



Submission cover sheet

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

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Australian Education Union - ACT Branch submission March 2026

Introduction

The Australian Education Union - ACT Branch welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. The AEU represents teachers and school leaders in ACT public schools, including language teachers whose working conditions and professional expertise are directly affected by the matters raised in E-Petition 077-25.

We note that accompanying the terms of reference, the committee has expressed a desire to “better understand the reasons behind the ACT Government’s decision not to offer a centralised program for Year 11 and 12 ATAR language courses, and the sufficiency of other language study pathways for college students.”¹ This submission is designed to help the Committee achieve this understanding.

Language education is one of the eight learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) states that learning a language provides students with the opportunity to engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world, broadens their horizons in relation to personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities, and develops communication skills, literacy in their first and additional languages, intercultural capabilities, and critical and creative thinking.² A substantial body of empirical research confirms that language learning confers multiple cognitive benefits, including enhanced cognitive flexibility, benefits for academic achievement, employability, intercultural competence and creativity.³ In a multicultural and globally connected city like Canberra the case for strong language education is especially compelling.

Every student in the ACT should have the opportunity to learn a language throughout their schooling. This is currently not the reality. This inquiry is an opportunity to set ACT public schools on a new trajectory towards achieving this standard. We explain how the current situation arose, examine the Government’s inadequate policy response, document the impact on teachers and students, and set out seven recommendations for the Committee.

¹ Thomas Emerson MLA in “Media Release: New inquiry into E-Petition 077-25: Access to 11–12 ATAR language courses in 2026”, Standing Committee on Social Policy, Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, 5 March 2026.

² Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, “Understand this Learning Area – Languages,” *Australian Curriculum Version 9*, accessed 12 March 2026, <<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/curriculum-information/understand-this-learning-area/languages>>.

³ 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, doi:10.1111/flan.12424.

In doing so, we ask the Committee to consider the evidence in this submission not only on its own terms, but as an illustration of a broader pattern. The failures of language education policy documented in this submission may not be the product of mere oversight. When the impact on students is the same whether a policy fails by design or by neglect, the distinction is academic: omission, in its effects, is action.

These failures reflect a pattern that extends well beyond languages. Across the ACT public education system, the Directorate routinely articulates policy expectations - that schools will deliver a given program, meet a given standard, serve a given need - without providing the resources, the staffing, or the funding to make those expectations achievable. Schools are given ever-expanding mandates and ever-tightening budgets, but no meaningful guidance on how to prioritise between competing demands. Responsibility is devolved; support is not. This is the fundamental disconnect between the Education Directorate and the schools it oversees, and it is the source of many of the most serious policy failings in our public school system. As the union representing the educators who are expected to bridge this gap, we cannot stand by when it produces the outcomes documented in this submission.

Background

The loss of Year 11–12 ATAR language courses previously delivered through CIT Solutions is not a sudden crisis. It is the foreseeable result of almost a decade of government inaction on language education. The ACT Government has known since at least 2016 that language education in public schools is in decline, that students face deeply inequitable access to language learning, and that the teachers holding the system together are exhausted and undervalued. At each point where leadership was needed, the Government chose not to act.

This submission sets out a detailed account of the decisions that have led to the current situation. We do so not to relitigate the past, but because the history is essential to understanding what needs to change. The loss of CIT Solutions' language courses is not an isolated event that can be remedied by a single replacement program. It is the latest consequence of a pattern in which the Education Directorate identifies problems, consults on them, and then fails to act with the urgency or ambition required. If the Committee's recommendations address only the immediate gap in course provision without confronting this pattern, the same problems will recur. The history shows us where the system has failed, and in doing so it points to what a genuine solution must look like: sustained political commitment, system-level coordination, adequate resourcing, and meaningful engagement with the expertise of language teachers and school leaders.

The privatisation of public language education

The Canberra Academy of Languages (CAL) was established in 2016 by dedicated volunteers and language educators who saw a gap that the public education system was failing to fill. Students who could not study their preferred language at their local college - because of teacher unavailability, timetable conflicts, or program closures - had nowhere to go. The CAL stepped in to meet that need.

