

**MEDIA RELEASE
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ENGAGING WITH LANGUAGES

A leading Australian professor believes both the Australian and Queensland Governments need to seriously address the decline in foreign language teaching.

Professor Ken Wiltshire will tell an Independent Schools Queensland forum today Governments need to do more to help foreign language studies.

Executive Director, Dr John Roulston, said the two day *Engaging with Languages Education in the 21st Century* forum at Riverglenn in Indooroopilly is bound to spark plenty of debate.

“The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages recognising genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding,” Dr Roulston said.

“Independent Schools Queensland decided to hold this forum for the same reasons, not only to discuss why speaking a language other than English in the 21st Century is vital but also to help develop better teaching methods.”

Dr Roulston said no stone will be left unturned in the forum with a huge range of speakers attending and even some presentations by French and Chinese students.

One of the keynote speakers will be Professor Wiltshire who is not only from the University of Queensland’s Business School but was previously Australia’s representative on the Executive Board of United Nations Education Sciences and Culture Organisation (UNESCO).

Professor Wiltshire will look at the importance of learning foreign languages for greater intercultural and interfaith understanding.

“It really is a pity, in a time of present turbulence in the world, that our policy makers are taking so little action to arrest the decline in foreign language teaching in Australia,” Professor Wiltshire said.

“The recent budget was also disappointing with the only additional money being allocated to Asian language studies. It is important Australia has strong relations with all countries and learning languages from places in Europe and Latin America is just as vital.”

Another speaker at the forum is the Professor of Applied Language Studies at the University for Queensland, Roland Sussex, who will discuss how the internet has made teaching a foreign language richer but also vastly more complicated.



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“The foreign language student’s encounter in the classroom can be very different to the colloquial language they find on the internet,” Professor Sussex said.

“It’s just like someone learning English for the first time and then discovering sayings such as ‘flat out like a lizard drinking’ in Chinese and having no idea what that means.”

Professor Sussex said teachers need to plan their approach so students are prepared to take advantage of the internet without being discouraged by its linguistic complexity.

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For more information or to set up interviews please call Shaun Rigby at Sequel Communications on (07) 3251 8140 or 0438 021 936.