

PHAROS ALLIANCE NSW IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GREEK
AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY



Pharos Alliance NSW Strategic Plan

A strategic response that safeguards Modern Greek language learning in NSW through practical initiatives and reforms guided by the Pharos framework.

May, 2025



Prepared by:
Sponsored by:

Konnie Zagrimanis
Greek Australian Society



Strategic Plan: Pharos Alliance NSW

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to generate insights into, and to design a plan for, the prospective revitalisation of the Modern Greek language in NSW based on extensive data collection and research conducted across jurisdictions. The ‘ecology’ of Greek in Australia is marked by declining student enrolment and retention rates, as well as problems with teacher qualifications and available resources.

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco’s COD model in *Pharos* will be used as a guide in developing key initiatives and proposals for structural reform to safeguard Greek language teaching into the future both in NSW and nationally.

The Pharos Alliance NSW was established to develop:

- coordinated steps towards a major community intervention into the preservation and cultivation of the Greek language
- a coherent and coordinated national vision for language education and learning that aims to ensure that Modern Greek survives for the benefit of future generations in Australia
- Australia’s ability to contribute to the multilingual and culturally diverse global landscape
- evidence-based advice for the wider community on supporting Modern Greek language continuity
- strengthened collaboration between schools and community initiatives to support effective teaching of the Modern Greek language
- Proposals for a greater emphasis on language learning in schools and improved educational outcomes for students

Factors contributing to the decline of the Modern Greek language in NSW

Greek language programs in NSW were historically successful for several reasons:

1. **Strong Community Support:** The Greek community in NSW has been vibrant and active, with a strong commitment to maintaining their cultural heritage and language. This community support often translated into demand for Greek language programs in schools.
2. **Cultural Heritage:** Greek language programs were often tied to cultural events and celebrations, fostering a sense of identity and belonging among students. This cultural relevance helped engage students and parents alike.
3. **Bilingual Exposure:** Many students came from bilingual homes where Greek was spoken, making it easier for them to learn the language in a formal education setting. This bilingual exposure provided a practical context for learning.
4. **Curriculum Integration:** Greek language programs were effectively integrated into the broader school curriculum, often complemented by studies in Greek history, literature, and culture, enhancing the overall educational experience.
5. **Government Support:** There have been various initiatives and funding from the NSW government and educational bodies to support language programs, including Greek, which helped establish and sustain these offerings in schools.
6. **Qualified Teachers:** The availability of qualified teachers whose Greek was that of an educated native speaker contributed to the quality of the programs, ensuring students received effective instruction.

These factors combined to create a conducive environment for the success of Greek language programs in NSW schools in the past.

The decline in the number of students studying Greek language in NSW can be attributed to several factors:

1. **Changing Demographics:** The Greek community, while still significant, has experienced demographic shifts. Younger generations may not have the same

cultural or linguistic ties to Greece, leading to reduced interest in studying the language.

2. Curriculum Priorities: With the increasing emphasis on STEM subjects and other global languages like Mandarin and Spanish, some schools may prioritise these areas over less commonly taught languages, including Greek.
3. Market Demand: Students often choose languages based on perceived career opportunities. As job markets evolve, Greek may not be seen as a language that offers significant advantages in terms of employment compared to more widely spoken languages.
4. Resource Availability: There may be fewer resources, such as qualified teachers and educational materials, available for Greek language programs compared to more popular languages, affecting the quality and appeal of these programs.
5. Cultural Integration: As the Greek community becomes more integrated into Australian society, there may be less emphasis on maintaining the language, leading families to speak English at home and reducing the necessity for children to learn Greek.
6. Perception of Difficulty: Some students may perceive Greek as a more challenging language to learn compared to other subjects, which can deter enrolment.

These factors have contributed to the overall decrease in student enrolment in Greek language programs in NSW.

