



**SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS**

Introduction

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is the peak professional body for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) educators in school and adult settings. It comprises representatives from state and territory TESOL associations, whose members include teachers, consultants and curriculum developers and researchers in the field of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D).

As the peak body advocating for the interests of students who are learning English as their second or additional language and their teachers, we welcome the opportunity to provide advice to the Review on ways in which these learners can be supported to achieve their educational potential in Australian schools.

Developing proficiency in English is essential to educational achievement and excellence in school. Failure to master the language and literacy of schooling affects school completion, further learning opportunities, employment prospects, civic participation and personal wellbeing. It also imposes long-term costs on society through impaired social cohesion and mobility, reduced productivity and increased welfare support.

In the coming decade, immigration will constitute a major proportion of Australia's population growth,¹ while international humanitarian crises will continue to put pressure on Australia's refugee intakes.² To meet this challenge, building national capacity and responsiveness through a strong government-supported education system of EAL/D provision is an essential government investment in high quality schooling in a multilingual society.

As highlighted in this submission, the major barrier to achieving educational excellence for EAL/D learners in Australian schools is the widespread, destructive impact of school autonomy and flexible resource management policies on targeted English language provision in schools. The review provides a crucial opportunity to recognise this barrier as a national risk and take action to ensure high quality/high equity EAL/D provision in Australian schools continues into the future.

The role of language in educational achievement

High order literacy and learning in schools requires all students to master the specialised academic language and disciplinary registers of the curriculum.³ For students learning English as their second or other language, specific risk of educational disadvantage arises from insufficient levels of English needed to access, participate and succeed in the English-medium school curriculum.

¹ Cully, M. & L. Pejosi, L. (2012) Australia unbound? Migration, openness and population futures. In *A Greater Australia: Population, policies and governance*. Committee for Economic Development. p. 70.

² Most recently, the decision in 2015 to resettle 12,000 Syrian refugees in addition to Australia's normal humanitarian intake. <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/abbott-government-agrees-to-resettle-12000-syrian-refugees-in-australia-20150909-gjibqz.html>

³ Schleppegrell, M. J. & O'Hallaron, C. L. (2011). Teaching academic language in L2 secondary settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, pp. 3-18.

Successive studies have confirmed the nature and resilience of the linguistic barrier experienced by second language learners at school. While achieving basic fluency in spoken English typically takes about two years, developing the English language and literacy needed to close the gap in academic performance with their English speaking peers^{4 5} usually takes a minimum of five to seven years. These *two types of language proficiencies* have been identified as conversational English (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills -BICS) and academic English, (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency - CALP)⁶.

An all-too-frequent outcome for English language learners in the course of their schooling is the failure to progress from BICS to CALP as manifested by language plateauing, literacy ceilings and academic underachievement. The key factor in development of CALP and the time taken to develop it is the level of literacy which students have developed in their home language. For this reason, refugee and other students with disrupted education and little or no literacy in their first language and can take between seven to twelve years to develop the level of English needed to achieve academic parity with their English- speaking peers^{7 8 9} are particularly at risk. A major consequence of this is that EAL/D students who present with native-like conversational fluency but struggle to develop CALP can be readily misdiagnosed as having or special literacy or learning needs.^{10 11}

It is estimated that there are currently over 300,000 students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) learning as English as their second or other language in schools throughout Australia. These students include newly arrived students entering Australian schooling at any year from Kindergarten to Year 12 and Australian born students in all years of schooling functioning at different levels of English language proficiency. They include humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers with little or no previous formal schooling, and migrant and international students as well as Indigenous students who have little or no exposure to Standard Australian English. While EAL/D learners come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, English language proficiency is the prime factor determining the learning needs and potential educational disadvantage of this group.

EAL/D learners are in the process of becoming bilingual or multilingual users of English. They enter the school system with language skills and cultural and cognitive abilities, bringing to the task of learning a range of linguistic and cultural resources that contribute to their English language and curriculum learning.

Australia's ongoing immigration program and its growing culturally and linguistically diverse population means that EAL/D learners will continue to make up a significant proportion of the school student population. Effective English language provision in schools will remain a vital educational access and equity strategy giving these learners opportunities to achieve their educational potential.

4 Cummins, J. (1991). Interdependence of first and second language proficiency in bilingual children, in E. Bialystok, *Language processing in bilingual children*, Cambridge: CUP.

5 Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement.

6 Cummins, J. (2008). BICS and CALP: Empirical and theoretical status of the distinction. In *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 487-499). Springer US.

7 Collier, V. (1989). How Long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language, *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(3), 509-531.

8 Hakuta, K. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? *University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute*.

9 Demie, F. (2013). English as an additional language pupils: how long does it take to acquire English fluency? *Language and Education*, 27(1), 59-69.

10 Lo Bianco, J. (1998). ESL ... Is it migrant literacy? ... Is it history? *Australian Language Matters*, 6(2), 1 and 6-7.

11 Cummins, J (1984a) Wanted: a theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students. C Rivera(ed) *Language proficiency and academic achievement*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Although Australia prides itself on its multicultural achievements, a monolingual mindset still pervades the policy and operation of its education systems. In schools where this mindset dominates, teachers remain blind to the hidden language curriculum and the linguistic challenges this poses for their EAL/D students.

The difference EAL/D pedagogy makes

EAL/D teaching and learning is more than ‘just good teaching’. It is a specialist teaching practice that makes a difference for students through language-based, instruction, assessment and curriculum, resource development, program and task design and evaluation, and professional development support and advocacy.