The AEU acknowledges and respects the work of the people behind the CAL. They identified a community need and responded to it with their own time, money and resources. They are not the cause of the problem before this inquiry. The cause is a government that allowed public education responsibilities to drift into private hands and then failed to act when the consequences became clear.

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.

While the ACT Government may plead otherwise, it is difficult to consider the ongoing provision of language education through private, user-pays mechanisms as being anything other than a deliberate policy choice by the Government.

Whether it achieves that privatisation through its own fecklessness and malaise or a well-conceived tactic to privatise languages is immaterial – the result is the same. Inaction, especially in the context of multiple, repeated requests seeking action, is a choice.

When the CAL was absorbed into CIT Solutions, the situation worsened. CIT Solutions was a commercial subsidiary of CIT. Its teaching staff were not part of the ACT Public Service. They were not entitled to the pay and conditions set out in the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement negotiated by the AEU. Yet they were fully registered teachers delivering BSSS-accredited courses to public school students. They did the same job as their public sector counterparts but were paid at the Federal Teaching Award rate, which sits well below the Enterprise Agreement rate.⁴ This arrangement amounted to an outsourcing of public education that undermined the pay and conditions hard won by union members over many years.

This outsourcing occurred without following the processes set out in Section F7 of the ACTPS Enterprise Agreements, which are intended to govern any privatisation of government services. Nor did it sit comfortably with the ACT Government's own insourcing commitments intended to prevent the outsourcing of public sector jobs and ensure that government services are not contracted out where they could be performed by public servants.⁵

The Government may argue that it did not outsource language teaching, because the CAL only took up the delivery of services that the Education Directorate had already ceased, and the switch from CAL to CIT Solutions did not involve a government entity. But this framing ignores the substance of what occurred. Registered teachers delivering BSSS-accredited courses to public school students is public education. It should happen in public education settings, delivered by public servants, with proper pay and conditions. The fact that it was allowed to occur outside those settings - first through the CAL and then through CIT Solutions - represents a failure of government responsibility, not an absence of government obligation.

⁴ A teacher with 8 years of experience or more (the most common classification in our system) currently earns \$129,106. A teacher with the same amount of experience, on the Award, earns \$92,956.60 (based on weekly earnings of \$1,787.80). The difference of around \$36,000 is the direct result of the negotiation power of the AEU ACT. Based on pay rates listed in the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020* and the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026*.

⁵ These are given effect by the *Insourcing Policy and Insourcing Framework*, Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, 2023.

Beyond the industrial implications, this arrangement came at a direct cost to students. The AEU understands that students enrolled in CAL and subsequently CIT Solutions courses typically paid for their own language lessons out of pocket. We also understand that this strategy for financial sustainability is being put forward by some advocates through this inquiry.

Public education depends on true universal access. These are students in the public education system, studying accredited courses, being asked to bear a personal financial cost for a gap in public provision. This is plainly inequitable. A student whose local college happens to offer their preferred language pays nothing; a student whose college does not must pay for the same opportunity.

The principle that public education is free and universally accessible does not have a carve-out for students who want to study a language.

The failure of the Language Education Action Plan

In November 2018, the ACT Legislative Assembly passed a motion calling on the Government to “develop an action plan to encourage, improve and support language education in Canberra schools as part of implementing the *Future of Education Strategy*.”⁶ More than five years later, in July 2024, the Education Directorate released the Language Education Action Plan (LEAP).⁷

The intervening period was not wasted entirely. In September 2022, the Directorate published a discussion paper that contained quality analysis of the state of language education in the ACT, including mapping of language provision across schools that made the scale of inequity plain.⁸ The AEU provided detailed feedback to this paper in October 2022. We put forward concrete solutions including workforce strategies, reforms informed by successful programs in other jurisdictions, and some areas for exploration regarding education delivery models. We called repeatedly for direct and sustained consultation with language teachers, who know their work better than anyone.

The LEAP, when it finally appeared, did not reflect this feedback. It is a document of vague aspirations and deferred action. Its proposed responses to well-documented problems amount to developing plans, exploring options, and leveraging relationships – almost all of which listed deadlines of the end of 2025. It took the Education Directorate seven years from the original Assembly motion to reach deadlines on a plan whose primary commitment was to begin planning.

