

Stepping Up To Mandarin

The Twin Benefits of Community and Trade Languages

ECCV Intern Policy Scoping Paper

The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)



The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the Voice of Multicultural Victoria. As the peak advocacy body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria, we are proud to have been the key advocate for culturally diverse communities in Victoria since 1974. For over 40 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

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Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc.

Suite 101, 398 Sydney Road, Coburg 3058 VIC

T: (03) 9354 9555

F: (03) 9350 2694

W: eccv@eccv.org.au

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ECCV Summary

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the voice of multicultural Victoria and the peak policy advocacy body for eight regional ethnic community councils and up to 220 members including ethnic and multicultural organisations across Victoria since 1974. During this time, we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

The ECCV has a history of providing policy recommendations on behalf of, and consulting with community stakeholders in regard to languages education and cultural competency in Victoria. This includes recent round-table consultation with translators and interpreters about their work and conditions, and a paper focusing on language education policy in Victoria. The focus of this paper—the importance of acquiring language and cultural skills—is part of ECCV's continuing policy and advocacy work supporting culturally diverse Victorians to equally engage with opportunities in education, employment and health.

Why Mandarin?

There are two main reasons for selecting Mandarin as a case study: firstly, its role as a community language within Victoria and; secondly, it's increasing importance as a global political and trade language. These two reasons explain the identification and understanding of Mandarin as either a community language or as a trade language respectively. As a result of consulting in these two areas, ECCV have been able to better understand the potential for languages policies in both business and trade and across the whole-of-government in Victoria.

Executive Summary

This paper focuses on the importance of acquiring language and cultural skills for the benefit of Victoria. It finds that Mandarin is predominately understood as either a community language or a trade language. It highlights current Victorian government initiatives worthy of support and development, as well as identifying gaps in language and cultural skills initiatives. Mandarin was chosen as a case study due to its prevalence as a community language in Victoria and for its increasing importance as a language for trade. As young people make up a large number of the Victoria's Mandarin-speaking community, and a growing number of young Victorians are studying the language for future economic benefit, the consultation focused on an 18-37 year-old age group.

Through May to July 2016, ECCV held a roundtable of 18-37 year old culturally diverse Victorians and consulted with key stakeholders within the community and government including Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV), Australia China Youth Dialogue (ACYD), Chinese Community Council of Victoria, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Department of Education and the Australia China Council within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The observation of this paper is that the learning and use of Mandarin is placed within either a community language or trade language framework. When this occurs, one understanding of Mandarin is usually emphasised at the expense of the other. This affects the type and/or quality of the language and cultural skills being learned through education, the potential returns on investing in language and cultural skills initiatives, the Chinese community participation in Victorian society and the public awareness and understanding of the need for a highly capable, China-ready workforce in the future. Scoping research and stakeholder consultation found that language skills for trade or for the community make up two sides of one coin; the outcomes of one can address the needs of the other.

This ECCV consultation and research found that Victorians, especially young professionals, could benefit from the uptake of language and cultural skills in their education, employment pathways

and professional relationships. A combination of community and trade languages programs would strengthen international opportunities for Victoria, if both language streams could be united through innovative whole-of-government policies.

Input for this paper has been drawn from direct consultation with young Victorians using or intending to use Mandarin in their professional lives and with key stakeholders pertinent to the creation of these policies. An analysis of current language policies, research and publications in the media is compared with feedback from young Victorians studying Mandarin as well as from the Mandarin-speaking community.

Participants for the round-table were members of the Victorian community—whether citizens or permanent residents—that use or intend to use Mandarin in their professional lives. Participants aged between 18 and 37 years, with or without an ethnic Chinese background were invited to reflect a diversity of perspectives.

Background

Victoria's Mandarin-speaking Community

The current rate of migration, coupled with consistently high numbers of Chinese-Australian youth learning the language and culture of their parents, will ensure the importance of Mandarin as a community language in Victoria well into the future.

The Chinese community is a long-established piece of Victoria's multicultural society; stretching back to Victoria's 19th century gold rush period, continuing through the White Australia policy era until today's fresh wave of emigration from the Chinese mainland. Historically, Cantonese had been the predominant language of Victoria's Chinese community, however in recent decades; the number of Mandarin speakers has eclipsed that of Cantonese speakers. This is especially evident in Melbourne's inner and university-suburbs where Mandarin is now more commonly heard and simplified characters (used in the mainland's writing system) is more commonly seen in written material than traditional characters (used in Hong Kong and Taiwan).

Between 2001 and 2011, the number of Chinese-born migrants living in Melbourne has grown from 36,000 to 90,000¹, a statistic in line with the growing number of Chinese students enrolling in Victorian universities. This has been accompanied by a visible increase in the number of localised small businesses catering to this growth.

In line with this trend is there are a large number of community language schools teaching Mandarin. At present there are 27 community language schools teaching Mandarin with close to 10,000 student's enrolled making Mandarin the most taught community language in Victoria. These schools serve a special role in the local Chinese community for the maintenance and transmission of Chinese language and culture from first to second and third generation Victorians.

Mandarin as a Trade Language

Mandarin language skills and Chinese cultural competency among Victorians has the potential to translate into present and future prosperity by creating a China-ready workforce and attracting greater Chinese investment.

While also outlining the benefits for cultural enrichment and social vibrancy in its new China engagement strategy, *Partnerships for Prosperity* (2016); the Victorian government has stressed the importance of increasing Mandarin language skills and Chinese cultural competency among Victorians for economic benefit. This includes equipping current Victorian businesses and professionals with the skills they need to successfully engage with China today, as well as initiatives

¹ ABS, 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends 2014 <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/4102.0main+features102014>

aimed at youth to establish a workforce highly capable of working with China in the near-future and beyond. This broad approach to upskilling current and future Victorians indicates a sound understanding of current and future international trends and the skills the economy needs to prosper in these environments.

In connection to this, Victoria sees the propagation of language skills and cultural competency among the Victorian Government and businesses community as key to attracting greater investment from China and turning Victoria into the “gateway” for Chinese investment to Australia. Inter-governmental relationship building, cultural exchanges between Victoria and China and the incorporation of the local Chinese community into initiatives are some examples aimed at demonstrating the state's cultural capabilities.

Unfortunately, there is a feeling within the local Chinese community that their language and cultural expertise is being over-looked, despite business and government recognition that such skills and knowledge are crucial to successful relations with China. Furthermore, professionals from Victoria's Chinese community have also observed a misunderstanding or under-appreciation of the role of language and cultural skills among many Australians wishing to trade with China. Chinese-speaking professionals especially believe they are being under-utilised. This under-utilisation is becoming a source of frustration amongst this group.

Programs aimed at boosting language and cultural skills will also benefit Victoria's local Chinese community maintenance of their community language, culture and identity. Providing skills and knowledge through these programs will also provide local Chinese communities an opportunity to build esteem and demonstrate their value to the broader Victorian community. Conversely, overlooking the abundant expertise and knowledge of the local Chinese community and missing the opportunity to meaningfully incorporate them in language and cultural skills programs signals a low sense of worth and risks alienating the local Chinese community. In terms of broader Victorian multiculturalism, development of a model of community participation in language and cultural skills programs could be emulated by Victoria's other culturally diverse communities for similar benefits to the community, the economy and for greater social cohesion.