EAL/D teaching expertise draws on a wide knowledge base of:

- educational linguistics, the English language system, the nature of speaking, listening, reading and writing in English in a variety of informal and formal learning contexts, including school academic literacy, registers and genres
- the acquisition and development of English as an additional language or dialect including the social context of language use and development, and bi/multilingual language and literacy
- educational research, theory and practice related to the teaching and learning of EAL/D, including key rationales underlying the historical development and current approaches to EAL/D methodology
- pedagogic models and strategies of language and content integrated teaching and assessing EAL/D learners in a range of cross cultural and curriculum contexts
- planning, designing and evaluating curricula, programs and differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of EAL/D learners including implementing and adapting course materials, lesson plans, learning activities, program organisation and assessment and evaluation methods.

EAL/D teaching and learning is informed by a growing evidence base of generalisable good practice models of ‘what works’ in achieving educational excellence for English language learners at classroom, school and system levels.

Classroom practice

In both on-arrival intensive and mainstream classroom settings, EAL/D learners require multiple opportunities for comprehensible exposure to and interaction with unfamiliar language forms and meanings of curriculum content through scaffolded receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) communication practice across a spectrum of informal to formal spoken and written language.¹² This ‘discursive apprenticeship’ involves a sustained, explicit and interactive process of modelling, scaffolding and coaching of target language and literacy skills.¹³

Classroom based research has identified the importance of scaffolding pedagogy for EAL/D learners. Understood as ‘the timely, temporary and partial assistance provided by experts to

¹² Gibbons, P. (2003). Mediating language learning: Teacher interactions with ESL students in a content-based classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 2, pp. 247-273.

Derewianka, B. (2014). Supporting students in the move from spoken to written language. In A. Mahbob & L. Barratt (eds.) *Englishes in multilingual contexts*. Netherlands: Springer, pp. 165-181.

Walqui, A. (2006). Scaffolding instruction for English language learners: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9, 2, pp. 159-180.

¹³ Collins, A., J. S. Brown & S.E. Newman (1988). Cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching the craft of reading, writing and mathematics. *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 8, 1, pp. 2-10.

Kong, A. & P. D. Pearson (2003). The road to participation: The construction of a literacy practice in a learning community of linguistically diverse learners. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 38, 1, pp. 85-124.

Gibbons, P. (2006). *Bridging discourses in the ESL classroom: Students, teachers and researchers*. A&C Black.

novices to enable their successful participation or performance on new and difficult intellectual tasks¹⁴, scaffolding realises high challenge/high support instruction that ‘stretches’ and ‘apprentices’ EAL/D learners into the language and literacy of school subjects.¹⁵

In classroom interaction, EAL/D instruction is ‘customised’ and differentiated for students’ varied English proficiency levels through both planned and contingent scaffolding around class learning tasks.¹⁶ In this process, use of the learners’ first language and developing oral English is optimised as a strategic linguistic resource for talking, thinking, and learning.¹⁷

School practice

The key characteristics of effective school EAL/D programs have been identified as key predictors of academic success for language minority students. These are:

- i. *continuing specialist support* in English and their first language where possible, involving “cognitively complex academic instruction through the students’ first language for as long as possible” and “cognitively complex academic instruction through English for part of the school day”
- ii. *interactive and engaging classroom language-based teaching and learning* involving communicative teaching/learning strategies and the teaching of language through content
- iii. school executive and teachers who are *knowledgeable and trained in ESL pedagogy and multicultural education* and have high expectations of student achievement.¹⁸

In many schools in Australian state capital cities, EAL/D learners comprise the *majority* of the student enrolments. In such settings, a whole school approach to EAL/D is essential. One large-scale intervention study conducted in eleven disadvantaged government and Catholic primary and secondary schools in south-western Sydney investigated the development of a whole school ESL approach and its impact on EAL/D and refugee students’ language, literacy and numeracy performance. A rigorous evaluation found considerable evidence of improved:

- English language proficiency of EAL/D students against the ESL Scales
- language and literacy for all students in all the schools, including results in NAPLAN and Basic Skills Tests, with “at risk” students significantly above State averages
- classroom teacher and school leadership capacity.¹⁹

Five interrelated school processes were found to be critical in achieving these outcomes:

- i. targeted support for students involving ESL teaching, cross-curricular support and after-school homework/study centres

¹⁴ Michell, M. & T. Sharpe, T. (2005). Collective instructional scaffolding in English as a second language classrooms. *Prospect*, 20, 1, pp. 31-58.

¹⁵ Hammond, J. (2006). High challenge, high support: Integrating language and content instruction for diverse learners in an English literature classroom. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 4, pp. 269-283.

¹⁶ Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching second language learners in the mainstream classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hammond, J., & P. Gibbons (2005). Putting scaffolding to work: The contribution of scaffolding in articulating ESL education. *Prospect* 20, 1, pp. 6-30.

Wilson, K., & Devereux, L. (2014). Scaffolding theory: High challenge, high support in Academic Language and Learning (ALL) contexts. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 8, 3, A91-A100.

¹⁷ Gibbons, P. (2009). English learners, academic literacy, and thinking. *Learning in the Challenge Zone*. Portsmouth, England: Heinemann.

Martin-Beltran, M (2010). The two-way language bridge: co-constructing bilingual language learning opportunities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, 2, pp. 254-277.

¹⁸ Two large scale studies on student achievement and program effectiveness of some 900,000 students from 1982-2001 conducted by Thomas and Collier. Success was defined as the target group reaching full educational parity with native English speakers in all school content subjects - not just in English proficiency - after a period of at least 5-6 years. Factors were stronger than SES or gender variables. Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997) School effectiveness for language minority students. National Clearinghouse for bilingual education: George Washington University, Washington DC; Thomas, W. & Collier V. (2002) A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students’ Long Term Academic Achievement. CREDE: UC, Berkeley.

