



### Launch of Virtual English as an Additional Language – an Australian first

On 15 June 2016 the Education Department officially launched its program to teach English through technology to newly arrived students in country Victoria who cannot access a Department Language School or Language Centre. Twenty-nine schools have so far participated.

The launch of the “Virtual English as an Additional Language (EAL) New Arrivals Program” was made by Dr David Howes and is an initiative of the Department of Education and Training and the Victorian School of Languages.

It is the first time in Australia that a distance education program to teach English (EAL) by using interactive technologies has been established.

Victoria welcomes thousands of new settlers every year and the Department has the responsibility of providing intensive English language instruction, mainly through the English Language Schools and Centres and EAL specialists who are generally based in the metropolitan area and regional centres.

However, there is an ever-increasing number of students living in geographically remote areas of Victoria where specialised EAL services are not available.

Early in 2016, the Minister of Education, the Hon James Merlino, approved the formal establishment of the Virtual EAL New Arrivals Program.



*Dr David Howes launching the project*

According to Dr Howes, “What we witnessed here today and what we are here to celebrate...is a culmination of so many people working together over a number of years...The challenges of distance and lack of availability of specialist English language teachers, that were once a barrier to support, have now been overcome through the specialised and expert use of



*Participating schools as seen on the screen*

virtual and other technologies, so that no matter where an isolated newly-arrived student lives in Victoria, they will be able to access EAL provision.”

The project began in September 2013 when, following a restructure of Education Department Regions, the former Western Metropolitan Region was expanded to include large country areas. Following a discussion between Giuliana Mecoli and Jeff McArthur (Regional Office) and Yolette De Zilwa (Western English Language School), a meeting was held with Frank Merlino, Principal of the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) to see if the distance education and technology expertise of the VSL could be utilised to deliver the English program.

The suggestions were subsequently endorsed by the Department’s EAL Unit and a project board was established to give broad guidance and prepare documentation.



*EAL Pilot program meeting 2014*

According to Mr Merlino “The Victorian School of Languages is delighted to contribute to a most essential service to assist new student arrivals in country Victoria to improve their English skills and greatly improve their opportunities at school.”

He also commented on the collaboration that led to the establishment of the project. "All EAL Officers in the various locations of the Department should be proud of the contribution they have made."

I wish in particular to thank Chris Finch, the Manager of the EALM Unit for the DET approval, Stefo Stojanovski (Assistant Principal) for managing the project at the VSL, Boris Grizelj and the three EAL teachers - Voula Mackenzie, Douha Abdo and Panayiota Kai".



Principal Frank Merlino thanking contributors

The launch took place at the VSL Head Office and was attended by Senior Department EAL staff from the Language Centres and Schools, the Region and the DET Central Office.

The participating schools are:

Apollo Bay P-12 College	Ararat North Primary School
Ararat Secondary College	Bairnsdale West Primary School
Beechworth Primary School	Bundarra Primary School
Colac Primary School	Dunolly Primary School
Kyabram P-12 College	Mansfield Primary School
Lorne-Aireys Inlet P-12 College	Macarthur Primary School
Melrose Primary School	Mitta Mitta Primary School
Murrayville Community College	Murtoa College
Nhill College	Ouyen P-12 College
Stawell Primary School	Terang College
Timboon P-12 College	Timor Primary School
Tongala Primary School	Wangaratta High School
Winters Flat Primary School	Wonthaggi Primary School
Woomelang Group School	Heathcote Primary School
Wangaratta High School	

The launch began with a virtual lesson conducted by the three EAL teachers and students from eight participating primary schools.



EAL Teacher Voula Mackenzie



EAL Teacher Douha Abdo



EAL Teacher Panayiota Kai

Dr Howes then launched the program and he was followed by Micaela Meyer, a Year 6 student from Murrayville Community College who spoke on behalf of the students. Finally there was an excellent film of interviews with principals, teachers, students and parents involved in the project.

The mother of one of the EAL students, Mrs Louise Meyer, commented: "In South Africa we don't speak a lot of English. That was one of our main concerns – how she (Micaela) will fare in English. What surprises me is that they (the Department) would go to so much effort for only one or two children – it's amazing".



Key contributors - Chris Finch, Voula Mackenzie, Giuliana Mecoli

Congratulations to everyone who has contributed to make the program a reality.

This is another great initiative involving the Victorian School of Languages that highlights the significant contribution that we make to our Education Department, to schools and to the Victorian community.



