



**Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory**

Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into E-Petition 077-25

Access to 11-12 ATAR language courses in 2026

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Approved for publication

Report 6
11th Assembly
July 2026

About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Social Policy on 3 December 2024.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Community Services
- Disability
- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- Families
- Health and health services
- Homelessness and housing services
- Intergenerational fairness
- Justice Health
- LGBTIQ+
- Mental health
- Multicultural Affairs
- Prevent of Domestic and Family Violence
- Seniors
- Social Housing
- Veterans
- Women (including the Office for Women)
- Youth Affairs

You can read the full establishing resolution [on our website](#).

Committee members

Mr Thomas Emerson MLA, Chair

Ms Chiaka Barry MLA, Deputy Chair

Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

Ms Caitlin Tough MLA

Secretariat

Ms Katie Langham, Committee Secretary

Ms Jennifer Forest, Assistant Secretary

Mr Justice-Noah Malfitano, Committee Support Officer

Mr Dikshes Patel, Administrative Officer

Contact us

- Mail** Standing Committee on Social Policy
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601
- Phone** (02) 6207 5498
- Email** LACommitteeSP@parliament.act.gov.au
- Website** parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees

About this inquiry

[E-Petition 077-25: Access to 11–12 ATAR language courses in 2026](#) was presented to the Assembly on 3 December 2025. The petition received at least 500 signatures and was referred under Standing Order 99A to the Standing Committee on Social Policy for consideration. Standing Order 99B requires the Committee to make a decision on whether or not to inquire into a referred petition within 28 days of the Minister’s response to the petition being tabled in the Assembly.

The Minister’s response was circulated on 26 February 2026.¹

The Committee decided to inquire into the petition on 3 March 2026.

¹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *Government Response to E-PET-077-25*, 6 February 2026.

Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| About the committee | i |
| Establishing resolution | i |
| Committee members | i |
| Secretariat | i |
| Contact us | ii |
| About this inquiry | iii |
| Acronyms & Abbreviations | vi |
| Recommendations | vii |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| Conduct of the inquiry | 1 |
| Background | 1 |
| Language learning curriculum | 1 |
| Events leading to the petition | 2 |
| The context of this inquiry | 4 |
| 2. Language learning pathways | 6 |
| Value of language continuity | 6 |
| Pathways to proficiency | 6 |
| Promotion of available pathways | 8 |
| Barriers to language pathways | 10 |
| System-wide structure | 10 |
| Workforce and data | 11 |
| Language strategy in the ACT | 14 |
| 3. Year 11–12 ATAR language learning options | 17 |
| Current Year 11–12 language options | 17 |
| Out-of-area enrolment | 17 |
| Dual enrolment | 19 |
| Distance education | 20 |
| Centralised supplementary languages programs | 21 |
| Canberra Academy of Languages model | 21 |
| CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages | 24 |
| Future centralised language program delivery | 26 |
| Interstate example of supplementary language program | 27 |
| Budget considerations | 28 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Tamil pathways | 31 |
| 4. Conclusion | 35 |
| Appendix A: Submissions | 36 |
| Appendix B: Witnesses | 38 |
| Tuesday, 28 April 2026 | 38 |
| Appendix C: Questions on Notice and Questions Taken on Notice | 39 |
| Questions on Notice | 39 |
| Questions Taken on Notice | 39 |
| Appendix D: Gender distribution of witnesses | 41 |

Acronyms & Abbreviations

| Acronym or Abbreviation | Long form |
|--------------------------------|---|
| AEU | Australian Education Union |
| ATAR | Australian Tertiary Admission Rank |
| BSSS | Board of Senior Secondary Studies |
| CAL | Canberra Academy of Languages |
| CIT | Canberra Institute of Technology |
| CIT Solutions | Canberra Institute of Technology Solutions |
| CLS | Community language schools |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| LEAP | Language Education Action Plan |
| PEA | Primary Enrolment Area |
| TQI | Teacher Quality Institute |
| VSL | Victorian School of Languages |

Recommendations

Finding 1

The Committee finds that the ACT Government's inaction following the impending loss of a centralised ATAR-level language learning program showed complacency with respect to the importance of language learning pathways for public school students in the ACT.

Finding 2

The Committee finds that it is essential to offer students continuous pathways to study languages throughout their schooling to improve their understanding of academics, rich literature and connection with culture.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide publicly available information to families about the language learning pathways on offer in the ACT's different districts and update this information regularly.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake the necessary workforce planning to determine how many qualified language educators are employed by the Education Directorate, and where these educators work.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake the necessary workforce planning to ensure that every primary school has a language teacher.

Finding 3

The Committee finds that the Language Education Action Plan is not fit for purpose, and the ACT Government has failed to fulfil its commitments under the plan.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the Language Education Action Plan, including by developing robust metrics to define success under the plan.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government affirm its commitment to providing continuous language learning pathways for students in the public education system and provide a clear roadmap for how this commitment will be fulfilled.

Finding 4

The Committee finds that a significant portion of students who sought to enrol out-of-area to study a language of their choice in Year 11–12 were unable to do so due to school capacity limitations despite ACT Government advice to the contrary.

Finding 5

The Committee finds that the ACT Government has not provided equitable continuous language learning pathways through to Years 11 and 12 across the public education system.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commit to providing equitable continuous language learning pathways through to Year 11 and 12 across the public education system.

Finding 6

The Committee finds that the Canberra Academy of Languages offered a sustainable model for ATAR language courses in the ACT school system.

Finding 7

The changes CIT made to the centralised ATAR-level language learning program compared with what was previously on offer led to reduced enrolments, which was likely exacerbated by an apparent lack of promotion of the program.

Finding 8

The Committee finds that the ACT Government's costing for delivering a centralised ATAR-level languages program was significantly higher than costings provided by organisations that have actually run such a program in the ACT.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fully fund, and either contract or directly deliver a centralised ATAR-level language learning program, at no cost to ACT public school students.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure its centralised ATAR-level language learning program is run at times that make sense for students and teachers, is in a centrally accessible location, and is well promoted.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that a BSSS-certified Tamil course is made available to Year 11–12 public school students in the ACT.

1. Introduction

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.1. On 3 March 2026, the Standing Committee on Social Policy (the Committee) resolved to conduct an inquiry into E-Petition 077-25: Access to 11–12 ATAR language courses in 2026. A media release was issued on 5 March 2026, commencing the inquiry and calling for submissions from the public. Invitations to make a submission were also emailed to stakeholders.
- 1.2. The Committee received 32 submissions which were published on the inquiry website and are listed at **Appendix A**.
- 1.3. The Committee held a public hearing on 28 April 2026, and heard evidence from witnesses listed at **Appendix B**. The transcripts and video recordings are available on the Legislative Assembly website.
- 1.4. A total of 16 questions were lodged during the inquiry: 13 questions were taken on notice by witnesses during the public hearings, and three questions on notice were lodged by Committee members following the hearings. A list of questions is at **Appendix C** and all published questions and responses are available on the inquiry webpage.
- 1.5. Committees began collecting information on the gender of witnesses in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs of, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses. A table showing the distribution of witness gender is at **Appendix D**.

Background

Language learning curriculum

- 1.6. Languages are one of the eight learning areas under the *Australian Curriculum*, which is taught in all ACT public schools.² Eight priority languages are offered across the ACT public school system: Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish.³
- 1.7. In alignment with the *Australian Curriculum*, the policy for ACT public schools is for language to be taught as follows:
 - Years three to eight: Compulsory subject

² ACT Government, *Language Education Action Plan*, April 2024, www.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2879885/Language-Education-in-ACT-Public-Schools-Action-Plan.PDF, (accessed 22 May 2026), p 2.

³ ACT Government, *Language Education Action Plan*, April 2024, www.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2879885/Language-Education-in-ACT-Public-Schools-Action-Plan.PDF, (accessed 22 May 2026), p 2.

- Years nine to 12: Elective subject taught in high school (Year 9-10) and college (Year 11-12).⁴
- 1.8. ACT public colleges teach courses across the eight priority languages in accordance with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) Languages Framework.⁵ Not all ACT public colleges offer the eight priority languages, with the number and type of languages offered varying between schools.⁶
 - 1.9. In 2025, 17 percent of ACT public college students were enrolled in one of the following language courses (in order of enrolments): Japanese, Spanish, French, Chinese, Italian, Korea, Hindi (an additional language offered at Narrabundah College), German and Indonesian.⁷
 - 1.10. ACT Government officials provided data on the number of students studying languages at the Year 11–12 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) level in college at the time of the public hearing:

There are currently 722 students studying ‘T’ accredited language courses in Year 11 and Year 12 in ACT public schools. The Board of Senior Secondary Studies refer to ‘T’ accredited courses that contribute to a student’s aggregate scaled score for a student seeking a Tertiary Entrance Statement.⁸

Events leading to the petition

- 1.11. From 2017 to 2023, the Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL) provided Year 11–12 ATAR language courses that were unavailable for students at their home college. Two hours of lessons per week were provided out-of-school hours at Ainslie School, with two hours of designated work to be completed independently. The course consisted of a total of 60 hours per unit of study, above the 55 hours mandated by the ACT BSSS.⁹ Six languages were provided through the CAL model: French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Tamil.¹⁰
- 1.12. In 2024 and 2025, CIT Solutions Pty Ltd took over the delivery of the Year 11–12 ATAR languages program previously provided by CAL. The CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages continued to deliver the same six languages outside of school hours at Ainslie School.¹¹
- 1.13. CIT advised the Education Directorate in late-April 2025 that CIT Solutions was entering voluntary liquidation and that CIT would not be able to enrol new students into the

⁴ Ms Angela Spence, Deputy Director-General, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, pp 58–59.

⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 4.

⁶ ACT Government, *Language course offerings by Network (2025)*, Document tabled by the Education Directorate, 28 April 2026.

⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 1.

⁸ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 3*, 4 May 2026 (received 22 May 2026), p 1.

⁹ Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 1.

¹⁰ Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 1.

¹¹ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5.

