



October 6, 2008

34/2008

E-Language

The 6th National Conference of Community Languages Australia in Perth Sets Direction for National activity

The 6th National Conference of Community Languages Australia was held in Perth on Saturday October 4, 2008 and was judged by all an overwhelming success.

Over 150 participants from all States and Territories had the opportunity to network, increase their overall understanding of languages education and cultural maintenance programs. It set the path for future directions and priorities, one of these being to ensure community languages schools in Australia and Community Languages Australia continue to receive funding under Commonwealth and jurisdictional funding programs

The Conference theme was: **2008 The International Year of Languages - Where Languages and Culture Come Together**. Held at the Catholic Education Office Conference Centre, the Conference discussed the issues of future COAG funding and Commonwealth – State and Territory Funding arrangements. The Conference called on all Governments to continue their support for community languages school programs as a vital partner in the delivery languages education in Australia.

Enzo Sirna, Chair of the Organising Committee and Vice President of Ethnic Schools Association in Western Australia (ESAWA) and the Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Association (AFESA), who with his co workers spent much time and effort preparing the Conference program welcomed all present and outlined the organising committee's aim in preparing the program – Network, Learn, Participate and Enjoy!

Halina Szunejko, President of ESAWA, and Tassos Douvartzides, President of AFESA, welcomed all present and thanked them for tireless efforts.

The Premier of Western Australia Colin Barnett MLA, who was also a former Minister for Education, presented quite succinctly the relevance of languages education and the important work being done by community languages schools. He indicated his Government's support for the Program. The Premier was in his 10th day in office. His attendance was very much appreciated, as expressed by the Community Languages Australia's Executive Director, Stefan Romaniw, in his vote of thanks. Mr Romaniw mentioned that the Premier's participation sent a strong message of support and this was acknowledged in the participants' response to the Premier's address. Mr Romaniw also provided a national overview of the work of community languages schools.

The program that followed included key note addresses, panels and workshops, all of which were lively and energetic sessions filled with information and thought provoking issues.

Lia Tedesco, Former Chair of MLATAV, gave a through provoking presentation on current and future funding models under COAG.

Dr Ken Cruickshank, Senior Lecturer TESOL, University of Wollongong, spoke on changes in the children's use of their languages in the home and the impact of travel, internet and cable TV.

Kurt Mullane, Manager Professional Development, Asia Education Foundation, provided some practical advice on the promotion of languages.

Jurisdictional representatives who formed part of a panel - Clare Busing (WA), John Kiosoglous (SA), Barbara Downing (QLD), and Kypros Kyprianou (VIC) - reported on their activities and also expressed strong support for Community Languages Australia's work and its efforts in incorporating parts of the Quality Assurance Framework into jurisdictional accreditation processes. Consular presentations from the Italian and Japanese Consulates were also very supportive. The Youth Ambassadors for Languages presentations were also a big hit with young people speaking about their experiences.
[Full program with all presenters attached]

A new dimension to the National Conference was the inaugural Conference Dinner which was held at the University Club of the University of WA.

The dinner gave participants an opportunity in a more relaxed atmosphere to discuss the day's proceedings, make new acquaintances and strengthen existing ones. Enzo Sirna welcomed all present, including the key note speaker, The Hon Prof. Kim Beazley, Consular representatives, senior members of the Department of Education and Training, University WA representatives, the National Trust of Australia (WA) and many others.

The Hon Kim Beazley spoke of the importance of languages in today's very mobile world. He also reinforced the important role that community languages schools play in ensuring a social cohesive society, as well as providing children and parents with great opportunities.

Stefan Romaniw offered the vote of thanks and invited all to the 7th National Conference in Melbourne in 2009.

Participant's feedback has been very positive. Some of the issues raised have now been taken up with representatives of Government and Government Departments. The Conference endorsed full support for Community Languages Australia the State and Territory Associations, and the grass roots work done by schools and teachers.

Community Languages Australia would like to sincerely thank its major sponsors for contributing to the success of the Conference: Department of Education and Training (WA); Office of Multicultural Interests (WA); Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; Italo-Australian Welfare & Cultural Centre Inc (Co.As.It. WA); Catholic Education Office (WA); University of Western Australia.