Assistant Principal Stefo Stojanovski addressing participants

# 2016 Premier's Awards – VSL leads the State

At the 22nd Premier's VCE Awards the Victorian School of Languages had the highest number of students in Victoria receiving individual awards.

The main presenters were the Governor of Victoria, (Hon Linda Desau AM) the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier (Hon James Merlino), and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier (Ms Judith Graley MP).



Section of the audience

The Premier, Daniel Andrews, stated in the program, "Today a total of 289 students will receive 312 awards crossing 83 subjects, including 283 Study Awards, 26 Top All-Round VCE High Achiever Awards, and three Top International Student Awards.

Those being recognised stood apart in a cohort of almost 50,000 Victorian Students completing their Victorian Certificate of Education last year – and should be immensely proud of this achievement."

For the second year in a row, the Victorian School of Languages was the best performing school in Victoria receiving 14 individual awards. The top five performing schools were:

- Victorian School of Languages - 14 awards
- Haileybury (College) - 10 awards
- Caulfield Grammar - 9 awards
- Methodist Ladies College - 8 awards
- Balwyn High School - 7 awards



Victorian Governor Hon Linda Desau with John Awad (Arabic)

The Principal of the Victorian School of Languages, Mr Frank Merlino, states: "It's excellent that the Government and Department of Education and Training makes arrangements for this function every year to celebrate the outstanding results of individual students at the end of their secondary school studies.

It is also appropriate that on occasions like this we also acknowledge the other key players in children's education.

"I wish to take the opportunity to thank all of the teachers of the Victorian School of Languages (not just the VCE teachers) who have worked with the students over the past thirteen years to improve their language skills and prepare them for their individual careers.



Teachers Enzo Calati and Rosa Vitelli with Chiara Angeli & Damiano Cunto (Italian) and mothers

Thank you also to the parents who have enthused their children to make a great effort".

Congratulations to the following Award winners:

Amanda Disilvestro	Spanish
Chiara Angeli	Italian
Damiano Cunto	Italian
Lien Dinh	Vietnamese
John Awad	Arabic
Martha Tadros	Arabic
Jasleen Grewal	Punjabi
Mansi Aggarwal	Hindi
Hemanya Malhotra	Hindi
Sofia Vamvakidou	Greek
Jure Plestina	Croatian
Medmedalija Djipa	Bosnian
Erika Daniella Genota	Filipino
Sanyi Kang	Korean 2nd language

The Victorian School of Languages is delighted that our VCE students have again received excellent results.



Parliamentary Secretary Judith Graley & Lien Dinh (Vietnamese)



Mansi Agrawal (Hindi) & parents



Sofia Vamvakidou (Greek) & teacher Anastasia Spanos

# VSL Study Tour to Germany and Austria

Eleven VSL students of German and two VSL Teachers left on a three week study tour to Germany over the summer break. This was the first time that the German Faculty of the VSL Distance Education had organised an overseas trip.

The aims were for the students to use German in a variety of real life contexts and to improve communication skills in German as well as to reinforce motivation for continuing to study the language. As most students were Distance Education students who don't usually have the opportunity to take part in a school exchange, they were also able to enjoy a group learning experience.

The schools we visited were

Adalbert-Stifter-Gemeinschaftsschule (Ulm),  
Vitzthum-Gymnasium (Dresden) and  
Hans-Carossa-Gymnasium (Berlin-Spandau).

The first part was spent in southern Germany and Austria, exploring the cities of Munich, Salzburg, Neuschwanstein Castle, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Ulm and Nuremberg. A tour highlight was being on top of Germany, the Zugspitze mountain (2962m), the highest mountain in Germany. At the top, an impressive 360° panorama opened up and we had an amazing view over 400 mountain peaks in four countries.



Dresden Christmas Market with Principal Wagner, Adalbert-Stifter-Gemeinschaftsschule



With host school students, Berlin Alexanderplatz

There was also the opportunity to enjoy some snow play and tobogganing, which put a smile on everyone's face. Christmas markets played an integral part of the tour! In every city we were able to enjoy this German tradition. We sampled lots of culinary delights including a variety of local sausages and gingerbreads at the famous Christkindl market in Nuremberg and the Striezelmarkt in Dresden.



On top of Zugspitze Mountain



Getting ready to sing Aussie Jingle Bells

Students also had the opportunity to look at and buy handcrafted Christmas gifts and soak up the unique atmosphere.



