



**Mr Robert Randall**  
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**Level 10**  
**255 Pitt Street**  
**Sydney NSW 2000**

5 August 2010

Dear Mr Randall

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is pleased to offer feedback to you on the draft senior years English curriculum.

The attached response has been prepared and reviewed by a working party comprising ACTA members and councillors who have extensive expertise in the fields of secondary education and curriculum development for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). It has the endorsement of ACTA's constituent state and territory associations for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Australia.

ACTA would welcome the opportunity to consult further with ACARA and to collaborate in the ongoing development and implementation of the senior years English curriculum.

Yours sincerely

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**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF  
TESOL ASSOCIATIONS  
(ACTA)**

**Response to the draft  
senior years English curriculum**

*5 August 2010*

## Preamble

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the draft national senior secondary English curriculum.

ACTA is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). ACTA represents and advocates on behalf of teachers, parents and guardians, and English-language learners, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students students who speak traditional/heritage Indigenous languages, creoles\* and Aboriginal Englishes, in all education sectors and contexts across Australia.

ACTA's objectives are

- to ensure *access to English language instruction* for speakers of other languages and dialects (from Indigenous, refugee and migrant backgrounds, and international students)
- to encourage *implementation and delivery of quality professional programs* at all levels, and
- to promote *study, research and development of TESOL* at state, national and international levels.

ACTA's membership comes from all educational sectors: pre-schools; schools and Intensive English Centres; adult, community, TAFE and other VET settings; consultancy services in state and territory education departments and the independent and Catholic sectors; and university teacher education departments.

\* including Torres Strait Creole, Kriol and other creole languages as yet unrecognised

## ACTA's response – General comments

The following response to the draft senior years English curriculum reflects the opinions and recommendations provided by ACTA's constituent state and territory associations. Each of these associations has made significant contributions to the development and implementation of existing state and territory syllabuses, courses and/or assessments for senior secondary EAL/D learners.

While the scope, organisation and content of courses and assessments which currently cater for EAL/D learners in subject English in particular vary greatly across the states and territories, this provision has been effective and is highly valued within the particular jurisdiction. As a result, the opinions and recommendations made by ACTA's constituent associations in the development of this submission have been varied and sometimes divergent, and we have attempted to represent the range of perspectives within this response.

There are, however, strong common points of agreement between the associations regarding the provision of suitable learning experiences and opportunities for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) within the proposed senior years curriculum. These are as follows:

1. Given that “all students require a level of English sufficient to enable the study of senior courses across the curriculum in Australian school settings” (*Level of difficulty* statement, draft EAL course), then provisions must be made within the Australian Curriculum for *all* EAL/D learners to achieve the required level of English language proficiency *before* they begin their senior years courses in *all* curriculum learning areas.
2. Courses within the senior years curriculum must acknowledge and address the English language development needs of EAL/D learners. These are additional to their literacy development needs.
3. Courses within the senior years curriculum must acknowledge and address the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of EAL/D learners.
4. Any senior secondary course (or *courses*) specifically designed to cater for EAL/D learners must address the diverse backgrounds, abilities and needs of *all* EAL/D learners.
5. Parity with “mainstream” courses must be assured for any senior secondary course (or *courses*) specifically designed for EAL/D learners. This requirement applies equally to university entry, vocational pathways and other post-school options.

The members of our constituent associations are deeply concerned that the draft EAL course will not meet the needs of all EAL/D learners. However, proposals vary from one state or territory to another regarding the types of course or courses that, on the one hand, would permit entry to tertiary studies and which, on the other hand, would provide for vocationally-oriented EAL/D learners, newly-arrived students with lower

English proficiency levels, refugee students with limited or disrupted prior education, and Indigenous students who speak traditional/heritage Indigenous languages, creoles and Aboriginal Englishes.

ACTA believes that further consultation is required to frame a proposal for a course or courses catering to *all* EAL/D learners in the same way that courses in the draft senior years English curriculum have been designed to accommodate *all* English-speaking students.

The submission which follows addresses the specific sections and questions provided in the ACARA consultation survey. Our response is directed mainly to the draft EAL course and to other of the proposed English courses as they affect EAL/D learners.

