, shows the number of schools, teachers and students enrolled in languages taught at Community Language Schools across Australia. This information can be found on the CLA website:

<https://communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/uploads/default/source/2024/10/bef05.CLAAnnualReport2023.pdf>

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000039

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Trend data and Commonwealth funding for Asian language study in higher education

Question

1. What trend data is available to track the number of Australian domestic students studying Asian languages at tertiary institutions including vocational education providers disaggregated to individual language level?
2. What trend data is available to track the number of international students studying Asian languages at tertiary institutions including vocational education providers disaggregated to individual language level?
3. Is there historical data available regarding the annual Commonwealth Government expenditure on the teaching of Asia languages in Australian universities? That is, the value of the Commonwealth's annual aggregate contribution through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme towards domestic enrolments in Asian languages at Australian universities.

Answer

1. The department collates and holds data for all domestic students studying Asian languages at Australian higher education providers from 2005 – 2024 in the Higher Education Statistics Collection. However, the data are not reportable at the individual language level, as they are grouped according to the Australian Standard Classification of Education. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations hold data related to vocational education. Trend data for domestic higher education students can be found in Attachment A.
2. The department collates and holds data for all international students studying Asian languages at Australian higher education providers from 2005 – 2024 in the Higher Education Statistics Collection. The data are not reportable at the individual language level, as they are grouped according to the Australian Standard Classification of Education. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations hold data related to vocational education. Trend data for international higher education students can be found in Attachment A.
3. The department is able to derive a timeseries estimate of the value of Commonwealth Grant Scheme expenditure on Commonwealth Supported enrolments in Asian languages at Australian universities using data sourced from the Higher Education Statistics Collection – Student data. However, as these data are not published in standard data products, it would require an unreasonable diversion of resources to extract and calculate the data.

RFI 25_773: Student load (EFTSL) by Year and Discipline group for Selected discipline groups (languages), Domestic students, 2005-2024

Source: Higher Education student statistics collection, 2024

Notes:

Discipline groups describe the principal subject matter of units of study according to the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), as Fields of Education describe that of courses
EFTSL has been rounded to whole numbers

Discipline	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
091500 Language and Literature	1,245	997	967	879	862	1,031	911	858	847	1,004	788	768	741	719	734	552	660	592	727	736
091501 English Language	1,102	1,184	1,336	1,396	1,459	1,396	1,375	1,344	1,172	1,226	1,430	1,404	1,358	1,298	1,272	1,255	1,224	974	951	951
091503 Northern European Languages	878	895	886	900	962	1,031	981	1,003	1,061	936	921	842	838	818	745	604	496	435	390	366
091505 Southern European Languages	3,008	3,109	3,047	3,109	3,339	3,574	3,558	3,591	3,468	3,389	3,235	3,015	2,958	2,751	2,526	2,338	2,217	1,871	1,813	1,812
091507 Eastern European Languages	96	76	80	76	87	81	74	85	76	71	85	88	93	85	81	68	52	48	43	45
091509 Southwest Asian and North African Languages	143	139	186	176	169	186	167	172	193	181	193	194	209	195	196	162	176	141	129	134
091511 Southern Asian Languages	21	31	27	30	26	25	25	28	33	35	39	34	26	23	19	16	17	13	12	11
091513 Southeast Asian Languages	523	457	421	404	359	394	360	388	349	341	332	300	277	236	209	181	159	140	135	130
091515 Eastern Asian Languages	2,444	2,391	2,364	2,405	2,508	2,617	2,646	2,771	2,890	2,984	3,013	3,049	3,007	2,944	2,754	2,435	2,414	2,057	1,868	1,790
091517 Australian Indigenous Languages	22	16	20	33	24	8	36	14	30	35	41	49	36	47	39	54	57	63	56	40
091519 Translating and Interpreting	104	120	122	116	154	153	150	166	188	225	233	248	253	263	240	300	309	246	197	189
091521 Linguistics	1,812	1,730	1,654	1,595	1,705	1,711	1,963	2,141	1,877	1,823	1,768	1,707	1,706	1,656	1,665	1,658	1,653	1,450	1,390	1,513
091523 Literature	4,411	4,469	4,412	4,541	4,946	5,167	5,355	5,155	5,304	5,166	4,896	4,697	4,677	4,356	4,012	4,105	3,800	3,545	3,450	3,402
091599 Language and Literature not elsewhere classified	631	512	482	490	681	496	583	718	785	723	748	685	637	695	668	621	799	921	954	1,137

