

C19 ACT Multicultural Strategy

ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013 promotes social inclusion of ACT citizens from multicultural backgrounds. Five of the six themes are relevant to the Department and its core business.

The ACT Multicultural Strategy can be accessed on the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services' website at <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au>

Focus area	Progress
<p>Theme 1: Languages</p>	<p>Implementation of the ACT Government policy to offer a languages program to all students from years 3 to 8 by the end of 2010 has begun. This is in addition to languages programs already on offer in the early years and in years 9 and 10.</p> <p>The Department supports the teaching of eight priority languages in public schools. These include four European languages (French, German, Italian and Spanish) and four Asian languages (Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Indonesian).</p> <p>In 2010, 50 public primary schools offered a languages program for a minimum of 60 minutes per week in years 3 to 6. This was an increase of eight schools from 2009. Similarly, in 2010, all high schools offered a languages program for 150 minutes (one line) per week for all students in years 7 and 8.</p> <p>Professional development support was provided to clusters of schools to encourage and ensure continuity of the same language through primary, high school and college. Professional development was also regularly held in collaboration with external providers such as the Australian National University, the Alliance Française, the Japan Foundation, the Australian Defence Forces Academy and embassies of the countries whose languages are taught in the ACT public schools.</p> <p>The Commonwealth Government's National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Project (NALSSP) contributed to the professional development of languages teachers in ACT schools through a number of programs designed to enhance language ability or pedagogy for teachers of Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese. Eleven ACT teachers of Japanese attended a two week Japanese Immersion program in Japan during the October 2009 term break as part of this project. Under NALSSP funding, the Lanyon cluster of schools received a Becoming Asia Literate Grant of \$35,000 to facilitate program enrichment amongst the cluster schools.</p> <p>The Department currently has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese Embassy for a full-time Chinese Language Assistant from China to work alongside Mandarin teachers in Mawson Primary School, Melrose High School and Canberra College. This budget initiative pays for the language assistant's visa and contributes \$3,000 per year towards their living allowance.</p> <p>The Department also collaborates with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office to support an annual Chinese Language Speaking Competition and Awards Ceremony for ACT students of Chinese language.</p> <p>Fourteen Indonesian Language Teaching Assistants have been placed in ACT schools to support Indonesian Language Programs as part of a NALSSP joint initiative with the Indonesian Embassy.</p> <p>The Department meets regularly with the Community Language Group to facilitate support to the ACT Ethnic Schools Association. The 40 schools, who are members of the Association, contribute to the development of community language programs across Canberra. The meetings also provide an opportunity to disseminate information about school languages.</p>

Focus area	Progress
<p>Theme 2: Children and young people</p>	<p>The provision of additional staff support to schools over a four year period to improve the learning outcomes for students with English as a second language (ESL) was a 2008 ACT Government election commitment. The provision of assistance to ESL students to bring them quickly into mainstream education is an important aspect of future economic growth and social cohesion in Australia.</p> <p>According to the February 2010 ESL census, there were 4,158 students meeting the ESL eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Introductory English centres ESL students and those students newly arrived in Australia, with a non-English speaking background, attend either a secondary, or one of three primary Introductory English Centres. These centres focus on the acquisition of English language skills to enable students to access the mainstream curriculum.</p> <p>Bridging program A Bridging program at Dickson College was developed as a response to the interrupted schooling of many young refugees entering the ACT college sector. The program is open to students aged 16 and over with a refugee experience. Students need to meet a minimum standard of English to enter the program but still have significant ESL and literacy needs. The program focuses on English language and academic support, plus the broader welfare of the student, including support with settlement issues. The program operates five days a week from 9am to 3pm and allows students who aspire to gain a Year 12 Certificate the opportunity to study units that are appropriate to and support past educational and life experiences. During 2009-10, 25 students accessed and benefited from the program.</p> <p>The flexible nature of the program allows more able and experienced students to move into mainstream units and, when appropriate, continue individual education pathways. Students could complete bridging units while accessing accredited or tertiary units in the mainstream college depending on individual progress. Each student had an individual pathway to progress in college or vocational education. Students have the option to complete the two year program over two or three years.</p>
<p>Theme 3: Older people and aged care</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Theme 4: Women</p>	<p>Discussion on programs for women from multicultural backgrounds can be found in the next theme and in section C22 ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015.</p>
<p>Theme 5: Refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants</p>	<p>Adult and Community Education Grants program In 2010, the Department's Adult and Community Education (ACE) Grants funded a number of programs that cater for the needs of migrants and refugees who have limited or no English language.</p> <p>Home Tutor and English for Living programs The Home Tutor program was designed to help migrants and refugees to learn English and Australian culture in their own homes. The program aimed to help people who have difficulty in accessing classes because of family commitments, transport difficulties, or lack of confidence.</p> <p>The English for Living program offered classes in pronunciation and conversation, and focused on English for everyday life in Australia, finding employment, and accessing further study.</p> <p>Both programs were delivered by Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT.</p> <p>Support Asian Women's Friendship Association The Support Asian Women's Friendship Association also received ACE funding to deliver the Learning Computer Skills in your Own Language program. This program was an extension of the 2009 program which targeted people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and delivered basic computer skills in their first language. The extended program included Korean in addition to Chinese and Vietnamese adult learners with little English and an additional intermediate course for previous participants who wished to extend and consolidate their learning from 2009.</p>

Focus area	Progress
<p>Theme 6: Intercultural harmony and religious acceptance</p>	<p>Section 29 of the Education Act 2004 provides for the inclusion of religious education in public schools, under certain conditions.</p> <p>Christian religious education is currently the only religious education requested in the ACT. Eighteen public primary schools offered Christian religious education.</p> <p>Schools have been provided with information to increase awareness of the dietary restrictions on Muslim children and young people during Ramadan. Schools, when requested by Muslim families, allocated time and space for prayer during the school day.</p> <p>Many ACT schools recognised and celebrated Australia's multicultural diversity by participating in Harmony Day on 21 March 2010. The key message from Harmony Day was 'Everyone Belongs'. Students, parents and staff were involved in a variety of events. The activities included students celebrating the day by hosting community picnics, international song and dance assemblies, multicultural art and craft sessions, cultural sporting activities and the always popular multicultural cooking classes.</p>

For more information contact:

Director
Learning and Teaching Branch
Telephone: (02) 6205 9205

Recently arrived ACT student excels

Congratulations to Cheam Gakao Banyar awarded the 2009 Australian Defence Force Long Tan Award for Leadership and Teamwork in year 12.

Cheam is a member of the Mon community, a persecuted minority group from Burma (Myanmar). Born in Burma, he and his family fled their homeland and made the dangerous journey to a refugee camp on the Thai border. Cheam stayed there for many years and finally left his family three years ago to come to Australia for an education.



He worked hard, determined to learn English and become a useful member of his own community and the broader ACT community. He gained his Year 12 Certificate at Dickson College after first graduating from the on-site Secondary Introductory English Centre. Cheam has been an active member of the college community and has spoken to mainstream classes about his experiences as a refugee.