Neuschwanstein Castle

Visiting German schools in Ulm, Dresden and Berlin was an important part of the Study Tour, and the visits provided the students with the opportunity to build new friendships.

Our students also shared photo presentations, music and a football workshop with the German host schools.

The final week was spent in Berlin-Spandau, where the students stayed with selected host families and took part in family and school life.

As part of the tour students were able to visit many places of historic and cultural significance. These included the concentration camps in Dachau and Ulm, the Dresdner Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) and the famous art collection at the Green Vault in Dresden, the Berlin War Memorial and the Stasi Museum, to name just a few.

The Study Tour proved to be a great success and we are looking forward to our next adventure in the near future.

**Katja Schubert & Katja Schoenfelder**

# VCE Top Students in the State

As we head towards the VCE Exam period we hope that the success of last years VCE students inspires the current Year 12 students. The Victorian School of Languages congratulates all of its 2015 VCE students and especially those who received scores between 40 and the maximum 50. The following 26 students received the top marks in Victoria in their language and/or a Premiers Award.



## Mehmedalija Djipa - Bosnian

While studying Bosnian at the VSL I became friends with people from a range of different backgrounds and I enjoyed sharing the common heritage. The most enjoyable aspect of being part of my VSL class was the positive atmosphere in the classroom. I plan to pursue a future in medicine. This includes working abroad, so learning other languages will no doubt be beneficial.



## Hermanya Malhotra - Hindi

Learning another language not only connects you with your community but it also gives you an edge compared to others when looking for work. In order to be proficient in a language you need to practice; a lot. Also, do not limit the use of the language you are studying to 'what you need' to know for assessment, delve deeper to gain a deeper knowledge thereby enhancing your overall linguistic ability. I plan to study Engineering and Commerce at Monash University and maintain my language skills.



## Sarah Kim - Japanese

I chose to study Japanese SL at the VSL as my school didn't offer it. Learning Japanese at the VSL was a great experience for me. The speaking component of the course was challenging as I usually speak in a slight dialect that is different from standard Japanese, however my teacher helped me to be aware of my weak points and helped me improve my Japanese. My dream is to work as an architect or as an art director around the world.



## Damiano Cunto - Italian

I completed my Italian VCE studies with VSL Distance Education because my school was not able to offer a class due to low student numbers. Initially I thought that studying Italian by distance, without a teacher in front of me, would be challenging, but I was wrong as my teacher was only a phone call away. I enjoyed my weekly phone lessons and attending the seminars. In my opinion studying a language is extremely important; it helps you to think in a different way and it even helps when writing and thinking in English. This year I will be studying commerce and economics at La Trobe University. I hope to use my Italian skills in the future, as I would love to work in an international company or in an Italian company.



## Dominique Pielach - Polish

I chose to study Polish at the VSL to perfect my speaking, reading and writing skills as well as learn about the country's beautiful culture and traditions. Learning a language is not easy, but it is very rewarding. Now I know I can travel to Poland and have the required skills to study or work there. I can easily communicate with my relatives and keep the language and traditions of my family alive. I hope to study medicine and become a doctor, where my ability to speak Polish could be very helpful with Polish patients.



## Khoa Trang - Vietnamese

I studied Vietnamese at the VSL Footscray centre. Studying Vietnamese was not as easy as I imagined it would be. I had to work very hard and try to do as many practice exams as I could to be well prepared. My teacher always supported me to do my best. I have lots of happy memories of my teacher and my Saturday friends. I would recommend to any students doing their VCE to consider studying a language, as not only will it contribute towards your ATAR, but it will give you more career choices.



## Andy Kosnav - Romanian

Studying Romanian at the VSL was a very rewarding experience. I chose to study Romanian because I wanted to extend my knowledge of the Romanian language and culture, which I love. My advice for other students studying a language is to try and be consistent and motivated the entire year. I am currently studying a Bachelor of Science at the University of Melbourne and plan to continue in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry once I graduate.



## Sophia Vamvakidou - Greek

I completed my VCE Greek studies at the VSL South Oakleigh Centre and achieved a perfect score of 50. I was born in Greece but moved to Belgium when I was 7 years old and then to Melbourne early in 2015. I always asked my teacher how I could improve my language skills and I completed many past exam papers in preparation for my end of year exam. I also enjoyed studying French for which I received a score of 47.