RFI 25_773: Student load (EFTSL) by Year and Discipline group for Selected discipline groups (languages), Overseas students, 2005-2024

Source: Higher Education student statistics collection, 2024

Notes:

Discipline groups describe the principal subject matter of units of study according to the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), as Fields of Education describe that of courses
EFTSL has been rounded to whole numbers

Discipline	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
091500 Language and Literature	202	140	159	150	139	164	132	130	96	94	90	142	194	195	214	184	190	210	306	365
091501 English Language	524	581	663	956	1,077	1,528	1,524	1,263	1,110	1,118	1,299	1,214	1,444	1,461	1,468	1,008	648	678	995	939
091503 Northern European Languages	72	75	72	79	93	92	86	85	95	80	78	107	125	119	121	74	75	71	57	55
091505 Southern European Languages	270	286	246	293	324	350	371	348	293	308	277	308	329	362	355	261	250	218	196	185
091507 Eastern European Languages	<5	<5	<5	5	<5	5	<5	5	5	4	3	6	9	10	8	5	<5	<5	<5	<5
091509 Southwest Asian and North African Languages	9	12	14	20	25	22	33	28	17	18	18	16	21	16	14	12	11	9	9	14
091511 Southern Asian Languages	<5	<5	5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	5	6	5	<5	5	6	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
091513 Southeast Asian Languages	54	46	42	45	35	41	38	38	39	50	48	60	86	78	90	74	79	64	72	44
091515 Eastern Asian Languages	1,359	1,443	1,411	1,496	1,714	2,035	2,114	2,128	1,877	1,801	1,795	2,070	2,414	2,777	3,069	2,383	2,634	2,456	2,061	1,737
091517 Australian Indigenous Languages	<5	<5	-	<5	-		<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	-	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
091519 Translating and Interpreting	352	502	641	626	677	779	608	438	388	418	464	547	676	704	736	654	673	674	745	665
091521 Linguistics	624	645	644	668	651	606	622	632	558	543	509	664	887	1,008	1,103	990	983	904	960	1,033
091523 Literature	352	348	329	289	273	285	265	211	203	179	182	200	223	253	276	227	197	202	227	250
091599 Language and Literature not elsewhere classified	104	99	100	95	108	99	97	97	105	79	68	53	60	80	77	61	63	79	93	107

Counts less than 5 have been masked to protect re-identification of personal information

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000040

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Asian languages in schools

Question

1. What policy levers are available to the Commonwealth to increase the number of schools that offer Asian languages?

2. What is the Department's assessment of the demand levers that shape the number of Australian students studying Asian languages?

For example a students' interest in a country and its language, a students' connection through family heritage, the quality of their learning experience, students and parents' assessments of the contribution language study could make to their ATAR, students and parents' assessment of job prospects.

3. What is the Department's assessment of the supply levers that shape the number of Australian students studying Asian languages?

For example teachers' and school leadership interest in teaching Asian languages, availability of qualified, quality teachers, resources for curriculum development.

4. What policy levers are available to the Department to encourage secondary school students to continue priority Asian languages through to senior levels?

5. The Australian Council of State School Organisations noted that the "treatment" of the Australian Curriculum's cross-curriculum priority, 'Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia' is "often broad and inconsistently embedded across subjects and jurisdictions".

