



# Submission cover sheet

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

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Submitter: Frank Keighley

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# Submission cover sheet

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

Submission number: 06

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**ACT Government submission to Standing  
Committee on Social Policy Inquiry into  
E-Petition 077-25 Access to 11-12 ATAR  
language course in 2026**

# Introduction

The ACT Government is committed to an inclusive, equitable and high-quality public education system that recognises the right of every child and young person to learn and benefit from the opportunities that education brings.

The ACT Government aspires for the ACT to be the jurisdiction of choice for language education, particularly given our national standing as representing Australia's diplomatic headquarters, major government departments, and multicultural community.

Languages are offered in rich and diverse contexts in ACT public school classrooms from preschool to year 12. In 2025, 11 different languages were taught across ACT public schools, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Auslan, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

ACT public schools have a range of mechanisms in place to support the provision of high-quality language learning. Supports include language teaching assistant programs, and funding for language teacher networks in eight priority languages (Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish). The Education Directorate also engages in formalised relationships with embassies and other language stakeholders in Canberra to support language provision in ACT schools.

In the broader language context, the Directorate supports the development of student mother tongue and other language programs through the Canberra Language Network, the Community Language Schools Association and the provision of professional learning for community language school teachers. The Directorate is uniquely positioned to provide rich language education programs in our schools, supported by embassies, universities and the broader community language sector.

# Language education in ACT public colleges

There are eight priority languages taught in ACT public schools: Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean and Spanish. ACT public school principals determine what languages are taught in their school in consultation with their school board and community.

ACT public colleges offer language education programs as an elective subject for students in years 11 and 12. Colleges deliver language courses in accordance with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) Languages Framework which includes language learning at beginning, continuing and advanced levels.

All eight priority languages are currently taught across ACT public colleges, except for Erindale College. Hindi is an additional language taught at Narrabundah College.

Of the total 7,485 students enrolled in ACT public colleges in 2025, 1,284 were enrolled in a language course in either year 11 or 12 (17%). Enrolments in language courses varied across colleges in 2025, with Narrabundah College accounting for the largest share (687 enrolments), ahead of Gungahlin College (200) and Canberra College (136). Smaller cohorts are seen at Lake Tuggeranong College (79), University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra (59), Melba Copland Senior Secondary School (58), Dickson College (57), and Hawker College (8). Across all colleges, Japanese was the most popular language with 324 enrolments, followed by Spanish (237), French (205), and Chinese (190). Italian (125), Korean (72), and Hindi (71) attracted moderate enrolment numbers, while German (51) and Indonesian (9) had smaller enrolments.

Many of these students do not complete a major and only a minority study languages at Continuing level.

The languages offered in ACT public schools (including colleges) can vary from year to year, based on local community needs and interest, student demand, and the availability of qualified language teachers.

## Enrolment options for year 11 and 12 students

The Education Directorate provides flexible enrolment options with arrangements to support students in continuing a language pathway in years 11 and 12. These options include:

- a) Enrolment at the student's Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) college, if the college offers their chosen language course.
- b) An arrangement between ACT public colleges for a student enrolled at one college to access a language course at another. In logistical terms, this is rarely practical because of bus timetables, college timetable clashes and travel times that usually exceed total weekly face to face teaching time.
- c) Application for out-of-area enrolment consideration at a school that offers the student's chosen language course (subject to school capacity). Out-of-area enrolment is unacceptable to most students and their families because of disruption to friendship groups and impacts on access to after school activities.
- d) Enrolment in a language course with a BSSS specialist education provider (currently the only BSSS approved specialist education provider is the Australian School of Contemporary Chinese providing a Chinese language course outside of school hours). The ASCC is a community language school. Most community language schools do not have the resources to undertake the compliance requirements for BSSS courses.

There are several factors to be considered by students, families and schools on a case-by-case basis to ensure the success of any dual enrolment or out of area enrolment arrangements, such as school capacity, class timetabling between schools, student transport, and transition support. While these options may not be suitable for all students and families, there are positive examples where these arrangements are meeting the needs of students in continuing their language education journey. I am not aware of any current successful examples for options (b) or (c). FK

# External Senior Secondary Languages Programs

The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) creates courses that, in addition to schools, can be adopted and delivered by approved specialist education providers. The BSSS oversees the quality assurance of course delivery and subsequent certification.