The vision

As an inherently multicultural society in a globalised world, it is critical that we educate future generations to become participants in global communication, by equipping them with the skills to meaningfully engage across cultures. This cultural awareness and understanding are fostered through Key Learning Areas such as Languages.

[Research](#) has comprehensively shown that students who learn more than one language demonstrate greater social and emotional understanding, as well as enhanced analytical and logical processing, than students who know only one language. The benefits of language learning are compounded by beginning at an early age, as data-

based research has shown that learning a language in early years of the brain's development results in more solid long-term results when compared to learning a language as an adult. Learning a language in the early years of life, when the brain is still forming and developing its structures, requires the utilisation of both hemispheres of the brain and therefore results in a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of language, culture and identity.

The [National Policy on Languages](#) was adopted by the Australian federal government in 1987 as a comprehensive national plan to cover all of Australia's language needs, including English.. It promoted Indigenous language rights and stressed the need for heritage and foreign language teaching, as well as language services such as research, translating and interpreting, and multilingual public media.

Our vision is to revitalise Modern Greek language learning and use in NSW by fostering cultural identity, bilingualism, and global citizenship. Through the COD model, building Capacity, creating Opportunity, and inspiring Desire, we aim to enrich the cognitive, social, and emotional development of Greek language learners and users, and to ensure the Greek language thrives for future generations.

Rationale

A belief in the value of cultural diversity, the declining number of students studying the Modern Greek language in schools and university, and the shortage of qualified teachers are factors that led to the initial conversations and form the basis of the rationale for this project in NSW.

Research evidence demonstrates that:

“All students should experience well designed and supported language programs, taught by well trained and supported language teachers, in schools that actively support language teaching linked to universities that are fully committed to widespread and successful language study. It is worth re-iterating why this ambition is important. The principal reason is to do with the deepest purposes of education itself, to instil knowledge, to deepen understanding, to stimulate reflection and to foster skills. Languages are intimately linked to the essentially humanistic, cultural and intellectual reasons for making education compulsory. Bilingualism can foster more reflective and

imaginative dispositions in citizens, and the principles of democratic discourse, participation and opportunity which Australia proclaims also find resonance with language study since the bulk of humanity lives in societies and continues traditions forged outside of English.” (Lo Bianco 2009, p. 64, [Languages - Shape of the Australian Curriculum_new.pdf \(acara.edu.au\)](#))

Despite this evidence for the importance of language learning, particularly in the early years of a child’s development, languages are not considered a key learning area in NSW schools.

However, in Years 7–10, students in NSW are required to undertake 100 hours of continuous languages learning, preferably in Years 7–8 (Stage 4). Despite this requirement, there is currently no correlation between mandated languages learning in the early years of high school and retention rates through to Year 12 and the HSC, with only about 9% of students studying a language in the HSC.

Each year NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) takes snapshots of [HSC students' enrolments](#), participation, provisions (based on student need) and malpractice statistics.

The following statistics reflect current student engagement in the study of languages in NSW:

- More than 38,000 students attend a community language school (K-12) every year.
- 66 language courses are available at the senior secondary level, including Beginners, Continuers, Extension, Language in Context (formerly Heritage) and Language and Literature (formerly Background Speakers) courses.
- In March 2022, 62.3% (498,430) of students enrolled in NSW government schools came from homes where English was the only language spoken. [LBOTE factsheet 2022 \(nsw.gov.au\)](#).
- More than a third (37.7%, 302,154) of students came from homes where languages other than English were spoken by the students themselves and/or at least one parent or carer.

- Between 30% and 40% of NSW primary schools have a language program, with most of these schools situated in the Sydney metropolitan area.
- The language teacher is either a specialist primary or high school teacher who must deliver the mandatory 100 hours of languages in Stage 4 (Years 7 or 8) or Stage 5 (Year 9) in classrooms of students of varying language experience and skills.
- Anecdotally the number of students who study languages as an elective in Years 9 and 10 is relatively low compared to earlier years.

