

**SUBMISSION TO**

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

***STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS***

**INQUIRY INTO**

**THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

**IN THE ACT**

from the

**Association of Teachers of English  
to Speakers of Other Languages in the ACT  
(ATESOL ACT)**

13 October 2009

## CONTENTS

<b>Acronyms</b>	3
<b>Executive Summary</b>	4
<b>List of Recommendations</b>	6
<b>The Focus of This Submission</b>	10
<b>Why is English Language Learning Relevant to the Inquiry?</b>	10
<b>Preventing an Educational Achievement Gap (1): Identifying English Language Learning Needs</b>	
EAL/D learners: some characteristics	11
Identifying EAL/D learners—the national level	12
Identifying EAL/D learners in the ACT	13
Problems in the ACT approach to identifying EAL/D learners	14
1. <i>Scope: who’s assessed and who isn’t?</i>	14
2. <i>The credibility of EAL/D assessments</i>	16
ATESOL ACT Recommendations on Identifying English Language Learners	18
<b>Creating an Educational Achievement Gap (1)? Procedures in the ACT for Determining Eligibility for ESL Support</b>	20
ATESOL ACT Recommendations on Eligibility for ESL Support	21
<b>Preventing an Educational Achievement Gap (2): Current Programs and Initiatives for ESL Students</b>	
1. Introductory English Language Centres (IECs)	23
2. ESL support in schools	24
3. The Pilot Refugee Bridging Program at Dickson College	26
4. Support for Indigenous EAL/D learners	26
5. Support for pre-school students	27
6. Counselling and advisory services	28
7. Translation and interpreter services	29
8. ESL Executive Officers	30
9. Pre-requisites for program effectiveness: ESL teacher qualifications and expertise	31
ATESOL ACT Recommendations on ESL Programs and Other Initiatives	33
<b>Creating an Educational Achievement Gap (2)? New Directions in Education Policy and Provision</b>	
The ACT Language and Numeracy Strategy 2009-13	36
National Commonwealth-State/Territory Partnerships	38
ATESOL ACT Recommendations on ACT Government Responses to National Partnerships	41
<b>References</b>	41
<b>Appendices</b>	
APPENDIX A Terms, Acronyms and Related Issues	43
APPENDIX B English and Educational Needs of Older Learners with Minimal/No Previous Schooling	45
APPENDIX C Learner Types and Recommended Programs/Interventions	47
APPENDIX D ACTA TESOL Teacher Standards (Short Version)	49
APPENDIX E The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA): Recommendations	50
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1: Differences between Literacy and Expert EAL/D Approaches	36
Table 2: Terms and Acronyms Related to Learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect	43
Table 3: Learner Types and Recommended Programs/Interventions	47

## Acronyms

<b>ACT</b>	Australian Capital Territory
<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
<b>ACTA</b>	The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (= the national body to which State/Territory associations are affiliated)
<b>ATESOL ACT</b>	The Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages in the ACT
<b>DET</b>	Department of Education and Training (in the ACT)
<b>EAL/D</b>	English as an additional language or distinct dialect
<b>ESL</b>	English as a second language; more recently, English as a subsequent language
<b>IEC</b>	Introductory English Language Centre
<b>LBOTE</b>	Language background other than English
<b>LPR (scale)</b>	Language Proficiency Rating (scale)
<b>NAPLaN</b>	National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy

## Executive Summary

This submission concerns the education achievement gap as it relates to learners of **English as an additional language or distinct dialect** (EAL/D learners).

In the ACT, those identified as “**ESL students**” are a sub-category of this group. ESL students can be Indigenous, migrant background or temporary residents. The main exclusions from ESL data collection and provision are (i) migrant-background *Australian-born children of Australian-born parents* (i.e. third generation) from homes where the main language is other than English, and (ii) *fee-paying international students*. Anecdotally, our members report concerns about these groups’ English proficiency. Since no data is held centrally on their English levels, the basis for these concerns cannot be quantified.

For ESL students, targeted support hinges on (i) assessment on a 5 point **English proficiency rating scale** (where level 4 = “average native English competence”) and (ii) a funding formula derived from **total enrolments in ACT schools**. This funding formula has steadily reduced support for ESL students, as overall enrolments in public schools decline and migrant and refugee intakes increase. In 2008, **52 per cent of ESL students rated with “below average” English went unfunded for ESL support**; only those assessed as level 1.5 (“minimal English”) gained full funding. *This funding method is perverse in that the greater the ESL need in the ACT, the less ESL support is available to individual students.*

Our submission also describes our concerns regarding:

- problems in **using self-identification on enrolment forms** as the basis for determining designation as an ESL student;
- the decline in **provision in Introductory English Centres**;
- **school ESL programs** that are unstable and staffed by unqualified and part-time teachers;
- the success of **the pilot bridging program** at Dickson College;
- the lack of English language (as distinct from literacy) support for **Indigenous EAL/D learners**;
- inadequate support for **EAL/D preschoolers**;
- insufficient and, in some cases in schools, inappropriate **counselling support**;
- insufficient use of **translation and interpreter services**;
- **diminishing professional development** to assist EAL/D learners;
- **the apparent unwinding of ESL provision** in the ACT *Language and Numeracy Strategy 2009-13* and through the use of NAPLAN tests as measures of need and progress.

ATESOL ACT notes the complete absence of reference to EAL/D learning and ESL provision in the ACT government's submission to the Inquiry. We hope that our submission will provide useful insights into how this provision can reduce the education achievement gap but is becoming progressively more thwarted in realising this goal.

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## List of Recommendations

*ATESOL ACT recommends:*

1. That this Inquiry request the Department of Education and Training (DET) to supply it with **ACT pre-school and school census data on *all* Australian-born students from homes where the main language is other than English**, irrespective of where their parents were born.
2. That English language proficiency assessment include ***all* students**, irrespective of their or their parents' birthplace:
  - (i) whose main language is a **language or distinct dialect other than standard Australian English**, and
  - (ii) who have had **less than seven continuous years of education** in an Australian or overseas educational institution **where English is the medium of instruction**.
3. That schools be required to include **in reports to DET on English language proficiency assessments:**
  - (i) **the names** of those who have carried out these assessments;
  - (ii) whether or not at least one assessor has **ESL qualifications**;
  - (iii) **details** of these ESL qualifications (year awarded, level of award, and awarding institution).
4. That school and DET reporting on ESL students include **explicitly disaggregated data on students' ages and years of previous schooling** in Australia and overseas.
5. That the Language Proficiency Rating scale be subjected to **regular review and revision** in consultation with mainstream teachers, ESL teachers, ESL Executive Officers and EAL/D assessment experts;
6. That the Language Proficiency Rating scale and associated assessment tasks be revised to provide **a more fine-grained picture of students' English proficiency** for policy, funding and educational purposes.
7. That, on an annual basis, the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs request the ACT government to report to the Legislative Assembly:
  - (i) the numbers of students in pre-schools and schools **rated at each level** on the LPR scale;
  - (ii) the numbers of students **funded for ESL support at each level** of the LPR scale;

(iii) **these data disaggregated** according to:

- (a) Indigenous/non-Indigenous status;
- (b) Australian-born/born overseas;
- (c) gender
- (d) visa category (as this applies);
- (e) ages;
- (f) years of previous schooling in Australia and overseas.

8. That the ACT government develop a graduated funding formula for ESL staffing (and related support) in pre-schools and schools that is based on **the numbers of students below LPR level 4 each year**.
9. That this formula include **an extra weighting** for students entering school at Grade 3 or above who have **fewer years of schooling than is the norm in Australia**, and that **this weighting increase** proportional to students' ages and the years of schooling missed.
10. That students identified **below LPR level 4 be re-assessed for ESL proficiency on an annual basis** until they reach level 4 (or equivalent on *an ESL-specific* assessment tool mapped against the LPR scale).
11. That, **regarding international students and the dependents of temporary residents**, the Inquiry request the ACT government to report on:
  - (i) the sources and bases of funding for ESL support;
  - (ii) the extent to which these students gain ESL support;
  - (iii) the visa status categories of these students.
12. That the Inquiry request DET to supply it with data **on each IEC** regarding:
  - (i) the total student population and number of classes in each school in which the IEC is located;
  - (ii) ESL student numbers;
  - (iii) class sizes;
  - (iv) the number of classrooms occupied by IEC classes *and* the total number of classrooms in the school;
  - (v) students' ages in relation to their years of previous schooling;
  - (vi) the distances ESL students travel to the Centre each day;
  - (vii) ESL teachers' qualifications.