Year 11–12 language program from 2026.¹² CIT committed to ‘teach out’ the 14 students in the existing language program in 2026 to allow them to complete their major.¹³ CIT advised the school principals and the parents of affected students of this decision in June 2025 and recommended adjusting curriculum offerings.¹⁴ The CIT program included an adjusted delivery model of a three-and-a-half-hour lesson delivered at the CIT campus in Bruce.¹⁵

Government response

- 1.14. The Education Directorate consulted the following stakeholders on the impact of the closure of the CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages and future Year 11–12 ATAR language course delivery options:
- Canberra Institute of Technology;
 - CIT Solutions;
 - ACT BSSS;
 - Frank Keighley, former convenor of CAL;
 - ACT Parents;
 - A group of ACT college principals;
 - Australian National University; and
 - University of Canberra.¹⁶
- 1.15. The Minister for Education and Early Childhood confirmed that the following teaching workforce was also consulted on alternative language delivery models: ‘ACT Principals Association, ACT Parents, selected college principals, Australian National University, University of Canberra; and Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment school leaders.’¹⁷ The last group were consulted on alternative delivery models in primary schools.¹⁸
- 1.16. The former convenor of CAL advised that tertiary institutions and the Community Languages School Association had indicated they were unable to deliver senior secondary programs.¹⁹
- 1.17. The Minister advised that the ACT Government had not undertaken modelling of the impact of the cessation of the CIT Solutions offering on ACT public school language pathways, but that it had modelled estimated costings for a centralised Year 11–12

¹² ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5.

¹³ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5.

¹⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5.

¹⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5; Mr Shaun Haidon, Principal, Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12) Program, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Proof Committee Transcript*, p 45. .

¹⁶ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 2*, 4 May 2026, (received 22 May 2026), pp 1–2.

¹⁷ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 2*, 4 May 2026, (received 22 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁸ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 2*, 4 May 2026, (received 22 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁹ Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 7.

language program to be delivered by the ACT Government,²⁰ and decided not to deliver such a program.²¹

- 1.18. On 6 February 2026, the Minister confirmed that language education offerings for senior secondary students would be ‘solely a school-based decision’ with students accessing courses offered at their priority enrolment area (PEA) school, out-of-area enrolment, or the BSSS) specialist education provider for Chinese language.²²

Committee comment

- 1.19. The Committee is concerned that the ACT Government appears to have given insufficient consideration to the benefits of a centralised ATAR-level languages program, and the costs of losing this program, to ACT public school students.
- 1.20. While the ACT Government modelled the cost of delivering a centralised language learning program, the Committee notes that no modelling was done to determine the cost of providing commensurate language learning opportunities for public school students through alternative pathways in the absence of a centralised program.

Finding 1

The Committee finds that the ACT Government’s inaction following the impending loss of a centralised ATAR-level language learning program showed complacency with respect to the importance of language learning pathways for public school students in the ACT.

The context of this inquiry

- 1.21. While the issue identified in the petition warranted further examination, much of the evidence received during this inquiry spoke to the broader, underlying issue of a lack of continuous and equitable language learning pathways in ACT public schools.
- 1.22. The Committee has approached the inquiry from this broader perspective, to identify barriers to continuous language learning pathways and access to Year 11–12 ATAR language courses, including:
- The absence of continuous language pathways from primary school through high school to college.
 - Inequitable access to language pathways, largely determined by the school or college a student can attend.
 - Lack of awareness and promotion of the language pathways that do exist.

²⁰ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 2*, 4 May 2026 (received 22 May 2026), p 2.

²¹ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5.

²² Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *Government response to E-PET-077-25*, 6 February 2026, p 1.

- 1.23. Finally, this report examines the strategic actions identified through the ACT Government’s Language Education Action Plan and options for the delivery of Year 11–12 ATAR language courses in the future.

2. Language learning pathways

Value of language continuity

- 2.1. Community groups, students and educators highlighted the value of learning a language, which can extend beyond schooling and provide opportunities for students that they may not otherwise consider. The Australian Education Union (ACT Branch) (AEU) noted:

...learning a language provides students with the opportunity to engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world, broadens horizons in relation to personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities.²³
- 2.2. This experience was exemplified by Mr Theo Herder, a recent student of the Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL), whose studies prepared him for a one-year exchange to Germany prior to completing his Year 12 studies. Mr Herder advised that his studies and the exchange opportunity provided him with a high conversational fluency in German, which had supported his ongoing study and employment in Germany and Prague.²⁴
- 2.3. Research has shown that studying a language to an advanced level enhances cognitive skill development.²⁵ The Committee heard that ‘many Australian universities provide an increase in selection rank for students who have completed studies in foreign languages’ in recognition of the value of foreign languages and the ‘inherit intellectual and cognitive capability they require.’²⁶
- 2.4. Deep understanding of a culture, and associated history and values, is enabled by language study. The Canberra Tamil School highlighted the central role language proficiency plays in accessing a culture’s literature and fostering community and heritage connections.²⁷

Pathways to proficiency

- 2.5. The Committee heard that continuity of language pathways from primary school through high school to college is necessary to develop fluency and capability.²⁸ ACT Parents noted ‘continuity matters because learning is cumulative’,²⁹ while the former convenor of CAL advised that the number of hours required to be competent in a workplace is approximately 700 hours for languages comparable to English (like French or Italian) and up to 2,000 hours for Japanese or Mandarin.³⁰

²³ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 1.

²⁴ Mr Theo Herder, *Submission 30*, p 1.

²⁵ Rebecca Fox, Olga Corretjer and Kelley Webb, ‘Benefits of Foreign Language Learning and Bilingualism: An Analysis of Published Empirical Research 2012-2019,’ *Foreign Language Annals 53 (4)* (2020) 894-920, quoted in Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 1.

²⁶ Name Withheld, *Submission 13*, p 2.

²⁷ Mr Gokularuban Thiruvathawooran, North Campus Principal, Canberra Tamil School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 14.

²⁸ Mr Frank Keighley, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 8.

²⁹ ACT Parents, *Submission 4*, p 4.

³⁰ Mr Frank Keighley, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 8.

- 2.6. The Australian National University Languages Board of Studies highlighted the importance of language fluency in a multicultural community such as Canberra and the risks of languages becoming an elite option for students:

The withdrawal of a centrally delivered Year 11–12 ATAR language model disproportionately affects students in the public system. Students in non-government schools are more likely to have stable, vertically integrated language pathways, while many public-school students face structural barriers unrelated to aptitude or motivation. Language education, particularly in Asian and community languages, risks becoming an elite or privately accessed option rather than a public good. This outcome is inconsistent with the ACT's commitments to equity, multicultural inclusion, and educational opportunity. Perhaps more starkly, it also fails to acknowledge that many career paths available to students in Canberra require a language fluency that the public education system does not support.³¹

- 2.7. Officials advised that, as far as practicable, the Education Directorate aimed to provide continuous language learning pathways for ACT public students, however its ability to achieve this goal was impacted by several factors.³² The Education Directorate mapped the language course offerings available in 2025 by district and level of schooling.³³ This mapping demonstrates that there was significant variation in the languages offered across the territory, with few complete language proficiency pathways available to students within their district.³⁴

- 2.8. Illustrative examples for three languages are provided below:

- a) The territory had continuous language pathways across the four districts for Japanese;
- b) Korean was not offered in any primary schools, was available in a high school and college in the same district, and was offered at one other college in a separate district; and
- c) Indonesian could be studied in three primary schools and six high schools across two districts, with the one college provider located in a separate district.³⁵

- 2.9. ACT Parents raised concerns about the uneven distribution of language learning pathways across the ACT, particularly in Tuggeranong and some parts of Belconnen:³⁶

Access to language education should not depend on where a student lives or whether a local school is able to attract and retain language teachers. Yet differences in provision mean that some students are able to build sustained

³¹ Australian National University Languages Board of Studies, *Submission 7*, p 2.

³² Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 66.

³³ ACT Government, *Language course offerings by network (2025)*, [Document-tabled-by-Education-Directorate-List-of-schools-offering-language-courses-2025.pdf](#), 28 April 2026, (accessed 10 June 2026).

³⁴ ACT Government, *Language course offerings by network (2025)*, [Document-tabled-by-Education-Directorate-List-of-schools-offering-language-courses-2025.pdf](#), 28 April 2026, (accessed 10 June 2026).

³⁵ ACT Government, *Language course offerings by network (2025)*, [Document-tabled-by-Education-Directorate-List-of-schools-offering-language-courses-2025.pdf](#), 28 April 2026, (accessed 10 June 2026).

³⁶ ACT Parents, *Submission 4*, p 2.

language learning pathways, while others have little or no opportunity to do so. For those students, the issue is not whether a language is available at a preferred college, but whether they have had any meaningful chance to study a language at all.³⁷

Committee comment

- 2.10. While the ACT Government aims to support equitable access to continuous language learning, a mapping of offerings in 2025 demonstrates that this is not occurring in practice. The languages available to students, and their ability to continue to study the same language throughout their schooling, is determined largely by where they live.
- 2.11. The Committee considers that this system is unable to consistently provide equitable access to language pathways for ACT public school students who may wish to develop language proficiency to pursue employment, travel or cultural connection.

Finding 2

The Committee finds that it is essential to offer students continuous pathways to study languages throughout their schooling to improve their understanding of academics, rich literature and connection with culture.

Promotion of available pathways

- 2.12. The Committee heard that there is little active promotion of the language learning opportunities available at the Year 11–12 ATAR level.³⁸ Parents told of their recent experiences navigating language pathways, including the responsibility placed on students and their families to identify and navigate the pathways themselves.³⁹
- 2.13. One parent recounted the extensive time required to identify the college language pathways available for their child, which was compounded by the provision of conflicting information:⁴⁰

The number of times I received information about studying Italian as an ATAR subject that conflicted with other information I'd received, or information that was partially or wholly incorrect was frustrating. I spoke with other colleges around the ACT about possible dual enrolments, non-school educational services offering Italian, the ACT Education Directorate, Finigan, even the Italian consulate.⁴¹

³⁷ ACT Parents, *Submission 4*, p 2.

³⁸ Name Withheld, *Submission 13*, p 2; Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, pp 3–4.

³⁹ Ms Natalie Drummond, *Submission 8*, pp 1–2; Name Withheld, *Submission 13*, p 2; Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, pp 3–4.

⁴⁰ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, pp 3–4.

⁴¹ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 4.

