

*Speech delivered by:*

**Governor of Victoria, Mr. John Landy, AC, MBE**

**Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Communication Launch**

December 11th, 2002

Senator for Victoria, Senator Lyn Allison; Representing the Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, Professor Kwong Lee Dow; Director of the Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Communication, Professor Michael Clyne; Head of the School of Languages of Melbourne University, Professor Colin Nettelbeck; Distinguished guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here to launch the Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Communication.

It is hard to imagine a better place for such a Research Unit than here in Victoria, where almost one in four people were born overseas. Migrants from all over the world have brought so much to our State and our Nation, in so many different ways.

This very building, the Sidney Myer Asia Centre, is representative of our diverse origins and of the singular contribution of our migrant population. Sidney Myer, who came here from Russia in 1899, gave so much to Australia in business and through his philanthropic contributions. His children and grandchildren continue to do so.

In Victoria, a microcosm of our nation, we enjoy the richness that comes from living in a culturally and linguistically diverse society, reflected: through the 208 different countries from which Victorians originate; through the 151 different languages spoken; through the 100 plus faiths practiced.

Yet, as we have heard from Professor Clyne, despite this diversity we lag behind in the area of language study and also need to consider the broader issues of language and society. This new Research Unit sets out to address these deficiencies, and the Directors have set themselves a challenging agenda.

The Unit will conduct research projects on different aspects of language and society, including: the maintenance and development of bilingualism and multilingualism; language in social context; and inter-cultural communication.

The research will link researchers, the communities being researched and the potential users of the research. It will enable the Unit: to advise on language policy within organisations; to facilitate cross-cultural communication; and to stimulate general community discussion.

The workshops are aimed to service a wide variety of groups - from individuals to schools to large organisations. Workshop topics include: raising children in more than one language; models of teaching Languages Other Than English; inter-cultural communication in the workplace or between professionals and clients or patients.

I congratulate all those involved and I wish you every success. I now have much pleasure in officially launching the Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Communication.