Youth Focus

A young demographic of 18-37 was chosen as the target group for this project for two main reasons: the importance of a Victoria ‘China-ready’ workforce, and the relative youth of the State’s Chinese community in relation to historical migration patterns.

Youth-focused initiatives

Youth acquiring Chinese language and cultural skills for the creation of a China-ready workforce is vital to the future prosperity of Victoria.

While the Victorian government has shown a commitment to equip Victorian businesses and professionals with the skills needed to engage with China today, many initiatives within the *Partnerships for Prosperity* documents were aimed at youth. More initiatives aimed at youth should create a broader proliferation of language skills and cultural competency among workers in the future and likewise broaden Victoria's China engagement capabilities.

Language education encompasses some of these youth initiatives. Language education policy in schools, however, requires extensive discussion which is beyond the scope of this paper. The ECCV's views on language education in Victorian schools can be found in its recent intern policy paper, *Languages Education Policy in Victoria: Rethinking languages education policy as an employment pathway for Multicultural Victorians in a global economy (2016)*.

ECCV found a growing number of youth-focused initiatives within the China engagement strategy

and beyond, including support for Australia-China youth organisations, exchange programs and scholarships. Like language education programs, these initiatives aim to boost language and cultural skills in youth, but with the additional aim of developing professional contacts between individuals and fostering good relations between Victoria/Australia and China. Along with cultural understanding, these mutual intentions will play a role in defining the skills integral to the creation of a China-ready workforce.

Young Chinese Community

The Mandarin-speaking community in Victoria is kept “youthful” through consistent migration and the maintenance of language and culture among children of migrants.

Mandarin has had a long presence as a community language in Victoria and has consistently been refreshed by new waves of migration. It is also one ethnic group whose size has sharply increased in recent decades. This is particularly true of Chinese-born university students and young professionals making Melbourne their home and lending to the youthful visage and sound of the Mandarin-speaking community.

The large number of community language schools teaching Mandarin throughout Victoria is also ensuring the youth of the language and culture, passing it on to the children of Chinese migrants and maintaining usage by second and third-generation Victorians.

POLICY OVERVIEW

The learning and use of Mandarin for young Victorians as either a community language or trade language rests within a complex context. Asking “why is it important to learn language and cultural skills?” helps to define the community and trade frameworks for learning or using Mandarin.

The support for multiculturalism and the related notion that multiculturalism has been good for the nation is pervasive throughout Australia. This is especially true in Melbourne where there exist high levels of ethnic diversity and support for the maintenance of ethnic community identities and activities among the general population.

This popular support both comes from, and adds to, the multicultural and social-cohesion policies of the Victorian government. In regard to the focus of this paper, the previously mentioned China engagement strategy, *Partnerships for Prosperity*, will be used as the principle document through which the Victorian government defines the necessity of Mandarin language skills and cultural competency for Victoria's future. In addition, a role for Victoria's local Chinese community in supporting relationships with China abroad and building cultural competency at home is also contained within the government's strategy. The ECCV commends the recognition of the importance of language skills and cultural competency, and the intent to incorporate the Victorian Chinese community into its China engagement strategy.

The ECCV also sees the Victorian government's embrace of language skills and cultural competency in step with international expectations. As economies become increasingly globalised and international relationships increasingly complex, language skills and cultural competency are becoming more valued and sought after by businesses and government and thus more necessary for individuals seeking work. *Partnerships for Prosperity*, the economic significance of China, the rise of Mandarin as a global language and the economic need for more Victorians to acquire the language and cultural skills encapsulates the understanding of Mandarin as a trade language.

At the same time, while the ECCV sees a continued need for language and cultural competency skills within the Victorian community, for a section of the public the significance and use of language and cultural skills is not easily defined or agreed upon. This has an effect upon the use, existence and perceived 'worth' of Mandarin as a community language in Victoria. This issue in

itself is not limited to Mandarin but could be applied to policies that prioritise other languages.

Language skills and cultural competency

Language skills and cultural competency are not currently prioritised or seen as relevant to many people's personal or professional lives. The benefits of acquiring these skills can be overly generalised from statements such as—“learning another language is good for your brain”—to a more specific—“speaking Mandarin lets me create business relationships”. Though this topic requires more discussion than can be given here, it can be concluded that without perceived relevance, policies to promote language skills will remain a low priority for governments.

A lack of relevance is further compounded by a prevailing complacency in our community that “English is enough”. Though not exclusive to Victoria, this complacency rests on the assumption that, as a language of international trade, governance, research and culture, much of the world already speaks English, meaning no need for English speakers to learn another language. This is another large area of discussion suitable for another paper. A report for the Department of Education, *Promoting the Benefits of Language Learning* (2007) by the University of Melbourne, provides a solid exploration of the “English is enough” concept.

Seemingly contradictory signals of both support and non-support for cultural diversity and its maintenance appeared in the *2015 Scanlon Social-Cohesion Survey (2015)*. There was a demonstrated belief that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, especially economically. Support for learning about the cultures and heritage of the ethnic groups that make up Australia, particularly among young Australians, was also high. A large amount of respondents, however, did not wish to see government funding for the maintenance of ethnic communities' cultures and believed in changing migrants' behaviour and customs. This has implications for Victoria's Chinese community, the maintenance of its culture and language, as well as the value of language learning and cultural awareness initiatives among the Victorian public.

Mandarin as a Trade and Community Language

When framed within the different trade or community frameworks, the learning and use of Mandarin takes on different attributes. Below are some elements of trade and community language frameworks that appeared through research and consultation with stakeholders.

Community Language

As a community language, Mandarin is inextricably linked to Chinese culture, an expression of individual identity and a shared connection with a wider community.

The people that use or learn Mandarin within this framework were predominately migrants, the children of migrants or people of relation to Chinese migrants, such as a spouse. Community language frameworks overall are long-term in learning and use. The knowledge of language and culture is primarily for the reciprocal benefit of identity and belonging between the individual and the Mandarin-speaking community—though there are also social and networking advantages to community participation. Although Chinese and Mandarin-speaking communities exist, their initiatives are predominately focused on servicing the local Chinese community and the maintenance of their ethnic identity and culture.

Included within its framework are qualities of:

- Immersion
- Community Building
- Identity Creation
- Social-Cohesion

Immersion:

Studying Mandarin as a community language was stated to have the ability to immerse students in the culture of the target language, much more than typical classroom learning.

Immersive learning is commonly held to be the best way of gaining fluency and true competency in a target language and culture through the benefits of first-hand exposure and experiences that extend beyond classroom scenarios. Unfortunately, immersive learning is expensive and time consuming, limiting the number of students that can undertake it.