The following statistics reflect student engagement in the study of Modern Greek in NSW primary and high schools:

- 2023: in Years 7-9 there were 679 students
- 2022: data was not collected
- 2021: 730
- 2020: 658
- 2019: 474

The declining number of students learning a language in stage 6, and then in tertiary institutions, is compounded by the structure of the curriculum and complicating factors associated with school staffing and timetabling. There is inconsistency regarding the running of language classes in schools based on these funding and staffing considerations. For example, the minimum number of students required for the school to run a course are school-based decisions and therefore not the same across schools. When schools have fewer students electing to study a language than the threshold designated, the language class does not run at the school. As a result, many students do not have the opportunity to continue the study of their chosen language unless it is through the NSW School of Languages (starts in year 9) or through the Secondary College of Languages (on Saturdays). Further, only 20% of primary school curriculum is available for 'Additional Activities' or as relief from face to face, with Languages falling within this competing 20%. The 'typical' language program in an NSW primary school involves a 30–40-minute lesson once a week and delivered during relief from face-to-face teaching



time. This often means that language program is deprioritised in the timetable and treated as flexible teaching time.

NSW Public Schools: The Community Languages Program

NSW Public Primary schools have an opportunity to engage in the Community Languages Program K-6, which has been operating during school hours in NSW public schools since 1981 and is DoE funded. Primary schools with a significant number of background speakers of a community language are provided with the opportunity to apply for a community language program in their school. Specialist community language teachers are appointed above establishment and meet the same conditions and requirements as mainstream teachers. The CLP K-6 is part of the K-6 Curriculum.

To attain an allocation for the CLP K-6 there needs to be:

- a community language spoken by the local school community
- demonstrated staff and parental support
- a dedicated classroom
- minimum of 2 hours teaching time in the target language per week
- conformity with the Department guidelines for class size

More information about this program can be found [here](#).

The NSW [Community Languages Schools Program](#)

This program has provided funding to community organisations operating languages schools since the mid-1980s. It supports not-for-profit, incorporated community organisations who deliver out-of-school programs that aim to enable school-aged students to maintain their background or heritage language. Community languages schools are also open to students who wish to learn a language other than their heritage language.

Classes are held outside normal school hours, usually at local government schools, and families may be asked to pay a small fee to enrol their child. They are open to any school-aged student attending an NSW government, Catholic or independent school. In NSW more than 36,288 students attend every year, involving 2,925 teachers, 305



organisations, 561 locations and 62 languages. Community languages schools are supported by grants from the government (federal and state) but are run by parents and community leaders.

Association of Independent Schools

Most Independent Schools do not offer the Greek language as an option. The three Greek Orthodox Schools that do teach Modern Greek are St Euphemia College, All Saints Grammar and St Spyridon. Data is required to establish a consistent approach between public and independent schools.

NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)

In high schools, the language teacher is either a specialist language teacher or has varying levels of language experience and skills to teach the mandatory 100 hours of languages in Stage 4 or Stage 5 (Years 7-10). The number of students who study languages as an elective in Years 9 and 10 is relatively low. Data is collected and managed by NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

In addition, [NESA eligibility criteria](#) for Stage 6 (Years 11 – 12) languages courses are impacting the subject selection and continuity of learning outcomes.

Recommendation

There is an opportunity to align the Greek Australian Society with the theory behind Professor Joseph Lo Bianco's *Pharos* with the aim of reinforcing Modern Greek in NSW schools by:

- developing clear, easy to access and consistent Modern Greek language learning opportunities across formal and informal settings
- promoting the benefits of learning Modern Greek within the school and to the parent community by selecting appropriate research and information
- informing the Greek community about where Modern Greek is taught in local kindergartens, primary and high schools



- providing opportunities for the community to find out more about the issues involved and to express their views if Modern Greek is wholly or partly discontinued in a school

Summary of proposed actions

- Data collection and publication of information on languages spoken and taught in local communities and schools
- Languages forum: community engagement
- Surveys on community sentiments and petitions to demonstrate community support of the initiative
- Discuss possibilities of extending students' language learning opportunities through:
 - Partnerships with primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as well as informal community organisations such as Pharos NSW
 - Establishing sister schools in Greece and Cyprus for Independent Greek Orthodox Schools
 - Modern Greek language kits and alternative learning methods
 - Best-practice in Modern Greek languages education in NSW schools' digital stories
 - School and community events
 - Greek language immersion camps for students.