Currently, the Australian School of Contemporary Chinese (ASCC) is the only specialist education provider registered with the BSSS to deliver an external senior secondary language course. ASCC is registered to deliver Chinese language courses at beginning, continuing and advanced levels. Classes take place at the University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra on Sundays (from 9:30am-12:30 pm) during school terms.

BSSS also advises there is currently community interest in establishing an independent specialist education provider for Tamil language courses. [This would be a challenging undertaking, given BSSS compliance requirements.](#)

Previously, the Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL) followed by CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages, and finally the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), offered BSSS language courses from 2017 to 2026. [Communication by CIT with stakeholders including students, parents and day schools around the closure of CIT Solutions and the discontinuation of enrolment options through CIT was completely unsatisfactory.](#)

## Canberra Academy of Languages

From 2017 to 2023, the Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL) offered an external Senior Secondary Languages Program to ACT public, independent and catholic college students. The program was delivered outside of school hours at Ainslie School, providing a central location for students. The number of languages taught increased from one in 2017 to six in 2023, including French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Tamil.

The program operated on a fee-for-service basis to cover the cost of program delivery and was supported by extensive volunteer input for key organisational roles.

The program complemented existing viable language programs in schools, and enabled year 11 and 12 students to study their chosen languages where these courses were not available through their schools or other providers. CAL was registered by the BSSS as a specialist education provider, enabling students to achieve unit credits for their ACT Senior Secondary Certificate and their Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) if the scores were among their best four course scores.

At its peak, there were 74 enrolments in the program in 2023, comprising 53 students from ACT public schools and 21 students from non-government schools. The number of ACT public school students accessing the program in 2023 represented 0.76% of the total number of students enrolled in ACT public colleges that year. [This is a misleading representation of the data because it refers to enrolments in all subjects. The CAL program was a specialised one for languages. Most students in public colleges did not study a language.](#)

In mid-2023, CAL advised the then Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and the Education Directorate that it would cease to operate at the end of 2023. The Directorate worked with CAL and the BSSS to explore options to transition the service to another external provider.

## CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages

In late 2023, the external Senior Secondary Languages Program transitioned from CAL to the CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages. This was a positive outcome as other external provider options explored at the time were not feasible. [Agreed on this.](#)

CIT Solutions continued to deliver the program as a BSSS specialist education provider, offering the same six languages (French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Tamil) outside of school hours at Ainslie School. The program continued to operate on a fee-for-service basis, with CIT Solutions student fees of approximately \$625 per term (\$2,500 per year), per course. These fees were paid by the student, or in some cases by the student's school.

In May 2025, CIT Solutions reported 49 student enrolments, comprising 39 students from ACT public schools, and 10 students from non-government schools. The number of ACT public school students accessing the program in 2025 represented 0.52% of the total number of students enrolled in ACT public colleges that year.

Again misleading, as it compares CIT Solutions languages student cohort to the total cohort in all subjects (not just languages) in all ACT public colleges.

In late-April 2025, CIT advised the Education Directorate that CIT Solutions was dissolving, and CIT would not be accepting new enrolments into the Senior Secondary Languages Program from 2026. CIT communicated this decision to relevant school principals and parents in June 2025, with a recommendation to adjust curriculum offerings accordingly.

CIT committed to 'teach out' the year 11 cohort of 14 students in 2026 to support students seeking to complete a Language Major. Students and their families have been advised this arrangement is contingent on the availability of suitably qualified teachers.

Apart from Tamil, all languages previously offered through CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages are delivered across ACT public colleges.

## Alternative options explored

Following CIT's announcement of the closure of CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages, the Education Directorate explored options for continuation of the external Senior Secondary Languages Program by CIT or another external provider. At that time, CIT advised that senior secondary language education was not a priority for the institute, and therefore CIT would not continue the program following the closure of CIT Solutions (except to teach out existing year 11 students). The possibility was also canvassed by FK with CLSA. They could not commit to becoming responsible for such a program.