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.

⁶ ACT Legislative Assembly, Motion on Language Education, 28 November 2018.

⁷ Education Directorate, *Language Education in ACT Public Schools: Action Plan* (Canberra: ACT Government, 2024). The title page is dated April 2024 but the plan was not released until July 2024 and not sent to the AEU until August 2024.

⁸ Education Directorate, *Language Education in ACT Public Schools: Discussion Paper* (Canberra: ACT Government, September 2022).

The Education Directorate attempts to portray the decline of language education as primarily a workforce supply problem. This explanation would be easier to accept if there was any indication that the Directorate was taking steps to secure the required workforce. In reality, the Directorate conducts little workforce planning. It does not know how many qualified language teachers it employs. It has no to labour market analysis to determine how many suitably qualified teachers exist. It has been unwilling to explore improved supports to language teachers that would help recruit and retain them.

The shortage of language teachers is real, but it is not primarily a workforce supply problem; it is a problem of strategy, leadership and system design. In other words, there is a shortage of language teachers, because there is a shortage of all types of teachers, but the Directorate's own policies are making the shortage worse.

For example, AEU language teacher members tell us that they are sometimes being directed to teach outside their speciality to fill gaps caused by the broader teacher shortage. This is self-defeating: in a system that already lacks language specialists, every language teacher redirected to teach another subject is a language class that cannot run. It makes no sense to acknowledge a shortage of specialist teachers in one breath and then deploy those specialists away from their area of expertise in the next.

Consequences of failure to genuinely engage

Our language teacher members have worked tirelessly over many years to bring the problem of sustainable language provision in ACT public schools to the attention of the Government and the Education Directorate. They have participated in consultations, provided detailed feedback, proposed solutions grounded in their professional expertise, and continued to deliver high-quality language education under increasingly difficult conditions. In late 2024, AEU language teachers passed a sub-branch motion calling on the Education Directorate to address the failures of the Language Education Action Plan, engage in real workforce planning, protect teachers from unsafe workloads, and deliver genuinely equitable access to language education for all ACT students. This motion was endorsed by the AEU ACT Branch Council and communicated to the Education Directorate in December 2024.⁹ The Directorate offered to meet with the AEU to discuss these issues, which happened on 24 March 2025. The meeting covered class composition and workload, class viability, context, teacher training, and principal feedback.¹⁰ After further consideration of issues raised by AEU members, the Directorate wrote to the AEU stating that,

“we can confirm that at this stage individual schools are best-placed to manage their ongoing language program provision. It is appropriate for individual staff members to raise any ongoing concerns they have regarding workloads through their local sub branch and the relevant school Principal.”¹¹

Herein lies the central issue. Language education provision is a responsibility of the Education Directorate, but ensuring this service delivery is devolved entirely to schools. Schools cannot affect system-wide equity. Principals and individual teachers are again left to shoulder the burden of systemic neglect.

⁹ AEU ACT Branch, Branch Council Motion on Language Education (2024).

¹⁰ Minutes provided by the EDU, received 13 May 2025.

¹¹ Daniel Ackland, Executive Branch Manager - People and Performance, Education Directorate, to Katie Slater, Organiser, AEU ACT Branch, received 26 May 2025.

The Directorate's antipathy towards languages education is so great that it has ignored stakeholder feedback aimed at constructive solutions. In the alternative, it has responded to schools advising that they cannot resource and deliver the provision of language education by doubling down on its unrealistic demands that they provide it. Its response to staff and schools raising their concerns about the viability of languages education is to advise them that it is an individual school responsibility, and that they are free to (continue to) raise these concerns.

It is typical of the approach of this Directorate that it would rather make demands of schools that it knows they cannot meet (and blame external factors for schools' failure to meet them) rather than engaging with viable solutions and taking responsibility for actually delivering on the commitments the ACT Government has made to the community.