Stakeholders consulted about learning Mandarin within a community language setting believed it also has an immersive effect upon students. This was because alongside language tuition, students were also being introduced to elements of Chinese culture both inside and outside the classroom and to the wider Chinese community that surrounds these community language schools. For example, students were introduced to cultural activities and celebrations that extended outside of the classroom context, gaining richer and more nuanced cultural understanding that some stakeholders felt was lacking in a typical classroom context.

As shown through its support for various Chinese exchange programs and scholarships, the Victorian Government understands the effectiveness of immersion for language learning and attaining cultural competency. In saying this, incorporating community language schools into broader language and cultural skills education initiatives could provide a worthy alternative that is cheaper than expensive, overseas immersion programs which continue over longer periods of time than traditional immersive exchange programs. Immersive languages initiatives may also empower the Victorian Chinese community through their involvement.

Community Building:

A shared language is integral to the formation and maintenance of a community.

Language is a primary identifier of a community and its members and is intimately linked to the expression of culture. Again, in the view of the stakeholders consulted, learning a community language, particularly through a community language school, is an integral part of many ethnic communities within Victoria such as the Mandarin-speaking Chinese community. This is due to the fact that ethnic communities themselves start and operate community language schools to cater to their own needs of language and cultural education. Through this, ethnic identities are maintained and communities strengthened. ECCV find that this is applicable across a range of culturally diverse communities in Victoria.

Government support for ethnic communities is received positively and, interpreted as acceptance and worth. For the Chinese community, this has included state government support for the upkeep of its cultural precinct in Melbourne and for the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV), a boost to the community schools language program in this year's budget.

Stronger, more cohesive communities are better able to contribute to the broader community by building stronger, more cohesive community identities. A strong community is:

- better placed to cater to its own needs
- better able to cohesively participate in and contribute to the broader community
- able to demonstrate a strong sense of worth within the broader community
- able to form positive identities for its members through inclusiveness and shared-experience

As engagement with the local Chinese community is a key component of Victoria's China engagement strategy, it is vital that the local Chinese community is strong and cohesive in order to

be of greatest possible benefit to itself and Victoria.

Identity Creation:

As an economic and social asset, diversity is comprised of the identities of individuals and only as valuable as the individual's ability to express that identity. Within the community framework, language and cultural skills express and strengthen identity and diversity.

As outlined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* (Vic), the government recognises and sees as an asset the diverse backgrounds of all Victorians, stating that: “*all individuals in Victoria are entitled to mutual respect and understanding regardless of their diverse backgrounds*”. One's background is key to his or her identity. The capacity to use and express one's language and culture of heritage is therefore fundamental to creating a healthy individual and a value of diversity within the community.

For the children of migrants, learning Mandarin and Chinese culture was a way of not only connecting to their parents and forming healthy familial identities, it allowed for them to make sense of their place within the broader multicultural community.

Australia often offers itself as an example of the economic and social benefits of embracing diverse identities. These benefits include:

- well-adjusted individuals within ethnic communities and the broader community
- productive participation in society at all levels
- facilitation of personal and professional relationships between people that share identities
- the amassment of cultural capabilities within individuals, benefiting both the individual and the wider community

Social-Cohesion:

In a diverse society, cultural competency underpins mutual respect and mutual respect underpins social-cohesion.

The Victorian government laid out its commitment to maintaining a harmonious society in the 2015, *Strategic Framework to Strengthen Victoria's Social Cohesion and the Resilience of its Communities*. The key priority of this strategy was to ensure a strong sense of belonging in Victorian society, regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender or cultural identity. Support for community languages and cultural initiatives are one way to create this sense of belonging.

For example, the national government has long upheld standards to ensure non-English speaking members of the community can still access services and participate in society. The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is one such government service that enables communication between sections of the community that may not share a common language. Such services promote belonging, equity, participation, acceptance and worth for all members of society.

Public support for language and community diversity in the broader community is as fundamental to social-cohesion as the education and adaptation of migrant communities to their new home. Just as cultural exchanges between China and Victoria build mutual understanding, similar initiatives could be formed to increase mutual understanding with Victoria's local Chinese community.

TRADE LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVES

The rise of Mandarin as a trade language coincides with the rising importance of China globally and study of the language to keep pace with the changes of the world and to be well-placed for success in the future.

People studying Mandarin within this framework may be of Chinese or non-Chinese background. These students may have encountered Mandarin through the primary or secondary schooling and chosen to continue, or actively sought out tuition themselves—through private tuition or as part of tertiary studies. For many students or users of Mandarin, gaining fluency and cultural competency is primarily for the economic and professional advantages that are perceived to come with these skills—though cultural appreciation and an interest in China is also a major reason behind studying the language. Included within its framework are qualities that benefit:

- Personal and professional relationship-building
- Trade and investment
- Future employment
- Security and strategic relations

Personal and Professional Relationship Building

Language skills and cultural competency connect people in ways not available to monolingual speakers.

In *Partnerships for Prosperity*, language skills and cultural competency were critical to developing useful personal and professional relationships between Chinese and Victorians; especially in regard to building trust in mutual business and government enterprise.

The ECCV welcomes the importance the Victorian government is placing on language skills and cultural competency and agrees that such skills are fundamental to achieving the goals of the state's China Engagement Strategy.

Roundtable and stakeholder consultation also revealed wide agreement for language and cultural skills underpinning successful engagement with China. Many also gave their own anecdotes of how Mandarin or cultural competency had enabled them to foster beneficial personal and professional relationships—both in China and in Victoria. In turn, stakeholders said building professional and personal relationships had:

- been central to the duties of their job or position
- enabled them to know when, how and with whom to do business
- allowed networking for oneself and on behalf of others

Trade and Investment

Demonstrating higher language and cultural capabilities is important in attracting higher levels of Chinese investment and trade.

The government has expressed its desire to become “China's gateway to investment in Australia” by distinguishing itself through high levels of cultural capital and language capabilities. This is to be done through capacity building initiatives among government and business professionals individually as well as at the institutional level. It was the opinion of stakeholders within state and national government that building such capacity amongst young professionals would not only facilitate the carrying out of trade investment as part of a “brand” or reputation for cultural and language skills, it would also go some way to attracting this trade and investment to Victoria in the

first place. European studies into the amount of revenue either generated or lost due to language and cultural capabilities support this.²

Future Employment:

Comprehensive language and cultural skills are expected to become mandatory for employment within the global market place.

Partnerships for Prosperity demonstrates the government's understanding of the changing circumstances of international business and relations and that language and cultural skills are becoming increasingly necessary skills for the future. The aim to create a China-ready workforce is part of this understanding; the preparation of youth as the next generation of future workers, increasing their employability at home or abroad and for continuing the prosperity of Victoria.

International studies have shown the desirability of employees with language and cultural capabilities to employers within the private sector and are mandatory in some academic and government positions.³ It can be expected with the world's economies and job markets becoming more globalised, individuals possessing language and cultural skills will likewise become more desirable.

Responses from the ECCV roundtable fit with this notion; language and cultural skills had either already led to employment, or it was expected to be used in their future employment. Furthermore language and cultural skills were held to be the “defining feature” of this or the next generation.

