



Freedom of Information Access Request - FA 24/10/01555

Thank you for your request of 24 October 2024. In your request you seek access to advice, documents or legislation relied upon by the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) to state that “*English is the national language*” and that the statement “*There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia*” is incorrect in the following Australian citizenship test practice question:

Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English?

- (a) People in Australia should speak whichever language is most commonly spoken in their local neighbourhood
- (b) There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia
- (c) Yes, English is the national language of Australia and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community

The Department has considered the legislative requirements contained in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (the Act) and the content of the Australian citizenship test resource booklet *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond* (OCB) in confirming the accuracy of the information contained in the citizenship test questions and responses, including the practice test question you refer to in your FOI request.

The Act sets out the eligibility requirements for Australian citizenship. As part of these requirements, most applicants for citizenship by conferral aged between 18 and 59 years at the time of applying need to successfully complete the Australian citizenship test (the test). Subsection 21(2)(d),(e) and (f) of the Act outlines that persons applying for citizenship by conferral under general eligibility criteria are able to demonstrate they meet the legislative requirements if the Minister is satisfied that the person:

- (d) understands the nature of an application, and
- (e) possesses a basic knowledge of the English language, and
- (f) has an adequate knowledge of Australia and of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship.

As specified in the Act under s21(2)(e), there is an expectation that a person possesses a basic knowledge in the English language in order to acquire Australian citizenship by conferral. As such, the response option (b) ‘*There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia*’, is regarded as an incorrect response option.

The Australian citizenship test resource e-booklet, *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond* (OCB), contains all the information required to prepare for the test. All the questions contained in the test, including the practice test questions, are based on the content of the testable section of the OCB. This resource booklet was originally published in 2007, and redeveloped by a panel of professional educators with experience in civics and citizenship education in 2009 to better assist applicants prepare for the test following the recommendations in the Report by the Australian Citizenship Test Review Committee in 2008.

The OCB references English is the national language of Australia, at:

- Page 8: *'Australia's national language is English. It is part of our national identity. In keeping with Australian values, migrants should learn and use English to help them participate in Australian society. Communicating in English is important for making the most of living and working in Australia. Other languages are also valued, including more than 100 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.'* and;
- Page 38: *'Australian society values the English language as the national language of Australia, and as an important unifying element of society. People living in Australia should make an effort to learn English. It is important to learn to speak English because it helps to get an education, a job, and better integrate into the community. It is essential for economic participation and social cohesion.'*

I trust this information is of assistance.

Notes:

1. Source: Department of Home Affairs (internal documents)

Caveats:

- *This information is provided for the specific purpose of this request.*
- *It is the responsibility of the area providing the Department of Home Affairs information to external stakeholders to ensure that the disclosure is in accordance with the ABF Act, Australian Privacy Principles or other relevant legislation.*