

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TESOL ASSOCIATIONS (ACTA)



# State of EAL/D in Australia 2014

Final Report September 2014

Australian Council of TESOL Associations

C/- CEASA

1<sup>st</sup> Floor EDC Milner Street

Hindmarsh SA 5007

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# 1. Executive Summary

In December 2013, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations conducted a survey of 200 teachers of English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) from all over Australia to

1. understand current issues impacting EAL/D teachers and students
2. assess the impact of school autonomy on EAL/D service provision and
3. compile a resource to support decision and policy makers to make informed judgements

Survey respondents worked in a range of contexts, teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Pacific, refugee and newly arrived students in urban, regional and remote areas.

The main findings were that the current state of EAL/D teaching and learning in Australia is characterised by a:

1. Reduced systemic support for EAL/D provision
2. Insufficient consideration of EAL/D learners
3. Underestimation of the demands of learning an additional language/dialect

## Recommendations

1. **Accurate identification of EAL/D learners.** ACTA urges immediate work on a nationally consistent English Language Proficiency measure with a particular focus on ACARA's EAL/D Learning Progression, building on the trialling work of NSW DECS. This is essential for the implementation of correctly targeted funding for EAL/D learners and is a matter of urgency.
2. **Accountability for allocated EAL/D funds.** ACTA recommends that the Commonwealth require transparency and accountability from the States and Territories for EAL/D allocated funding, which in turn requires similar transparency and accountability from schools. Accountability must include requirements that funding directly addresses EAL/D learner needs through use of specialist staff, such as EAL/D teachers and multilingual staff, both teachers and teacher aides.
3. **Guidance for principals.** ACTA recommends that principals in schools with multilingual populations be provided with guidelines and resources to appropriately manage the EAL/D learning of those populations.
4. **Preparation of teachers.** ACTA recommends at least one compulsory university unit in English as a Second Language for pre-service teachers.

## **2. Introduction**

The expansion of school autonomy in Australia continues to be integral to education policy of successive governments in various States and Territories and now at the Commonwealth level with the release of the 2013 Education Act.

Schools in all jurisdictions except for Tasmania are already if not moving towards being following an autonomous school model.

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations' (ACTA) mandate is to advance the interests of learners of English as an additional language or dialect (henceforth EAL/D learners), their mainstream and specialist teachers, and to assist the educational systems and schools within which these learners are located. Our concerns embrace the distinct needs of all bi/multilingual students (Indigenous, migrant, refugee and international), in all their various school settings, be they remote or urban; or in intensive English centres<sup>1</sup> or mainstream classrooms (See Appendices A and B).

Following concerns raised by state and territory associations, ACTA instituted a survey of its members asking them to reflect and report on EAL/D provision in their particular contexts. Between December 2013 and March 2014, 201 EAL/D educators across Australia responded to this survey: it consisted of 15 questions, each one allowing for individual comments, with two questions (12 and 13) soliciting further open-ended comment. This report will describe the results of the survey question by question, and make a series of recommendations for a range of stakeholders aiming to ensure effective and transparent EAL/D service provision.

## **3. Survey responses question by question**

We are aware that the responses come from a diverse range of contexts. While there is a natural skew towards government schools (as they are more numerous), we have ensured that quotes are taken from all jurisdictions and that the number per jurisdiction is as balanced as possible. In the interests of transparency the contexts of the respondent's comments are given. However, it should

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<sup>1</sup> There is no common term for intensive English centres as not every jurisdiction has them or names them as such. In this submission, they are referred to as intensive English centres.

be noted that our responses show a consistency in observations across the country regarding responses to all questions.

### Question 1: Which school sector do you work in?

The overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) work in government schools.

Sector	Percentage
Government	82.2%
Catholic	7.1%
Independent	6.6%
Intensive English Center (or equivalent)	2.5%
ELICOS (Private language schools)	3.6%

Figure 1: Table of responses per sector

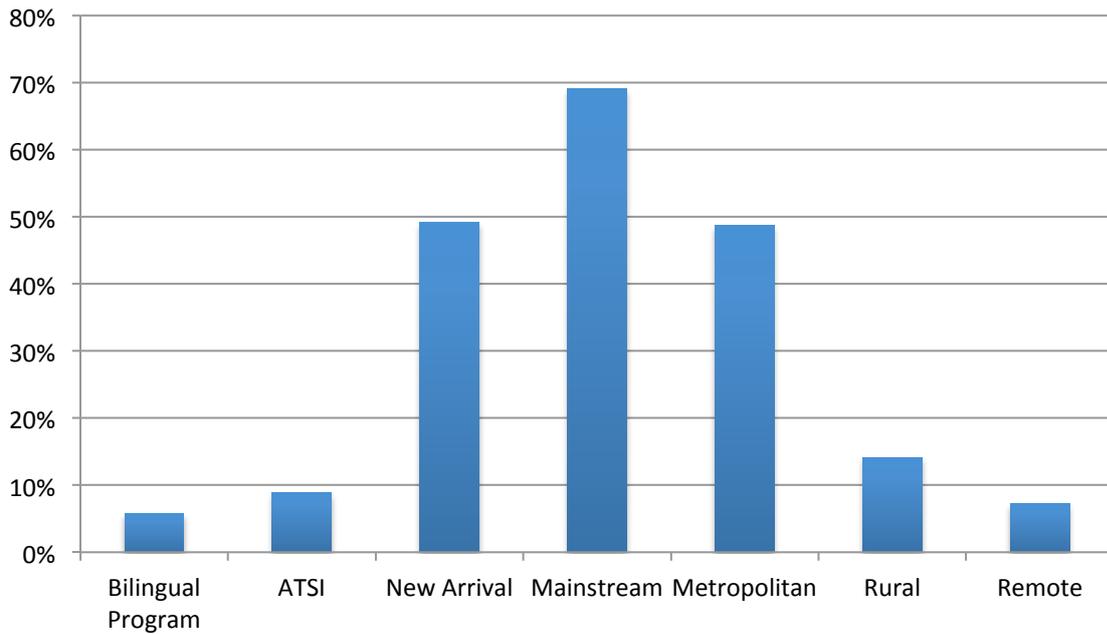
### Question 2: Which state/territory do you work in?

State/Territory	Response %	Response Count
Victoria	24.6%	48
ACT	21%	41
New South Wales	14.9%	29
Queensland	12.8%	25
Northern Territory	9.2%	18
South Australia	6.7%	13
Tasmania	2.6%	5

Figure 2: Table of responses per state/territory

Almost a quarter of respondents hailed from Victoria, followed by ACT (21%) and NSW (14.9%). The disproportionately high numbers from ACT was due to a high level of promotion about the survey in that jurisdiction.

### Question 3: Describe your EAL/D context.



*Figure 3: Description of EAL/D Context*

The majority (69%) of respondents work in mainstream contexts, followed by New Arrivals (49%) which includes refugee programs. Respondents mainly came from metropolitan areas (49%) and operating with new arrival students (49%). 41 respondents (21%) work in rural (14%) or remote (7%) contexts. Remote teachers responded from the NT, QLD, VIC and WA.

In the additional comments, respondents specified their precise cohorts including classes of

- Refugee students only
- Pacific Islanders only
- Aboriginal students only
- High achieving Asian students – mostly Chinese
- Year 11/12 ESL English Course
- Mixed classes of mainstream students and international fee-paying students and
- Kindergarten to Year 12

**Question 4: What is your role at your institution.**

Respondent roles were:

- Teacher

- Program Manager (and as such, involved in all areas of EAL/D such as implementation of programs)
- School Administration
- University lecturer/professor

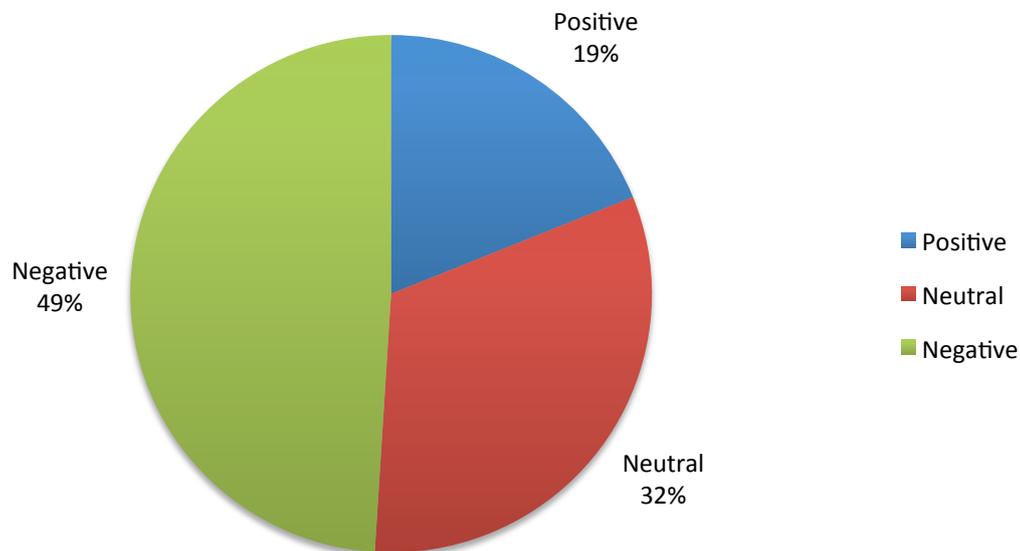
84% of respondents described themselves as qualified EAL/D teachers. Qualified teachers may have additional qualifications to basic teaching that include:

- completed university units in teaching English as a second language
- hold a masters degree in Applied Linguistics
- completed additional professional development courses run within the jurisdictions

<b>Respondent role</b>	<b>Response %</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Qualified EAL/D teacher	83.7%	164
Consultant	8.2%	16
Unqualified EAL/D teacher	7.1%	14
Administrator	7.1%	14
University teacher educator	9.2%	18
Unrecognised EAL/D teacher (qualified, but currently not providing EAL/D support)	1.5%	3
Principal	1.5%	3
Researcher	0.5%	1

*Figure 4: Roles of respondents*

**Question 5: Currently EAL/D funding and support is being decentralised and managed at the school level. Overall, do you deem the impact of school autonomy as positive, negative or neutral for your EAL/D context?**



*Figure 5: Impact of school autonomy on EAL/D*

19% of respondents believed the school autonomy had a positive impact on EAL/D service provision. Teachers commented on being highly supported in schools that had well resourced and established programs.

*We are highly supported in our roles as specialist teachers, and our program is highly regarded by executive and by the teaching staff. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Metropolitan, Mainstream, ACT*

*...schools in Victoria are able to manage their budgets, and in schools with high EAL/D student cohorts, this has enabled some schools to fund and run excellent programs for them. At the [name of school], we are able to provide extensive welfare and transition programs alongside the teaching and learning program because of the devolved nature of school funding in Victoria. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Intensive English Centre for New Arrivals, VIC.*

Those who believed that school autonomy had a neutral effect expressed a range of both positive and negative effects in their contexts (discussed also in Question 6 below). Some stated that they were not in a position to answer because they were unaware of how their school was funded or they were not working in under an autonomous model.

*I am not sure how things will be for EAL/D teachers in the next few years. I have indicated neutral as I will wait until 2015 (when the EAL/D funding will change). I hope that it will be a positive impact at our school.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, Metropolitan, Mainstream, WA

Just under a majority of our respondents (49%) believed that school autonomy had impacted negatively on EAL/D provision in their context. Respondents noted cases of specific EAL/D funds being used inappropriately. One respondent noted some general observations in this regard:

*Unfortunately with decentralised funding, EAL funding goes into global school budgets and is too frequently spent on other areas. EAL students are not receiving specialised assistance. Even if the money was spent on professional learning about EAL for mainstream teachers it would be very beneficial. When questioned about where funding has gone, principals will often respond by saying the funding is supporting general literacy programs or reducing overall class sizes. This does not address the specific needs of EAL students. Too frequently EAL students receive no support and mainstream teachers are left floundering and frustrated.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, New Arrival, VIC.

Schools may not even be aware that they are able to access specific EAL/D funds. One teacher noted this problem, which in turn contributed to poor practice with respect to a particular student:

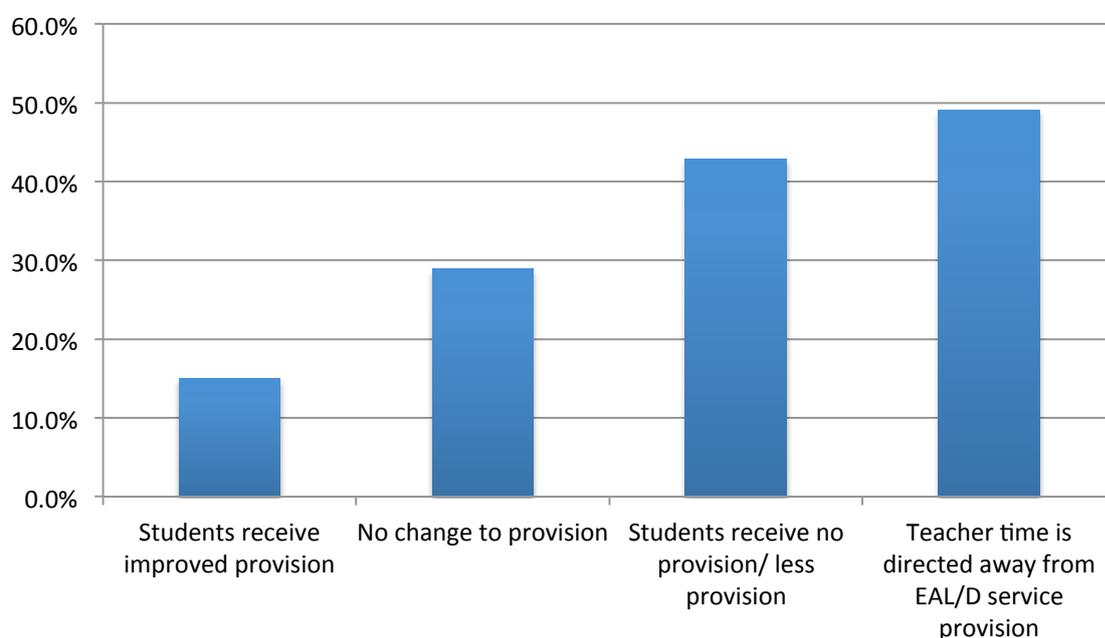
*Initially the school was unaware of the availability of funding to support their new EAL student. It was only after research by the school's Welfare Coordinator, that funding was sourced. It then took school management three months for the funding to be utilised. Hence the student received no EAL support for 6 months after his enrolment at the school. He was attending mainstream year 10 classes and his assessment tasks were not modified. In one class he was expected to read sections of the class text book aloud to the whole group without opportunities for practice beforehand.* Unqualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Multiple Contexts, VIC.

In summary, experiences and comments regarding this question varied much within each jurisdiction highlighting considerable inconsistency in the implementation of funds and programs.

**Question 6: According to your observations, what has been the impact of decentralised school funding on the provision of EAL/D support to EAL/D students?**

Regarding the impact of increased school autonomy on EAL/D provision, 15% said that EAL/D support had improved. Supplementary comments indicated that these respondents’ principals had a good understanding of EAL/D learning and valued specialist EAL/D teachers. For example, one teacher wrote:

*Both my Principals and Deputy Principals in both schools value what I do with the students...some teachers are beginning to value the EAL/D program too as they can see the improvements. New Arrival, Mainstream school, qualified EAL/D teacher, WA.*



*Figure 6: Change in EAL/D Provision*

Respondents noted the importance of school leadership and flexibility of the school to meet local demands.

*As schools situations change, policies in the school adapt to match the environment. It is good that our school manages our funding as we see fit. Unqualified EAL/D teacher, Coordinator of ESL Programs, Independent, Mainstream, New Arrival, QLD*

At the same time, while respondents acknowledged that the impact can be positive, it can depend on the school and its past experiences with EAL/D teachers.

*[I think the impact is] Positive because of the presence of a supportive Principal who recognises the importance of EAL/D support plus campaign on my part to make my EAL/D work more visible in the school to parents and other staff. However [there is a] concern that with a shift in leadership, with a less enlightened view on the importance of EAL/D support, the situation could change dramatically. This aspect of decentralisation makes me nervous.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, New Arrival, NSW

Too dependent on whim of administration; can be lucky or otherwise. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, New Arrival, QLD

28% of respondents noticed no change to provision for a variety of reasons similar to those who answered 'neutral' in question 5.

In my context (as the provision has not changed) there has not been a change as yet. However, I know that if further staffing cut backs occur, then the specialist EAL/D teaching position will go and the job be left to classroom to do what they can. In other schools however, I understand that Principals have cut EAL/D provision and so EAL/D students are receiving limited services and classroom teachers are asked to meet all the English language learning needs of diverse students - very difficult to do and frustrating as 1:1 attention and small group needs is often impossible. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Mainstream/New Arrival/ATSI, rural, NT

### **Question 7: Are your EAL/D students receiving appropriately resourced programs?**

In response to the question as to whether EAL/D students were receiving appropriately resourced programs, 33% of respondents reported that they believed resourcing was appropriate, 57% reported the resourcing was partly appropriate and 10% believed that resourcing was not appropriate.

