



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

## Answer to question taken on notice

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Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Mr Thiruvathwooran and Ms Ragulan

In relation to: Canberra Tamil School - Continuation of Tamil studies from Year 10 to Year 11 -  
Number of students in Year 10 & college distribution

Hearing: 28 April 2026

Uncorrected Proof Transcript p 18

Transcript provided: 6 May 2026

Answer Due: 14 May 2026

Mr Thiruvathwooran and Ms Ragulan took on notice the following question(s):

**THE CHAIR:** So without that kind of a centralised offering, what would be your estimate at a given school and given year level, how many Tamil students would be the absolute most in a cohort, three or four at given school?

**Mr Thiruvathwooran:** So from Canberra Tamil School I am in school, we have got seven students who have shown interest from Year 8, and so, like I said, we have 100 students. So even if you halve it, you have got 50 students coming into the—

**THE CHAIR:** Might be keen to continue, yes.

**Mr Thiruvathwooran:** And also that we are currently with the CTI—CIT, sorry, CIT. We are currently encouraging the parents as well to join in. And it is, like I said in the beginning, it is a work that you have to start at the beginning. It is not something you just, at a Year 8, you go, you know what, I am going to learn this language. No, it is something that you build up. You first teach them, you can say two plus two, but you first teach them what is two. And then you have to teach them the other aspect on top of it. So now is the time that more parents are getting involved with their children in teaching. There are more people who are interested because of this.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have any sense of—is there a concentration of Tamil language learners in any particular schools? I am imagining in the college level, there is no college that currently offers Tamil, which is why the centralised program has been great. The most that you could imagine at a given college for like a Year 11 cohort might it just be two or three Tamil students and in a given—in a specific college? Do you understand my question?

**Mr Thiruvathwooran:** A specific college maybe—

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Ms Ragulan: I think you are asking if you had to pinpoint one college how many students of Tamil background or Tamil students would be in that college who would to—

THE CHAIR: Yes, who would want to do—yes, who would want to learn a language.

Ms Ragulan: Yes. We probably do not have that at hand, but that is something that we can get.

THE CHAIR: Would it be possible to get a notice?

Ms Ragulan: Yes, we can.

THE CHAIR: Maybe just a range of, you have got your Year 10 group, they are going into Year 11 at different colleges, which college has the largest number of incoming students who would learn—

Ms Ragulan: Yes, want to learn.

Mr Thiruvathwooran: Learn.

THE CHAIR: —who would—might want to continue learning Tamil language and how many students in that cohort, you know, a bit of a range. I think that would be helpful for the committee.

Mr Thiruvathwooran: Yes, okay. We can take that.

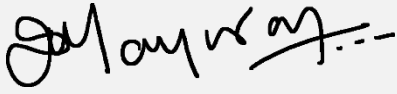
### **Canberra Tamil School: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:**

While the ACT Education Directorate provides total enrolment figures, they do not release a public school-by-school count for every specific language. However, within the Australian Capital Territory, approximately **70%** of the Tamil student population (estimated at **595 - 665 students**) is concentrated in the northern districts, specifically the high-growth areas of **Gungahlin** and **Belconnen**. The remaining **30%** (approximately **255 - 285 students**) resides in the southern districts, including **Tuggeranong** and the rapidly expanding **Molonglo Valley**. These figures are derived from a cross-analysis of the **February 2025 ACT School Census** and the **2021 ABS Census (Language Spoken at Home)**. Furthermore, **YourSay ACT Multicultural Profiles** corroborate these statistics, highlighting a high demographic density of Tamil-speaking families in Canberra's northern suburbs and a corresponding shift toward public and independent schools in those corridors.

In alignment with these regional trends, Canberra Tamil School currently maintains an enrolment of **120 students** across two campuses, with the majority situated at our northern location. We have identified significant demand for senior secondary pathways. At present, at least **12 students** have expressed a formal interest in pursuing Tamil language studies for **Year 11 in 2027** and **Year 12 in 2028**. This cohort includes nine of our current students and three external students currently receiving remote instruction from tutors in **Sri Lanka** and **India**. Consistent inquiries during community events and via the **Canberra Tamil Association** suggest that formalising an accredited Year 11 and 12 Tamil curriculum would substantially increase enrolment and provide a vital academic pathway for the broader community.

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Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature: 

Date: 10/05/2026

By Mayuran Sivarasa, the Principal Coordinator, Canberra Tamil School