## VCE Top Students (Continued)



### Jasleen Grewal - Punjabi

I began studying at the VSL Thomastown Centre in Year 2 and enjoyed every moment of my time there. I found it extremely rewarding to be learning about the Punjabi language and culture. I was born in Australia and have never lived in India, so it was very challenging in the beginning.

I would definitely recommend future students study a language as not only does it boost your ATAR score, it also helps you to feel closer to your heritage.



### Peije Russel - Dutch

I enjoyed going to Dutch class on Saturdays as the students in my class were awesome; I have even made several lasting friendships. My teacher was very nice and supportive, always ready to give me feedback on practice exams and essays.

After Year 12 I plan to take a gap year, and then I will decide whether to study at university here in Australia or in the Netherlands.



### Szliard Szekely - Hungarian

I chose to study Hungarian with the VSL to keep up my language skills after having moved to Australia, and also to keep in touch with people from my country, to build friendships and to boost my ATAR score.

I always enjoyed going to Saturday school; it was uplifting to be in a friendly and supportive environment. In the future I would like to travel around the world and use my language skills to communicate with people.



### Martha Tadros - Arabic

I greatly enjoyed attending Arabic classes at the VSL and learning the language in a positive and encouraging environment.

I have improved my language skills over the years and am thankful for the support of my classmates and teachers.

Learning another language provides an insight into the unique customs and traditions that are associated with the heritage language, but above all it is the key to greater communication among individuals.



### Ehsan Sadeghi - Persian

I thoroughly enjoyed studying Persian at the VSL Dandenong centre. Studying a VCE language assisted in improving my language skills, my ATAR score, and my chances of going to university. I enjoyed attending the class and being in the company of my classmates. I encourage other language students to review past papers in preparation for the final exams.



### Angela Setjadinigrat - Indonesian Second Language

I studied Indonesian with the VSL as my school did not offer the subject. Studying Indonesian was enjoyable and a break from regular subjects such as Maths and English.

Preparing for SACs was stressful but I had a very helpful teacher. I would advise younger students studying a language to do extra study if they want to achieve a high score. I hope to use my Indonesian language skills to haggle for things at the markets when I visit Bali in the future.



### Saeeda Lodin - Persian

I chose to study Persian with the VSL as I wanted to stay connected with where I come from.

I loved going to class and only speaking and writing in Persian. Enthusiasm and dedication towards your language studies are the key to success. Knowing an additional language is great when looking for work, but is also essential for bridging communication gaps.



### Jure Plestina - Croatian

Studying Croatian at the VSL has not only resulted in my improved knowledge of Croatian language and culture, it has also given me another perspective on the multicultural world we live in today.

I plan on pursuing an exciting career with the Australian Defence Force. I hope my knowledge of Croatian will help me in the future and offer me greater employment opportunities.

## VCE Top Students (Continued)



### **Erika Danielle Genota - Filipino**

I studied Filipino as a VCE subject because I love the language and I knew I could use it to my advantage to boost my ATAR score. Although it was hard getting up on a Saturday morning, especially in winter, my class was truly one of the best and I made many new friends. I hope

to study Science or Nursing and use my language skills in my work. I know that I want to teach future generations to value our language so that it does not die.



### **Natsumi Matsuyama - Japanese FL**

I chose to study Japanese with the VSL as I wanted to enhance my skills in the language. I enjoyed going to class and making new friends.

I recommend students who are studying a language read books, watch movies and listen to music in the target language. I hope to study Nutrition and Dietetics at university and eventually use my language skills to communicate with others in the work place.



### **Larissa Schulz - German**

I chose to learn German with the VSL via distance education as my school did not offer it as a VCE subject.

I wanted to maintain and extend my fluency and language skills after coming to live in Australia. I was in the first class group to start learning German through the online course, which I really enjoyed. I liked the flexibility of the course and the ability to work ahead, especially in Year 12, when the demands of all my subjects needed to be balanced. I am now studying Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne and I am looking forward to using my German in my medical career.



### **Tianqi Yang - Chinese FL**

I enjoyed studying Chinese with the VSL. I liked how we interacted with each other in class and also how we gave our opinion and showed creativity in our writing tasks.

A language is not only letters and characters; it's a way of communication laden with culture. Studying VCE gave me a deeper understanding of Chinese.

I plan to do medicine or commerce in the future, and with my bilingual skills I will be able to communicate easily with others.