Those who believed resourcing was appropriate noted the importance of EAL/D staff to advocate for programs, positive school environments with regards to multicultural learners and central funding. For example, one respondent wrote:

*We make do according to student needs. We strive to provide a safe, inclusive and welcoming learning environment. The students have a recognisable EALD place where they can access assistance and support either within or outside our EALD program. The aim is to enable / facilitate / encourage student participation and success at some level in the mainstream while supporting and developing the social, linguistic and academic skills they need to achieve this.* Qualified EAL/D Teacher, Mainstream Government school, rural, Queensland

However another respondent, based in a school that received extra funding from a New Arrivals Program noted that:

*This response [that resourcing is appropriate] is coloured by the comparative prosperity associated with a small group of fee-payers, who generate funds we can control ourselves. Compared to earlier years we are less strapped for resources and are able to soften, slightly,*

*the impact of a funding formula that gives us an 'average ' of 13 per class, which of course means that class sizes can be much too large, especially for education interrupted beginners. If we were dependent on government funding alone, we would be seriously disadvantaged. And as for our physical spaces...we manage, but the classrooms are really sub-standard.*  
Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrivals, Government. Victoria

A small number of those who responded that program funding was partly appropriate reflected similar positive reasons as those noted directly above, however the majority of additional comments were negative. Familiar compromising factors included various funding matters (including a shortage of funds and inappropriate allocation of EAL/D funds away from EAL/D learners), lack of staff competence in EAL/D and the use of EAL/D teachers not being maximised. For example, EAL/D students may find themselves in appropriately funded mainstream classes, but not actually accessing the targeted support for which they receive funding. One teacher noted also that EAL/D teachers are excluded from funding decisions that directly impact on their effectiveness as teachers:

*Our EAL/D classes are generally appropriately resourced Mainstream classes could be better resourced with in-class support I have seen some students accepted into a new arrivals program which was funded, so money was accepted by the school, but there was no additional service to the students - and EAL/D teachers were not part of the process.*  
Qualified EAL/D teacher, mainstream, Catholic, South Australia

Schools may be currently running appropriately funded programs, but student numbers are increasing and funding is being diminished or does not match the number of students creating short and long term issues. For example, one respondent noted how improved EAL/D outcomes led to a decrease in the school's funding allocation, which coincided with an increase in student numbers who enrolled after their schools number audit was taken. Indeed several respondents commented on the impact of high numbers on a program, the lack of forward planning for increases in student numbers, and student influxes after the school numbers audit, as follows:

*Up until this year the programs have been appropriate although the courses of study classes too large. Next year ESL students will not receive ESL resourcing, will be in larger withdrawal classes and students have been turned away to other local schools which have no ESL provision.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, mainstream, Government, Western Australia

*Funding fluctuates so what can be delivered fluctuates from year to year. This presents challenges for delivery longer term programs. I have been in my current position for nearly 10 years. The program started with 7 students and is now over 120 but it is still funded year to year with no long term planning occurring.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrivals, Government. Queensland.

*Funding limitations, lack of EAL/D specialists and/or literacy coaches in schools, insufficient expertise/interest/awareness in EAL/D students, limited use of community resources and other issues hinder adequate and timely support.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI, New Arrival, Metropolitan, Rural, Remote, Catholic, Northern Territory.

One respondent commented how limited resourcing has even led to competition within the EAL/D cohort:

*In the last twelve months emphasis has been placed on providing EAL/D to refugees and some Indigenous students at the expense of migrants. Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrivals, Government. Queensland.*

Beyond the allocation of targeted EAL/D funds, another respondent commented that while special needs students are in the New Arrival Program, they are unable to access disability funding (Intensive English Centre, Victoria).

The 'no' respondents echoed the issues mentioned by those who believe students were partly receiving adequately funded programs, and stressed that resources and support were limited. This was reflected at the school and state level, for example,

*Schools cannot access professional learning as the Multicultural ESL consultants and Community Information Officer positions no longer exist. There is now only one person in the state who can provide advice to schools. Administrator, Metropolitan, NSW.*

*The ESL teachers at our school are spread too thin and don't have enough time to adequately support our students. Unqualified EAL/D teacher, Metropolitan, QLD.*

### **Question 8: In your view, what are the benefits of a targeted EAL/D provision compared to a non-EAL/D based program?**

This question invited participants to tick off as many benefits as they saw to be important, as well as comment on other advantages. 93% checked the benefit of a 'deeper understanding of language systems (grammar, meaning, pragmatics, cultural considerations, etc)'. Over 80% checked students' 'strong development of oral proficiency' and 'greater sense of wellbeing', and over 60% checked 'strong grounding in SAE language skills' and 'strong grounding in Australian culture'. 'Developing a multicultural identity' was seen as a notable benefit by 50%.

There were additional responses from 59 participants, and together these referred to benefits of targeted EAL/D provision in three ways: as the kinds of teaching qualified EAL/D specialists typically engage in; as students' learning experiences and outcomes, including involvement of families; and as an institutional form of service delivery.

*Benefits in terms of students' learning experiences and outcomes*

Many benefits of targeted EAL/D provision were described in terms of students' learning experiences and outcomes. For example, students were experiencing differentiated curriculum to support second language acquisition, having gaps in understanding identified and filled, receiving all round support – academic, emotional and social, being supported to develop strong oral language and to use that as a basis for reading and writing, feeling comfortable to make mistakes, and feeling proud that the home language was acknowledged as a resource rather than a deficit. Additionally, in mainstream settings, students were being supported to understand what is expected in the school environment, curriculum and culture, and they typically experienced classes in building topic vocabulary and related cultural knowledge so that they could subsequently follow whole class lessons and be ready to attempt assessment activities. Some students could also sit for accredited ESL/EAL courses which count towards their Year 12 certificate.

In terms of outcomes, students in mainstream schools were seen to be settling into school quickly, achieving higher levels of self-efficacy and academic results, better development of study skills, reduced anxiety and self-harming, better access and achievement across the curriculum, improved cultural inclusivity, and pride in the home language. One respondent referred to targeted EAL/D provision as generating accelerated learning, evidencing it through characteristics of senior students who had not received such provision:

*Students who have missed out on targeted EAL/D provision frequently find their way to our school as it is a senior campus that enrolls older students. These students generally demonstrate very good oral proficiency in casual contexts, but have poor academic speaking, reading and viewing and writing skills and struggle to follow conversations of an academic or abstract nature. It also common for these students to have fossilised at this stage.*  
Mainstream, administrator and qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, WA.

Small class sizes in targeted EAL/D provision were mentioned as having particular benefits for students, notably: having their individual needs met, having the time and space to think and make connections with their learning in a new language, being in a position to save 'face', building rapport with the teacher and feeling safe to have a go, forging relationships and gaining confidence.

Experimenting with a multi-aged group of Upper Primary students in a withdrawal session once/twice per week has shown noticeable improvement in student confidence to ask questions and to ask for assistance with course work in mainstream classroom. They have created a loose social group which gives them better access to a wider group of students, socially and in the classrooms. The content of each session is geared to consolidating language basics across the curriculum, hands on activities, building cultural awareness and supporting students to meet mainstream classroom task requirements. Feedback from class teachers indicates that these students are more confident in seeking help with specific problems and are more willing to attempt set tasks. Heightened self-esteem is noted. EAL/D students' access to 'normal' can be stifled by presumed understandings that are culturally

specific. Targeted EAL/D provision is the best possible option for these students to thrive. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.

Related to the student experience, a number of participants noted greater involvement of parents and families, where there was a targeted EAL/D program and a familiar face for the parents to connect with, as well as someone who would pass on their concerns to other teachers. It was also proposed that a targeted new arrivals program helps the parents of the students to feel more secure about their place in the new country.

#### *Benefits in terms of what EAL/D specialists provide*

Specific benefits relating to the expertise of trained and experienced EAL specialists highlighted learner-centred practices such as: making links to the 'funds of knowledge' that students bring to the classroom, assisting with first language maintenance and community links, targeted language input at different stages of progression, focus on academic English, tracking students' English language development, identifying and assessing learning needs, and modifying the provision of teaching based on solid EAL/D pedagogy. In a mainstream setting, such pedagogy was seen to include:

*Provision of the assumed / background knowledge underpinning classroom content / activities / tasks. Assistance in understanding the concepts associated with subject specific terminology. Oral practice in using and applying the language of the classroom and subject content. Explicit linking of oracy and written language. Mainstream and New Arrivals, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Qld.*

*Helping students understand the benefit of maintaining their heritage language and being bilingual. Connecting with families to involve them in the school more. Supporting parents with children's homework and giving advice/support about bilingualism. Someone who has key, ongoing knowledge about families and culture can help mainstream teachers to be more culturally sensitive and culturally inclusive. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

Several respondents identified key qualities of experienced EAL/D specialists which enable them to advise EAL/D learners on issues such as curriculum choices, and to advocate for their right to access the curriculum and for modification of assessment tasks:

*Professionals who have worked with EAL/D students over time have a deep understanding of issues faced by students. They are then able to effectively manage situations to create the best outcomes for students. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

EAL/D specialists understand the value of encouraging use of the home language in class to help students grasp SAE language concepts. They tend to foster use of the home language and make good

use of interpreters and translated materials and bilingual resources. They also tend to support the implementation of the general capability Intercultural Understanding in the Australian Curriculum.

