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# I'M MULTILINGUAL

## ... *now what?*

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Maximising the Potential of  
Young Multilingual Victorians

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Research Paper 2010

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Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) Inc. was established in 1974 as a voluntary community based organisation.

Over 35 years later, ECCV is a broadly based, statewide, peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria.

ECCV's role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities.

ECCV delivers policy projects for key partners in areas like multicultural policy, aged care programs and skilled migration strategies.

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## Foreword

Linguistic diversity has always been a feature of Australian society. From the continent's many discrete Indigenous communities to the waves of visitors and migrants who have congregated on these shores since the first days of European settlement. Yet challenges persist in the recognition, nurturing and harnessing of multilingualism both at the quantitative and qualitative level.

Notable among them is a sense of doubt and disillusionment among Victorians of secondary and tertiary age who claim to receive 'mixed signals' regarding the usefulness, desirability and competitive advantage of learning a language other than English (LOTE).

This timely ECCV research paper examines the startling array of perceptions, objectives, and outcomes that exist throughout the education, employment, and political spheres, and the resulting impact upon career pathways and vocational opportunities for multilingual Victorians of secondary and tertiary age. On one hand, it is encouraging to note that many young Australians express a desire to become multilingual and hope for this ability to become formative in their future vocation. On the other, research finds that this youthful ambition is not being consistently championed and channelled through each stage of secondary and tertiary education and into the workforce.

At heart, the paper reveals systemic shortfalls in bringing much-vaunted aspirations for a modern multilingual population to fruition. The remarks of students at various stages of their educational life prove particularly insightful and underscore the need to develop strong connections within and between industries that fully optimise Australia's burgeoning multilingual potential.

Special thanks must go to all the people who agreed to be interviewed for this paper and to ECCV intern Natalie Cunningham for her energetic research and exhaustive compilation of their candid insights. There is certainly much to consider and ECCV, through our own Youth Committee, will continue to work with governments as well as the private, public and community sector to expand the opportunities for multilingual Victorians to better utilise their LOTE skills.

As we enter the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is crucial that all areas of society keep a close eye on the ambitions of our younger generations and take note of any barriers that may inhibit their progress. I commend this important report to all with an interest in helping Australia's multilingual youth achieve a fruitful and meaningful professional life.

Sam Afra JP  
Chairperson  
Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria



'What is needed is [a] more tangible demonstration of [the benefits of LOTE study] in a form that will convince students and the community of this validity.'

( *Erebus*, 2002: 169 )

## Executive Summary

The reasons for acquiring multiple languages are as varied as the methods by which they are acquired. While some individuals choose to become multilingual for personal pleasure and enjoyment, others feel compelled to do so for domestic and day-to-day practicality or professional purposes. Similarly, the environment in which an individual lives and interacts can have a dramatic influence on the motivation and morale of a multilingual speaker and whether they foresee their skills being utilised in a meaningful career capacity.

For instance, not all students who have studied a language other than English (LOTE) at high school will go on to develop high level multilingual skills, and not all students who continue their language studies will actively seek out opportunities that allow them to combine language skills with their profession.

However, there are still clear deficiencies in the way in which multilingual Australians have their unique skills nurtured and utilised. Research for this paper reveals a significant and systemic disconnect between the positive rhetoric circulated about the value of multilingualism and the long-term development and actualisation of multilingual people with a genuine desire to put their skills into practice. On one hand, there is considerable effort and support put into broadening the linguistic confidence and capabilities of Australia's younger generations and promoting multilingualism as an advantageous attribute. On the other hand, considerable evidence suggests that beyond words of commendation, young multilingual Victorians find notable shortfalls in the structure and strategic approach toward harnessing their talents in a professional capacity.

Evidence of this discrepancy can be found at every level and among all the key players. Among students, there seems to be a general understanding of LOTE skills to be a 'bonus skill.' However, this is tempered by :

- little awareness of concrete applications of LOTE abilities
- questions about the necessity, value, and ongoing opportunities for practical LOTE usage
- disillusionment with LOTE studies as a result of few clear connections between LOTE skills and a variety of career options.

Similar sentiments are expressed by LOTE teachers who feel that institutional support for LOTE teaching and learning is inadequate to achieve international multilingual standards. One outcome is that those students who choose to continue their LOTE studies do so almost exclusively for personal interest and enjoyment of languages rather than a belief in the necessity of such skills. Another is that increasing numbers become so disillusioned that they drop out altogether.

Then there are obstacles encountered within the workforce regarding :

- inconsistency in the recognition and utilisation of LOTE skills
- inconsistency in the standardisation and reward (not just monetarily) of LOTE skills
- poor development and exploration of new opportunities to utilise LOTE skills
- few established linkages with educational institutions to develop career pathways.



In order to address this contradiction between aspiration and actualisation of multilingualism in Australia, this paper provides several recommendations, which revolve around more targeted and sustained investment and closer connections between LOTE languages and career pathways between educators and employers.

These recommendations include :

- Encouragement of greater self-awareness by students about existing career pathways involving the practical application of multilingual skills.
- Provision of appropriate advice and guidance by education providers to students regarding career pathways involving multilingual skills.
- Greater promotion by educators of career pathways that make tangible use of LOTE to motivate students as well as establish links between language skills and careers.
- Combining of LOTE skills with other areas of expertise such as education, interpreting and translating or business.
- More frequent, targeted and practical engagement by LOTE learners with industry members who use multilingual skills in their careers, such as interpreters and translators serving as guest speakers to LOTE learners.
- Facilitation of work experience linked to languages for students.
- A review of current Interpreter and Translator fees to ensure that qualified and experienced people do not find the industry financially untenable and have to seek employment elsewhere.
- A review of the need for multilingual skills in public and private sectors, focusing on more detailed specifications of language skills required that go beyond 'advantageous' and 'desirable' so that staff are remunerated accordingly and have a clear understanding of the value and role of multilingual skills in their position.
- Encouragement of multilingual skills to be recognised as additional services of staff members and either articulated formally in job descriptions or remunerated in a way resembling the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Language Allowance.
- Review of the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Language Allowance scheme to ensure that all bilingual staff using language skills in their day-to-day work are aware of the existence of and eligibility for this allowance.
- Greater recognition by employers of the qualities and attributes that are gained through LOTE study that go beyond linguistic competency.

Only then will LOTE students feel more confident that their particular skills are both appreciated and practically advantageous to the course of their lives.



“Language programs that link language learning to vocational skill development have the additional benefit of providing a meaningful context and motivating students to learn languages.

At present, there are very few initiatives in this area.”

( *Languages for Victoria's Future, DET 2002: 39* )

## I. Introduction

Anthropologists and social scientists have long recognised the value of language, whether it be at an individual, communal or national level (Schramm, 1988). When it comes to languages other than English (LOTE), however, in Australia it seems there is a notable difference between the proclaimed principle of language learning as a valuable enterprise, and the practice of making language learning a valuable vocational asset.

### *A Multilingual Continent*

It is worth noting that long before the English language was introduced into Australia the continent was an environment already rich in linguistic diversity. Historians and sociolinguists have documented the existence of over 250 Australian indigenous languages at the time of settlement (DCITA, 2005).

This rich multilingual landscape diversified even further during the immigration years. From the gold rush to the post war immigration of the 1940s, Australia continued to welcome high numbers of Anglo-Saxon immigrants which then extended to a much wider variety of ethnicities, such as Greeks, Italians and Germans. Asian immigration was particularly strong from the 1970s onwards.

### *A Monolingual Mindset*

Languages other than English, however, were not received as readily as the immigrants that spoke them. According to Clyne (1997), assimilation, linguistic and otherwise, was “the prevailing policy for both the indigenous population and the various waves of immigration. It was expected that immigrants would rapidly acquire English and abandon their first language” (Clyne, cited in Erebus, 2002: viii). Moreover, the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 and the English dictation test used language as a means of selecting the most suitable migrants. In short, much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by the expectation of linguistic conformity, despite Australia’s growing linguistic and cultural diversity.

It is an attitude which extended through to the country’s education system. According to the highly influential *Wyndham Report* (1957) the marginalisation of LOTE learning from the Australian mainstream stems from two different but equally prejudicial lines of thinking. Firstly, LOTE learning is the preserve of migrants and therefore irrelevant to the mainstream. Secondly, LOTE study is elitist and indulgent – a feature of private schools and destined for the brightest students – and therefore at odds with the unpretentious and egalitarian Aussie ideal.

### *Mixed Messages*

Over fifty years after the Wyndham Report, it appears that a hangover of these sentiments persist throughout all strata of society, which is not only at odds with the ever-increasing number of international languages being spoken, but an impediment to the many younger Australians eager to broaden their linguistic capacity and become active global citizens in the truest sense.