13. That the ACT Government **increase funding for Introductory English Language Centres**, such that:
- all students below LPR level 1 can utilise their tuition entitlements (i.e. between three terms and 18 months),
  - class groups average no more than 12 students, and
  - there is a ratio of 1 full-time Bilingual Assistant (or part-time equivalent) per 24 students.
14. That the ACT Department of Education & Training (DET) require and/or more carefully scrutinise **reporting from each school** on:
- (i) how ESL funding is deployed;
  - (ii) which students are identified for ESL support and how;
  - (iii) the English language progress of students supported through ESL funding;
  - (iv) who assesses students' progress in English and how;
  - (v) the programs and other initiatives funded from ESL allocations;
  - (vi) the qualifications of teachers funded from ESL staffing allocations;
  - (vii) ESL provision for fee-paying international students.
15. That DET encourage the development of **pilot bridging programs at the pre-College level** for refugee students with minimal/no previous schooling.
16. **That specialist ESL staffing for pre-schools** be developed through a formula that responds to data on the numbers of overseas, arriving and Australian-born children (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous from homes where the main language is other than English) entering pre-school and rated as having less than LPR level 4 English proficiency.
17. **That the number of ESL Executive Officers** be determined through a formula that responds to census data on ESL learning needs (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) as reflected in LPR assessments.
18. That the new **qualifications requirements for pre-school teachers** include a compulsory ESL unit.
19. That DET increase its scrutiny to ensure that **the ESL teachers it funds hold at least its own stated qualification requirements**.

20. That the ACT Government **Quality Teaching initiatives** be extended to include:
- (i) **upgrading qualification requirements for newly employed ESL teachers** to meet recognised professional standards (see Appendix D);
  - (ii) **supporting ESL teachers now employed** in public schools and pre-schools to gain these qualifications through scholarships and study leave;
  - (iii) professional development for **mainstream teachers in pre-schools and schools** that is *specifically* concerned with supporting **learning English** as an additional language/dialect and **learning through English**.
21. That the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs inquire into **counselling, advisory, interpreting and translation services** for Indigenous, migrant and refugee students in pre-schools and schools, with a view to recommending on **improvements** and **an integrated approach** to children and their primary carers.
22. That, as an interim measure pending the findings of this Inquiry, additional funding be allocated for:
- (i) **two additional counselling positions** at Companion House;
  - (ii) **professional development for school counsellors** on responding appropriately to EAL/D learners who have experienced or are experiencing major trauma and/or learning difficulties
  - (iii) **use of interpreting and translation services by pre-schools and schools** (and that accountability measures ensure that this funding is used for this purpose).
23. That, concurrent with its initiatives in response to National Partnerships, the ACT government maintain and strengthen **designated ESL policy development, programs and staffing**, and that this designation **be distinguished** from literacy programs and staffing.
24. That DET undertake a Territory-wide and school-by-school **analysis of NAPLaN results mapped against students rated from 1-5 on the Language Proficiency Rating scale**, and include this analysis in reporting on NAPLaN data.
25. That this Inquiry commend **the ACTA recommendations** listed in Appendix E to the ACT Government as a useful basis for informing future National Partnership negotiations.

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## The Focus of This Submission

This submission specifically addresses the Inquiry's terms of reference, as follows:

- educational engagement and outcomes for students of all interests and abilities, with reference to any implications of cultural background, including Indigenous and ESL students;
- qualitative assessments of educational experiences for students from different backgrounds;
- current programs and initiatives designed to address educational achievement gaps, including resources allocated and relevant experiences in other jurisdictions;
- other related matters.

The submission is made on behalf of the **Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages in the ACT (ATESOL ACT)**. It draws from a special meeting of interested Association members. A draft of this submission was then circulated for comment, further revisions and approval by the ATESOL ACT Committee.

The submission addresses the education achievement gap as it relates to **learners of English as a second/additional language/dialect** (henceforth "**EAL/D learners**"). Where we refer specifically to practices in the ACT, we use the terms "**Indigenous students**" and "**ESL students**". See Appendix A regarding the complexities of terminology in this educational field.

ATESOL ACT apologises for the lateness of our submission but the Inquiry's existence only came to our attention well after it was announced, by chance, and concurrently with a commitment to contribute to our national Association's submission to the Commonwealth Government (see Appendix E for recommendations in this submission).

We hope that ATESOL ACT members' insights are useful to this Inquiry. Our representatives would be happy to appear before it.

### Why is English Language Learning Relevant to the Inquiry?

By definition, a gap exists for EAL/D learners between their current English proficiency level and desired English and educational levels. This gap is not problematic in itself, although it is vulnerable to this interpretation, as for example when learners' achievements of milestones in learning English are conflated with "literacy" problems (see below: "The ACT Language and Numeracy Strategy 2009-13").

The gap becomes problematic only if learners slow down or stall in their progress towards full participation in education.

Anecdotes exist about individuals who have learned English as a second/additional language simply through exposure and their own efforts. Despite such anecdotes, the evidence is overwhelming that learners benefit from expert language teaching and support. Where English is required for participation in mainstream education and society, as in Australia, gaps are highly likely to emerge when this support is absent. (For a comprehensive recent analysis of the effect of ESL programs in the Canadian context, see Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006).

This submission proceeds on the assumption that **EAL/D learning needs should be addressed *in order to prevent* many EAL/D learners contributing to the educational achievement gap in the ACT.**

The first question is, then, how to identify EAL/D learning needs.

## **Preventing an Educational Achievement Gap (1): Identifying English Language Learning Needs**

### ***EAL/D learners: some characteristics***

EAL/D learners can be found **among the following groups** in the ACT:

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.:
  - (i) school-aged international students;
  - (ii) exchange students;
  - (iii) 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.

Some EAL/D learners:

- live with parents who may themselves be traumatised or otherwise debilitated;
- have lost their parents and live with another family or with only their siblings or even by themselves.

### ***Identifying EAL/D learners—the national level***

At the national level, EAL/D learners are *not* identified. Rather, they are included within a number of categories that are both too broad and too narrow, namely, as students:

- with language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE);
- with low socio-economic status;
- who have self-identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

These categories are unsatisfactory for identifying EAL/D learners, as we elaborate below (see “Other Related Issues: National Partnerships”). In brief, **none of these categories targets students’ English proficiency and associated English learning needs.** These and other forms of identification (commonly, length of residence in Australia, languages spoken in the home) use surrogate and approximate identifiers that may or may not include students who are actually *learning* English.

The only publicly defensible method of identifying English proficiency and learning needs is through **reputable, specific-purpose EAL/D assessment tools.**

Although some States/Territories and systems, including the ACT, have developed their own approaches to EAL/D assessment, national agreement on how these approaches relate to each other, much less a unified national approach, has yet to be achieved.

In the absence of a nationally agreed approach to EAL/D assessment, the national body to which ATESOL ACT is affiliated—the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA)—has proposed an interim (and surrogate) definition of EAL/D learners as **students:**

- **whose main language is a language or distinct dialect other than standard Australian English, and**

- **who have had less than seven continuous years of education in an Australian or overseas educational institution where English is the medium of instruction.**

ACTA continues to advocate for a nationally agreed approach to identifying EAL/D learners. ATESOL ACT supports this advocacy.

### ***Identifying EAL/D learners in the ACT***

The ACT is among the jurisdictions that use **English language proficiency assessment** to identify EAL/D learners. This assessment is limited to those who self-identify as:

- (i) speaking Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages or Aboriginal English;  
*or:*
- (ii) born or having parents born in a country where English is not the main language, *and*
- (iii) speaking a language other than English at home, *and*
- (iv) having attended an Australian school for less than 7 years.

These students are tagged in a DET data base as “**ESL students**”. The data are collected from a census in ACT schools each February and August.