#### *Benefits in terms of service delivery*

Several respondents took a broader perspective on targeted EAL/D provision as an overall form of service delivery, noting general benefits such as partnerships which lead to better educational outcomes for all, as well as benefits related to particular settings. In a mainstream setting, for example, there is:

*Greater consistency of quality service for all students. Greater attention to PL for staff around this student group. Increased likelihood of whole school understanding of the needs of this student group.* Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D Teacher, Government, Tas.

*The EAL/D specific program promotes regular L2 student attendance at school, in particular the senior levels.* Mainstream. Qualified EAL/D teacher. Government. Vic.

*An EAL/D programme is able to specifically identify the student's weak areas and focus on strengthening them. Mainstream teachers don't have the skills and/ or time to do this.*

Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Qld.

#### *For a New Arrivals setting:*

*The advantages are multifaceted. It sets expected standards of EAL delivery and teaching It allows for the development of a central reference point of expertise of teachers who can be accessed by schools. It allows for the consolidation of resources for greater efficiency and less cost as it avoids replication. It allows for a focal point delivery of a range of services from educational, health, advice to parents, preparation for mainstream schooling.* New Arrivals, Principal, Government, Vic.

Despite participants' overwhelming and explicit identification of benefits accruing from targeted EAL/D provision, it is also important to note the view that such provision is not always well constructed, and is not, on its own, sufficient.

*On the basis of my experiences as an EAL coach in mainstream schools, I think there can be some serious faults in an EAL/D program that runs (in secondary) as a parallel class. The quality of programs is extremely variable; the programs very often mirror mainstream subject English and there is frequently no coherent approach to building student language in other disciplinary genres. In the end, responsibility for EAL/D student language development cannot rest only with EAL/D teachers; it must be equally shared by all teachers. We've paid a lot of lip service to language across the curriculum with very little understanding (in Victoria) of just where language lies in the various disciplines and very little practical training for subject teachers in achieving a meta-understanding of the disciplinary language of which they are expert users. I understand that the existence of separate EAL/D program gives a profile to EAL/D students but I think in the end, as a sole model, it is an easier and seriously flawed option. EAL/D staff have or should have the capacity to support language knowledge*

*and appropriate language teaching methodology in all staff and if this also benefits students other than EAL/D students, well and good. This in no way suggests a low EAL/D profile; this cohort needs to be tracked and monitored, from day 1 in the school and beyond; it needs highly responsive well-being staff and programs, it needs special programs, such as bridging programs and so on but most of all it needs effective language development 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. New Arrivals, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Vic.*

### **Question 9: Are there any programs being used at the school that compete with the provision of EAL/D services?**

This question was posed to discern any pedagogical factors that might be impacting on the effective implementation of an EAL/D services. The majority of respondents (73%) answered 'no' generally indicating that there were no impediments from other programs. While respondents who replied with 'yes' were invited to give additional information, those who replied 'no' also made comments. One respondent commented that the EAL/D program complemented the running of the mainstream classroom due to the shared goals of improving students' outcomes and well-being. Two comments reflected EAL/D teachers being used for general support for absent non-EAL/D teachers. One respondent reported that he/she would be expected to cover for other teachers when required instead of following the EAL/D program. Another noted that:

*...there is a problem with classroom space that is made available as our ESL classrooms are no longer needed as we are all SUPPORT....it saves money [for the school] because if the classroom teacher is away for science and we are supporting on that lesson or co teaching then they [the school] save on relief don't they? Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, NSW.*

EAL/D teachers being allocated to fulfil relief roles was also apparent amongst respondents who replied 'no'. 27% of respondents believed that there were competing programs that interrupted effective provision of EAL/D services. These programs were both academic and non-academic and included:

- Commercial literacy programs such as Accelerated Literacy, Direct Instruction and MultiLit
- Commercial phonics based education packages such as Jolly Phonics
- Other literacy programs such as Reading Recovery, Synthetic phonics
- Remedial English classes
- Speech Pathology intervention
- Disability services
- Sport
- Gardening: The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program

- School carnivals and performances

Respondents noted that the academic programs were not appropriate for EAL/D learners as they have been designed for literacy development of Standard Australian English speaking learners.

*Jolly Phonics and decontextualised teaching practices. Reading strategies that ask EALD students to provide a word or sound that is not in the vocabulary/knowledge for the stage of acquisition.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival, Government, ACT

*'Literacy' does not directly compete but totally omits the explicit teaching of English in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI, Remote, Government, NT

One respondent summarised the practice of diverting funds into competing programs as 'theft':

*EALD money is funnelled in to support a range of other programs. It's essentially theft but year after year they get away with it! Where's the accountability?* Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, SA

#### **Question 10: Does your site leadership team have the requisite understanding of EAL/D matters to administer funds/make decisions on behalf of these students?**

Nearly 50% of participants responded to this question with 'partly' and 23% with an outright 'No', for example:

*Management have little understanding of EAL of how EAL should be delivered and assessed.* ELICOS, qualified EAL/D teacher, VIC.

However, these negative figures must be read against 28% with an outright 'Yes', and also against various contextual factors contributing to participants' 'partly' assessments. The 67 comments shed light on these factors and simultaneously provide indicators of the characteristics shaping leaders' EAL/D decision making, the role of the EAL/D team in supporting leadership to make wise decisions, factors acting for or against leadership having the requisite understanding, and outcomes of leadership not having such understanding.

One key contextual factor impacting mainly on the 'Partly' responses concerned whether respondents were in a single school or functioning in a cluster or as consultant across a large number of schools. In other words, the response reflected the number of leadership personnel in the setting who had the requisite understanding, eg some but not all regional leaders, only the head of teaching and learning in the school, one in four of the school leadership team.

*As a systems person answering this question, I have not seen widespread, quality understanding of EAL/D pedagogy and resulting required provision amongst or across school leadership. Having said this, there are some school leadership teams that do have the requisite understanding; however, with no centralised advice/direction, this is not sustainable.* ATSI/New Arrivals/Mainstream, Administrator, Government, NT.

*Not all principals realise what the funding is for and what their obligations are in regard to the funding.* Mainstream/New Arrivals, EAL/D consultant, Government, Vic.

*Our principal is a strong EAL/D supporter. She is a distinct minority in the region which caters predominantly for ATSI EAL/D students.* ATSI/Remote, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, WA.

Distinct from these elaborations of 'Partly' are those that indicate lack of respect by leadership for the knowledge and expertise of the EAL/D specialist. For example:

*The person with the EAL/D expertise had little power as a member of the leadership team:*

*Though the EAL Director has a masters in TESOL, the school administration (with no appropriate expertise) dominates EAL provision and services with little regard for the particular needs of these students.* Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Vic.

*The leadership have had little interest and little to do with the provision of EALD support and are new to higher leadership roles.* Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, SA

In contrast to the above, some comments indicated high respect for EAL/D expertise and/or readiness to delegate:

*The leadership team, especially the Principal, is willing to accept the recommendations of the qualified EALD staff. We are able to buy bilingual teacher aides, resources and necessary equipment (iPads, etc) as we see fit. There is very little interference.* New arrivals, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Qld.

Decision making by leadership was delegated to the EAL/D team because of little understanding of funding and specialised enrolment needs in a mainstream setting. Leadership consultation with EAL/D staff on decision making particularly involved:

- the EAL/D specialist keeping leadership informed and/or reminded of EAL/D matters
- the EAL/D specialist becoming a recognised source of expertise in decision making related to EAL/D matters

*As a trained EALD teacher and having been in a consultant position I advise on funding ideas and suggest direction for where resources need to be spent.* Mainstream/New Arrivals, Consultant/Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, NSW.

- leaders' willingness to listen

*When understanding is not there, the leadership team is open to EALD teacher clarification.* Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.