"Families report that Asia-related content is frequently sidelined or absorbed into generic multicultural or interfaith learning, rather than providing the explicit Asia focus intended. This has diluted its impact and made it harder for families to see a clear progression of Asia capability throughout schooling."

Are there reporting and monitoring mechanisms in place to track primary and secondary school's implementation of the cross-curriculum priority, 'Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia' and the General Capability 'Intercultural Understanding'?

Answer

State and territory governments and non-government education authorities operate and regulate schools and have responsibility for the implementation of all elements of the Australian Curriculum including which languages they offer.

The Department has not undertaken any work to assess the supply or demand levers that shape the number of Australian students studying Asian languages.

There are limited opportunities available to influence individual students' acquisition of language. While Australian Tertiary Admissions Rankings (ATAR) loadings or bonuses for Year 12 language study may make this a more attractive subject choice for students planning to go on tertiary education, the Australian Government Department of Education is not involved in the determination of ATARs.

State and territory governments and non-government education authorities are also responsible for cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities. There are no reporting or monitoring mechanisms in place to track how these are implemented.

At the local level, schools and teachers have flexibility in how they implement the Curriculum, including how they incorporate the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities in their teaching in the 8 Learning Areas, where appropriate and relevant.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000041

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Teacher supply

Question

1. Are there currently any Commonwealth initiatives to attract measures in place to attract current pre-service and in-service teachers to take up Asian language teaching as an area of specialisation?
2. Does the Department coordinate with the Department of Home Affairs to include educators with Asian language expertise on the Skilled Occupation list across the schooling sectors (early childhood / primary / secondary)?
3. In Victoria, primary schools were mandated to teach a language other than English, but many have had to apply for exemptions over the recent years because they could not secure necessary teachers.
 - a. How many schools have applied for exemptions in Victoria?
 - b. How many schools have applied for exemptions in other jurisdictions?
 - c. Does the Commonwealth monitor these trends?

Answer

1. The Department of Education does not currently have any initiatives or measures in place to attract current pre-service and in-service teachers to take up Asian language teaching as an area of specialisation.
2. The Department of Education does not coordinate with the Department of Home Affairs to include educators with Asian language expertise on the Skilled Occupation list.
3. Policies, implementation and data collection related to mandating the teaching of a language other than English, including any exemptions, are the responsibility of state, territory and non-government education authorities. The Australian Government does not receive data or monitor trends related to this issue.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000042

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Sister school arrangements

Question

What mechanisms does the Commonwealth have in place to encourage sister-school partnerships and teacher exchanges between Australian schools and partners in Asia?

Answer

The Department of Education engages regularly with Asian partner governments on opportunities for education cooperation across schools and higher education. Some Asian partner countries have raised interest in implementing teacher exchanges with Australian schools, which we have shared with States and Territories for consideration. While school programs are ultimately the responsibility of the States and Territories, the Commonwealth is able to advocate opportunities and highlight the importance of Australia's relations with particular partner countries.

The department regularly engages through the Commonwealth, State and Territory International Education Forum, which brings together government officials with responsibilities for international education to inform the development and implementation of national policy priorities for the sector.

The department also provides advice to foreign universities operating in Australia who are interested in delivering programs to high school students, noting there are additional legal requirements when enrolling overseas students under the age of 18 in Australia.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000043

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Teaching pedagogy

Question

1. Who is responsible at the Commonwealth level for best practice in pedagogy and the methods for how languages are taught at our schools?
2. What is international best practice for the teaching of languages in schools?
3. How has this changed over time?
4. Do Australian Schools implement current international best practice in language teaching?
5. Does the Commonwealth monitor this in any way?

Answer

While the Australian Government plays a national leadership role in school education, decisions about pedagogy and teaching methods for languages instruction are made by state and territory government and non-government education authorities and individual schools. Education authorities, school leaders, teachers and communities determine how languages are taught within their schools, and each jurisdiction takes a different approach to the delivery of languages education.