Students who meet these criteria are assessed on a five-point **Language Proficiency Rating (LPR) scale**. The scale is graded as follows:

- 0 - 1 minimal English
- 1 - 2 well below average
- 2 - 3 below average
- 3 - 4 approaching average
- 4 average native English speaking competence
- 4 - 5 above average.

***ATESOL ACT commends the ACT government for its use of an ESL-specific proficiency rating scale to identify EAL/D learning needs.*** This form of identification has the potential to provide:

- a credible basis for policy-making and resourcing;
- sound and invaluable data for long-term planning;
- solid, consistent and on-going evidence in profiling regional and individual schools’ needs for EAL/D support;
- solid, consistent and on-going evidence of students’ progress towards English language proficiency;
- data that would allow a more fine-grained analyses if related to other data bases (e.g. demographics, visa categories, other tests).

These benefits are contingent, of course, on the scope and credibility of the assessment process itself. Equally, these benefits do not accrue if the data generated are not utilised.

We now consider scope, credibility, and how the data are/are not utilised.

## ***Problems in the ACT approach to identifying EAL/D learners***

### **1. Scope: who's assessed and who isn't?**

Eligibility for LPR assessment accords with the ACTA definition of an EAL/D learner in using the criteria of (i) **seven** years in an Australian school, and (ii) years **in school** (and not, for example, years since migration or visa status).

**Criterion (i)** is supported by an extensive body of long-standing, credible, and internationally recognised research regarding the time required for English language learners to reach grade standards. Reviewing more than two decades of research, Thomas and Collier (2002) stated that, for those with prior literacy, “the minimum length of time it takes to reach grade level performance in second language (L2) is four years” (p. 9). In regard to those with minimal/no previous schooling, Collier's (1987) comprehensive survey of school age learners in the USA concluded that: “Where all instruction is given through the second language (English), non-native speakers of English with no schooling in their first language take 7–10 years or more to reach age and grade-level norms of their native English-speaking peers” (p. 618). Hakuta, Butler and Witt (2000) found that, even in schools regarded as highly successful in teaching EAL learners, “oral proficiency takes 3 to 5 years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years” (p. 3; see also August & Shanahan, 2008; Cummins, 1984; Cummins & Swain, 1990; Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006).<sup>1</sup>

***ATESOL ACT commends the ACT government for use of a 7 year (in school) cut-off point for ESL students but notes that students with minimal/no previous education may need to be tracked and supported for longer.***

**Criterion (ii)** means that DET tagging as an “**ESL student**” is attached to those who fall below LPR level 4 and self-identify as:

- Indigenous;
- migrant-background (newly arrived, long-term resident and second generation Australian-born);
- non-fee-paying international students;
- children of non-residents.

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive summary of the August & Shanahan report is attached to this submission.

***ATESOL ACT commends the ACT government in including all these groups in data collection on ESL students, in contrast with practices in some other States.***

Two key differences exist between ACT practices and the ACTA definition. First, LRP assessment is not extended to third generation migrant-background students, i.e. students born in Australia of parents also born in Australia, **who come from homes where the main language is other than English**. These data would be recoverable, at least to some extent, from the school census mentioned above (viz. where the main language in the home is reported as other than English). Second, data on **fee-paying international students' English proficiency**, if it is assessed, is not reported to DET.

Consequently, **it is impossible to estimate the numbers of EAL/D learners in these groups** and the extent of their need for ESL support. Excluding these groups from English proficiency assessment appears to be short-sighted (in that data is lacking on their English proficiency) and discriminatory (because it is arbitrary to deny ESL support to some learners on the grounds of parents' birthplace); in the case of fee-paying international students, a failure to monitor their needs for English language support is derelict in preventing their exploitation as sources of revenue for schools.

In identifying those who *are* eligible for ESL assessment, a key problem is that eligibility is determined from completed school enrolment forms. These forms rely on self-identification. They are in English, which **many students' parents/guardians do not understand**, as might be expected. Our members report that assistance in completing these forms is frequently the responsibility of teacher assistants or front office staff, who are ill-equipped for this task.

ATESOL ACT members in Introductory English Centres (IECs; see below "Program types") report that some students with very low levels of English are not referred to them for weeks and months after enrolment in a school. This problem has two possible causes, which our members report are not uncommon.

**First, enrolment forms are incorrectly completed**, as just described. If enrollees had adequate assistance in completing forms (as in some schools by using ESL teachers, for example), this problem would be overcome.

Second, some schools undertake assessments but **keep students below LPR level 1 until after the cut-off date for schools' annual staffing allocations**, i.e. after the returns from the February census. Having attracted this funding, the students are then referred to an IEC. This practice is dishonest. It could be prevented if enrolment records were routinely

forwarded to IECs and IECs were required to report disproportionate referral times to the Department.

## 2. The credibility of EAL/D assessments

Assessment on the LPR scale encompasses tasks in English Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. **ATESOL ACT commends this approach.** It contrasts favourably with approaches in some other jurisdictions, which conflate Listening and Speaking skills. Research and teachers' experience provide overwhelming evidence that receptive and productive skills (in both spoken and written language) differ considerably and therefore should be separately assessed.

**LPR assessment is also commendable in that it is moderated.** That is, both classroom and ESL teachers individually assess students' performances, and (ideally) then discuss their conclusions. (In primary schools, scoring and moderation are undertaken by one classroom and one ESL teacher; in post-primary schools, the task falls to two subject teachers and one ESL teacher.) This kind of moderation is invaluable in promoting quality control and teacher development. Potentially, it is a source of feedback for those developing assessment tasks.

The main gap in the credibility of LPR assessments is that, although ESL teachers are involved, our members report that many lack recognised ESL qualifications and therefore **the expertise to undertake and interpret these assessments**, including in moderating conclusions with their mainstream counterpart (see below: "Pre-requisites for program effectiveness"). In regard to English varieties that are noticeably distinct from standard Australian English, including but not only Aboriginal Englishes, English language assessment requires quite particular linguistic and cultural expertise, and sensitivity in recommendations for support.

Our members report that **assessments can therefore be cursory and ill-informed.**

Correct identification of ESL learners is essential for individuals, schools and the integrity of data bases.

Another problem with LPR assessments is that **each level on the scale encompasses huge differences between EAL/D learners.** For example, level 0–1 ("minimal English") includes:

- students **across the full range of academic achievement** in their previous schooling (i.e. high, average and poor performers);
- students with **literacy in English** gained through learning English as a foreign language in their own country but little or no spoken English;
- students **with no English whatsoever**;

- students (aged 8 to 18 and older) **with little/no previous education or literacy in any language**. See Appendix B for a further breakdown on this group.

With students above level 1 but below level 4, similar differences obtain and play out in their own particular ways. We can expect that students in the first two groups will progress relatively quickly in learning English. They will require much less and different kinds of ESL support than those in the last group. Distinguishing between these learners is important in calculating ESL needs (and therefore demands on funding), planning for ESL support (in regard to programs, materials and teacher expertise), and interpreting learner progress and achievement on national and local tests. Indigenous ESL students, who are liable to be above level 1, add an even more complex dimension to the populations at each level.

### 3. Utilisation of data on students tagged “ESL”

As currently utilised, data on students tagged “ESL” provide a guide to a portion of EAL/D learning needs in the ACT. These data are particularly valuable because English proficiency assessments can be analysed across the Territory as a whole, in different regions and school by school.

Potentially, English assessment data could be mapped on to data from other sources to produce more fine-grained pictures, which in turn could facilitate better analysis, targeting and resourcing. For example, these data could be mapped against:

- other data collected on **Indigenous students**;
- **visa categories** to gain a better picture of English language levels and therefore potential demands on resources by different groups (migrants, humanitarian entrants, international students, children of temporary entrants);
- results from the **various tests** administered in the ACT (enabling exploration of these tests’ validity and reliability for different ESL student groups);
- other **demographic** data (e.g. gender and age).