## **2. Multilingualism in Victoria**

### **2.1 Demographic data**

According to 2006 census data, approximately 20.4% of Victorians (1,007,394 people) speak a language other than English at home, a figure which has increased by 10.2% since the 2001 census. The top ten language groups in Victoria are Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic, Macedonian, Turkish, Spanish and Croatian (ABS, 2006).

### **2.2 Psychographic data**

In terms of motivation for LOTE study, students who were surveyed nominated:

- general interest and enjoyment
- travel
- maintaining links to personal and familial heritage and culture
- a personal aptitude for language study
- a passion for culture and the desire to immerse oneself in a new culture
- the incentive of languages “scaling-up” in VCE, whereby tertiary entry scores featuring LOTE subjects are given a more favourable weighting.

A sample of personal qualities and attributes identified as being furthered by LOTE study include:

- appreciation and respect for other cultures
- improved understanding of english
- problem-solving, a “different way of thinking”
- creativity
- perseverance, focus, determination and confidence
- communication skills
- openness and willingness to try new things

Unfortunately, the personal belief of dedicated LOTE students that their studies nurture important and transferable skills is undermined by frustration that multilingual skills are not considered a “necessary” skill by others. This results in a sense of overwhelming disillusionment or reluctance to continue with its study.



“...Not until world languages become a secure part of the elementary school curriculum will language learning begin to meet the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century.”

(Curtain and Dahlberg, cited in DEECD, 2008:4)

### 3. LOTE study in Victoria

#### **FAST FACTS : Victorian LOTE study statistics**

*(all data from 2007 unless noted otherwise)*

- Total student enrolments in LOTE (government primary and secondary) : 324,670
- The most widely taught languages across all government schools were Italian, Indonesian, Japanese, French, German, Chinese (Mandarin), Auslan and Greek
- 43 languages were taught through the Victorian School of Languages (VSL)
- Total student enrolments in VSL classes (government primary and secondary) : 14,432 (9,570 of whom were government school students)
- The Distance Education Section of the VSL provided courses in ten languages, which were accessed by 23.3% of secondary school students studying at the VSL
- Approximately 200 after-hours ethnic schools provided over 50 languages to approximately 31,000 students each week

*Source : Languages Other Than English in Victorian Government Schools 2007, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009.*

In Victoria, the recognition and encouragement of language study is formalised in a number of ways.

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) is the basis for curriculum and assessment in Victorian schools, based on best practice in Victorian schools, national and international research and widespread consultation with school communities. LOTE study is not only recognised by the VELS as supporting the “moral, social and economic initiation of young people into the culture and wider civilisation that surrounds them” (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2008), but is one of the domains within the ‘Discipline-based Learning’ strand of the VELS.

Then in 2009, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) launched its multicultural education strategy entitled, *Education for Global and Multicultural Citizenship: A Strategy for Victorian Government Schools* (DEECD 2009b). Among other things, this strategy highlighted proficiency in at least one LOTE as part of the skill-set required for active and multicultural citizenship.

From an infrastructure standpoint, the Victorian government school system consists of one special school, 12 primary schools and two secondary colleges which offer designated bilingual programs. There are also three Centres of Excellence in Languages established in 2005 to provide models of exemplary practice in languages education.



**FAST FACTS : Victorian LOTE study statistics**

*(all data from 2007 unless noted otherwise)*

***Victorian Primary schools***

- 21 languages were taught in Victorian government primary schools
- 972 schools offered some form of LOTE program. This is 77.4% of the total 1,256 schools. Across all schools, language study is most commonly offered at Year 5 and Year 6
- Total primary school student enrolments in LOTE: 225,314. This represents 73.6% of government primary school students, a decrease of 7.8% in numbers since 2006
- Italian was the most widely studied language across all government schools, offered by 26.7% of schools
- Notable increases in student numbers were noted in Arabic (535 to 922), Spanish (1,479 to 1,808) and Somali (34 to 487). Notable decreases in student numbers were noted in Indonesian (65,513 to 51,141), Italian (71,560 to 66,948) and Macedonian (540 to 127)
- Only 3% of LOTE programs provided the minimum of 150 minutes of LOTE teaching per week as recommended by the DEECD

***Victorian Secondary schools***

- Eighteen languages were taught in secondary colleges
- 272 schools offered some form of LOTE program. This is 88.3% of the total 308 secondary schools. 51.3% of schools with LOTE programs provided a continuous language sequence from years 7 to 12
- Total secondary school student enrolments in LOTE study: 99,356. This represents 44.5% of full-time students at Victorian government secondary colleges
- Largest decline recorded at Year 10 level where enrolments decreased by 18.2%
- The average weekly study time for year 7 students was 144.6 minutes per week. As in previous years, this continued the pattern of receiving slightly less than the minimum weekly recommendation of 150 minutes study time per week. At years 11 and 12, 94.4% and 99.6% of LOTE students respectively studied for a minimum of 200 minutes per week

Source : *Languages Other Than English in Victorian Government Schools 2007*,  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009.

Based on these facts, it appears the general attitude within the Victorian government and bureaucracy toward the learning of LOTE is positive and encouraging. Yet closer examination reveals a considerable contrast between what politicians and bureaucrats say, how they allocate funding, and how they ascertain and measure outcomes.



### *Encouragement versus Requirement*

Consider, for instance, the statement that DEECD “expects” that government schools provide languages other than English from Prep to Year 10, offering a minimum of 150 minutes per week in classes taught by a qualified LOTE teacher. As the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) itself states, the use of the word *expects*, “is different from an explicit statement that languages are compulsory and an expectation of provision is different from an expectation that all students P-10 will study a language” (DEEWR, 2007:20).

While schools are *encouraged* to offer a LOTE, it might be argued that they do not face any real consequences if a LOTE programme is not implemented. In reality, the bulk of language learning is taking place at primary school, the level of schooling where “programmes are most likely to be characterised by low time allocations and [language learning] is not continued to higher levels of proficiency” (DEEWR, 2007:41).

LOTE study can be either a compulsory or an elective subject, and there are notable differences in LOTE obligation at the primary and secondary levels of schooling, as well as between the public and private systems. When Victorian government primary schools offer LOTE programmes (only 77.4% do so), common practice is for language study to be undertaken by all students, and LOTE is not offered as an elective subject. At secondary level, most government and private schools make the study of at least one LOTE compulsory for anywhere between one to four years. LOTE study commonly changes from a compulsory subject to an elective subject at year 9 level.

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## 4. LOTE Education Policies and Perspectives

"We don't have any clear statements of policy from the Federal Government level.

Above all, there's no sort of clear statement that a national competency in languages other than English is of strategic advantage to the country.

The same thing is true for humanities in general."

— Professor Colin Nettelbeck,  
Honorary Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne  
(Nettelbeck cited in Russell, 2004)

In 2007, a discussion paper was released by a coalition of leading Australian universities called the Group of 8 (Go8) who aim to promote excellence in tertiary education. The paper was entitled *Languages in Crisis* and it presented a damning report card on the state of language learning in Australia and the lack of stability, respect and support it was accorded.

To combat this circumstance, the coalition proposed co-operative action between commonwealth, state and territory governments to achieve a consistent national approach to language education at all levels of the education system (Go8, 2008). Among the chief concerns such a top-down approach might address include :

- Resourcing
- Requirement versus Encouragement (i.e. mandatory or elective LOTE study)

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### 4.1 National LOTE education policies and perspectives

At the national level, LOTE study has been a feature of several key policies, such as :

- the National Policy on Languages (1987);
- the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (1991); and
- the declarations of the National Goals of Schooling (1989 & 1999).

Professional development is also encouraged through opportunities such as the Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships where practising language teachers and trainee language teachers in Australian schools and universities are given the chance to participate in short-term intensive language and cultural study programs in Australia and abroad.



<b>FAST FACTS : Australian Government LOTE initiatives</b>		
▶ National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP)	\$62.4 million over four years (2008–09 to 2011–12)	to increase opportunities for school students to become familiar with the languages and cultures of Australia's key regional neighbours, such as China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea (DEEWR, 2008).
▶ School Languages Program (SLP)	\$112 million from 2005 to 2008 to state and territory education authorities	to support the teaching and learning of Asian, European, Australian Indigenous languages and Auslan in schools and community language programs in ethnic schools (DEEWR, 2008).
▶ Asia Education Foundation (AEF)	annual grant established in 1992	to support the studies of Asian language and culture in Australian schools

In spite of these much-vaunted strategies however, there has not been a significant rise in levels of multilingualism. Indeed, Australia has been called “the third-most monolingual country in the developed world” (Tomazin, 2009).

LOTE students are *beginning* study but not pursuing it to the extent of developing significant multilingual skills. According to figures from the Asian Studies Association of Australia, fewer than 6,000 students in Australia are studying Chinese at any level of sophistication and “[it is estimated that] nearly half of these students have come from Asia, and many will take their multi-lingual skills back to their own countries”

(De Silva, 2005). A more recent education article was more direct, asserting that “our capacity to teach and research the major Asian languages is eroding” (Tomazin, 2009).