- 2.14. Another parent noted that information about the external CAL/CIT Solutions language pathways was not systematically communicated to students or their families at the college their child attended:

Even at formal enrolment sessions, there appeared to be limited awareness that languages such as Japanese could be continued externally... it was never promoted or marketed strongly, and I cannot recall seeing a poster or brochure, or other prominent advertising material.⁴²

- 2.15. The Minister advised that promotion of language learning in schools occurs via existing school communication channels and that there was 'no dedicated ACT Government budget allocated to the promotion of language in schools to students.'⁴³

Committee comment

- 2.16. The Committee considers that families and students would benefit from clearer, consistent information about the language pathways available in their college, and the alternative pathways if their priority enrolment area (PEA) college does not provide their preferred language. Raising awareness among high school and college teaching and career staff of the alternative pathways available throughout the system may assist them to provide this information more consistently for students and parents.
- 2.17. The Committee considers publicly available information on the language pathways across ACT public schools, similar to the mapping information discussed at paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8, would assist students and their families when considering whether to pursue an out-of-area enrolment for high school and/or college. This information should be updated regularly to account for changing course offerings between years and shared with teachers and career advisors to better support them when providing advice to students and families.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide publicly available information to families about the language learning pathways on offer in the ACT's different districts and update this information regularly.

⁴² Name Withheld, *Submission 13*, p 2; Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, pp 3–4.

⁴³ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 3*, 4 May 2026 (received 22 May 2026), p 1.

Barriers to language pathways

- 2.18. Two main barriers to continuous language learning pathways were raised with the Committee – attraction and retention of specialist language teachers and the structure of the ACT public school system.⁴⁴

System-wide structure

- 2.19. While the ACT Education Directorate is responsible for the delivery of public education in the territory, many decisions regarding staffing, course offerings and timetabling are devolved to individual schools.⁴⁵ This historical model was ‘designed to empower each school with maximum autonomy, the rationale being that schools were the experts in the needs of their local communities and could innovate best to meet those needs.’⁴⁶
- 2.20. While this model provides flexibility to schools to respond to the needs of their community, one teacher highlighted how this ‘hyperlocal’ school model can limit teacher mobility and course offerings:

...where you have schools with programs, a teacher is employed at a school to deliver that program, and then their timetable, if they are a specialist, is topped up with other things. I am a Korean teacher. That is my training. I could be teaching Korean across multiple schools, but colleges operate each on their own independent timetables. Some have trimesters instead of semesters. I suppose my observation would be that there are all these hyperlocal factors that really produce challenges at the system level.⁴⁷

- 2.21. The AEU argued that this hyper localisation translates into system-wide inequity of language learning opportunities which individual school leadership teams cannot influence:

Herein lies the central issue. Language education provision is the responsibility of the Education Directorate, but ensuring this service delivery is devolved entirely to schools. Schools cannot affect system-wide equity.⁴⁸

- 2.22. Limitations of this autonomous school model emerged as a key theme of the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review (the Review). The final report, released on 2 April 2026, observed that decisions relating to school staffing, budget management, curriculum and

⁴⁴ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 7; Mr Patrick Judge, Branch Secretary, Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 31.

⁴⁵ Final report of the Expert Panel, *ACT Public School System Resourcing Review*, 2 April 2026, www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3073961/ACT-Public-School-System-Resourcing-Review-final-report-of-the-Expert-Panel.PDF, (accessed 10 June 2026), p 32.

⁴⁶ ACT Government, *Future of Education: one public education system*, 27 May 2026, www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/3073962/Future-of-Education-One-public-education-system.pdf, (accessed 27 May 2026), p 2.

⁴⁷ Mr Orion Lethbridge, Member, Australian Education Union, (ACT Branch), *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 26.

⁴⁸ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 5.

assessment were devolved and made with ‘comparatively limited system-level coordination, guidance or support compared with other jurisdictions.’⁴⁹

- 2.23. On 27 May 2026, a month after the Committee’s public hearings for this inquiry, the ACT Government released its interim response to the Review which acknowledged the evolving education landscape and ‘inequity between schools that needs to be addressed.’⁵⁰ The government advised it would be implementing a coordinated, centralised public education system and had commenced organisational design work to enable the Education Directorate’s central office to better support schools.⁵¹

Workforce and data

- 2.24. Language teachers observed that the current operating model presented workforce challenges, including the retention and effective use of specialist language teachers.⁵² Language teaching requires a high level of proficiency, which may take several years of intense language study to achieve.⁵³ ACT Parents advised that this specialisation meant language teachers could be harder to find and expensive for individual schools,⁵⁴ which may already be struggling with teaching shortages and budget pressures.
- 2.25. The ACT Government acknowledged it had experienced challenges in attracting qualified educators to teach the eight priority languages,⁵⁵ particularly in primary schools.⁵⁶ ACT Parents noted that in 2022, the majority of schools that did not offer any language were primary schools.⁵⁷ This is despite language being a compulsory subject for primary schools under the national curriculum.⁵⁸
- 2.26. The AEU reported that teacher shortages meant specialist teachers were ‘stretched quite a lot’ particularly when teaching composite classes across beginning, continuing and advanced levels within one classroom.⁵⁹ Representatives also raised concerns about expectations on teachers to market their subject to attract students and justify smaller class sizes.⁶⁰ There are also challenges with language teachers being able to build a full-

⁴⁹ Final report of the Expert Panel, *ACT Public School System Resourcing Review*, 2 April 2026, www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3073961/ACT-Public-School-System-Resourcing-Review-final-report-of-the-Expert-Panel.PDF, (accessed 10 June 2026), p 32.

⁵⁰ ACT Government, *Future of Education: one public education system*, 27 May 2026, www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/3073962/Future-of-Education-One-public-education-system.pdf, (accessed 27 May 2026), p 2.

⁵¹ ACT Government, *Future of Education: one public education system*, 27 May 2026, www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/3073962/Future-of-Education-One-public-education-system.pdf, (accessed 27 May 2026), p 3.

⁵² Mr Orion Lethbridge, Member, Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 30.

⁵³ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 8.

⁵⁴ Ms Veronica Elliot, Executive Officer ACT Parents, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 20.

⁵⁵ Ms Angela Spence, Deputy Director-General, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 59.

⁵⁶ Ms Jo Wood, Director-General, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 60.

⁵⁷ Ms Julie McLean, Policy Officer, ACT Parents, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 22.

⁵⁸ Modern Language Teachers Association ACT, *Submission 26*, p 1.

⁵⁹ Mr Orion Lethbridge, Member, Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 30.

⁶⁰ Mr Patrick Judge, Branch Secretary, Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 32.

time load in their teaching specialisation.⁶¹ These factors can mean language teachers stop teaching language courses or leave the system entirely:

Unstable and under-enrolled programs are contributing to the loss of qualified language teachers. As positions become less viable, teachers leave the system, further reducing capacity and accelerating program decline.⁶²

- 2.27. The AEU identified the shortage of language teachers as symptomatic of a broader teaching workforce issue.⁶³ ACT Parents also spoke to this broader workforce supply issue:

One of the things that we are hearing most frequently at the moment is that schools are struggling to provide qualified teachers in front of students generally, and that is creating a very big challenge for them. Again, that is not talking about specific teachers. Obviously, language teachers are specialist teachers, and they cannot be substituted easily. When we are having this general challenge around trying to find qualified teachers to fill in for or relieve teachers generally, and when we have quite specialist teachers, like a language teacher, which means that not everyone can pick that class up, there is an issue around the availability of the teachers that we have that is also having an impact, and we acknowledge that.⁶⁴

- 2.28. The Committee sought advice on the number of qualified language teachers in the public education system, noting some teachers may not be teaching language courses due to limited demand at their local school.⁶⁵ The Minister advised on notice that the ACT Government did not have a complete and accurate central record of the number of language teachers in each school:

The Directorate is strengthening reporting processes through the annual Language Education Census for ACT public schools to establish a more accurate central record of the number of language teachers in ACT public schools, including what and where they teach.⁶⁶

- 2.29. The ACT Government later provided an update on the dedicated workforce plan for language teachers, advising:

...the work remains ongoing and has been delayed due to evolving priorities for language education and the ACT public school system more broadly, including the re-prioritisation of resources to deliver the 2024 election commitment of a Punjabi and Hindi Language Survey and the dissolution of CIT Solutions.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Modern Language Teachers Association ACT, *Submission 26*, p 1.

⁶² Modern Language Teachers Association ACT, *Submission 26*, p 1

⁶³ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 4.

⁶⁴ Ms Veronica Elliot, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 24.

⁶⁵ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 8.

⁶⁶ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QTON 10*, 28 April 2026 (received 22 May 2026), p 1.

⁶⁷ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QTON 12*, 28 April 2026, (received 25 May 2026), p 2.

- 2.30. In response to the School System Resourcing Review, the ACT Government agreed to address equitable school staffing across the system, noting:

Equity is a guiding principle for ACT public education, and school staffing needs to support this. While existing mechanisms such as the teacher mobility process go some way to supporting workforce movement within the system, the report shows this is not sufficient and not all schools have the staffing they need to meet the needs of their communities. The Government agrees a more coordinated approach is required to support equity in school staffing. A new team in the Education Directorate will consult with school-based staff to design and implement a refreshed approach to school staffing that supports the system's aim of equity in meeting student needs. All aspects of this work will include close consultation with staff and unions in line with industrial frameworks.⁶⁸

Committee comment

- 2.31. The Committee is alarmed that the Education Directorate does not know how many qualified language educators it employs, or which schools they work in.
- 2.32. The Committee considers the ACT Government has not paid sufficient attention to addressing language teacher shortages across the system, and there is a clear need for a more coordinated approach to equitable staff allocation. The ACT Government's work in this area ought to include a focus on enabling a better understanding of where language teachers are and how best to allocate them to enable access to continuous language learning pathways.
- 2.33. The Committee notes that language teachers may choose not to remain in their area of speciality for a variety of reasons, however there is a need to better support language teachers who wish to remain and provide sustainable language program offerings.
- 2.34. The Committee welcomes the ACT Government's response to the recent school resourcing review. The transition to 'a consistent, coordinated public school system' represents a necessary and timely reform which will also help to improve equity of access to language learning pathways across the territory.⁶⁹

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake the necessary workforce planning to determine how many qualified language educators are employed by the Education Directorate, and where these educators work.

⁶⁸ ACT Government, *Future of Education: one public education system*, 27 May 2026, www.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/3073962/Future-of-Education-One-public-education-system.pdf, (accessed 27 May 2026), pp 4–5.

⁶⁹ Final report of the Expert Panel, *ACT Public School System Resourcing Review*, 2 April 2026, www.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3073961/ACT-Public-School-System-Resourcing-Review-final-report-of-the-Expert-Panel.PDF, (accessed 10 June 2026), p 13.