This notion with respect to Mandarin and the gaining of cultural competency correlates to the growing number of Australian-Chinese youth organisations. Here, young people are taking it upon themselves to form useful connections and gain cross-cultural experience that will translate into career benefits.

Security and Strategic Relations

Although matters of Australia's national security and future strategic relations are beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning that an uptake in language and cultural skills is also necessary in this area.

A recent study published by the Australia-China Relations Institute, *Building Chinese Language Capacity in Australia*, stated that alongside ensuring Australia's long-term economic success, understanding the cultures and speaking the languages of Asia was crucial to international trust and strategic involvement in the region.

As the economic success of Victoria is ultimately tied to the success of the nation, Victoria can play its role contributing a ready supply of China-experts—positioning Victoria as Australia's gateway to expert engagement with China.

The quality outcomes of learning Mandarin are effective across different frameworks. Language learning contributes to building relationships and creating benefits for the individual and wider community. As a trade language the aims and outcomes of acquiring language and cultural skills is ultimately the creation of financial capital and capabilities, whilst the aims and outcomes of a community language is the creation of cultural capital and capabilities.

Learning any language or cultural skills is better than not learning any at all, however, the difference in the aims and underlying reasons for acquiring these skills can lead individuals to learn, or

2 See for example; https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/309899/Costs_to_UK_of_language_deficiencies_as_barrier_to_UK_engagement_in_exporting.pdf

3 See for example; <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2014/06/more-firms-demanding-language-skills-to-break-into-new-markets-cbi-pearson-survey/>

institutions to adopt, one framework at the expense of others. The result is an individual with certain blind-spots in their language and cultural skill-sets, which in turn results in institutions with unrefined or unbalanced, capabilities.

Language and cultural education should be as holistic as possible to maximise a person's resilience for the future, their flexibility, capabilities for the workforce. Gaps in knowledge and ability appear where holistic learning is not undertaken. Holistic approaches to language and cultural skills uptake should be taken whenever possible to minimise these gaps.

Languages skills lead to cultural skills

Languages and cultural skills enhance each other. For example, if community language speakers of Mandarin limit their participation to the local Chinese community, the broader community loses valuable cultural diversity and economic capabilities. Moreover, if a Mandarin speaker's lack of participation in the broader community is due to a perceived lack of appreciation for their identity or community, a diminished sense of belonging could lead to disengagement and breaks in social cohesion.

Short-term Mandarin initiatives which reap short-term gains ignores the reality that speaking a language is more than learning a system of grammar and vocabulary and may not adequately equip the next generation of Victorians with China-ready skills. Furthermore, without adequate exposure to Chinese culture and the people that participate in it, a person's cultural competency could remain arrested through inexperience.

Roundtable participants and stakeholders expressed various concerns about the possibility of Mandarin teaching splitting into "different streams" that would imply or produce different outcomes to their primary motivation for learning either the language or to gain cultural competency. More holistic approaches to Mandarin education, which brought together all aspects of Mandarin language, culture and uses within Victorian society, were highly desired.

A particular emphasis was put on language immersion initiatives, such as intensive study abroad or long-term exposure to native speakers and living examples of the target culture within Australia. It was widely held that immersion in Chinese culture and language was incomparably beneficial to skill development and should therefore be implemented as much as possible. Respondents and stakeholders agreed that a well-rounded approach to language and cultural skills uptake would reduce the "blind-spots" in an individual's education.

Responses from roundtable participants and consultation with stakeholders were also united in the belief that children should be exposed to languages education and cultural competency skills as early as possible. This went hand in hand with the belief that language education in a specific language (i.e. Mandarin) should be consistent and continual throughout the education system to ensure higher levels of fluency and cultural competency among the Victorian population. This could also be a platform to creatively combine the needs and uses of Mandarin into something more holistic and therefore beneficial to the language learner.

This matter will be further explored in the stakeholder responses that follow.

The ECCV supports these perspectives and believes that holistic approaches to Mandarin study will both increase the quantity of Victorians with language and cultural skills—as more people understand the relevance of such skills—and also increase the quality of those skills gained by the individual—as they have been exposed to the broader needs and uses of the language within our society. The net result should be more Victorians with greater social cohesion capacity, the creation of the China-ready workforce needed for future prosperity, the empowerment of the Victorian Chinese community and the strengthening of China-Victoria relations.

Trade Languages: Benefits and Issues

Publication A: China Engagement Strategy - Partnerships for Prosperity

Key Themes:

- Recognise the importance of language skills and cultural competency for successful relationship building with China and upskilling programs as core initiatives
- Connect language and cultural skills to economic benefits
- Upskill youth for future employment pathways
- Understand the Chinese community as a valuable resource for a China engagement strategy

Partnerships for Prosperity was released by the Victorian government in April 2016 as its new China engagement strategy. Many of the policies and initiatives within the document have originate from previous positions put forward by the state government, particularly in regard to building closer cultural and economic ties between Victoria and China, increasing the quality of Mandarin education and attracting investment to the state.

Within the document, the Victorian Government makes clear that achieving a high level of collaboration between itself and China depends on building the linguistic and cultural competence of Victorian youth and professionals. This can be facilitated through a range of cultural initiatives—including sport, design and art exhibitions to raise awareness of Chinese culture among the general population, the Hamer scholarship program aimed at upskilling young professionals through intensive Mandarin studies, as well as visits to China for the members of the Victorian Cabinet to increase Chinese cultural understanding among the State's leaders. These initiatives are seen to raise cultural competency among Victorians, which is envisioned to encourage more engaging, meaningful and productive interactions between China and Victoria.

The ECCV considers a commitment to gaining cultural competency is important to:

- Demonstrate the importance of acquiring language skills to people that may otherwise not see the importance of acquiring them, particularly within an economic context
- Increase the capacity for cultural understanding and social-cohesion as both a value and skill within the broader community,
- Demonstrate to China the sincerity with which Victoria wishes to engage with it.

The ECCV is very eager to see what form these language and cultural skills initiatives take. It is also hoped that a comprehensive system of assessing the implementation and effect of such initiatives will be developed to measure, adjust and control quality. In addition, the value of language education within the document may also aid in reversing the current decline of participation in language education programs in the state—which has been noted in another ECCV study, titled *Languages Education Policy in Victoria: Current State and Future Repercussions for Multicultural Victoria*.

Economic and community benefits: Two sides of one coin

Throughout *Partnerships for Prosperity*, the importance of language and cultural skills is strongly entwined with economic growth and future prosperity. The creation of wealth is dependent upon the creation of trusted relationships, which in turn are dependent upon the language and cultural skills of individuals. The ECCV agrees that it is critical that Victorian businesses are equipped with the skills they need to successfully do business in China's growing market. The connection of language and cultural skills to the creation of economic prosperity often appears important and more 'tangible' to the wider public. In comparison, the role of Mandarin as a community language

is mentioned only briefly.

