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Cultivating the Greek Language Within the Australian Diaspora: The Current Landscape, Barriers and Frameworks

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Executive Summary

This report provides insight into the current state of the Greek language in Australia. It analyses evidence of language shift, examines the existing systems and supports, identifies barriers to learning, and investigates existing strategies to better cultivate the language within the diaspora. Methods used to achieve this include the analysis of Australian Census data, manually collected Greek language school data, and the synthesis of both contemporary academic literature and language education policies.

The results were varied and detailed:

- There is clear evidence of a language shift from Greek to English within Greek Australian households. However, a relatively high retention rate of 21% of the third generation and beyond indicates the language is still being transmitted.
- The observed 'shift' is more complex than the Census data captures. It does not encapsulate the varied way language is used by younger generations, such as the mixing of Greek and English (known as 'GrEnglish' or 'Greeklish').
- There are various well-established community supports for learning Greek across the country. These are supported by government funding, often distributed through Community Language Associations.
- There are major limitations in Australia's current language education system. These limitations create significant barriers to learning Greek (and other languages) at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

This report finds that while the shift in Greek language usage is concerning, it is not irreversible. There is an urgent need for improved supports for Greek and other languages in Australia. Key recommendations include:

- A national recognition of the need to support multilingualism. The government should formally promote the value of all languages to enhance the nation's multicultural identity.
- The utilisation of the 'COD' (Capacity, Opportunity, Desire) framework to cultivate the Greek language at a community level. This model can be used to create language initiatives that target younger generations while considering their hybrid identities as both Greek and Australian.

The limitations of the report include:

- Census data and Greek language school data having issues with completeness and timeliness.
- The findings are specific to the Australian context. A direct comparison between other diasporic communities is not feasible due to differing historical and environmental factors.

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Introduction

The Greek diaspora in Australia is one of the most active and established, serving as a key representation of the nation's multiculturalism.¹ The Greek language is valued by the community through the facilitation of intergenerational connections as well as serving as a core marker of cultural identity.² This value is demonstrated through "organised community networks" which has helped Greek remain as one of the top ten spoken languages in Australia.³

Despite this, studies consistently observe a clear language shift from Greek to English within the diaspora, a process where the community will "replace one language by another" over time.⁴ This phenomenon is experienced by all community languages, a term used to refer to groups that use minority languages within a "majority language context".⁵ A shift away from the Greek language raises concerns for the long-term sustainability of Greek culture in Australia.

This report aims to address these concerns through investigating the state of Greek language cultivation in Australia. To do this, it will:

1. examine the evidence for language shift,
2. assess existing community and institutional resources,
3. identify barriers to the language's success, and,
4. introduce evidence-based strategies to support the language.

This report argues that the decrease in Greek language is not a simple decline, but a complex shift. The shift is driven by two key factors:

1. the evolving nature of diasporic identity, and
2. a systemic disconnect where community resources are limited by a lack of structural support in the mainstream education system.

This report proposes that for Greek to be cultivated in the long term, a new approach is crucial. Multilingualism needs to be supported at a systemic level, and strategies that align with theory and the adapted identities of younger generations need to be considered.

¹ Maria Irini Avgoulas and Rebecca Fanany, "The Significance of Community for Greek Australians Living in Diaspora," *Athens Journal of Social Sciences* 8, no. 4 (2021): 224, <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajss.8-4-1>; Anastasios Myrodis Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) 99, 163.

² Alexandra Holeva, "Current Trends of the Linguistic and Cultural Values of the Greek Australian Community in South Australia," *International Education Journal* 4, no. 4 (2004): 217, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ903829>; Rebecca Fanany and Maria Irini Avgoulas, "Greek Identity in Australia," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*, ed. Steven Ratuva (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0242-8_83-1.

³ Anastasios Myrodis Tamis, "The Greek language in the Diaspora/ La langue Grecque en Diaspora," *Études Helléniques* 17, no. 1 (2009): 2, https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/arts_article/20/; Andonis Piperoglou et al., "The Greek Diaspora and Greek Emigration: Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United States," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Greek History*, ed. Stefanos Katsikas (Oxford University Press, 2025), forthcoming, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197759523.013.0041>.

⁴ Lenore A. Grenoble, "Language Shift," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, accessed October 20, 2025, <https://oxfordre.com/linguistics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.001.0001/acrefore-9780199384655-e-347>; James Forrest et al., "Linguistic Shift and Heritage Language Retention in Australia," in *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn and Roland Kehrein (Springer, 2020), 1072-1074; Maria Irini Avgoulas and Rebecca Fanany, "The Greek Language in Diaspora: Perceptions Across Three Generations of Greek Australia Woman," *Athens Journal of Philology* 12, no. 3 (2025): 191, <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajp.12-3-2>.

⁵ "What are Community Languages?" National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC), accessed October 20, 2025, <https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Initial%20Teacher%20Education/Documents/Whatarecommunitylanguages.pdf>

The first section will investigate the current state of the Greek language. It will examine the discourse on diasporic identity, the argument for multilingualism, and the evidence for language shift. The second section will analyse the current supports and resources in place for the Greek language through investigating community resources, formal state education, and broader government support. The final section will apply sociolinguistic theory to classify the languages stability and discuss a pre-existing framework for its cultivation. The report will conclude with targeted recommendations for key stakeholders.

A variety of sources have been consolidated for this report, including Australian Census data, manually collected Greek language school data, contemporary academic literature and language education programs. Limitations of the datasets used are discussed in the appendix.