- 2.35. The Committee considers that workforce planning should also focus on ensuring sufficient language teachers are available to provide language education in primary schools in accordance with the Australian curriculum.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake the necessary workforce planning to ensure that every primary school has a language teacher.

Language strategy in the ACT

- 2.36. The Language Education Action Plan (LEAP) is the ACT Government’s plan to strengthen language learning in ACT public schools. Released in 2024 following an Assembly motion in 2018, the LEAP contains nine actions against the priority areas of workforce planning, pedagogy, and curriculum and partnerships.⁷⁰ The LEAP supports the *Future of Education Strategy* and ‘provides a pathway for the ACT to be the jurisdiction of choice for language education in Australia.’⁷¹ The majority of actions in the LEAP were due to be completed by the end of 2025.⁷²
- 2.37. The Committee heard concerns about the time taken to develop the LEAP, as well as the adequacy of the actions identified.⁷³ The AEU expressed frustration with ‘planning to plan’ and raised concerns that, despite taking over five years to develop and being informed by detailed stakeholder consultation, the LEAP was general, rather than specific, in its aims and commitments:

The LEAP contains no measurable targets. It does not precisely define the problems it seeks to address. It does not identify the drivers of those problems. It does not present fully developed solutions. It does not propose any mechanism to deal with unreasonable language teacher workloads. It does not explain how it will close the gap between the current situation and the basic curriculum requirement that all schools deliver language education.⁷⁴

- 2.38. When asked what key performance indicators were included in the LEAP, Education Directorate officials advised that it was not developed in that way:

The Language Education Action Plan is not developed in that way. It involves a number of actions which we thought we could take to improve this situation. The workforce plan is an HR plan, which looks across more broadly than just language teachers. That has those more defined targets, goals and numbers associated with it. This is a generalised plan to say, “What are we going to do to assist, with what we currently have, in making language education the best we can possibly be?”

⁷⁰ ACT Government, *Language Education Action Plan*, April 2024, pp 4–6.

⁷¹ ACT Government, *Language Education Action Plan*, April 2024, p 3.

⁷² ACT Government, *Language Education Action Plan*, April 2024, pp 4–6.

⁷³ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 4; Canberra Region Languages Forum, *Submission 21*, p 2.

⁷⁴ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 4.

That is without committing significant additional funds, other than people power, which is what we have done.⁷⁵

- 2.39. ACT Parents called for more action on the LEAP, noting that it had not been consulted on, or provided information about, the implementation of actions identified for delivery by the end of 2025.⁷⁶
- 2.40. The ACT Government took a question about this on notice and later provided information on the implementation status of the plan's actions, summarised here:
- a) Action 1: The language teacher workforce plan integration with the Directorate's broader workforce strategy has been delayed due to redirection of resources to the Punjabi and Hindi language survey and the dissolution of CIT Solutions.
 - b) Action 2: Consultation completed with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) to discuss barriers for international teachers looking to teach in the ACT with the resulting action as messaging by TQI and the Directorate to schools and prospective teachers not to assume they are ineligible and to seek advice from TQI.
 - c) Action 3: Ongoing work is underway to investigate IELTS levels (English language proficiency test) required for language teachers.
 - d) Action 4: Alternative delivery models are focused on cross-college enrolments and exploring community language options for Punjabi and Hindi language education.
 - e) Action 5: Mandated minutes for language learning are specified in the Learning and Teaching Policy, 2026.
 - f) Action 6: The Curriculum Policy and Procedures has not been updated yet.
 - g) Action 7: The Education Directorate expect to publish by the end of Semester 1, 2026 data that shows language pathways across schools to support school decision making on their language offerings.
 - h) Action 8: Connections with Community Language Schools (CLS) is ongoing work including developing information on CLS pathways for families.
 - i) Action 9: Ongoing collaboration with the University of Canberra to promote language teaching opportunities.⁷⁷

Committee comment

- 2.41. The Committee appreciates that strategies can take many forms and notes the information received from stakeholders and the ACT Government about the merits and deficiencies of the LEAP in its present approach. However, the Committee considers that the LEAP in its current form does not support meaningful progress in the provision of equitable language

⁷⁵ Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 70.

⁷⁶ Ms Julie McLean, Policy Officer, ACT Parents, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 24.

⁷⁷ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *response to QTON 12*, 28 April 2026, (received 25 May 2026), pp 2–4.

learning opportunities for ACT public school students or accountability for the implementation of the actions it identifies.

- 2.42. In the spirit of greater transparency in government reporting, the Committee considers that the LEAP, or its successor, would benefit from clearer targets about what the ACT Government is committed to achieving in language delivery, from primary school through high school and into college. Robust metrics with regular and rigorous reviews would assist the full range of stakeholders, as well as those responsible for delivery, to understand progress and identify areas for future action.

Finding 3

The Committee finds that the Language Education Action Plan is not fit for purpose, and the ACT Government has failed to fulfil its commitments under the plan.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the Language Education Action Plan, including by developing robust metrics to define success under the plan.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government affirm its commitment to providing continuous language learning pathways for students in the public education system and provide a clear roadmap for how this commitment will be fulfilled.

3. Year 11–12 ATAR language learning options

Current Year 11–12 language options

- 3.1. The following enrolment options are currently available for Year 11–12 ATAR students who wish to continue to build their language proficiency in their chosen language:
- a) Enrolment in their priority enrolment area (PEA) college and continued language study if their PEA college offers that language. The ACT Government guarantees a place for every ACT child at a public school within their PEA.⁷⁸
 - b) Out-of-area enrolment at another college, where their PEA college does not offer their language of choice, if capacity allows.
 - c) Dual enrolment: A process where a student is enrolled at a home college and then travels to a second college to study the language course of their choice.
 - d) Enrolment to study a language course with a BSSS specialist education provider outside of the ACT public school system. There is currently one provider that exists the ACT, which is for Chinese language studies.⁷⁹

Out-of-area enrolment

- 3.2. One of the options presented by the government for students who wish to study a language not offered at their PEA college is to apply for out-of-area enrolment at another college that offers their language of choice.⁸⁰
- 3.3. ACT public schools are divided into two categories:
- Category A schools – schools which are in high demand and have limited capacity to take students from outside their PEA. Category A schools do not consider out-of-area enrolment applications on the basis of a curriculum choice not being available at a student’s PEA school.
 - Category B schools – schools which usually have some places for students located outside their PEA. These schools may consider out-of-area enrolment applications where the school offers a curriculum choice that is not available at the student’s PEA school.⁸¹
- 3.4. One parent highlighted the limitations of the current out-of-area enrolment process, where the only college in the ACT that offered all of the subjects her child wanted to study for their ATAR was a category A school:

A child cannot be enrolled in a school of choice based on subject requirements in the ACT. Instead, the restrictive policies guiding school enrolments mean that

⁷⁸ ACT Government, *Find a school in your Priority Enrolment Area*, www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/find-a-school-and-enrol/find-a-school-in-your-priority-enrolment-area (accessed 16 June 2026).

⁷⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 1.

⁸⁰ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 1.

⁸¹ ACT Government *Apply to a school outside your area*, <https://www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/find-a-school-and-enrol/apply-to-a-school-outside-your-area#Category-A-and-Category-B-schools> (accessed 16 June 2026).

college students cannot enrol into a college that best fits their subject requirements unless their parents choose to live in the ‘correct’ suburb, a choice a child has no control over – even less so in a military family such as ours.⁸²

- 3.5. The Committee raised concerns that capacity constraints at some schools meant that out-of-area enrolments on curriculum grounds were not supported.⁸³ In response to an Assembly Chamber question on notice, the ACT Government advised the number of applications for out-of-area enrolment in 2026 to access a language course and the reasons for rejection:

As of 12 February 2026, 115 enrolment applications were received, applying to an out of area college to access a language course in 2026. Of those 73 were accepted, and 42 declined. Of the 42 declined, 31 were due to school capacity, 10 were declined because the chosen language course was available at the student’s local school, and one was declined because the language course was not available at the out of area school applied to.⁸⁴

- 3.6. Speaking at the hearing, officials acknowledged capacity constraints for out-of-area enrolments:

We take into account a whole range of factors in those decisions about our out-of-area enrolments. And there are circumstances, like those that were identified, where there is not capacity for additional students. But I think we need to recognise that our colleges actually deliver a range of languages—some of them deliver multiple languages. So there are very active efforts to ensure we are providing quality language provision to senior secondary students, and in those circumstances, we could not meet every student’s preference for the language and college enrolment.⁸⁵

Committee comment

- 3.7. While out-of-area enrolment is technically an option for students where their PEA school doesn’t offer their preferred language, capacity constraints at some schools mean this option is of limited effectiveness in practice.
- 3.8. ACT Government data provided in March 2026 speaks to this limitation, with 27 percent of applications to an out-of-area college to access a language course rejected due to school capacity.⁸⁶

⁸² Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 1.

⁸³ Mr Thomas Emerson MLA, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 57.

⁸⁴ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to Chamber QON 872*, 3 March 2026, (received 31 March 2026), p 1.

⁸⁵ Ms Jo Wood, Director-General, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 58.

⁸⁶ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to Chamber QON 872*, 3 March 2026, (received 31 March 2026), p 1.

Finding 4

The Committee finds that a significant portion of students who sought to enrol out-of-area to study a language of their choice in Year 11–12 were unable to do so due to school capacity limitations despite ACT Government advice to the contrary.

Dual enrolment

3.9. Dual enrolment is available for students to continue their language of preference into Year 11–12 where it is not offered by their PEA school.⁸⁷ This is where a student completes the majority of their studies at their home college and studies their language course at a second college.⁸⁸

3.10. Education officials advised that while dual enrolment is possible, it is not a regular occurrence, with just two dual enrolments for languages at the time of the public hearings:

I would add that there are a couple of examples where students do all of their studies at a particular college and then choose to do a language at a different college. We have a couple of examples of that. Obviously, that is challenging. We have to align timetables, scheduling and travel et cetera, but there are examples. It is possible under our current enrolment policies to have a dual enrolment, so to speak. So they do all their studies at their local and then go off to a different college that offers their subject of choice in regards to language. So that can happen. It is quite rare, but it does happen.⁸⁹

3.11. The former convenor of CAL highlighted timetable clashes as a significant challenge for the dual enrolment model:

The other issue is timetable clashes. The model assumes that the two colleges have 100 per cent compatible timetables for the particular subject that you are looking at enrolling in. That almost never happens. When I was at Hawker, we had an arrangement with Lake G; we did this in sociology, where we sent a student across to Lake G and we hosted a student from them for French. It did not work well for them because there was always at least one session that clashed with what they had on their timetable in their main college. It is not a practical proposition to be doing that.⁹⁰

3.12. Parents raised concerns about the practicality of dual enrolments, highlighting student travel across town as logistically challenging and potentially dependent on a parent's availability to facilitate travel during work hours.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 63.