To some degree, the amplification of Mandarin as a trade language relative to the role of Mandarin as a community language sets up a separate “trade” and “community” language framework, which in this instance places the importance on the former and not the latter. This is not to say that the economic benefits of learning languages and cultural skills should not be stressed, but that their benefits to the community should be just as pronounced. Economic and community benefits are two sides of one coin.

The ECCV supports the Government’s foresight in equipping young Victorians with the abilities they will need to communicate with and understand China through language education initiatives, immersion programs, peer-to-peer relationship building and the fostering of entrepreneurship—all preparations for prosperity in the ‘Asian century’. Strong support for language and cultural skills uptake in the mainstream and community language school system also stands to create greater inter-ethnic understanding and inter-community participation within Victoria—which should likewise be highlighted as benefits to the future prosperity of Victoria and a demonstration of its cultural competency.

The link between economic and community frameworks for language and cultural skills is strong. For example, the strength of the connection between Victoria's economic and community benefits will be reflected in the level of Chinese investment and tourism attracted by Victoria's cultural competency. The State Government's plan to involve the Chinese community in its China engagement strategy through community outreach programs is very encouraging and commendable. It stands to create a strong foundation for attracting economic investment from China, increasing the profile of the Chinese community in Victoria as well as facilitating in greater cultural understanding among the Victorian public.

The ECCV looks forward to seeing what specific roles for the Chinese community this might entail and what forms the outreach programs might take. As discussed, the ECCV further hopes that similar initiatives will be developed for other ethnic communities in Victoria for the benefit of community and trade.

Future Directions:

- The shape and cost of continued support for language and cultural skills initiatives might take and the method by which results will be measured requires initiatives to be adjusted and quality controlled for Mandarin and cultural education outcomes
- A stronger connection between economic and community benefits for learning language and maintaining cultural skills needs to be communicated to the public and inform government policies and programs
- Clear plans for Chinese community engagement by the government on how these will they be implemented requires community consultation

Stakeholder 1 Victorian Government: Office of the Lead Deputy Secretary, Economic Development, Employment and Innovation; Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources_

Key Themes:

- Importance of language skills and cultural competency in trade and business relations
- The importance of language skills and cultural competency most easily quantifiable in economic terms, though connection to community benefits should be strengthened

- Chinese community has the potential to be better utilised
- Need for better measurement and appraisal systems
- Acknowledging historical issues among the Victorian Chinese community

A telephone consultation was held with the office of Victoria's Economic Development, Employment and Innovation on May 17, 2016 to discuss the relationship between language and cultural skills and trade. Among other areas, this office oversees International Victorian Government Business Offices (IVGBOs), including those in China. These offices are aimed at increasing trade and investment from China, Chinese tourism and advising Australian businesses moving into the Chinese market.

Language and culture skills were seen as very important for trade. The need to increase the awareness among businesses of the need to upskill employees was highlighted. As large companies often commit resources to doing these themselves, IVGBOs helped small and medium-sized businesses by making available individuals with the expertise, language and cultural skills to connect to the Chinese market. Even so, IVGBOs also advised companies when *not* to move into the Chinese market, as in some cases, Australian businesses misunderstood China and their own capabilities. It was stated businesses and trade could benefit from deeper understanding of Chinese culture and language and believed youth-focused initiatives would ultimately provide this crucial know-how.

The Department agreed that communicating the worth of language and cultural skills to the wider community was most readily done in economic terms. This is due in part to the importance and familiarity of economic interests to the wider community. An economic framework more readily quantifies and communicates the use of language and cultural skills as, for example, successful business and trade outcomes. However the Department stated that the terminology was changing and the understanding of language and cultural skills was widening to include benefits to the Chinese community and the broader community. He noted that this is a new shift in values and can require generational change to take hold, but he hoped that with a greater focus on youth education, a broader return to society from investment in language and culture skills would result.

Overall, the learning of language and cultural skills still required better measurement methodology. With better systems of appraisal, the government could better allocate resources to initiatives that worked and adjust those that did not. It was also noted the results of language and cultural education can take time to appear and that therefore initiatives should be planned for the long-term.

Specific plans for the Chinese community and the community outreach programs mentioned in the China engagement strategy were unknown, but it was stated that there was great potential for Chinese community involvement. It was hoped that this community engagement would take the form of a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship. Community engagement was suggested as a way of connecting social and economic aims.

In regard to relations with China and the Chinese community of Victoria, sensitivity to certain historical issues could lead to a foundation of sincerity and understanding. For example, Australia's historical immigration policies are remembered both in China and by the Chinese community at home. Sensitive recognition of such issues would demonstrate good-will and social maturity to bolster community and economic relations. There was agreement with this proposition, but it noted that the pace of government may limit that possibility. .

Future Directions:

- Aiming language and cultural skills education of greater quality and duration at youth for

the benefit of future business, showing how greater engagement with the Chinese community regarding international Chinese engagement can create synergy between economic and community/social goals

- Documenting what long-view perspectives for the uptake of Mandarin language and cultural skills might look like. Designing strategies to address historical issues between cultures to build good-will and social cohesion

Stakeholder 2 Victorian Government/Tertiary: Hamer Scholarships Management Team, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Key Themes:

- Language and cultural skills are now more important than ever for the Victorian economy and there is an urgent need to target youth
- There is a need for reassessing methods and creating systems of measurement for language and cultural education programs
- Difficulties in accessing the Chinese community as a resource for government initiatives can be addressed by improving cultural competency across government

A face-to-face consultation was held with members of the Hamer Scholarships Management Team on May 8, 2016. The Hamer Scholarship program is primarily aimed at professionals to undertake intensive, immersive language studies in China, Japan, Korea or Indonesia for the benefit of the Victorian economy. Tertiary level students are also able to apply for the scholarship if they can demonstrate how acquiring fluent Mandarin is needed for their future career path and benefit Victoria.

The management team believed that the existence of the Hamer scholarship and other initiatives for professionals to upskill themselves demonstrate that language and cultural skills are more important to Victoria's economy than ever before. It was their view that the uptake of language and cultural skills in concert with economic growth creates a feedback loop of demand; businesses put greater demand on language and cultural skills, more individuals seek to gain these skills, greater access to skills encourages growth, with more individuals with skills required in turn to service growth. In regard to Mandarin and the Victorian economy, the outcomes were seen as:

- Greater economic dexterity at state and business levels
- Strengthening of the Victorian brand among Chinese investors
- Broadened perspectives and possibilities for individuals
- Economic as well as social benefits due to greater levels of cultural awareness and the understanding of international cooperation among Victorians

In addition to established professionals, the Hamer scholarship is also granted to tertiary students over the age of 21. As young Victorians are already receptive to the necessity of language and cultural skills in an increasingly globalised world, the management team saw benefit in targeting language initiatives at this demographic. Another reason for targeting youth was for their future role as Victoria's workforce. To this end, they both stressed that to reap broader and long-lasting benefits from the uptake of language and cultural skills, Victorians should be exposed to language education as early as possible. Consistent education in a language throughout schooling was also noted as instilling value for language and cultural skills in young people.