Section 1: The Current State of the Greek Language

1.1 Not Greek nor Australian: The Development of a Hybrid Greek Australian Identity

Greek language usage and identity has developed across generations resulting in the formation of a complex dual identity. The way the Greek language is used within the household shows an intergenerational difference between first generation ('the migrant generation'), second generation and third generation Greek Australians. In a study conducted by Avgoulas and Fanany (2025) on three generations of Greek Australian women, this discrepancy in language use was evident:

- The first generation mainly used Greek and spoke limited English,
- The second generation were "true bilingual" speakers, using Greek and English,
- The third generation mainly used English but exhibited 'translanguaging'.⁶

Translanguaging in this context is where majority of a conversation is in English but select words are swapped into Greek: "Γιωγιά" instead of Grandmother.⁷ This phenomenon of mixed-language usage was observed in a study by Holeva (2004) termed as "GrEnglish Creole".⁸ Additionally, Holeva found that younger speakers used Greek primarily with older relatives (i.e. parents) but overwhelmingly switched to English with their peers (i.e. friends, siblings)⁹. Together, the studies indicate that while Greek fluency is declining, the way the language is used is unique to diasporic communities, particularly for intergenerational communication.

Alongside this is the emergence of a hybrid identity in which individuals identify as 'Greek Australian' rather than fully Greek or Australian. Avgoulas and Fanany (2019) find that individuals possess "a dual identity as Greek and also fully Australian", whilst Holeva (2004) found that the younger generations "increasingly perceive[d] themselves as Australians more than Greeks".¹⁰ Despite differences in the degree one feels either Greek or Australian, these studies illustrate the heterogeneity of the Greek Australian lived experience.

⁶ Avgoulas and Fanany, "The Greek Language in Diaspora," 192.

⁷ Avgoulas and Fanany, "The Greek Language in Diaspora," 192.

⁸ Holeva, "Current Trends of the Linguistic and Cultural Values," 217.

⁹ Holeva, "Current Trends of the Linguistic and Cultural Values," 217.

¹⁰ Fanany and Avgoulas, "Greek Identity in Australia," 1. ; Holeva, "Current Trends of the Linguistic and Cultural Values," 213.

However, there is a contradictory finding as well where language maintenance is seen as important across generations but the younger generation lacks the same “emotional attachment to the language”.¹¹ This internal conflict reflects a broader, ongoing debate within the Greek diaspora community regarding whether language maintenance remains essential to identity.¹² There is a division in those who see language as a necessary “carrier of culture” and those who believe Greek identity “transcends language” fluency.¹³ This one instance highlights the complexity and depth of this topic.

From the literature, it can be understood that the traditional concepts of “maintenance” or “preservation” are quite rigid and do not reflect the transformation in language usage discussed above. To effectively support the Greek language in the community, a better approach should use terms that acknowledge the unique context of language and identity in the Greek Australian diaspora, such as “cultivation” or “revitalisation”.

1.2 The Need for Multilingualism Support in Australia

The evolution of the Greek language in Australia connects to broader issues related to the need for multilingualism support in Australia. The loss of language fluency over time is a phenomenon felt not only by the Greek community, but by several migrant communities across the country.¹⁴ This pattern highlights that the loss of Greek language ties into a larger conversation around the loss of all community languages.

While multilingualism has been acknowledged in Australia through various programs and policies, there is a lack of an explicit national doctrine for multilingualism.¹⁵ Additionally, recognition for multilingualism within the multicultural doctrine is more so connected to an “immigrant identity” rather than Australia’s overarching identity.¹⁶ Consequently, multilingualism is prone to being seen as a fringe issue rather than a key component to Australia’s multicultural nature.

A number of studies focus on the intrinsic value of multilingualism to argue its importance as an economic resource. Both Schroedler et al. (2023) and Chik et al. (2019) connect language competencies to human capital, concluding that a loss in language fluency in community languages is a loss of human capital.¹⁷ The studies further establish the economic disadvantage of monolingualism through the limitations of international business opportunities and market reach.¹⁸ Furthermore, Schroedler et al. (2023) expanded on the ability of multilingualism to

¹¹ Fanany and Avgoulas, “Greek Identity in Australia,” 11.

¹² Elizabeth Mavroudi, “Feeling Greek, speaking Greek? National identity and language negotiation amongst the Greek diaspora in Australia,” *Geoforum* 116 (2020): 133-136 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.08.003>.

¹³ Patricia Koromvokis and Theodora Gianniotis, “DEBATE: Is the Greek language essential to our Greek Identity?” moderated by Tom Skolarikis and Nick Athanassiou, podcast, posted May 28, 2025, by Ouzo Talk, YouTube, 9:04 and 17:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vknlpnCJo>.

¹⁴ Forrest et al., “Linguistic Shift and Heritage Language Retention,” 1072-1074.

¹⁵ Kathleen Heugh and Phil Benson, “Reflections on Multilingual Sydney in a Multilingual World,” in *Multilingual Sydney*, ed. Alice Chik, Phil Benson and Robyn Moloney (Routledge, 2019), 232.

¹⁶ Heugh and Benson, “Reflections on Multilingual Sydney,” 232.

¹⁷ Tobias Schroedler et al., “The value of multilingualism for sustainable development: a case study of languages in Australia,” *International Multilingual Research Journal* 17, no. 4 (2023): 291-292, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2023.2208509>; Alice Chik et al., *What are languages worth? Community languages for the future of New South Wales* (Macquarie University: The Macquarie Multilingualism Research Group, 2019), 10.

¹⁸ Schroedler et al., “The value of multilingualism,” 291-292; Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 10-12.

meet market needs, such as the aged care sector.¹⁹ This issue was more pronounced for the Greek community, as Greek and Italian seniors are amongst the highest proportion of seniors with limited English abilities and those that required translation services.²⁰ Both studies show that multilingualism can benefit both local market needs and international market share.

Beyond fiscal benefits, the various social benefits of multilingualism discussed by Chik et al. (2019) connect directly to the Greek community. First, the argument was made through a quote by Ozdowski (2017) that community languages are connected to “a sense of belonging”.²¹ This was seen in previous studies, where it was established that language was seen as important in the Greek community regardless of a person’s ability to use it.²² Further, it was argued that usage of languages “strengthen[s] intergenerational” connections.²³ This was also seen earlier through the transmission of Greek occurring largely from younger generations to older generations.²⁴ Multilingualism can therefore contribute to social cohesion through a more secure sense of identity, connection to family and broader community belonging.