The minimum minutes requirement

The immediate loss of Year 11–12 ATAR courses sits within a broader erosion of language education at every level of schooling. The obligation to deliver language education in ACT public schools has a long but increasingly uncertain policy history. In 2008, the ACT Ministerial Curriculum Taskforce determined that all students in Years 3–8 must study one of the eight priority languages, with minimum teaching minutes of 60 minutes per week in Years 3–6 and 150 minutes per week in Years 7–8.¹² These requirements were set out in the Curriculum Requirements Policy, which the 2018 Assembly motion recognised and which the LEAP itself references. The reality is that many schools do not meet this requirement. The LEAP acknowledges this, listing the following 'observation/challenge':

“Languages are required to be delivered as one of the eight learning areas under the Australian Curriculum but are not always delivered in every school.”

The 'action' listed alongside this 'observation/challenge' - the proposed solution to this problem - says,

“Maintain the minutes mandated for language learning in the 'Curriculum Policy and Procedures' so that languages is delivered as one of the eight learning areas under the Australian Curriculum.”¹³

The plan simply restates the existing obligation without any indication of how to ensure compliance. Mandating language teaching is not the same as delivering it. If schools cannot meet the mandate with current resourcing and workforce arrangements, the Education Directorate needs to change the resourcing and workforce arrangements, not simply repeat the mandate and hope for the best.

Moreover, it is unclear whether even this obligation remains in force. The Curriculum Policy and Procedures referenced by the LEAP no longer exists as a current policy document. The Learning and Teaching Policy for ACT Public Schools, which has superseded it, requires only that schools “meaningfully incorporate” all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum, without specifying languages by name or mandating minimum teaching minutes.¹⁴ The Australian Curriculum

¹² Department of Education and Training, Ministerial Brief MIN09 1009, “Languages in Schools,” 17 September 2009, obtained under freedom of information, reference EDU 2023/014; see also Education Directorate, *Language Education in ACT Public Schools: Discussion Paper* (September 2022), 8.

¹³ Language Education Action Plan, Action 5.

¹⁴ Education Directorate, *Learning and Teaching Policy for ACT Public Schools*, section 2.6.

website, for its part, states that decisions about which languages are taught are matters for state and territory authorities and individual schools.¹⁵

This means that the specific mandated minutes for language teaching that were in place when the LEAP was written - and which the LEAP's own Action 5 proposed to "maintain" – appears to no longer have a policy basis. The Committee should seek an explanation from the Education Directorate as to whether this change was deliberate, whether it was consulted on, and what obligation, if any, now requires ACT public schools to deliver language education.

The contrast with other jurisdictions makes the significance of this policy gap clear. Victoria continues to require all government schools to provide a language program from Foundation to Year 10, with a recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week in primary schools, backed by legislation.¹⁶ The Education Directorate's discussion paper notes that South Australia and the Northern Territory similarly mandate language education from Kindergarten to Year 10.¹⁷ If the ACT has allowed its own mandated minutes to lapse, it risks falling behind every other jurisdiction that takes language education seriously.

Workforce planning and teacher workload

The ACT has a shortage of language teachers and no credible plan to address it. The LEAP proposed to develop a workforce plan by the end of 2025.¹⁸ This means the Education Directorate was given a mandate to act in 2018 and proposed to undertake workforce planning seven years later. The AEU is not aware of any such plan being completed.

In December 2024, the Education Directorate's Chief Operating Officer wrote to the AEU stating that as of 5 December 2024, there were only three permanent language vacancies across ACT public schools.¹⁹ The AEU is concerned that measuring the language teacher shortage by the number of unfilled vacancies fundamentally misrepresents the scale of the problem.

A vacancy is only recorded when a school has created a position and been unable to fill it. It does not capture the schools that have never had a language teacher, schools where a single language teacher is spread too thin leading to students missing out, schools that closed their language programs because they could not recruit one, or the schools that stopped advertising because previous rounds attracted no candidates.

The Directorate's own 2022 discussion paper acknowledged that eleven schools were not providing a language program at all, and that the reason most often given was the inability to recruit a suitable language teacher.²⁰ The network maps published in the same paper reveal that across the ACT, many primary schools - particularly in the Tuggeranong and Belconnen networks - had no language program, and that for several of the eight priority languages, no

¹⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, "Does My Child Have to Learn a Language?", accessed 12 March 2026, <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>.