On 11 December 2023, in response to recommendations 1 and 2 of *Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel*, all Education Ministers endorsed amendments to the *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*. These set out core content that higher education providers must embed in their ITE degrees by 31 December 2025. A key feature of the new Core Content area 2 is a focus on effective pedagogical practices.

The Australian Government has not undertaken any work to identify international best practice for the teaching of languages in schools or to identify changes in international best practice over time.

The department is aware that PISA 2025 has introduced a Foreign Language Assessment to generate comparable data on students' foreign language proficiency and insights into best practices for teaching and learning a foreign language. This first cycle is assessing students' foreign language competence in English as a Foreign language, as this is the most commonly taught foreign language in schools around the world. Australia is not participating in this cycle, but notes that the coverage of languages may progressively widen in future

cycles. Further information is available at www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/foreign-language-learning/pisa-2025-foreign-language-assessment.html.

Implementation of language teaching is the responsibility of state, territory and non-government education authorities and individual schools. The Australian Government does not collect any data about how languages are taught in schools, or monitor how languages are taught in schools.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000044

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

School trips to Asia

Question

We've heard mixed reports from school stakeholders about state and territory education department approaches to approvals for overseas school trips to Asian countries for language students.

It's been suggested that there were occasions in which the advice to schools provided by the State and Territory education departments and directorates did not align with the risk ratings for overseas destinations published on DFAT's Smartraveller website.

- a. Is the Department aware of this issue?
- b. How can the Department ensure State and Territories are informed by DFAT advice when approving schools' overseas travel requests?

Answer

Child safety is a high priority and an important consideration when approving overseas travel requests for school students. The department is aware of some cases where Australian state governments and schools have raised concerns about the lack of mandatory background checks for host families abroad, and have therefore been unable to approve existing homestay programs. In these cases, the international counterparts would need to introduce host family screening measures aligned with Australian standards (such as a Working With Children Check) in order for Australian students to participate.

The department's offshore network is able to advocate to international partner governments on the need for increased child safety measures in host family arrangements, in order to continue these valuable cultural and education exchanges.

Current homestay safety measures in Australia for international students include (open source):

- All states and territory governments, as well as contracted homestay agencies, require Working With Children Checks (WWCC), or equivalent, and/or police background checks of everyone over 18 years of age (15 in the Northern Territory) residing (full time or part time) at the homestay accommodation.
- An inspection of the accommodation is also required. Some states require additional periodic inspections during the homestay.

- Many states/territories have aligned their host family requirements with the Homestay Standards of Australian Government Schools International at www.agsi.org.au/homestay-standards/ a collaborative association of government schools with international student programs.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000045

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Community languages – Interaction with formal education

Question

The Council of Chinese Language Schools Victoria (CCLSV) which represents over 25 weekend community schools across Victoria notes that community language classes provide “culturally grounded, accessible education outside the mainstream sector”.

However, they are “under-recognised in national policy frameworks” and there is “is little integration between mainstream and community sectors in curriculum, accreditation, or data collection”.

The CCLSV suggested that aligning the curriculum and credit pathways between the Community language schools and mainstream schooling to recognised certifications such as VCE or VET would be of benefit.

- a. Has the Department considered how community language can be better integrated with formal education and pathways created for accreditation?
- b. Is there any work being undertaken by the Department to integrate the language training undertaken at Community Language Schools with the formal school curriculum?

Answer

Secondary school students in all states and territories can undertake a vocational education and training (VET) course at school with the opportunity to attain a nationally recognised VET qualification in Applied Language, as well as providing credit towards their Senior Secondary Certificate of Education. Jurisdictions determine which languages are available.

Community language schools are not considered schools as defined under the *Australian Education Act 2013*, and they are not required to teach the Australian Curriculum. The Department is not undertaking any work in relation to integrating the language training at Community Language Schools with the Australian Curriculum.