In addition to supplying Victoria's economy with Mandarin speakers, it was suggested that greater appreciation for the needs of language learning within government itself must precede and then

concurrently support economic initiatives with China. It was felt that such insight would best guide the government's initiatives toward its goals.

Under-utilisation of the local Chinese community in language and cultural education initiatives and as an asset for China engagement was noted. It was also noted that the Chinese community can be difficult to tap into—perceived as largely keeping to its own affairs. This could have implications for the China engagement strategy: A strong relationship between Victoria and China seems difficult to imagine if there exists a lack of intimacy between the local Chinese community and the broader community and government.

Future Directions:

- Broad effects Mandarin upskill for the economy will have upon society and the community
- The upskill of established professionals and young Victorians needs different approaches and different intended outcomes
- The government is yet to determine how to quantify and assess the outcomes of Mandarin and cultural competency initiatives
- Difficulties in connecting with the Chinese community: what obstacles are there to using the local community in regard to Victoria's broader China Engagement Strategy?

Publication B (Various): The “Bamboo Ceiling”. Publications from the Chinese Community Council of Australia, *ABC News* and *The Guardian*.

Key Themes:

- Latent potential of Australia's Chinese community
- Business naivety and token cultural competency

The ‘bamboo ceiling’ is a phenomenon that Australians of Chinese heritage claim hinders their upward professional progress, analogous to the glass ceiling phenomenon that affects the upward professional progress of women. The bamboo ceiling emerged as a point of interest for the Chinese Community Council of Australia, and picked up as a story by the ABC in September last year. It appeared again in *The Guardian* in April 2016.

Among Chinese-Australian professionals within these stories was a complaint of under-representation in upper levels of government and business. This in turn was connected to a complaint of under-utilisation of their business expertise, language skills and cultural competency, pulling the intentions and outcomes of Victorian/Australian-Chinese engagement into doubt. Although these comments were made before the release of the *Partnerships for Prosperity* document, they still evidence a lingering frustration within the Chinese community. This issue has been raised by the publication of a report by the Australian Human Rights Commission *Leading for Change: A blueprint for cultural diversity and inclusive leadership (2016)*

Speaking to *The Guardian* newspaper, Professor Ying Zhu stated that compounded with the under-utilisation of the local Chinese community, there is also a keen misunderstanding prevailing among those Australians wishing to engage with China as to the levels of cultural understanding needed to successfully engage with China. Within this framework, the eagerness for business growth and wealth creation is overlooking community engagement and an appreciation for deeper cultural understanding—which is critical for successful engagement with China. In order to avoid misconceptions of Victoria's own China engagement strategy, the cultural competency of those operating within a trade framework must be deepened and the Chinese community incorporated in this process as much as possible.

Future Directions:

- Government to consult the Chinese community about barriers facing Chinese-Australian professionals wishing to contribute to the strategy
- Use of professionals from the local Chinese community to deepen cultural understanding to build capabilities of Victorian businesses to be engaged in projects

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES: BENEFITS AND ISSUES

Publication C: Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2015

Key Themes:

- Wide agreement that multiculturalism has been beneficial to Australia
- Conflicting views of cultural diversity
- Current use of languages in Victoria

In 2015 the Scanlon Foundation released its eighth national survey dealing with a range of social issues including social cohesion, immigration and multiculturalism. It is a national survey, but also includes data specific to Victoria. The survey fielded some 1,500 respondents and alongside English was available in six of the most commonly spoken community languages including Mandarin and Cantonese.

When asked if multiculturalism had been good for Australian society, the vast majority of the public responded positively (85.7%) and held multiculturalism to have been beneficial to the economic development of the nation (75% agree). This correlates with the idea that language and cultural skills are most readily understood and quantified in economic terms. The survey also noted that economic matters topped most Australians' concerns.

In the broader Australian context, the survey found that the term “multiculturalism” was open to interpretation and concluded that there can be no definitive determination in the balance of Australian opinion towards cultural diversity. On the one hand, close to two thirds of Australians are in support of both Australians and immigrants adapting to a changing Australian society or the view that Australians should learn more about the customs and heritage of the various ethnic and cultural groups in Australia. On the other hand, close to one in four Australians strongly believed immigrants should change their behaviours to be more like Australians or strongly opposed funding cultural maintenance for ethnic minorities.

These national sentiments are relevant to Victoria's own similar conversations—between its capital and its other regions, Victoria had the greatest divergence in positive responses toward questions on immigration and cultural diversity of any state or territory. By extension, this suggests differing perceptions in the value of learning community languages like Mandarin and developing greater cultural competency.

The divergence between Melbourne and the rest of the state could partly be attributed to the large percentage of overseas-born Melbournians (60%) and of those speaking a language other than English at home (Campbellfield 81%, Springvale 79%, Dallas 73% and 75% in Melbourne overall). The survey stated that language usage better indicates cultural diversity as it incorporates first and second generation Australians rather than only counting people born outside of the country.

This measurement of cultural diversity can be applied to the Chinese community and Mandarin speakers through data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics—showing large percentages of Chinese-born migrants in the city's centre and east—and the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria,

correspondingly showing Mandarin as the community language with the most enrolled students.⁴

This information is significant for two reasons: Firstly, it illustrates the importance of Mandarin within Victoria, regardless of an economic framework. Secondly, in connection with the previous paragraph, it suggests more communication of Melbourne's diversity and the value of community languages like Mandarin to the rest of Victoria is needed.

Future Directions:

- Develop strategies to incorporate the strong approval of multiculturalism into initiatives like Victoria's China Engagement Strategy
- Specify evidence for how the economic benefits of cultural maintenance and language education promotes multicultural harmony and social cohesion

ECCV COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE FINDINGS: Stepping Up with Mandarin Roundtable Responses

Key Themes:

- English is not enough for our future workforce and multilingualism will be the defining feature of the next generation
- Government recognises the importance of learning languages and cultural competency, but its application of these skills is narrow or unclear
- Need to maintain connection between language and culture in learning process, as well as between community and trade aspects of Mandarin
- Early exposure and continuity is crucial for successful language learning and true cultural competency

On May 13, 2016 the ECCV held a roundtable consultation on the importance of language and cultural skills in our community. Eight persons of different occupations, levels of Mandarin ability, involvement with the local Chinese community and Chinese experience attended. All attendees either used Mandarin or intended to use Mandarin in their professional lives. Participants were of Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic backgrounds. A variety of needs and uses of Mandarin within both trade and community frameworks were discussed.

Why do we need language and cultural skills?

When asked "why do we need language and cultural skills", participants offered reasons including globalisation making these skills necessary for trade and rapid advances in technology bringing economies of different languages and cultures into closer and more frequent contact. Alongside these were responses concerning these skills and the individual, the community and their reciprocal relationship including:

- The importance of these skills for second generation Australians to orientate themselves in society
- A connection to family overseas
- Cultural exchange for people from non-Chinese backgrounds
- Creation or recognition of identity for people from Chinese backgrounds

⁴ Please see *Where Do Migrants Live?* <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features102014#ENDNOTES> for the numbers and areas of Chinese migrants in Victoria, and the Ethnic Schools Association's website <http://www.esav.org.au/> for the number of students enrolled in Mandarin community language schools.