However, the data show that leadership consultation with EAL/D staff on decision making was far from widespread in mainstream schools, suggesting the truth of the below comment:

*The majority of EAL/D teachers have little impact on decision or policy making if they are not a senior Executive in the school. Metropolitan, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

Where consultation did not occur, teachers referred to leaders' lack of interest in EAL/D matters, and sometimes their active resistance to information and accountability:

*They don't know and they don't want to know. They see the EALD money as their big slush fund for doing whatever they like with. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, SA.*

*Many leaders have very little understanding of EAL. They often assume that programs designed for students with learning difficulties are appropriate for EAL students. The need for mainstream teacher professional learning around strategies and differentiation is not recognised and supported. Qualified EAL/D Teacher, Government, New Arrivals. Vic.*

In the schools where leaders were considered to definitely have the requisite understandings to make decisions, contextual factors referred to were:

- leadership being all EAL/D qualified, e.g. in targeted provisions for new arrivals
- an EAL/D qualified director/head of an EAL/D unit as an active respected member of the school leadership team
- a solid EAL/D program in place with ongoing enrolment of EAL/D students over a number of years and visible success
- leaders' commitment to internationalisation and the achievement of all members of the school's diverse community

In the schools where leaders were considered not to have the requisite understandings, contextual factors mentioned were:

- lack of professional learning opportunities for leaders on EAL/D issues
- minimal support and oversight from education authorities
- school-based decision making as a recent shift from regional decision making by EAL/D specialists:

*As there has previously been a regional focus, led by a HOD the complexities of service delivery may not be fully known by school leadership. Mainstream/New Arrivals/ATSI, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Qld.*

- EAL/D low on a leader's priorities for the school:

*With school autonomy and a principal who highly values numeracy, science and IT, the EALD Program is not high on the priority list. (It has, however, received recent awards and therefore, continues to be funded.) Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

- gaps in understanding, e.g. where a special needs student is also an EAL/D learner
- uninformed and mistaken beliefs or assumptions about EAL/D learners and their learning needs and about best practices for addressing those needs, exacerbated by lack of interest in obtaining accurate information:

*[leadership] seem to falsely believe that EALD students' needs can be catered for in the same way/combined with those students receiving LA (learning assistance). Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT*

*There is a fundamental lack of understanding at all levels of leadership regarding the needs of English language learners. Too often they are conflated with learning difficulties and little regard is paid to students' considerable bilingual skills. Nor is there any interest in learning about how long it takes to become properly fluent in a language, including academic discourse. Once students have ceased to be new arrivals they are treated exactly the same as native English speakers, with no recognition of cultural difference. Mainstream/New Arrivals, EAL/D Consultant, Government, NSW.*

*Not all of the team have a clear understanding of EALD student needs....the belief is that good teachers will meet the learning needs of all children, including EALD students. Mainstream, Unqualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

*I have heard our leader say 'learning English is like learning to play cricket - you need to be surrounded by experts to pick it up quickly, so withdrawing students for support is not in their best interests'. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT*

*It is sad to say that the intensive language program is adversely affected by leaders in school and at the network level who believe that a mainstream approach to teaching is ok for newly arrival EALD students with minimal English. This belief is reflected in their choice of unqualified teachers in the specialist program, the lack of targeted professional learning for the staff and the interference of mainstream agenda/priorities in the short term program. New Arrivals, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

Professional learning opportunities for leaders were seen as essential in order to counteract such beliefs; ensure access to accurate, evidence-based information; and bring about change.

Reviewing the 67 comments on this question, outcomes of decision making without the requisite understanding are clearly evident, as follows:

- inappropriate and ineffective service delivery
- failure to provide staff with necessary professional learning opportunities
- inappropriate and ineffective staffing decisions, e.g. cuts to EAL/D teachers, use of unqualified teachers in EAL/D positions, misuse of qualified EAL/D teachers
- failure to establish monitoring procedures all the way down the line of decision makers and implementers

- failure to recognise and acknowledge the value of the home language and the advantages of bilingualism.

### **Question 11: Do you feel supported in your role as an EAL/D teacher in your school?**

Large proportions of respondents felt either supported (47%) or ‘sometimes’ supported (43%) by their school. 11% felt unsupported in their role.

Those who felt supported noted a range of reasons in their additional comments; these are summarised below:

- Being given adequate planning time
- Being part of a cohesive and functioning teaching staff
- Feeling supported by staff and leadership
- Being welcomed when entering the school
- Recognition from classroom teachers of the academic and emotional improvements of students who follow an EAL/D program
- Being given access to professional learning
- Having policies and procedures that favour EAL/D provision
- Being granted freedom to set up teaching programs
- Being recognised as having skills that need to be imparted to other teaching staff

One respondent noted that despite feeling supported, the leadership team does not always prioritise EAL/D in staffing decisions.

*Although I am sometimes covering other teachers, on the whole I feel supported and that the work I do with the EALD students is valued. Teachers often come to me for assistance or to ask about how EALD students in their class can be best supported in their learning.*  
Unqualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, ACT.

### **Question 12 is reported together with Question 15**

### **Question 13: What do you think is needed to improve opportunities for EAL/D students in your school or the schools you are familiar with?**

This open-ended question was aimed at gaining insight into practicable opportunities identified by EAL/D teachers at the ground level.

Responses centred on increased accountability, increased learning time, professional learning for teachers on language, EAL/D pedagogy, racism and cultural awareness, funding and teacher capacity. These responses are consistent with the matters raised so far and proposed improvements are exemplified below:

*[more] Teachers whose role is purely EALD within the school. Teachers who cannot be used for any other role. Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival, ACT.*

*Qualified EAL/D teachers supporting classroom teachers to implement EAL/D pedagogy and providing small group intervention as needed, connected to the classroom program.*

*Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ATSI/New Arrival, Metropolitan/remote, NT*

*[Reduced] size of classes. Specialist teachers. Resources that target language skills. Showing care, understanding and acceptance to these students to make them feel comfortable, settled and integrated. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, SA*

*Trained EAL/D teachers, time to run a program, liaise and support mainstream teachers, cultural awareness, a clear expected EAL report that teachers use for assessment, planning and reporting to and on appropriate students. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Intensive English Centre – New Arrival, VIC.*

Several respondents noted how more time is required for students to receive targeted service provision:

*The ability to support students who are in Stage 3 (in the ESL/ESD Progress Maps) and still are not able to work at the appropriate level in classes. They need support but there is no time or money to assist them. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, WA*

Responses also included mention of the need for increased awareness not only among principals as noted in previous questions, but throughout the education system:

*An attitudinal change... from educating executive members, departmental heads, principals, teaching staff in all schools. Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI, Remote, NT*

**Question 14: Does your role at your site (such as a school) include the promotion of cultural diversity/acceptance and intercultural understanding? If so, what sort of activities are you involved with?**

EAL/D teachers as cultural mediators reflects an immeasurable aspect of quality EAL/D provision.

*Having EAL/D teachers is so important to ensure cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, to provide a point of contact for students and vulnerable families, and to support teachers to work effectively with EAL/D students in their classrooms. We need EAL/D teachers to ensure that EAL/D students develop proficient academic language skills. Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival, Government, ACT*

At the same time, EAL/D teachers are central to the promotion of intercultural understanding among all staff and students in the school community. The following quote suggests the range of activities individual EAL/D teachers are involved in.

*Conduct term professional learning to staff at staff meetings. Promote and organise NAIDOC and Multicultural day activities. Promote intercultural connections within the curriculum - as per EAL/D annotations - I work one on one with staff and whole staff. Announce special holidays or events to the staff and considerations which they should be aware of, e.g. Ramadan. Regularly contribute to school newsletter promoting students, curriculum and multicultural services. Organise girls only swimming lessons. Advocate for students – e.g. vegetarian options at sausage sizzles. Support [EAL/D] student participation in school activities. Organise cultural awareness excursions. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

While few respondents provided such a range of activities, many mentioned two or three of them. A majority of the teachers adopted an informal role in promoting intercultural understanding, e.g. supporting colleagues to better understand CALD communities, encouraging positive relationships with parents, guardians and families, sharing information about special religious and cultural celebrations of students, and generally raising awareness of cultural diversity in the school. Strategies included personal communications, information in the school newsletter, and maintaining a notice board for the whole school with a map/flags and students' names linked to their countries.

*The EAL/D staff offer cultural competence workshops. We publish a newsletter each term which includes cultural background information about the different ethnic backgrounds of students resettled through the UNHCR refugee program. We have a close working relationship with the staff of the resettlement provider. New Arrivals, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Qld.*

Teachers also provided a range of more formal professional learning opportunities, such as regular intercultural awareness sessions for staff, sessions on the development of two-way (Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal) thinking and operation of teachers, and on the nature of the home language and its role in learning. Teachers and consultants also shared information about the ACARA EAL/D documents and their cultural annotations, and provided professional learning about the general capability 'Intercultural understanding', and how it can be easily implemented.