Proposed actions in detail

Capacity Data collection and information

Information about where Modern Greek is spoken in the schools and the community can be useful when considering which language is most appropriate for a school. This project proposes that data be collected regarding:

- The languages spoken at home by students' families, and the numbers of families speaking Modern Greek (LBOTE data, CENSUS, CESE, Bureau of Statistics)
- The number of students learning a language outside regular school hours through a Community Language Schools Program, Secondary College of Languages or at the NSW School of Languages
- The languages spoken by teachers/staff and any language teaching qualifications held by current staff, potentially using survey methods
- Existing use of the school's facilities by community languages schools' program for out-of-hours language classes

Capacity Languages spoken and taught in local communities and schools

It is proposed to investigate:

- Where Greek is predominantly spoken in the wider school communities (available from the Centre For Educational Statistics and Evaluation(CESE), census data, by postcode)
- Relevant historical factors in each local area (e.g. social clubs that existed in the past)
- Greek cultural organisations in the local area, e.g. social clubs or facilities for the elderly Greek population
- Local businesses with links to Greece or Cyprus and the Greek language

- Other sources of information available for Greek, like trends in the study of languages in government and non-government schools across NSW
- Support available for Modern Greek teachers from cultural organisations comparable to, for example, the Alliance Française, the Goethe-Institut, the Japan Foundation, the Chinese Teacher Training Centre, and from foreign governments
- An opportunity to revitalise the Modern Greek Teachers Association
- Develop expertise in how to achieve continuity of learning
- The availability of teaching and learning materials in Greek, including digital and online resources, suitable for NSW students and aligned with the continuity of learning across stages including HSC
- Consistency in pedagogical approach in Modern Greek between primary and secondary schools with a focus on teacher development
- Known teacher supply issues

Capacity Community surveys

Develop a survey to gauge parent/community opinion about the Greek language, using translations, if required. It is recommended to ask parents/the community for up to three suggestions, in order of preference, including reasons for Greek not being a language of preference. If the information provided from these surveys is to be useful, findings from local and community research should be made widely available to the community before the survey is conducted (to ensure that parents/community are well informed).

Capacity Forums: community engagement

Hold a languages forum, across NSW, where a summary of the information collected can be presented, and everyone can ask questions and provide feedback. Use translated material and interpreters, where necessary, to ensure that the information presented is accessible to everyone. After the presentation of information and the chance to ask questions, as part of the process:

Allocate participants to small groups for further discussion. A maximum of eight people per group, to ensure that everyone can share their views.

We recommend separate forums be held for different groups i.e. one for students, one for parents, etc.

Capacity Disseminate information

Summarise the results of this research and make the information available to the schools offering the language and community through appropriate school/community publications and forums, using translations and/or interpreters where required.

Capacity Actioning the findings

The education and community sectors may need access to a summary of the information collected, recommendations from discussions, student forums, parent forums and surveys, and any other advice that will help reach an educationally sound, well-supported decision on the future of Modern Greek. The contribution of the Pharos Alliance NSW might take the form of a report, with recommendations.

Capacity Teacher training & Professional development

To address the teacher shortage in Greek language education in NSW, a multifaceted approach can be implemented. Firstly, increasing incentives for prospective teachers, such as scholarships or relocation grants for those specialising in Greek language education, could attract more candidates to the field. Additionally, establishing partnerships between universities and schools could create more robust pathways for Greek language teacher training, including internships and practical teaching experiences.