**Combined with data on speakers of Aboriginal languages or Aboriginal English**, LPR assessments have the potential to reveal the effects of Indigenous students’ distinctive English learning backgrounds and needs. Indigenous students with no English whatsoever are rare in the ACT but not entirely unknown if families have moved here from northern Australia. Indigenous ESL students are more likely to be assessed above level 1.75, which has implications for the support they receive and how they are tracked (see below “Supporting Indigenous ESL students”). The ACT government submission states that DET is engaged in various lines of research on Indigenous students, including into preschoolers’

language acquisition<sup>2</sup> as it relates to language background and standard Australian English (p. 50). ATESOL ACT warmly commends this research activity. However, we note that these issues require consideration in the context of research into the effects of programs to maintain and teach Aboriginal languages and creoles at pre-school and higher levels.

In regard to all those identified as ESL students, LPR assessments could be used **to chart their on-going progress in learning English**. This charting would entail administering and maintaining assessments on the LPR scale (or these assessments mapped against other ESL assessment tools) of individuals over time (of course, with names removed). These assessments could also provide invaluable insights into NAPLaN data.

In this regard, we note **the spurious claim in the Government’s submission to this Inquiry regarding LBOTE learners’ progress** (pp. 17-18). As we understand it, the evidence supporting this claim does not come from longitudinal data on *the same student cohort* progressing from Year 3 to 9. These data are drawn from a one-off snap shot from 2008 NAPLaN data on Year 3 students and *another group* of Year 9 students. The underlying assumptions are untenable (and, as far as we can tell, untested)—for example, that these Year 3 and Year 9 students are similar demographically and educationally, and that the Year 9 students’ relatively good performance results from them being in the ACT school system since Year 3.

### ***ATESOL ACT Recommendations on Identifying English Language Learners***

*ATESOL ACT recommends:*

1. That this Inquiry request the Department of Education and Training (DET) to supply it with **ACT pre-school and school census data on all Australian-born students from homes where the main language is other than English**, irrespective of where their parents were born.
2. That English language proficiency assessment include **all students**, irrespective of their or their parents’ birthplace:
  - (i) whose main language is a **language or distinct dialect other than standard Australian English**, and
  - (ii) who have had **less than seven continuous years of education** in an Australian or overseas educational institution **where English is the medium of instruction**.

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<sup>2</sup> It is unclear in the submission whether “language acquisition” refers to English language or any language, including Aboriginal languages as a mother tongue. The use of the word “language” to mean “English” is a common error. It may seem trivial but, in fact, contains false and misleading assumptions, and indicates a monolingual English perspective.

3. That schools be required to include **in reports to DET on English language proficiency assessments:**
  - (i) **the names** of those who have carried out these assessments;
  - (ii) whether or not at least one assessor has **ESL qualifications;**
  - (iii) **details** of these ESL qualifications (year awarded, level of award, and awarding institution).
4. That school and DET reporting on ESL students include **explicitly disaggregated data on students' ages and years of previous schooling** in Australia and overseas.
5. That the Language Proficiency Rating scale be subjected to **regular review and revision** in consultation with mainstream teachers, ESL teachers, ESL Executive Officers and EAL/D assessment experts;
6. That the Language Proficiency Rating scale and associated assessment tasks be revised to provide **a more fine-grained picture of students' English proficiency** for policy, funding and educational purposes.

## ***Creating an Educational Achievement Gap (1)?*** **Procedures in the ACT for Determining Eligibility for ESL Support**

As just outlined, the identification of EAL/D learning needs in the ACT is incomplete and not entirely credible but is superior to that in some other jurisdictions.

However, the number of identified ESL learners has no effect on funding for ESL support for two reasons.

First, ESL funding in the ACT is determined **irrespective of the number of those identified as ESL students**. That is:

- the ESL allocation **is capped** as a proportion of the **total ACT school staffing budget**—since 1981, no more than 4 per cent;
- the actual ESL allocation is determined by a formula (known as the “staffing multiplier”) that is derived from **all enrolments** in ACT public schools (not just ESL students);
- **the ESL proportion** within this formula **has been progressively reduced** since 1989.

(*The ACT Teacher*, Sept. 2009, p. 7).

Second, this funding determines a **variable cut-off point on the LPR scale at which students qualify for ESL support**. In 2008, students rated at 1.50 or below attracted full funding for ESL support, and those at 1.75 attracted partial funding. ATESOL ACT does not have information for 2009.

On the basis of these calculations, IECs and schools gain ESL staffing “points”.

***Overall, this method of determining student eligibility for ESL support runs counter to any aspiration to reduce the educational achievement gap in the ACT.*** Its effects are perverse.

Thus:

1. In contrast with the 4 per cent cap on ESL staffing, ESL students in 2009 constitute **10.94 per cent of total school enrolments**.
2. Although overall enrolments in ACT public schools have dropped, **the proportion of ESL students has increased by 35 per cent** between 2000 and 2009.
3. On the LPR scale, students rated below level 4 have below “average native English competence”. By definition, this represents an achievement gap between those with average competence and those below this point. **52 per cent of students whose**

**English was rated below level 4 were *without* targeted funding** to support their English learning needs.

(The information in points 1-3 is drawn from *The ACT Teacher*, Sept. 2009, p. 7, citing DET figures).

4. ESL students' needs are now more acute and long-term, due to **increased migrant intakes, including post-elementary level refugee students with minimal/no previous schooling**. (See Appendix B for a detailed description of these learners and their educational needs.)
5. As the overall number of identified ESL students increases, **funding for each individual is decreased**.
6. As acute ESL needs increase (i.e. as manifested by increased low rankings on LPR scale), **the more funding shrinks for students with less acute needs**.

Within this overall policy framework, the basis of ESL funding is unclear for international students and the dependents of temporary residents such as diplomats and students funded through Australian aid programs. International students sometimes lack ESL support in schools, despite the fees they pay. It would appear that, in some schools, these fees cross-subsidise ESL classes for other students, and vice versa.

### ***ATESOL ACT Recommendations on Eligibility for ESL Support***

*ATESOL ACT recommends:*

7. That, on an annual basis, the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs request the ACT government to report to the Legislative Assembly:
  - (i) the numbers of students in pre-schools and schools **rated at each level** on the LPR scale;
  - (ii) the numbers of students **funded for ESL support at each level** of the LPR scale;
  - (iii) **these data disaggregated** according to:
    - (a) Indigenous/non-Indigenous status;
    - (b) Australian-born/born overseas;
    - (c) gender
    - (d) visa category (as this applies);
    - (e) ages;
    - (f) years of previous schooling in Australia and overseas.
8. That the ACT government develop a graduated funding formula for ESL staffing (and related support) in pre-schools and schools that is based on **the numbers of students below LPR level 4 each year**.

9. That this formula include **an extra weighting** for students entering school at Grade 3 or above who have **fewer years of schooling than is the norm in Australia**, and that **this weighting increase** proportional to students' ages and the years of schooling missed.
10. That students identified **below LPR level 4 be re-assessed for ESL proficiency on an annual basis** until they reach level 4 (or equivalent on *an ESL-specific* assessment tool mapped against the LPR scale).
11. That, **regarding international students and the dependents of temporary residents**, the Inquiry request the ACT government to report on:
  - (i) the sources and bases of funding for ESL support;
  - (ii) the extent to which these students gain ESL support;
  - (iii) the visa status categories of these students.

## Preventing an Educational Achievement Gap (2): Current Programs and Initiatives for ESL Students

The following types of programs and initiatives exist in the ACT for those identified as ESL students.

### **1. Introductory English Language Centres (IECs)**

Three primary Centres and one secondary Centre cater for most ESL students rated below LPR level 1. Generally, students are entitled to up to 3 terms (3 x 10 weeks) in a Centre. Humanitarian entrants with minimal/no previous schooling may have up to 18 months.

Potentially, IECs are sites exemplifying high quality provision for EAL/D learners. They contain the “critical mass” that allows class groupings and teaching resources to be tailored to the diverse learner groups described earlier. Interaction between ESL teaching staff is a constant source of professional development, raising the quality of curriculum, materials and teaching approaches.

IECs also employ Bilingual Learning Support Assistants, who are invaluable in beginners’ classes. For older refugee students adjusting to schooling for the first time, they provide necessary close attention and support. They are crucial in providing cross-cultural “bridges” for both students and their parents/guardians.

However, according to our members, IEC provision is in decline.

