



Association of German
Teachers of Victoria Inc.

Supporting teaching and learning since 1979

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training
107 Sir Donald Bradman Drive
Hilton, SA, 5033

27 March, 2017

Dear Senator Birmingham,

I am writing on behalf of the Association of German Teachers of Victoria Inc. to ask why German is not one of the languages included in the innovative Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) program. It is disappointing and difficult to understand why it was overlooked given the relevance of German to Australia.

German is the most widely spoken first language in Europe and is one of 14 languages in the Australian Curriculum. German is taught in every state and territory in Australia. Data from 2014 in Victoria shows German to be the sixth most taught language in Government schools (19,000 students) and fourth in Independent schools (10,000 students). Many students participate in exchange programs with Germany.

Every Australian university has partnerships with German-speaking countries including more than 500 formal agreements promoting research partnerships. Australian students are studying in German-speaking countries as well as completing internships in companies in Europe and Australia.

German-speakers have made significant contributions to Australia since European settlement and were the largest non-English speaking group at the time of Federation. German-speaking communities from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and other countries where German is spoken as an official or minority language, such as Liechtenstein, Belgium, Luxembourg and South Tyrol in Italy, continue to make significant contributions to the economic prosperity and cultural life of Australia.

Germany alone has the fourth largest economy in the world and is the 10th largest trading partner of Australia. There are over 700 German-owned businesses operating in Australia employing 100,000+ Australians. The Australian government is seeking to expand relationships with Germany and Europe.

Australia launched its European Landing Pad for Australian start-ups in Berlin in April 2016. Germany is the focus country for the federal government's 'Australia now' program in 2017.

The high-level Australia-Germany Advisory Group (AGAG) committed to developing closer ties between our two countries in 2015 with 59 recommendations. Relationships have steadily strengthened as outlined in the progress report 'Collaboration, innovation and opportunity' presented to Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in December 2016 by Professor Doctor Maria Böhmer (FRG) and Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann (AUS). These are exciting times for collaborative partnerships for research and investment in education, science, technology, trade, security and cultural exchange.

German has been and remains an important language for the future of young Australians. German must be included in any program supporting languages education in Australia including the federally funded interactive apps for children in preschool.

Can you please tell us when German will be included in the ELLA program, and if not, why not?

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Gosling, President, AGTV Inc.

cc Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance, Australia

Her Excellency Dr Anna Prinz, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, FRG