



Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister
Minister for Early Childhood Development
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
Minister for Housing and Suburban Development
Minister for Women
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
Minister for Sport and Recreation

Member for Ginninderra

Tom Duncan
Clerk
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Secretariat@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter about e-petition No. 2-21, lodged by Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA and received by the Assembly on 30 March 2021, regarding the resumption of the teaching of French at Belconnen High School.

The Australian Curriculum is a world-class curriculum and is delivered in all ACT schools. Languages are one of the eight learning areas delivered under the Australian Curriculum. The choice of languages delivered in ACT public schools is made by the principal in consultation with the school board and the community.

Language education programs require a consistent teacher to deliver the program and sustain student engagement. Belconnen High School faced significant challenges with retaining and recruiting French and Indonesian teachers; this meant students were not able to engage. Recruiting suitably qualified specialist language teachers is a global challenge. The ACT Government has taken steps to address this challenge through a specialist recruitment drive.

In 2018 Belconnen High School introduced Aboriginal Languages of our region, as the language course, 'Connecting to Country'.

Through learning the original languages of Australia all students develop a deeper appreciation of the nature and diversity of languages and cultures. Students acquire knowledge and skills necessary to learn and understand an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language, culture and Country.

ACT Legislative Assembly London Circuit, GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601



+61 2 6205 0233



berry@act.gov.au



[@YvetteSBerry](https://twitter.com/YvetteSBerry)



[YvetteSBerry](https://www.facebook.com/YvetteSBerry)



[Yvette_berry_mla](https://www.instagram.com/Yvette_berry_mla)

The students learn Aboriginal language and culture from each Country, beginning with the area where students live and work, Ngunnawal Country. Students then investigate and learn about our surrounding regional Countries of Ngarigo, Gundungurra, Yuin and Wiradjuri.

Each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language is unique to the Country/Place on which it arose. It gives voice to the landscapes, thoughts and ways of seeing and interpreting the world. When the language of the land is spoken, it brings together all of the elements of the landscape and its people. It encompasses the relationships of these people with one another and with the landscape, past, present and future. The learning of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language incorporates the realities of its people and facilitates students' deep engagement with knowledge, ways of being and ways of knowing. It develops in students an understanding of historical, current and ongoing connection to Country/Place and culture.

The 'Connecting to Country' course is written and delivered to the specifications of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages of the Australian Curriculum Languages Framework under the Second Language Learner Pathway.

In the development of the Connecting to Country course, Belconnen High School consulted closely with the local student community, their families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as the United Ngunnawal Elders Council.

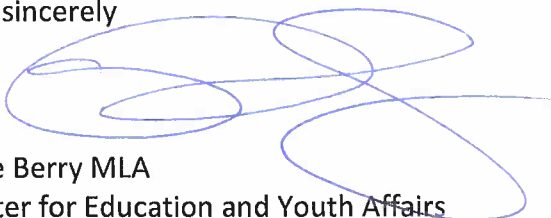
Regardless of ongoing recruitment efforts within the ACT Government, Belconnen High School and their community have determined that the Connecting to Country course best fits their community, and school interests.

In addition, Belconnen High School offers elective language courses to their students in Year 9 and Year 10 with an online program, Language Perfect, which is aligned to the Australian Curriculum. There are students currently undertaking courses in French, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Greek, Korean, German and Russian.

Belconnen High School will continue to deliver the Connecting to Country course as the language course in Year 7 and 8. It falls under the Australian Curriculum for the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages of the Australian Curriculum Languages Framework.

Your correspondence on this matter is appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

7 June 2021