For many in the LOTE industry, there is a sense of disconnect between the ideal of the global citizen, the strategies and funding of language study, and the result: languages are in crisis.

#### *Mandatory or Elective LOTE Study*

Some blame low continuation rates on LOTE's elective status within the education system, but mandating LOTE study is a complex issue. From a resourcing perspective, if LOTE is truly a “key area” in primary and secondary education systems, then by definition it is an area of study relevant to *all* students (DEEWR, 2007), and LOTE learning should be unaffected by issues such as disengagement and difficulties in programme implementation.

On the other hand, all the secondary school and tertiary level students surveyed for this paper acknowledged that LOTE study should only be compulsory ‘up to a certain point.’ Having been given the opportunity to explore language study, they agreed that personal preference should dictate its continuation. The rationale being that the most effective LOTE learners are those that do so voluntarily. All of which reiterates the need to improve community understanding of the benefits of multilingualism.



## 4.2 Interstate comparisons

Whilst the vastly different population sizes and demographic breakdowns of Australian states make it impossible to conduct a straight-forward like-versus-like comparison, some key distinctions are worth noting. Firstly, the widespread uncertainty that exists at state level about a clear over-arching state LOTE policy. Secondly, the inconsistency between different states regarding the study of languages other than English in primary and secondary schools (see **Table 5**).

**Table 5: Language requirements across Australian States and Territories**

State / Territory	Status	Extent of Study	Comment
Australian Capital Territory	Not mandated	—	—
New South Wales	Mandated	100 hours	NSW has been commended for its <i>Aboriginal Language Policy</i> however no other clear languages policy exists which reflects the national commitment to languages education.
Northern Territory	Not mandated	—	—
Queensland	Mandate being revised	Years 4-7	Under regional language plans the level of mandating for individual schools has been reduced.
South Australia	Implied mandate	P-10	Year levels not explicitly stated
Tasmania	Not mandated	—	—
Victoria	Expectation of teaching	P-10	Expectation expressed in terms of provision of programmes rather than study by students
Western Australia	Implied mandate	Years 3-10	Students expected to reach Level 3 by Year 9.

Source : Adapted from: *Language requirements in Australian States and Territories* (DEEWR, 2007).

Thirdly, LOTE enrolment numbers themselves. For instance, in 2001, 679,822 students studied LOTE across all sectors in Victorian schools, while the same year saw New South Wales record a total enrolment of only 365,890 students – just over half as many, despite NSW having a population 25% larger than Victoria. Similarly, in 2003 approximately 20.2% of students completing Year 12 in Victorian schools studied a language other than English, while in New South Wales the figure was only 12.8% with Queensland 5.9%. The 2003 Victorian figures for Year 12 study of languages were also relatively strong in comparison with the national average of 13.5% (DEECD, 2008).



### 4.3 International perspectives

When comparing the relatively unflattering state of Australia's multilingual landscape with that of Europe, the inevitable counter-argument is that the greater proximity of 'foreign language' countries and the convenience of travel make the motivation to learn and opportunity to utilise multilingual skills in European countries a more tangible daily reality.

#### **FAST FACTS : Foreign Languages in Europe**

- 58% of European pupils learn two or more foreign languages during their secondary education (Eurydice, 2008)
- In 2002, the Heads of State or Government of the European Union declared their intention 'to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age' (Barcelona European Council 2002, cited in Eurydice, 2008)
- In December 2006, the European Parliament nominated the learning of two foreign languages to be one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning

The geographic practicalities of Europe in this respect cannot be denied. However, technological advances and an increasingly transnational marketplace mean Australia's geographic isolation is not the tyrannical obstacle it once was. It is not for a lack of international business and government interaction that multilingualism has yet to become truly integrated into the Australian culture. There is a need for the underlying perceptions about LOTE study to be examined.

A combination of greater impetus and higher standards is considered to be a key reason why European language students "are able to arrive at a much higher level of competency earlier than Australian students" (Surveys & Interviews, 2009). As one respondent observed: "what Australian students study in French at university is what European students are tackling in high school" (Surveys & Interviews, 2009).

To improve consistency and output in terms of excellence in multilingual ability among LOTE students, Monash University teacher and researcher Tony Taylor suggests that a "focused languages policy" might be in order "that stipulates at least one nominated European language and one nominated Asian language ... for national study at a basic level in years kindergarten to 10, for functional and cultural reasons" (Taylor, 2009). This is designed to produce a majority of Australian students who are "reasonably fluent in at least one language that interests them instead of very, very ordinary at many" (Taylor, 2009).

Whatever strategy is adopted, a greater recognition of the value of multilingual skills is critical. Investment in the development of multilingual skills – whether it be on an emotional, intellectual or financial level; or at an individual, community or national level – is greatly hindered by a lack of *awareness* of the potential usefulness and benefits of multilingual skills.



## 5. Role of teachers and career advisors

According to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) “teachers should encourage learners to identify the many careers in which second language skills are useful” (VCAA, 2008). This echoes the sentiments expressed in the 2007 report, *Attitudes Towards the Study of Languages in Australian Schools*, which explicitly called for a strengthening of “the links between learning languages and the increased career options ... available for young people who have language expertise” (McConchie, 2007:12). By this, the report referred to schools and careers advisors as key figures.

Yet among the students surveyed for this paper, many indicated that they had never been given any information from teachers or advisors regarding the benefits of neither multilingualism nor a view to what opportunities existed. Of those who had considered the vocational potential of their multilingual skills, few could name specific roles or relevant spheres of employment apart from teaching, interpreting and translating.

**“I’d like to continue [with the language]  
but I don’t really know what I could do ...  
apart from teach or be an interpreter”**

**(Surveys & Interviews, 2009)**

One possibility is that information about potential career pathways incorporating LOTE language use is being poorly transmitted – or at least unsuccessfully received and understood – or there is a lack of consistency about vocational preparation and guidance from LOTE teachers and career counsellors. However, a 2002 survey suggests a far deeper concern regarding a sense of ambivalence toward the value of LOTE learning among teachers and career advisors within the school system itself (see **Table 4**). Out of eight reasons to study a language other than English, LOTE teachers and schools ranked the gaining of “vocational skills” eighth.

**Table 4: LOTE teacher survey 2002**

<b>Benefits of LOTE learning</b>	<b>Language teachers</b>	<b>Schools</b>
➤ Communication skills	1	1
➤ Literacy in the LOTE	2	2
➤ Cognitive skills, such as problem solving	3	4
➤ Promoting understanding of different cultures	4	5
➤ Expanding knowledge about how languages in general work	5	3
➤ Promoting intercultural awareness	6	6
➤ Expanding knowledge about the culture and society	7	7
➤ Language skills for vocational and career purposes	8	8

*Source: Adapted from ‘Benefits of languages, as ranked by teachers and schools,’ (DET, 2002).*



It must be noted that the language teaching profession is not without its own frustrations and difficulties. Numerous Federal and State reports over the last twenty years have documented a shortage of qualified LOTE teachers and listed the concerns and obstacles faced by LOTE teachers, many of whom feel their skills and positions are undervalued and are fighting against being “squeezed out of an already crowded curriculum” (Surveys & Interviews, 2009).

Between 1997 and 2000, 90 university teaching positions in languages were lost across the country (Russell, 2004). In May 2009, Victoria University revealed its intention to discontinue all LOTE programmes apart from Vietnamese from 2010. University study of language usually entails a combination of core language acquisition subjects which are then complemented by elective subjects which focus on cultural aspects, such as art, literature and theatre. Such subjects in universities are becoming increasingly limited, and as one language teacher commented, “it is hard enough to justify the existence of the *department*, let alone have the resources to fund a variety of electives” (Surveys & Interviews, 2009).

The danger is that this sense of disillusionment, frustration and ultimate ambivalence about the value of LOTE learning – what one respondent labelled a “piece-meal and ambivalent approach to language education,” (Surveys & Interviews, 2009) – will proliferate in a downward spiral. Whether teachers are uncertain or unconvinced about the vocational opportunities afforded by LOTE fluency, their lack of conviction may be affecting the perceptions of LOTE students as to their future prospects.

**“If we are not nurturing those who do show an interest  
[ in LOTE learning ],  
if we are not fostering the understanding  
[ amongst talented and engaged LOTE learners ]  
that languages can play an important and practical role  
in their personal and professional development ...  
then we have failed as teachers”  
(Surveys & Interviews, 2009)**

Based on these findings, it appears that a concerted effort must be made at a number of different levels.

