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E-Language

POSITIVE DISCUSSIONS IN FURTHERING LANGUAGES EDUCATION AND ROLE OF ETHNIC SCHOOLS IN ACT MINISTER HARGREAVES PROVIDES LEADERSHIP IN MOVING DISCUSSION FORWARD TO NEW LEVELS

Languages education and the role of ethnic schools as complementary providers received a boost in the ACT at a meeting between Community Languages Australia (CLA), The ACT Ethnic Schools Association (ACT ESA) and The Hon. John Hargreaves Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Director of the Office Multicultural Affairs, Nic Manikis, Trish Wilks, Director, Curriculum Support and Professional Learning with the Department of Education and Minister for Education, Andrew Barr's adviser Luke Ryan last Friday February 8, 2008 in Canberra.

Community Languages Australia Executive Director Stefan Romaniw, ACT ESA President Emiliana Afeaki and ACT ESA Executive members Santosh Gupta and Javad Farrokh Mehr met with the Minister to discuss the following issues:

- Ongoing Funding for the Ethnic Schools Program
- Impact of any reduced funding
- Raising awareness of the role and work of ethnic schools and nature of the complementary role of ethnic schools.
- Round Table on Languages Education

The Minister and other Government officials were responsive to the CLA and ACT ESA proposal to conduct a Round Table discussion with the range of key stakeholders in languages education.

These include: The Department of Education in areas of Curriculum Professional Development and Training Board of Studies, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Parent Associations, Primary and Secondary Principal Associations, School Council Organisations, Business Leaders, Tertiary Institutions, ethnic school and community representatives amongst *others*.

Its purpose would be to raise the awareness about the role of ethnic schools and how they play an important part of the language education provision jig saw. It would also provide an avenue for discussion in how ethnic schools, languages education, multicultural education are an integral part of education in the ACT.

Minister Hargreaves provided strong support for the expansion of the languages education discussion involving the many stakeholders. The Minister sort action on the issue and proposed that the language education issue be a part of the planned Multicultural Summit.

Nic Manikis Director of the OMA provided support for further dialogue to expand the concept.

Trish Wilks and Luke Ryan also were positive in their responses and agreed to examine possibilities.

The ACT Government promotes languages education and multicultural education as important platforms for strengthening overall community relations.

CLA and ACT ESA also provided information on the Quality Assurance Framework being worked on by ethnic schools to ensure strong educational outcomes Teacher training, sharing of resources and a better understanding of the nature of ethnic schools were also discussed.

Other matters raised and discussed were:

- CLA and ACT ESA plans to contact individual Members of the Legislative Assembly to provide information on ethnic schools.
- CLA and ACT ESA proposed future budget bids should be systemic and indexed. CLA and ACT ESA called on joint Education and Multicultural portfolios bids to be presented to the Estimates Review Committee to access increased funding for ethnic schools in ACT.
- CLA and ACT ESA called for funding not to be reduced to the ACT ESA in the light of Cabinet recommendation to seek efficiency saving in all programs given the low financial operating base of the ACT ESA.
- CLA and ACT ESA agreed to prepare an Impact Statement to examine the issues of savings given the minimal funds received and held by ACT ESA.
- The Impact Statement would also examine the proposal of merging schools within language groups. CLA and ACT ESA do not see this as a viable outcome as geographic location, community needs, specific programs need to be taken into account.

“The meeting was very encouraging and showed Minister Hargreaves taking a leadership position in wanting issues addressed in a systemic way,” Mr Romaniw said.

“Couple of this with the positive approach of the Education area having both the Ministerial Office and Department together with the OMA present and providing support, we will achieve positive outcomes,” Mr Romaniw said.

“A productive meeting that will hopefully lead a positive set of outcomes, which will strengthen overall languages education in the ACT,” Mr Romaniw said.

Further information Stefan Romaniw OAM 0419 531255

**Photo Back row: Luke Ryan, Santosh Gupta, Nic Manikis
Seated: Emiliana Afeaki, Minsiter Hargreaves . Stefan Romaniw, Javad Farrokh Mehr**