*The ACT Teacher* (Sept. 2009, p. 28) reports that **IEC class sizes** have increased and are continuing to do so. In response to a draft of this submission, one member wrote: “*I have had to run two classes in my room, almost continually, for the last 2 years.*”

**Student entitlements** are also under pressure. A member wrote that students are rarely allowed 18 months IEC tuition. She continued:

*We have to fight to keep students for an additional term even though they are at extreme risk of failing in mainstream. They are put in mainstream classes after only 12 months due to lack of funding, a desire to keep class sizes down, lack of ESL teachers, and a lack of Bilingual Learning Support Assistants.*

This decline in provision results in part from increased intakes into IECs following record migrant intakes and increased numbers of students with minimal/no previous schooling. As already noted, the total ESL allocation has not increased proportionately.

IECs are located within mainstream schools. This co-location is beneficial for IEC students because it facilitates their experience of and transition to mainstream schooling, and

promotes interaction between IEC and mainstream students and teachers. However, **increased intakes to IECs can pass a tipping point** and begin to overwhelm the school in which they are located, lowering the quality of provision for all students. We understand that this situation may exist at some sites.

Until 2009, IECs were funded through the Commonwealth New Arrivals Program. This Program has now been rolled into a “Special Purposes” allocation within the new National Partnerships between the Commonwealth and States/Territories, giving the ACT government discretion over funding previously quarantined for new arrivals and IECs. **This discretion threatens the integrity of IEC programs, staffing and ESL student entitlements.** The following comment from one ATESOL ACT member reflects this threat:

*The need for IECs is in question as IEC classes and mainstream classes are in the same building. Therefore there’s a blurring of the lines, a tendency for inclusion across the system. The benefits of co-location for the students are high. However, the staffing has become an issue, as often teachers without appropriate qualifications or sufficient experience are given positions on the IEC classes.*

Another member noted that “*mainstream administrators who have staffing and curriculum responsibility for the IECs are not required to hold ESL qualifications and rarely do*”. Hence their appreciation of IEC requirements appears to be limited.

A further related threat is that Commonwealth-State/Territory National Partnership **funding is dependent on gains in NAPLaN scores** (see below “National Commonwealth-State/Territory partnerships). ESL students are exempt from NAPLaN testing while in an IEC and for some time after exiting, depending on when they exit and when NAPLaN is administered. Because these students are not included in these data, they are liable to become a lower priority.

ESL provision has now been incorporated within the ACT *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013*, increasing **the possibility that designated ESL support in both IECs and schools will be replaced by generalised literacy initiatives** (see below “The ACT Literacy and Numeracy Strategy”).

**The ACT Government’s submission to this Inquiry provides evidence for this policy shift.** ESL provision has no mention.

## **2. ESL support in schools**

ESL support in schools may be provided for students exiting IECs and other students. ESL teachers may teach parallel ESL classes timetabled against mainstream English classes and/or short-term intensive classes; they may team-teach with mainstream teachers, work

with individual students or small groups in mainstream classrooms, and take withdrawal classes in which individuals are withdrawn from mainstream classes for small group ESL tuition. ESL teachers may also be active in developing curriculum and school policies that assist EAL/D learners and their learning needs.

Principals are required to provide documentation to the Department that ESL funding has been used for ESL support. However, our members report that this requirement can be flexibly interpreted, to put it kindly. Despite guidelines to the contrary, schools commonly use their ESL funds to reduce class sizes and to extend their programs to include other activities. Confident ESL teachers who know the point system have been known to challenge these practices but, as one member wrote “*when this is challenged, it can often reflect badly on the ESL teacher*”.

One member described her experience in different schools:

*The common use of ESL teachers as group work teachers to make smaller maths or literacy groups for mainstream classes often leads to the ESL teacher not working with the students most in need and not giving them specific ESL support. Some teachers have been given groups purely for behaviour management, groups without ESL students etc. It is often the ESL teacher who becomes the relief teacher when mainstream teachers are absent. Many situations still involve ESL teachers sitting in classrooms watching mainstream teachers teach for half a lesson and then working as a teacher’s aide for the rest of the time. This is totally inappropriate but happens because of the need to be seen to be working with a teacher in their classroom. The ESL teacher should be seen as a valuable resource in a school, and the funding and its allocation should reflect this.*

In some schools, according to *The ACT Teacher* (Sept. 2009, p. 28), ESL and so-called “Learning Assistance” students (also known as “special needs” students) are being combined into one learning group. Placing these students, whose learning needs are quite distinct, in an undifferentiated “remedial” group regresses to the discredited practices of the 1950s and ‘60s.

Schools’ use of fees from international students appears to be impossible to monitor. ATESOL ACT is concerned at this lack of accountability and that these students may not be receiving support commensurate with the fees they pay.

According to our members, ESL teachers are frequently employed part-time and work across two or more schools. The uncertainty and limitations of funding, combined with unsatisfactory working conditions and no career paths, create high ESL staff turn-over and instability in school-based ESL programs. This situation weakens the credibility of these

programs and teachers, undermining their potential to contribute substantively to students and schools. The reality appears to be that ESL support in schools is frequently minimal and, because of increased numbers below LPR level 1, is becoming increasingly restricted. Tying ESL staffing to ESL students numbers (as recommended above) would help reverse this situation, since it would lessen the numbers of part-time teachers and provide greater program stability.

The utilisation of ESL teachers in schools is closely related to qualification and employment issues, which we discuss below (see “Pre-requisites for program effectiveness”).

### **3. The Pilot Refugee Bridging Program at Dickson College**

Dickson College offers a pilot program for students aged 16 and older with disrupted/minimal previous education. The focus is on English language, basic literacy, numeracy and life skills but within a framework that is age-appropriate and supports settlement needs, including dealing with previous trauma. Year 11 and 12 studies can be completed, as necessary, over three years. Students aspiring to gain a Year 12 Certificate initially study units that are appropriate to their past education and life experiences and that provide a flexible pathway into further studies and mainstream units. Other students are supported towards educational pathways in TAFE and/or employment.

This program is partially funded through the allocation to the College’s Introductory English Centre and partially through the College’s operating budget.

This program is widely acknowledged as exemplary. One of our members (not at this College) wrote in response to the draft of this submission: *“This is an excellent program and I wish there was a similar program for IEC students who arrive in year 6 and have to move on to year 7 without any support.”*

This recommendation reflects the wider problem for many students (not just ESL) in moving from primary to secondary school. They must adjust to the loss of a single class teacher throughout the day, and learn to manage timetables, a range of teachers and the more impersonal organisation of a bigger school. Our members report that this transition is the point at which some ESL students fall badly behind.

### **4. Support for Indigenous EAL/D learners**

Both the Commonwealth and ACT governments have made “closing the gap” for Indigenous students a high priority. ATESOL ACT warmly welcomes this policy direction and the various initiatives described in the ACT government submission to this Inquiry (pp. 47-50).

Unfortunately, this submission provides **no data on ESL students** within the broader 2009 population of 1,330 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who self-identified in ACT public and private schools (1,082 in public schools; 248 in private schools; p. 47). This failure reflects a similar failure at Commonwealth level in regard to NAPLAN data (see below “National Commonwealth-State/Territory Partnerships”). However, in contrast to national data, in the ACT English language proficiency data on ESL students would permit cross-referencing with Indigenous figures and hence an indication of EAL/D learning needs, albeit limited by the problems of self-identification on enrolment forms (see above “Scope: who’s assessed and who isn’t?”). We commend this exercise to the Inquiry.

Indigenous students may receive support from ESL teachers if they are tagged as ESL students (by virtue of a rating below level 4 on the LPR scale) and are within the cut-off point for ESL funding (see above “Creating an Educational Achievement Gap (1)”). We suspect that most are above the LPR 1.75 cut-off point.