- Broadened perspectives of the world and a nuanced understanding of what is “normal”
- A method of increasing inter-cultural understanding and social-cohesion

Respondents agreed that language and cultural skills will be the defining feature of the next generation. Though they believed that English is probably enough to “get by” today, they also believed that the status quo is changing and monolingualism will be detrimental in the future—especially to an individual's career. A comparison was drawn between the culture of complacency toward language learning in the English-speaking world and English fluency as a sign of status in the Mandarin-speaking world. For now, speaking Mandarin and understanding Chinese culture are skills that separate professionals in Australia, however with the growing influence of China and its economy, having these skills was believed to become increasingly more necessary to gain employment in a greater array of careers.

One participant responded that although the government had stated the importance of acquiring language and cultural skills, government departments placed little importance on these skills when hiring. For this person from a background in the not-for-profit sector, only business or teaching seemed like obvious career paths. Although it was agreed that language and cultural skills were complimentary to one's professional skillset and could lead to many, often unexpected careers opportunities, it was also noted that an appreciation for language or cultural skills was still under-developed in parts of society including government agencies.

Cultural competency is more than ‘just business’

A concern that language education goals were not being enforced or that not enough practical implementation of language and cultural skills within government was leading to a fear that upskilling initiatives might be tokenistic. This sentiment could stifle language and cultural upskill initiatives, correspondingly diminishing the benefits individuals possessing these skills would bring to the community. When asked to respond to the whether there was a difference between learning Mandarin within a trade or a community framework, one response was that although business is part of daily life, daily life is not all business. Furthermore, no participant believed they were learning or used Mandarin solely for business or employment. However, participants believed there was a growing disconnection between the manner in which Mandarin was being taught and the culture to which it belonged.

Learning Mandarin within a community setting was believed to be ideal in maintaining the connection, bringing greater fluency and cultural competency to the student as a result. Participants agreed that language skills alone were not enough for businesses to engage with foreign markets and that deep cultural understanding was needed. Therefore, though there were some doubts due to the different needs and uses of Mandarin in trade or community functions, it was agreed that ideally there should be no distinction between Mandarin as an international language for economic prosperity and as a community language in our multicultural society.

Participants all agreed that in order to build language and cultural capabilities in Victoria, early language and culture exposure was needed.

Suggestions for facilitating this included:

- Changing the culture of complacency towards learning languages
- Creating everyday relevance for language learning—it was suggested that incorporating Mandarin's community language aspects could be used towards this end
- Community language school style immersion as a cheaper alternative to overseas exchange programs—again an area where the Chinese community could be involved

- Continuation in learning the same language throughout a child's education
- Educating parents of the importance and benefits of language education
- Allowing time for the benefits of language and cultural skills to be understood and seen in society—this requires consistency in language education policy

Future Directions:

- Acknowledging the foundations of wide-scale multilingualism to the future benefit of all Victorians
- Develop a greater prevalence of multilingualism in the public sector and services (particularly health⁵)
- Develop initiatives which combine community and commercial needs to maximise the capabilities of the individual and the future workforce
- Introduce community language programs in education to ensure early and continuous exposure to a language other than English

Stakeholder 3: Community - Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV)

Key Themes:

- Function of the Community Language Schools program
- Intimate link between Community Language Schools and their respective communities
- Fade of community languages and culture between generations

A face-to-face consultation was held with the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV), on April 27, 2016. The ESAV is a peak body for community language schools in Victoria. It promotes language education through the community languages program, represents community language schools on government boards, advocates on their behalf and coordinates with the Department of Education and Training to ensure that education standards are met. The ESAV also oversees training programs for teachers of community language schools. Community language schools are initiated and maintained primarily by migrant communities to teach their native language and culture to their children, though are open to students of any ethnic background. They are complimentary to the mainstream school system and operate outside of normal school hours. The government supports community language school programs through funding and by encouraging Victorian schools to make their facilities available.

According to ESAV data, last year there were:

- 27 community language schools teaching Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese)
- 612 Chinese community language teachers
- 9,968 students enrolled in Chinese community language schools

According to the ESAV, language education in community language schools differs from other forms of language education as “skill providers” because of their role in the preservation of the culture and ethnic identity of migrant communities. This was particularly for second and third-generation Australians. The 2016 Victorian State Budget increased funding to the community language schools program. This was welcomed by ESAV as a sign of appreciation for the role that community language schools play and the importance of strengthening migrant communities.

5 Please see the ECCV website for its position on language and cultural competency and health services

According to the ESAV, the close ties of a community language school to the surrounding migrant community provides is a type of cultural immersion that other language education streams in Victoria cannot match. Considering that language is intimately connected to culture, there is a difference between learning about a culture in a classroom and participating in a culture through the community setting of a community language school. Compared to the former, in the latter context, students gain deeper understanding through their own first hand experiences. For this reason, the ESAV believes that community language schools can provide superior language and cultural competency.

Despite the role of community language schools in preserving ethnic identities, it was stated that educating migrant families of the importance of language and cultural education remains an ongoing matter. They stated that with successive generations of integration, maintaining language and cultural traditions becomes less of a priority for families from migrant backgrounds.

Parents will not send their children to community language schools for extra-curricular education unless they see the need. This fade from generation to generation is reflected in data showing that although the total number of students enrolled in community language schools is increasing, especially in schools teaching Mandarin, the total number of languages being taught is decreasing. To communicate the importance of maintaining language and cultural skills, the ESAV is working towards an ambassadors program to raise awareness among the community, as well as joint studies with universities to demonstrate the importance and potential of the community languages schools program to the government and wider community.

Future Directions:

- Incorporating the elements of immersion inherent in the CLS program into other language education initiatives may prove an alternative to costly overseas exchange programs
- Encouraging migrant communities, particularly migrant families, to maintain their languages and cultures may benefit future workforce capabilities, healthy multiculturalism and strengthen their personal identities

Stakeholder 4: Community - Australia China Youth Dialogue

Key Themes:

- Organisational modal that has embraced diversity Language and cultural skills and related benefits

Email correspondence was conducted with the Australia Chine Youth Dialogue (ACYD) on May 17, 2016. The ACYD outlined the organisation's core role in bringing together young, emerging leaders from China and Australia interested in bilateral relations for a four-day summit each year. Summits alternate between being held in Australia and China. The chosen young delegates discuss topics of diplomacy, trade, entrepreneurship, the arts and sport.

The ACYD embraced diversity and displayed it at all levels of participation including the board and management team. The board and management team is made up of both Australians and Chinese. Diversity on its board brought multiple benefits:

- Providing a range of views that could best deliver value to summit delegates
- Providing appropriate engagement with organisation partners
- Developing expertise and competency to meet the organisation's aims

It was suggested that not only did language and cultural skills enable successful inter-organisation relationships, but the inherent diversity also fostered further improvement of those skills. Instances

of Australians building relations with Chinese participants through fluent Mandarin, for example, were described as being very effective in driving other Australian participants to improve their own language skills.

