

18 May 2023

The Hon Julia Gillard AC  
Royal Commissioner into Early Childhood Education and Care  
GPO Box 11025  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Email: [RoyalCommissionECEC@sa.gov.au](mailto:RoyalCommissionECEC@sa.gov.au)

**Dear Ms Gillard,**

Thank you very much for providing relevant stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to the Royal Commission's deliberations via formal submissions.

The topic of education and care for the first thousand days is very important. How we conceptualise and implement it will have long term effect both on the children themselves and on broader society, wherever those children are present.

Please find attached a submission by the Comitato degli Italiani all'Estero (Committee of Italians Abroad) for South Australia (ComItEs SA).

We give permission to publish the submission on the Royal Commission's website and for it to be explicitly referenced if you wish to do so.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr Stefano Pratola**  
Chair,  
Language and Culture Sub-  
Committee

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**Assoc Prof Marinella Marmo**  
President

**Dr Antonio Dottore**  
Vice President and Secretary

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## **ComItEs SA Submission to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education & Care**

### ComItEs SA

The Committee of Italians Abroad (ComItEs) is an institution created by Italian legislation, administered via the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. It comprises Italian citizens resident in the local jurisdiction, who are directly elected. There are also co-opted Members, of Italian descent but who are not Italian citizens.

ComItEs SA strongly values diversity and inclusion across cultures and along other dimensions.

### Relevance to the Royal Commission

Our relevance to the Royal Commission lies in the direct connection we have to an important component of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community in South Australia.

### Recommendation.

First, we wish to congratulate the government for establishing the Royal Commission. At the time of deciding to make a submission, we were very pleased to see the Terms of Reference place specific focus on CALD issues. This was further confirmed by the Interim Report's attention to the diversity of families.

On that basis, we make the following single **recommendation**:

- **That languages be a core component of the curriculum.**

### Basis for recommendation

Our recommendation is coherent with both the initial design of the Royal Commission and the Interim recommendations – and builds upon them.

Language acquisition capabilities are strongest at the earliest stages of our lives and the advantages are long lasting (Bialystok, Hawrylewicz et al. 2022). That would then generate powerful synergies with the following well established benefits.

- 1) Social cohesion is enhanced via understanding and valuing of diverse cultures. Having multiple languages supports this (UNESCO 2006, Kosonen, Young et al. 2007, Newby and Penz 2009, Lo Bianco forthcoming).
- 2) Inter-generational engagement develops socially useful bonds (Hu, Torr et al. 2014, Rameka and Glasgow 2015, Zuckermann 2020), whether by children being able to communicate better with their own parents and grandparents, or having *nonno*, *yia-yia*, or an Aboriginal auntie/uncle come into the classroom to tell stories and play with the children.
- 3) Inter-cultural experiences and inter-cultural competence will create meaning for everybody, not only those of us who embody more than one culture (Kersten 2010, Diaz 2014, Antoniou 2019, Augustin and Pudelko 2020).
- 4) Ongoing positive effect on the brain is evident, both physically (Kroll, Dussias et al. 2015) and in its functioning (Keysar, Hayakawa et al. 2012, Bialystok 2017, Hernandez 2018).
- 5) Long term economic development is enhanced: openness to other cultures and cultural (mis)understanding are fundamental drivers of success/failure in international business (Malecki 2010, Neeley 2015, Welch and Welch 2018, Hill and Hult 2019).

As well as noting the above benefits, we look to Victoria where languages are embedded into the curriculum from early childhood. It has been successful. It is well established and well accepted by the community. Finally, we are warmly encouraged by the reference to Carla Rinaldi's work in several submissions to the Royal Commission.

**18/05/20023**

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