



Where language and culture come together



COMMUNITY LANGUAGES AUSTRALIA

Where language and culture come together

185 Faraday Street Carlton, Victoria 3053

Telephone (03) 9347 0379 Fax: (03) 9347 0297

Email: afesa@netsol.net.au

www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au

Haven't we come a long way? - Congratulations Ethnic Schools in Australia

**10th National Ethnic Schools Conference
Adelaide, July 9, 2012**

**Stefan Romaniw OAM
Executive Director, Community Languages Australia**

The 10th National Community Languages Schools - Ethnic Schools Conference being held in Adelaide today is another signpost, highlighting the success of the ethnic schools program in Australia.

As one looks around the room we see a group of dedicated teachers and administrators who represent many communities. As a group you seem to have the look of happiness, enthusiasm and peace on your faces. And that speaks huge amounts about the vibes in this room.

It is in fact a mini United Nations - people coming together with a common cause, wanting to make the world, their State, their schools, their community a better place.

It's holiday time and we have close on 200 people here, bright and early, eager to absorb more information, eager to learn, eager to take back into their classroom new ideas, new technology.

Last week in Melbourne we had over 400 teachers and instructors attending the Victorian State Conference with the same intention. In October this year we will have over 300 teachers and instructors at the NSW State Conference.

In the ACT, WA, Queensland, Tasmania we have teachers and instructors attending professional development with the same enthusiasm.

What does this say to Government and broader community?

Ethnic schools are an integral part of the education system, they have dedicated staff, they have students who are working hard to learn their home language, understand their culture and in turn share all this with their peers and broader community.

Community Languages Australia calls on all those associated with our schools to aspire to be effective teachers, to become students willing to learn to share and understand your roots. We call on communities to support their schools.

Yes, over the years as a sector we have come a long way!

We have

- national coordination,
- a quality assurance framework,
- training and PD programs, also
- currently applying to become a Registered Training Organisation ,
- are strong contributors in delivering Government languages and multicultural education programs on a State and Territory and National levels.
- have the highest retention rate to year 12.



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This Conference is another example of what national coordination, cooperation, sharing of resources and being focussed can achieve.

From a planning, governance and implementation perspective we also have structures in place, with ethnic schools associations and federations around the country

We have our National Council - the Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations represented here today by Tassos Douvartzides, Victoria its chair, Enzo Sirna from WA the deputy Chair, Inta Rumpe SA Treasurer and Secretary, Jude Nirmalaraja SA, Irene Bayldon -Queensland, Albert Vella NSW, Javad Mehr - ACT and an apology from Mahendra Pathik from Tasmania.

We have our executive and administrative officers Fahry Abubaker from Victoria Jacquie Dixon ACT, Marita Macalalad SA, and the ESA SA Professional Development Officer Jacqueline Von Wersch.

We have been very fortunate to have had strong and forward thinking leaders and contributors in the past. They were community leaders, teachers, administrators and parents who were committed to laying a strong Foundation, leaving a legacy.

As we look around the room there are many here who have for years given of them and who ensured that the right building blocks were in place.

At the back of the room is Inta Rumpe who has been a stalwart in the area not only in South Australia but nationally. She is well placed to tell you the story of the journey of getting this far.

Today's President Jude Nirmalaraja and his Ethnic Schools Association of South Australia together with past presidents and committees around the country have worked hard in your interest to make your school a better place, ensure your school is funded, and make sure your students have the best opportunities.

We say thank you to all who have worked hard over the years to get us here today.

The work is not complete.

- New National Curriculum,
- new technologies, methodology to meet today's learning needs,
- new strategies to overcome the at times intergenerational tensions about sending and coming to school
- Ongoing and increased Government funding and support,
- acknowledgment in policy terms the role ethnic schools play

are other areas that require our attention.

There is an exciting journey ahead of us all. But for now let's acknowledge how far we have come and enjoy today's Conference and take away new methodology ideas and strategies, new technology ideas, new friends and networks,

Community Languages Australia acknowledges the work of the ESA SA in organising this conference.

Have a great day. Take time to meet others and most importantly reinforce in your mind that the work you do every week in the ethnic school classroom, where you bring language and culture together is recognised and appreciated, if not in the short term, it will be in the long term.



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I am proud to announce that the 11th National Community Languages Schools Conference will be held in Canberra on October 5, 2013.

Once again enjoy the day, the company of your peers and the atmosphere