Indigenous students, whether or not ESL tagged, are eligible for support from the five Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Officers described in the ACT Government submission to this Inquiry (pp. 48-49). However, for Indigenous EAL/D learners, **literacy approaches are largely inappropriate** (see below “Table 1: Differences between Literacy and Expert EAL/D Approaches”). Quite specific linguistic, cultural and educational expertise is needed in working with speakers of Aboriginal languages and creoles, and Aboriginal Englishes, for example, understanding the nature and pedagogic implications of creoles and non-standard English varieties (see also Appendix C, Table 2, entries on “varieties”, “Indigenous students” and “creoles”). We believe that scope exists for increased cooperation between those with expertise in Aboriginal languages and varieties, EAL/D learning, Indigenous education and literacy development. This expertise may need to be drawn from outside the ACT. It should include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and community leaders.

### **5. Support for pre-school students**

Two itinerant ESL teachers serve the ESL students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in 75 pre-schools in the ACT (including Jervis Bay). *The ACT Teacher* (Sept. 2009, p. 28) reports that, in 2008, 225 preschoolers were assessed at below LPR level 2.

Children aged 3.5 from homes where the main language/variety is other than standard Australian English may enrol in pre-school (effectively 6 months before other children). However, actual enrolments are contingent on available places, which are rare. Consequently, this option is not widely promoted. If parents knew of this option, and places were available, an increased need for ESL pre-school teachers would almost certainly follow.

ATESOL ACT believes that ESL pre-school support is grossly inadequate. The effectiveness of interventions at this stage in children's education means that attention to EAL/D learning in pre-schools is liable to be productive. Increasing ESL support would further the ACT government's commitment to pre-school education as described in its submission to this Inquiry (pp. 42-43).

## **6. Counselling and advisory services**

Education does not occur in a vacuum. Many EAL/D learners (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) have experienced/are experiencing difficult—often traumatic—situations. Without expert counselling and advice tailored to these different situations, absentee rates and drop out can be high, and students' performance in class minimal.

Counselling may be needed to deal with the aftermath of trauma, even torture, on-going difficulties and family violence. Advice may be required on housing, health, finances and learning and employment pathways. One ATESOL ACT member wrote:

*I have visited some of the homes of my refugee families and was shocked to find one house in the middle of winter with no heating on. It was like an ice box. The children were all sick with head colds and the baby had just come from hospital. I wonder how much support they get for budgeting for utilities and if they have enough support to cater at all for very expensive Canberra heating bills.*

Counselling and advice may be required for long periods of time. Entitlements for humanitarian entrants come through the Department of Immigration & Citizenship's Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) but these can be insufficient in both length and intensity, and do not include some categories of family reunion.

Companion House provides invaluable support for educators working with refugees and victims of torture and trauma. However, our members report that this support is under-funded. One person wrote:

*The only service we see in the IEC comes from Companion House on a very rare basis. They seem to be there to support the new arrivals. Often there is a support person who visits the children but it is for a very brief time once a week or fortnight and usually only for the 3 terms of IEC.*

Schools have their own counsellors. No training or employment requirements exist in regard to linguistic and cultural diversity, and/or responding to students who have experienced trauma and torture. In preparing this submission, we were told that some refugee students are being subjected to inappropriate and stressful standardised psychometric testing.

ESL teachers, mainstream teachers, school counsellors, administrators and whole school staffs need on-going professional development on appropriate responses, support networks and how to develop effective lines of referral. Counselling and advisory services must be planned holistically in relation to individuals, family groups and institutional settings. The level of resourcing appears to be inadequate.

## **7. Translation and interpreter services**

Many migrant and refugee parents/guardians (new arrivals and long-term residents) have minimal or no English. They do not understand English language enrolment forms, school notices and permission forms for excursions. Without interpreters, they cannot participate in parent-teacher interviews or, in fact, have any interaction with their children's school.

Interpreting and translation services operate on a fee-for-service basis. We understand that these payments come from operating budgets and attract no specific funding. IECs use interpreters for parent-teacher interviews. Schools generally are unwilling or unable pay for these services. Where interpreting takes place, it is reliant on other family members (frequently children) or friends. One of our members wrote:

*Over the years I have spent many hours organising all school special events notes to be translated and given to ESL families. This does not always happen in mainstream schools and even in the mainstream section of IEC schools it doesn't occur unless someone pushes for it. It is a problem for parents. It is a resource that is quite easily available but it needs people with ESL training to implement and make sure that the parents are informed. The Embassies usually supply an interpreter but other families do not have access to these resources.*

Another member wrote:

*Although schools can access interpreter services, they are notorious for not making use of them. Why? Don't know – worried about the cost perhaps? Or just completely ignorant of what it's like to have a meeting with a school official when you have only half an idea of what they are saying.*

ATESOL ACT believes that the current approach to interpreting and translation is unacceptable. Excluding parents/guardians from proper communication with schools is unfair, dysfunctional and potentially dangerous. One of our members reported that she is aware that some students routinely sign their own excursion permission forms, including statements that they can swim when, in fact, this is not the case. Schools also lack adequate medical health information for some ESL students.

## **8. ESL Executive Officers**

The Department of Education and Training directly employs two ESL Executive Officers (also known in some jurisdictions as “ESL consultants”.) Their role is to provide advice, professional development and in-service activities for ESL teachers, mainstream teachers, school administrators and whole staffs. They also give policy advice within the Department. In some States and the Northern Territory, ESL consultants have played leading roles in developing the ESL curriculum, materials and assessment tools that underpin Australian best practice in ESL, and which have been adopted overseas as exemplary models.

**The growing pressure on the ESL budget in the ACT is limiting these Officers’ abilities to carry out their roles**, just at a time of increasing need—both in response to the growing ESL intakes in schools and to new Commonwealth and ACT policy initiatives. Reports from other States/Territories are that ESL consultants are not included in developing National Partnership arrangements. We have no information from the ACT on this matter but the government’s submission to this Inquiry reflects a lack of input from those knowledgeable about ESL provision.

According to *The ACT Teacher* (Sept. 2009, p. 28), when the 7 year limit for ESL support was introduced in 1992, the ESL allocation also included five central office positions to run a new *Language for Understanding across the Curriculum* (LUAC) in-service program. The program is described as “a successful professional learning program for mainstream teachers” whose purpose was to provide indirect support for “ESL students not resourced with ESL staffing” (p. 28). By 2007, the five positions had been reduced to one. In 2009, the LUAC program was replaced by a new program reflecting Commonwealth-State/Territory National Partnership priorities: *InSinc—Incorporating Strategies for an Inclusive Curriculum*. From 2010, this program will be run by the new Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers. No requirement exists for these Officers to have ESL qualifications or expertise in EAL/D issues. ATESOL ACTA wholeheartedly supports ACT government initiatives to encourage all teachers to take responsibility for social inclusion, literacy and numeracy. **Our concern is that these initiatives are substituting for targeted ESL support.**

As already indicated (see above “Support for Indigenous EAL/D learners”), the appointment of Indigenous Language and Literacy Officers does not appear to include explicit consideration of Indigenous EAL/D learning issues. ATESOL ACT believes that these Officers should work closely with ESL Executive Officers and other EAL/D experts. A priority should be professional development for Indigenous Literacy Officers on language and language learning issues in Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and other Indigenous contexts (see, for example, the latest *Canadian Modern Language Review* Special issue on

“Indigenous, Minority, and Heritage Language Education in Canada”, 66, 1, September 2009; <http://utpjournals.metapress.com/content/v20642835638/>).

ATESOL ACT believes that the increased pressures on ESL Executive Officers, the termination of the LUAC program, and assigning responsibility for its replacement to Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers provide **further evidence of the ACT government’s loss of commitment to support for EAL/D learners**. We are gravely concerned that current DET policy reflects a fundamental misunderstanding about the difference between EAL/D teaching and mainstream literacy teaching. The two are not interchangeable (see below: “Creating an Educational Achievement Gap (2)”).

### ***9. Pre-requisites for program effectiveness: ESL teacher qualifications and expertise***

Teaching English as a second/additional language/dialect has been established as a distinct pedagogical field since at least the beginning of the 1970s. Like the other pedagogies on which curriculum and teaching depend, it draws on a range of disciplines and research—specifically, linguistic, psycholinguistic and socio-cultural insights into how second/additional languages/dialects are learned and should be taught. Research, scholarly and practical books, journals, conferences, workshops and teachers’ experiences provide the profession with on-going dynamism. ESL qualifications—ranging through certificates, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and diplomas, Masters and doctoral studies—support this pedagogy.