¹⁹ *Successful Language Learners (SLL) project* in DEC NSW (2011). *Literacy and Numeracy Pilots: Final Report*. DEEWR: Canberra. Accessed at: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/evaluation-repository-search/successful-language-learners-whole-school-esl-language-and-literacy-practices>

- ii. comprehensive collaboration between EAL/D teachers, EAL/D Multicultural Consultants, school leadership, and Community Liaison Officers.
- iii. professional development for all teachers in developing their understanding of EAL/D pedagogy, and how to include an explicit and systematic language learning focus in their programs
- iv. school leadership teams acquiring knowledge of and commitment to the use of EAL/D pedagogy that ‘allowed them to become leaders of pedagogical change’
- v. parent and community engagement.

System practice

In response to growing EAL/D learner school populations, some education systems have moved to develop a comprehensive support infrastructure focused on supporting learners, their teachers and schools. Development of these ‘systems of support’²⁰ reflects the recognition that effective support for these students’ English learning is beyond the capacity of individual teachers or schools and can only be effected through a coordinated, systemic approach. Such coherent support frameworks are characterised by:

- district-wide professional English language learning support
- school-based specialist teacher support
- a collaborative, student-focused staff culture
- appropriate instructional resources
- a district and school English learning leadership network.²¹

Education systems that demonstrate achievement of exceptional outcomes for EAL/D learners have developed such ‘systems of support’ for schools. A notable example is the four American school districts with significant English learner populations (the “Great City” school districts in Dallas, New York City, San Francisco and St. Paul).²² When compared with lower-performing, slower-improving education systems, the distinctive features of these high-performing systems were identified as:

- a shared vision for reform that includes a system-based strategy for improving instruction and services for English language learners
- district leadership and advocacy on behalf of English language learners
- an empowered English Language Learner office included in the highest levels of decision-making
- using external compliance requirements to leverage real reforms in programs for English language learners
- comprehensive district planning of language development strategies for English language learners with sustained, extensive district support for strategy implementation
- a culture of district-school collaboration and shared accountability
- ongoing, high quality relevant EAL/D professional development for all teachers
- use of English language learner student data to inform teaching

²⁰ Brisk, M. E. (2006). *Bilingual education: From compensatory to quality schooling*. Routledge.

²¹ Cummins, J., R. Mirza, & S. Stille (2012). English language learners in Canadian schools: Emerging directions for school-based policies. *TESL Canada Journal*, 29, 25. Efers, A., T. Stritikus, K. Calaff, K. Von Esch, A. Lucero, M. Knapp, & M. Plecki (2009). Building systems of support for classroom teachers working with second language learners: A report prepared for the Center for strengthening the teaching profession. Seattle: University of Washington, College of Education. Retrieved 2014 from <http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/ELL.Study-July2009.pdf>. Efers, A. M., A. Lucero, T. Stritikus, & M. S. Knapp (2013). Building systems of support for classroom teachers working with English language learners. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 7, 2, pp. 155-174.

²² Horwitz, A., Price-Baugh, R., Simon, C., Uzzel, R., Lewis, S., & Casserly, M. (2009) *Succeeding with English Language Learners: Lessons Learned from the Great City Schools*. Council of the Great City Schools: Washington DC.

- increased English Language Learner funding and strategic reallocation of existing resources.

Despite its evident value for the development of high impact EAL/D programs in Australian schools, there has been no real take up of such research in mainstream system policy and planning. A key reason for this is that Australia has no national research agenda or coordinating mechanism dedicated to investigating and disseminating best models of EAL/D practice in classrooms, schools and systems.

Recommendation 1

That a nationally funded research strategy be established to plan, co-ordinate and contract EAL/D research by university and other research agencies with a particular focus on investigating and promoting best models of EAL/D practice in classrooms, schools and systems.

The importance of a systemic EAL/D approach

A national targeted program policy framework is vital for direction and coordination of effort in EAL/D education. It provides an essential cohering focus for the development of specialised pedagogical practice, expertise, curriculum, research and leadership and the basis for supply of qualified teachers, professional development and the creation of an appropriate evidence base.

Established as a national specific purpose program in 1969, the then English as a Second Language (ESL) Program formed Australia's front-line response to the immediate and longer-term English learning needs of migrant and refugee students by ensuring targeted provision underpinned by system support, tied funding and program-specific accountability requirements. In so doing, the program has played a pivotal role in the success of Australian multiculturalism.

As outlined in the next two sections, policy neglect and displacement has eroded this national policy framework and is now putting this provision at risk in schools.

The alternative to a systemic approach to EAL/D provision is the unwarranted hope that school-based decision making, short-term projects and localised practices can effectively substitute for the loss of a national systemic approach.

The key role of school leadership

School leadership is a key determinant in effective delivery of EAL/D programs in schools and therefore an essential element in any systemic approach.

The nature and distribution of EAL/D students throughout the years of schooling requires both targeted and whole school approaches to organising EAL/D teaching support within a school. EAL/D learners access specialist instruction through different modes of program delivery organised by EAL/D teachers with the support of school executive staff.

Unlike the ready-made curriculum structure of subject areas, organisation and delivery of EAL/D programs crucially rely on collaboration between EAL/D teachers, class teachers and school executive. The key delivery mode of collaborative planning and teaching involves the EAL/D and class/subject teachers working together to develop and implement language and subject content integrated learning tasks and programs. This co-dependence requires teachers' understanding about second language learning and teaching and explains the fragility of school EAL/D programs when this understanding is lacking.

Research has highlighted the key role played by school leadership in building inclusive whole school systems of support that meet the language learning needs of EAL/D students.²³ Echoing findings of research on whole school approaches to EAL/D provision, such leadership is typically distributed across the school with an instructional focus that involves:

- promoting effective, differentiated pedagogy and collective staff responsibility for progress towards shared goals
- ongoing collection and formative use of data to monitor student engagement and achievement for instructional improvement and whole school planning
- developing strong professional development support programs for all staff, including administrators, with opportunities for peer and expert coaching, and collegial sharing
- assisting parent and family participation, building school-community relationships.²⁴

Under school flexible resource management policies promoted by state and territory education systems, principals have greatly increased discretion over the use of resources allocated to their school on the basis of their reported EAL/D student support needs. The scope of principal decision making now encompasses use of previously dedicated EAL/D funding for other purposes; ‘trading-off’ specialist EAL/D teacher positions when determining a mix of staff within their school budgets; deploying EAL/D teachers to other teaching roles; employing casual or contract teachers without EAL/D qualifications; making EAL/D teaching support a ‘priority’ one year, but not the next; or discontinuing the school’s EAL/D teacher positions and programs altogether.

As school principals have ultimate decision-making authority over the use of EAL/D resources within their funding allocation, school-based management policies effectively become *principal-based* management policies. Local, school-based decision-making, however well-informed and well-intentioned, can provide no guarantee of service provision and cannot form the basis for a coherent national system of EAL/D provision.

Teaching standards, initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning

The quality of EAL/D teaching crucially depends on an interrelated system of EAL/D teaching standards, accreditation, initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning operating in each state or territory. These in turn are entirely dependent on the values, priorities and directions established by an overarching EAL/D policy framework. With the disappearance of this policy framework at the national level, these vital professional supports are stagnating or unravelling in State and Territory jurisdictions.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership’s *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* do not identify the specific knowledge and skills required for specialist EAL/D teaching. In an attempt to fill this gap, ACTA developed *EAL/D Standards Elaborations*²⁵ to highlight the requirements of specialist EAL/D teaching at different teacher career stages and to inform teacher practice, professional learning goals, pre-service teacher courses and in-service professional learning programs. Although produced in accordance with advice from AITSL, the *Elaborations* have no official status and stand outside the system of teacher regulation.

²³ Calderón, M., R. Slavin, & M. Sánchez, M. (2011). Effective instruction for English learners. *The Future of Children*, 21, 1, pp. 103-127.

Scanlan, M., & López, F. (2012). ¡Vamos! How school leaders promote equity and excellence for bilingual students. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48, 4, pp. 583-625.

Stufft, D. L., & Brogadir, R. (2011). Urban principals’ facilitation of English language learning in public schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 43, 5 pp. 560-575.

²⁴ Efers, A, & Stritikus, T. (2013). How school and district leaders support classroom teachers’ work with English language learners, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 20, 10, pp. 1-40.

²⁵ <http://www.atesol.org.au/RESOURCES/Australian-Professional-Standards-for-Teachers>

Effective EAL/D teaching in schools heavily relies on the employment of EAL/D teachers with appropriate specialist entry-level training and qualifications. Recognition of EAL/D qualifications and standards by State and Territory accreditation bodies, however, is variable, lacking or unclear. This uncertainty affects recognition and accreditation of EAL/D as a teaching specialisation weakening incentives, demand for, and ultimately provision of pre-service and post-graduate EAL/D courses offered by tertiary institutions.

In many tertiary institutions, funding for specialist EAL/D pre-service education has been cut or redirected into other areas with the result that new graduates are often teaching EAL/D students with little knowledge of the considerations and adaptations required for EAL/D students to access to the Australian Curriculum. At the same time, emphasis on market-oriented development of adult TESOL courses and international language-learning diplomas has lessened the focus on language learning in the Australian context through the Australian Curriculum.

Given the everyday linguistic diversity of Australia's classrooms, teacher training courses should be offering mandatory units which specifically address the educational needs of EAL/D learners and cover the major tenets of second language teaching and learning. Currently, however, many pre-service teacher education courses still do not include coursework specifically related to this cohort of learners²⁶

Teachers on practicum placements and internships need access to mentoring by teachers with EAL/D teaching expertise. Ideally, such mentorship is provided by highly accomplished teachers and teachers with post-graduate qualifications in TESOL or applied linguistics. Currently there is no system of support or incentives in place to support such mentoring.

International and Australian research on teachers' professional development needs highlights the disconnect between the growing linguistic diversity of schools and the lack of EAL/D pre-service training or in-school professional development support for classroom teachers of refugee and migrant students.²⁷ These teachers report not being able to provide effective teaching for these students without this training²⁸ and identify EAL/D professional development as a high priority²⁹ as well as the areas in which they need professional development.³⁰

Central EAL/D units in State and Territory education systems have attempted to fill this skill gap through the development and implementation of school-based EAL/D professional development courses for mainstream teachers.³¹ These courses have proved their value in up-skilling teachers and offering pathways to specialist EAL/D training. In the absence of system requirements for mandatory EAL/D pre-service training, however, these courses are effectively doing the 'heavy lifting' in a never-ending, catch-up process. At the same time, in the current policy environment, system or career incentives for teachers to undertake this professional learning are declining.

²⁶ Hammond, 2011; Foley, Sangster & Anderson, 2013.

²⁷ He, Y., Prater, K. & Steed, T. (2011). Moving beyond 'good teaching' ESL professional development for all teachers, *Professional Development in Education*, 37(1), 7-18.

Harper, C. & de Jong, E. (2004). Misconceptions about teaching English Language Learners, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 48(2), 152-162.

²⁸ Gandara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Driscoll, A. (2005). *Listening to English Language Learners: A Survey of California Teachers' Challenges, Experiences and Professional Development Needs*. UCLA: Santa Cruz, CA.

²⁹ Watkins, M., Lean, G., Noble, G., & Dunn, K. (2013). *Rethinking Multiculturalism Reassessing Multicultural Education*, UWS and NSW DEC: Sydney.

³⁰ Franco-Fuenmayor, Padron, & Waxman, 2015

³¹ For example, ESL in the Mainstream, Teaching English Language Learners (TELL), Tracks to Two-Way learning (Aboriginal Education), Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms (TESMC), ESL in the early years; Culturally responsive classrooms.

Despite the critical role school principals and leaders play in determining delivery of EAL/D support, there is no specialised leadership development program to support effective, evidence-based decision making in EAL/D education.

What is urgently required is a coherent, national EAL/D professional development strategy that systemically supports state and territory actions to address these issues.

Recommendation 2

That a national EAL/D professional development strategy be developed in partnership with States and Territories that supports:

- i. development by AITSL of Australian professional standards for specialist EAL/D teaching at different career stages, drawing on ACTA's EAL/D Standards Elaborations*
- ii. strengthening of State and Territory standards, qualifications and accreditation requirements for EAL/D as a teaching specialisation*
- iii. requirements for pre-service teachers to undertake mandatory units which specifically address the language learning needs of EAL/D students and for universities to include these in their in pre-service teacher education courses*
- iv. recognition in all State and Territories of school-based EAL/D professional learning programs as pathways to full specialist EAL/D accreditation*
- v. development and provision of a program of specialised EAL/D professional development for school principals and leaders.*

Unfinished business: Defining and measuring EAL/D students' educational success

Despite the large number of EAL/D learners in Australian schools, there is currently no nationally agreed mechanism for identifying this target group or for reporting on their English learning needs or outcomes.³²

The disappearing EAL/D student cohort

Public reporting of ESL students, identified by participation in the then ESL General Support Program, ceased after the Commonwealth Government subsumed the program as part of Broad-banded Literacy Program in 1997. There has been no public reporting of ESL New Arrivals students since the establishment of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 2000.

Since 1997, Australia has been stuck with an inaccurate *de facto* proxy for the EAL/D student target group - the nationally consistent definition 'Language background other than English' (LBOTE).³³ This broad category encompasses a wide diversity of students from high to low SES backgrounds and includes, but cannot identify, the EAL/D student subgroup on the basis of their levels of English language proficiency. The inability to identify the EAL/D student target group

³² See ACTA submission to the Productivity Commission's *Inquiry on the National Education Evidence Base* at:

http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/208903/subdr120-education-evidence.pdf

See also its submission into *Inquiry into Migration Settlement Outcomes* Sub (108) p.53-55 at:

[file:///C:/Users/TOSHIBA/Downloads/Sub108%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/TOSHIBA/Downloads/Sub108%20(1).pdf)

³³ The Measurement of Language Background, Culture and Ethnicity for the Reporting of Nationally Comparable Outcomes of Schooling at:

<http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports/per%20and%20publications/Archive/per%20Publications/Measuring%20and%20Reporting%20Student%20Performance/Measure%20Language%20Background%20Culture%20Nat%20Comparable%20Outcomes.pdf>

See also: ACARA (2012). *Data Standards Manual: Student Background Characteristics*, Sixth Edition. <http://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/data-standards-manual-student-background-characteristics>

according to their English language proficiency constitutes a major, systemic gap in the nation's education evidence base.

In the absence of an EAL/D student definition, NAPLAN and other national data collection and reporting processes rely on the broad LBOTE category as a misleading substitute for EAL/D students.³⁴ This situation has supported the policy and program 'invisibility' of the EAL/D student target group and the nation's inability to report on their English language and literacy outcomes.³⁵ As a result, we really do not know anything about the literacy performance of the EAL/D student target group nationally, while the group has disappeared from national policy discourse, planning and provision.

Lack of a nationally agreed identification of the EAL/D student cohort fosters system and school level misidentification of EAL/D learners and limits the effectiveness of mainstream teaching practices and programs in addressing their English language and literacy learning needs. In the absence of such mechanisms, EAL/D learners may be identified as either:

- students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), without English language learning needs and/or
- failing English mother tongue literacy learners, and/or
- underachieving socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Australia's inability to accurately identify the EAL/D student cohort extends to national schools funding mechanisms. In the absence of an English language proficiency measure, a 'disadvantaged LBOTE' measure was also adopted as the basis for allocating Commonwealth needs-based funding to schools for students with limited English language proficiency. As shown in a recent analysis,³⁶ application of this inaccurate measure effects gross misalignments between students captured by this measure and students with actual English language proficiency needs.

The key role of assessment tools

The tools and instruments which teachers use to assess student achievement and monitor their progress reflect views about students and their norms of language development. They powerfully guide teacher understandings about student needs and appropriate instructional responses. These tools have practical consequences for teaching and learning of EAL/D students with potential for creating new forms of educational disadvantage through misdiagnosis of learning need and inappropriate or ineffective 'remedial' interventions.

The invisibility of EAL/D learners within NAPLAN and literacy testing over the past decade has encouraged the equation of EAL/D student need with English literacy support and fostered a general view that EAL/D learning needs can be adequately met through mainstream literacy

³⁴ Lingard, B, S Creagh, & G Vass (2012) Education policy as numbers: Data categories and two Australian cases of misrecognition *Journal of Education Policy*, 27, 3, pp 315-333.

Creagh, S (2014) A critical analysis of problems with the LBOTE category on the NAPLAN test *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 41, 1, pp 1-23.

Creagh, S. (2016). 'Language Background Other Than English': a problem NAPLAN test category for Australian students of refugee background *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19, 2, pp 252-273.

Sladek, R M & SM King (2016). Hidden from view? Bringing refugees to the forefront of equity targets in Australian higher education *International Studies in Widening Participation* 13, 1. <http://novanewcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/37>

³⁵ See ACTA submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry into the National Education Evidence Base (DR 120) p.7-9 at:

http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/208903/subdr120-education-evidence.pdf

³⁶ Statistics Unit, Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation, NSW DEC (2013) Improvements and Alternatives to the Disadvantaged LBOTE Measure Report at:

http://www.cesensw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/Improvements_and_alternatives_to_the_Disadvantaged_LBOTE_measure.pdf

The analysis concluded that the "disadvantaged LBOTE" measure not only significantly *underestimates* the size of the cohort needing EAL/D support but it also *does not capture the right students*, and therefore should not be used to identify the ELP loading for EAL/D students. It estimated that using "disadvantaged LBOTE" as a proxy for English language proficiency suggests that 74.7 per cent of the \$100 million earmarked by Gonski-funding for limited English language proficiency would be misdirected to students who do *not* require EAL/D support.

support. Such literacy interventions, however, are based on the assumption of English native speaker oral fluency and fail to address these students' English learning starting points and pathways, and their oracy and literacy language competence in another language.³⁷

Early learning screening instruments, literacy continua and progressions being developed and used in state and territory education systems assume monolingual mother tongue development in English. When rigidly applied to EAL/D learners, they result in inaccurate and invalid assessments. While such instruments are intended to cater for the full diversity of learners, their design is necessarily based on the oral language development of English speaking children growing up in Australia and is therefore unable to index the different starting points and progressions of children from language backgrounds other than English who are learning English as their additional language on entering school at different year levels.

Accurate assessment of EAL/D learners' language and literacy development requires application of an English language proficiency measure. Since the 1990s, State and Territory education systems have addressed this issue through the implementation of nationally developed EAL/D assessment frameworks such as *ESL Scales*, *ESL Bandscales* and other related state-based assessment tools. The risk now is that in the absence of a national EAL/D policy framework giving recognition to these tools, inappropriate mainstream literacy assessment tools will be regularly applied encouraging ineffective late interventions based on identification of past student underperformance instead of proactive timely language interventions based on second language development needs.

National moves towards an English language proficiency framework

The identity and 'visibility' of the EAL/D target group in terms of their English language proficiency is fundamental to the targeted provision and development of effective teaching support programs in schools. The absence of a nationally consistent approach to identifying EAL/D students at different proficiency levels and accurately measuring their progress in English learning across the years of schooling has resulted in national policy stagnation and neglect in the area of EAL/D education.

EAL/D assessment frameworks currently used by education systems are specific to State and Territory jurisdictions do not provide a nationally agreed measure of English language proficiency.

In 2011, in conjunction with work on the National Curriculum, and informed by earlier frameworks, ACARA developed the *EAL/D Learning Progression* was developed as part of the Australian Curriculum to support non-specialist teachers to understand the broad phases of English language learning, monitor EAL/D students' English development, and inform teaching and learning.³⁸ The *Progression* provides broad descriptions of what successful EAL/D learning looks like for each of the four language modes: listening, speaking, reading and writing in four phases of English language learning: Beginning, Emerging, Developing and Consolidating across three stages of schooling: Kindergarten-Year 2, Years 3-6, and Years 7-10.

The *ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression* has the potential to:

- identify the EAL/D learner target group and measure their English learning progress

³⁷ Cf section 3.3.4 which details the same issue in regard to adult migrants; see also Adoniou Submission 03 to the *Inquiry into Migration Outcomes*, Appendix 1 for a full explanation.

³⁸https://acaraweb.blob.core.windows.net/resources/EAL/D_D_Learning_Progression_Foundation_to_Year_10_09052014_file_2.pdf

- identify the relative English language learning support needs of each school, system or jurisdiction
- allow meaningful analysis and reporting of EAL/D learners' performance in NAPLAN and other data collections and support effective planning and intervention at school, system and jurisdiction levels
- enable transparent, accountability reporting for the EAL/D student target group and their English language and literacy outcomes
- replace the previously used "disadvantaged LBOTE" measure as an additional indicator of educational disadvantage in the calculation of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)³⁹.

Collaborative work undertaken throughout 2014 and 2015 under the auspices of the Education Council involved individual jurisdictions mapping the *Progression* against their current EAL/D assessment tools. This work resulted in the *National Framework for Assessing English Language Proficiency* and was endorsed by the Education Council in 2016. The Council is considering options for its further work and implementation. Progress appears to have stalled, however.

A nationally consistent approach to identifying and assessing EAL/D students' English language proficiency in Australia's multilingual schools is long overdue. It represents the last, unfinished business in the nation's education reform agenda towards student outcomes measurement.

The technical difficulties in ensuring accuracy, rigour and comparability of the framework can be substantially addressed through systematic validation and refinement of its mapping methodology. The greatest barrier, however, comes from state and territory reluctance to commit to adoption and implementation of a common national instrument.

Recommendation 3

That a nationally consistent approach to identifying, assessing, resourcing and reporting on EAL/D students in the school sector be endorsed through the following actions:

- i. completing work undertaken under the auspices of the Education Council on the National Framework for Assessing English Language Proficiency, including its validation and trialling*
- ii. gaining COAG agreement that the framework is the nationally accepted means of identifying English language proficiency in the school sector*
- iii. using this agreed measure for national collection and reporting of data on English language needs and outcomes*
- iv. discontinuing other inaccurate identifiers used for these purposes, notably Language Background Other Than English, LBOTE, and Disadvantaged LBOTE*
- v. using the National Framework for Assessing English Language Proficiency to inform the allocation of Commonwealth targeted funding for students with English language learning needs to State and Territory education systems during the 2018-2021 schools funding quadrennium.*

Going backwards: targeted provision for EAL/D students

While issues of school funding lie outside the scope of the review, capacity to achieve excellence in the delivery and outcomes of educational programs cannot be considered apart from issues of

³⁹ http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/news/announcements/yr2010/jan/what_is_icsea.pdf

management and use of available resources. The interdependence of schools, districts and systems identified in the previous section also highlights the crucial role educational structures play in facilitating program support and enhancing student outcomes.

Over the last few years, major organisational restructures in State/Territory education systems have had direct, adverse impacts on EAL/D programs and provision in schools. Inspired by school-based management and school autonomy policies, these restructures have resulted in:

- devolution of responsibility for EAL/D provision away from central offices to schools
- weakened system level EAL/D program policy, planning and oversight
- cuts in/disbanding of State/Territory and regional office EAL/D consultancy teams and their functions
- dismantling of specific-purpose EAL/D resource allocation mechanisms
- effective untying of EAL/D funding through ‘one line’ budget allocations to schools and school based flexible resource management
- reduced EAL/D professional development support for teachers.⁴⁰

These impacts have been accompanied by a loss of transparency in system-to-school allocative funding mechanisms for EAL/D learners and a commensurate lack of public accountability reporting for how these funds are used.⁴¹ The impacts have been reported occurring in nearly all state and territory jurisdiction, including those that signed up to the ‘Gonski’ funding process. Further information on these impacts on EAL/D programs are detailed in Table 5 of ACTA’s submission to Inquiry on Migration Settlement Outcomes.⁴²

These developments are the long-term outcome of a national policy process that progressively abandoned the Commonwealth targeted funding program for EAL/D learners (English as a Second Language (ESL) General Support Element in 1997 and ESL New Arrivals in 2008) and devolved all responsibility for English language provision for EAL/D learners to states and territories.

At the school level, EAL/D programs are increasingly subject to the variable knowledge and commitment of principals, the dilemmas of conflicting school funding priorities and the vicissitudes of staff micro-politics.⁴³ All areas underpinning effective EAL/D program delivery are being eroded including: EAL/D inclusive management and leadership, specialist funding and staffing, within-school resource allocation and accountability, recognition of specialist expertise and professional development support. Principals’ in-school staffing decisions are leading to widespread diversion of EAL/D funding, fractionalisation and casualisation of EAL/D teaching positions and the employment of teachers without EAL/D qualifications. Graphic teacher comments about these impacts from ACTA’s *2016 State of EAL/D in Australia Survey* are detailed in ACTA’s submission to Inquiry on Migration Settlement Outcomes.⁴⁴

School-based management policies of “local solutions to local problems” are returning many schools with EAL/D students back to the 1950s when governments took no responsibility for

⁴⁰ See ACTA submission Table 5, pp. 58-60 for individual State/Territory reports.

See Table 7, p. 120, for State/Territory Intensive English Language (IEC) Centre provision for New Arrivals.

Note: (1) the lack of IEC provision at Primary level in NSW, Queensland and Tasmania (2) in WA, Centres are now located in schools and managed at the Principal’s discretion: see ACTA submission Table 5.

⁴¹ See ACTA Migration Settlement Outcomes submission p.65

⁴² ACTA’s submission to Inquiry on Migration Settlement Outcomes, p 58-60

⁴³ Grissom, J A, D Kalogrides & S Loeb (2015) The micro-politics of educational inequality: The case of teacher-student assignments *Peabody Journal of Education*, 90, 5, pp. 601-614. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0161956X20151087768>

⁴⁴ ACTA submission to Inquiry on Migration Settlement Outcomes, p 60-71

English language provision in schools. In the move towards a devolved system, many Australian schools are returning to assimilationist, immersion (“sink or swim”) responses to their EAL/D students that characterised the educational practices of Australia’s immediate post-War period immigration period.

In this policy environment, the existence, continuity and quality of EAL/D teaching support across the nation is steadily deteriorating and Australia’s capacity to address the immediate and long-term English learning needs of migrant and refugee students in response to its ongoing immigration program is being put at risk.

There is an urgent need for a renewed national commitment to effective EAL/D provision through State-Commonwealth agreements that redress the erosion of EAL/D programs in schools and provide an accountability framework that provides an assurance of dedicated funding and quality provision and outcomes. The major obstacle standing in the way of this commitment is the historical reluctance of individual state and territory governments to be subject to such accountability requirements.

Recommendation 4

That a national policy framework for EAL/D in the school sector be established through:

- i. A national review of EAL/D provision in the school sector be conducted with reference the impact of devolution policies, effective system planning, and employment of qualified teachers with a view to setting policy directions for the program
- ii. Specific EAL/D accountability requirements that ensure targeted funding and quality provision and outcomes, and annual public reporting be included in Commonwealth school funding agreements with State and Territory Governments.