## Rationale and aims of the course

### 5 Comments

#### *Rationale*

While our members support in principle the inception of a national curriculum and are pleased that there is a course for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), many are deeply concerned that the proposed English as an Additional Language (EAL) course will not meet the needs of many EAL/D learners, and that EAL/D students who are forced to enrol in other of the English courses will be seriously disadvantaged.

Additionally, the great majority of our members are firm in the belief that the proposed EAL course must not be, and must not be perceived to be, of lesser status and complexity to the English course. It must be recognised as a course which is of equivalent status and which encompasses differentiated rationale, aims and content that meet the English language learning and skills development needs of EAL/D learners. ACTA recommends that the Rationale should clearly signal that the EAL course meets the requirements for university entrance and that it is of equal status to the English course.

ACTA welcomes the acknowledgement – signified by the inclusion of the EAL course in the suite of English courses – that a significant number of students in Australian schools come from language backgrounds other than English and are learning “Standard Australian English” as a second or additional language or dialect.

Overall, however, the majority of our members believe that the draft English curriculum documents do not include a well-developed understanding of and provision for the diversity of learners in Australian schools, including EAL/D learners.

Some of our constituent associations have commented that one course is not sufficient to cater for the full range of EAL/D learner capabilities; that is, it is impossible for one course to be sufficiently rigorous to maintain parity with the English course at one level and also to cater for the needs and pathways of lower proficiency EAL/D students at another level.

#### *English as an Additional Language*

The implicit recognition in the Rationale, Aims and elsewhere in the course description that a significant number of learners in Australian schools, such as speakers of an Aboriginal English, refugees from some West African nations, Pacific Islander students and others, are coming to grips with “Standard Australian English” as a markedly different dialect to the variety of English they use in their everyday lives is welcome, and is consistent with the way that these learners have been identified in the draft K-10 Australian Curriculum documents. However, the inclusion of this specific group of students within the cohort of EAL/D learners for whom the EAL course is designed must be stated explicitly in the Rationale.

Many of our members and some of our constituent associations are concerned that the very name of the course is exclusive of our Indigenous population and is not in

keeping with overseas trends (in, for example, Canada) and that it should be changed from “English as an Additional Language” (EAL) to “English as an Additional Language or Dialect” (EALD). They assert that the adoption of the present name of the proposed course (“English as an Additional Language”) will entrench the current downgrading of speakers of non-standard varieties of English, stigmatising the language they use as simply “poor English” rather than legitimate uses of English that are crucial to these students’ communities and identity formation. This failure to recognise the legitimacy of distinctive non-standard varieties of English is most acute in relation to Indigenous students but is also an emerging issue for students from some other nationalities.

**Suggested change:**

**English as an Additional Language *or Dialect* (EALD) is designed for a diverse cohort of students who are *learning English as an additional language or dialect*. [...]**

*or*

**English as an Additional Language (EAL) is designed for a diverse cohort of students who are *learning English as an additional language or dialect*. [...]**

ACTA notes that current (“Learn or Earn”) legislation at national, state and territory levels requires students to be enrolled full time until they reach the age of 17. In addition, the retention of students to Year 12 is one of the priorities of the COAG National Education Agreement. It follows that students who arrive in Australia with minimal English *must* be supported in a school environment and must be accommodated within the national EAL (or “EALD”) course, or courses.

Some of our members have pointed out that the proposed EAL course differs from the other senior years English courses insofar as it is the only course that focuses on the learning of English from a different language/culture perspective. That is, the students to whom it is directed know languages/varieties other than “Standard Australian English” and are learning this language variety *in addition to* the language(s) and varieties they already know.

The current EAL course draft acknowledges the cross-lingual skills and abilities that EAL/D learners bring to the classroom. This acknowledgement will go some way towards countering the “deficit model” stigma with which existing ESL/D and EAL/D courses and support programs in schools are sometimes burdened. However, it is essential that the proposed course is broadened to cater for the *full* range of EAL/D learners, for potential areas of academic specialisation (including the study of literature) and interests, and for these learners’ diverse tertiary and vocational aspirations.

Under the heading “*Level of difficulty*”, the current draft of the EAL course states that

all students require a level of English sufficient to enable the study of senior courses in Australian school settings ... ” (p. 3)

This point applies as a whole to the English course (including the EAL course), and all other courses within the proposed national senior years curriculum. One recommendation made by some of our members is that the EAL (or “EALD”) course should provide content which enables students to access the senior curriculum (as they may enter it with lower levels of English language ability). Some of our constituent associations have recommended that a separate EAL course should be provided that is not bound by tertiary entrance requirements and which will cater specifically for students with lower English proficiency levels.

