2026 ACTA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

State of EAL/D education in Australia
Analysis of 2016 & 2024 surveys

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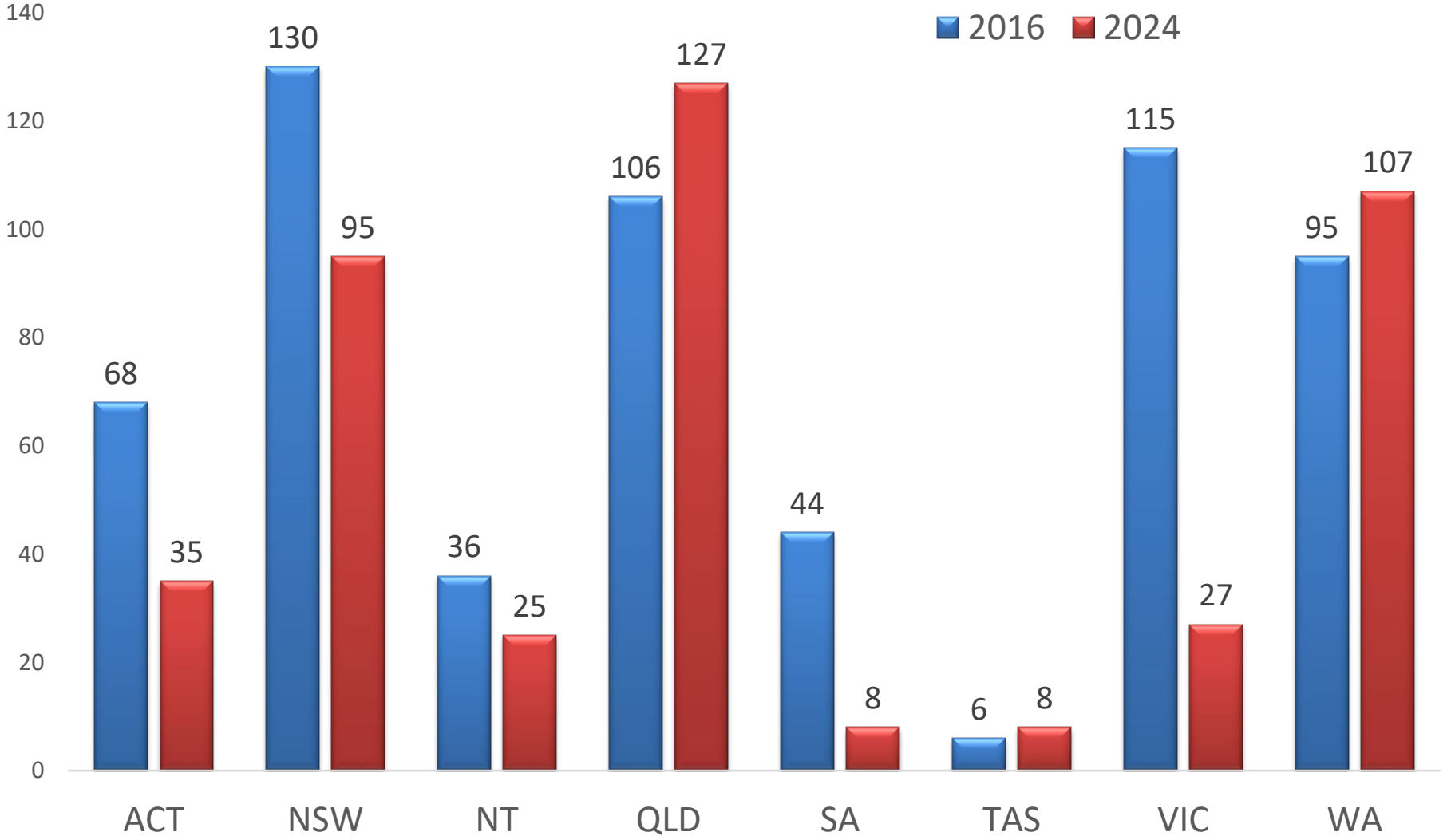
THE 2024 *STATE OF EAL/D EDUCATION* IN AUSTRALIA SURVEY

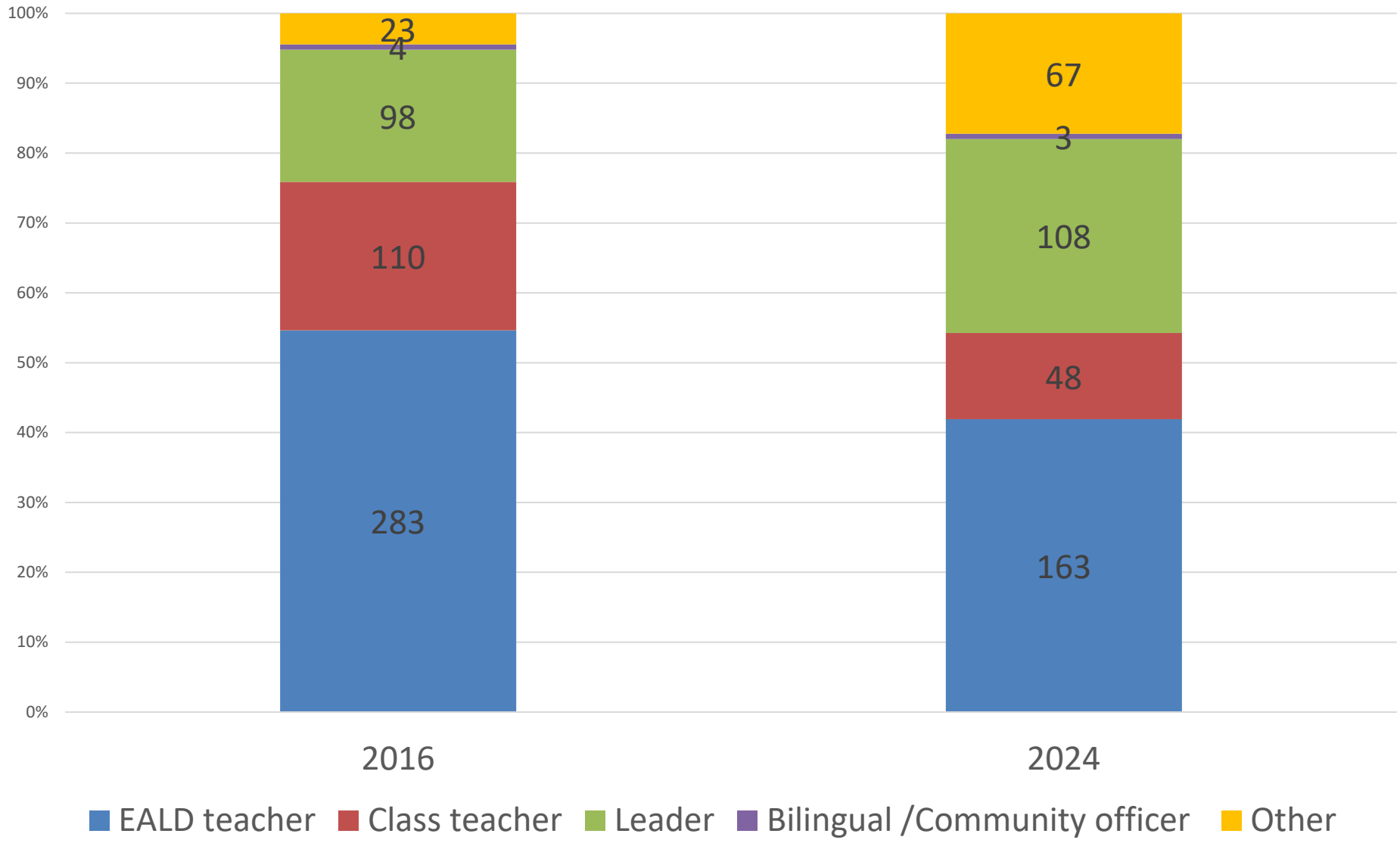
A 2016 ACTA national survey found that the recently introduced school autonomy reforms of one-line school budgets and school-based management of school staffing were eroding all aspects of formerly tied funded, specialist EAL/D provision.