The Department does not have policy responsibility for community languages education. Responsibility for community languages sits with the Department of Home Affairs including funding for the Community Language Schools Grant Program.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000046

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Higher Education - Asian languages

Question

1. Is it a Commonwealth Government objective to increase the number of Australian university students studying Asian languages?
2. Are there international examples or models that Australia can learn from to encourage student uptake in language units?
3. The India Economic Strategy to 2035 (first published in 2018) recommended that “Australian universities should partner with business to promote India literacy in Australia through the expansion of Indian studies, including language studies, in Australian universities”. It also recommended that “the study of Indian languages should be expanded”.

In 1997 there were six Australian universities which taught Hindi. In 2025, there are only two, with only ANU teaching Hindi in-person.

- a. What levers are available to the Department to support Indian studies and South Asian languages other than Hindi (e.g. Bengali, Tamil, Punjabi, Kannada) being taught at our universities?
- b. Are there plans to include South Asian languages other than Hindi (e.g. Bengali, Tamil, Punjabi, Kannada) in the Australian Curriculum for schools to kickstart this pipeline through to universities?
- c. Is the Commonwealth considering ways to recruit teachers for these languages?
- d. Is the Commonwealth developing curriculum materials to support this?

Answer

1. The Government encourages universities to offer a broad range of programs to meet student demand and the needs of the communities they serve.
2. The department is aware of work other countries do to promote language learning and this information is an input into policy making in this area.

3. a) In February 2025, the Government released A New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India. The Roadmap builds on the 2018 India Economic Strategy to 2035, refining and adapting Australia's approach in response to economic, environmental and geostrategic developments. Education and skills is identified as a sector of significant potential, noting that Australia is a tertiary education and skills partner of choice and that Indian international students are the second largest cohort. The Action Plan identifies multiple mobility and research programs which help to build people to people relationships and facilitate mutually beneficial knowledge and skills transfer between Australia and India.

The Government also established the Centre for Australia-India Relations (CAIR) in 2023 to support and facilitate greater collaboration and engagement with India. The CAIR is focused on four pillars: building business engagement with India, promoting informed public debate, engaging Indian-Australian communities to support the bilateral relationship, and deepening cultural connections and mutual understanding. The CAIR seeks to build India capability and literacy among the business community in Australia and supports academic, business and cultural links with India through its flagship Maitri Grants, and its Scholarships and Fellowships program.

Further, the Government has invested \$25 million over four years to support 600 community language schools across Australia help more than 90,000 students learn 84 languages. \$5 million of this funding is dedicated to specialist Asian languages, including Hindi.

b) c) d) The Australian Curriculum is developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and agreed by all Education Ministers. The current version of the Australian Curriculum was endorsed by Education Ministers in April 2022. It includes 14 languages including 6 Asian languages.

State, territory and non-government education authorities are responsible for delivering the Australian Curriculum, including decisions about implementation timeframes, classroom practices and resources that complement teaching of the Australian Curriculum.

Decisions about how the Australian Curriculum is taught, including the choice of which languages in which schools, is a matter for state and territory government and non-government education authorities and individual schools.

Where jurisdictions/systems believe there is a particular need for a language that is not included in the Australian Curriculum, they are able to determine this at the state level. For example, the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) provides opportunities for students to study Tamil in Kindergarten to Year 10 (K–10).

The ACARA Modern Languages Support Resource has been created to assist jurisdictions and community groups in developing curricula for languages that sit outside of those languages which have been published by ACARA in Version 9.0.

The next full review of the Australian Curriculum is scheduled for 2032, in line with the recently revised 10-year review cycle. The review will be led by ACARA, with outcomes endorsed by the Education Ministers Meeting. The review will include significant consultation to identify and consider any potential changes that may be required. ACARA will work closely with teachers, unions, principal associations, education departments, and a wide range of other stakeholders to ensure a broad range of voices are heard.

Any decision to add new languages to the Australian Curriculum will be through the review process.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000047

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Higher education - Area studies

Question

The 2023 report “Australia’s Asia Education Imperative” by the Asian Studies Association of Australia noted “there has been an accelerated shift away from a traditional area studies model of teaching Asian Studies that emphasised language acquisition and comprehensive study of a particular Asian country or region.”