Possessing Chinese language and cultural skills enabled strong bonds with Chinese to be built, both personally and professionally. In addition, it was stated learning language and cultural skills helps to develop the critical mind needed to assess challenges and opportunities in such things as Chinese-Australian bilateral relations. These are the same capacities the Victorian government is trying to build within its workforce through its China engagement strategy.

Future Directions:

- Creation of or support for organisations of a similar model to build future China capabilities in Victorian youth
- Benefits of diversity within an organisation: direct exposure to different ideas and values; experience in dealing with people of a different culture; relations of mutual empowerment
- The importance of early exposure to different cultural practices and language education to ensure better individual adaptability for the future

Stakeholder 5: Community - Chinese Community Council of Australia, Victorian Chapter

Key Themes:

- Example of the Chinese community as an active player in society
- Importance of language and cultural skills for personal and social prosperity, as well as greater harmony in a multicultural society

Email correspondence was exchanged with the Chinese Community Council of Australia Victoria (CCCAVic), throughout May 2016. The CCCAVic is a chapter of a larger, national body that seeks to advocate for the rights and well-being of Australian-Chinese, as well as organising state and national conferences and community services. The body is made up of other Chinese community associations and groups as well as individual members.

The CCCAVic was described as a politically and socially aware organisation. It responds to government strategies that affect the Australian Chinese community through direct contact of members of parliament, public meetings of members and media releases. For example, the CCCAVic had previously worked closely with Shadow Attorney General Mark Dreyfus during the campaign against changes to sections 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. It also released materials and held a conference aimed at raising awareness of the “Bamboo Ceiling” phenomenon. The CCCAVic is very supportive of Victoria's new China engagement strategy, especially as Victoria is the only state government to have such a strategy.

The CCCAVic was proud of the number of young Victorians studying Mandarin at community language schools and encouraged all Australians to learn an additional language. The CCCAVic believes that the language skills and cultural competency that youth are acquiring will lead many to become the ambassadors that link Australia with Asia, bringing benefit to themselves as well as the wider community. At the same time, it believes learning a second language in itself equipped individuals with the intercultural awareness necessary to build a fair, respectful and harmonious multicultural society.

Future Directions:

- State Government to consider connecting with bodies that possess similar types of organisational and outreach capabilities as does CCCAVic to participate in the social

outreach programs as outlined in *Partnerships for Prosperity*.

- Individual and/or social prosperity and multicultural harmony are often mentioned as joint benefits to language and cultural skills. These two aims should be connected and emphasised throughout language and cultural education initiatives, bringing trade and community frameworks closer together to produce greater outcomes in combination

Stakeholder 6: Government - Australia China Council

Key Themes:

- Increasing Chinese cultural competency in Australia using both economic and cultural methods

A phone consultation was held with a representative of the Australia China Council (ACC) on May 17. The ACC is a body within Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that is aimed at furthering Australia's foreign policy and economic diplomacy interests through the promotion of mutual understanding and people-to-people relations between Australia and China. Language and cultural skills are used regularly at this organisation to liaise between stakeholders and Chinese overseas offices.

Among the roles of the ACC, one core aim is “to make foreign policy less foreign”. This entails support and funding for a range of projects that raise the awareness and understanding of China in the Australian public. To this end, the ACC places equal focus on supporting Australian-Chinese economic initiatives and raising the awareness of Australia-China trade relations among the Australian public as it does upon cultural exchange initiatives.

A recent cultural initiative was the “Celestial Empire” exhibition at the National Library of Australia; a collection of maps, books and prints showcasing over 300 years of Chinese culture and tradition. It was reported that a large percentage of the people who had enjoyed the exhibition had no prior knowledge or interest in Chinese culture. Such initiatives were described as powerful catalysts in stoking interest and increasing understanding among the public. People that would not typically be exposed to such experiences were reached.

Though the ACC displays a successful combination of economic and cultural awareness raising initiatives, not much is done to engage with Australia's local Chinese communities. It was explained that this lay outside of the ACC's core aims of raising awareness of China in Australia and vice versa. Inclusion of the local Chinese community in a similarly modelled state-based organisation could better suit Victoria's needs. Such a body could increase economic potential abroad, while also benefitting inter-cultural understanding at home, thereby aiding in the realisation of Victoria as China's “gateway to investment in Australia”.

Future Directions:

- The ACC as a model for raising the understanding of China in Victoria through combined economic and cultural frameworks
- Incorporating the local Chinese community into such a model as part of the outreach programs outlined in *Partnerships for Prosperity*

POLICY GAPS

The following gaps were drawn from the research and consultations:

1. Language education: Exposure to an additional language is not occurring early enough in a child's education. Inconsistencies and breaks in language education programs was also a concern; for example, learning one language in primary school only to cease learning it and starting another language in high school. Some stakeholders believed that there was not enough attention or appreciation shown for the complexity of the task at hand.
2. Community involvement: What role the Chinese community will play in the China engagement strategy, or their utilisation in language or cultural awareness building initiatives remains unclear. Social outreach programs were highlighted, but details are still unknown. The scope of initiatives should include multicultural harmony for the benefit of the broader community and trust building for the benefit of the local Chinese community as well as with overseas Chinese businesses and government.
3. Funding: Figures such as \$66m for Victorian overseas business offices were mentioned in the *Partnerships for Prosperity*, but the financial endowment of other initiatives, such as for language and cultural skills or community outreach remain unknown or unclear. Scholarship programs, community language schools programs among others are also seeking further funding.
4. Awareness: There is an underlying need to continue raising awareness for the importance of language and cultural skills in our community. This should be targeted at the whole community, though with special aim at encouraging migrant families to maintain their language and culture for their own benefit and the future benefit of the wider community.

CONCLUSION

Many of the points raised for consideration within the trade framework could be treated with elements found within the community framework and vice versa. It is the opinion of the ECCV therefore, that the learning and use of Mandarin in Victoria—for the benefit of engaging with China and for the benefit of the broader community—combine the needs and aims of Mandarin as a trade language and Mandarin as community language as much as possible.

The ECCV's view is that language education and ethnic communities' cultural maintenance is an investment. A holistic approach would ensure the maximum return on investing in language and cultural skills for multicultural harmony, social cohesion and economic prosperity.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Linking together the importance of Mandarin as a trade language with its importance as a community language enriches multiculturalism by underscoring the Chinese community and Chinese culture as part of Victoria's cultural fabric
- Early commencement and consistent, long-term continuation of language education
- Consistent, long-term China engagement policies and language and cultural initiatives
- Consistent, long-term Chinese community engagement programs
- Quality and outcome assessments of language education and associated cultural initiatives
- Continued support for the Community Language Schools program and further training initiatives for their volunteer teachers
- Continued support for current scholarships and exchange programs to upskill current professionals
- Link mainstream schools with community language schools to facilitate immersive language education experiences
- Strong commitment to incorporate Chinese-Australian professionals into the China engagement strategy

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