SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION. EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-10

Outcome 3

DEEWR Question No. EW0323_10

Senator Cormann asked on 3 June 2009 EEWR Hansard page 31:

Question

Languages at Tertiary Institutions

Senator CORMANN—The report (Go8 report "Languages in Crisis") points out that the percentage of year 12 students graduating with a second language has fallen from 40 per cent in the 1960s to 30 per cent in 2007, which of course covers a period of governments of both persuasions. A specific issue I would like to know about is that apparently there are now only 29 languages offered at tertiary institutions compared with 66 some decades ago. You are not aware of this, because you are not aware of the report. However, there is a recommendation for a joint policy commitment from the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to reverse those statistics.

Has any work been done to increase the number of languages being taught at tertiary institutions across Australia?

Answer

Languages at Tertiary Institutions

The Australian Government has supported a number of projects that will increase the number of languages being taught at tertiary institutions across Australia.

Under the 2008 Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund, funding has been provided for two projects by Australian universities to enhance and diversify language provision:

- The Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies, led by Murdoch University, received \$390,000 for a project aimed at enabling students from partner universities to undertake studies in Indonesia for credit at their home university.
- The University of Queensland received \$2,271,000 for a project to ensure the sustainability in Brisbane of tertiary award study in Indonesian, Korean, German and French by students at The University of Queensland, Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology.

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) has supported projects including:

- A 2009 Fellowship for Professor David Hill, Murdoch University, to develop a national strategic plan for Indonesian language in Australian universities.
- Innovation with Quality Assurance: online curriculum development for the University of New England's multi-institutional collaborative programs in German at New England,

James Cook and Newcastle universities. This project's aim is to advance national understanding of collaborative models of teaching suitable for languages and small enrolment disciplines.

• a Discipline Support Strategy for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. One of the strategies is looking at ways that state-based groups can look at offerings, successes and gaps and where they might work together in areas of small enrolment (such as languages).

The Australian Government has committed funding of \$62.4 million over four years for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) to increase opportunities for school students to become familiar with the languages and cultures of our Asian neighbours, namely China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea.

It is anticipated that this program will have a flow on effect to the higher education sector where students will develop an interest languages and continue this at tertiary level.