



Submission cover sheet

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

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Submission: TORs - Inquiry into E-Petition 077-25: Access to 11–12 ATAR language courses in 2026

Dear committee members

I'm writing to give you about my personal thoughts on the 11-12 ATAR language courses which are currently under consideration.

Background

I have a love of the French language and have spent several years studying French, including living in France for 18 months when I was in my 20s.

I have the impression that in Australia and New Zealand where most people speak English as their first language, schools don't prioritise learning foreign languages. It's an old attitude that as we come from an English-speaking background it is sufficient to know only English. Learning a second language may be offered but the way it is taught is not given the same priority and rigour that learning English is given in countries where English is not the spoken language.

Technology and air travel have made the world smaller over time and having a second language can come in handy for travelling or even in one's own country.

I've had a personal circumstance in 2004, when I relied on my French language knowledge while travelling in Portugal, where neither I nor the hotel owner spoke the other's language, but we were able to communicate effectively in French. Lucky, I knew French.

My youngest child who is now in year 12, was an extension French student in primary school and continued French into high school. She had to give it up due to bullying and left in Year 8. This started her school refusal time and in Year 9 she tried Distance Education; however, despite the course being delivered remotely, she was unable to take part as the class was full. I found this ridiculous and wasn't impressed as it was distance learning and at the time was her favourite subject, but I had to let the issue go.

In Year 9, to support her continued learning, I enrolled her in private lessons at Alliance Francaise at my own expense. In Year 10, when she was at another high school, she used Duo Lingo platform independently to continue learning French, as well as dabbling in Spanish and Portuguese during her study lab time.

At college in year 11, she couldn't take French as it wasn't offered and this is when we discovered the CIT program. The evening delivery model conflicted with her sporting commitments.

Here was a smart student with good foreign language ability, who gave it away because it got too hard. This experience highlighted to me that capable and motivated students were abandoning language studies because access required participation outside of normal school hours.

That model competed with students needing this time to study, work, attend sport or just have downtime.

My idea

I started thinking there could be a better solution for a more flexible and sustainable model for language delivery at college level during school hours. I believe there is and we need to think outside the normal parameters.

What if colleges had no full-time foreign language teachers but there is a team who could float between the different colleges on different days/times as needed. Maybe they're only providing in-person instruction for limited hours each week supported by structured online learning. Teachers could be based remotely or at designated hubs and deliver a combination of face-to-face and online instruction aligned with student timetables. Based on my daughter's current college timetable, a language lab could be 1 hour on a Monday, 2 hours at least 2 or 3 times in that week.

Weekly on-site engagement would allow teachers to guide learning, target key skills and collaborate with students, while online components would support continuity with their learning.

Conclusion

I'm aware with the current schooling model that language teachers often teach other subjects or relieve other teachers. Maybe it's time to move away from this model.

Ability in a foreign language can offer significant advantages; it may help one navigate challenging situations discreetly by not revealing comprehension or create new opportunities by enabling effective communication across languages. It also enhances cultural understanding.

I hope you find a way forward and come up with a model that works for the students, teachers and families.

Kind Regards

Natalie Drummond