Participating in and sometimes managing curriculum development and implementation relating to intercultural education was frequently mentioned. Such curriculum activities included the incorporation and recognition of cultural diversity in all school activities, team planning across mainstream classes, supporting the teacher librarian with resources for teaching about cultural diversity and intercultural understanding, and studying the countries the students come from. Teachers also mentioned their involvement in policy development and implementation, particularly

in regard to equity, diversity and anti-racism policies. Consultants generally did not mention such aspects, although some were involved

*[t]o a limited extent in helping teachers and leadership teams understand and accept different ways of thinking and behaving without being judgmental or evaluative.*

Mainstream/New Arrivals/ATSI, EAL/D consultant, Catholic, NT

Many EAL/D teachers referred to their involvement in organizing the school's participation in events such as Harmony Day, Cultural Diversity Week, NAIDOC, Reconciliation Day, significant days in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar, Refugee Week, Multicultural Festivals, annual multicultural picnic, celebration of national days, cultural performances, International Food Day, and the UNHCR Refugee Art Competition. Two recurrent issues emerged in relation to EAL/D teacher involvement in such events: avoiding tokenism in the school's approach and avoiding the event being seen as 'largely EAL/D teacher driven'.

*I work with outside agencies to organise celebrations of, e.g., Harmony Day..I ensure that these activities are organised in conjunction with other people and this is seen as a whole school activity, not an EALD thing. Mainstream/New Arrivals, Administrator/Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, Qld.*

Similar but more ongoing activities included organizing cultural exchanges, multicultural ambassador teams and intercultural school assemblies; incorporating ISEC students into school clubs, sports and music wherever possible, establishing a multi-racial dance group, as well as Arts and Film festivals showcasing works by the school's refugee students. When planning all such activities, the intercultural understanding and inclusivity components were distinct areas of consideration, and teachers made frequent reference to the general capability in the Australian curriculum.

Liaising with parents and the community was another role taken on by EAL/D teachers in schools. Examples included: holding a multicultural morning tea once a term to bring families together and create positive relationships; inviting parents into school to be part of programs; family-school partnerships; parents tutoring other parents; skilling parent helpers; meetings with groups of different ethnic parents every term with interpreter involvement.

*We encourage a New Families network meeting once a month to meet at the school and support needs of families new to the area and new to English. We have routine catch ups with parent/carers and strong displays raising the profile of our bilingual learners. We have support systems in place to work with families in filling out forms and understanding reports etc. Mainstream, Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government, ACT.*

It is worth mentioning that, for some teachers, many of the activities mentioned here were not specifically a part of the role of the EAL/D teacher as established in the school, but were engaged in

as a result of personal belief and commitment to values of inclusivity and intercultural understanding.

**Question 15: Are there any other matters that you believe are important about the state of EAL/D in your context?**

Due to the overlap in responses, the analysis of questions 12 (*Are there any particular matters happening in schools that you are familiar with at the moment that are impacting on the effective teaching and learning of EAL/D?*) and 15 have been combined.

These two questions highlighted several areas of concern related to school provisions for EAL/D learners, and particularly: reduced EAL/D staffing allocation, re-distribution of targeted funding, misuse of EAL/D teachers, lack of expertise among non-EAL/D specialists, teacher education, inappropriate educational practices, inconsistent provision of service, and the resulting compromised quality of EAL/D provision.

*Reduced EAL/D staffing*

Whether due to changed staffing formulae, reduced funding allocations or changes associated with school autonomy, there have been widespread EAL/D staffing cuts across the nation.

*NT teacher cut backs in middle and secondary schools. Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI/New Arrival/ Mainstream/Rural, Government, NT.*

*DOE EALD funding cut backs. Limited schooling class sizes for example have jumped from 12 to 16. Administrator/Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrivals/Mainstream, Government, WA*

*EALD programs receive MINIMAL allocation of SSO hours unless EALD Teacher is replaced by SSO allocation. Even in that situation, EALD support of students is always jeopardised! Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, SA.*

Consultants in several different states confirm that changes to funding models have put pressure on schools with EAL/D learners across all areas, from staffing to curriculum.

*Due to the decrease in teacher FTE, less time spent on EAL/D students. Mainstream teachers not having the skills to implement teaching, planning and assessment of EAL/D learners. Not being able to identify EAL/D learners. Intensive English Centres full to capacity at the beginning of the year therefore new arrivals with limited or no English not gaining access to these programs. Consultant/Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream/New Arrivals, Metropolitan/Remote, Government, WA.*

At the school level, there is uncertainty about changes related to school autonomy.

I'm not sure how it would impact our program to be funded in a different way. It seems though that there is much less money available to run our program now than in the past.

*I already need to fight for my position at the school in order to be there for the students, rather than filling gaps when release teachers are not available. The amount of support I provide both academic and emotional is not understood at the school. The NAPLAN results were positive with the EALD students scoring well in the average range and this is due to the extra and careful support they have been consistently receiving for a number of years. This is not really understood either, the results are just taken for granted and the assumption is because they score well they don't need support. School level funding will take away the collegiality of EALD teachers and result in less support for EALD students. Mainstream school, qualified EAL/D, ACT.*

One teacher wrote:

*There is no longer any accountability to provide support for these students. At my school, my position as qualified ESL teacher has been disestablished, and been replaced by a totally unqualified aide. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Independent, Mainstream, QLD.*

#### *Redistribution of targeted funding*

Respondents noted that funds that were marked for EAL/D students were being redistributed to other areas which do not necessarily correspond with the needs of EAL/D students and that there was no guarantee that funds would be spent as intended. The following typify these comments:

*EALD points not always being used appropriately for EALD students who need support. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, ACT*

*Time has been allocated to help non-EAL/D students too especially the ones with Learning Difficulties. Qualified EAL/D Teacher, rural Government School, New Arrival/Mainstream, WA*

*Unfortunately with decentralised funding, EAL funding goes into global school budgets and is too frequently spent on other areas. EAL students are not receiving specialised assistance... When questioned about where funding has gone, principals will often respond by saying the funding is supporting general literacy programs or reducing overall class sizes. This does not address the specific needs of EAL students. Too frequently EAL students receive no support and mainstream teachers are left floundering and frustrated. New Arrival, qualified EAL/D teacher, VIC.*

The redirection of funds raises concerns of accountability. One respondent noted that:

*The funding seems to be put into the 'school bucket' and is now going towards other programs. The EAL programs within the schools are decreasing and this includes the allocation of teachers to EAL programs. The schools need to be held accountable for the EAL funds they are given. New Arrival, qualified EAL/D teacher, VIC.*

*EAL/D trained teachers are being taken off EAL/D and put onto class. Some schools are 'trading in' their EAL/D teachers for money. Some schools are using their EAL/D allocation to put extra teachers into class to reduce class size. Qualified EAL/D Consultant, Government School, New Arrival/Mainstream, NSW.*

The reducing class size may help create improved learning conditions in general, there is an accountability issue if EAL/D funds which are supposed to advantage a student are being used instead for whole-school decisions which may not directly benefit that learner.

#### *Mis-use of EAL/D teachers*

The redistribution of targeted funding is insidious and occurs also through EAL/D specialists having their time redirected away from EAL/D learners and being required to act as a relief teacher for other staff.

*In some schools, it is prescribed who and how teachers will work, regardless of needs of students. EAL/D time is given to other things. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, ACT.*

*Some ESL teachers have become LASTs [Learning and Support Teachers]. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, NSW.*

*EAL/D teachers' workloads incorporate teaching VCAL [Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning] taking time away from students who need more individualised support. Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival/Mainstream, Government, Vic.*

Conversely, some EAL/D teachers reported having to support large number of students but with chronically insufficient time allocated for this work. For example, one teacher wrote:

*The school want EAL/D support to happen, they want you to run TELL [Teaching English Language Learners – a program delivered by the NSW DECS], team teaching etc, but the only time I have is to organise everything in my own time/weekends etc. Team teaching requires serious planning and implementation, however the school is not willing to release the mainstream teacher for this planning to take place. I often use my allocated support periods to make things happen. Sometimes I wonder where is the pedagogy in all this timetabling? Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government School, New Arrival / Mainstream, NSW*

Furthermore, for those students who do receive EAL/D support, it is usually for a limited time (this period is inconsistent across the nation, but may be for 6 to 18 months) and until a certain proficiency which still may not be enough for the student to match the academic demands of the mainstream classroom.

*Funding at the moment only provides support for Beginning, Emerging and some Developing EAL/D students. Those students who leave EAL/D support continue through the school system and do not always cope with more academic language requirements at Upper Primary and Secondary level. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Metropolitan, Government, ACT.*

### *Lack of expertise among non-EAL/D specialists*

Lack of expertise among non-EAL/D teachers who are teaching EAL/D students in mainstream classes is a matter of extreme concern. This is seen to be tied to a lack of understanding of EAL/D students, what they know and what they have yet to learn, and what they need to help them access the curriculum and achieve their potential. Respondents stated that EAL/D positions are held by teachers who lack qualifications or experience in EAL/D teaching.