The need for multilingualism beyond the direct benefits to the country’s economy and individuals social belonging, it serves as a tool to deepen Australia’s understanding and approach to multiculturalism. The current government approach to multiculturalism is described by Rascon (2019) as a simplified and a surface level understanding, which leads to the emergence of anti-multiculturalism arguments.²⁵ This is evident in Australia’s socio-political landscape, with the rise of anti-immigration sentiment.²⁶ Therefore, it can be argued that a clear gap exists between the current approach to multiculturalism and a deeper understanding which would allow improved synchronicity between varied cultures in Australia. While this concept is outside the scope of this report, investigating the need for support of community languages is a crucial piece of the puzzle to move beyond the surface-level understanding of multiculturalism.

1.3 Evidence of Language Shift in Households

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data confirms the established concern that the Greek language, alongside other community languages, is declining over generations in favour of English.²⁷ This phenomenon is referred to as the “3-G Problem”, a term coined by Lo Bianco (2021) to describe the theory developed by Fishman (1966) regarding the phasing out of a minority language for a majority language within three generations.²⁸ However, a study by Forrest et al. (2020) found that the Greek language was a slight exception to this trend

¹⁹ Schroedler et al., “The value of multilingualism,” 297.

²⁰ Schroedler et al., “The value of multilingualism,” 297.

²¹ Sev Ozdowski, *Importance of heritage languages to Australia’s social and economic future*, quoted in Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 15.

²² Fanany and Avgoulas, “Greek Identity in Australia,” 11.

²³ Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 15.

²⁴ Holeva, “Current Trends of the Linguistic and Cultural Values,” 217.

²⁵ Roxana Rascon, “Developing policy and planning services for a multicultural community” in *Multilingual Sydney*, ed. Alice Chik, Phil Benson and Robyn Moloney (Routledge, 2019), 76-77.

²⁶ Fethi Mansouri, “Australia stands at a crossroads — the path we choose will determine the future of multiculturalism,” *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, September 23, 2025, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/fethi-mansouri-multiculturalism-australia-at-the-crossroads/105773630>.

²⁷ Forrest et al., “Linguistic Shift,” 1072-1074.

²⁸ Joseph Lo Bianco, *Pharos: The vitality and presence of Modern Greek in contemporary Australia* (Australian Council for Educational Research Press, 2021), 13-14.; Forrest et al., “Linguistic Shift,” 1072-1074.

where it demonstrated a relatively high retention rate when compared to other community languages.²⁹

As this study utilised the 2011 Census data, its methodology was applied to the most recent Census data (2021) to provide an updated empirical snapshot and help further establish the trajectory of Greek language shift between generations over the past decade. The methodology required the collection of the following metrics from Tablebuilder (an ABS database):

- Language Used at Home by 4-digit level ('LANP'),
- Country of Birth of Person ('BPLP'),
- Country of Birth of Parents ('BPPP'),
- Proficiency in Spoken English by 4-digit level ('ENGLP'),
- Ancestry Multi Response ('ANCP').³⁰

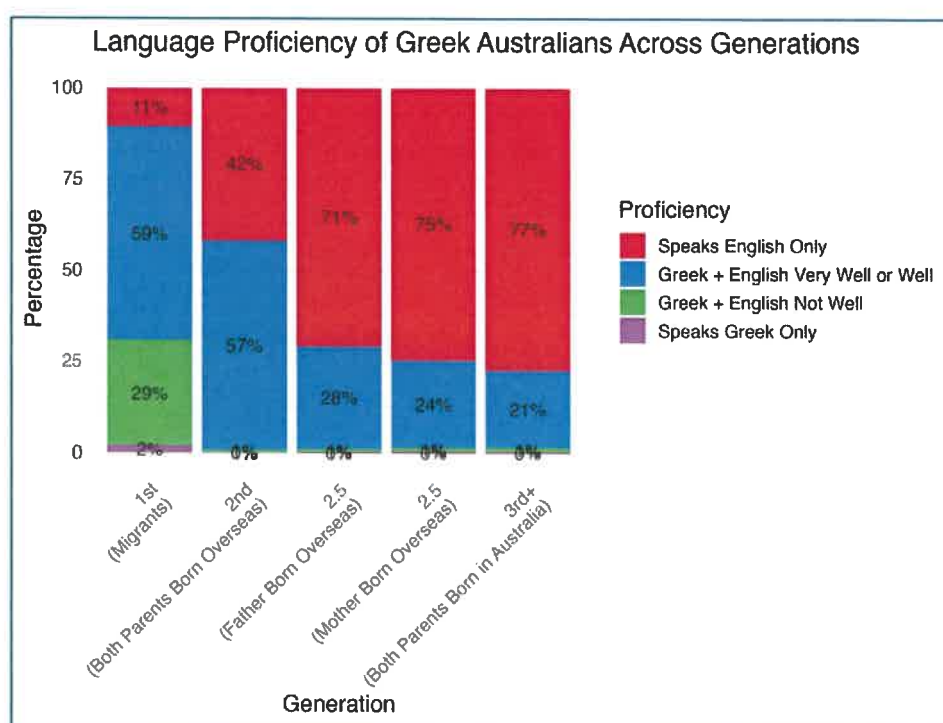


Figure 1: Language Proficiency of Greek Australians Across Generations. Using methodology from Forrest et al. (2020)

Figure 1 visualises use of Greek in Greek Australian households by presenting two factors: the proportion of households where only English is spoken, and the level of English proficiency among individuals who use Greek at home. This data is further separated by generation, with the addition of 'Generation 2.5' (only one parent born overseas) in order to closely follow the methodology of Forrest et al.³¹

²⁹ Forrest et al., "Linguistic Shift," 1072-1074.

³⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, "2021 Census of Population and Housing: counting persons, place of usual residence," *TableBuilder*, accessed September 3, 2025, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder>.

³¹ Forrest et al., "Linguistic Shift," 1072-1074.

Figure 1 clearly highlights the language shift through the increasing proportion of individuals who only use English in their households. English proficiency is established by the second generation, with low to no English proficiency displayed exclusively within the migrant generation. Though proficient, there is already a noticeable shift to English by the second generation, with approximately a 40/60 split between monolingual and bilingual households. This shift is only exemplified in Generation 2.5 and the third generation onwards. In these generations, English only households represent a significant majority, ranging from approximately 70-80%.

