

The Hon Julia Gillard MP

Deputy Prime Minister

Minister for Education

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP

Prime Minister

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Joint Media Release

New reports show decline in Asian Language Education in schools under the previous government

The Government today released four new reports on the teaching of Asian languages in Australian schools that make plain the decline in Asian language learning that happened under the previous government.

The Government is committed to fixing this decline. The Government has committed \$62.4 million over four years to 2012 to increase the number of students learning the languages and cultures of China, Japan, Indonesia and Korea under the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP).

The reports provide the most current data and insight into the state of Japanese, Indonesian and Korean language education in Australian schools. An overarching report also covers Chinese language education.

Academic experts in each of the languages were commissioned to write the reports in conjunction with the Asia Education Foundation, funded through the Australian Government's School Languages Program.

The three language reports on Japanese, Indonesian and Korean complement an earlier report on Chinese language education and complete coverage of the suite of four languages which are the focus of the NALSSP.

They provide valuable baseline data and evidence, which will be used to inform future policy and national initiatives aimed at increasing the number of students studying Asian languages.

The reports indicate a decline in the number of students studying an Asian language in Australian schools, particularly at the secondary level.

In 2008, the proportion of Australian students studying one of the four Asian languages from Kindergarten to Year 12 was 18.6 per cent, down from 24 per cent in 2000.

All Australian governments have agreed to a target of at least 12 per cent of students exiting Year 12 by 2020 with a fluency in one of the four Asian languages sufficient for engaging in trade and commerce in Asia and/or university study.

The Australian Government considers learning languages other than English, in particular Asian languages, very important to Australia's future security and prosperity in an increasingly globalised world.

The reports, which include a summary report, *The Current State of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean Language Education in Australian Schools*, are available at www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NALSSP/Pages/Resources.aspx.

Media Contact:

media@deewr.gov.au

Non-media queries: 1300 363 079