DASSH
DEANS OF ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Professor Barry McGaw AO
Chair
Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority (ACARA)
Level 10, 255 Pitt Street
Sydney, NSW 2000

18 April 2011

Dear Professor McGaw

Re: University sector feedback on the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* Paper

The Board of the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) commends the work that ACARA has done in developing language curriculum in schools and we strongly endorse the key positions underlying the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper. In particular we support the teaching of a diverse range of languages in Australian schools, including indigenous languages, languages of our neighbouring nations and the key world languages. We also support the idea that the learning and teaching of language and culture go hand in hand.

However, we are concerned that there may have been less than optimal engagement with the university sector in formulating the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper. The questionnaire seeking responses to it does not seem to be sensitive to the issues we need to raise regarding the common ground and interconnections between school and tertiary teaching of languages.

The introductory paragraph of the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper lists the groups and communities generally consulted by ACARA. While clearly individual academics were consulted, we note that there is little evidence that the university sector as a whole, or its faculties of arts, social sciences and humanities (the faculties where languages are generally taught) were engaged in the consultation process for this draft paper.

The DASSH Board in its role supporting language teaching in universities, is eager to find ways of engaging with ACARA to support sustainable language teaching in schools.

We see a number of linkages between language teaching and learning in schools and universities.

Like schools, the arts, social sciences and humanities' faculties of universities have concerns about the erosion of tertiary level language learning.[1] This erosion has implications for teaching of languages in schools. If the spirit of the draft language curriculum paper is to be

[1] Group of Eight (2007) *Languages in Crisis Policy Paper*

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implemented, we will require teachers trained in not just a diverse range of languages, but also in teaching technologies, curriculum design and pedagogies of language teaching – across first and second language education. We clearly need to plan the expansion of languages in the school curriculum with a realistic plan for increasing the number of tertiary trained language teachers capable of delivering high quality language education in schools. For schools to deliver the best possible teaching of languages to the next generation, it is important that this is planned with the university sector.

We hope that the next iteration of this paper and more importantly its implementation will consider the important linkage between school learning and university teaching of languages. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our concerns with you in more detail.

Yours sincerely

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