While the core methodology from Forrest et al. was followed, any comparisons drawn between their study and the current data must be made with a clear precaution regarding the potential differences in data collection and analysis methods.

Proportion of English Only Households for Greek Australians Between 2011 and 2021					
Generation (%)	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 2.5 Father Born Overseas	Gen 2.5 Mother Born Overseas	Gen 3+
2011	10	30	64	66	74
2021	11	42	71	75	77
Percentage Change (2011 to 2021)	1%	12%	7%	9%	3%

Table 1: Proportion of English Only Households for Greek Australians Between 2011 and 2021. 2011 Data from Forrest et al. (2020), 2021 data from the Census

Table 1 demonstrates how the largest increase in English only households between 2011 and 2021 is seen for individuals with one or both parents were born overseas. The increased intergenerational language shift could indicate that the factors contributing to this decline are not only still present but are continuing to impact the Greek Australian community.

The data supports the “3-G Problem” by confirming the shift from Greek to English that has seemingly worsened over the past decade.³² As discussed by Forrest et al., the retention rate for Greek is relatively high with approximately 21% of the third generation using Greek in the household.³³ Despite this, strategic intervention is still needed to better support the language.

³² Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 13-14.; Forrest et al., “Linguistic Shift,” 1072-1074.

³³ Forrest et al., “Linguistic Shift,” 1072-1074.

Section 2: Resources and Supports at Community, State Education and Government Levels

2.1 Community

The Greek Diaspora in Australia has various resources and supports in place allowing them to effectively transmit the “Greek culture” over generations.³⁴ A significant amount of community activity centres on the Greek Orthodox Church, with numerous studies highlighting its role in facilitating identity, community and belonging for Greek Australians.³⁵ This fosters a symbiotic relationship between the Church and greater community life. The Church both supports and undertakes endeavours that strengthen Greek culture, notably language schools.³⁶ Similarly, community groups often support the Church, reinforcing its central position within the community.³⁷

Community language classes are the main means to learn Greek in Australia, typically operating after school hours or on weekends.³⁸ A large proportion of classes are non-profit and community led.³⁹ In addition to intercommunity support, many of the schools receive funding from the state and federal government through the Community Language Associations (which will be further discussed in section 2.3).⁴⁰ While these classes are available within every state and territory, states with larger Greek populations tend to offer a wider variety of options. The language school landscapes in Victoria and South Australia will be investigated, which represent states with the large and mid-sized communities, respectively. According to the 2021 Census, Victoria recorded 181,184 individuals with Greek ancestry, while South Australia recorded 40,704.⁴¹ This analysis will use data from the Victorian Government (year) and the Community Language Associations in both states.⁴²

³⁴ Avgoulas and Fanany, “The Significance of Community for Greek Australians,” 224.; Anastasios Myrodis Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential: Profiles of 9 Key Languages in Australia, Volume 8: Modern Greek* (National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, 1993), 1.

³⁵ Piperoglou et al., “The Greek Diaspora and Greek Emigration,” forthcoming.; Fanany and Avgoulas, “Greek Identity in Australia,” 7.; Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia*, 104.

³⁶ Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia*, 104-105.

³⁷ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 55.

³⁸ Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 71.

³⁹ Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 71.

⁴⁰ “Community Language Australia”, Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations Inc., accessed September 22, 2025, <https://www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/communitylanguageschoolsinaustralia/>.

⁴¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, “2021 Census of Population and Housing: counting persons, place of usual residence,” *TableBuilder*, accessed September 4, 2025, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder>.

⁴² “ACCREDITED COMMUNITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS 2025,” Victorian Department of Education., accessed September 4, 2025, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/languages/Accredited-Community-Language-Schools-2025.pdf>.; “Victorian Community Languages Schools,” Community Languages Victoria, accessed September 4, 2025, <https://www.communitylanguages.org.au/CLS-List.php#Greek>.; “Find A School,” Community Language Schools SA, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://www.clssa.sa.edu.au/find-a-school/>.

2.1.1 Victoria

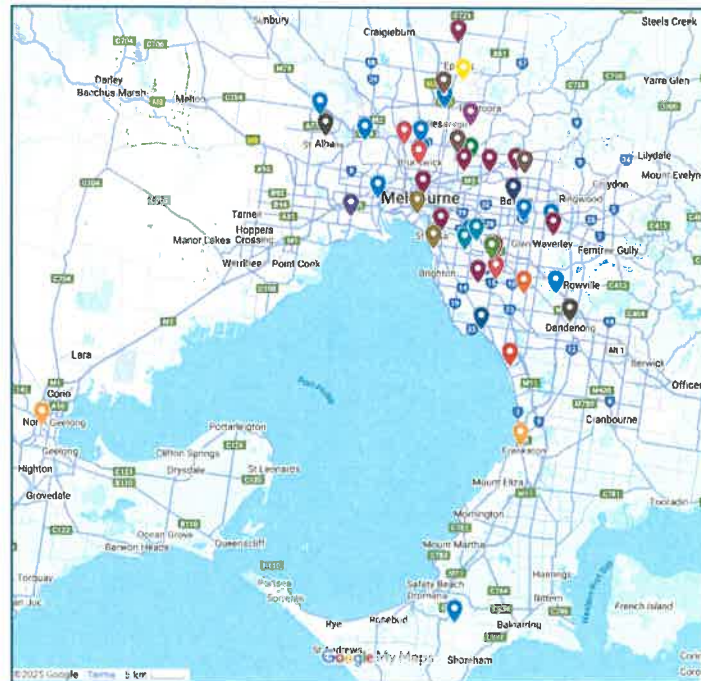


Figure 2: Greek Language Classes Offered in Victoria.

In Victoria, 19 language schools were identified as offering Greek language classes. Many of the organisations operate multiple classes per week across various campuses. In total, there are 45 unique locations where in person classes are held across Melbourne and Geelong. As seen by Figure 2, these classes are exclusively concentrated in urban areas, with no recorded options available for regional Victoria.