⁸⁸ Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 63.

⁸⁹ Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 63.

⁹⁰ Mr Frank Keighley, Former Convenor, Canberra Academy of Languages, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 4.

⁹¹ Ms Natalie Drummond, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2025, p 38.

- 3.13. One parent investigated dual enrolment in 2026 for their student who was offered dual enrolment with Hawker College as the home college and Italian studied at Narrabundah College.⁹² The student would have been required to attend Narrabundah College four days a week. With the travel time of 25–30 minutes across town, a 60-minute lesson, then travel back, the parent calculated their student would ‘miss two hours of the school day at Hawker College four days per week, or almost a quarter of the school week.’⁹³ The parent advised that ‘sacrificing one subject for another is counterproductive’ and the family did not pursue dual enrolment as a consequence.⁹⁴

Distance education

- 3.14. After exhausting out-of-area and dual enrolment options to study Italian in college, one parent enrolled their child in distance education with Finigan School of Distance Education in NSW.⁹⁵ The course provides one group video call per week with alternating times, meaning that due to the student’s timetable availability, contact with the teacher occurs fortnightly.⁹⁶ The opportunity to speak and hear the language with the teacher or other students was therefore limited and the family advised they were considering supplementing distance education with a tutor, though the cost at \$80 per hour would likely be prohibitive.⁹⁷
- 3.15. Another challenge with the distance education model included access to learning materials, as restrictions on the ACT Government-issued Chromebook prevented the student accessing the distance education website and materials.⁹⁸
- 3.16. While not listed as a pathway option in the ACT Government’s submission, Education Directorate officials advised they had looked at distance education models in other jurisdictions, which were largely in place to support students in regional and remote locations.⁹⁹
- 3.17. Officials advised that while it is possible for students to complete a distance education course,¹⁰⁰ there are challenges associated with this model for Year 11–12 ATAR subjects:

Our current distance education provider is delivered through New South Wales Education for the ACT. That means, in the senior secondary language space, because it needs BSSS accreditation, their language courses in years 11 and 12 are accredited by... NESA, by their standards unit. To meet the requirements of our Senior Secondary Certificate, we need a completely different accreditation for that subject area. Whilst our schools sometimes choose to pick up a single subject

⁹² Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 3.

⁹³ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 3.

⁹⁴ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 3.

⁹⁵ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, pp 3–5.

⁹⁶ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 5.

⁹⁷ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 5.

⁹⁸ Name Withheld, *Submission 10*, p 5.

⁹⁹ Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 70.

¹⁰⁰ Mr John Borton, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 70.

through distance education in New South Wales for high school, for example, it is because it is Australian curriculum based. However, in senior secondary, that becomes more challenging because of BSSS accreditation requirements.¹⁰¹

Committee comment

- 3.18. The parent experiences described above demonstrate the limitations of out-of-area enrolment, dual enrolment, and distance education options for students seeking to complete Year 11–12 ATAR language courses in the ACT.
- 3.19. School capacity pressures mean that students are unable to apply to some schools on curriculum grounds, and schools where they can apply on these grounds do not always have enough space to accommodate them. This means that students' access to language courses is dictated by where they live, creating inequality across the system. This inequality is compounded by the hyperlocal school model discussed in chapter 3.
- 3.20. The Committee considers that the alternative language education delivery models currently offered by the ACT Government are unsuitable for many students.

Finding 5

The Committee finds that the ACT Government has not provided equitable continuous language learning pathways through to Years 11 and 12 across the public education system.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commit to providing equitable continuous language learning pathways through to Year 11 and 12 across the public education system.

Centralised supplementary languages programs

- 3.21. Consistent with the terms of the petition, the Committee received evidence calling for the establishment of a centralised languages program to fill gaps where continuous language learning pathways are unavailable through ACT public schools.¹⁰² This evidence drew on the learnings from the previous CAL and CIT Solutions programs.

Canberra Academy of Languages model

- 3.22. The Canberra Academy of Languages was a specialist education provider registered with the ACT BSSS. Established in 2016, CAL provided language courses from 2017 to 2023 for

¹⁰¹ Ms Angela Spence, Deputy Director-General, Education Directorate, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 70.

¹⁰² See, for example, Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 8; ANU Languages Board of Studies, *Submission 7*, p 2; Dr Vikkitharan Gnanasambandapilla, *Submission 25*, p 1; Vengatasalam Jeganathan, *Submission 12*, p 1; Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 11; Senthil Shanmugam and Vaishnavi Senthil Kumar, *Submission 17*, p 1; Name Withheld, *Submission 29*, p 4; Mr Dennis Flannery, *Submission 31*, p 3.

Year 11 and 12 ACT public, independent and Catholic school students to enable them to continue with their language studies where their chosen language courses were not offered at their schools. The CAL program also offered an early access option for high school students commencing their selected senior secondary subjects in Years 9 and 10.¹⁰³

- 3.23. Language offerings increased from two languages in 2017 to six languages in 2023. Enrolments also steadily grew over the duration of the program, see Figure 1. At its peak, 74 students, including 53 public school students, attended CAL.¹⁰⁴

At a glance – CAL students, schools, languages:

2017: 2 students, 2 schools, 1 language

2018: 5 students, 4 schools, 1 language

2019: 9 students, 6 schools (incl. CIT), 2 languages

2020: 21 students, 12 schools, 4 languages

2021: 32 students, 13 schools, 5 languages

2022: 60 students,* 19 schools, 6 languages

2023: 74 students,* 19 schools, 6 languages

* The figure for 2022 is the average of enrolments in the two semesters. For 2023, it is based on Semester 1.

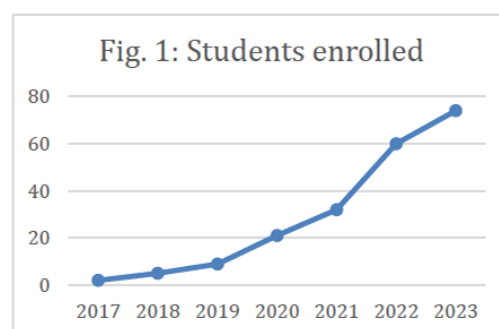


Figure 1: Enrolment and language offerings at CAL between 2017 and 2023 [Source: Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 4].

- 3.24. The CAL program was run out of Ainslie School, was supported by volunteers for key organisational roles and employed six teachers at its peak.¹⁰⁵ Students participated in two hours of face-to-face learning and two hours of self-paced online learning each week.¹⁰⁶ The program charged \$500 per term, which was covered by either students' families or their home schools.¹⁰⁷
- 3.25. Evidence from parents, students and teachers at CAL was overwhelmingly supportive of the model.¹⁰⁸ Parents and students highlighted the opportunity CAL provided to deepen their understanding of language, culture and heritage.¹⁰⁹ The central location and out-of-hours delivery model was also considered beneficial:¹¹⁰

Of critical importance was a centrally located teaching environment and an administration system that worked in sync with the College timetables. This meant that [name redacted] could easily and safely commute into the city following [their] other classes in Tuggeranong and still complete [their] day at a

¹⁰³ Canberra Academy of Languages, *Home*, <https://www.cal.act.edu.au/> (accessed 18 June 2026).

¹⁰⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 4.

¹⁰⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 4.

¹⁰⁶ Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 1.

¹⁰⁷ Mr Frank Keighley, Former Convenor, Canberra Academy of Languages, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 2.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Name Withheld, *Submission 13*; Senthil Shanmugam & Vaishnavi Senthil Kumar, *Submission 17*; Sarvesh Kumar, *Submission 18*; Nivedha Manikandan and Shivani Manikandan, *Submission 19*; Theo Herder, *Submission 30*; Mr Dennis Flannery, *Submission 31*; Name Withheld, *Submission 32*; Ms Uma Ramiah, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, pp 9–10; Mr Baba Touré, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, pp 10–11.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Ms Nivedha Manikandan and Ms Shivani Manikandan, *Submission 19*, p 1; Manikandan Lakshmanan, *Submission 20*, p 1; Sarvesh Senthil Kumar, *Submission 20*, p 1; Senthil Shanmugam and Vaishnavi Senthil Kumar, *Submission 17*, p 1.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Name Withheld, *Submission 32*, p 2; Modern Languages Teachers Association, *Submission 26*, p 2.

reasonable hour and with easy and safe access to bus routes. Further to this, the student cohort commenced classes together and thus developed friendships and were able to support each other. If [name redacted] had attended a different college, for example Hawker college, [they] would have been in a cohort that had already formed relationships and may have found it difficult to integrate.¹¹¹

- 3.26. Two teachers who taught at CAL spoke to the benefits of the smaller class sizes and in-person delivery which supported students to interact and participate confidently during classes.¹¹²

- 3.27. The Australian Multicultural Action Network spoke to the challenges facing a small-scale, privately-operated program like CAL:

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.¹¹³

- 3.28. The former convenor of CAL advised that the program was intended to provide a ‘proof of concept’ for a government-run, centrally delivered language education program to complemented language learning in schools.¹¹⁴ This position was supported by the AEU, which advised:

The CAL was never designed to be a permanent solution. Its leadership made this explicit in detailed Budget submissions to the ACT Government in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. They put forward costed proposals for the Government to take over the CAL’s operations, absorb them into the public system, and place language education on a sustainable footing. These submissions were not acted on. The Government had a standing invitation, year after year, to bring language education back into public hands. It declined.¹¹⁵

- 3.29. The CAL program ceased operations at the end of 2023. The then-Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and the Education Directorate were advised in mid-2023 and worked with CAL and the ACT BSSS to transition the external Senior Secondary Languages program to another provider.¹¹⁶

Committee comment

- 3.30. The CAL program provided language learning options for students where they were unable to complete ATAR-level courses at their home school. The program offered a learning pathway that was complementary to existing language learning avenues in the public, independent and Catholic education systems.