¹⁶ Victorian Department of Education, "Languages Education: Policy," accessed 12 March 2026, <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/languages-education/policy>; *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic).

¹⁷ Education Directorate, *Language Education in ACT Public Schools: Discussion Paper* (September 2022), 10, Figure 1.

¹⁸ Language Education Action Plan, Action 1.

¹⁹ Email from David Matthews, Chief Operating Officer, Education Directorate, to Patrick Judge, AEU ACT Branch Secretary, 12 December 2024.

²⁰ Education Directorate, *Language Education in ACT Public Schools: Discussion Paper* (September 2022), 24.

coherent pathway existed from primary school through to college in entire parts of Canberra.²¹ These are not schools with vacancies. These are schools where language education has simply ceased to exist, or never began, because the system has not been designed to deliver it.

If the Committee is to understand the true scale of the language teacher shortage, it must look beyond the vacancy count and examine how many schools are actually delivering language education, and how many students have access to a genuine language learning pathway.

The Directorate also pointed to a 2024 ACT Labor election commitment to offer scholarships of up to \$50,000 for teaching students in high-demand specialisations including languages.²² The AEU acknowledges that scholarships may assist with recruitment over time. However, language teaching requires deep proficiency in a language, which cannot be acquired through a short course. Depending on the language, it may take several years of intensive study before a teacher is competent to teach it.²³ Scholarships alone will not address the immediate shortage, and they will achieve nothing for the retention of the language teachers already in the system.

Meanwhile, the language teachers who remain in the system are bearing unsustainable workloads. As student numbers in language courses decline, schools collapse multiple course levels into single classes. We hear from college language teachers who must simultaneously deliver combinations of Beginning, Continuing and Advanced courses, across years 11 and 12, to students taking Tertiary, Accredited and Modified options, *in the same classroom at the same time*. There is no mechanism in our industrial instruments to compensate for this level of complexity, so there is no additional planning time despite the enormous additional preparation required.

When language classes are collapsed, teachers are then directed to fill their remaining teaching load in other subject areas for which they may have no training. As noted above, this is a perverse use of an already scarce resource: language specialists are being taken away from language teaching in a system that cannot find enough language teachers.

Language teachers also face the burden of personally marketing their programs and recruiting students to prevent their courses from being cut. This is a direct consequence of the Education Directorate's devolution of operational decisions to individual schools without adequate system-level coordination. If a school principal cannot justify the staffing cost of a language program with low enrolments, the program closes. Students miss out. The school principal and individual teacher are left to bear the weight of a system failure.

The result is a vicious cycle: teachers face unstable enrolments and program closures, which erodes confidence in public language education, which drives down student numbers, which leads to further program closures. Without systemic intervention, this cycle will continue.

²¹ Education Directorate, *Discussion Paper*, 13–20 and Appendix A. The Tuggeranong network had the most gaps and multiple primary schools with no language program. For several languages, notably German, Korean and Italian, no viable pathway existed in most networks.

²² Email from David Matthews, 12 December 2024.

²³ This point was raised by AEU language teacher members in consultations. The US Foreign Service Institute classifies languages by difficulty for English speakers. Korean, Japanese and Chinese - all priority languages in the ACT - fall into the most difficult categories and are estimated to require over 2,000 hours of study for professional proficiency.

The Director-General has stated that working together as one system is a priority for 2026, as is “having some important equity-focused conversations.”²⁴ Implementing sustainable solutions for language education in ACT public schools requires resolution from both an equity and system perspective.

Student inequity

The Education Directorate is well aware that language learning opportunities are distributed highly inequitably across the ACT. The 2022 discussion paper documented this clearly: where a student lives determines what languages they can study, and whether they can study a language at all. Some parts of Canberra are well served. Others are language learning deserts.

The LEAP sets out the principle that “all students have access to options for language proficiency.” But this is a statement of aspiration, not a plan for action. The gap between the principle and the reality is vast, and the LEAP offers no credible theory of change for closing it.

The closure of the CIT Solutions language program deepens this inequity. Students who could not access their preferred language at their local college at least had a pathway, however imperfect and however unfairly funded, through the CAL and then CIT Solutions. That pathway is now gone and there is nothing to replace it.