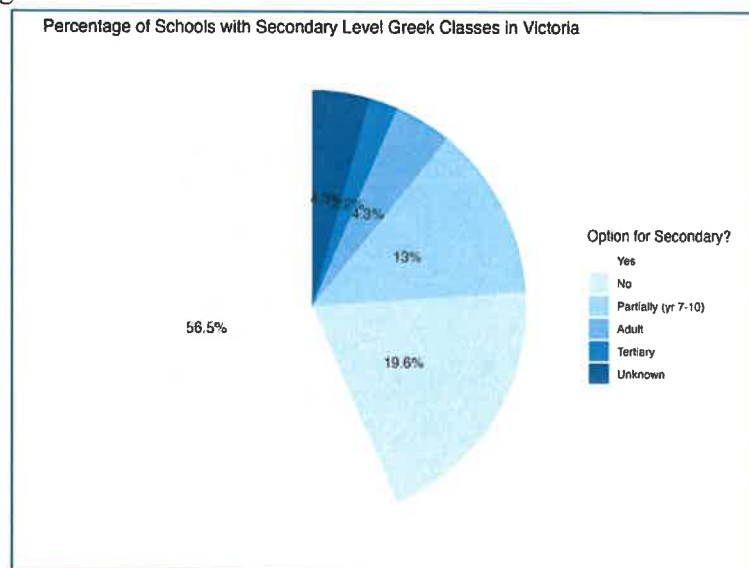


Figure 3: Percentage of Schools with Secondary Level Greek Classes in Victoria.

Figure 3 breaks down the levels catered for at each of the 45 locations. In total, 70% of locations offer some form of secondary teaching, with most (56.5%) offering a complete secondary program. This high level of availability is important as lack of later year programs can be a barrier to Greek language teaching (to be further discussed in section 2.2).

2.1.2 South Australia

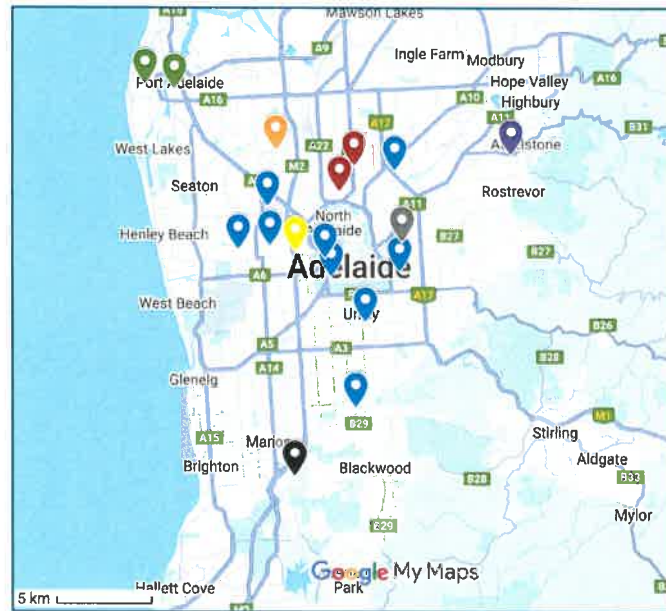


Figure 4: Greek Language Classes Offered in South Australia.

South Australia's language school landscape is smaller, with 7 organisations offering 18 weekly classes across Adelaide. This is to be expected due to the smaller size of the community in the state. Similar to Victoria, the classes recorded are exclusively within urban areas.

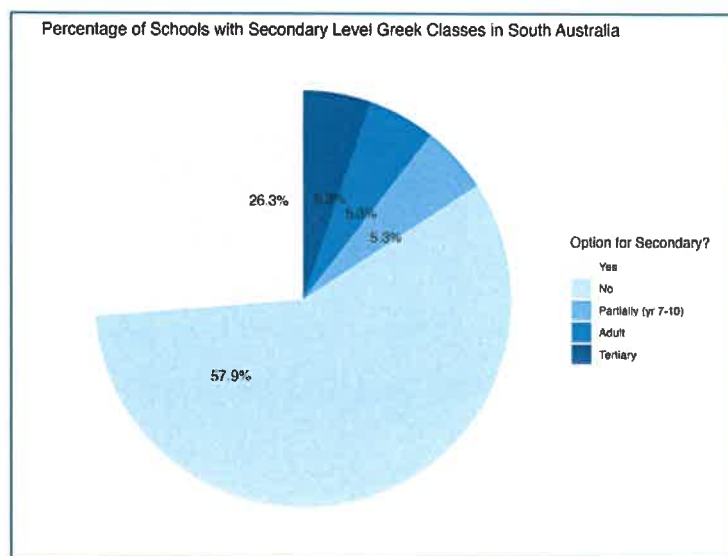


Figure 5: Percentage of Schools with Secondary Level Greek Classes in South Australia.

As seen in Figure 5, the most significant difference is the availability of programs for older students. Only around 30% of locations offer any secondary courses, with the majority catering exclusively to primary aged students. Again, this is partially due to the smaller community base, in which a lower supply of classes is needed given the size of the SA Greek community.

Community language schools are important because they meet the need to learn a language that otherwise may not be taught at day schools.⁴³ There are several additional benefits outside the language itself, including but not limited to: increased connection to family and the community, increased social cohesion and improved cognitive benefits.⁴⁴ The key challenge for language schools is that the quality of education varies across the nation.⁴⁵ An example of this can be the differing results between studies, in which Cruickshank (2018) found that schools were adaptable, particularly regarding technology.⁴⁶ Conversely, other studies found that certain language classes had outdated materials and were quite traditional.⁴⁷ Other key issues included teachers lacking a dedicated teaching space and challenges related to teacher qualifications. While the teachers were fluent and culturally knowledgeable, many did not hold Australian teaching qualifications.⁴⁸ This is not to suggest that they were unqualified, but rather that their teaching approach could sometimes create a cultural disconnect with students raised in an Australian context.⁴⁹

While after-school language classes are the backbone of Greek language learning, the challenges with teaching resources and consistency hinder the community's ability to effectively foster the language within the diaspora.

