LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS
REINVIGORATING THE STUDY OF LANGUAGES
2036

WILL MARK OUR STATE’S BICENTENARY

By the time our State turns 200 years old, I want South Australia to be a place of prosperity.

Planning and delivering on my vision for a better future starts now.

This policy is an important part of our plan to deliver a clear and responsible pathway to recovery and success.

See where it fits in below

1.0 GROWING OUR ECONOMY

2.0 THE BEST EDUCATION SYSTEM

   2.3 Building more innovative and flexible school systems
   2.4 Expanding opportunities for students to engage with training, skills and higher education and ready themselves for employment

3.0 BEING A HEALTHY STATE

4.0 STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

5.0 BUILDING OUR STATE

6.0 ENSURING SAFETY AND JUSTICE

7.0 PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

8.0 EMBRACING OUR UNIQUE CULTURE

   8.5 Celebrating and embracing our vibrant Aboriginal and multicultural communities

9.0 RUNNING AN EFFICIENT AND STABLE GOVERNMENT
“We will ensure the academic, social, economic and cultural benefits of learning a second language are being realised in our South Australian schools.”
THE CHALLENGE

For 15 years the State Labor Government has overseen a decline in second language instruction in South Australia, as highlighted by the low number of students now taking language subjects at a year 12 level.

When Labor came to power in 2002, 11.8% of Year 12 students undertook language studies.

In 2016, only 4.9% of students (1,176 students) studied a language other than English in Year 12.

Despite the government’s Chinese engagement strategy, the study of Chinese language by Year 12 students has dropped from 1.9% in 2002 (326 students) to 0.9% in 2016 (220 students – 149 of whom undertook the Chinese Background Speakers subject designed for students with Chinese language backgrounds).

Learning a second language is beneficial for students’ general academic development – with a clear link between learning another language and literacy development in English.

Further, learning a language other than English is increasingly important in a globalised market, with many countries refocussing on the importance of growing their bilingual workforce in order to take full advantage of international trade links.

We now have two schools offering bilingual programs, in Chinese and French, which need – and will receive – ongoing support to ensure their students receive an outstanding education.

The key challenge, however, is to ensure that students across South Australia have the intercultural capabilities they need to succeed in the increasingly globalised world in which they will live.

Despite the demonstrated benefits of learning languages, the number of students undertaking language studies has been steadily declining.

South Australia is a proud multicultural state. Our diverse cultural heritage should be celebrated and harnessed to further drive our cultural development and economic growth.

The most recent census data indicates that a language other than English is present in more than 17% of South Australian households.

Our multicultural communities, particularly through our ethnic schools, are valuable assets for students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

We believe that collaboration and innovation with these communities can create new opportunities that benefit our education system.

Despite the demonstrated academic, social, economic and cultural benefits of learning languages, these benefits are not being realised in South Australia due to the lack of investment and direction in this area after fifteen years of Labor Government neglect.

The Liberal Party has long argued for a stronger focus on children learning a second language, and it is now more important than ever to reinvigorate the study of languages.
THE STATE LIBERALS’ PLAN

A Marshall Liberal Government will reinvigorate the study of languages in South Australian schools.

If elected in March 2018, a Marshall Liberal Government will reinvigorate the study of languages in South Australian schools by introducing a broad suite of measures.

These measures will include:

• reviewing the Stage 2 SACE requirements, including subject numbers and the Research Project

• enabling four new public schools to offer the International Baccalaureate for high achieving students

• expanded options for SACE language study

• expansion of Languages Alive holiday programs for primary students

• innovative Language Program Grants for primary schools

• improved professional development opportunities for language teachers

• scholarships for language teachers to improve their language skills

• working with universities to review the demand for new language teachers and the language content of teaching degree courses.
**Review the Stage 2 SACE requirements, including subject numbers and the Research Project**

A Marshall Liberal Government will commission a formal review into the makeup of Year 12 SACE requirements, to be led by a leading educational expert. This review will focus on questions such as whether the SACE should require 5 or 4 subjects at Year 12 level; what is best practice within South Australian schools in the way the Research Project has been integrated into the curriculum – from an educational and a vocational perspective; whether the Research Project should be optional; and whether the Research Project should be offered at a year 11 level as it is at many schools in South Australia.