Representatives from the Australian National University and University of Canberra confirmed their support for the intent of the program, but both institutions advised they do not have available funding to take over the service. The ACT Government also explored options for a centralised Senior Secondary Languages Program to be established through the Education Directorate, however, this was determined unfeasible, noting:

- significant costs to establish and maintain the service; This does not accord with my estimate of costs.
- the ACT Government has never had a centralised language program (this has always been delivered externally); This is a long-standing significant deficiency in the ACT. CAL was established to address it and to provide proof of concept to the government.
- setting a precedent that the ACT Government will set up centralised services so that students can access any course from any school or that each individual school needs to embed individualised options creates a community expectation the ACT Government is unable to meet. There was no suggestion in successive CAL budget submissions that implementation of central provision of senior secondary language courses would set a precedent for central provision of any other courses. Nor does it happen in NSW, Victoria or South Australia.

From 2026, language education offerings for senior secondary students in ACT public colleges are solely a school-based decision, and students are required to access language courses via the abovementioned existing school enrolment options or a BSSS specialist education provider (currently for Chinese language courses only).

This is the worst situation for senior secondary languages in the last ten years. From the start of 2026, the opportunity for students whose day school could not offer their language of choice to study that language after school hours through centrally provided courses ceased to exist. This compares poorly to provisions in NSW, Victoria and South Australia, where government-run schools of languages are there to complement program provision by day schools.

# ACT Government priorities for language education in ACT public schools

The ACT Government has a Language Education Action Plan (LEAP) and work is continuing across all action areas, with the intention of strengthening language education in ACT public schools. As part of the LEAP, the Education Directorate continues to explore ways to strengthen the delivery and continuity of language education pathways across school years, with consideration for flexible delivery models, teacher recruitment, partnerships, and curriculum.

Key deliverables under the LEAP to date include:

- improved data collection and reporting of language offerings in schools, pathway options across schools, and student uptake of language courses I have not seen any evidence of improved student uptake of language courses. With the demise of central provision, the opposite will occur.
- promotion of language teaching opportunities in ACT public schools for new and existing teachers A central provision model to supplement day school provision of language courses would enhance opportunities for recruitment and retention of language teachers. Removing it on the other hand will undermine those objectives.
- continued exploration of different delivery models for language education programs in ACT public schools (such as online or distance education options, cross-school delivery models, and provision of language teaching assistants) These have been trialled in the past. The outcomes were less than satisfactory.
- undertaking a YourSay survey to assist in understanding and developing a model to introduce Punjabi and Hindi language teaching in schools where this would benefit the local community, and determine the level of student interest in learning Punjabi and Hindi at school and which ACT public schools they attend Punjabi, Hindi and Tamil are examples of languages that would achieve better uptake in a central delivery model.
- consideration of new language education options not yet available through the Australian Curriculum, such as Punjabi. This has long been sought by the Punjabi community. It could have been addressed by supporting course writing to include it in BSSS courses and inclusion, alongside Tamil, in the central delivery model.

The Education Directorate has also had productive engagement with the Teacher Quality Institute, Australian National University, and the University of Canberra to support this work, including efforts to attract more language teachers to ACT public schools, promote scholarship opportunities for existing teachers to upskill in language education, and to collaborate with regulatory authorities to support teacher registration. Attracting language teachers is one thing. Retaining them is another. ACT colleges have faced difficulties with teacher retention because of workload with composite classes and a perceived lack of government commitment to address it.

The Education Directorate committed to deliver all priority actions in the LEAP by the end of 2025. This work is continuing and ongoing as the broader landscape and priorities for language education in ACT public schools evolve. The ACT Government remains committed to strengthening language education opportunities for all students across ACT public schools and will continue to pursue the priority actions in the LEAP to achieve this. Notwithstanding good intentions, language education opportunities in the ACT have not improved, but have declined.

The Education Directorate will keep students, their families, and the school community informed of any updates to senior secondary language programs in ACT public schools, as options to support access to language provision for all students continue to be explored. This commitment was not kept throughout the time of uncertainty after the closure of CIT Solutions.