Other of our members believe that scope should be provided for specialised Intensive English support programs or English Language Bridging courses as pathways for those students who do not possess the level of English language proficiency required to access the content of the proposed national senior years curriculum.

### *Essential English*

The Essential English course, despite its textbook-sounding name, also fills a very real need in the senior years English curriculum. Units within this course can be taken to supplement students’ learning in other of the English courses, or in their own right can be adapted to suit a wide cross-section of student interests and vocational pathways. However, this course does not cater specifically to the language learning and sociocultural needs of EAL/D learners. Although the course aims to “accommodate students who require support in English”, the unit content lacks a specific English language focus and should aim to accommodate students who require explicit English language instruction and support.

Some of our constituent associations have called for a separate foundation or lower level EAL course. Despite long-standing attempts to link EAL/D learners with low performing students whose first language is English, the educational needs of the two groups are quite different. The placement of EAL/D learners in Essential English classes simply because of staffing issues is an undesirable prospect in the current arrangement of courses within the proposed senior years English curriculum.

The Essential English course should aim to improve and refine students’ English language communication skills in preparation for a range of post-school options. One of the explicit aims of the course should be for students to use language “critically” as in other of the English courses. There is some confusion in the course Rationale and Aims between “real and practical daily life” and the “workplace”. In the *Pathways* section, “Contexts of work and community” provides a far too narrow view of students’ post-school lives. This course should aim both to enrich students’ lives and to provide a foundation for *further* education.

### *The overall senior years English curriculum*

The existence of the EAL (or “EALD”) course should not be viewed as a warrant for ignoring linguistic and cultural diversity in Australian classrooms. EAL/D learners who do not meet the entry requirements for the course will need to opt for another course within the senior years English curriculum. All courses should include explicit reference to those students for whom “Standard Australian English” is an additional language or dialect, and to the need to develop these students’ English language skills and sociocultural understandings. In particular, the Essential English and English

courses should explicitly acknowledge the need to identify and support English language and literacy learners.

## The structure and organisation of the course

### 10 Comments

#### *Unit structure*

The organisation of all four English courses with identical sequential units and broad focus areas in common is designed to increase flexibility for students studying courses concurrently and those moving between the courses. However, this structural contiguity is artificial and obscures the essential differences between the courses.

The four units – “Language, texts and contexts”, “Representation”, “Making connections” and “Perspectives” – are core English concepts. However, basing the sequential structure of the senior years English curriculum on these four concepts is contrived and problematic. The unit titles and content are not clearly aligned and lack internal consistency. Additionally, the unit content is disorganised and does not reflect a development of skills, knowledge and understandings from Units 1 and 2 to Units 3 and 4. Elements from all four units are required at all times to provide authentic and meaningful English teaching and learning experiences for students.

The four core concepts should be infused across all units rather than attempting to separate them and address them in isolation from another. However, the core concepts might be profitably used as internal organisers for the content *within* each unit of the senior years English courses (and for the organisation of the Content descriptions in the K-10 English curriculum as well, in order to enhance the links between the K-10 and senior years courses and to assist in identifying and mapping a more coherent *progression* of learning in English.)

#### *Combinations of courses*

Scope must be allowed for students to combine the EAL (or “EALD”) course with English *or* Literature. Some EAL/D students will have the skills and inclination to undertake intensive study of English literature. Their aspirations may include tertiary level studies in literature (in English or other languages) or literature-related subjects, careers in fields that are enhanced by advanced understanding, analysis and appreciation of literature and literary texts, and/or simply to enrich their current and future lives.

At the same time, the EAL (or “EALD”) course should have the status and credentials to allow successful students to gain university admission without having to complete additional units from any other course. In particular, it should not be necessary for students to supplement the EAL (or “EALD”) course with the English course in order to gain university entrance. The English and EAL (or “EALD”) courses should be different courses but of equal status.

Our members point out that, at present, there is not sufficient clarity regarding the relationship between the four proposed English courses. The purposes of each course and the students likely to undertake them should be made more explicit. For example,

it is unclear for whom the Essential English course is intended and whether it includes some EAL/D learners.

