

**Yvette Berry MLA**

Deputy Chief Minister

Minister for Early Childhood Development

Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

Minister for Housing and Suburban Development

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Minister for Sport and Recreation

Member for Ginninderra

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**RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Questions on Notice Paper 1**

**4 December 2020**

**Question No. 12**

**MRS KIKKERT: asked the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs**

- 1) In relation to language instruction at Belconnen High School and the three primary schools that share its priority enrolment area (PEA), when was the decision made to cease teaching Indonesian and French at Belconnen High School.
- 2) Who was consulted regarding this decision before it was made, and when/where did these consultations take place.
- 3) When and how were residents within Belconnen High School's PEA informed of this change.
- 4) What public options exist for families who live in the Belconnen High School PEA where children wish to continue their studies in Indonesian or French at high school.
- 5) Noting the Government's Curriculum Requirements in ACT Public Schools (P-10) Policy 2009 requires all high schools in the Territory are to provide a language program of 150+ minutes per week to students in years 7-8 in one of eight priority languages: French; German; Italian; Spanish; Indonesian; Japanese; Mandarin; and/or Korean and that Belconnen High School no longer complies with this requirement, why has a decision been taken that now makes Belconnen High School non-compliant with government policy.
- 6) Does this non-compliance in any way increase the enrolment options for families where children wish to be able to continue their language studies; if so, in what way/s, for example, is enrolment preference given to such families at schools outside of their PEA.
- 7) What steps will the ACT Government take to bring Belconnen High School back into compliance with this policy and when will this be complete.



**MS BERRY MLA** – The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:

- 1) The decisions to discontinue French and Indonesian occurred during the 2017 school year.
- 2) After significant effort to maintain and sustain the languages program were unsuccessful, consultation with the local Parents and Citizens (P&C) Association led the School Board, including the Principal, to make the school-based decision to discontinue both French and Indonesian. This occurred at the school in 2017.
- 3) Residents within Belconnen High School’s Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) were informed of this change through involvement with the P&C, and via the school’s newsletter, website, prospectus and parent/student information nights. Initial notifications occurred in 2017 and the information about the change of program is still available on the school website.
- 4) The Directorate currently offers a pathway for French language learning for families who live in Belconnen. Melba Copland Secondary School is a hub for language provision, including a clear pathway in French. French language is offered at both the high school and college campuses. Canberra High School also offers a French language program.
- 5) The ACT Education Directorate continues to work with Belconnen High School to seek opportunities to deliver language options for students. A school’s ability to provide and sustain language education in a specific language, such as French, is strongly influenced by the availability of suitable language teachers. Language teachers are specialist teachers who have substantial language learning experience and fluency in the target language. They also need to be qualified teachers who meet the requirements to hold a Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) registration. The Directorate is continuously working to ensure appropriately qualified staff are providing quality education to our students.

The low numbers of language teachers is a national issue and the ACT is tackling this through targeted national recruitment campaigns and specific scholarship programs to both attract new languages teachers to the ACT and to develop the skills of our current workforce.

To provide a language option for students, the school collaborated closely with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop and implement the unique Connecting to Country course, which includes both language and cultural components.

- 6) If continuation of a particular language is important to a student, the family can apply to enrol into a school outside of their PEA that offers this language. Schools may consider applicants whose PEA school does not provide a specific curriculum choice, including preferred language choice. Enrolment will be considered as per standard enrolment criteria where a school has capacity to enrol out of area students. More detail about enrolling in out of area schools can be read on the Directorate’s website:

<https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/enrolling-in-a-public-school/enrolling-in-kindergarten-to-year-12>.

- 7) The ACT Education Directorate will continue to work with Belconnen High School around language options for students. The school offers Connecting to Country for year 7 and 8 students which aligns with the Australian Curriculum subject Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. Spanish, Chinese and Japanese are also offered as electives for year 9 and 10 students, leveraging the language resources of teachers of other subject areas to support this offering.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



**Yvette Berry MLA**  
**Minister for Education and Youth Affairs**

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