**Qualified, knowledgeable and committed ESL teachers are fundamental to the effective delivery of EAL/D tuition and other learning support.** These teachers also play key advocacy and policy-informing roles in schools. Since this role includes advising and team teaching with other teachers, the demands on ESL teachers’ ability to work closely with colleagues and to understand other subject areas are higher than is normally expected for regular classroom teachers. ESL teachers working with older students need a range of pedagogic expertise spanning pre-literacy skills to English for entry to tertiary study. In responding to students who have suffered or are suffering trauma, ESL teachers need to develop extensive community and agency networks in order to assist their students, refer them appropriately and interact with families, guardians and other community supports. ESL teachers who work with Indigenous EAL/D learners need specific linguistic and cultural knowledge and experience, as indicated earlier (see above “Support for EAL/D learners”).

Appendix D reproduces the ACTA *Standards for TESOL Practitioners*, which ATESOL ACT endorses.

**The officially stated requirements for employment as an ESL teacher** in an ACT government school are, in addition to regular teaching qualifications, at least one semester's study in ESL methodology. In contrast, and in line with professionally endorsed standards, ATESOL ACT lists the following as minimal qualifications: a Bachelor's degree in Education with relevant major, or a Bachelor's degree with relevant major plus a Diploma in Education, plus a post-graduate TESOL certificate or diploma if TESOL method was not part of the degree or Diploma in Education (<http://atesolact.org.au/teach.html>).

Our members report that **not even the Department's qualification requirements are observed in appointing ESL teachers** (see also *The ACT Teacher*, Sept. 2009, p. 28). Situations exist where the Japanese or PE teacher have been designated as the school's (only) ESL teacher. ATESOL ACT finds it unacceptable to consider that anyone who can speak English can teach it or that, because someone speaks another language but lacks a reasonable command of English, he/she should teach it to ESL students.

As already noted, the failure to employ qualified and confident ESL teachers has adverse consequences for the identification of ESL students, the status and stability of programs, the quality of provision in IECs and schools, and teachers' advice and advocacy on behalf of EAL/D learners. These problems are exacerbated by employing ESL teachers on a part-time basis and the absence of ESL career paths.

*The ACT Teacher* (Sept., 2009, p. 28) reports that it appears that the new Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators in schools may replace ESL teachers. One of our members wrote that this process has already begun. Any such development will effectively end ESL provision in schools.

EAL/D learners in schools are assisted not just by specialist ESL teachers. These students spend most of their time with mainstream teachers. **All teachers need to take responsibility, not only for teaching different content areas, but also for developing their students' English and literacy in and through their content areas.** The *InSinc—Incorporating Strategies for an Inclusive Curriculum* program (already mentioned) has the potential to further these goals. These goals will also be assisted by the University of Canberra's new compulsory ESL unit within the B.Ed. Primary program (a move that meets recommendations in reports on teacher education as far back as the 1980s). The new qualification requirements for preschool teachers provide a similar opportunity to include compulsory ESL units.

None of these initiatives are replacements for targeted ESL programs. Research has shown that, no matter what professional development and how much expert support is provided to non-ESL specialists (i.e. mainstream teachers), **they do not adjust their approaches**

**sufficiently to support non-fluent users of English in accessing the curriculum.**

Moreover, mainstream teachers do not—and refuse to—consider this as part of their professional role, a resistance that increases through senior year levels (Arkoudis, 2003; Creese, 2002; Davison, 2005; Langman, 2003; Leung, 2001; McKay, 2006; Miller & Brown, 2007). Rather, gaining awareness of EAL/D learning needs helps mainstream teachers work more effectively with ESL specialists.

### ***ATESOL ACT Recommendations on ESL Programs and Other Initiatives***

Our recommendations 1-11 above address some of the problems identified in this section. In addition, *ATESOL ACT recommends*:

12. That the Inquiry request DET to supply it with data **on each IEC** regarding:
  - (i) the total student population and number of classes in each school in which the IEC is located;
  - (ii) ESL student numbers;
  - (iii) class sizes;
  - (iv) the number of classrooms occupied by IEC classes *and* the total number of classrooms in the school;
  - (v) students' ages in relation to their years of previous schooling;
  - (vi) the distances ESL students travel to the Centre each day;
  - (vii) ESL teachers' qualifications.
  
13. That the ACT Government **increase funding for Introductory English Language Centres**, such that:
  - all students below LPR level 1 can utilise their tuition entitlements (i.e. between three terms and 18 months),
  - class groups average no more than 12 students, and
  - there is a ratio of 1 full-time Bilingual Assistant (or part-time equivalent) per 24 students.
  
14. That the ACT Department of Education & Training (DET) require and/or more carefully scrutinise **reporting from each school** on:
  - (i) how ESL funding is deployed;
  - (ii) which students are identified for ESL support and how;
  - (iii) the English language progress of students supported through ESL funding;
  - (iv) who assesses students' progress in English and how;
  - (v) the programs and other initiatives funded from ESL allocations;
  - (vi) the qualifications of teachers funded from ESL staffing allocations;
  - (vii) ESL provision for fee-paying international students.

15. That DET encourage the development of **pilot bridging programs at the pre-College level** for refugee students with minimal/no previous schooling.
16. **That specialist ESL staffing for pre-schools** be developed through a formula that responds to data on the numbers of overseas, arriving and Australian-born children (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous from homes where the main language is other than English) entering pre-school and rated as having less than LPR level 4 English proficiency.
17. **That the number of ESL Executive Officers** be determined through a formula that responds to census data on ESL learning needs (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) as reflected in LPR assessments.
18. That the new **qualifications requirements for pre-school teachers** include a compulsory ESL unit.
19. That DET increase its scrutiny to ensure that **the ESL teachers it funds hold at least its own stated qualification requirements**.
20. That the ACT Government **Quality Teaching initiatives** be extended to include:
  - (i) **upgrading qualification requirements for newly employed ESL teachers** to meet recognised professional standards (see Appendix D);
  - (ii) **supporting ESL teachers now employed** in public schools and pre-schools to gain these qualifications through scholarships and study leave;
  - (iii) professional development for **mainstream teachers in pre-schools and schools** that is *specifically* concerned with supporting **learning English** as an additional language/dialect and **learning through English**.
21. That the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs inquire into **counselling, advisory, interpreting and translation services** for Indigenous, migrant and refugee students in pre-schools and schools, with a view to recommending on **improvements** and **an integrated approach** to children and their primary carers.
22. That, as an interim measure pending the findings of this Inquiry, additional funding be allocated for:
  - (i) **two additional counselling positions** at Companion House;
  - (ii) **professional development for school counsellors** on responding appropriately to EAL/D learners who have experienced or are experiencing major trauma and/or learning difficulties

- (iii) **use of interpreting and translation services by pre-schools and schools**  
(and that accountability measures ensure that this funding is used for this purpose).

See Appendix C for an overview of programs and initiatives recommended by ACTA for different EAL/D learner needs.

## **Creating an Educational Achievement Gap (2)? New Directions in Education Policy and Provision**

### ***The ACT Language and Numeracy Strategy 2009-13***

In 2009, largely in response to the Commonwealth-State/Territory National Partnership arrangements, the ACT Department of Education instituted its *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-13*. ATESOL ACT warmly endorses support for literacy and numeracy.

**However, we hold grave concerns that this initiative will further undermine the ESL programs and support just described.**

ATESOL ACT members (in common with other ESL professionals) are frequently challenged to explain what ESL expertise offers and why literacy support is not simply inadequate but also misdirected for EAL/D learners. Table 1 below outlines some answers.

