



MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 21 October, 2011

SUBJECT: Parents unite to build demand for Asian languages and studies

CONTACT: Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, 0411 255 418
Peter Garrigan, President, Australian Council of State School Organisations, 0419 986 547

The Australian Parents Council (APC) and the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) are inviting parents from around Australia to be part of an exciting and innovative project, ***Parents Understanding Asia Literacy: Building demand for Asian languages and studies.***

ACSSO President, Peter Garrigan, said today, "Learning about Asia is an increasingly important part of the personal, social and academic development of all young Australians. Through this project the peak national organisations representing parents of students in government and non-government schools will establish a network of parents who can work supportively with school leaders to build student demand for the studies of Asia and Asian languages and increase opportunities for their children to be exposed to high quality and sustainable teaching programs."

The Parents Understanding Asia Literacy project is being funded as part of the Australian Government's National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) which has a focus on assisting schools to promote the teaching and learning of Asian languages and/or the studies of Asia related to one or more of the four NALSSP target countries – China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea.

Over 200 parents from 75 government, Catholic and independent schools will be brought together in clusters of 15 schools to be provided with training to build their understanding of the difference that learning about the four NALSSP languages and cultures can make to the lives of young Australians. Each cluster will have a dedicated mentor to support the parents as they go back into their schools to talk to their peers and school leaders about how the studies of Asia might be given a stronger focus in their schools.

"This project is very timely, considering that Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia is a cross-curriculum priority in the new Australian Curriculum," said Ian Dalton, APC executive director. "We know that parents influence the subject choices students make. If they are appropriately informed and engaged they can also drive school curriculum choices and pathways that are best for their children.

"Our research has shown that there is undoubtedly a genuine interest among parents in their children having the opportunity to study other languages and cultures. However, there are also high levels of confusion and uncertainty among parents about how this can be done effectively considering current structural problems, such as a shortage of qualified teachers of Asian languages and a lack of continuity in the provision of Asian languages programs," he added.

According to Mr Garrigan, "ACSSO and APC both believe it is critical, if participation rates of students studying Asian languages and studies are to be lifted to any significant extent, that parents are meaningfully engaged as supportive allies of schools."

Further information and an on-line expression of interest form are available at <http://pual.org.au>

ENDS