The petition before this Committee asks the Government to replicate the Year 11–12 ATAR language courses within the Education Directorate from February 2026. The AEU supports this as a necessary and urgent short-term measure. But it should not be treated as a sufficient response. The systemic problems that created the need for the CAL in the first place remain unaddressed.

What is needed

While the petition asks for an immediate stopgap measure, we submit that the Committee should make recommendations aimed at preventing this kind of situation occurring again. What is required is a strategic vision for how language education will be delivered across the ACT, backed by system-level coordination and adequate resourcing.

Other jurisdictions have demonstrated that this is possible. South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory all operate centralised language education programs - government language schools or hubs - that provide equitable access to a wide range of languages across their jurisdictions. Closer to home, the ACT’s own Instrumental Music Program offers a long-standing and successful model in which specialist teachers travel to students across multiple school sites, ensuring that access to specialist education is not determined by which school a student attends.

Some of our language teacher members have expressed an appetite for exploring a model along these lines, particularly in colleges. Any such model would need to be developed through comprehensive consultation with language teachers, who are the experts on their own practice and whose working conditions would be directly affected. The AEU is not proposing a predetermined design, but we are saying that the status quo is failing and that there are alternatives that deserve serious exploration with the people who would make them work.

²⁴ “A message from the Director-General: 2026 system priorities,” all-staff email from Jo Wood, 18 March 2026.

Recommendations

We call on the Standing Committee to recommend that the ACT Government:

1. Immediately replicate the Year 11–12 ATAR language courses within the Education Directorate, ensuring that students who would have enrolled through CIT Solutions in 2026 can continue studying their chosen language at the ATAR level, taught by registered teachers employed on public sector pay and conditions.
2. Commission an updated mapping of language education provision across ACT public schools, building on the network-by-network analysis in the Education Directorate's 2022 discussion paper, to give the Committee and the community an accurate and current picture of which schools are delivering language programs, which languages are available in each network, and where viable pathways from primary school through to college exist.
3. Commit to developing a publicly funded language education model operated by the Education Directorate, designed through genuine and sustained consultation with language teachers, that guarantees every ACT student a pathway for language learning from primary school through to college.
4. Fund schools to maintain language classes with low enrolments, so that program viability is not determined solely by student numbers at individual school level.
5. Investigate whether there is currently a requirement for schools to provide a minimum number of minutes of language education, and if not, what this means for the aspirations listed in the Language Education Action Plan.
6. Ensure genuine and sustained consultation with language teachers regarding any reforms to language education delivery, in accordance with the consultation requirements of the Enterprise Agreement.
7. Report publicly and regularly on progress against the commitments in the LEAP and any revised plan, with specific, measurable outcomes that the community and the Assembly can hold the Government to account on.

Conclusion

The loss of CIT Solutions' language courses is a symptom of a much larger failure. For nearly a decade, the ACT Government has been aware that language education is in decline, that students face growing inequity, and that the teachers holding the system together are under immense and increasing pressure. The community stepped in through the CAL. Volunteers donated their time and money. Teachers accepted below-award pay. Students paid out of pocket for courses that should have been provided by the public education system. Year after year, the Government chose not to act.

The Directorate's own framing of these failures is revealing. By treating workforce shortage as a question of vacancies - unfilled positions in existing schools - the Directorate defines the problem in terms that exclude its own responsibility for system design and program delivery. A vacancy measure will never capture the courses that were never offered, the programs that were never established, or the students who were never given the choice. It is a metric chosen not to illuminate a problem, but to contain it. The LEAP exemplifies the same dynamic. It restates the obligation for schools to deliver mandated minutes of language education while simultaneously acknowledging that they do not, and provides no mechanism, no resources, and no accountability framework to close the gap. To publish a plan that documents non-compliance as a known challenge and then offers compliance itself as the solution is not policy failure. It is the appearance of action in place of action itself.

This inquiry is an opportunity to change course. Our members have proposed solutions and offered their expertise. What is needed now is leadership and investment commensurate with the importance of language education in a multicultural, globally connected city like Canberra.

AEU members stand ready to work with the Government and the Education Directorate to build a language education system that serves every student in the ACT.