The 2024 survey aimed to ascertain whether these policy impacts were continuing and how EAL/D teachers were responding to them.

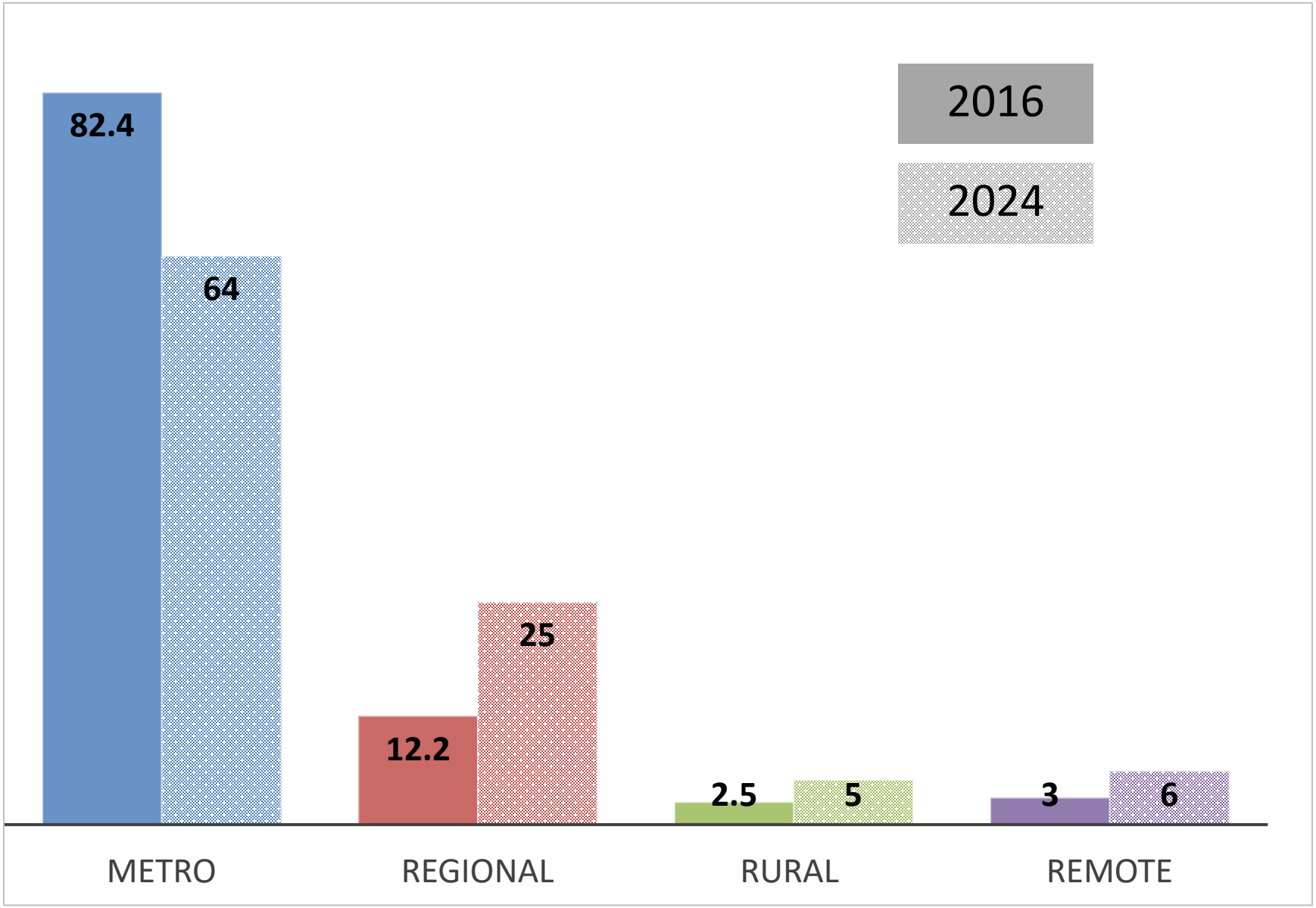
Number of respondents by state and territory (2016 = 600; 2024 = 432)



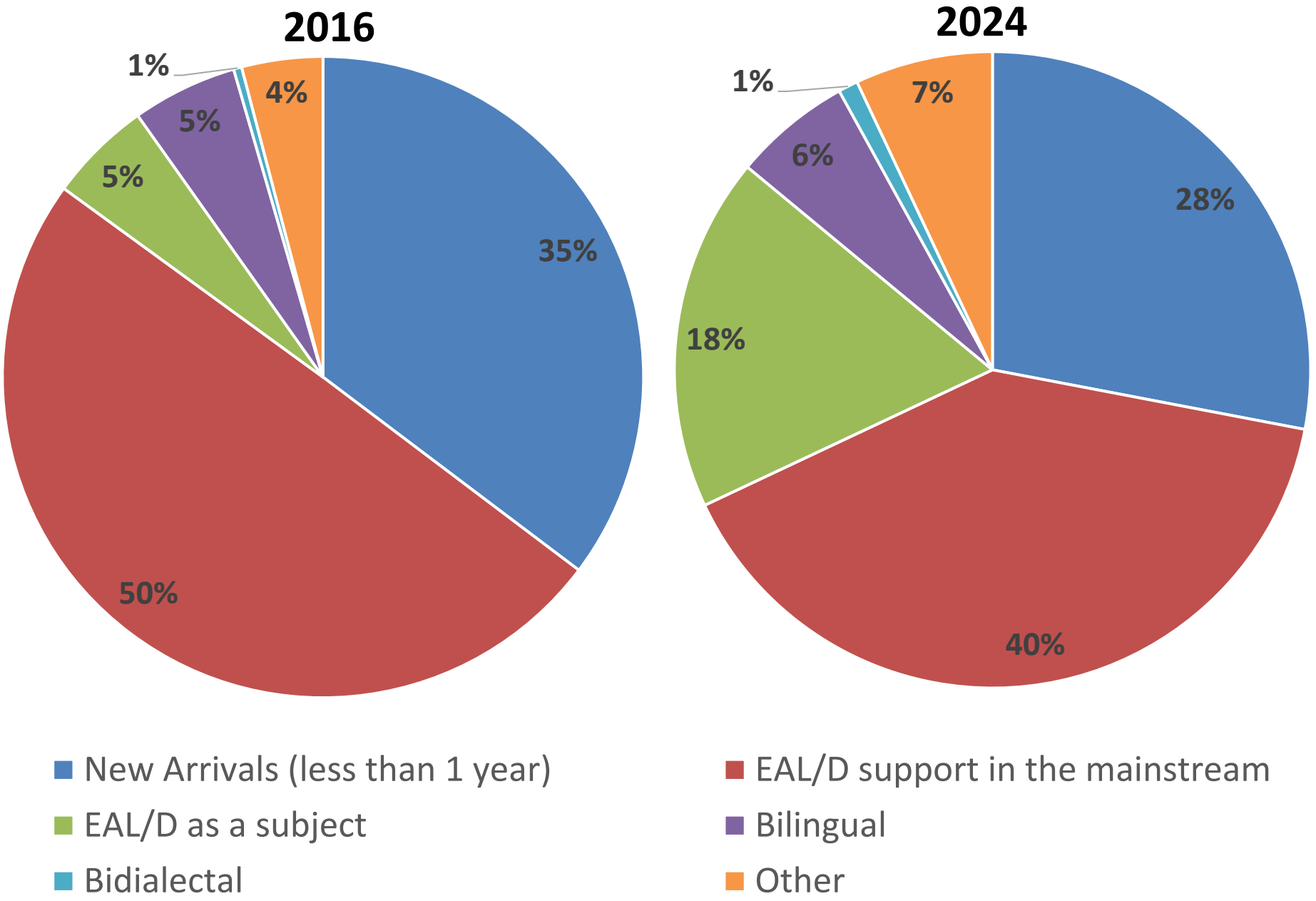
Number of respondents by role 2016 & 2024