**Recommendation :**

- **Encouragement of greater self-awareness by students about existing career pathways involving the practical application of multilingual skills.**
- **Provision of appropriate advice and guidance by education providers to students regarding career pathways involving multilingual skills.**
- **Greater promotion by educators of career pathways that make tangible use of LOTE to motivate students as well as establish links between language skills and careers.**



## 6. The role of industry and employers

“Proficiency in foreign languages is an essential component of cross-cultural competency ... While communicative competency is important, language also serves as an insightful window into the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artefacts that characterize a society. Learning a second language can also help students to understand other cultures more broadly.”

— Professor Yong Zhao, Michigan State University  
(Zhao, 2009:26)

The tendency by Australians to treat LOTE learning and LOTE proficiency as an afterthought rather than a foremost concern is reflected in the approaches taken at times by employers toward multilingual roles, staff and vocational development. The 2008 Monash University report entitled *Victoria's Languages – Gateways to the World*, highlighted that “while unwilling to pay a premium for additional language skills, companies value and make extensive use of the skills which their employees bring to the workplace” (Monash, 2008:8).

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### 6.1 Workplace Standards for Multilingual Employees

Uncertainty regarding the place and value of multilingual skills in the workplace often begins with the job description itself, from the specified duties and responsibilities to the desired / required skills and attributes. For instance, it is not unusual for the classification of LOTE skills in advertised job vacancies to be distinctly (and possibly deliberately) vague and ambiguous. At face value, there may seem no difference between an advertisement seeking a ‘Mandarin speaking journalist’ and one seeking a journalist for whom the ability to speak Mandarin is ‘advantageous’, but in practice the emphasis on language skills can be vastly different and require considerably different levels of fluency.

When the language is not *the* key feature of the position – designated only as either ‘desirable’ or ‘advantageous’ – inevitable questions arise:

- Does this skill improve one’s chances of success?
- Does it or does it not constitute a core function?
- Could the job be performed successfully without possessing such a skill?

Few would disagree that the ability to work in a language other than English is an additional skill. Whether this ability constitutes a core function, and at what point an employee’s multilingual skills go beyond a ‘value-add’ to a remunerable function can cause confusion and frustration, and occasionally some suspicion that the advertiser is allowing for the possibility of securing an employee benefit without needing to pay extra for this benefit. An oft-cited case involves employees called away from their usual tasks to ‘play the interpreter’ when no mention of such service was made in the job description.



It is this type of failure to give due recognition to LOTE abilities as constituting a separate, additional skill that necessitates clearly defined and enforced industry standards on:

- whether utilisation of LOTE proficiency is expected within a designated role,
- at what level of proficiency;
- how often and in what capacity; and
- how is this use to be remunerated.

While some degree of flexibility both within and between the aforementioned industry spheres is expected (and necessary), clear strategic priorities, recruitment policies, management structures and professional development of organisations and staff hinge upon directives imparted from above, whether as legal requirements, industry standards or recommended organisational codes of practice. LOTE advocates and practitioners insist that until there is much greater clarity and consistency on how multilingualism is managed and remunerated, the full potential of Australia's multilingual potential will fail to be realised.

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## 6.2 Public Sector

“[multilingual skills] help to strengthen relationships with stakeholders that otherwise wouldn't be reached due to the language barrier.”

— Tricia Pierson,  
International Marketing Assistant for Tourism Victoria, 2009

### *Victorian Public Sector*

As part of an ongoing commitment to address community disadvantage and social exclusion, Victorian Government departments and agencies have been encouraged to deliver their services “culturally, religiously and linguistically appropriately” (*All of Us*, 2009: 21) and efforts are being made to address a critical shortage of interpreters and translators in Victoria, particularly in the health services sector. On a different stage, the government also continues to find ways to bolster the state's credentials as a tourist destination and centre for international trade and commerce, arguing that Victoria's competitive edge and economic advantage lie in a diverse, innovative, highly skilled and internationally connected workforce (Austrade, 2009).

Yet LOTE practitioners argue that as the frontline of this internationally connected workforce, urgent attention is required to improve the management and remuneration of industries such as interpreting and translating. As the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH) has pointed out, “while most agencies readily acknowledge the benefits of bilingual staff, there are no existing standards, training or policies to define or contextualise these roles” (2008:4).



### *Professional incentives: Victorian Public Service*

Since 1996, bilingual public servants in Victoria have been eligible to receive a language allowance if it can be demonstrated that they use their LOTE skills in their day-to-day work with the Victorian public by engaging in simple communication with clients in languages other than English. Members of the Victorian police force are eligible. LOTE teachers, interpreters, translators and people in jobs where LOTE skills are an integral part of the job profile are not eligible for the allowance. Upon successful completion of a NAATI exam, public service staff will receive an allowance of:

- \$800 (language aides),
- \$1,100 (paraprofessional Interpreters) or
- \$1,500 (interpreters) per annum.

### *Professional incentives: New South Wales Public Service*

A similar Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) with similar restrictions operates in New South Wales. Administered through the NSW Community Relations Commission (CRC), the CLAS is paid to selected NSW public sector employees who have a basic level of competency in a language other than English and who work in locations where their language can be used to assist clients. The scheme is essentially a form of monetary compensation for the use of multilingual skills in positions that don't incorporate such skills into the job description. NSW Community Language Allowance rates are \$1,036 (base rate) or \$1,556 (higher rate), distinguished by frequency of language usage and level of NAATI accreditation.

### *Interpreting and Translating Services*

In terms of utilising LOTE skills in an ongoing professional capacity, interpreting and translating roles remain the predominant career options in both the public and private spheres. The official Australian accreditation body for interpreters and translators is the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd. (NAATI). NAATI offers accreditation testing at various levels of proficiency and activity

(see **Appendix 1**), and successful NAATI testing is a requirement of eligibility for both Victorian and NSW public service language allowance schemes (see **Appendix 2 – 3**). Accreditation at professional interpreter level, or 'language recognition' for certain languages is required for employment with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), a major service provider of interpreters and translators through its Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

Currently, if Victorian Government departments require the services of an interpreter or translator, they are most often sourced through agencies such as the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS), a Victorian State Business Corporation. A key difference between the Victorian and NSW public sectors is opportunity for the employment of interpreters and translators as a part of the public service.

In NSW, the state government's Community Relations Commission has paid full-time interpreters and translators whose services are available to all NSW Government departments and agencies, as well as private and commercial organisations, community groups and individuals. The NSW Government outsources interpreters and translators from the private sector when in-house staff members do not possess the requested languages.



Furthermore, the NSW government pays interpreters and translators in accordance with the Crown Employees (Interpreters and Translators, Community Relations Commission) Award (Community Relations Commission, 2007).

The CRC notes that it is the only language service provider in NSW which provides pay and conditions to all of its interpreters and translators in accordance with an industrial award which specifically recognises the skill, function and qualifications of the profession of interpreting and translating.

In Victoria, full-time in-house interpreting and translating positions within the public sector are increasingly rare. Examples can be found such as in the Royal Children's Hospital whose Interpreter and Non-English speaking background (NESB) Services Department provides patients and families with interpreting services, but in general interpreters and translators are out-sourced, either from companies such as VITS Language Link or private companies on a case-by-case basis. This means that Victorian interpreters and translators are overwhelmingly freelance workers, which presents the usual instability and uncertainty associated with precarious employment. Reports of low rates of pay and calls for a regulation of the industry, including the promotion of the industry to younger generations is a consistent feature of commentary on this industry (Monash, 2008).

#### *Perceived Deterrents to a career in Interpreting and Translating*

The most oft-cited issues surrounding the translating and interpreting (T&I) industry involve improved remuneration along with the need for a more concerted effort to promote the industry to younger generations (Monash 2008). Indeed, the absence (or poor communication) of financial and other incentives is frequently highlighted as a major deterrent to young LOTE learners considering a long-term career utilising their skills. These sentiments were mirrored in the AUSIT submission to the Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations in 2008.

**“the inevitable result of stagnation of T&I fees is that qualified and experienced people ... will find this area of employment untenable and look elsewhere. This loss to the workforce represents a waste of educational resources and must lead eventually to erosion in the quality of services”**

**(AUSIT, 2008)**

Apart from interpreting and translating, there are a number of spheres where highly proficient multilingual employees can make active use of their LOTE skills in a professional capacity, ranging from tourism and international diplomacy to security and intelligence. As Asian markets such as China and India continue to expand, many have argued that this is the Asian Century (White, 2009) and that to prepare for this, “half of Australia’s population should be fluent in Asian languages over the next 30 years,” in order to make Australia the most Asia-literate country in the west (Tomazin, 2009).



## Tourism

Victoria's government run tourism body, Tourism Victoria, operates under the umbrella of the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD). For the purposes of this paper, Tourism Victoria provided examples of the multilingual skills of employees as well as a range of roles in which these multilingual skills play a part in day-to-day activities (see **Table 8**).

