



MINISTER FOR  
EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION & TRAINING

THE HON. JOHN DAWKINS M.P.

M E D I A • R E L E A S E

94/91

DAWKINS ANNOUNCES NEW  
NATIONAL POLICY ON LANGUAGE  
AND LITERACY FOR AUSTRALIA

Australia has a new national policy on language and literacy today following the release in Canberra of a White Paper which sets out more than \$333 million in measures and new directions to address critical shortcomings in Australia's competence in English and other languages.

Launching the White Paper *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* John Dawkins, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, said the blueprint for language and literacy in schools, tertiary education institutions and the broader community will strengthen Australians' ability to communicate with each other and with the rest of the world.

The policy boasts a \$100 million increase to the Government's language and literacy programs over the next three years to \$333 million, a re-ordering of priorities and new directions in national policies and research.

It asserts Australian English as the national language and proposes measures to increase the nation's capacity in languages other than English.

"This policy and the decisions flowing from it," said Mr Dawkins, "will help address the English literacy problems of more than one million adult Australians - including about 360,000 residents who have little if any English - and boost our capacity and expertise in languages other than English and strengthen Aboriginal languages.

"It is a policy which will serve Australia well into the next century."

The new policy includes such measures as using television to deliver adult literacy services, special grants to schools for senior students studying priority languages other than English, development of a national English curriculum statement and arrangements for school literacy proficiency assessment, more funding and support for adult literacy, a boost in English as a Second Language school programs, new language and literacy advisory bodies and increased support for English for adult migrants.

The White Policy paper follows a Green Discussion paper on language and literacy released late last year. More than 340 submissions were received in relation to the Discussion Paper. The White Policy paper was written following consideration of these submissions and widespread consultations.

It was broadly agreed by all individuals and groups responding to the discussion paper that adequate proficiency in English, including reading, writing and listening proficiency is essential if individuals are to participate effectively in the workforce, in education and training and in broader community life.

"There is also a widespread view that Australia has to do more to strengthen its capacity in languages other than English and the White Paper addresses this issue."

Features of the policy paper include:

#### ADULT LITERACY

- . a doubling of Federal funds for adult literacy in 1991-92 to \$40 million. The funds will be used for adult literacy and basic education, including curriculum and staff training and development , information and referral advice;
- . \$11 million over the next three years for workplace literacy programs;
- . \$24 million this year for special vocational literacy and numeracy assistance and English as a Second Language training for unemployed people;
- . \$1 million to establish an adult literacy teaching service through television;
- . \$1.5 million in 1991-92 for innovative national adult literacy projects;
- . \$2.5 million over the next three years for adult literacy professional and curriculum development in TAFE.

## LITERACY IN SCHOOLS

Cooperation with States and Territories to:

- . help teachers provide special literacy assistance to primary and junior secondary school students experiencing difficulties reading and writing English;
- . use \$5.5 million new funding for Early Intervention Strategies to assist children having literacy difficulties before the end of Year 3;
- . develop a national curriculum statement for English and establish national proficiency standards and achievement profiles relevant for the various stages of schooling;
- . develop arrangements for the comprehensive assessment of student capability in literacy and the regular reporting of progress and results at the end of primary school and Year 9;
- . provide almost \$1.4 million over the next three years for innovative projects in children's literacy.

## ENGLISH LITERACY FOR MIGRANTS AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKERS

- . a \$10 million increase from the 1993 school year to more than \$117 million annually for the English as a Second Language program to assist children of non-English speaking backgrounds improve their English;
- . an additional \$21.6 million over the next three years for the Adult Migrant English program - AMEP - (administered by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs) to increase English language training and course quality for migrants, bringing the total funding for tuition under this program to \$89.1 million in 1991-92, \$100.7 million in 1992-93 and \$102 million in 1993-94 and aim for AMEP participants to reach a certified level of English proficiency;

AMEP will now also provide access to adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for migrant jobseekers who have not yet reached a minimum social proficiency in English;

- . priority entry to ESL classes for Newstart recipients.

#### LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

. **provide school systems an annual grant of \$300 per each Year 12 language student ( up to a ceiling of 25 per cent of the Year 12 population) who completed at Year 12 a designated priority language.** State Education Ministers will be able to select up to eight languages as priorities from the following: Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. These funds will be able to be spent at the discretion of school authorities;

. **the cap placed in 1986 on the funding level for the Ethnic Schools Program will be lifted and funding will be increased by 30 per cent to \$9.4 million a year.** Administration of the program will be passed to the host government or non-government education system (in the case of insertion classes) and to governments in the case of after hours classes. Schools and systems will be encouraged to cooperate with existing providers on developing acceptable transition arrangements for insertion classes.

. **an Asia Education Foundation will be established at a cost of \$1.5 million over the next two years, to promote the study of Asian languages in Australian schools. An Asia in Australia Council will also be established to advise Mr Dawkins and Senator Evans, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on priorities for fostering more effective education and training links between Asia and Australia.**

. **\$1 million annually to continue support for national projects on teaching languages other than English, especially through alternative delivery models such as distance education.**

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LANGUAGES

. \$5.25 million each calendar year from 1993 (when the next Aboriginal Educational triennium begins) to assist Aboriginal literacy and ESL and education initiatives to support Aboriginal languages.

. \$1.75 million in 1991-92 rising to \$3 million annually from 1992-3 to support Regional Aboriginal Language Centres, community-based projects to develop and maintain Aboriginal languages and a network of regional Aboriginal language committees.

#### TRANSLATING SERVICES, RESEARCH AND ADVISORY BODIES

. support for the development of a national language services organisation;

. development of a national training strategy for interpreters and translators;

. funding of \$2.1 million from 1991-92 for interpreter services for jobseekers;

.\$1.5 million this year rising to \$2 million in 1992-93 for the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia including support for a research network on the literacy and ESL needs of children, an adult literacy research network and support for the Style Council in its work on Australian English;

. \$900,000 to promote the need for enhanced English and language skills among business, industry and the community and on the need for plain English in public documents;

. the establishment of a new Council as part of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) - the Australian Language and Literacy Council - to replace previous advisory mechanisms. The new Council will replace the Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education, the Asian Studies Council and the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year which have made substantial contributions to policy over the last few years.

"This White Paper is a statement of shared responsibility and it has been developed in consultation with those who share responsibility for language and literacy program delivery.

"This Government has developed a language and literacy policy that places Australia in a good position to use English and other languages in a more productive and equitable manner.

"Ensuring that people are effectively literate is an important social justice objective. Poverty, fewer life opportunities and the inability to communicate needs and problems successfully and reduced access to community services are the sad consequences of illiteracy in our society. This policy will go a long way of improving life opportunities for thousands of Australians."

Mr Dawkins thanked all groups and individuals who contributed to the development of this Policy paper, and offered special thanks to the Task Force responsible for its preparation.

Copies of the White Paper can be obtained at any Australian Government Publishing Service outlet.

September 2, 1991

Enquiries:  
Wayne Burns  
Mr Dawkins' media adviser  
06 277 7460



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