



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into E-PET-077-25: Access to 11-12 ATAR language courses in 2026

Submission number: 002

Submitter: Australian Multicultural Action Network

Date authorised for publication: 31 March 2026



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Submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into E-Petition 077-25: Access to Year 11–12 ATAR Language Courses in 2026

Submitted by:

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Date: 12/03/2026

1. Introduction

The **Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)** welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the **Standing Committee on Social Policy Inquiry into E-Petition 077-25**, which concerns access to **Year 11–12 ATAR language courses in the ACT from 2026 onwards**.

The petition highlights concerns about the cessation of new enrolments for Year 11–12 ATAR language programs previously delivered through **CIT Solutions**, which had earlier replaced the **Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL)** model. These programs enabled ACT students to continue studying languages that were **not available at their local colleges**.

The languages previously offered included **French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Tamil**, delivered through a centralised learning model that allowed students from multiple colleges to attend weekly classes outside normal school hours.

AMAN strongly supports the **continuation of senior secondary language learning opportunities in the ACT**. However, our submission emphasises that the delivery of ATAR language courses involves **significant structural, financial and sustainability challenges** that must be carefully addressed if such programs are to remain viable.

2. Importance of Language Education in a Multicultural Society

Language education plays a critical role in Australia's multicultural environment.

For students, language learning offers:

Intellectual Benefits

- Improved analytical and cognitive skills
- Greater understanding of language structures, including English
- Improved ability to learn additional languages
- Access to global literature, media and cultural knowledge

Social and Cultural Benefits

- Increased intercultural understanding
- Greater appreciation of diversity
- Stronger cultural identity and heritage connections

Economic and Global Engagement Benefits

- Skills relevant to diplomacy, trade, tourism and international relations
- Enhanced workforce capability in an increasingly global economy

These benefits align with the broader goals of strengthening Australia's engagement with the world and supporting multicultural communities.

3. Role of Centralised Language Programs in the ACT

The **Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL)** was established to address a key structural gap: many ACT students study languages in Years 7–10 but are unable to continue these languages in their local colleges.

CAL operated as a **specialist education provider registered with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies**, enabling students from across Canberra to continue language study at the senior secondary level.

The program expanded progressively over time:

- 2017–2018: French
- 2019: German added
- 2020: Spanish and Tamil added
- 2021: Japanese added
- 2022: Korean added

This expansion demonstrates that language programs can grow in response to community demand when the right institutional structure exists.

The program delivery model involved:

- **Two hours of face-to-face instruction each week** after school hours
- **Two additional hours of structured off-site work** supported by online resources

- Classes conducted at a central Canberra venue
- Teaching delivered by specialist language educators

This centralised structure allowed students from multiple colleges to participate in a single program, making the courses financially and logistically viable.

4. Evidence from Program Operations

Evidence from the CAL program illustrates both the **value and limitations** of centralised ATAR language programs.

In 2023:

- Over **70 students were enrolled at the start of the year**
- Approximately **60 students remained by the end of the year**

These numbers represent the **combined enrolments across multiple languages**, meaning that individual language classes often consisted of **small cohorts**.

While these small groups can support high-quality learning environments, they also present **significant sustainability challenges**, particularly in relation to staffing, funding and long-term program continuity.

5. Structural Challenges in Introducing and Sustaining ATAR Language Courses

Introducing a new non-English language into the **ATAR curriculum is a complex, multi-year undertaking**.

The process typically requires **four to five years of preparation**, including:

5.1 Identifying Sustainable Student Demand

Initial student interest must be demonstrated through:

- surveys and expressions of interest
- consultation with schools and community language organisations
- analysis of language learning trends.

However, student interest in ATAR language study often fluctuates significantly from year to year.

5.2 Curriculum Development and Accreditation

Language courses must be aligned with the requirements of the **ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies**, including:

- course frameworks and unit structures
 - assessment design
 - moderation processes
 - ATAR scaling requirements.
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5.3 Institutional and Provider Validation

Education providers must demonstrate the capacity to deliver the program through:

- administrative infrastructure
 - examination and reporting systems
 - coordination with multiple schools.
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5.4 Recruitment of Qualified Teachers

Teachers must possess:

- advanced language proficiency
- professional teaching qualifications
- familiarity with ATAR assessment requirements.

For less widely taught languages, recruiting and retaining teachers can be particularly challenging.

5.5 Resource Development

Effective language learning requires specialised materials including:

- textbooks and digital resources
 - audio-visual materials
 - online learning platforms
 - examination preparation resources.
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5.6 Timetable Coordination

Because students come from different schools, classes must often occur:

- outside normal school hours
- at a central location

- on fixed weekly schedules.

This requires significant coordination between institutions.

6. Student Motivation and ATAR Pressure

Students frequently begin language learning in early secondary school or through community language programs with strong enthusiasm.

However, many students report that their motivation changes when language study becomes an **ATAR-assessed subject**.

Students often ask:

- *“How will this subject affect my ATAR?”*
- *“Will this subject help me get into my university course?”*

As a result, students may prioritise subjects perceived to improve university entry prospects rather than continuing language learning.

This shift in motivation contributes to **declining enrolments in senior secondary language programs**.

7. Teacher Sustainability Challenges

Teachers delivering language programs also face structural challenges, including:

- limited teaching hours due to small cohorts
- travel between teaching locations
- evening teaching schedules
- uncertain enrolment numbers each year.

Without appropriate support structures, language teaching roles can become difficult to sustain.

8. Administrative Complexity

The enrolment process itself requires coordination across multiple institutions, including:

- student registration
- parental consent
- endorsement by the student's day school
- coordination of subject loads and timetables.

This administrative complexity highlights the importance of having a **dedicated centralised provider**.

9. Policy Considerations

Given the evidence above, it is clear that **ATAR language programs are valuable but structurally fragile**.

Attempting to introduce a large number of languages across individual colleges is unlikely to be sustainable.

Instead, the ACT Government should consider a model that balances **accessibility with sustainability**.

10. Recommendations

AMAN recommends that the ACT Government adopt the following policy approach:

Recommendation 1

Maintain a **centralised ACT-wide language program** to enable students to continue studying languages not available in their local colleges.

Recommendation 2

Provide **stable multi-year funding arrangements** to support program planning, teacher recruitment and curriculum development.

Recommendation 3

Limit the number of languages offered to those with **demonstrated and sustainable student demand**.

Recommendation 4

Strengthen collaboration with **community language schools** to create clearer pathways into senior secondary language study.

Recommendation 5

Introduce **flexible delivery models**, including hybrid or online learning options, to improve accessibility and program sustainability.

Recommendation 6

Improve awareness of **career pathways linked to language skills**, including diplomacy, international trade, tourism and global business.

11. Conclusion

Language education plays a vital role in preparing young Australians to participate in an increasingly interconnected world.

The ACT has previously demonstrated leadership in this area through the **Canberra Academy of Languages and subsequent CIT Solutions programs**, which enabled students across Canberra to continue studying languages at the senior secondary level.

However, these programs require **careful policy design, stable funding and centralised coordination** in order to remain viable.

Rather than attempting to introduce numerous language courses across individual colleges, the ACT Government should strengthen and sustain a **centralised language education model** that ensures equitable access while maintaining educational quality and long-term sustainability.

AMAN stands ready to work collaboratively with the ACT Government, education providers and community organisations to support the future of language education in the ACT.

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