A hierarchical relationship between the courses, if it is intended, will be problematic as it will limit options for learners and raises issues of equity. For example, if students select units from a number of courses, will they be acknowledged as having completed an equivalent course? If a student eligible for the EAL (or “EALD”) course undertakes units across two or three other courses, or is enrolled in Essential English, how will that student be assessed?

EAL/D students who are intending to study a specific vocational course (at TAFE or elsewhere) may elect to study Essential English because they are interested in developing skills in workplace language and communication rather than the skills addressed in a traditional English course. In this case, assessment should be against other EAL/D students rather than the whole Essential English cohort.

Revision of the proposed senior years English curriculum should be based on more explicit definition of the relationship between the four courses. The possibility of creating a bank of interchangeable units which could make up the two year course should be explored. This would enable learners with diverse needs to select units suited to their pathways and aspirations and would allow for changes in students’ directions and interests. In this case, each unit must have parity. Access to a range of further study and employment options must be built in to the curriculum. Eligible EAL/D learners must be able to have the full choice of options at the same time as being assessed as EAL/D learners.

#### *Eligibility requirements*

The eligibility requirements for the EAL (or “EALD”) course are unclear and do not include the full range of EAL/D learners.

#### **Suggested change**

***The following students will be eligible for entry into the EAL (or “EALD”) course:***

- ***migrant, refugee and international students who are learners of English as an Additional Language or Dialect and who have had no more than seven years of schooling in Australia or overseas with English as the medium of instruction***
- ***migrant and refugee students who are learners of English as an Additional Language or Dialect who have experienced significant disruption to their studies and who have had no more than ten years’ total schooling in Australia or overseas with English as the medium of instruction***
- ***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional/heritage Indigenous languages, Creoles (including Torres Strait Creole, Kriol and other creole languages as yet unrecognised) and/or an Aboriginal English as their home language.***

#### *Key elements*

The course as written states that:

**Key elements** of English underpin this course. They build on the knowledge and skills developed in K-10 ...

Given that there is no K-10 EAL (or “EALD”) course, this statement which refers to the whole suite of senior years English courses does not take into account senior secondary students who have been EAL/D learners in high school prior to Years 11 and 12, those who have had no prior schooling in Australia, and those who have had no previous schooling whatsoever.

#### **Suggested change**

***Key elements of English underpin this course. They build on the knowledge and skills developed in diverse English language learning settings, including intensive English language programs in Australia and overseas and varied amounts of time spent in Australian schools K-10.***

### **The content of the course**

#### 16    Comments

The scope and focuses of the content for the current draft of the EAL course draw from and build on elements from existing state and territory syllabuses. The emphasis on developing students’ sociolinguistic competence and sociocultural *understandings* (N.B. suggested change of wording) alongside English language and literacy skills is a significant and worthwhile direction.

However, while some areas of learning identified in the current draft EAL course are relevant and appropriate (for example, language study, sociolinguistic competence and sociocultural understanding), these are not identified in ways that can be operationalised. The format of listing course content as a general area of learning followed by a number of dot points provides an inadequate basis for identifying learning outcomes or developing capacities. The specification of learning content should be grounded in the goals and objectives of the course and the scope and purpose of the course. Some concrete but general statement of what learners completing the subject have achieved at each unit level are required. These will be part of the process of identifying overall achievement standards, but at this stage something more grounded must also be provided.

The EAL (or “EALD”) course content should also incorporate English for academic learning, literature and explicit language study as a basis for EAL/D learners engaging with public discourses in Australia.

Several of our constituent associations have suggested that a much greater emphasis on academic English skills is required in the EAL (or “EALD”) course to prepare students for academic study. Adoption of a stronger focus on academic English skills and inclusion of the unique bilingual and intercultural perspective of EAL/D learners to prepare students for academic study is recommended. This could be achieved through greater emphasis on the general capabilities, such as including research skills under *Thinking Skills*. It could also include work on interpreting and extrapolating data from a variety of graphs (*Numeracy*) and *ICT*.

The course content in the proposed EAL course lacks an adequate focus on the development of spoken English. This should be explicitly included in the course content and should distinguish the EAL (or “EALD”) course from the other English courses.

