Accent placed on a brilliant career

Emmie Dowling

YEARS of volunteer work – or “la vie associative” – have earned French teacher Lesley Davies the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM). Ms Davies, of Rennington Park, was recognised in the Queen’s Birthday Honours for her 24 years devoted to international, national and state French and teaching associations.

Her love affair with the French language began in Paris in 1966 when she moved there for 12 months to become an assistant teacher.

“I wasn’t fluent at the time, I didn’t know swear words,” Ms Davies says.

“And there were a lot of other words that couldn’t be found in students’ university course books.”

One of her early challenges came when she needed to visit a hardware shop.

“I lived in a studio apartment and needed to get wall plugs to put in shelves,” she recalls.

“It was a challenge because I didn’t know what to call them.

“Now, I’ll never forget the word – ‘cheville’ – which also means ankle.”

She was also lost for words when hearing her first French profanity – “merde”.

Now, she makes it her business to teach it to all her students.

Ms Davies has lived and worked in Jamaica and Greece as well.

The former Mercedes College teacher of 31 years, who also speaks fluent Spanish, was “completely overwhelmed” to be awarded the OAM.


Ms Davies is one of eight people in the Eastern Courier Messenger people to be recognised in this year’s Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

French teacher Lesley Davies has been awarded an OAM for services to education.