**Table 8: Multilingual Skills of Tourism Victoria Employees**

### **International Team:**

- Business Development Manager – Japan/Korea (Japanese / basic Korean)\*
- Business Development Manager – North Asia (Mandarin / basic Japanese)\*
- Business Development Manager – South Asia (Singaporean)
- Business Development Manager – US/NZ (Portuguese / French / Spanish)
- Group Manager International – (Mandarin / Cantonese)
- International website content editor – (German / French)

### **Aviation:**

- Manager, Air Services – (Japanese)

### **Familiarisations:**

- Media & Trade Relations Officer (can speak Italian)
- A varied mix of contracted guides who can speak Mandarin, Japanese, Korean and French when required for our Media and Trade familiarisations

### **Public Relations:**

- Group Manager, Corporate and Destination Communications (Italian)
- Senior Media Officer (Russian), who assists with escorting Russian International familiarisations

### **Destination and Product Marketing:**

- Business Development Manager – Business Excellence (German)
- Business Development Manager – Backpacker Tourism / Product Development (German)

*\*Languages listed represent multilingual skills of employees that Tourism Victoria is able to benefit from. The multilingual skills of both the Business Development Manager – Japan/Korea and Business Development Manager – North Asia were described as being an essential requirement of the position.*

*Source : Tourism Victoria, 2009.*



As a department, DIIRD is known to place a high premium on multilingual skills, including the funding of language courses as part of the professional development of its staff. Multilingual skills are recognised as being advantageous, and assist to achieve the department's overall business and social development goals as well as fostering greater staff potential and mobility within the department via transfers and exchanges around the state and internationally.

Tourism Victoria draws on the language skills of employees that may have been acquired to improve personal knowledge and assist with career pathways as well as employees whose skills are the result of having a LOTE background. The approaches of DIIRD and Tourism Victoria toward multilingual employees make an interesting comparison to departments at the national level.

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### *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

In May 2009, it was reported that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd personally intervened in a departmental nomination to the ambassadorship to Germany on the grounds that the candidate lacked the necessary language skills to fulfil the job (Banham, 2009). While this incident was taken as a powerful endorsement by those with a passion or professional interest in the multilingual sector that English is no longer 'enough,' the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) still maintains a clear policy that unless specifically stated, multilingual skills are *not* a prerequisite for employment with the department, and while "valued," LOTE language proficiency is "not essential," or a component of the general DFAT recruitment process (DFAT, 2009).

On the one hand, not confining the recruitment pool to pre-existing LOTE proficient candidates is encouraging for candidates who do not possess pre-existing LOTE skills. Existing employees and new candidates are not automatically excluded from selection to overseas (language specific) postings, and indeed many will have the opportunity to acquire language skills that they might never have developed were it not for the opportunity provided by the department.

One might argue that the deliberate decision *not* to incorporate multilingual skills as a factor in the DFAT recruitment process is a curious approach to multilingualism for a department whose title emphasises the foremost attention given to interactions with peoples outside Australia, many of whom do not have English as their preferred language. Certainly, from the perspective of multilingual students, however, it is understandably discouraging to receive the response that LOTE skills do not significantly improve one's employment prospects with DFAT.

### *Language Designated versus Language Desired*

DFAT employs the terms "language designated" and "language desired" for positions which do require levels of competency in languages other than English. Language aptitude tests take place to determine whether or not a candidate is likely to succeed in language acquisition. Training then takes place accordingly, subject to funding (see **Table 9**).



**Table 9: LOTE training for language specified positions overseas**

	<b>Language designated</b>	<b>Language desired</b>
<b>LOTE requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ LOTE skills are an essential requirement of the position, requiring Level 3 working capacity</li> <li>➤ Full-time training is guaranteed for postings to countries where English is not the main language spoken by government or business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ LOTE is not vital to the performance of the role</li> <li>➤ Full-time training is ideal but not always guaranteed (subject to funding)</li> </ul>
<b>Languages required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Approximately 30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Approximately 30</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Funding is determined upon examination of number of positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Funding is determined upon examination of number of positions</li> </ul>
<b>Training regime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Language training is guaranteed</li> <li>➤ Becomes a full-time job involving 3 hours individual tuition daily plus an additional 4.5 hours of individual study</li> <li>➤ Employees trained quite narrowly, scope of communication limited to specific task-related capacity, such as trade and foreign policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Training still takes place, but is resource dependent</li> <li>➤ In 2009, DFAT was able to provide full-time training to the majority of language desired positions</li> </ul>

<b>Overseas postings with no LOTE specifications</b>	
<b>LOTE requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No LOTE specifications, the Department does not require any training to take place</li> </ul>
<b>Languages required</b>	—
<b>Funding</b>	—
<b>Training regime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Short-term “survival courses” are made available to staff should they wish to undertake basic training when deployed to a country where English is not the main language spoken</li> <li>➤ Training not required, survival courses are sought out by employees</li> </ul>



DFAT relies on its Language Skills Unit to provide employees with the relevant language training needed for overseas postings based on what might be termed the “if you need a language we’ll teach it to you,” approach.

For its Graduate Trainee programmes, DFAT seeks graduates from all academic disciplines, “people with the skills, knowledge and abilities to contribute to the department’s work in advancing Australia’s national interests” (DFAT, 2009). Otherwise, the Department runs lunchtime conversation classes in various languages other than English to maintain the foreign language skills of employees.

Accredited diplomatic and consular positions in Australian Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates – including Ambassadorial positions – are staffed with ongoing, permanent employees of DFAT deployed on posting from Australia. According to the 2007-2008 DFAT Annual Report, 15% of Australian staff employed by the Department are posted overseas (DFAT, 2008). The Department has two graduate recruitment programs: the Graduate Trainee programme and the Corporate and Financial Management Trainee Programme which both consist of a two-year training and professional development period undertaken in Canberra, followed by the opportunity to apply for an overseas posting.

Not all overseas postings with DFAT include language specifications.

#### *Training concerns*

There are also practical concerns regarding the difficulties some staff members may find in achieving an effective work / LOTE study balance. For instance, it is at times impractical for certain senior positions within the Department to be deemed “language designated” because the staff members cannot afford to forgo that many office hours to devote themselves to full-time language study. Conversely, most of the 25 language designated positions with the Department in Jakarta, Indonesia, for example, are at the more junior levels. With junior level employees more likely to have the time to dedicate to language study, this is considered “a better investment,” especially as having received such training early in their careers, their skills can then be called upon over the years and as they move higher up in the department.

Why the same notion cannot be applied to a greater appreciation for the pre-existing LOTE skills of all potential candidates is unclear, but such an approach would contribute greatly to the encouragement of LOTE training within younger generations of Australians. Research does suggest that there are signs of progress in this area, with DFAT staff noting that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has set an ambitious agenda for the department which will require an enhancement of resources and qualified staff to fulfil.



### *Intelligence Agencies*

“Military, embassy and other U.S. government personnel in the field face cross-cultural communication challenges every day. It takes only one misplaced image, word or phrase to confuse or cause offense, and many more to repair the damage.”

(United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2004:12)

In 2004, Philip Flood, a former diplomat, headed an inquiry into Australia’s intelligence agencies. Among the findings in his final report, Flood recommended that Australian intelligence agencies should be active in building a profile of staff with LOTE skills, paying particular attention to emerging issues and ensuring the agencies possess staff with language skills, including in Arabic, and other expertise to match emerging needs.

In response to the recommendations in the Flood Report, the Australian Government allocated \$3.1 million over four years in the 2005-06 Federal Budget to further develop the language skills and expertise of ASIO staff (ASIO, 2006). In 2005, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) launched a programme to train several officers each year in relevant languages. This training comprised full-time language study for up to two years and involved in-country components. Upon completion of this program, officers have the opportunity to be placed in positions where they can apply their language skills. ASIO also encourages and supports staff to gain and update language skills utilising the Study Assistance Program. Finally, ASIO continues to recruit specialised linguists across a range of languages to match the requirements of their high priority investigations (ASIO, 2006).

The Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) and Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) also place a high priority on recruiting for and training in target languages.

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On a positive note, it appears that most of the intelligence agencies do have some kind of system in place for remunerating staff with relevant language skills, with levels of remuneration reflecting not only linguistic ability but also, crucially, the importance of the language in terms of national intelligence priorities.

However, there are indications that further enhancements to LOTE recruitment and management policies are required if the aspirations outlined in the Flood Report are to be met. At the very least, all of the agencies need to be active in identifying and reviewing language shortfalls and building a profile of staff with necessary language skills, paying particular attention to emerging issues and ensuring that agencies have the language skills to match developing needs.



### 6.3 Private (Corporate) sector

According to the 1998 *Business Review Weekly* survey, more than half of the top 50 most innovative companies in Australia at the time were foreign-based companies, and in the year 2000, firms with substantial foreign ownership account for about 25% of Australian exports. Yet, from the specification of jobs to the recruitment, management and professional development of multilingual employees, notable shortfalls or outright indifference in the approaches of private Australian companies are reported by young LOTE students and seasoned LOTE practitioners and advocates alike.

