

Ministers announce national policy on languages

MPS 85/87 (Joint).

Minister for Employment Services and Youth Affairs

Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs

Media Release

Canberra, December 15, 1987.

The Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Mick Young, and the Minister for Employment Services and Youth Affairs, Clyde Holding, today announced the composition of an Advisory Council and details of funding for the National Policy on Languages.

The Ministers said \$15.1 million had been allocated in the current budget for the National Policy on Languages and it would receive \$28 million in 1988-89.

They said the Council which would advise on languages policy would be broadly representative of groups with an interest in the area. It would oversee the implementation of the policy and assess its effectiveness.

The Advisory Council would be chaired by Mr Joseph Lo Bianco, author of the report "National Policy on Languages".

"The policy package reflects the Government's determination to ensure that our education and training systems respond more actively to the major economic and social challenges now facing Australia," the Ministers said.

"It also addresses the needs and aspirations of the educationally disadvantaged as well as fostering the enrichment of Australian cultural

and intellectual life."

The policy would have six major elements, all of which would be in place by the start of the 1988 academic year:

English as a Second Language - \$5.7m has been allocated to supplement the existing ESL program for newly-arrived refugee and migrant children in 1987/88. Newly-arrived refugee and migrant children are amongst the most disadvantaged students and this program underlines the Commonwealth's commitment to meeting their needs.

Australian Second Language Learning Program - to enable State, Territory and non-government school authorities to introduce high quality language programs in priority areas (\$3.9m in 1987-88). This program will be expanded in 1988-89 with a Budget of \$7.5m and this will give greater stimulus to the improvement and extension of second language learning in Australian schools.

Adult Literacy Action Campaign - a campaign to improve levels of adult literacy (\$1.96m in 1987-88). Many adult Australians have poor English reading and writing skills. The campaign will coincide with Australia's Bicentennial and will boost significantly adult literacy in English.

Asian Studies - a range of initiatives designed to boost the study of Asian languages and cultures (\$1.85m in 1987-88).

Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Supplementation Programs - to boost multicultural and inter-cultural studies in tertiary education institutions, particularly for the development of cross-cultural training within professional courses (\$0.75m in 1987-

88).

National Aboriginal Languages Project - initiatives in Aboriginal languages, including bilingual education, language maintenance and language awareness programs (\$0.5m in 1987-88).

Mr Young and Mr Holding said the policy would make a major contribution towards lifting language skills in the work force and this was a necessary step in the restructuring of the Australian economy.

"It will do this by enhancing the level of English language competence amongst Australians of non-English speaking background; the level of English literacy for all Australians; and by providing greater opportunities for the study of the languages of our major trading partners.

"At the same time, it will encourage the maintenance of our rich linguistic heritage.

"The policy is flexible enough to take account of the requirements and priorities of State, Territory and non-government education systems."

Attachment A

Membership and Terms of Reference of The Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education

The Council will have the following representation:

- Part-Time Chairperson - Joseph Lo Bianco
- nominee of Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
- nominee of Australian Education Council
- nominee of Asian Studies Council
- nominee of Aboriginal groups
- nominee of Business Council of Australia
- nominee of ACTU (education sector)
- nominee of Australian Council of Adult Literacy
- nominee of Tourism groups
- nominee of Ethnic groups (FECCA)
- selected Applied linguist/Curriculum expert
- observer status - Office of Multicultural Affairs

Terms of Reference

- To advise the Minister for Employment Services and Youth Affairs on the implementation of the components of the National Policy on Languages;
- To monitor the effectiveness of the National Policy on Languages program components;
- To act as a forum for discussion on national needs and priorities relating to issues in languages policy.