



Submission cover sheet

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

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Submitter: Name Withheld

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The Chair
Standing Committee on Social Policy
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
Canberra ACT 2601

Re: Submission — Inquiry into E-PET-077-25: Access to Years 11–12 ATAR Language Courses in 2026

Submitted by:

[REDACTED]

1. Introduction

I am writing as the parent of [REDACTED], a student who completed Tamil as an ATAR subject through the **Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL) in 2021 and 2022**, which is now run by CIT.

I write in **strong support** of the petition E-PET-077-25 and urge the Committee to recommend that the ACT Government ensure continuity of Years 11–12 ATAR language instruction — including Tamil — beyond 2025.

The CIT model has provided an irreplaceable educational lifeline for students across Canberra whose language of study is not available at their home college. Its abrupt discontinuation would sever years of student investment, disadvantage culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and contradict stated ACT Government commitments to equity and language education.

2. Our Personal Experience

[REDACTED] undertook Tamil ATAR through the CIT centralised program. Tamil is not offered at his school Burgmann Anglican School, making the CIT program the only viable pathway to complete this subject at a senior secondary level. The program gave him the opportunity to:

- Continue language studies that began in high school without interruption or geographic relocation;
- Sit a formally recognised ATAR examination in Tamil, which contributed to his tertiary entrance rank;
- Maintain and deepen a connection to cultural heritage that is central to our family's identity;
- Develop bilingual proficiency that will provide lasting professional and personal value.
- He also had the benefit of having a good ATAR due to his high marks in this language.

3. Why the Program Must Continue

3.1 It fills a structural gap in ACT language provision

The ACT college system does not offer every language at every campus. No college in the greater Belconnen area offers French, for example, and Tamil is absent from all college timetables. The centralised CIT model — one face-to-face two-hour lesson per week at a central Canberra location — is explicitly designed to fill this gap. It complements, rather than duplicates, day school language programs. Removing it removes the only access point for hundreds of students.

3.2 It is a question of educational equity

Every ACT student deserves the right to pursue their chosen ATAR subjects regardless of which college they attend. Students from language backgrounds such as Tamil, Korean, or Spanish who happen to live in areas where those languages are not taught at college level would be penalised for nothing more than their postcode. This is a structural inequity the ACT Government has an obligation to remedy.

3.3 Tamil is one of the world's great living languages

Tamil is one of the oldest continuously spoken classical languages in the world, with over 80 million speakers globally. It is an official language of India, Sri Lanka, and Singapore, and is spoken by a significant and growing community in Canberra. Offering Tamil as an ATAR subject recognises the richness of Australia's multicultural society and prepares students for engagement with South and South-East Asia — a region of growing strategic and economic importance to Australia.

3.4 Discontinuation causes serious and irreversible harm

Students currently in Year 10 who have studied Tamil — or any of the other affected languages — since Year 7 face the prospect of being unable to continue at ATAR level. Unlike most subjects, language study is cumulative. There is no adequate substitute. The suggestion of out-of-area enrolment does not address the access and logistical barriers facing most families, particularly those relying on public transport or juggling work and school commitments.

4. Response to the Minister's Position

The Minister's letter indicates there are no current plans for the Education Directorate to provide a centralised language program in 2026, citing out-of-area enrolment as an alternative. With respect, this response is inadequate for the following reasons:

- Out-of-area enrolment requires students to physically attend a different college for a full subject load — a logistically impractical option for most families compared to the CIT model's single weekly after-hours session;
- Not all colleges offer the relevant language even as an out-of-area option;
- The ACT Government's own Languages Education Action Plan acknowledges the importance of language learning continuity — the proposed discontinuation directly contradicts this policy commitment;
- The solution proposed by community advocates — transitioning the program into the ACT Education Directorate itself — is both feasible and cost-effective, particularly if the existing Year 12 CIT cohort is brought across simultaneously with the incoming Year 11 cohort.

5. Recommendations

I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend that the ACT Government:

1. Immediately commit to providing centralised after-school ATAR language instruction for Years 11 and 12 commencing February 2026, covering all six languages previously offered by CIT (French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Tamil);
2. Transition delivery of this program into the ACT Education Directorate, ensuring long-term stability and government accountability;
3. Include the existing 2025 CIT Year 12 cohort in the new program to maximise efficiency and minimise disruption;
4. Establish a clear policy framework ensuring no ACT student is denied access to a language ATAR subject solely because their home college does not offer it.

6. Conclusion

The CIT centralised language program has served the ACT community with distinction. Tamil ATAR, offered since 2020, has opened doors for students from Tamil-speaking families who would otherwise have had no pathway to study their heritage language at senior secondary level. My family has experienced this benefit firsthand.

Allowing this program to lapse without replacement would be a failure of the ACT's commitment to equitable, high-quality education. The fix is practical, achievable, and affordable. I urge the Committee to act with urgency so that students enrolling in Year 11 in 2026 do not pay the price of administrative inaction.

Yours sincerely,