The benefits of sister-school relationships include:

- Access to native speakers, i.e. opportunities for purposeful and authentic communication to improve students' Greek language skills

- Opportunities for sharing pedagogies and curriculum
- Increased global awareness and intercultural understanding (if partners are in Greece or Cyprus)
- Potential student exchange programs

Research suggests that sister school relationships can provide students a sense of accomplishment and purpose for their language learning when they find they can communicate with their sister school classmates in another language.

Opportunity Establish community immersion activities

Community immersion activities, involving a range of topics including food, sport, history, culture and professional networking may be conducted public spaces in Greek language, accounting for variation in proficiency and confidence and designed to encourage continued use. Written materials may compliment spoken language engagement, retaining informal and non-classroom interaction.

Opportunity Support families to maintain Greek language in the home

Families with current or historic use of Greek language in the home to provide insights for strategies to maintain the continued use of Greek language in various home settings, including interactions with immediate and extended family members, neighbourhood or room-based interactions, and comparison and/or contrast with formal learning.

Desire Career advice

Career and university pathways are significantly influenced by the growing recognition of the value of bilingualism, particularly in Modern Greek, among universities and employers. As the global job market becomes more interconnected, the ability to communicate in multiple languages, including Modern Greek, is increasingly seen as a valuable asset, enhancing an individual's employability and competitiveness. This trend motivates students to continue their Greek language studies, knowing that proficiency

in Modern Greek can open diverse opportunities for further education and career advancement, especially in fields such as translation, international relations, and cultural studies, ultimately enriching their personal and professional development.

Desire Engaging the community on social media

This involves the creation of a NSW-specific website and social media that serves as a vibrant digital hub for Greek-Australians in NSW to reconnect with the Greek language. Rather than teaching Greek directly, the page will inspire and guide users by showcasing local learning opportunities, both formal and informal, alongside practical language tips and emotionally resonant community stories. The platform will be inclusive, non-political, and aimed at all ages and language levels, helping to embed Greek into everyday life. This aligns strongly with the ‘Desire’ element of the COD model in *Pharos* by Joseph Lo Bianco, which emphasises sparking personal motivation and emotional connection as key drivers in language revitalisation. By making language learning visible, relevant, and joyful, the page will cultivate a sense of belonging and aspiration, essential to reigniting interest in Modern Greek across the NSW diaspora.

Desire Fostering interest in using language

This includes developing community-driven programs that celebrate Greek culture and language through festivals, workshops, and storytelling events, thereby strengthening cultural identity and fostering a desire to learn the language. Schools and educational institutions can partner with Greek cultural organisations to integrate cultural activities into the curriculum, making language learning more engaging and relevant. Additionally, creating mentorship programs that connect students with Greek-speaking community members can provide authentic language practice and cultural exchange. These efforts, aligned with Professor Jo Lo Bianco's ‘Desire’ concept, can inspire a deeper appreciation and enthusiasm for the Greek language, motivating both students and the community to actively participate in its revitalisation.

Cultural days and festivals should provide opportunities for students to use the Greek language, and to learn more about the culture of Greece and Cyprus in an enjoyable



social context which can involve the whole school community. Local restaurants, specific performing groups, and social clubs can be invited to participate and contribute to the range of activities.

Next steps

- Data collection and analysis, e.g. where the Modern Greek language is taught, community sentiment and support
- Evaluation of Modern Greek HSC syllabus and courses
- Evaluation of Modern Greek Year 12 exams across jurisdictions
- Evaluation of Modern Greek language teachers' qualifications and skills
- Further options for identifying potential Modern Greek language teachers
- Proposed methods to increase teacher recruitment
- Teacher development: a pedagogical approach between primary and secondary schools
- Developing a state languages policy
- Creation of a website and social media accounts that curates all Greek language learning opportunities in NSW