When LOTE skills are articulated as “advantageous” or “desirable,” candidates are often left questioning the exact level of importance of these skills to a position, as well as consequent issues regarding remuneration in recognition of a separate, additional service or simply a ‘bonus skill’ from which firms are able to profit.

**“In interviews employers usually just comment on your languages ... but that’s all. It’s like they don’t stand for much, even though they require so much work ...”**  
**(Surveys & Interviews, 2009)**

#### *Advantageous or Desired*

In the private sector, job-related skills tend to be the priority when hiring candidates. Foreign language skills will not always be required or used to a degree that would warrant their formal articulation or remuneration. Firms with international markets are understandably more likely to require language services. Victoria, however, also presents an interesting situation in that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities are a market that can often be difficult to reach, and therefore companies and businesses often require strategic use of multilingual skills to communicate with these groups.

When firms cannot source the required language skills in-house, companies are forced to outsource to interpreters and translators (Monash, 2008b). The volume of translation work required in the private sector is increasing rapidly and a particularly interesting and recurring observation regarding this is the prediction of increased efficiency and accuracy that would arise from employees with both technical skills and language knowledge (Surveys & Interviews, 2009).

Management of bilingual skills within the private sector is comparatively the most difficult sector in which to obtain clear and tangible definitions regarding the value placed on foreign language skills. ‘Advantageous’ and ‘desired’ are vague labels, and at times multilingual speakers have rightly questioned how or why a LOTE might be ‘highly advantageous’ yet not critical to a position.

To minimise this ambiguity, **Table 10** suggests a classification system for multilingual specifications within the private sector.



**Table 10: Suggestion of classifications for multilingual job specifications**

<u>Language Required</u>		<u>Proficiency</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Proficiency</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
<b><u>English</u></b>	<i>Written</i>	Basic (survival)	Xxx ...	Comprehensive	Xxx ...
		Functional	Xxx ...	Compositional	Xxx ...
	<i>Spoken</i>	Basic (survival)	Xxx ...	Advanced	Xxx ...
		Functional	Xxx ...	Fluent	Xxx ...
		Conversational	Xxx ...		
<b><u>LOTE</u></b>	<i>Written</i>	Basic (survival)	Xxx ...	Comprehensive	Xxx ...
		Functional	Xxx ...	Compositional	Xxx ...
	<i>Spoken</i>	Basic (survival)	Xxx ...	Advanced	Xxx ...
		Functional	Xxx ...	Fluent	Xxx ...
		Conversational	Xxx ...		

## 6.4 Community Sector

It is important to note that a livelihood involving the use of multilingualism can be personally stimulating and satisfying without necessarily being highly lucrative financially. The community sector is another key area of employment in which multilingual and cultural skills are valuable, particularly within the sphere of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community organisations.

Whether it be through service delivery, social networking, or community-run media, employees and volunteers in the community sector have the opportunity to utilise multilingual skills that can assist in the effective and appropriate response of staff members to community needs.



Awareness of these various opportunities is important, as is the manner in which multilingual skills are rewarded, regarded and specified. Some steps are being taken to address the anomalies and inconsistencies within and between different sectors and industries, but more needs to be done to ensure generations of *would-be* multilingual Australians continue to feel compelled to invest in their multilingual proficiency.

**Recommendation :**

- **A review of current Interpreter and Translator fees to ensure that qualified and experienced people do not find the industry financially untenable and have to seek employment elsewhere.**
- **A review of the need for multilingual skills in public and private sectors, focusing on more detailed specifications of language skills required that go beyond 'advantageous' and 'desirable' so that staff are remunerated accordingly and have a clear understanding of the value and role of multilingual skills in their position.**
- **Encouragement of multilingual skills to be recognised as additional services of staff members and either articulated formally in job descriptions or remunerated in a way resembling the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Language Allowance.**
- **Review of the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Language Allowance scheme to ensure that all bilingual staff using language skills in their day-to-day work are aware of the existence of and eligibility for this allowance.**
- **Greater recognition by employers of the qualities and attributes that are gained through LOTE study that go beyond linguistic competency.**



## 7. Multilingual pathway initiatives and vocational links

### “WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY LANGUAGES?”

Of the secondary students whose opinions and comments were gathered through surveys and personal interviews,

- 80.7% of responses indicated some understanding of foreign language skills to be ‘an advantage in today’s globalised world,’ with the comment that ‘languages open doors and allow you to work overseas’ mentioned several times.
- 19.2% of students agreed with the statement that LOTE learning was “not very important [because] English is enough.”
- 62.5% of secondary students surveyed aged 16-18 affirmed the desire to use or combine foreign language skills in their future career.
- 60% of students within this group indicated the intention to continue with LOTE study.

(Surveys & Interviews, 2009)

There is no question that greater awareness of the practical applications of multilingualism will improve attitudes toward LOTE study and the recognition and remuneration of LOTE proficiency. Various studies have reiterated the need to forge links between languages and career options (DET, 2002), but these connections need to be as accessible, meaningful and vocationally constructive as possible.

Fortunately, there are signs that a few initiatives being undertaken in both the education and employment spheres are having some success in bridging multilingual students with career pathways that provide the opportunity for use of their language skills.

### *Education links*

Within the education sector, overseas exchange programs and industry networking events are two major forms of vocational connections for multilingual students.

At both the secondary and tertiary levels, there is an elaborate network of study and research related scholarships and grants that contribute to the exchange of knowledge and research on an international scale. Well established student exchange programs exist in many Victorian high schools, while most universities across Victoria offer student exchanges that allow for one or two semesters to be spent at an overseas university, which can also contribute to a student’s Australian degree. In both cases, these opportunities encourage the development of language and culture skills through travel and study abroad.



### Industry

Complementing these education-based programs are initiatives which originate from industry itself and actively reach out to find LOTE proficient candidates or bolster the skills of candidates interested in pursuing a multilingual career pathways. State sponsored scholarships to become interpreters and translators are a good example. In Victoria, free interpreting and translating services received over \$16 million in annual state government funding in 2006–07 with a particular focus on the area of early childhood health and wellbeing and the interpreting and translating of materials regarding this issue into community (LOTE) languages (All of Us, 2009).

At the national level, investment and expansion of T&I services can also be seen in the Australian Government funded NAATI national project, which aims to increase the number of NAATI interpreters in both metropolitan and selected regional areas around Australia, especially in rarer and new and emerging languages for which there is a shortage of qualified interpreters and translators (NAATI, 2009).

A few noteworthy programs are included as highlights of best practice and examples of what can be achieved.

#### **BEST PRACTICE MODEL # 1**

- The 'Science and Technology' evening held at the *Alliance Française of Melbourne* (a non-profit association dedicated to the promotion of the French language and culture) in May 2009 is an excellent example.
- Hosted by the French Association for Science and Technology (AFAS), whose mission is to develop and foster links between Australia and France at all levels in the fields of Science and Technology, this function provided an opportunity for recent graduates and current tertiary students who had some background in science and technology, and who shared an interest in France, to meet and establish interpersonal networks which may present valuable career opportunities in the future (AFAS, 2009).

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### **BEST PRACTICE MODEL # 2**

- **In collaboration between the Monash University Translation Studies programme (French) and Jean Moulin University's Faculty of Languages in Lyon, France, the Monash Double Masters is an innovative program that has been developed with a deliberate view to creating professionals who possess specialised language qualifications and are equipped with international experience that will stand them in perfect stead to engage within and across both French and Australian language service agencies and enterprises that require such services (Monash, 2009).**
- **This program is open to students in France and Australia. The first year will be spent at Monash University in Australia and the second year is taught at Jean Moulin University in Lyon, France.**
- **Throughout the two years, students will undertake practical training with practitioners and other representatives of the industry such as professional translators, translation agencies, and language service providers, as well as with French and/or Australian companies that need such services.**
- **This practical work experience should provide them with key contacts and opportunities for their future careers. In the final semester of this program students will write their master's thesis which can be a research thesis *or* a thesis written after a professional internship within a French company, ideally, one that has links to Australia.**
- **By spending time in a foreign-based organisation that has links with Australia, students would be contributing to the strengthening of international relationships between corporations and countries, and facilitating the exchange of business activities.**
- **This is an innovative and highly practical programme. Upon completion of this programme, students are awarded two degrees: the Master of Interpreting and Translation Studies (Translation stream) from Monash University, and also the Master of English Studies or Master of Applied Foreign Languages awarded by Jean Moulin University (Monash, 2009).**

In this era of heightened, broadened and more diversified connectedness, it is fitting that greater attention and resources be invested in building connections across the multilingual sphere. Among the so-called Millennial Generation (1980-2000), there is certainly a growing belief in the importance of being able to interact on a global scale and the benefits of practical and transferable linguistic capabilities that allow professional mobility through different spheres. The development of clear career linkages and vocational pathways between education and industry such as those mentioned are crucial to achieving this outcome.