Moving forwards: Identifying, sharing and driving good EAL/D practice and continuous improvement

Three decades of application of New Public Management principles to education have shown little success in driving exemplary educational practice and continuous improvement in schools and classrooms. A major flaw has been its reliance on specification of outcomes without commensurate regard for the vital educational processes that produce those outcomes, or the processes in which those outcomes are a part. A new approach is needed which constantly links, not severs, educational resources, processes and outcomes at interdependent macro and micro levels of the education system.

This holistic approach has historically been the *modus operandi* of EAL/D program implementation, planning and development at state system and school levels. It is evidenced in a wide range of tools and resources for assessment and curriculum, resource allocation, program delivery and professional development in Australia that have been recognised as world’s best practice support in EAL/D policies, programs and pedagogy. Details of some of these resources can be found in Appendices A, B and C of ACTA’s submission to the Inquiry on Migration Settlement Outcomes.

However, in the context of the national EAL/D policy vacuum and the professional disruption and isolation from restructuring and school-based management policies, this wealth of knowledge and practice is now becoming less available to schools, teachers and students. What’s lacking is a

national clearing house dedicated to publishing and promoting state and territory EAL/D resources.

Education Services Australia, with its operating principle of leveraging existing national and State/Territory resources, and its remit to “create, publish, disseminate and market curriculum and assessment materials, ICT-based solutions, products and services to support learning, teaching, leadership and administration” would be an appropriate body to host national clearing house functions in EAL/D education.⁴⁵

Three EAL/D projects are worth drawing to the Review’s attention as promising examples of innovative, research-informed, school-based, best practice models of national significance promoting higher educational outcomes for EAL/D students.

ESL pedagogy action inquiry projects

The findings and methods of the ARC funded action research projects, *Putting 'scaffolding' to work in ESL* (2001-2003) and *Investigating challenging pedagogy for ESL students* (2005-2007) were applied in an annual statewide professional learning program, *ESL Pedagogy Action Inquiry Projects* with 60 targeted schools between 2003 to 2008. Involving teams of primary and secondary EAL/D and class teachers supported by regional EAL/D consultants, the program aimed to develop teachers’ language and literacy ‘scaffolding’ practices in high ESL classrooms.

For teachers, the program resulted in the adoption and creative adaption of language scaffolded, task based pedagogy, effective design and use of teaching tools, and enhanced self-efficacy in developing evidence-based EAL/D teaching practices. ESL students in the project classes typically gained two levels on the oral, reading and writing strands of the *ESL Scales*. For the system, the program provided an effective model of school-based ESL professional development and research dissemination.

Tools to Enhance Assessment Literacy (TEAL) for teachers of English as an additional language⁴⁶

is an e-based toolkit designed to support practical, rigorous and pedagogically sound assessment of EAL/D student progress and provide reliable data to inform teaching and learning, planning and resource allocation for Victorian primary and secondary schools. The TEAL tool kit is a resource of national and international significance applying standards-referenced, assessment-for-learning and item-response theoretical frameworks and reflecting research and expertise in second language assessment and testing.

Best practice EAL/D standards and school planning and evaluation tools

In the current policy environment, there is an urgent need for a national EAL/D policy framework that outlines the nature and purpose of EAL/D Education in schools, its evidence base and quality standards for effective implementation in government and non-government systems and state and territory jurisdictions. In this context, a set of evidence-based national best practice standards supporting effective EAL/D program provision at system, school and classroom levels has been developed by ACTA as described in pages 109-113 of ACTA’s submission to Inquiry on Migration Settlement Outcomes.

⁴⁵ <http://www.esa.edu.au/about-us>

⁴⁶ <http://teal.global2.vic.edu.au/assessment-tools/common-writing-assessment-tasks/>

With increased emphasis on school-based management and decision making, there is also a pressing need for school-based evaluation and planning tools to assist teachers and executive staff in development and continuous improvement of an effective whole school EAL program reflecting best practice standards. ACTA is currently developing a prototype tool, the *School EALD Capability Framework*, for trialling and validation in 2018. The framework is a planning matrix describing four levels of school EAL/D performance (Awareness and Commitment; Targeted Programs; Whole School Inclusion and Sustainability and Innovation) across five key areas of school operations.

These projects bridge the research-practice gap and are productive in identifying new, evidence-based exemplary EAL/D practice for schools and classrooms. To ensure broader productivity gains for education systems, they require sustained system support, effort and investment in project up-scaling, practice dissemination and knowledge utilisation and embedding in teacher training and professional learning programs. The challenge for Australia is the lack of national commitment to the area and the absence of appropriate national structures for research collaboration, planning, coordination and sharing across state boundaries.

Recommendation 5

That a national system for identifying, sharing and driving good EAL/D practice and continuous improvement be created through:

- i. establishing a nationally funded EAL/D research network tasked with investigating and identifying best practice, high performance models of whole school and classroom EAL/D program delivery*
- ii. endorsing the standards described in 4.2.1 of ACTA's submission as national best practice EAL/D standards for education systems, schools and classrooms and incorporating them as systemic outcomes and indicators for EAL/D education as part of the National Outcomes Standards for the education and training priority area of the National Settlement Framework*
- iii. establishing, through the Education Council, a national digital space and clearing house within Education Services Australia for the recognition, dissemination and further development of evidence based, best practice resources and tools for EAL/D education.*

Conclusion

EAL/D education in Australia is presently at a critical crossroad. The teaching of English to speakers of other languages in Australian schools has a proud history of excellence and innovation but under current policy conditions, its future is now at risk. A commitment to protect, maintain and continuously improve this provision needs to be reaffirmed as a national priority by Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments. Without this, EAL/D provision in schools will continue to wither along with Australia's capacity to achieve educational excellence for its EAL/D learners as they attempt to master the language and literacy of the school curriculum.