The learner is portrayed as a passive participant in their education throughout this whole initial section of the EAL course document. There are too many “understand” and “know” statements and not enough “do” statements. In the English and Literature courses, the learners “extend and develop their knowledge” while in the current EAL draft the course simply seeks to provide “a range of language experiences” for the learner. There is also a great deal of emphasis on accuracy and fluency in the aims but nothing about learners using English to perform a range of communicative functions in a range of contexts and for a range of purposes. The draft does not identify the outcomes of learning or identify the ways in which capacities and skills develop.

Concerns have also been expressed by some of our constituent associations regarding the amount of content that students are required to cover in the EAL (or “EALD”) course. It has also been noted that the course is very text-focussed and that it appears to have been written from a genre perspective. They recommend that students’ *English language development* should be the focus of this course and that texts and genres should be used to enable students to develop and practise their English language skills across a range of contexts.

## **Cross curriculum dimensions**

### 20 Comments

ACTA notes ACARA’s commitment “to review the draft English, mathematics, science and history curriculum to ensure that there is strong and coherent inclusion of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions in the final curriculum.” The statements for each of the cross curriculum dimensions and a scope and sequence for learning should inform the content descriptions and elaborations in each senior secondary English course.

As part of the recognition of “the histories, cultures, traditions and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students” within the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dimensions* section of the cross curriculum dimensions, explicit acknowledgement that a significant proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student cohort in Australian schools are learning English as an additional language or dialect is required. This should be accompanied by a consideration of who “owns” this knowledge and of the community in which the teaching and learning is taking place.

ACTA strongly endorses the inclusion of *Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia* as a cross curriculum dimension. Given Australia’s proximity to Asia, and the increasing presence of international students from Asia in particular in Australian senior secondary classes, it is essential that the Australian Curriculum incorporates a focus on developing a deep understanding of the region and Australia’s connection to it. However, within the current draft senior years documents “Australian students” are depicted as somehow looking out on “the diversity of Asia’s peoples” rather than

acknowledging that this diversity is present in Australian classrooms. The issue might be overcome by changing the phrase from “Australian students” to “students in Australian schools”.

The focus on Asia should be extended to include “Asia and the Pacific”. Further, the definition of Asia is unclear. The Australian Curriculum should clearly describe what “Asia” is seen to encompass and make consistent use of this description throughout all courses and curriculum documents. The present treatment of *Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia* (in all curriculum areas) does not allow for students to develop a deep understanding of the region, including Australia’s connection to it.

The senior years English courses should address and acknowledge the impact of Asia on Australia through immigration (including the experiences and contributions of migrants and refugees) and increasing international student enrolments. Texts should include those reflecting the rich traditions of multicultural and post-colonial literatures within Australia and elsewhere, in contrast to the current narrower focus on the study of “texts from Asia” and “world literature”.

One of our constituent associations has noted that care must be taken in relation to Year 12 assessment on Asian texts. For example, the Mandarin language film *Raise the Red Lantern* will be far more accessible to Mandarin speakers than to speakers of other Chinese languages.

## General capabilities

### 31 Comments

ACTA notes ACARA’s commitment to provide “[l]iteracy, numeracy and ICT continua [which] will inform curriculum development in all learning areas”. As with the cross curriculum dimensions, it is essential that these continua are developed, published and made available for consultation prior to finalising the senior years English courses in order that the documents reflect a consistent progression of knowledge, skills and understanding in these general capability areas.

ACTA recommends that all learning areas in the senior years curriculum should include information on second language development. Additionally, mainstream teachers should be provided with examples and strategies for the development of English language skills to support the development of curriculum-specific literacy for EAL/D learners. This could take the form of an adjunct EAL/D document.

The senior years English curriculum should cater more effectively to the general capability of *Intercultural understanding* through the inclusion of texts reflecting the rich traditions of Indigenous, multicultural and post-colonial literatures within Australia and elsewhere, in addition to the study of “texts from Asia” and “world literature”.

More generally, the explanation and subsequent elaboration of the general capability of *Intercultural understanding* within the proposed senior years English courses (and across all senior curriculum documents) is limited and inconsistent. Greater prominence should be given to enabling students “to work and communicate with

those from different cultures and backgrounds ... and to work ... in harmony within and across cultures” (National Curriculum Board, *The Shape of the National Curriculum*, May 2009) to counter the values and attitudes that underpin racism and prejudice within Australian society. This could be achieved through a focus on understanding the complex and continually evolving nature of individuals’ cultural identities, and through exploring students’ own and others’ cultures and their interrelationships. This is fundamental to the EAL (or “EALD”) course by its very nature and should be acknowledged in the final draft.