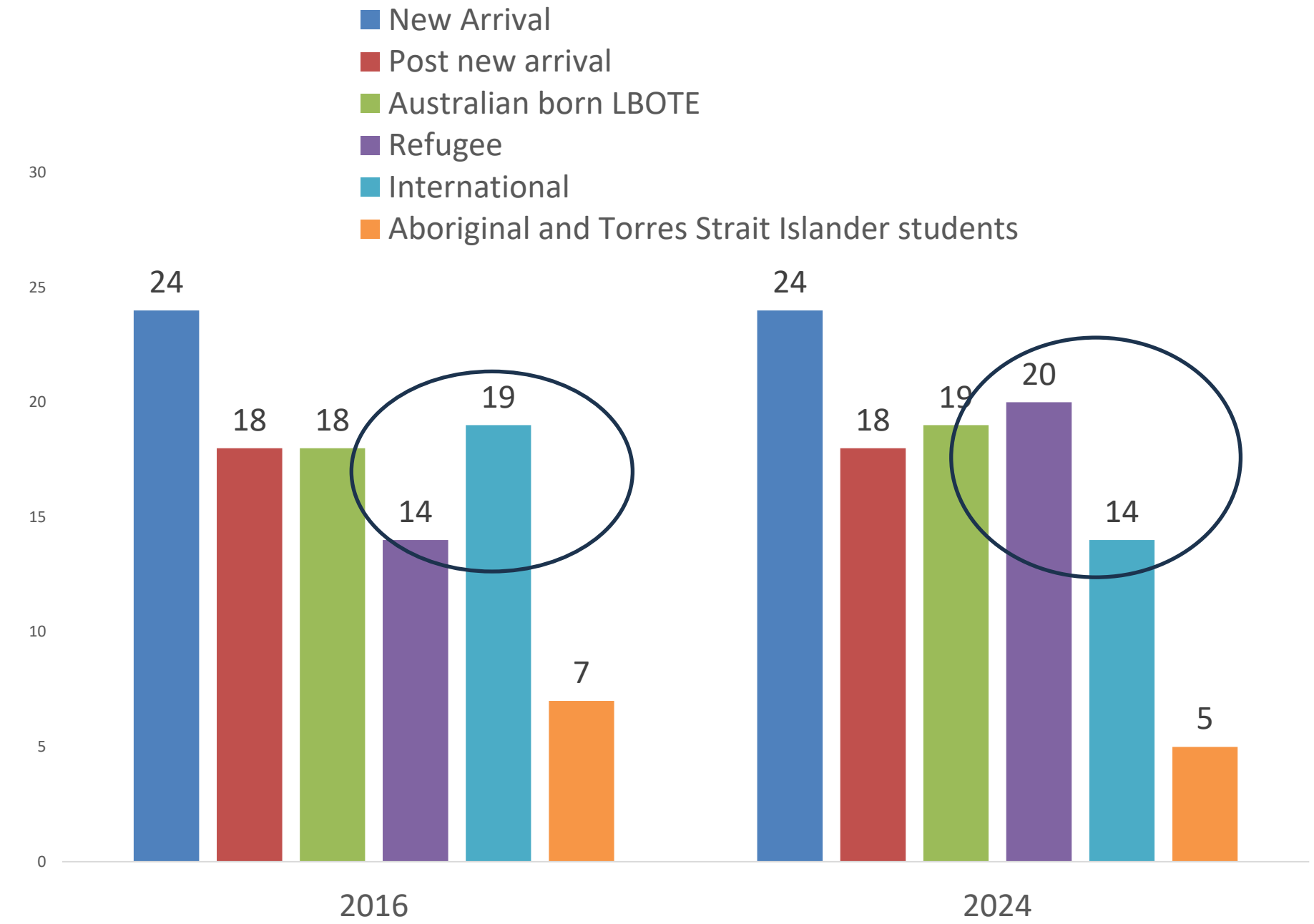
Percentage of respondents by EAL/D workplace location



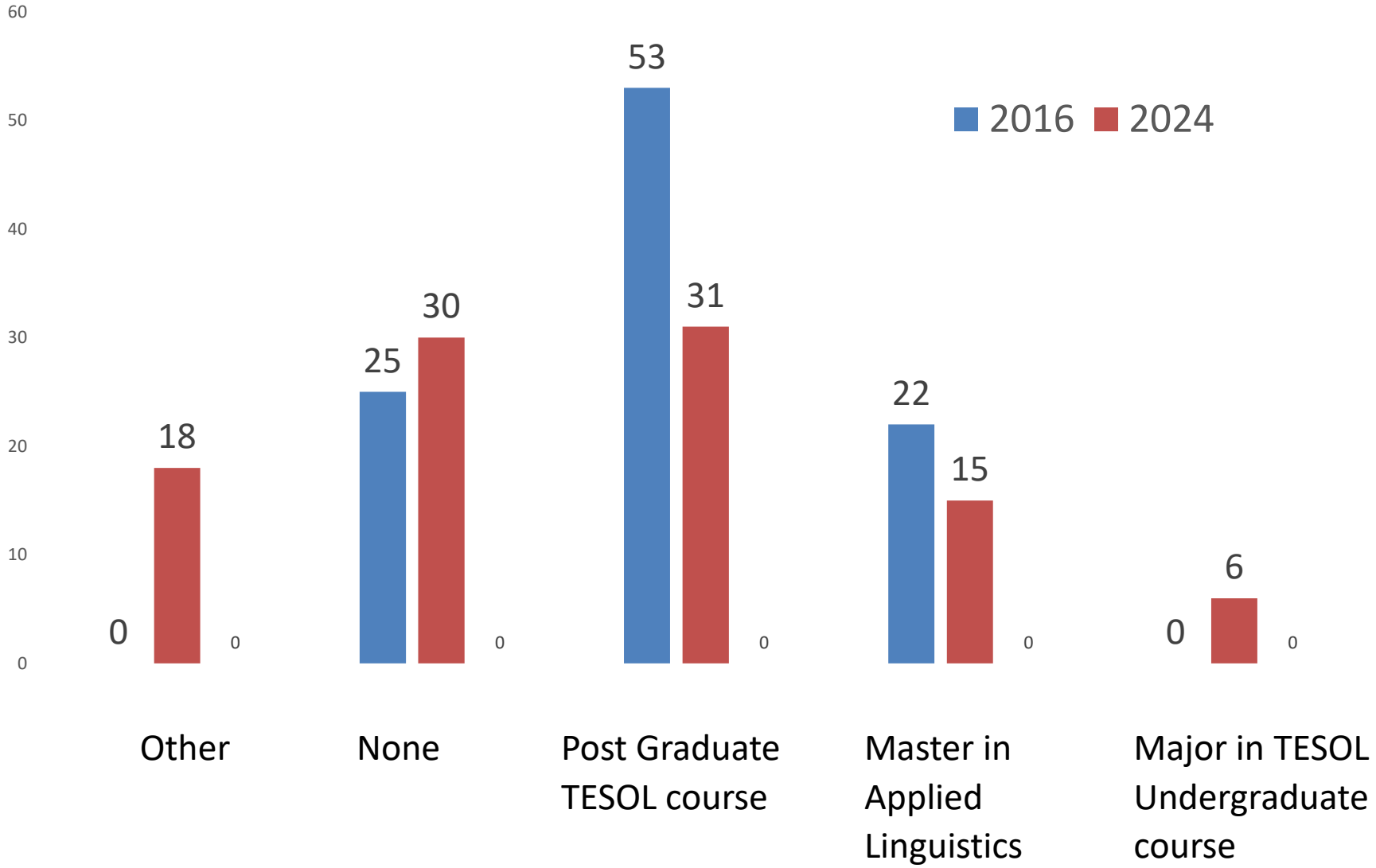
Percentage of EAL/D Program types in responder schools