¹¹¹ Name Withheld, *Submission 32*, p 2.

¹¹² Mr Baba Touré, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 8.

¹¹³ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 2*, p 4.

¹¹⁴ Mr Frank Keighley, *Supplementary Submission 5.1*, p 6; Canberra Academy of Languages, *CAL News 2023*, <https://www.cal.act.edu.au/docs/CAL-News-2023.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2026).

¹¹⁵ Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 4.

¹¹⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 4.

- 3.31. While the CAL program was never intended to be a long-term solution, it provided a seven-year case study of how a centralised language model could operate effectively in the ACT. Increasing enrolment numbers over the life of the program suggest it would have been a sustainable program had government support been provided to continue its operations.

Finding 6

The Committee finds that the Canberra Academy of Languages offered a sustainable model for ATAR language courses in the ACT school system.

CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages

- 3.32. In late 2023, the external senior secondary languages program previously run at CAL transitioned to the CIT Solutions Centre of Modern Languages (CIT Solutions). CIT Solutions offered the program in 2024 and 2025 as a BSSS specialist education provider, offering the same six languages as the CAL model which had been delivered at the Ainslie School.¹¹⁷
- 3.33. The program operated on a fee-for-service basis, with fees of approximately \$625 per term. As of May 2025, 49 students were enrolled in the course, 39 of those from ACT public schools.¹¹⁸ CIT Solutions did not offer an early access option for Year 9 and 10 students.¹¹⁹
- 3.34. The Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) took over delivery of the external Senior Secondary Languages program from semester 2, 2025 after the CIT Board decided to liquidate CIT Solutions.¹²⁰ Forty-seven students were completing the course in 2025.¹²¹ CIT committed to ‘teach out’ the 14 Year 11 students enrolled in 2025, however the decision was made not to continue the program further.¹²² While CIT continued to offer the same languages provided under CAL and CIT Solutions, the method of delivery changed, with face-to-face time increased to three and a half hours on a Thursday, delivered at the CIT Bruce campus.¹²³
- 3.35. It is unclear if promotion of the CIT Solutions program was undertaken during 2024 and 2025 due to the voluntary liquidation process, however CIT later advised:

CIT is aware that CIT Solutions had the availability of ATAR languages on their website and it is evident that CIT Solutions also had relationships with the school cohort during the handover process.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, pp 4–5.

¹¹⁸ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 5.

¹¹⁹ Mr Shaun Haidon, Principal, Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12) Program, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 45.

¹²⁰ Mrs Roslyn Jackson, Non-Executive Director, CIT Governing Board, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 46.

¹²¹ Dr Margot McNeill, Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Institute of Technology, *answer to QTON 6*, 28 April 2026 (received 12 May 2026), p 2.

¹²² ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 6.

¹²³ Mr Shaun Haidon, Principal, Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12) Program, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 45.

¹²⁴ Dr Margot O’Neill CEO Canberra Institute of Technology, *answer to QTON 3*, 28 April 2026 (received 12 May 2026), p 1.

- 3.36. The Committee received evidence regarding the impact of the CIT's changed delivery methods on student enrolment numbers. The Modern Language Teachers Association ACT identified the location of CIT's course delivery as impacting student numbers:

The transfer of senior secondary language programs from Ainslie School to CIT Bruce has created significant access barriers. Travel time, timetable constraints, and reduced flexibility are discouraging student participation. Students are increasingly choosing not to study languages rather than navigate these obstacles.¹²⁵

- 3.37. One submitter recounted how the decision to cease early access impacted their daughter, who was removed from their Year 11 Tamil course, despite having been officially enrolled and attending two classes with CIT.¹²⁶

- 3.38. Officials advised that CIT's decision to change the hours and delivery location of the Senior Secondary Language program was to ensure safety and connection for students:

When any provider delivers certification courses under the BSSS, it has to meet the Board of Senior Secondary Studies quality requirements of attendance, engagement and so forth. For us, with such a small cohort, we took it that the way to ensure the safety of group and continuity of learning was to have increased face-to-face hours. I understand the model of two hours face to face and then two hours of self-paced online learning used to be the model. For us, we could not see that being a way to demonstrate high-quality language education in a safe, transitory way for this cohort.¹²⁷

Committee comment

- 3.39. The Committee considers that when the external Year 11–12 ATAR language program transitioned to CIT Solutions, and subsequently CIT, changes to the delivery model and location meant it was not designed to retain students. This was compounded by an apparent lack of promotion and the discontinuation of the early access option for Year 9 and 10 students.

Finding 7

The changes CIT made to the centralised ATAR-level language learning program compared with what was previously on offer led to reduced enrolments, which was likely exacerbated by an apparent lack of promotion of the program.

¹²⁵ Modern Languages Teachers Association ACT, *Submission 26*, p 1.

¹²⁶ Name Withheld, *Submission 24*, p 1.

¹²⁷ Mr Shaun Haidon, Principal, Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12) Program, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 51.

Future centralised language program delivery

- 3.40. Multiple submitters called for the Education Directorate to deliver a centralised Year 11–12 ATAR language program to fill the gap created by the cessation of the CAL and CIT programs.¹²⁸
- 3.41. The ACT’s lack of an alternative, centralised language program to supplement home college offerings was described as a ‘critical equity issue’, with the provision of a centrally delivered supplementary offering considered ‘best practice for enabling equity and inclusion for all student cohorts.’¹²⁹
- 3.42. The Federation of Chinese Associations of the ACT called for the Education Directorate to replicate the previous programs with a focus on ‘high-demand community languages.’¹³⁰ The Australian Multicultural Action Network noted that a centrally delivered model could help address challenges that limit the delivery of language courses at individual colleges:

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.¹³¹

- 3.43. ACT Parents raised concerns around a centralised language program delivered by the Education Directorate and questioned whether such a program was the best use of public funds:

We have looked at the numbers from the participation in the CIT Solutions program, and we consider that it would be a better investment for the government to provide language teachers through schools that are currently without them, which would impact more students, than publicly funding a centralised program. That is not to say that a centralised program is not beneficial, because clearly there is a demand for this service, but it is a bit bespoke, and its offering would depend on the demand within the community, which can change from one year to the next. It is not that we are not supportive of that; it is about what would give the best and biggest impact for students overall.¹³²

- 3.44. The ACT Government explained that it had explored options to deliver a centralised languages program through the Education Directorate, however it concluded this was unfeasible:

¹²⁸ See, for example, Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 8; ANU Languages Board of Studies, *Submission 7*, p 2; Dr Vikkitharan Gnanasambandapilla, *Submission 25*, p 1; Vengatasalam Jeganathan, *Submission 12*, p 1; Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Submission 3*, p 11; Senthil Shanmugam and Vaishnavi Senthil Kumar, *Submission 17*, p 1; Name Withheld, *Submission 29*, p 4; Mr Dennis Flannery, *Submission 31*, p 3.

¹²⁹ Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 1.

¹³⁰ Federation of Chinese Associations of the ACT, *Submission 1*, p 3; Name Withheld, *Submission 24*, p 1.

¹³¹ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 2*, p 8.

¹³² Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 25.

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;
- the ACT Government has never had a centralised language program (this has always been delivered externally);
- 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.¹³³

3.45. The Minister also raised questions about whether such a program would be offered to students outside the public school system, noting the ACT Government has not run a program that funds language education for non-government schools.¹³⁴

3.46. The possibility of language teachers travelling between colleges was also discussed.¹³⁵ The former convenor of CAL noted that teachers may not be compensated for travel costs between colleges, and a current teacher identified the logistical challenges such as aligning daily timetables and yearly schedules.¹³⁶

Interstate example of supplementary language program

3.47. Government-run language education programs, to supplement in-school offerings, are available in other jurisdictions.¹³⁷ The Canberra Region Languages Forum advised:

The ACT is one of the few jurisdictions in Australia without a centrally delivered language education program. Government-run programs that allow students to study a language not offered in their day schools have been run for some years in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. These in no way replace school-based language programs; they supplement and complement them.¹³⁸

3.48. The Victorian School of Languages (VSL) provides an example of a government-run supplementary languages school. The VSL offers a combination of in-person and distance education language courses. Students from the public, independent or Catholic school system may undertake study at the VSL where their home school does not offer their

¹³³ ACT Government, *Submission 6*, p 6.

¹³⁴ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 56.

¹³⁵ Ms Natalie Drummond, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 38.

¹³⁶ Mr Frank Keighley, Former Convenor of the Canberra Academy of Languages, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 4; Mr Orion Lethbridge, Member Australian Education Union (ACT Branch), *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 27.

¹³⁷ See, for example, Victorian School of Languages, *2026 Languages Program Centre Classes*, https://web.vsl.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2026-Languages-Program-Centre-Classes_Final_Web.pdf (accessed 18 June 2026); Queensland Government Education, *Community Language Schools*, 21 May 2026, <https://communitylanguageschools.education.qld.gov.au/community-language-school-programs>, (accessed 18 June 2026).

¹³⁸ Canberra Region Languages Forum, *Submission 21*, p 2

language of choice or timetable clashes prevent them from studying their language of choice at their home school.

- In-person: The VSL offers face-to-face language learning for foundation (first year of school) to Year 12 and VCE students.¹³⁹ Instruction in 50 languages is delivered on Saturday mornings at 40 locations in Melbourne, Geelong and regional Victoria.¹⁴⁰ In 2026 an annual voluntary parent contribution was requested of between \$90 to \$250 (year level dependant).¹⁴¹ 16,000 students access this delivery method.
- Distance education: The VSL offers distance education in 13 languages for secondary school students from all three school systems. An annual administration fee is charged directly to the student’s home school (the enrolling school), with the amount depending on which school system the student is enrolled.¹⁴² 1500 students across Victoria study a language by distance education.¹⁴³

Budget considerations

- 3.49. The Committee received conflicting information about how much the delivery of a centralised supplementary language program would cost.
- 3.50. The former convenor of CAL submitted a proposed model and implementation timeline for the delivery of a fee-for-service supplementary Year 11–12 languages program based on the previous CAL model.¹⁴⁴ Estimated budget scenarios for the delivery of such a course were provided during the public hearing.¹⁴⁵ A summary of these scenarios for the 2026 calendar year is at Table 1.

| Scenario | Projected total income | Projected total expense |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 10 languages offered (72 enrolments) | \$216,000 | \$206,518 |
| 10 languages offered (42 enrolments) | \$126,000 | \$205,318 |
| 10 languages offered (24 enrolments) | \$70,400 | \$204,598 |

Table 1: Indicative income and expenses to deliver external, centralised Year 11-12 language program based on the CAL model [Source: Frank Keighley, Additional information – budget scenarios].