Some of our members have expressed reservations about other of the general capabilities, specifically *Ethical Behaviour* and *Teamwork*. They question how “ethical behaviour” will be defined and whose ethics will be embedded in the curriculum. They also note that “teamwork” is a concept within which inherent values should not be taken for granted.

Another of our member associations has suggested that the general capabilities of *Thinking Skills*, *Numeracy* and *ICT* would prove very relevant if an English for academic purposes focus was incorporated and consolidated within the EAL (or “EALD”) course.

## Format/layout

### 34 How could the website and layout be improved in the next version?

ACTA recommends that the Australian Curriculum home page should provide a link to an EAL/D document which describes key stages in English language learning for students whose first or main language is not “Standard Australian English”. Additional hyperlinks might be provided to this adjunct EAL/D document from the senior years course documents in *all* curriculum areas. All teachers should be encouraged and assisted to devise relevant and appropriate programs of learning for EAL/D learners in their classrooms.

Logging on for each return visit to the Australian Curriculum website by retyping the user’s email address and password is a cumbersome process. The addition of a “Remember my password” protocol or auto-fill drop-down would make the site more user friendly.

## Overall strengths and challenges

### 35 What do you perceive are the overall strengths in the curriculum content for this course?

- ACTA welcomes the commitment from ACARA to develop a course catering specifically for EAL/D learners which draws from and builds on elements from existing state and territory syllabuses.
- There is an acknowledgement within the course content of the abilities and knowledge that EAL/D students bring with them into the classroom.
- Additionally, within the rationale and curriculum content for the course there is a recognition that a significant number of students speak a non-standard

variety of English as their primary language and are therefore learning “Standard Australian English” as well as learning *in* “Standard Australian English”.

- The emphasis on developing students’ sociolinguistic competence and sociocultural understanding as an integral part of their English language and literacy skills is a significant and worthwhile impetus.
- There is flexibility in the design of the curriculum that could potentially allow students to take units across all four English courses.
- There is potential to incorporate developing skills in English for academic purposes.
- There is potential for substantial and significant treatment of the Cross curriculum dimension of *Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia* and the General capability of *Intercultural understanding* within the proposed EAL (or “EALD”) course.
- There is scope for an adjunct EAL/D document to be linked to the overall curriculum.

### 36 What are the overall challenges or issues you perceive in the curriculum content for this course?

Refinements are needed in terms of the text prescriptions, articulation between the courses and units and the organisation of some of the content points, and specific guidance must be provided in relation to assessment and reporting.

There should be a very clearly articulated progression of content and learning from one unit to the next with appropriate content headings providing coherence and cohesion across the units.

The suggested texts need to reflect the diversity and needs of the cohort and also current research that indicates that if learners’ cultures and languages are not recognised and utilised as a part of the learning process then optimum learning will not occur. The suggested texts also need to engage the learner.

A key challenge is determining a way to cater for the range of the EAL/D cohort while maintaining sufficient academic rigour to maximise parity with English in terms of tertiary entrance scores and rankings.

Other major issues noted by ACTA’s constituent associations are summarised as follows:

- overcoming the problem of differential standing and status of the different English courses
- responding appropriately and realistically to the diverse learning needs, English language levels and aspirations of EAL/D learners in senior secondary classrooms
- developing and naming the current “EAL” course to make it truly inclusive of speakers of non-standard varieties of English
- clarifying the eligibility criteria for entry into the EAL (or “EALD”) course
- accommodating the needs of EAL/D learners who are ineligible for the EAL (or “EALD”) course

- developing all four English courses to accommodate the needs, perspectives, capabilities, active participation and aspirations of EAL/D learners
- reframing the document to acknowledge the significant presence of international students in Australian classrooms
- defining the distinctive aims and purposes of the four English courses
- overcoming the artificiality of the four units in the English courses
- developing more substantive attention to oral English and English for academic purposes, and a more rounded approach to English language development and skills, in the EAL (or “EALD”) course
- giving greater attention to the implications for assessment and reporting, particularly for EAL/D learners
- giving real substance to all the Cross curriculum dimensions and the General capabilities
- broadening the Cross curriculum dimension to include and acknowledge Australia’s relationship with and place within the broader Asia-Pacific region
- broadening the range of prescribed texts to include multicultural, post-colonial, migrant, refugee and Indigenous perspectives and experiences
- developing the website to encourage all teachers to learn about and support EAL/D learners in their classrooms
- allowing for further consultation that will draw on the expertise of our constituent organisations in resolving key issues.