Percentage of EAL/D student types, 2016 & 2024



Percentage of respondents with tertiary TESOL qualifications 2016 & 2024



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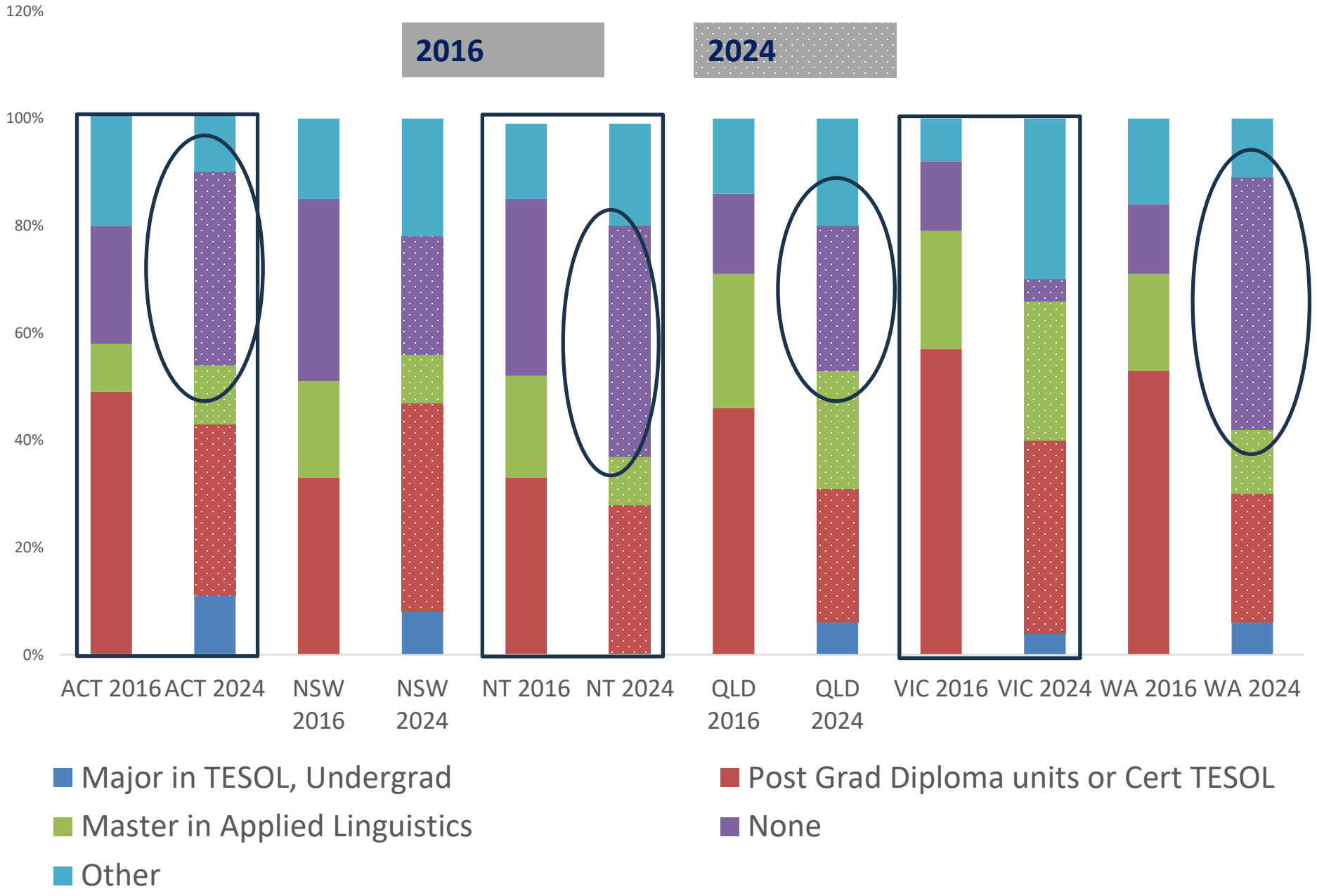
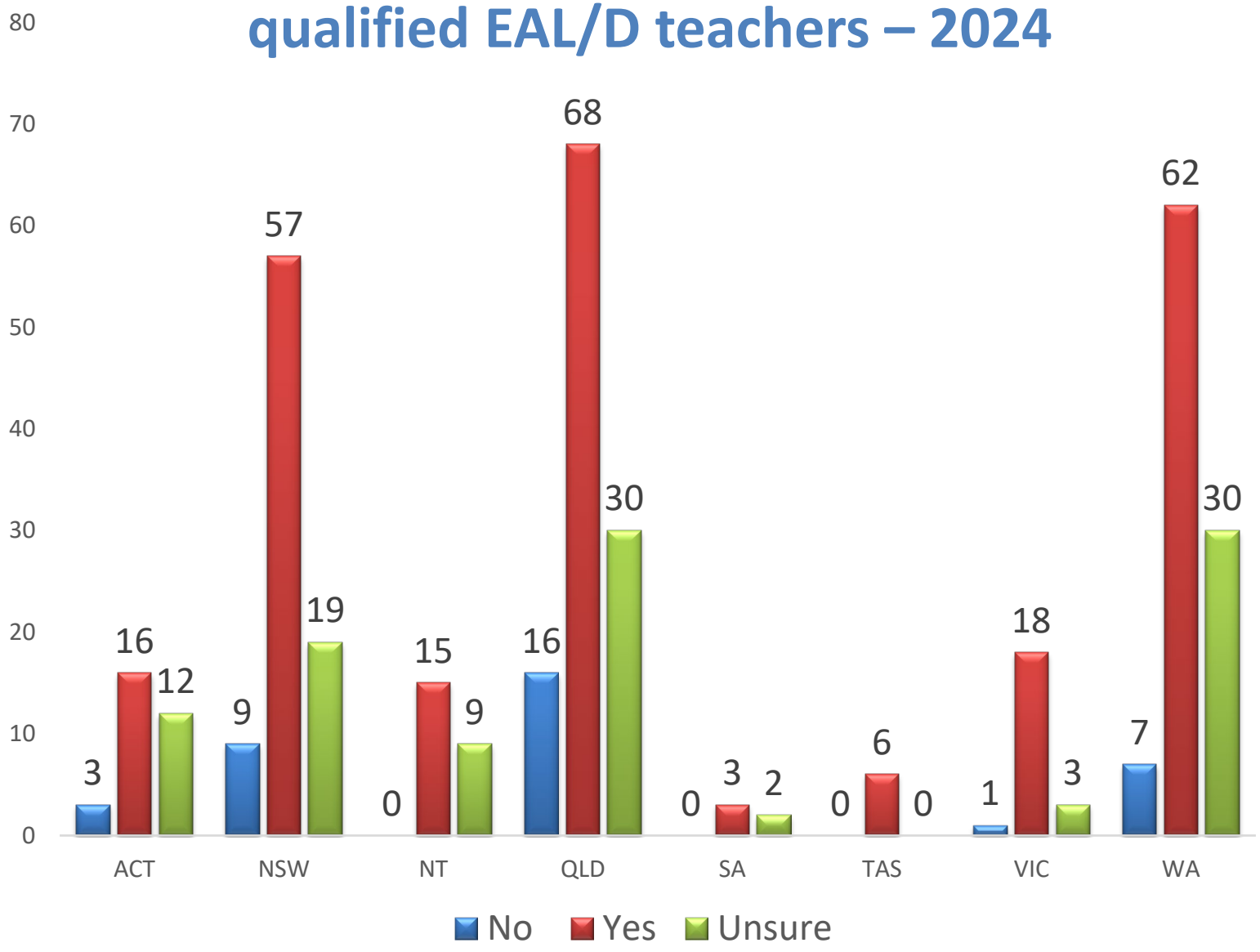
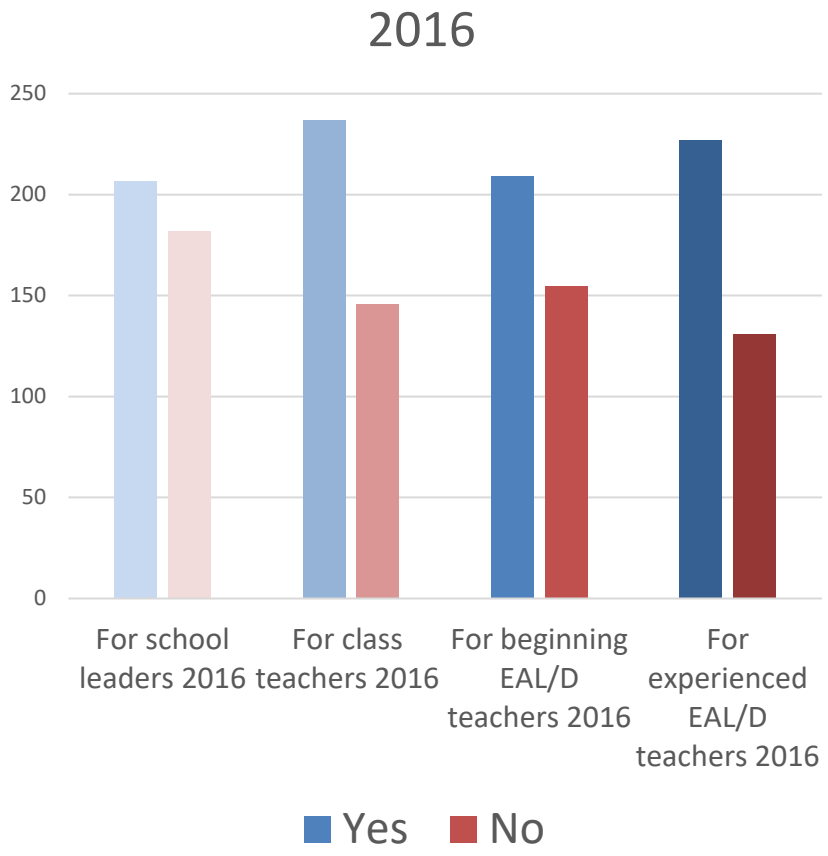
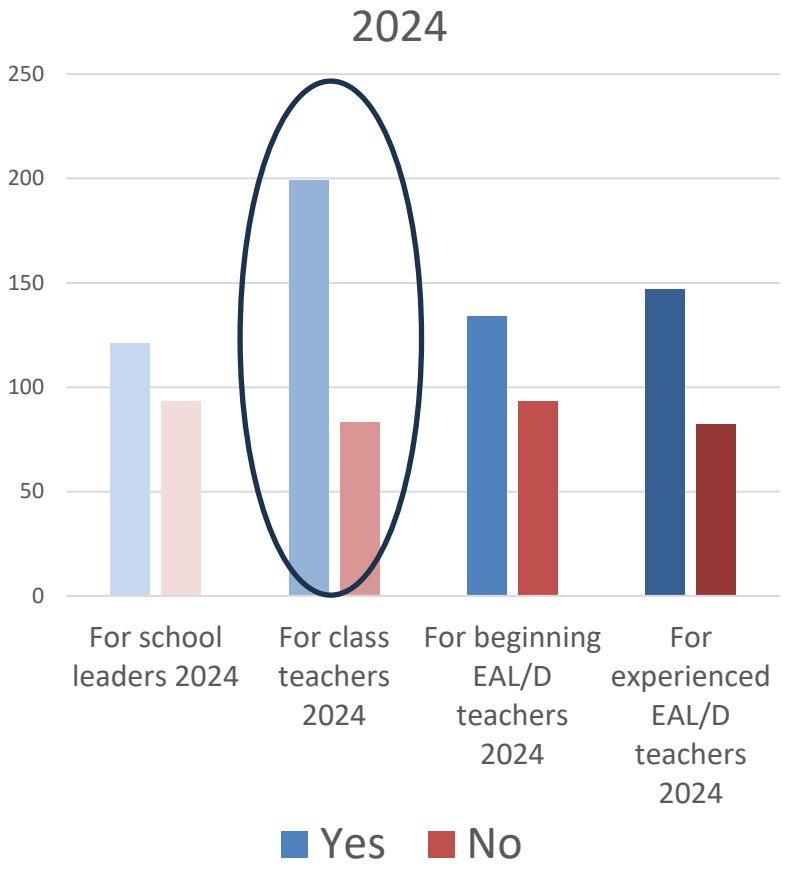