2.2 Language Education in Schools

Without a national language education policy, there are noticeable limitations in language teaching.⁵⁰ Consequently, all languages including Greek face numerous barriers for students.⁵¹ This issue stems from a failure of execution of previous programs and policies. As Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009) argue, Australia has no shortages of “policy development and program innovation in second language education”, but the issues emerge with the lack of “consistency” and “maintenance”.⁵²

This inconsistency is evident in the insufficient and variable language provision guidelines across states and territories.⁵³ One study focused on New South Wales found that its

⁴³ Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 9.

⁴⁴ Strategic Development Group, *Review of the investment in ACT Community Language Schools*, (The Legislative Assembly For The Australian Capital Territory, 2020), 4, https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1912915/LIST_Report-on-the-Independent-Review-of-the-Investment-in-ACT-Community-Language-Schools.PDF; Schroedler et al., “The value of multilingualism,” 295.; Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 6.

⁴⁵ Strategic Development Group, *Review of the investment in ACT Community Language Schools*, 4.; Anne-Marie Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude: The case for a blue-sky blueprint for Languages Education in Australia* (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association, 2021), 49.

⁴⁶ Ken Cruickshank, “Community language schools: Bucking the trend?” in *Multilingual Sydney*, ed. Alice Chik, Phil Benson and Robyn Moloney (Routledge, 2019), 167.

⁴⁷ Strategic Development Group, *Review of the investment in ACT Community Language Schools*, 15.; Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 53.; Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 49.

⁴⁸ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 47.; Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 28.; Strategic Development Group, *Review of the investment in ACT Community Language Schools*, 8.

⁴⁹ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 49.

⁵⁰ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 14-15.; Joseph Lo Bianco and Yvette Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2009), 6-7.; Ken Cruickshank, “Exploring the -lingual between Bi and Mono: Young People and Their Languages in an Australian Context,” in *The Multilingual Turn in Languages Education*, ed. Jean Conteh and Gabriela Meier (Multilingual Matters, 2014), 41-42.

⁵¹ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 49.; Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 50-54.; Cruickshank, “Exploring the -lingual between Bi and Mono”, 41-42.

⁵² Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, 6.

⁵³ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 14-15.; Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 23.

comparatively lax language provisions led to students in this state having “less exposure” when compared to “their Australian peers”.⁵⁴ The severity of this issue is reflected in Australia’s poor performance in languages education on an international level.⁵⁵

The lack of prioritisation placed on language provisions has the direct consequence of high dropout rates for students studying languages in secondary school.⁵⁶ Multiple studies found that this rate peaked when the study of a language became optional, which is around Year 8 to 10 depending on the state.⁵⁷ Lo Bianco (2021) highlighted that only 10-14% of all high school students in Australia completed a language course.⁵⁸ This high attrition rate was not only driven by the lax language provisions but also the widespread perception that languages, particularly community languages like Greek, are scaled poorly for the ATAR.⁵⁹

Beyond this there were various other issues identified in current language education within Australia. One identified issue from the studies is issues emerging from the connection of a course from primary to secondary school.⁶⁰ This includes courses that are available at a primary level but not a secondary level, causing students to pick an alternate course.⁶¹ This problem is particularly evident for Greek and matches what was seen at the community level (in section 2.1), where some states have more primary programs than secondary.⁶² This creates a deterrent for studying Greek, in which students will pick another language instead.⁶³ Additionally, for languages taught at both primary and secondary levels there is a mismatch of curriculum.⁶⁴ Schools often teach the same introductory content at each level to accommodate for new students.⁶⁵ This leads to a decreased quality of education for those continuing the language from the primary program. Further issues identified in the research include the need for a larger pool of proficient language teachers and better pathways to support them.⁶⁶

The barriers and limitations within the language education system heavily impacts tertiary language courses. For Greek in particular, university courses are often supported by the community.⁶⁷ Despite this, universities such as Macquarie University discontinued their Modern Greek course, alongside multiple other languages.⁶⁸ The research has shown two emerging findings that creates a vicious cycle. Low university enrolments, partly from the lack

⁵⁴ Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 23.

⁵⁵ Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 23.; Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 21.

⁵⁶ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 22.; Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 25-26.; Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 23.

⁵⁷ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 25-26.; Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, 48-49.

⁵⁸ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 21.

⁵⁹ Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 25.; Cruickshank, “Community language schools: Bucking the trend?”, 168.; Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 22.

⁶⁰ Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, 48.; Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 53.

⁶¹ Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 99.

⁶² Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 71.

⁶³ Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 71.; Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 58-59.

⁶⁴ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 28.; Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, 48.

⁶⁵ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 28.; Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, 48.

⁶⁶ Morgan et al., *Altitude and Amplitude*, 71.; Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, v & 60-61.

⁶⁷ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 8-12.; Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 100.

⁶⁸ Andriana Simos, “Macquarie University responds to criticism after decision to end Modern Greek program,” *The Greek Herald*, June 6, 2024, <https://greekherald.com.au/news/education/macquarie-university-responds-to-criticism-after-decision-to-end-modern-greek-program/>.

of continuing students in secondary school, reduces the viability of the program and contributes to course cuts. If the courses are not available at a tertiary level, then students may be further disincentivised to study the language at the primary or secondary level.

Overall, Australia's inconsistent and weak approach to languages education causes languages like Greek to be of low priority. This results in high attrition rates in secondary level and course cuts at tertiary levels.

2.3 Government Support

The Australian government makes frequent and diverse investments into the Greek language, but this support could be complemented by policies that promote multilingualism and community languages, as discussed in section 1.2 and 2.2. Most recently, the Albanese government promised to invest \$25 million into community language schools as a part of their election campaign.⁶⁹

The most direct support currently is the investment by both state and federal government into the given Community Language Associations (CLAs) in each state and territory.⁷⁰ The CLAs will then distribute grants to accredited community language schools.⁷¹ The research conducted in Section 2.1 revealed that there are 46 accredited Greek community schools across Australia that receive this funding, with many schools offering multiple locations and classes. This helps alleviate the financial strain on community-led organisations through covering costs like textbooks and materials.⁷² These grants enable schools to lower their fees and make language education more accessible.

Beyond direct funding, the federal government also supports languages through investments for multicultural institutions like the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).⁷³ The SBS airs radio programs, news, and podcasts in Greek, alongside various other languages.⁷⁴ While less relevant to language learning, it plays a symbolic role in helping to normalise linguistic diversity and reinforcing multiculturalism as a key government value. Additionally, there are practical benefits, such as helping to ensure the older generations with lower English proficiency can stay informed.⁷⁵

While financial investments are crucial for community language schools, the discussion throughout this report has demonstrated the need for improved policies around languages,

⁶⁹ "Labor is celebrating Australian diversity through community language schools," Australian Labor Party, April 26, 2025, <https://alp.org.au/news/labor-is-celebrating-australian-diversity-through-community-language-schools/>.

⁷⁰ "Community Language Australia", Community Languages Australia Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations Inc., accessed September 22, 2025, <https://www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/communitylanguageschoolsinaustralia/>.

⁷¹ "Community Language Australia", Community Languages Australia Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations Inc., accessed September 22, 2025, <https://www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/communitylanguageschoolsinaustralia/>.

⁷² "Community Language Australia", Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations Inc., accessed September 22, 2025, <https://www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/communitylanguageschoolsinaustralia/>.

⁷³ "Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)," Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sports and the Arts, January 1, 2024, <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/national-broadcasters/special-broadcasting-service-sbs>.

⁷⁴ "Languages," Special Broadcasting Service, accessed October 20, 2025, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/en>.

⁷⁵ Schroedler et al., "The value of multilingualism," 297.

particularly in the education system. The current system relies mainly on the teaching of community languages to be disconnected from mainstream education.⁷⁶ However, key research argues that community language schools should be incorporated into the formal education system.⁷⁷

Promisingly, some state initiatives are already investigating this integrated approach. For example, the NSW Community Languages Program (K-6), connects community teachers within primary schools in areas with a high concentration of speakers.⁷⁸ A limitation for Greek is that this program would only benefit areas with a high proportion of Greek speakers. More recently, the ACT's Languages Education Action Plan (2024) seeks to "leverage the community languages sector" within mainstream education.⁷⁹ Part of achieving this is through helping to formally recognise the "proficiency" students gain in external community classes.⁸⁰ Both programs show that community language learning should not exist in isolation but rather should be integrated into the mainstream system.

This reflects the need for national policy to extend beyond fiscal support towards a strategy of structural integration of community languages, both in education and generally.

⁷⁶ Tamis et al., *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential*, 71.; Cruickshank, "Community language schools: Bucking the trend?", 168.

⁷⁷ Lo Bianco and Slaughter, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, 60.; Chik et al., *What are languages worth?*, 29-30.

⁷⁸ "Community languages program K-6," NSW Department of Education, last modified August 20, 2025, <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages/leading-languages-k-12/leading-languages-k-6/community-languages-program-k-6>.

⁷⁹ Education Directorate, *LANGUAGE EDUCATION ACTION PLAN* (ACT Government, 2024), 4, https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2879885/Language-Education-in-ACT-Public-Schools-Action-Plan.PDF.

⁸⁰ Education Directorate, *LANGUAGE EDUCATION ACTION PLAN*, 4.

Section 3: A Framework for Reversing Language Shift

3.1 Classifying the Challenge: An EGIDS Analysis

Reversing Language Shift (RLS), coined by Joshua Fishman (1991) is an extensive process that is difficult due to applying goals and strategies to “natural social processes”.⁸¹ The goal of RLS is “stability”, such that a language is at least “intergenerationally transmissible”.⁸² Fishman created a hierarchal model called the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) to help classify the degree to which a language was threatened.⁸³ A lower number indicates a more stable, established language (Stage 1 is the best scenario). Understanding where Greek in Australia is classified will help better understand how to target responses to best attempt RLS.

Table 2 uses the Expanded Scale (EGIDS) developed by Lewis and Simons (2010).⁸⁴

Stage (Table)	Definition	Justification
Dispersed: 5 (Alternative labels for other special situations)	“The language is fully developed in its home country... but these are not promoted in the country in focus via institutionally supported education.”	This additional category shows the unique context of Greek in the diaspora: while it is threatened in Australia, its situation is different from other threatened languages (i.e. indigenous languages), as there is an established national community of speakers elsewhere.
Threatened: 6b (EGIDS)	“The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.”	Previous discussion saw that while Greek is used for some communication, it is not used between all generations.
Shifting: 7 (EGIDS)	“The child-bearing generation can use the language... but it is not being transmitted to children.”	The language is not officially at this stage as it is still transmitted to children, but at a decreasing rate (discussed in section 1.3).

Table 2: EGIDS Levels Relevant to Greek in Australia, adapted from Lewis and Simons (2010) and Eberhard et al. (2025)

Greek in Australia sits at stage 6b with potential to move to stage 7. This shows the dynamic and shifting nature of the language previously discussed. Fishman acknowledges that while

⁸¹ Joshua A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Multilingual Matters 76, 1991), 67.

⁸² Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, 86.

⁸³ Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, 87.

⁸⁴ M. Paul Lewis and Gary F. Simons, “ASSESSING ENDANGERMENT: EXPANDING FISHMAN’S GIDS,” *Revue roumaine de linguistique* 55, no. 2 (2010): 110-114, <https://www.lingv.ro/RRL-2010.html>.; David M. Eberhard et al., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 28th ed., “Methodology” (SIL International, 2025), <https://www.ethnologue.com/methodology/#Status>.

“small and voluntary” efforts can be made within the community, it may be insufficient to “fully reverse” the shift.⁸⁵ This sets up the need for a comprehensive strategy.