¹³⁹ Victorian School of Languages, *2026 Languages Program Centre Classes*, https://web.vsl.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2026-Languages-Program-Centre-Classes_Final_Web.pdf (accessed 18 June 2026)

¹⁴⁰ Victorian School of Languages, *2026 Languages Program Centre Classes*, https://web.vsl.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2026-Languages-Program-Centre-Classes_Final_Web.pdf (accessed 18 June 2026)

¹⁴¹ Victorian School of Languages, *2026 Languages Program Centre Classes*, https://web.vsl.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2026-Languages-Program-Centre-Classes_Final_Web.pdf (accessed 18 June 2026)

¹⁴² [Distance – Victorian School Of Languages](#)

¹⁴³ Victorian School of Languages, *2026 Languages Program Distance Education*, https://web.vsl.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2026-Languages-Program-Distance-Education_Web.pdf (accessed 18 June 2026)

¹⁴⁴ Mr Frank Keighley, *Submission 5*, p 6.

¹⁴⁵ Mr Frank Keighley, Additional information provided – budget scenarios, www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/3055171/Document-tabled-by-Mr-Frank-Keighley-28-April-2026-Budget-Scenarios.pdf, 28 April 2026.

A breakdown of the first budget scenario, which aligns with the number of enrolments during the CAL program delivery is at Figure 2.

Projected income for calendar year 2026, classes with 12 each

| Item | Quantity | Semesters | Rate | Amount |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Enrolments Arabic | 0 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ - |
| Enrolments French | 12 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ 36,000 |
| Enrolments German | 12 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ 36,000 |
| Enrolments Hindi | 0 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ - |
| Enrolments Indonesian | 0 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ - |
| Enrolments Italian | 0 | 0 | \$ 1,500 | \$ - |
| Enrolments Japanese | 12 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ 36,000 |
| Enrolments Korean | 12 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ 36,000 |
| Enrolments Spanish | 12 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ 36,000 |
| Enrolments Tamil | 12 | 2 | \$ 1,500 | \$ 36,000 |
| Total enrolled | 72 | | | |
| Total for calendar year | | | | \$ 216,000 |

Projected expenses

| Item | Quantity | FTEA | Rate | Amount |
|--|----------|------|------------|-------------------|
| STAFFING COSTS | | | | |
| Class teachers | 6 | 0.2 | \$ 120,102 | \$ 144,122 |
| Director of Languages | 1 | 0.1 | \$ 145,938 | \$ 14,594 |
| Administration/Reception | 1 | 0.1 | \$ 75,000 | \$ 7,500 |
| Information Technology Officer 2 | 1 | 0.1 | \$ 98,000 | \$ 9,800 |
| Superannuation (12% of total salaries) | 12.0% | | \$ 176,016 | \$ 21,122 |
| Workers Compensation | 0 | | \$ 2,000 | \$ - |
| Staffing sub-total | | | | \$ 197,138 |
| OTHER OPERATIONAL COSTS | | | | |
| Curriculum resources | 36 | | \$ 80 | \$ 2,880 |
| IT equipment | 2 | | \$ 1,000 | \$ 2,000 |
| IT services | 12 | | \$ 200 | \$ 2,400 |
| Web hosting plan renewal | 1 | | \$ 900 | \$ 900 |
| Wireless broadband | 12 | | \$ 100 | \$ 1,200 |
| Other sub-total | | | | \$ 9,380 |
| Total for calendar year | | | | \$ 206,518 |

Figure 2: Indicative income and expenses to deliver external, centralised Year 11-12 language program based on the CAL model [Source: Frank Keighley, Additional information – budget scenarios, p 1].

- 3.51. CIT provided information on the cost of its language program delivery for 2026 to the remaining students it committed to teach out, being nine students in Semester one 2026 and 10 in Semester two 2026.¹⁴⁶ The cost was given as \$124,075, consisting predominantly of staffing costs:

The estimated revenue over semester 1 and semester 2 is approximately \$21,250. Our forecast estimate expenditure for the two semesters is \$124,075—so a net loss of \$102,825. That is on our estimates.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ms Ros Jackson, Non-Executive director, CIT Governing Board, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 44.

¹⁴⁷ Mr Shaun Haidon, Principal, Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12) Program, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 50.

- 3.52. For 2026, CIT maintained the same fees structure as for previous years under CIT Solutions with Semester One fees as \$1,250, Semester Two as \$1,000, being a total of \$2,250 a year.¹⁴⁸
- 3.53. The Education Directorate investigated delivering a centralised Year 11–12 language program as a supplementary offering to languages delivered in colleges, and calculated an indicative costing of \$548,038 to offer seven languages.¹⁴⁹ This costing was prepared prior to the petition related to this inquiry and includes a full-time Program Manager and part-time Administration Support Officer.¹⁵⁰

| | 2025-26 | 2026-27 |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| | Costs (\$) | Costs (\$) |
| Classroom Teacher 1.4 FTE (7 x 0.2) | 250,778 | 258,140 |
| SLC (Program Manager) | 201,582 | 207,515 |
| ASO 4 (.5) (Administration Support) | 65,678 | 67,439 |
| Administration including ICT costs and student resources | 30,000 | 30,000 |
| Total | 548,038 | 563,094 |

Figure 3: Education Directorate costings [Source: Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QTON 9*, 6 May 2026 (received 25 May 2026).]

Committee comment

- 3.54. The Committee notes the variations in costing provided by CAL, CIT and the Education Directorate, with models that contain significant variation in figures for administration costs in particular.
- 3.55. The Committee is concerned that the Education Directorate’s cost estimate is 2.66 to 4.42 times higher than the costings provided by the two organisations that have previously run this program.
- 3.56. The Committee notes that cost was put forward as a primary barrier to the ACT Government delivering a centralised ATAR-level languages program.
- 3.57. The Committee considers that a centralised ATAR-level languages program, supplementing language offerings in home colleges, is required to ensure continuity of language pathways for students in the ACT public school system. In the absence of a suitable alternative

¹⁴⁸ Dr Margot O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Institute of Technology, *answer to QTON 4*, 28 April 2026, (received 12 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁴⁹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QTON 9*, 28 April 2026 (received 25 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁵⁰ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QTON 9*, 6 May 2026 (received 25 May 2026), p 2.

provider, the Committee concludes that the provision of such a program is the responsibility of the ACT Government.

- 3.58. A centralised supplementary languages program funded by the Education Directorate would prevent inequity resulting from fee-for-service programs where the cost is borne by families. The ACT Government's costing was prepared prior to the recommendations arising from the independent school resourcing review, which may provide opportunities to streamline processes and promote such a program to schools and students and support sustainable enrolment numbers.
- 3.59. The Committee acknowledges that the sustainability of a supplementary centralised languages program is dependent on sufficient enrolments. The experience of CAL has shown that effective promotion of a supplementary languages program, delivered in a central location with a schedule suitable for students, can attract and grow enrolments.

Finding 8

The Committee finds that the ACT Government's costing for delivering a centralised ATAR-level languages program was significantly higher than costings provided by organisations that have actually run such a program in the ACT.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fully fund, and either contract or directly deliver a centralised ATAR-level language learning program, at no cost to ACT public school students.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure its centralised ATAR-level language learning program is run at times that make sense for students and teachers, is in a centrally accessible location, and is well promoted.

Tamil pathways

- 3.60. The Committee received several submissions from Tamil parents and students, and testimony from Tamil language teachers, of the strong interest in continuity of language learning pathways at the Year 11–12 ATAR level.¹⁵¹
- 3.61. Following the cessation of the CIT program at the end of 2026, students will be unable to complete Year 11–12 ATAR studies in Tamil in the ACT.¹⁵² The Canberra Academy of

¹⁵¹ Mr Gokularuban Thiruvathwooran, North Campus Principal, Canberra Tamil School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 16; Mrs Apirami Ragulan, Secretary, Canberra Tamil School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 17; Thilagam Diraviam, *Submission 9*, p 1; Muthaiah Ramanathan, *Submission 14*, p 1; Selvameena Murthi, *Submission 15*, p 1; Sindhuja Subramani Prasad, *Submission 16*, p 1; Mr Sarvesh Senthil Kumar, *Submission 18*, p 1; Manikandan Lakshmanan, *Submission 20*, p 1; Viginathan Paranchsothi, *Submission 23*, p 1.

¹⁵² Ms Uma Ramiah, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 10; Mr Gokularuban Thiruvathwooran, North Campus Principal, Canberra Tamil School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 12.

Languages and CIT Solutions Centre for Modern Languages previously provided this study pathway for Tamil.¹⁵³ A former teacher at CAL spoke of the community interest in a continuing pathway:

The students are very keen. With very minimal advertising, the numbers in CAL were growing. From the point of view of the Tamil students, the best thing we expect is for the course to continue as an ATAR course, because the courses offered by community language schools in the ACT are not recognised by any government or any department. That is a big thing. For the last seven years, once it had been introduced as an ATAR course, the community has started involving the students in a very keen manner, because they can complete their course in a recognised form. Studying in community schools is not providing them with the acknowledgement that they need. Running it in years 11 and 12 is a great option.¹⁵⁴

3.62. The Canberra Tamil School, one of two community language schools in the ACT, provides Tamil language instruction up until Year 10. The Canberra Tamil School advised that it had an enrolment of 120 students, and that the school had at least 12 students interested in Tamil language studies for Year 11 in 2027 and Year 12 in 2028.¹⁵⁵

3.63. The value of Tamil language pathways was articulated as being two-fold—strengthening cultural connection and pursuing language study for educational attainment:

For Tamil speaking families, opportunities to learn and speak Tamil support cultural continuity and community wellbeing... students who maintain and develop a heritage language often demonstrate stronger learning outcomes across subjects. Integrating Tamil into the curriculum therefore supports educational success more broadly, not only language proficiency.¹⁵⁶

3.64. A former student of CAL, who studied Tamil, observed the vital role that language study has in developing a deep understanding of culture and history, that it was ‘much more than the studying of words and sentences; it has been a way to connect with my family, culture and my identity.’¹⁵⁷

3.65. Parents raised concerns with the Committee about the discrepancies with other jurisdictions in language pathways, and that their children may be disadvantaged by living in Canberra:¹⁵⁸

We are deeply grateful that Tamil was included as an ATAR subject in the ACT (through CAL/CIT delivery)... It has allowed our children to study their mother tongue at the highest academic level, strengthening both their cultural identity and their future opportunities. Tamil is already offered as an ATAR subject in

¹⁵³ Ms Uma Ramiah, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 9; ACT Government, *Submission 5*, pp 6–7.

