

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the Education System and Beyond

Submission 1 – Council of Chinese Language Schools Victoria (CCLSV)

Date: 11 October 2025

Re: Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education Inquiry into Asia Capability

Dear Committee Members,

Inquiry into Building Asia Capability in Australia through the Education System and Beyond

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Date: 27 October 2025

Re: Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education Inquiry into Asia Capability

Dear Committee Members,

The Council of Chinese Language Schools Victoria (CCLSV) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry into *Building Asia Capability in Australia through the Education System and Beyond*.

Representing over 25 weekend community Chinese language schools across Victoria, CCLSV supports thousands of students, teachers, and families who are deeply committed to Chinese language learning and intercultural understanding. For decades, community language schools have sustained Australia's engagement with Asian languages—particularly Chinese—by providing culturally grounded, accessible education outside the mainstream sector.

Despite their critical role in strengthening Australia's linguistic and cultural capacity, community schools remain under-recognised in national policy frameworks and under-resourced in funding priorities. This submission outlines CCLSV's perspective on the Terms of Reference and provides practical recommendations for enhancing national strategies for Chinese language education and Asia capability development.

1. Structural Enablers and Barriers

CCLSV identifies several systemic challenges confronting community-based Chinese education:

- Inconsistent policy recognition: Community language schools are often excluded from long-term planning despite their reach and contribution.
- Short-term and limited funding: Current grant structures do not provide stability for program continuity or teacher development.
- Fragmented coordination: There is little integration between mainstream and community sectors in curriculum, accreditation, or data collection.

CCLSV recommends:

- Establishing a National Community Languages Framework aligned with Australia's broader Asia capability agenda.
- Introducing multi-year funding models to support program sustainability, teacher retention, and innovation.
- Recognising community teaching experience and overseas qualifications within national teacher registration standards.
- Strengthening government–community partnerships to coordinate policy delivery, research, and data sharing.

2. Good Practice Models for Building Asia Capability

Across Victoria, CCLSV schools have developed highly effective, locally driven initiatives that directly foster Asia capability:

- Collaborative partnerships with mainstream schools that enable continuity of Chinese learning.
- Parent and community engagement programs that promote intercultural understanding beyond the classroom.
- Professional networks and training facilitated by CCLSV, fostering pedagogical innovation and digital resource development.
- Cultural festivals and bilingual events that highlight Australia's multicultural strengths and build community cohesion.

CCLSV recommends:

- Expanding scalable models of collaboration between mainstream and community sectors.
- Recognising cultural events and intercultural programs as integral components of Asia capability development.
- Investing in digital platforms such as Compass that connect community teachers to national professional learning and curriculum resources.

3. Current State of Chinese Language Learning in Community Schools

Chinese remains the most widely taught Asian language in community education, yet participation and workforce sustainability remain fragile:

- High enrolments at beginner levels contrast with sharp declines at advanced stages, due to limited credentialing or credit recognition.
- Teacher shortages and reliance on volunteers constrain quality and innovation.
- Curriculum misalignment between community and mainstream schools impedes student progression.

CCLSV recommends:

- Supporting curriculum alignment and credit pathways between community learning and mainstream schooling, particularly linking community school achievement with recognised credentials (e.g., VCE Chinese or nationally endorsed certificates such as VCE VET Applied Languages - Chinese).
- Providing teacher training scholarships and recognition pathways for community educators.
- Exploring credit-bearing systems that formally recognise long-term participation in accredited community language schools—thereby incentivising retention and continuity.

4. Expanding Asia Capability Beyond Language Learning

Community Chinese schools are powerful platforms for developing intercultural understanding, empathy, and global citizenship—key pillars of Asia capability. Their programs nurture identity, belonging, and respect for cultural diversity.

CCLSV recommends:

- Embedding Asia capability frameworks across the national curriculum, explicitly valuing heritage and community language learning.
- Supporting intercultural learning projects that link language study with history, society, and contemporary Asian contexts.
- Promoting university and industry partnerships to demonstrate the career and civic value of bilingual and bicultural competence.

5. Teacher Education and Workforce Development

Consultation with principals and teachers highlights acute challenges in workforce recruitment, retention, and recognition. To address these:

- Establish pathways for community educators—including those with overseas qualifications or substantial experience—to teach accredited programs such as VCE Chinese under a supervised or provisional accreditation model.
- Partner with universities (e.g., RMIT, Deakin, Monash) to offer Diploma-level or micro-credential programs that articulate into initial teacher education degrees.
- Support teaching practicums in community language schools for pre-service teachers specialising in Chinese, providing authentic teaching contexts and workforce pipelines.

6. Whole-of-Government Coordination

Sustaining Australia’s Asia capability requires cooperation across federal, state, and community levels.

CCLSV recommends:

- Establishing a National Taskforce on Asian Languages and Community Education, including representation from the Department of Education, DFAT, Austrade, Jobs and Skills Australia, and state education authorities.
- Ensuring community language bodies such as CCLSV have a seat in national policy consultations, implementation planning, and evaluation processes.

7. Conclusion

Building Asia capability extends beyond language proficiency—it is a long-term investment in Australia’s cultural confidence, social harmony, and regional engagement. Community Chinese schools play an indispensable role in this endeavour. They cultivate language skills, intercultural understanding, and a sense of shared identity that strengthens Australia’s multicultural fabric.

CCLSV stands ready to collaborate with government, education systems, and the broader community to ensure that Chinese language education—and, by extension, Asia capability—receives the recognition, resourcing, and strategic attention it deserves.

We thank the Committee for considering this submission and would be pleased to provide further evidence or participate in hearings and consultations.

Yours sincerely,

Delan LIN, President

Chuanshuang ZHANG, General Secretary

Council of Chinese Language Schools Victoria (CCLSV)

Email: huaxiaolianluohui@gmail.com



WeChat Public Account:

