As part of the VSL’s 80th Anniversary celebrations in 2015, a reception was held on 4 August at Parliament House of Victoria. The purpose of this event was to celebrate the VSL’s achievements and to thank the many groups and individuals who have supported the school over its 80 year journey.

The VSL was delighted to welcome many distinguished guests to this event, including a number of Ministers, Parliamentarians, Consular representatives, Education officials, host school principals, presidents of language teacher associations, and VSL school councillors and staff.

Guests were welcomed by the School Council President Associate Professor Bruno Mascitelli. The Minister for Education and Deputy Premier, Hon James Merlino began the proceedings, “I congratulate you all on this important milestone anniversary. The Victorian School of Languages as we know it today is an important provider of languages education to Victoria. Over the years the VSL has played an invaluable role in nurturing and building the linguistic and cultural capital of Victoria.” He listed the many known cognitive benefits and improved learning outcomes that language learning brings, before explaining the other ways it helps in the education of young people: “In learning an additional language, students become more reflective about their own identity and they learn to value and respect other cultures.”

The Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Finance, Hon Robin Scott then acknowledged the work of the VSL in supporting multiculturalism in Victoria. He made a special mention of the support provided by the many host school principals from around Victoria. One of the Principals in attendance was Ms Leonie White from Thomastown Secondary College. She observed that her school’s relationship with the VSL is a partnership, and that the VSL feels like “our” school. Having the VSL has enriched our students’ experiences and our community...and I thank the school.”

The Hon Nick Wakeling, Shadow Minister for Education, stated that “Tonight’s a wonderful night because it’s a wonderful opportunity for us to collectively celebrate the wonderful work of this organisation over eighty years. A great strength of this State is our multiculturalism. It’s something that we embrace and the work of this organisation is so important.”

VSL Principal Frank Merlino thanked the many friends and supporters of the VSL for attending the evening. He made a special mention of the support provided by the many host school principals from around Victoria. One of the Principals in attendance was Ms Leonie White from Thomastown Secondary College. She observed that her school’s relationship with the VSL is a partnership, and that the VSL feels like “our” school. Having the VSL has enriched our students’ experiences and our community...and I thank the school.”

The Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Hon Inga Peulich, spoke about her experiences as a student at the school in the 1980s. She reflected on the formative power of her language study: “My language study played a very big role in my life, without which my path would have been quite different.”

Dr Marco Maria Cerbo (Italian Consul-General) and Ms Keiko Haneda (Japanese Consul-General). Japanese and Italian were the first languages taught at the VSL in 1935.

The final speaker was Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, a world renowned scholar in linguistics and language education. In his address he emphasised the uniqueness of the VSL. He explained that he has assisted other countries such as Myanmar and South Africa to find a way to deliver programs in many languages, and that the structure of the VSL has inspired those countries. “I think that is worthy of mention, acknowledgement and considerable pride.”
Inclusion in and through education: Language counts - 2015 ANGLS Conference

Early this year UNESCO backed the ‘International Mother Day Language’ celebration and had as its theme ‘Inclusion in and through education: Language Counts’. In a globalised and culturally diverse world, language ability has become increasingly important. It cements human societies, supports cultural vitality and makes socio-economic development possible. Language ability is also essential for cognitive development and allows the fulfilment of individual potential and broader learning.

At the 18th annual conference of the Australian Network of Government Language Schools (ANGLS), hosted at the Alice Springs Language Centre, Principals from the various States and Territories had the opportunity to reflect on challenges and new options for effective languages education. Since its formation in 1998 the Network has acted as a catalyst and sounding board for interstate cooperation.

Part of the conference dealt with aspects of teaching Aboriginal children and with many constructive ideas that would be great to implement in our respective States and schools. Visiting a remote school in Hermannsburg, listening to local experts on education and the Law Courts and on cultural protocols was a fantastic and unique opportunity. The challenge of encouraging the teaching of Aboriginal languages remains, especially for us in Victoria. Research shows that mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education has a positive impact on a student’s overall learning educational outcome.

The Conference program also allowed the Principals from the various States to report their highlights and challenges regarding language education. They had the opportunity to have a tour of Ntaria P-12 School and met with the Principal Cath Green. They also listened to an array of presentations by Ms Karen Blanchfield (Regional Director, Alice Springs schools South, NT Department of Education), Mr David Moore (Interpreter Services to the Aboriginal Community), Mr Neil Broad (Translator and Member Australian Society for Indigenous languages). Former Victorian DE&T Officer Arthur Townsend also dropped in.

There was also a panel discussion chaired by members of Indigenous Language Learning in Remote Schools, Indigenous Languages & Culture support consultant, Central Australia and the School Support Unit South, NT Department of Education.

This conference also allowed the opportunity for discussion and workshops between the States on common issues and priorities such as the Implementation of the Australian Curriculum for Languages, the role of school councils and marketing and promotion strategies for our language schools.

The President of ANGLS, Frank Merlino, summed up the views of all of the participants in praising the host Principal, Domenique Castle, and her staff for hosting the conference and arranging a wonderful range of speakers.
80th Anniversary Gala Dinner and Awards ceremony

On Saturday 29th August, the San Remo Ballroom in Carlton was packed out by staff and friends of the VSL, who gathered to celebrate the school’s 80th anniversary. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our shared achievements and also to enjoy each other’s company across Faculties, Centres, and our Distance Education section. The Hon Lily D’Ambrosio, Minister for Industry, Energy & Resources represented the Minister of Education, and many guests from consulates and educational organizations were in attendance. It was also great to see our School Council members present.

One of the aims of the event was to acknowledge a number of people who have made a significant contribution to our school. Thank you to the Selection Committee that chose the following Award recipients of the VSL Teacher, Parent and Community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>AWARD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miyuki Wirth</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>VCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Nicolaou</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamaypaw Naysay</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>F-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Rae</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>VCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafia Dell’Anna</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>VCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurwinder Mohan Singh</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>Years 7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Ines Avila</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mervat El-Gawly</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thushari Deepika Perera</td>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alka Keshari</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>Years 7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lian Ding Hmung</td>
<td>Chinhakha</td>
<td>VCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>East 1: Greek Parent &amp; Friend Association</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Parent Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maree Dellora (VCAA)</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Recognition Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalaf Greis (Area North)</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Recognition Award</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Heather Rae, who received an award for her teaching of German at VCE level, was delighted to be recognised for her work:

“I would like to thank the VSL for the honour of being awarded the VSL teaching award for my work with VCE students. I undertake this work with pleasure and enjoy rising to each new challenge, whether at Box Hill or Distance Education. I believe a core strength of the VSL is the working atmosphere of encouraging the teaching of languages for the genuine love of languages, the belief in the benefit of Languages for the students and the community.”

The Gala Dinner was an enjoyable evening and one of the highlights was when guests got up and danced to music and songs that were sung in several languages from around the world. The Greek Faculty from South Oakleigh later wrote to the VSL head office to express their appreciation for such a fun night. “Everything was fantastic: venue-food-music-atmosphere!”

Thanks to all for making it a memorable night. A big thank you also to everyone who assisted in selling the tickets and to Angela Natoli in particular for the overall organisation of the function – without her dedicated support the dinner would not have taken place.

Thank you also to the staff of the San Remo Ballroom for their elegant venue and great service.
The Victorian School of Languages initiated our VETinSchools program at the start of 2014, and this year we decided to enter our VETinSchools program in the 2015 Victorian Training Awards.

The Awards were presented on Friday 28 August and a strong VSL delegation composed of Pandora Petrovska, Peter Shaw-Truex, Maurice Gregorace, Khalaf Greis and Frank Merlino was in attendance. The VSL’s entry made the final but did not receive the top award in the VETinSchools category which went to the Geelong Industry Trade Training Centre, a very large operation.

Nevertheless, Minister Steve Herbert congratulated the VSL on being a finalist: “The awards celebrate the best and brightest from across Victoria’s TAFE and training sector and you should be very proud of your hard work and achievement.”

The certificate to the VSL was presented by the Department Secretary, Ms Gill Callister.

### Introduction of new VCE languages in 2016

In the past 18 months the VCAA and teachers from respective community groups have been working together to prepare the VCE Study Designs for accreditation of Chin Hakha, Karen and Vietnamese First Language.

Year 11 VCE Chin Hakha, a language of Myanmar, was taught this year for the first time in the world by the VSL with Year 12 to commence in 2016. Karen, another language from Myanmar, has also received VCE Accreditation with Year 11 classes commencing in 2016 and Year 12 in 2017.

In addition, the VCE Vietnamese First Language Reference Group met at the VSL head office on the 27 October for a final Study Design consultation. The meeting was facilitated by VCE Language Manager, Maree Dellora and her colleague Maria Dikaio and attended by Vietnamese teachers who have contributed to the writing of the Study Design. This new VCE course is in response to the increasing number of Year 12 Vietnamese students who are International students and are dominating the top scores for the language and making it more difficult for the local students to compete. The Year 11 VCE Vietnamese First Language course will commence in 2016 and at Year 12 in 2017.

Our school congratulates the VCAA for its ability to introduce new languages and courses at the VCE level.
What's been happening in our VSL centres?

As any visitor to a VSL Centre knows, there is always something going on. Here is an eclectic range of activities:

**Karen Open Day**

On September 5, Karen parents were invited to the Croydon Centre to experience first hand what their children do in Karen classes. Parents eagerly participated in classroom activities with their children. They took part in Karen singing and dancing, Karen story time and writing activities. The visit allowed them to attend classes and gain a greater insight and understanding of the Croydon Centre and the Karen classes in particular. It will also assist them to promote the language within their own community. The Karen language has gained VCE accreditation for 2016 and the community’s pride in this important milestone was evident on the day.

**Success for VSL students of Hebrew**

Three Hebrew language students from the VSL McKinnon Centre recently won all of the prizes for their Hebrew essay writing in the prestigious Melbourne University Ziva Shavitsky Foundation Hebrew essay competition. This is the first year that VSL students have entered this competition. Their achievements are a testament to the quality of the VSL’s learning program and to the skills of our students.

**Korean dignitaries visit the Blackburn Centre**

On September 5 staff and students of the Blackburn Centre welcomed Director Soo Hwan Kang, from the Korean Education Centre in Sydney, and Ms Insun Chang, Korean Language Advisor to Victoria. There were many positive and inspiring conversations between the visitors and our Korean students to encourage them to continue their Korean language studies. They were also inspired to think about being ambassadors for the Korean language once they complete their school studies. The VSL looks forward to working collaboratively with the Korean Education Centre to provide high quality Korean language programs to our Victorian students and continue to support the Korean International Students.

**Greek immersion classes at South Oakleigh Centre**

Over 300 students were involved in the Greek cooking immersion classes at the South Oakleigh Centre in August and September. This year the focus was on Pontian cooking and the students made *pereskia*. The local Member of Parliament Stephen Dimopoulos dropped in and demonstrated his own culinary skills. The immersion classes have a simple cooking component and they are carried out in the target language of Greek with a little English when needed. The cooking aspect is the starting point for the class. Students practise a new set of vocabulary, they are provided with a grammar lesson, and an opportunity to participate in listening comprehension as well as extending their cultural awareness. The goal of the program is to acquire proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the target language, with the cooking aspect of the program providing the ‘fun element’.
Professional Development for VSL Teachers

Throughout Terms 3 and 4, the VSL has been committed to upskilling our teachers to enable them to cater for the diversity in their classrooms. Angela Natoli, the Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Professional Development, has been facilitating ‘Differentiation Strategies for Mixed Abilities & Levels in the Language Classroom’ workshops. This was conducted across all VSL areas including regional centres, with 357 teachers from Prep to VCE attending so far. The practical learning sessions have provided language teachers with specific differentiation strategies and planning ideas needed for the multi-level classroom.

The sessions have examined the following topics: What is a multi-level/mixed ability classroom? Investigating possible challenges teachers may face, Advantages of teaching a mixed ability class, Strategies for the multi-level classroom, Practical scenarios, Differentiation model, Needs Analysis, Extension activities for stronger students and Support for weaker students, Differentiation Basics and Differentiating Instruction using technology.

This has been a highly successful model for delivering professional development across centres, and it is evident in the large number of participants. We will be investigating a possible video conferencing model to deliver professional development to our country centres in the new year, as well as organising workshops to prepare lesson plans to further consolidate knowledge regarding differentiation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Footscray City College</td>
<td>8 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSL Head Office, Thornbury</td>
<td>15 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keilor Downs Secondary College</td>
<td>22 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glen Waverley Secondary College</td>
<td>25 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKinnon Secondary College</td>
<td>27 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dandenong High School</td>
<td>12 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doncaster Secondary College</td>
<td>17 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Cory High School</td>
<td>10 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Geelong Secondary College</td>
<td>14 November</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A successful evening seminar called VCE Assessment & Moderation was held on 12 August from 5pm-7:30pm at VSL head office in Thornbury with 105 teachers attending.

It was designed to provide practical advice and strategies for generating optimum results for VCE students and it was offered to our VCE (Year 11 & 12) teachers. The seminar was facilitated by the VCAA Manager for Statistical Moderation & Assessment Reporting Division, Mr. Nick Dobroff.

Topics included VCE Moderation, Assessment, Ranking of Students and Indicative Grades. Our VCE teachers found this an extremely valuable session and it reinforced the need to constantly revisit our assessment and reporting practices as well as to develop an understanding of what happens behind the scenes when our students’ final results are calculated.
The redeveloped VSL web site was launched late last year and includes many new and improved features. We are now giving particular attention to the News section. Please have a look and pass on any feedback. The site is at: www.vsl.vic.edu.au

We have also launched three new online media sites: a Blog, a Facebook page and Twitter account. They will all relate to the News section of the website, but will have complementary functions.

**VSL Blog** – This is a new section in the web site. It is an outlet for longer form pieces (300-600 words) about major events and developments at the school, our stakeholders, language issues, and articles. It has been initiated by a VSL parent, Liz Lopez, who is a journalist. Thanks to Liz for all her hard work.

**Facebook** – This will be used for shorter form announcements and marketing.

**Twitter** – Another arm to link to languages professionals who favour Twitter. Twitter is to be used mainly for announcements and dissemination of links.

Links to the above can all be found on the Victorian School of Languages home page.
Key 2015 Term 4 Dates

12 September  Last Class for Term 3 (Centres 1-10)
19 September  Last Class for Term 3 (Centres VCE)
10 October   Centre Classes commence for Term 4
3 - 30 October VCE Languages Oral exam Period
19 October   VCE CCAFL Written Exam
26 Oct - 18 November VCE Written Exams
5 November   2016 enrolments for existing students commence
13 November  2016 enrolments for new students commence
14 November  Final day for centre classes (VCE)
21 November  Final day for centre classes (Years 1 - 10)
18 December  End of School year
30 January 2016 Centre staff PD (Area based)
6 February 2016 2016 Centre classes begin

New VSL Publications/Materials 2015

Chinese Year 10 Distance Education course
Amharic Grades 1 and 2 Resources
German 12 Online Course
Indonesian 12 Online Course
French 11 Online Course
Italian 11 Online Course
Italian Exam Practice Kits
Chin Hakha VCE Units 1&2 Textbook
Japanese Extension Workbook 5-7
Tamil Prep/1 workbook
Tamil 2 Workbook
Others currently in progress include:
Hindi VELS level 2 textbook
Bosnian VCE
Karen VCE
Sinhala VCE

Principal Leonie White and Khalaf Gries at the Parliament House function
Consuls-General of Turkey and Egypt with Leonie White and Dr Mascitelli
Gala Dinner
Historian Catherine Bryant with Lia Tedesco, Principal South Australian School of Languages

Hon Bruce Atkinson, President of Legislative Council (Centre)
School Council members