¹⁵⁴ Ms Uma Ramiah, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 10.

¹⁵⁵ Mr Mayuran Sivarasa, Principal Coordinator, Canberra Tamil School, *response to QTON 2*, 28 April 2026 (received 10 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ms Divya Muthiah, *Submission 28*, p 1.

¹⁵⁷ Mr Sarvesh Senthil Kumar, *Submission 18*, p 1.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Annamali Muthiah, *Submission 27*, p 3; Dr Vikkitharan Gnanasambandapillai, *Submission 25*, p 1.

other Australian states, and it is only fair that ACT students have the same access. Removing this opportunity would disadvantage Tamil-speaking students in the ACT compared to their peers in other states and would undermine years of effort by our community to maintain and celebrate our language heritage.¹⁵⁹

- 3.66. The Canberra Tamil School delivers the national Tamil syllabus for pre-school to Year 10, developed by the NSW Federation of Tamil Schools. While the Canberra Tamil School cannot deliver ATAR level studies, they advised that in New South Wales this curriculum provides a pathway into Higher School Certificate studies where 'it is formally recognised through the Record of Achievement and provides a direct pathway for students to complete HSC Units 1-4.'¹⁶⁰
- 3.67. The Canberra Tamil School advised it had TQI teachers that could deliver Year 11–12 ATAR units using the Victorian curriculum as other jurisdictions do, however, unique constraints in the ACT prevented it from delivering an accredited pathway for Year 11–12 ATAR study:¹⁶¹
- Unlike other states, where community language schools operate with high-level subject matter experts, the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) requires that these units be delivered by a TQI-registered teacher within an accredited Specialist Education Provider. Consequently, despite our proven expertise and facilities, our status as a community language school prevents us from offering accredited senior courses in the ACT.¹⁶²
- 3.68. Examples of partnerships between community language schools and education departments in other jurisdictions include the Victorian School of Languages and the NSW Saturday School of Community Languages, which have 'partnered with community organisations to ensure heritage languages are accredited for the VCE and HSC.'¹⁶³ The Committee heard that the Queensland Department of Education 'actively supports a Senior External Examination model specifically designed to help community language students gain Year 12 certification and ATAR points in languages like Tamil.'¹⁶⁴
- 3.69. Tamil is not one of the eight priority languages for ACT public schools and is also not currently recognised in the Australian Curriculum as a language learning area.¹⁶⁵
- 3.70. The ACT Government consulted with Punjabi and Hindi speakers in 2025 about the introduction of educational pathways for their languages, noting that the community

¹⁵⁹ Dr Vikkitharan Gnanasambandapillai, *Submission 25*, p 1.

¹⁶⁰ Mr Mayuran Sivarasa, Principal Coordinator, Canberra Tamil School, *response to QTON 1*, 28 April 2026 (received 10 May 2026), p 1.

¹⁶¹ Mr Gokularuban Thiruvathwooran, North Campus Principal, Canberra Tamil School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2026, p 12; Mr Mayuran Sivarasa, Principal Coordinator, Canberra Tamil School, *response to QTON 1*, 28 April 2026 (received 10 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁶² Mr Mayuran Sivarasa, Principal Coordinator, Canberra Tamil School, *response to QTON 1*, 28 April 2026 (received 10 May 2026), p 2.

¹⁶³ Canberra Tamil School, *Submission 22*, p 1.

¹⁶⁴ Canberra Tamil School, *Submission 22*, p 1.

¹⁶⁵ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, *answer to QON 2*, 4 May 2026 (received 22 May 2026), p 2.

consultation showed a strong preference for in-school delivery in primary school of Punjabi and Hindi, with language pathways into high school and college.¹⁶⁶

Committee comment

- 3.71. The Committee considers that the Education Directorate and the BSSS have a responsibility to collaborate with the dedicated volunteers at the Canberra Tamil School to ensure the ongoing provision of a BSSS-certified Year 11–12 ATAR language offering.
- 3.72. The Committee notes that a centralised ATAR-level languages program such as that previously offered by CAL and CIT would achieve the above objective.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that a BSSS-certified Tamil course is made available to Year 11–12 public school students in the ACT.

¹⁶⁶ ACT Government, *Punjabi and Hindi language education – report on what we heard*, 2025, <https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/punjabi-and-hindi-languages> (accessed 28 May 2026).

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The Committee would like to thank the ACT Government, and the many organisations and individuals who participated in this inquiry.
- 4.2. The Committee makes nine recommendations and eight findings.

Mr Thomas Emerson MLA
Chair
30 June 2026

Appendix A: Submissions

| No. | Submission by | Received | Published |
|-----|---|------------|------------|
| 1 | Federation of Chinese Associations of the ACT | 09/03/2026 | 31/03/2026 |
| 2 | Australian Multicultural Action Network | 12/03/2026 | 31/03/2026 |
| 3 | Australian Education Union (ACT Branch) | 27/03/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 4 | ACT Parents | 30/03/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 5 | Frank Keighley | 31/03/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 5.1 | Frank Keighley - Supplementary | 28/04/2026 | 28/04/2026 |
| 6 | ACT Government | 01/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 7 | Australian National University Languages Board of Studies | 01/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 8 | Natalie Drummond | 04/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 9 | Thilagam Diraviam | 07/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 10 | Name Withheld | 08/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 11 | Meenu Sampath | 09/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 12 | Vengatasalam Jeganathan | 09/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 13 | Name Withheld | 09/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 14 | Muthaiah Ramanathan | 09/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 15 | Selvameena Murthi | 09/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 16 | Sindhuja Subramani Prasad | 09/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 17 | Senthil Shanmugam & Vaishnavi Senthil Kumar | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 18 | Sarvesh Kumar | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 19 | Nivedha Manikandan and Shivani Manikandan | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 20 | Manikandan Lakshmanan | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 21 | Canberra Region Languages Forum | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 22 | Canberra Tamil School | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 23 | Viginathasan Paranchsothi | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 24 | Name Withheld | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 25 | Dr Vikkitharan Gnanasambandapillai | 10/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 26 | Modern Languages Teachers Association ACT | 13/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 27 | Annamalai Muthiah | 13/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 28 | Divya Muthiah | 13/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 29 | Name Withheld | 13/04/2026 | 14/04/2026 |
| 30 | Theo Herder | 15/04/2026 | 21/04/2026 |

| No. | Submission by | Received | Published |
|------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 31 | Dennis Flannery | 28/04/2026 | 12/05/2026 |
| 32 | Name Withheld | 28/04/2026 | 12/05/2026 |

Appendix B: Witnesses

Tuesday, 28 April 2026

Private capacity

Ms Natalie Drummond

Mr Frank Keighley, Former convenor Canberra Academy of Languages

Ms Uma Ramiah

Mr Baba Touré

Organisations

ACT Parents

- **Ms Veronica Elliott**, Executive Officer
- **Ms Julie McLean**, Policy Officer

Australian Education Union (ACT Branch)

- **Mr Patrick Judge**, Branch Secretary
- **Dr Bianca Hennessy**, Research and Policy Officer
- **Mr Orion Lethbridge**, Member

Canberra Tamil School

- **Mr Gokularuban Thiruvathawooran**, North Campus Principal, Canberra Tamil School
- **Mrs Apirami Ragulan**, Secretary, Canberra Tamil School

ACT Government

- **Ms Yvette Berry MLA**, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Minister for Sports and Recreation
- **Ms Jo Wood**, Director-General, Education Directorate
- **Ms Angela Spence**, Deputy Director-General, Education Directorate
- **Ms Tina Brendas**, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery
- **Mr Jason Borton**, Executive Branch Manager, Education Programs and Services

Canberra Institute of Technology

- **Ms Roslyn Jackson**, Non-executive Director, Canberra Institute of Technology Governing Board
- **Mr Shaun Haidon**, Principal, Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12) Program
- **Ms Georgia von Guttner**, Chief Industry and Innovation Officer

Appendix C: Questions on Notice and Questions Taken on Notice

Questions on Notice

| No. | Date | Asked of | Subject | Response received |
|-----|----------|--|--|-------------------|
| 1 | 04/05/26 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Language Education Action Plan | 25/05/26 |
| 2 | 04/05/26 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Senior Secondary language education consultation | 21/05/26 |
| 3 | 04/05/26 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Senior Secondary language pathways and promotion | 21/05/26 |

Questions Taken on Notice

| No. | Date | Asked of | Subject | Response received |
|-----|------------|--|--|-------------------|
| 1 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Tamil School | Infrastructure gap in moderation and recognition of language learning | 10/05/26 |
| 2 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Tamil School | Continuation of Tamil studies from Year 10 to Year 11 - Number of students in Year 10 & college distribution | 10/05/26 |
| 3 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Institute of Technology | Marketing of language courses | 12/05/26 |
| 4 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Institute of Technology | CIT Solutions fee structure | 12/05/26 |
| 5 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Institute of Technology | Cost benefit analysis | 12/05/26 |
| 6 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Institute of Technology | Enrolment figures | 12/05/26 |
| 7 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Institute of Technology | Age of students | 12/05/26 |
| 8 | 28/04/2026 | Canberra Institute of Technology | Student evaluation process | 12/05/26 |
| 9 | 28/04/2026 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Cost of delivery | 25/05/26 |

| No. | Date | Asked of | Subject | Response received |
|------------|-------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10 | 28/04/2026 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Language teachers | 21/05/26 |
| 11 | 28/04/2026 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Erindale College - ATSI language | 21/05/26 |
| 12 | 28/04/2026 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Language Education Action Plan | 25/05/26 |
| 13 | 28/04/2026 | Minister for Education and Early Childhood | Consultation | 21/05/26 |

Appendix D: Gender distribution of witnesses

Beginning in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Committees are collecting information on the gender of witnesses. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.

| Gender indication | Total |
|-------------------|-------|
| Female | 11 |
| Male | 7 |
| Non-binary | 0 |
| Gender neutral | 0 |
| No data | 0 |