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University partners with government to establish community languages institute

The University of Sydney is receiving \$7.6m in funding from the NSW Government to establish a research institute for community languages education.

University of Sydney Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Stephen Garton, said the institute builds on an established record of excellence in community languages education.

“Our commitment to community languages can be traced to 1975, when we became the first University in the state to train community language teachers,” said Professor Garton.

“Our partnership with the NSW Government aims to lift our capacity for world-leading community languages education, as regional and global demand for language skills grows.”

The Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE) will have a number of research, training and engagement priorities, including:

- a scoping study and review of the state’s community language schools;
- the design of programs to support new syllabuses and curriculums for 54 languages;
- professional learning courses for volunteer community language teachers;
- the development of a ‘languages passport’ as a record of students’ learning achievements throughout their school years.

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Finance Victor Dominello, and Minister for Multiculturalism Ray Williams, announced the partnership at the University of Sydney today.

“The NSW Government is partnering with a world-leading university, and Australia’s first university, to deliver the Community Languages Schools Program,” said Premier Berejiklian.

The institute will also design scholarships, internships and university entry concessions to encourage secondary students to study languages, while sharing best practice within the tertiary sector for improving pathways to further study.

Associate Professor Ken Cruickshank from the University of Sydney School of Education and Social Work led the funding bid for SICLE.

"Our new institute will support linguistic diversity and educational opportunity, through research, teaching, and professional learning programs in schools and community organisations in NSW," said Associate Professor Cruickshank.

The University of Sydney was the first to provide teacher education for community language teachers in NSW in 1975 and the first to provide professional development for teachers in NSW community languages schools. It remains the only University to have introduced languages teaching units into primary school teacher education.

More than 2,700 volunteer teachers and almost 35,000 students attend community language schools in NSW. Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, and Vietnamese follow English as Australia's most commonly spoken languages, according to the 2016 Census.

Associate Professor Ken Cruickshank is available for comment on 0422 492 952.

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