### **Nishadi Withanage - Sinhala**

By learning Sinhala I learnt more than just the language, but also the culture and traditions of Sri Lanka. Getting together with the others in class and organising cultural events allowed us to develop a closer connection with my classmates and made studying more enjoyable. The hard work I put in was definitely worthwhile, it assisted my ATAR score, and I feel proud to have studied Sinhala.



### **Danijela Zukancic - Serbian**

When I attended Lyndale SC my friends also recommended that I enroll in the Serbian classes of the Victorian School of Languages at the Dandenong Centre. This gave me the opportunity to improve my Serbian skills and also to study the language at the VCE level. Yes, getting up on Saturdays may have been a challenge but I made so many friends and learnt a lot ... and it was worth it! I had a great time in my class and at school and even

made friends with the junior kids, while my teacher helped me a lot in a very supportive and caring way! I think that speaking more than one language is important and helps you to think and look at problems in many different ways. I am looking forward to university and will be learning French. And a message to my younger fellow students: listen to your teachers, do your homework, come on time and enjoy the classes - now, I do sound like a teacher myself!



### **Natasha Petkovska - Macedonian**

Studying Macedonian at the VSL was enjoyable but it meant prioritising my time and balancing my workload. Studying languages leads to greater cultural awareness. I encourage all those studying a language to practise as much as possible, by speaking to relatives or watching movies in the language. I am currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Applied Science/ Master of Orthoptics at La Trobe University, and I hope to put my language skills into practice once I enter the workforce.



### **Vengchou Taing - Khmer**

Studying Khmer at the VSL was a memorable experience and gave me a great insight into the Khmer culture and traditions. My teacher was very encouraging and inspired me to always do my best. I enjoyed making new friends with others from my background and to be able to communicate with them during and outside of class time.

## VCE Top Students (Continued)



### Aidan Scott - Portuguese

I chose to study Portuguese with the VSL as I wanted to further improve my language skills and to make new friends. The classroom environment was very enjoyable. I plan to continue speaking and sharing the culture throughout my life, be it at work or with family and friends. I may even do a year of university in Portugal or Brazil. Having an additional language is definitely an asset.



### Fatemeh Heidaritabrizi - Persian

I chose to study with the VSL because I wanted to maintain my native language and be able to speak it at an advanced level. I really enjoyed studying on Saturdays and making new friends. Knowing another language is very important in our multicultural society and the skills gained will also assist with additional career opportunities.



### Additional Premier's Award recipients

There are no student profiles for the following six students who received a Premier's Award:

Amanda Disilvestro	<i>Spanish</i>
Chiara Angeli	<i>Italian</i>
Lien Dinh	<i>Vietnamese</i>
John Awad	<i>Arabic</i>
Mansi Aggarwal	<i>Hindi</i>
Sanyi Kang	<i>Korean 2nd language</i>

## Vale Dimitri Tsaloumas (1921-2016) – VSL teacher and poet



Over the years the VSL has had some very creative teachers taking our classes. One of the most talented was Dimitri Tsaloumas a former Greek teacher at the Glen Waverley VSL Centre. He was a very modest and unassuming person and it came as a surprise when in 1983 he brought out his collection of poetry "The Observatory" in a bilingual edition. We purchased a number of class sets and I was surprised by the quality of his writing. Dimitri completed an Arts degree at Melbourne University where he majored in Languages and English, subjects which he taught in high schools. Dimitri went on to write a number of other books of poetry both in Greek and in English and was awarded many prizes, including the Patrick White award for literature (Patrick White is the Australian novelist who received the Nobel Prize for Literature).

Frank Merlino

## Former VSL students Tasia and Gracia Seger win 2016 *My Kitchen Rules* competition



MKR 2016 winners sisters Tasia and Gracia Seger (Photo Source: Channel 7)

On the evening of 26 April former VSL students Gracia Seger and her sister Tasia, won the 2016 *My Kitchen Rules* competition final. MKR is the Australian competitive cooking game show that has been broadcast on television since 2010.

The two sisters studied Indonesian at the Glen Waverley Centre of the Victorian School of Languages where one of the teachers, Mr Silvius Ruron, remembers them as being great students.

Tasia and Gracia received three perfect 10s and an overall score of 57 out of 60 which gave them a six point win over the runners up and the first prize of \$250,000. When asked what the future holds for these new champions they replied that they were looking at specialising in Indonesian cuisine in Australia.

Their knowledge of Indonesian will come in handy!

We look forward to inviting Tasia and Gracia to visit some of our language classes.