**BEST PRACTICE MODEL # 3**

- **As an incentive for students to undertake T&I studies, the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) offers scholarships to students enrolled in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) Diploma of Interpreting and the Advanced Diploma of Interpreting and Translating.**
- **The languages selected for scholarship support relate to particular groups experiencing a strong need for interpreting and translating services, and have included Timorese Hakka, Burmese, Amharic, Arabic (Sudanese), Dari, Dinka, Farsi, Khmer, Nuer, Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali and Swahili.**

Of particular importance, however, is the need for a balanced approach – one that gives confidence to multilingual youth in terms of acknowledging that their unique skills are valued and valuable, but does not present unrealistic expectations about long-term career opportunities. LOTE students, advocates and practitioners have observed that when considering foreign language skills, a “combined” perspective is important, whereby LOTE language skills are combined with another area of expertise, such as engineering, architecture, education, or medicine, so that the individual concerned is best positioned to capitalise on both.

**Recommendation :**

- **Combining of LOTE skills with other areas of expertise such as education, interpreting and translating or business.**
- **More frequent, targeted and practical engagement by LOTE learners with industry members who use multilingual skills in their careers, such as interpreters and translators serving as guest speakers to LOTE learners.**
- **Facilitation of work experience linked to languages for students.**



## Conclusion

“If we really want to create future generations of multilingual professionals, then we need to inspire and motivate young people as early as possible. We need to make these links clear enough so that that they *know* how to answer questions like ‘what can I do with my languages’ early on, when they begin their studies. We need to connect the dots, make it *real* ...”

— Elissa Gia, Secondary School Teacher

The *Investigation of the State and Nature of Languages in Australian Schools* linked the history of language use, language policy and language education to a changing and developing national self-perception (DEEWR, 2007). Yet multilingualism remains a concept far from wholly accepted into the so-called ‘essential skill-set’ of today’s younger generations. Contrary to the stated aims of politicians, community leaders and captains of industry, many young Australians report a feeling that mixed messages are constantly being sent out regarding LOTE language study (even among multilingual Australians).

Despite being repeatedly assured that their language skills are not only advantageous, but necessary, and that language study is a way to *unlock your potential* as it *opens doors*, LOTE students are finding that in practice their career opportunities are restricted by entrenched unawareness about available opportunities and a lack of promotion of options.

In spite of the spectacular developments in technology and transcultural connectivity that make it possible for Australians to communicate more immediately, frequently and widely than ever before, the perception endures that LOTE learning and LOTE proficiency is little more than a novelty to assist in overseas travel and has limited vocational and career significance.

Students find it particularly disheartening that arenas in which LOTE skills would seem to be integral to the role – such as teaching, interpreting and translating – can, at times, be weighed down by scant resources, low levels of job satisfaction and inadequate remuneration. Likewise, when the most seemingly *logical* government departments to require such skills, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs, advertise that LOTE skills are not required, but merely “a good idea”, the uncertainty is only exacerbated.

When one considers the wealth of highly proficient young LOTE speakers currently studying or having recently graduated, critical shortages in language specific services, teaching, interpreting and translating suggest a serious failure to recognise a unique skill, communicate the benefits and opportunities, or connect supply with demand.

Until the gap between the theoretical value and practical usage of LOTE students’ skills is bridged, young LOTE learners and multilingual Australians will continue to feel disillusioned that their particular skills have no immediate or long-term professional application.

New links need to be established between education and industry and existing links better promoted. But above all, Australian society must move quickly to recognise the immense value inherent in our young multilingual population and work to ensure that their enormous potential is realised.

잠재력

potencial

potentieel



## Terms of Reference

Some of the key terms as they are applied in this paper.

- 'Languages other than English' [LOTE] will also be referred to as 'foreign languages' for the purposes of this paper.
- The scope of this paper will be reserved to migrant languages, also referred to as community languages. Data regarding indigenous languages will not be included.
- 'Multilingual' includes speaking one or several languages other than English. This term will be employed with a definition of 'competency' in the language. Specific language levels will be noted when relevant. This report does not require an analysis of scientific definitions of bilingualism or multilingualism regarding equal fluency within various languages.
- This paper will at times distinguish between a linguistic competency in languages other than English (LOTE) that has been acquired through "life experience" or "formal language study". This is in order to include both Victorians whose language skills have been developed through study (primary, secondary, tertiary levels and language schools) as well as Victorians who speak a language other than English as a result of factors such as family background or country of birth.





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## Interviews

- Ms Brigitte Bozyk, secondary school LOTE student, age 17.
  - Ms Dionne Lee, University of Melbourne student, age 18.
  - Ms Leah Sammut, secondary school LOTE student, age 18.
  - Ms Lucy Xi Luo, University of Melbourne student, age 22.
  - Ms Sherina M. Khalid, University of Melbourne student, age 25.
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- Ms Elissa Gia, Secondary School Teacher, Caroline Chisolm Catholic College, Victoria.
  - Ms Lucia Strati, 2008-2009 Rotary Cultural Ambassadorial Scholar.
  - Ms LuLu Vitali, Language Coordinator & Japanese Teacher, Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School, Victoria.
  - Mr Marc Orlando, Lecturer in Translation & Interpreting Studies and French Studies, Monash University.
  - Ms Wesa Chau, Manager of the non-profit organisation Advocacy, Disability, Ethnicity, Community' (ADEC).

## Surveys

Twenty-five students aged 16-18 completed surveys regarding attitudes and perspectives on LOTE study and the need for multilingual skills.

*Certain interviewees indicated a preference to remain anonymous for the purposes of this paper.*



## Appendices

### APPENDIX 1: Workplace Standards, Incentives and Salaries Snapshot – Interpreters & Translators Accreditation

TRANSLATOR ACCREDITATION LEVELS	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETER ACCREDITATION LEVELS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Paraprofessional Translator</b> <i>available in a very limited range of languages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A level of competence in translation for the purpose of producing a translated version of non-specialised information.</li> </ul>	<b>Paraprofessional Interpreter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Level of competence in interpreting for the purpose of general conversations, generally in the form of non-specialist dialogues.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Translator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Translators work across a wide range of subjects and require a sound conceptual understanding of the material being translated.</li> <li>➤ They are qualified to translate into one language only or into both languages, depending upon their accreditation.</li> </ul>	<b>Professional Interpreter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Minimum level of competence for professional interpreting. It may be regarded as the Australian professional standard.</li> <li>➤ Interpreters are capable of interpreting across a wide range of subjects involving dialogues at specialist consultations.</li> <li>➤ They are also capable of interpreting presentations by the consecutive mode.</li> </ul>
<b>Advanced Translator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Handle complex, technical and sophisticated material, compatible with recognised international standards.</li> <li>➤ They may choose to specialise in certain areas, usually into one language only, that being their first language.</li> </ul>	<b>Conference Interpreter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Advanced professional level and a level of competence sufficient to handle complex, technical and sophisticated translating and interpreting.</li> <li>➤ Conference Interpreters practise both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting in diverse situations including at conferences, high-level negotiations, and court proceedings.</li> <li>➤ Conference interpreters operate at levels compatible with recognised international standards.</li> </ul>



**APPENDIX 1: Workplace Standards, Incentives and Salaries Snapshot – Interpreters & Translators Accreditation**

<p><b>Advanced Translator (Senior)</b></p>	<p>➤ Highest level of NAATI accreditation and reflects both competence and experience. It represents an international standard together with demonstrated extensive experience and leadership.</p>	<p><b>Conference Interpreter (Senior)</b></p>	<p>➤ This is the highest level of NAATI accreditation and reflects both competence and experience. It represents an international standard together with demonstrated extensive experience and leadership.</p>
<p><u>Recognition</u> is an award in a totally separate category from accreditation. It is granted only in languages for which NAATI does not test and it has no specification of level of proficiency.          Status: Recognition does not have equal status to accreditation, because NAATI has not had the opportunity to testify by formal assessment to a particular standard of performance. It is, in fact, intended to be an acknowledgment that, at the time of the award, the candidate has had recent and regular experience as a translator and/or interpreter, but no level of proficiency is specified.</p>			
<p><u>Language Aide</u>: For Government Employees only, to determine eligibility for language allowances.          Elementary level of language use, <u>NOT</u> a translator and/or interpreter category. Appropriate for persons required to use a minimal knowledge of a language for simple communications. Required level for the first range of the Community Language Allowance. Can be considered a form of certification for bilingual workers to have their skills (however elementary) recognised.</p>			

\*All information sourced from 'Accreditation Standards for Translators and Interpreters in Australia,' National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd. <<http://www.naati.com.au/at-accreditation.html>> accessed 29 June 2009.



## APPENDIX 2 : Workplace Standards, Incentives and Salaries Snapshot – Multilingual Employees

**Bilingual staff members** are called upon to facilitate basic levels of communication directly with a client or between two parties. Their services should not be used where the communication is of a more official or serious nature.