3.2 A Strategy for RLS: The COD Model

The COD model, coined by Grin and Vaillancourt (1988) and expanded by Lo Bianco (2021), is a vital RLS strategy built on three connecting pillars: Capacity, Opportunity and Desire.⁸⁶

‘Capacity’ aims to increase an individual’s language proficiency, based on the principle that greater skill and confidence lead to greater use.⁸⁷ A crucial component of this, however, is to welcome “all efforts at communication”.⁸⁸ This is particularly relevant for younger generations which, as discussed, increasingly have less language “knowledge” and engage in “translanguaging”.⁸⁹

‘Opportunity’ refers to creating new “occasions” for learners to use Greek, which in turn can build their ‘Capacity’ through practice.⁹⁰ To be effective, these opportunities must be inclusive of all proficiency levels and designed with the consideration of young individuals.⁹¹ The latter concept connects to ‘Desire’, by ensuring the activities are relevant and engaging.

‘Desire’ seeks to utilise the internal and external motivations that drive an individual to use and learn a language.⁹² Exploring this through encouraging students to “imagine their future selves” as language users is a key strategy to encourage continuation of study amongst individuals.⁹³

The COD model is a highly flexible framework. At a high level, it can be used to construct detailed strategies, such as the “Modern Greek Strategic Plan” Lo Bianco developed for the Modern Greek Teachers Association of Victoria (‘MGTAV’).⁹⁴ However, it can also be used to inform smaller initiatives. For example, a simple application of Opportunity is for a youth organisation to create a “Greek only” speaking environment. This exact strategy was recently observed when the National Union of Greek Australian Students (‘NUGAS’) Victoria introduced a 10-minute Greek conversation at their usual weekly meetup, encouraging participation regardless of fluency.⁹⁵ This example emphasises that RLS initiatives do not have to be elaborate to be meaningful. It confirms that the COD model is an invaluable framework for any group.

⁸⁵ Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, 82.

⁸⁶ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 97.

⁸⁷ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 99.

⁸⁸ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 99.

⁸⁹ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 99.

⁹⁰ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 102.

⁹¹ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 104.

⁹² Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 106-107.

⁹³ Lo Bianco, *Pharos*, 108.

⁹⁴ “Modern Greek Strategic Plan,” Modern Greek Teachers Association of Victoria, accessed October 18, 2025, <http://www.mgtav.asn.au>.

⁹⁵ National Union of Greek Australian Students (NUGAS) Victoria (@nugasvic), Instagram, September 9, 2025, accessed October 18, 2025.

Section 4: Recommendations

4.1 For Mr Steve Georganas MP

1. Continued support for the Greek Community, specifically community language schools and other language-based initiatives.
2. Advocacy for multilingualism as a part of multiculturalism, with engagement within relevant parliamentary bodies.
3. Advocacy to improve language education at all levels, noting the systemic barriers identified in the report.

4.2 For the Australian Government (Federal & State)

1. Investigate educational reform to improve language education at all levels, particularly the integration of community languages into mainstream education.
2. Promote multilingualism as a part of multiculturalism. Formally recognise its contribution to society, for example through increased social cohesion and human capital.
3. Continue to support multicultural research to deepen the understanding of concepts discussed such as multilingualism and diaspora communities.

4.3 For Greek Community Organisations

1. Utilise the COD (Capacity, Opportunity and Desire) model to guide Greek language cultivation initiatives. This can be applied to small, easy to implement events to larger long-term strategic plans.
2. Work alongside young Greek Australians to ensure program implementation is relevant and effective. Initiatives incorporating newer technology such as social media should be investigated.
3. Foster an inclusive environment that celebrates all current language efforts, such as partial speakers, translanguaging and GrEnglish. No initiative should be based on guilt or shame.

Conclusion

Greek language use in Australia is not simply declining but rather transforming to reflect an evolving diasporic identity. While the community provides various resources to support the language, challenges within language schools and mainstream education exposed barriers to Greek language cultivation. Furthermore, the application of sociolinguistic theory confirmed the shifting nature of the Greek language within Australia. This highlighted the need for two main adjustments. First, structural reform for all languages within the education sector, and second, community-led initiatives guided by the COD model.

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Appendix

Limitations of Census Data from Section 1.3

The metric of using another language in the household (LANP) is vague and insufficient for accurately assessing bilingualism. This measure fails to consider the diverse ways language is used, as discussed in Section 1.3, particularly the degree of usage and fluency of the individual. Consequently, it does not capture an individual's language capabilities, for example, a Greek speaker may not use the language in their household (e.g. a university student living with monolingual peers).

There is a similar issue with the Parents Country of Birth (BPPP) metric, as the specific country of origin could not be selected. While the data was filtered for Greek ancestry, it is entirely impossible that the parent was born in another country. This leads to a decreased precision of the definition of generations in the findings.

To better understand multilingualism in Australia, the census data should include questions related directly to second language proficiency and language acquisition type (i.e. whether the language is cultural/heritage or an additional language learnt). Additionally, the parents' country of birth should be specified to allow for a better understanding of cultural diversity in Australia.

Limitations of Data from Section 2.1

The methodology used to gather data on Greek language schools involved collecting accredited schools from CLA websites, supplemented by manual google searches. Two main issues emerged:

- **Completeness:** Classes that do not receive community languages funding or that are not online (i.e., a website or Facebook page) would not be included in the database. This omission could disproportionately affect rural areas, who are more likely to rely on word of mouth.
- **Timeliness:** The information on the CLA and individual schools' websites may be outdated. This could lead to inaccuracies, such as the inclusion of schools that are no longer operating, or the exclusion of new schools.

A Note on Comparison between Countries

The comparison of Greek language retention rates across diasporic communities was investigated to better understand the level of Australia's Greek language retention. However, several issues arose, causing direct comparison to be unfeasible:

- Census data availability and collection differed across countries. Metrics used for the analysis in Section 1.3 were either absent or measured in a different manner.
- Differences around the historical context and current environment diasporic communities were in. For example, assumptions about how "well" a country does at retaining Greek could have less to do with specific policies, and more with migration history and how insular the community is.

Despite these issues, it is understood that the concerns facing Greek language retention in Australia are common to Greek diaspora communities across the world.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ John Pandazopoulos, *Learning Greek top priority for diasporic Greeks*, quoted in Mavroudi, "Feeling Greek, speaking Greek?", 132.