The decline in the number of students undertaking languages other than English at a Year 12 level has corresponded with the number of Year 12 subjects being reduced from 5 to 4 so it is important to address this as part of an overarching languages in schools policy.

**Expanded options for SACE language study**

A Marshall Liberal Government will expand the range of options for how senior secondary students can undertake SACE language study, through enhanced Ethnic Schools and Open Access College programs plus School of Languages intensive holiday courses.

Currently, fewer than half of public schools in South Australia offer languages at SACE level, with students at those schools restricted to accessing these subjects through the School of Languages or Open Access College.

Many students are unable to access these options – or at least cannot access their language of choice through these options.

To address this we will:

- supplement capacity through the Ethnic Schools Association to work with Ethnic Schools to deliver higher level programs in the senior years in line with the Australian Curriculum
- work with the Open Access College to expand their range of language options at a secondary SACE level and review their cost structure to ensure that students across regional South Australia are able to access these options in an affordable way
- commission the School of Languages to deliver intensive language courses for secondary students during the school holidays.

**Enabling four new public schools to offer the International Baccalaureate for high achieving students**

A Marshall Liberal Government will enable four new public schools to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) certificate of education.

Despite the IB being an internationally recognised and highly regarded school certificate known for its academic rigour and the breadth of academic demands, it is currently only offered through to Year 12 in one public school.

Importantly, the IB mandates the study of a second language, so supporting more schools to offer this certificate will lead to better language outcomes.

**Expansion of Languages Alive holiday programs for Primary Students**

A Marshall Liberal Government will commission the School of Languages to expand their Languages Alive holiday program targeted at early primary students.

The school currently runs three one-day programs in the October school holidays, with children undertaking a range of activities designed to expand their interest in studying languages.

We will expand this program from three days per year to five days during each holiday break so that more families can benefit more often from this excellent program.
Innovative Language Program Grants for primary schools

A Marshall Liberal Government will provide five grants for primary schools wanting to expand their language study offering in innovative ways.

These grants would enable schools to apply for funds that could assist the school to transition their language methodology to a more substantial and sustainable approach.

Grants could be applied towards new technologies, staff costs, program costs, or other costs, with schools wishing to access these grants being required to share their models so that best practice can be applied elsewhere.

Improved professional development opportunities for language teachers

A Marshall Liberal Government will encourage excellence in language teaching by supporting improved professional development opportunities for language teachers.

Due to the unique nature of this vocation, many schools require additional support to promote excellence in this cohort of teachers.

We benefit from having many excellent language teachers in South Australia but we need more, and we also want to ensure that teachers with language skills have access to the best professional development opportunities possible to ensure they are confident in their teaching pedagogy.

Scholarships for language teachers to improve their language skills

A Marshall Liberal Government will encourage excellence in language teaching through a range of scholarships for language teachers to improve their language skills.

Scholarships would enable in-country immersion programs (including innovative programs for teachers of Aboriginal languages), academic improvement and other short courses to take place for teachers in key language priority areas.

Review the demand for new language teachers and the language content of teaching degree courses

A Marshall Liberal Government will undertake a review of current and future workforce needs and also a complementary review of the content of language teaching in teaching degrees.

The results will inform the establishment of long-term targets for how many extra language teachers are needed in key areas if we are to meet our goal of increasing the number of students undertaking language studies.

Strategies can then be developed, in conjunction with the universities, as to how we improve content and inspire interest from students to become language teachers.
“A Liberal Government will ensure our students have every opportunity to become confident and proficient in a second language.”

Steven Marshall, State Liberal Leader
If you would like to provide feedback on our policy or learn more about our plan, please get in touch via:

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