## Addendum

Before further recommendations can be made, clarification needs to be provided by ACARA on several key points.

1. It is unclear whether the study of English will be compulsory in the senior secondary curriculum as is currently the case in some states and territories.
2. It is unclear whether all four English courses will qualify for inclusion in students' Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), or whether the courses will be scaled. Clarification of this issue is vital. Many eligible students will not elect to study the EAL (or "EALD") course if it does not give them entry to university.
3. Some of our constituent associations have commented that the EAL (or "EALD") course mirrors the other three English courses in aim and content and that it does not take into account the unique nature and content of existing ESL/D and EAL/D courses on offer in some states and territories or the specific English language needs of the prospective students. These courses aim to extend and refine language acquisition and academic skills of students with extremely disparate educational backgrounds and levels of knowledge of English through a wide variety of text types and genre. These ESL/D and EAL/D courses teach English through pedagogy that is not solely based on the study of literary texts. EAL/D learners have different needs to students studying English; they require different pedagogy, different (negotiable) texts, and different assessment tasks. They have expressed the following specific concerns:
  - The proposed EAL course caters for students with higher English proficiency levels, primarily those who are already attained at least Level 5 on the NLLIA Bandscales and who have age-appropriate academic education in their first language. Although the Aims state that the course "accommodates a range of starting points", no such accommodation has been made in the essential content. It is outside the reach of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and it does not cater for students who have lower English proficiency levels and those who have had limited/disrupted schooling.
  - Many students new to Australia in Years 11 and 12 (those with refugee backgrounds for example) have little or no literacy in their first language and none or little in English. These students need a course that allows them to focus on language acquisition and basic academic skills in order that they can function at school and access a wider curriculum, and also function in the broader community as new residents of Australia. The proposed EAL course does not meet their needs.
  - Many students are literate in their first language but possess limited literacy in Standard Australian English. These learners require a course which allows them to extend their literacy and academic skills across a range of curriculum areas so that they can achieve their (leaving) certificate and function in the workplace or at CIT/TAFE. The proposed EAL course does not meet their needs.

- A number of students, especially International Private Students and students who have had some years of instruction in English in Australian schools, study EAL/D or ESL/D courses to help them gain access to university. They need a course which refines their existing literacy and academic skills across the curriculum so they can succeed at university. The proposed EAL course does not meet their needs.
  - A few students are highly literate in their first language/s, have studied for many years in Australian school settings, have an excellent English vocabulary, good grammar skills, excellent research skills, and wish to refine their literacy skills by analysing English literature. This course meets their needs, as do the other English courses on offer.
  - There are excellent existing EAL/D courses across the country to which the ACARA curriculum writers could refer in revising this course.
4. Another of our constituent associations has expressed concern about the implications of having one separate EAL course to represent the range of EAL/D learners due to issues of access and equity. They have made the following points and have provided specific recommendations and a list of “Principles for developing an EAL course in the senior years” to ACARA in their separate response:
- The first concern is that not all EAL/D eligible learners will have access to a separate EAL course in their school. In schools where there are two or three EAL/D learners for example, it may not be possible to run a separate class and, at Year 12, these learners would then be doubly disadvantaged as they would find themselves studying a mainstream English course less suited to their needs and would be assessed and normed against the mainstream cohort of English learners.
  - The second concern is that a separate EAL course for year 12 would need to be designed in such a way as to maximise parity with English in terms of university entrance scores. In the interests of equity for EAL/D learners, the EAL course must have parity with the other English subjects in terms of recognition for university entrance. Entry to university courses that require a certain score in English should require an equivalent (not higher) score in EAL. The EAL (or “EALD”) course needs to be designed within the national senior curriculum to ensure this.
  - This necessary focus on tertiary entrance would however have consequences for those EAL/D learners who have low literacy, for example some indigenous or refugee learners who have had insufficient schooling. A course aiming at academic parity with English would not in our view cater effectively for this group. There should be an option for a course for EAL/D learners who might not meet the threshold level of English proficiency for the EAL (or “EALD”) course aimed towards tertiary entrance.