And noted that “evidence suggests that the promise of mainstreaming is being missed: with a few exceptions, there has been a decline in Asia content across universities.” with “this gap creating the risk that most Australian students have little or even no opportunity to study Asia at university”.

- a. Has the Department considered the impact that mainstreaming Asian area studies across our Australian universities has had on Asian studies and language specialists?
- b. Has consideration been given to the levers available to the Department to help support an increase in Asian area studies specialists?

Answer

- a) The Department has not undertaken any specific work to consider the impacts that trends in university course content or delivery methods may have had on Asian studies and language specialists.
- b) As autonomous self-accrediting institutions, it is universities that determine their course offerings, structure, content and delivery methods. There are no legislative provisions that would allow the Department discretionary power to compel universities to offer certain courses or intervene in operational decisions.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000048

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

National Languages Plan and Strategy for Languages Education in Australia (NLPS Project)

Question

In 2019 the Department of Education, Skills, and Employment engaged the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations to produce a National Languages Plan and Strategy for Languages Education in Australia (NLPS Project).

The first report “Research Project One: The state of languages education in Australia: Provision and participation” included substantial amounts of data.

- a. Are there ongoing reporting mechanisms in place from education jurisdictions to track schools offering languages and the number of students undertaking language studies in both Government schools and non-Government schools under the Australian Curriculum?
- b. If no, why not?
- c. Is this something the Commonwealth has considered?

The final product from the NLPS project “Towards a National Plan and Strategy for Languages Education” included 4 key recommendations as well as an overarching goal, 10 high-level goals and further sub-goals.

- d. What consideration was given to these goals by the Department and what progress has been made since the release of this report?
- e. What action has been taken to address the key recommendations?
- f. What review mechanisms are in place to track progress on the goals and recommendations?

Answer

Implementation of language teaching, including collecting and reporting on data related to language teaching, is the responsibility of state, territory and non-government education authorities and individual schools.

ACARA reports on Year 12 subject enrolments, including students enrolling in courses in the Languages other than English (LOTE) Learning Area, on the National Report on Schooling in Australia. Further information is available at: www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/year-12-subject-enrolments.

The former Australian Government funded the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) to develop a draft national languages strategy and plan to inform language teaching in Australia. This work represents the views of AFMLTA, based on teacher surveys and did not have access to jurisdictional data.

This work has added to the knowledge base available to governments, researchers, schools and teachers in relation to language teaching. The department understands that the key issues from the AFMLTA research will be part of a future discussion with ACARA's Languages Network, which comprises representatives from each state and territory.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the education system and beyond

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 29 October 2025

Outcome: Schools & Youth

Department of Education Question No. IQ25-000049

MP Tim Watts provided in writing.

Coordination

Question

1. How often was building Australia's Asia capability (including through Asian languages) an agenda item for the Education Council until it was disestablished in 2020?
2. How often has building Australia's Asia capability (including through Asian languages) been an agenda item for the Education Ministers Meeting since it commenced in its current configuration in 2021?
3. How often has building Australia's Asia capability (including through Asian languages) been an agenda item for National Cabinet since its establishment in 2020?

Answer

1. Education Council (EC) agendas are EC-in-confidence however, a Communiqué detailing meeting discussions is published on the Department of Education website following each meeting. Building Australia's Asia capability is not detailed in the published Communiqués. www.education.gov.au/education-ministers-meeting/education-ministers-meeting-communiques.
2. Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) agendas are EMM-in-confidence however, a Communiqué detailing meeting discussions is published on the Department of Education website following each meeting. Building Australia's Asia capability is not detailed in the published Communiqués. www.education.gov.au/education-ministers-meeting/education-ministers-meeting-communiques.
3. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has provided the following response: Building Australia's Asia capability (including through Asian languages) has not been on the agenda of a National Cabinet meeting.