*Non ESL trained teachers timetabled to support EAL/D students. Consultant/Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, NSW.*

*There is a lack of common understanding about EALD teaching strategies. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, SA*

Some said that non-qualified teachers were employed because they 'cost less' or because schools do not have easy access to qualified staff. Different examples of the considerations of a lack of expertise are noted below:

*Teachers do not know how to differentiate for a range of EALD learners. We are seeing increasing numbers of EALD students. Differentiation is not regularly planned for. The result is that EALD students perform at a superficial level but don't develop sound understanding of both English language and subject content. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, ACT*

*Lack of specialized knowledge so staff, lack of time or willingness to learn about EALD practice. Rural, mainstream, WA.*

*Push for already overworked classroom teachers with no TESOL training to address the needs of EAL students - even traumatised refugees. . Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival, Metropolitan/Rural/Remote, Government, Vic.*

High turnover of teachers. Teachers not coming with EAL/D knowledge. Teachers not appreciating the requirements of learning a new language/dialect. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream/ATSI/remote, Government, WA.

Lack of vision of where actually going and when people create sub rubrics for measuring lack of success (anything beyond Level 0) I worry - the aim should be onward and upward and if NO real progress being made in a reasonable time \_that should WORRY people about THEIR teaching

It should be noted that some non-qualified EAL/D teachers may be in the process of EAL/D training, for example, from their local TESOL association, as is the case with the unqualified EAL/D teachers who responded to this survey.

### *Teacher education*

Both pre-service and in-service teacher education were identified as an additional area of concern.

In regard to pre-service education, in some parts of the country there is:

...increasing recognition of EAL/D within pre-service teaching courses at universities.  
Consultant, New Arrival/Metropolitan, NSW.

However, in Queensland EAL/D qualifications are no longer being fostered.

*Queensland now has a shortage of qualified EALD specialist teachers with skills and knowledge to work in primary and secondary schools. ESL or EAL/D is being dropped from teacher education courses, rather than being strengthened.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival, Government, QLD

Within schools, some specific professional learning needs were identified:

*Staff development required to enhance understanding of how to teach to diversity and differentiate the curriculum for diverse students. Little staff development provided in these areas.* Higher education, teacher educator/international student support, Qld.

*Graduates and pre service teachers need to have better understanding of grammar and text types.* Unqualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, SA.

*Secondary teachers have need of PD in EALD and language acquisition however it is difficult to program this in a very crowded agenda and it is seen as low priority.* Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, Qld.

#### *Inappropriate educational practices*

New arrivals students are being sent to Intensive English Units with no consultation with parents, their capacity to support students at home, time required to settle in a new country and adapt to a new learning environment, age/skills/understanding/personality of the student

On demand testing, data driven teaching that often fails to appreciate the time it takes to acquire academic competence in an additional language

Broadly speaking there are wildly unrealistic views about the pace of language acquisition, and at the same time a notion that EAL/D English is somehow a streamed English for lower English students rather than a different pedagogy. NAPLAN is damaging to EAL/D students as the test is well beyond many students' stage of language acquisition. Qualified EAL/D teacher. New Arrivals/Metropolitan, Government, Vic.

The introduction of the National Curriculum has not been particularly EALD friendly eg the inquiry method in SOSE needs further modifications for EALD students to access thus method of assessment

Changes to curriculum that align EAL/D with English courses and have moved away from teaching it as a Language course, doesn't address student needs. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Independent, TasRooms to teach in. Need specifically designated areas in school.

Some schools test for disability and impairment in order to get more funding for students with little or no prior education. It also means these students don't sit NAPLAN. These students need a proper EAL course and structured education.

### *Inconsistent provision of service*

The quality and quantity of EAL/D service provision differs between states and within them across metropolitan, rural and remote areas.

Inequitable resource allocation for new arrivals – mainstream rural school with only 35 LBOTE students from a diverse range of backgrounds gets no new arrivals funding, but a child in the city can go to an intensive language school for up to 12 months before being expected to cope independently in mainstream settings. Unqualified EAL/D teacher, New Arrival, Government, Rural, VIC

In country areas a lack of trained teachers can be a problem, that's one of the reasons we need consultants for support. Where there are small numbers of students the support can be a bit hit and miss. Also the person responsible for EAL/D may have several other competing responsibilities as well. Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI, New Arrival, Rural, Mainstream, State not specified.

Inconsistent capacity in regional offices to support EAL/D teaching in schools. Consultant, All, Government, NT

### *Compromised EAL/D provision*

As the above items indicates quality of provision to EAL/D learners has been compromised:

Isolated EAL students often do not receive targeted EAL support.

Even in a school with over 60% EAL/D students, EAL/D is not a school priority – it just remains in the background, largely overlooked in strategic and year level planning. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, Vic.

Students directly miss out not only on quality teaching, but also quantity of hours. One respondent noted that:

Students are not always receiving their entitled support [EAL/D allocation] and [EAL/D] teachers are often expected to do other work, so the points [the EAL/D allocation] are swallowed up into other areas in the school which do not support EAL/D students. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Government school, Mainstream, ACT.

At the same time there is concern about particular cohorts of students not being catered for.

Funding through staffing allocation is not provided for International students yet these students are often the weakest and require the most support from EAL/D teachers particularly in Stage 6. Although schools receive partial funds from international students the vast majority of this disappears into coffers and schools are left trying to find extra funds to gain extra EAL/D support from elsewhere. Another issue is that of the university foundation programs not being more tightly controlled and them letting in students who have not successfully completed Year 11 studies. This undermines the schools and allows a small percentage of weak, lazy international students to use valuable school EAL/D resources to 'babysit' them for their Year 11 knowing the university will take them even if they have been a complete waste of space all year. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, NSW.

Asylum seekers programs at schools where students come and go continuously. Qualified EAL/D teacher, Mainstream, Government, NT

This includes concern about ATSI students not being properly recognised as learners of EAL/D, and therefore not attracting specialist support and programs.

*ATSI students are not seen as EAL/D students and as such not seen (or valued) as multilingual speakers. Remote teachers need to be strong on this. I recently attended a regional/remote Graduate PD which was NOT aware of the ATSI Capability Framework nor did they discuss or refer to language difference. I was seen as a 'specialist' area and marginalised in that most of the views and discussion were based on the belief that students are monolingual/dialectal learners. Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI, Remote, WA.*

*In a situation where bilingual education is poorly covered/where programs like WTT [Walking Talking Texts] are only mastered by very few teachers (or any {appropriate} program like that) children are being forced to learn English through other subjects and they are neither becoming literate in English nor their Indigenous language en-masse – this is a disaster. Qualified EAL/D teacher, ATSI, Remote, NT.*

## 5. Interpretation of results

Three areas of immediate concern can be identified in regard to EAL/D provision in 2013/14. These are: reduced systemic support for EAL/D, low status of EAL/D, and underestimation of the demands of learning an additional language or dialect. Based on the qualitative data collected, these insufficiencies evidently stem from a limited appreciation and understanding of the needs of multilingual learners at all levels of provision: school, systemic and teacher preparation.

1. Reduced systemic support for EAL/D provision, indicated by
  - a. staffing cuts (Question 12);
  - b. lack of accountability requirements in funding and assessment;
  - c. inconsistent funding allocation, resulting in instability of EAL/D programs – Is the program being funded? Will it continue to be funded? (Questions 5,6)
2. Insufficient consideration of EAL/D learners
  - a. in schools: indicated by inappropriate use of teachers, with EAL/D teachers engaged in non-EAL/D matters (Questions 5,6); untrained teachers in EAL/D roles; use of inappropriate literacy programs for EAL/D learners; students not receiving specialised language instruction (Questions 5,6,7,8);
  - b. in systems: indicated by unprepared staff, including principal, mainstream teachers and support staff (Questions 5,6);

- c. in teacher preparation (Question 12): indicated by universities not providing due preparation that matches the needs of schools.
- 3. Underestimation of the demands of learning an additional language/dialect, indicated by
  - a. non-identification of students, such as Indigenous EAL/D students in remote communities, or children raised without access to English in the home. (Question 6)
  - b. insufficient EAL/D specialist teachers available to support students with the academic language demands of the curriculum as they progress through the years (Questions 5, 6, 12, 15)

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

We suggest that these findings indicate serious challenges to effective teaching EAL/D learners who are present in the majority of Australian classrooms. For such effective EAL/D service provision, the concerns detailed above must be addressed.

The aim of this survey was to gather data to support an informed understanding of the current state of EAL/D in Australia as experienced by teachers and other educators in the field of multilingual education. As the peak body for EAL/D in Australia, it is ACTA's role not only to understand the nature of EAL/D provision in all jurisdictions where our members operate, but only seek to inform policy and practice in order to ensure effective and responsible education to multilingual Australians. While there is already a strong and increasing number of EAL/D students in Australian schools, ACTA notes a distinct opportunity to collect more data into financial provisions for EAL/D programs, classroom compositions, teacher preparation, appropriate knowledge of leadership regarding EAL/D students and services.

