

## Teaching of Italian Language in Australia Threatened

Fairly recently the Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training (Mr Dawkins) promised a thorough-going review of language teaching in Australia.

At the time, he proposed that the government designate Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian, French and German as being of significant economic and social relevance to Australia. (In the past, funding has been forthcoming for languages that have been so identified).

The outcry was such, that on 26th September the Minister was forced to back-track, evident in his statement that he personally did not see the necessity for changing the existing priorities the government had for languages taught. In so saying, he reiterated that the matter would be left to two future official reports.

The first of the reports will be a Green Paper that will be presented in December next. It will form the basis of a public debate that will lead to a White Paper, expected to be ready in the first half of 1991, wherein will be set out the official and definitive course of action (Australian Literacy and Language Policy).

The tone and tenor of the Minister's statement likely meant that the government was listening and that probably the teaching of Italian would not be relegated in importance.

Although the threat to Italian seems to have been averted for now, there is a need to be vigilant and ready for action.

My view is that Italian should have a significant place in the government's plans, for after English, it is the most widespread language in Australia. It is Australia's second language in Australia. It is Australia's second language. Down-grading it, as well as being an incomprehensible move, is insulting to the Italian-speaking community and plainly a backward step economically and socially.

I support the Petition that is being organised across Australia by the A.P.I.A. Club Ladies Committee. If you feel you can support it too, please fill in details where indicated.

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