Number of respondents reporting difficulty in finding qualified EAL/D teachers – 2024



Is EAL/D professional learning available to staff in your school?





EAL/D teacher training, supply and demand

- The lack of AITSL standards relating to EALD learners has resulted in **universities dropping TESOL courses**. This has led to a rapid decline of the pool of qualified teachers.

- There are NO undergrad/MTeach specialisations in EAL/D for pre-service teachers - hence there is a real lack of expertise in current graduates. **The only teachers available are the older ones who are entering retirement**

- It is extremely important to understand how first and additional languages are acquired to inform pedagogy and approach. **Basic literacy strategies designed for monolingual students do not cut it**

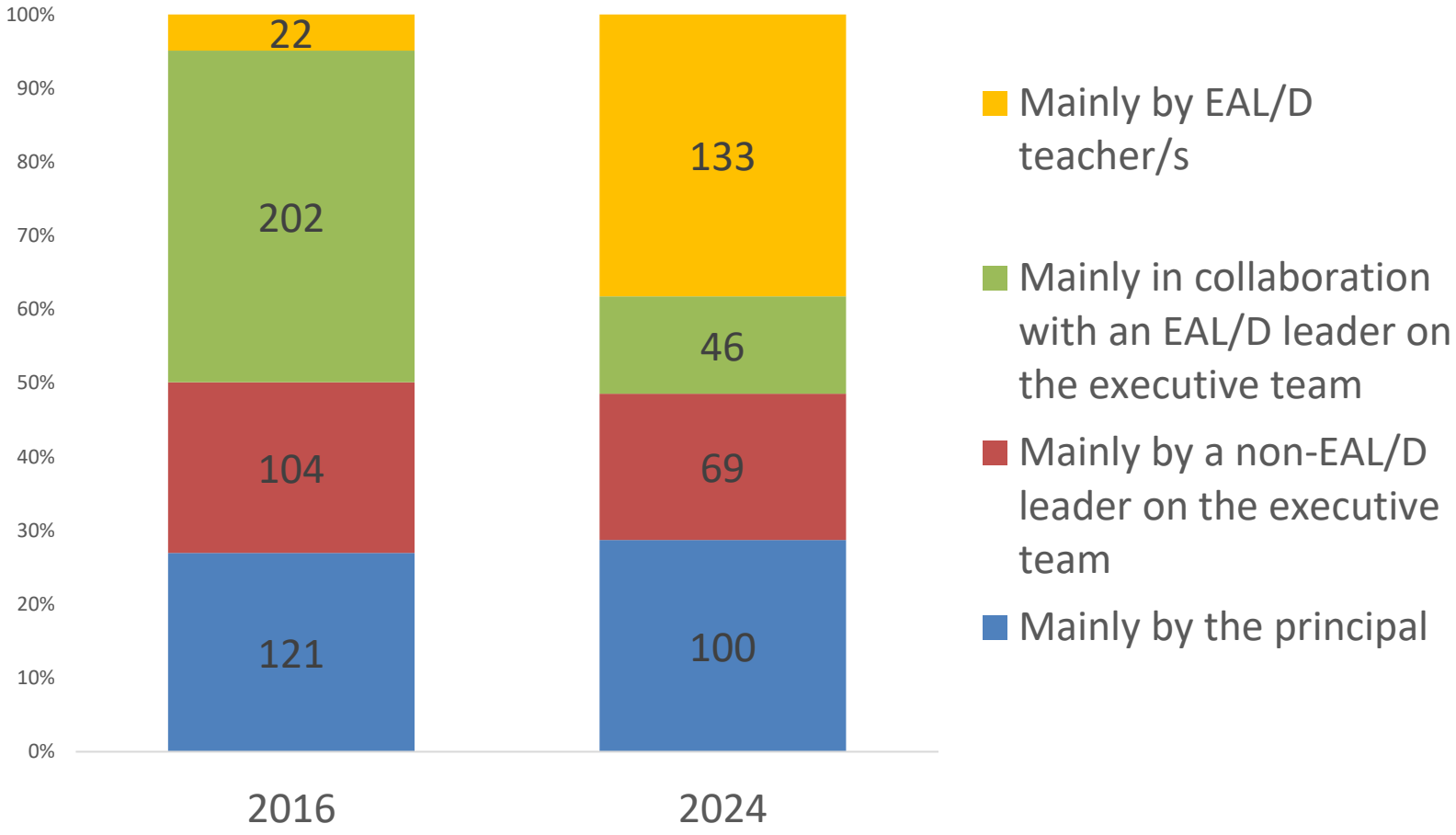
- most schools are **not valuing explicit language teaching** for EAL/D learners

- Currently there are **no designated school-based specialist EAL/D positions**, even in Qld schools in remote Indigenous communities with 100% EAL/D learners

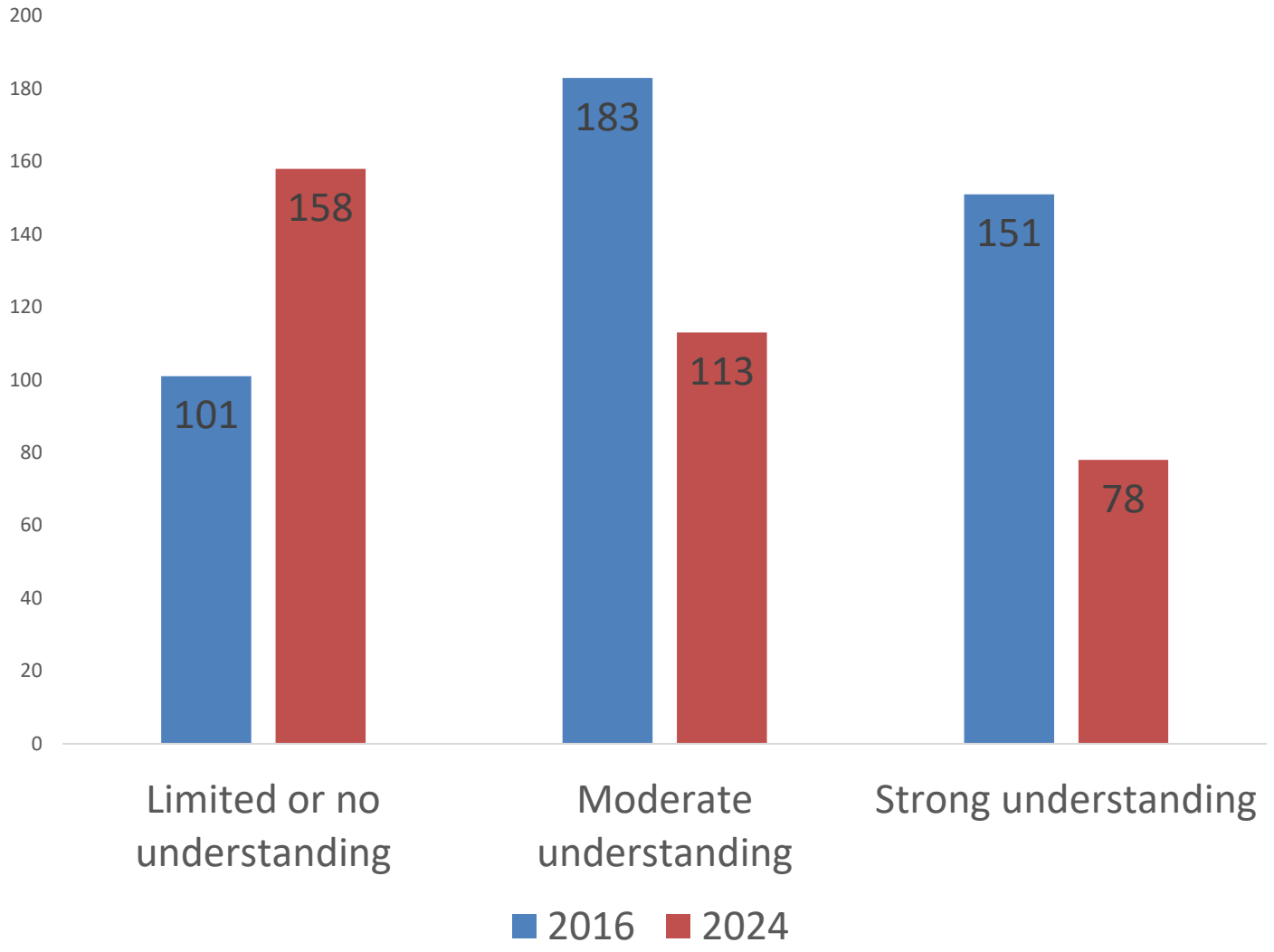
- Specialist EAL/D knowledge is held by a **declining number of teachers.**

EAL/D Program leadership

EAL/D program decision-making in schools 2016 & 2024



EALD understanding of school leadership team 2016 & 2024



School-based EAL/D decision making

- The principal makes the decision what supports to have. So **support varies from school to school**, meaning the future success of a large group of students is left to one person who may not know much about EAL/D students and their needs.

- If the school principal is onboard with supporting EAL/D learners and understands how to effectively support these students, then the funding is used effectively

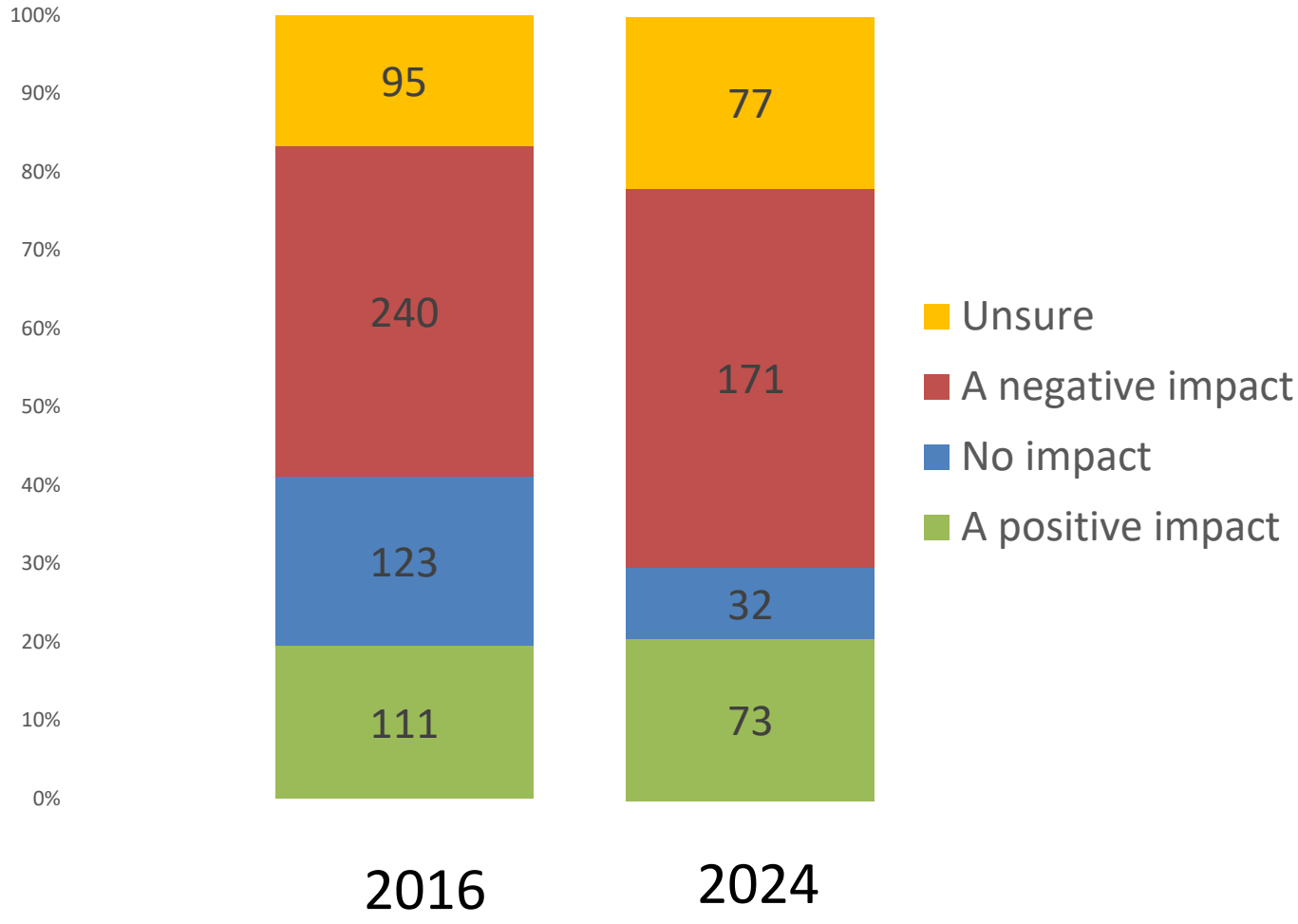
- **Positions are not always advertised** and principals often "place" staff returning from leave in the position as they have no other positions for them

- Along with other specialist programs, **EAL/D programs are regularly collapsed** as EAL/D teachers are deployed to cover classes of absent colleagues.

- We found a trained and highly valuable teacher (temp) but the principal chose to put an untrained class teacher on the EAL/D team instead.

EAL/D Policy impacts

Impact of policy changes and increased local decision making 2016 & 2024



System reform, dysfunction and decay

- **The system is broken**. The IPS model has destroyed the EALD program and the safety-nets that existed to ensure all EALD students are offered the support they are entitled to.

- In many schools, inclusion reforms have resulted in **EAL/D teachers losing their positions** in schools as these students are lumped in with all other students that require any kind of support.

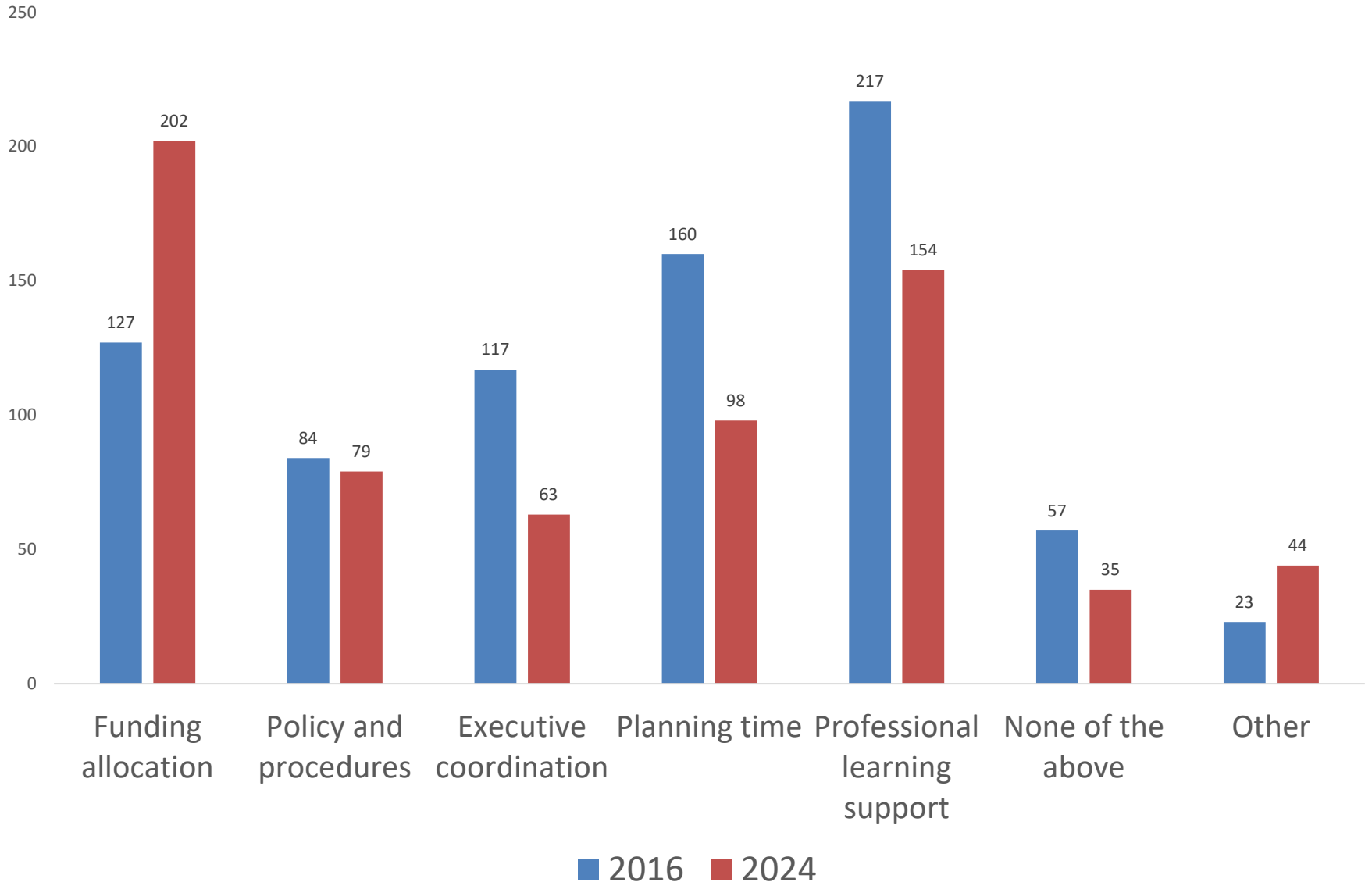
- There are currently no system initiatives that build teacher capability in EALD student support. **We do not have a dedicated EALD section on our system portal** and policy uses 'soft' language (may, could, school - based decision) when addressing EALD support.

- We used to have an extremely effective program for our new arrivals and EAL/D learners. Unfortunately, **under the new banner of 'inclusion' our program has been dismantled** and EAL/D students are now being absorbed into the mainstream with little additional support for students apart from general classroom teacher support.

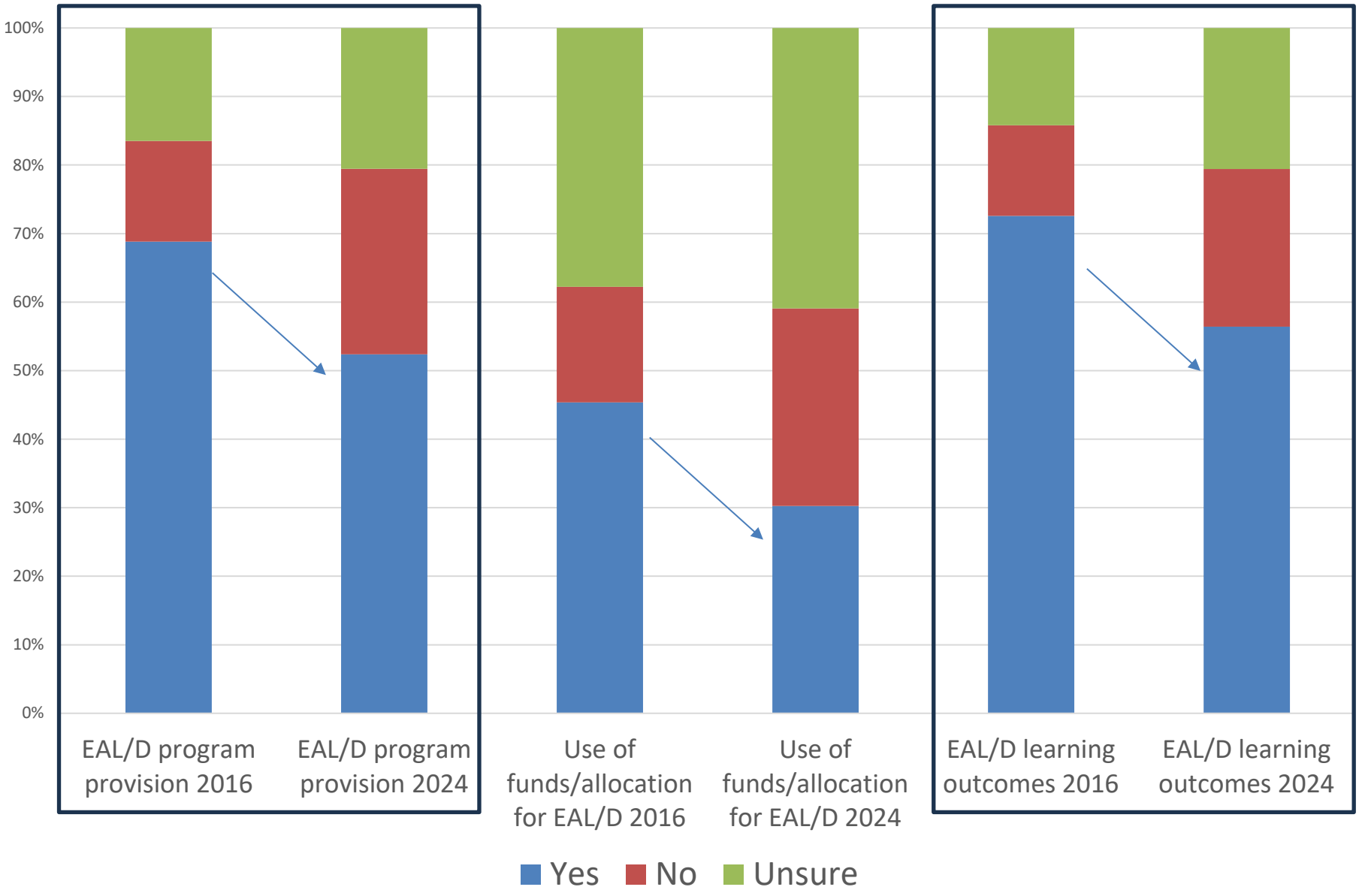
- The funding model is ridiculous and based on a deficit model but **does not allow for the fact that immigration is a process that happens over the whole year,** not just January!

EAL/D accountability and reporting

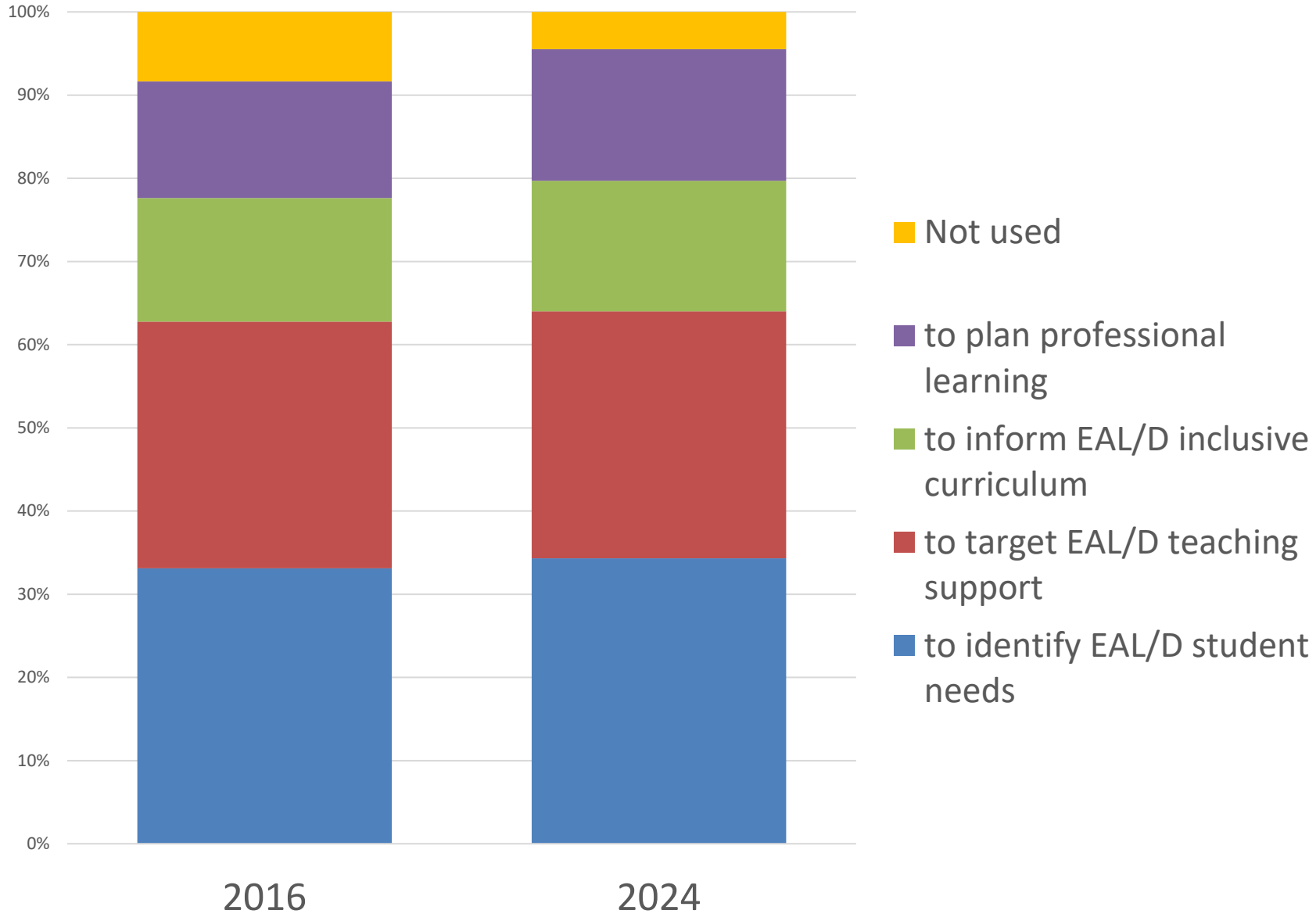
How is the EAL/D role supported in your school?



Reporting requirements for EAL/D - 2016 & 2024



School use of EALD data - 2016 & 2024



Accountability for EAL/D provision

- There is **no accountability for how EALD funds are spent** on schools or the outcomes for language learning for the students

- There is **no transparency in our school** as to where the funds are being spent. Not all of the funds are being used to support EALD students.

- We don't know what happens to the funding. No EALD resources are bought for the students. Everything is a secret and **EALD teachers spend their own money** to buy language resources for their students.

- There are frequent instances of **schools manipulating Census** data to gain more funding but then when this is received, it is eaten up by other spending and resourcing that has no impact on EAL/D provision.

Impact on EAL/D students

- **Students are becoming disengaged** from learning due to the language barriers that are not being addressed - some students exhibit unruly behaviours and some even expelled for these.

- **Class teachers are overwhelmed** with the number of students with additional needs and have little time and support to cater for EAL/D students. EAL/D students then become less and less engaged, which then in turn results eventually in disruptive behaviours/wellbeing issues and lower academic achievement.

- Students who are struggling **do not get necessary scaffolding to thrive** as rapidly as they could. The flow on effect is often behavioral in middle primary.

Pockets of exemplary practice

Lone EAL/D teachers

- I am so fortunate that my school funds my role above our allocation but **I work extremely hard** to maintain this and am stretched to the limits. This is my 8th year in the role … but I have hit a potential burnout wall.

EALD team and structures

- The school has established an EALD faculty and funds a HT position. They have driven change in pedagogy and worked with the principal to create Eald structures that respond to the needs of students.
- We have established **a well-respected best practice model** without the support of our Department or Region.

System support

- NSW has the EALD education leadership strategy that **offers high quality support to schools** including professional learning to trained EALD and mainstream teachers.

EALD data and assessment

- EAL/D data is used to inform teaching at point of need for classroom teachers. It is also used to **monitor the effectiveness** of the current whole school English program and **inform future whole school goals** to support improved outcomes.
- **Students are tracked on a spreadsheet** and a colour coding system is used. This identifies students needing the most intervention/support to least and in what modes.

CONCLUSIONS

- Specialist EAL/D provision and expertise continue to be devalued, sidelined and eroded by school autonomy reforms and exacerbated by further system reforms

- Respondents articulated clear and strong understandings of the nature and value of EAL/D expertise. This underpinned notable resilient/resurgent pockets of exemplary practice at school, regional and system levels. Sustainability is in question, however.

- Specialist EAL/D provision and expertise is on borrowed time. Exemplary EAL/D practice needs to be upscaled and nurtured by education systems and underpinned by national policies on EAL/D funding and accountability and EAL/D teacher training.

Thank You

Questions & discussion welcome

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