200 respondents participated anonymously in the survey from Government, Catholic and Independent sectors, as well as from universities and with Education departments. Responses were collected from educators from all states and territories, sectors and sub-specialities of EAL/D, such as primary, ATSI, refugee and so on. There is currently a spectrum of EAL/D support in Government schools in Australia: some states, such as Tasmania, have not decentralised their EAL/D support for schools, whereas Victoria have had school-centred funding for many years. The Education Act 2013 requires all states and territories to empower schools to administer their own funds according to their own contexts. This can lead to positive and negative outcomes for EAL/D students. This survey

endeavours to gain a deeper understanding of those outcomes than might currently be accessible to the public, policy makers and decision makers.

Even though more responses came from some states than others, the comments and concerns were common to all jurisdictions. EAL/D teachers in schools achieve a range of specific outcomes. As specialists in multilingual education:

- They enable enhanced learning for multilingual students that might otherwise be unavailable
- They foster relationships between the schools and the families of multilingual students
- They support staff in EAL/D pedagogy
- They support leadership in making decisions that impact on EAL/D service provision
- They promote intercultural understanding in the school amongst teachers and the general student population

However, the survey results indicate important concerns that jeopardise not only the effective provision of teaching at the school level and the attainment of the Melbourne Declaration goal of equity, but the future of the EAL/D profession.

ACTA urges state, territory and commonwealth governments as well as Catholic and Independent sectors to consider the following recommendations:

1. **Accurate identification of EAL/D learners.** ACTA urges immediate work on a nationally consistent English Language Proficiency measure with a particular focus on ACARA's EAL/D Learning Progression, building on the trialling work of NSW DECS. This is essential for the implementation of correctly targeted funding for EAL/D learners and is a matter of urgency.
2. **Accountability for allocated EAL/D funds.** ACTA recommends that the Commonwealth require transparency and accountability from the States and Territories for EAL/D allocated funding, which in turn requires similar transparency and accountability from schools. Accountability must include requirements that funding directly addresses EAL/D learner needs through use of specialist staff, such as EAL/D teachers and multilingual staff, both teachers and teacher aides.
3. **Guidance for principals.** ACTA recommends that principals in schools with multilingual populations be provided with guidelines and other support to appropriately manage the EAL/D learning of those populations.

4. **Preparation of teachers.** ACTA recommends at least one compulsory university unit in English as a Second Language for pre-service teachers.

## APPENDIX A

### What is ACTA?

The **Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA)** is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Our membership comes from all educational sectors: pre-schools; schools; 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. Our objectives are to:

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

## APPENDIX B

### Who Are EAL/D Learners?

EAL/D learners have diverse histories and backgrounds. They can be found among the following groups:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
2. recently arrived and longer-term resident migrant and refugee students
3. Australian-born migrant/refugee-background students
4. temporary entrants to Australia, e.g.: school-aged international students; exchange students; children of tertiary international students, temporary skilled workers, temporary professional entrants, international defence force personnel, diplomats, etc.

EAL/D learners' main language(s) may be:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages and creoles;
- Aboriginal, Pacific Island, Singaporean, African, Indian sub-continent and other English varieties that are significantly different from Standard Australian English in regard to comprehensibility and world view;
- one or more of the multiplicity of languages throughout the world.

EAL/D learners may:

- have been born overseas or in Australia;
- use varying amounts of English at home and at varying proficiency levels;
- be just starting in an Australian school or have been there for all or most of their school lives;
- have attended school overseas and may have achieved at high levels in their mother tongue;
- have never been to school in Australia or anywhere else;
- have had their schooling seriously disrupted by war, traumatic experiences, frequent moves and other dislocations.

These complex histories and backgrounds impact on students in many ways, including their pathways into Standard Australian English and English literacy.



## APPENDIX C

### How Are EAL/D Learners Distinctive?

The pathway in learning another language or significantly different variety/dialect of a language is not the same as the pathway for those who have been learning that language or variety from infancy. It follows that, if assessment is to provide useful and effective information on EAL/D learners' achievements, progress and learning needs, it should map their progress along their actual learning pathways.

In regard to the variety of English that constitutes the required norm in Australian schools, EAL/D learners differ – in different ways – from English mother tongue speakers and from each other. For example:

- EAL/D learners (from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds) will have age-appropriate oral skills in another language/variety but may not speak or (fully) understand Standard Australian English – hence many need assistance in building oral English skills as a foundation for learning literacy in English
- migrant and refugee EAL/D learners may enter Australian schools at any age – hence the age-related English and educational norms for Australian-born, mother tongue English speakers will not apply to many of these learners
- EAL/D learners may or may not have advanced literacy skills in a language other than English but assessments in English will not reflect/reveal their literacy and numeracy skills in other languages
- EAL/D learners' cultural and social understandings cannot be assumed to be the same as those of English mother tongue speakers – hence the cultural and social assumptions embedded in assessments may be quite misplaced.

EAL/D learners face the complex task of simultaneously learning Standard Australian English as a new language or variety, coming to grips with a different culture, acquiring English literacy, and gaining school-specific knowledge.

In regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners, a recent report (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2006) stated that:

In the 2001 Census, about one in eight Indigenous Australians (12 percent) reported that they spoke an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home. The majority (about 80 percent) reported that they spoke English. However, the Census does not differentiate between standard Australian English and Aboriginal English. Kaldor and Malcolm ('The language of school and the language of the Western Australian Aboriginal schoolchild – Implications for education', *Aborigines of the West: Their Past and Their Present*, p. 411) suggest that 'Aboriginal children's speech today is probably best seen as a post- creole continuum,' and Harkins ('Structure and Meaning in Australian Aboriginal English', *Asian Englishes: an international journal of the sociolinguistics of English in Asia/Pacific*, 2000, 3 (2): 60) asserts that 'Australian Aboriginal English ... is now the primary language of internal and wider communication for the majority of Australian Aboriginal people.' The literature also reveals that standard Australian English spoken by Indigenous students frequently shows evidence of conceptual features that are not shared with non-Indigenous speakers. Aboriginal English shows itself at the level of conceptualization, even when it is not so apparent at the level of linguistic form. (See, for example, the extensive body of work by Ian G. Malcolm, as well as recent work by F. Sharifian, 'Cultural conceptualisations in English words: A study of Aboriginal children in Perth'). (p. 33)

## APPENDIX E

### ACTA Press Release July 2013

School English Language learners set to gain or lose?

Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) says National Plan for School Improvement has potential to either benefit or disadvantage in teaching school students for whom English is an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D)

The Australian Government's *National Plan for School Improvement* increases principals' decision-making powers and introduces a funding model directed to supporting all students. However, there is some debate about the best processes for implementation for students with limited or developing English language skills.

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) has been actively involved in the national education agenda in regard to English language learners. Over the years, we have contributed to substantive developments that address the learning needs of Indigenous, migrant, refugee and international students for whom English is an additional language or dialect (EAL/D learners). Most recently:

1. ACTA has collaborated with ACARA in developing:
  - tools to assist teachers in identifying EAL/D learners and tracking their progress
  - resources to assist specialist and mainstream teachers working across the curriculum with EAL/D learners.
2. ACTA has developed materials on behalf of AITSL to demonstrate teacher standards in classrooms with EAL/D learners.
3. ACTA has written detailed submissions to various inquiries, the latest being the Senate Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
4. ACTA's State/Territory affiliates continue to provide on-going and regular high-quality professional development for EAL/D specialist and mainstream teachers, including a major biennial and international teacher conference.

As the peak body for local State/Territory Associations, ACTA has both a locally grounded and nation-wide understanding of EAL/D issues. We see the current trend to decentralise school

administration and resourcing as an opportunity for genuine flexibility that will allow schools to respond appropriately and effectively to the very diverse contexts in which they operate.

However, if localised decision-making and resourcing is to benefit EAL/D learners, decision-making by principals and their schools must be informed by the knowledge and skills that have been proven to underpin effective EAL/D provision. Thus, it is essential that:

- all education systems in all States/Territories maintain and strengthen the specialist EAL/D services that support schools, teachers and learners
- the work that has been done nationally and locally in developing EAL/D perspectives in curriculum, assessment and reporting is utilised and further developed
- **all education systems ensure that properly trained and qualified EAL/D specialist teachers are employed in schools**, that is, teachers who (i) know and can use nationally and locally developed EAL/D resources, programs, and assessment and learning materials, (ii) can accurately determine English language needs, provide targeted language-focused teaching, and (iii) work collaboratively with mainstream teachers across the curriculum
- all teachers are encouraged to pursue professional development opportunities to improve their capabilities in working with EAL/D learners across the curriculum
- the effectiveness of the new arrangements in benefitting EAL/D learners is consistently monitored at local, State/Territory and national levels.