JOB DESCRIPTION	STANDARDS & PRACTICES (Victoria)	STANDARDS & PRACTICES (Interstate & National)	RATES OF REMUNERATION (Victoria)	RATES OF REMUNERATION (Interstate & National)
<p>Bilingual staff member (Public service – LOTE integral)</p> <p>– Used to meet official departmental demands for language assistance.</p> <p><i>Example: LOTE Teachers in Victoria, Bilingual Community Educators – Justice for Refugees Program (DOJ)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ VPS standard codes of conduct</li> <li>➤ Teacher's Union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NSW Public Service standard codes of conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ VPS rates, e.g. (LOTE) teacher in Victorian Government Schools</li> <li>➤ As of 4 January 2009, teacher salaries range from \$52,571 p.a. (graduate level 1) to \$77,546 (expert level 4) for classroom teachers.</li> <li>➤ Interpreters and Translators (Table 7)</li> <li>➤ <i>Bilingual Community Educators, DOJ:</i></li> <li>➤ \$62,116 – \$70,477PA (pro rata) + superannuation</li> </ul>	—
<p>Bilingual staff member (Public Service – LOTE non-integral)</p> <p>Used to meet departmental demands for language assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ VPS standard codes of conduct</li> <li>➤ Individual government agencies may compensate workers accordingly upon recognition of benefits and continued use of skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New South Wales Public Service standard codes of conduct.</li> <li>➤ Individual agencies may compensate workers accordingly upon recognition of benefits and continued use of such skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unless use of LOTE skills are officially recognised and remunerated as an additional function/skill, VPS language allowance scheme and NSW Community Language Allowance provide official recognition and remuneration bonuses</li> </ul>	—



JOB DESCRIPTION	STANDARDS & PRACTICES (Victoria)	STANDARDS & PRACTICES (Interstate & National)	RATES OF REMUNERATION (Victoria)	RATES OF REMUNERATION (Interstate & National)
<p>Bilingual staff member Public Service – LOTE non-integral) (<i>cont.</i>) Used to meet Departmental demands for language assistance</p>	<p>—</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Community Language Allowance: staff must sit NAATI test language aide, paraprofessional interpreter or interpreter (professional) level</li> <li>➤ Eligibility for test determined by supervisor's recognition of continuing for the officer's language skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ VPS language allowance: staff must sit NAATI test language aide, paraprofessional interpreter or interpreter (professional) level</li> <li>➤ Eligibility for test determined by supervisor's recognition of continuing for the officer's language skills</li> </ul>	<p>—</p>
<p>Bilingual staff member (Private Sector)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Governed by the professional standards of their profession, rather than their own common code of ethics</li> <li>➤ Language skills may be officially incorporated into job description.</li> <li>➤ Often imprecise job specification and recruitment</li> <li>➤ Positions often advertise LOTE skills as 'desirable' or 'advantageous', making value and necessity unclear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Governed by professional standards of their profession, rather than own common code of ethics</li> <li>➤ Language skills may be officially incorporated into job description.</li> <li>➤ Often imprecise job specification and recruitment</li> <li>➤ Positions often advertise LOTE skills as 'desirable' or 'advantageous', making value and necessity unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unclear whether this skill is always remunerated as an additional service that employers and organisations receive</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ AAHIT (Australian Association of Health Interpreters and Translators).</li> <li>➤ ASLIA (Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association).</li> <li>➤ CRC (New South Wales Community Relations Commission).</li> <li>➤ DEECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development).</li> <li>➤ DIIRD (Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development).</li> <li>➤ DOJ (Victorian Government Department of Justice)</li> <li>➤ NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters).</li> <li>➤ RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology).</li> <li>➤ VPS (Victorian Public Service)</li> <li>➤ VMC (Victorian Multicultural Commission).</li> </ul> </div>	



**APPENDIX 2 : Workplace Standards, Incentives and Salaries Snapshot – Multilingual Employees**

JOB DESCRIPTION	PROFESSIONAL INCENTIVES (Victoria)	PROFESSIONAL INCENTIVES (Interstate & National)
<p>Bilingual staff member (Public service – LOTE integral)</p> <p>– Used to meet official Departmental demands for language assistance</p> <p><i>Example: LOTE Teachers in Victoria, Bilingual Community Educators – Justice for Refugees Program (DOJ)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Languages Training Programmes: DEECD covers the cost of tuition and contributes to the support for study days for teachers awarded as Language Scholarship grant by Australian universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Australian Government Professional Development funding</li> <li>➤ Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships: Short-term intensive language &amp; cultural study programs overseas &amp; in Australia for practising language teachers and trainee (pre-service) language teachers in primary &amp; secondary schools</li> </ul>
<p>Bilingual staff member Public Service – LOTE non-integral)</p> <p>Used to meet departmental demands for language assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Allowances to Public Service staff only available when language skills are not essential and pre-specified requirements of the position.</li> <li>➤ VPS language allowances not the <i>only</i> avenue for recognition of multilingual skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NSW Community Language Allowance Scheme:</li> <li>➤ Community Language Allowance:</li> <li>➤ Base Level Rate: \$1036 p.a. awarded for occasional language use when staff member has NAATI language recognition award or passed exam administered by CRC</li> </ul>
<p>Bilingual staff member Public Service – LOTE non-integral) (<i>cont.</i>)</p> <p>– Used to meet departmental demands for language assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Departments such as DIIRD (Tourism Victoria) fund language courses of staff and make use of multilingual skills (see Table 8)</li> <li>➤ VPS Language Allowance Scheme</li> <li>➤ Staff member recommended to sit NAATI test at appropriate level, funded by VMC</li> <li>➤ VPS: \$800 p.a. (language aides), \$1100 p.a. (paraprofessional Interpreters) or \$1500 p.a. (interpreters)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Higher Level Rate: \$1,556 p.a. paid when staff member has achieved at least (professional) interpreter accreditation and LOTE skills are called upon regularly</li> </ul>
<p>Bilingual staff member (Private Sector)</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>



**APPENDIX 3 : Workplace Standards, Incentives and Salaries Snapshot – Interpreters & Translators**

JOB DESCRIPTION	STANDARDS & PRACTICES (Victoria)	STANDARDS & PRACTICES (Interstate & National)	RATES OF REMUNERATION (Victoria)	RATES OF REMUNERATION (Interstate & National)
<p>Interpreters &amp; Translators</p> <p>(Predominantly freelance industry, in-house positions rare)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NAATI accreditation (translators and interpreters are accredited at different levels, see Appendix 1)</li> <li>➤ NAATI credentialing provides quality assurance to the clients of translators and interpreters and gives credibility to agencies that employ practitioners who are credentialed appropriately</li> <li>➤ NAATI lists accreditation approved courses for training and study and administers accreditation tests.</li> <li>➤ Interpreters and translators are bound by the professional Code of Ethics of AUSIT</li> <li>➤ Interests of actively employed interpreters and translators are represented by professional organisations such as AUSIT, AAHIT &amp; ASLIA</li> </ul> <p>Employees of NSW public service bound by public service codes of conduct</p>	<p>Freelance for State and National public and private language service providers such as VITS language link, All Graduates Interpreting &amp; Translating, TIS National (See AUSIT guide).</p> <p><u>Victorian Public Sector:</u>  <i>Royal Children's Hospital employs in-house staff in Interpreter &amp; NESB Services Department. Remuneration guidelines set by AAHIT</i></p>	<p><u>AUSIT guide:</u> \$0.16 to \$3.00+, per word rate for translation, depending on the type of work undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Translation generally priced per word or per 100 – 1000 words of the target</li> <li>➤ Standard interpreting rates per hour vary from \$50 – \$100+</li> <li>➤ Standard interpreting rates per day vary from \$250 – \$500+</li> <li>➤ Only a guide.</li> </ul> <p><u>NSW Public Sector:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ When employed within the Public service (Community Relations Commission), paid in accordance with Crown Employees (Interpreters and Translators, Community Relations Commission) Award</li> <li>➤ Salary per annum: Interpreting/Translating Officer, (Year 1): \$49,589 to Senior Interpreter/Translator (Year 3): \$74,408</li> <li>➤ Casual interpreter hourly rate: \$57.02</li> <li>➤ Casual translator “standard document”: \$28.54</li> </ul>	



**APPENDIX 3: Workplace Standards, Incentives and Salaries Snapshot – Interpreters & Translators**

JOB DESCRIPTION	PROFESSIONAL INCENTIVES (Victoria)	PROFESSIONAL INCENTIVES (Interstate & National)
Interpreters & Translators  (Predominantly freelance industry, in-house positions rare)	➤ VMC scholarships for RMIT University Interpreting & Translating Studies	➤ Opportunities for Professional Development with NAATI, AAHIT, ASLIA



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