**Table 1:  
Differences between Literacy and Expert EAL/D Approaches**

<b>Crucial Issues</b>	<b>Literacy-Focussed Approaches</b>	<b>EAL/D Approaches</b>
<b>Language versus literacy as the focus of pedagogy and assessment.</b>	Focus is predominantly on <b>reading &amp; writing</b> .	Starting point is a comprehensive assessment of the learner's knowledge of the <b>English language</b> , including listening & speaking.
	Failure to perform within age-related norms is seen as problematic and <b>requiring some form of remediation</b> .	Learners who do not meet mainstream benchmarks <b>are not seen as "underperforming"</b> . Teaching <b>addresses what is possible for each stage in language learning</b> , which is quite different from remedial literacy teaching.
	Learners' failure to achieve benchmarks/standards is interpreted with reference to <b>the class/social/home factors that support literacy learning</b> .	Class/social/home factors are taken into account in EAL/D approaches. But learning another language is also recognised as <b>entailing specific cognitive tasks</b> that do not apply in learning one's first language.  <b>Cross-cultural learning</b> is an important focus for EAL/D approaches. This learning is not equated with class-based identity issues.
<b>Learners' age</b>	Literacy guidelines, descriptions of development, teaching resources and content <b>assume that beginning literacy learners are young</b> and beginning school.	Age-related learning levels, needs, interests and aspirations cannot be assumed. EAL/D approaches take account, for example, of: (1) both <b>younger and older learners with/without spoken English</b> ; (2) both <b>younger and older learners with or without previous literacy skills</b> in their home language; (3) <b>older learners with little/no previous schooling</b> , or severely disrupted schooling.
<b>Spoken English</b>	Teaching <b>assumes learners' prior use &amp; comprehension of age-appropriate spoken English</b> .	Learners may have <b>little or no comprehension of spoken English</b> and may not be able to speak English. Teaching may need to begin by developing learners' English listening and speaking.
	Teaching assumes that, as English users, learners can <b>distinguish &amp; produce English sounds</b> . The teaching focus is on relating known sounds to letters (by whatever method).	EAL/D teaching includes <b>attention to discriminating and producing English sounds</b> (e.g. /p/ versus /b/). The learner must acquire a new repertoire of sounds.

Crucial Issues	Literacy-Focussed Approaches	EAL/D Approaches
<i>Command of reading &amp; writing.</i>	Teaching <b>assumes that learners lack skills in reading and writing</b> because they lack these skills in English.	<p>EAL/D approaches take <b>explicit account of learners' development in reading and writing skills in other languages or varieties</b>. Some learners will have highly developed literacy skills (but not in English). Teaching utilises these skills.</p> <p>EAL approaches consider whether or not learners are familiar with Roman or non-Roman scripts, and vary accordingly.</p> <p>In contrast, some older EAL refugee students with little/no previous schooling (some of whom have come from a totally non-print based environment) may require <b>a more fundamental orientation to school learning</b>, including print and texts, than any of their age-related peers with previous schooling (e.g. they may need to learn how to orientate a book or hold a pencil; understand a numbered sequence; use scissors). See Appendix B for an elaboration.</p>
<i>Content and cultural assumptions</i>	<p>Content of resources and tests frequently assume that learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand &amp; conform to peer group norms of <b>urban Australian-born students</b>;</li> <li>• live in a <b>nuclear family</b>;</li> <li>• have <b>experienced continuous schooling</b> (even if not successful) from a young age;</li> <li>• are monolingual and live in an <b>English monolingual world</b>.</li> </ul>	<p>EAL/D approaches always proceed from an understanding of cultures and languages as intertwined, and therefore that <b>radical differences exist in people's cultural assumptions and life experiences</b>.</p> <p>EAL/D approaches and content take account of the fact that <b>some learners may have little/no experience of urban Australian culture</b>.</p> <p>EAL/D content is sensitive to <b>family structures that are very different from traditional Western norms</b>.</p> <p>EAL/D approaches <b>cannot assume that learners live with their parents or indeed any family</b>. EAL/D teaching may need to be attuned to other expertise in dealing with trauma and torture.</p> <p>EAL/D approaches do not assume a monolingual English world but rather <b>understand and value the cognitive, social and personal advantages of bi/multilingualism</b>.</p>
	If Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders are considered, content and resources <b>frequently (and wrongly) assume that only in remote locations do Aboriginal people have distinctive cultures, languages and English varieties</b> .	EAL/D approaches <b>explore (rather than assume) the linguistic and cultural similarities and differences</b> between Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander groups in urban, rural and remote locations, and in different regions of Australia.
	If the values embedded in texts are explored, <b>students' starting point for the exploration is taken for granted</b> (as just outlined above). The aim is often <b>to question, disrupt or criticise this starting point</b> .	A starting point for EAL/D approaches is to assess the cultural assumptions in texts and to explore how these <b>may be alien for students</b> . In the process of engaging with a text, explicit attention is paid to <b>building bridges between learners' cultural understandings and that text</b> .
	In so far as literacy approaches take account of values in relation to older students' non-engagement with texts, they tend to assume that <b>problems result from students' alienation from literacy practices and education</b> .	<p>Rather than being alienation from literacy and learning, EAL/D learners are <b>generally highly motivated to gain literacy and an education</b>, although they can become disillusioned by repeated failures to meet their learning needs. When combined in classes with students alienated from literacy and education, ESL students can be confused, shocked and disgusted by other students' behaviour.</p> <p>Rather than dealing with problems of alienation, EAL/D approaches <b>support learners in their desire to participate in schooling and the wider society</b>. They locate the learning of standard Australian English in the</p>

<b>Crucial Issues</b>	<b>Literacy-Focussed Approaches</b>	<b>EAL/D Approaches</b>
		context of citizenship, multiculturalism, ethnic identity and language/dialect maintenance.
	Literacy approaches do not pay sufficient attention for EAL/D learning needs in relation to <b>the links between language forms and subject matter/content.</b>	EAL/D approaches recognise that content is linguistically embedded and that <b>teaching must explicitly address how content takes shape in, is shaped by, and expressed through English language forms.</b> EAL/D pedagogy has developed a <b>variety of sophisticated approaches that integrate content with English learning</b> , allowing attention to subject matter, the forms of English, and discourse patterns and possibilities (e.g. English for academic purposes; English for new arrivals; the topic approach; genre approaches).

Although EAL/D and literacy pedagogies overlap in some respects and certainly have insights to offer each other, conflating them:

- wastes existing human and material resources;
- confuses pedagogies and responsibilities;
- makes the different contributions of literacy and EAL/D educators less focussed and effective.

### ***National Commonwealth-State/Territory Partnerships***

The new National Partnerships now dominate Commonwealth-State/Territory relationships in regard to funding and policy-making. These agreements hinge largely on improving NAPLaN test scores (see the ACT government submission to this Inquiry, pp. 39-40). This reporting determines policy support and funding for targeted interventions.

Three priorities against which NAPLaN data are disaggregated potentially relate to EAL/D learners and learning:

- socioeconomic status;
- Indigenous status;
- language background other than English.

However, as indicated earlier, ***none of these categories captures EAL/D learners' performance or needs.***

**Socioeconomic data** include large numbers of fluent English users as well as EAL/D learners. The two groups' literacy performance may overlap but the factors underlying this performance—and appropriate strategies for its improvement—are significantly different (see Table 1 above).

**Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students** gives no indication of language background, and therefore no insight into the quite different English language learning pathways that impact on these students' test performance. These students may be

fluent users of standard Australian English, or have a traditional Aboriginal language or Aboriginal or Torres Strait creole as their dominant or only language, or be speakers of a distinctive Aboriginal variety of English. Without this information, test data cannot be interpreted to identify progress, problems or appropriate interventions.

**Identification of students with a language background other than English (LBOTE)**

includes *unspecified numbers of students who are fluent in English*. As a whole, the LBOTE group appears to be performing within national norms. But it is impossible to distinguish between those actually *learning* English and those for whom English is their dominant or only language even though other languages are spoken in the home.

**The use of NAPLaN data, in their current form, to monitor National Partnerships is unsatisfactory** because:

- (i) these data do not identify EAL/D learners who are *in process of acquiring* standard Australian English to the level required for full participation in age-appropriate schooling;
- (ii) these data lead to misleading and false interpretations of EAL/D learning pathways and progress, viz. that EAL/D learners who perform poorly on NAPLaN tests—and their schools, programs and teachers—are “failing”;
- (iii) these data provide no basis for determining requirements for specialist and targeted ESL teaching and support;
- (iv) these data do not allow different EAL/D learner sub-groups to be differentiated and hence do not permit their learning needs to be addressed;
- (v) these data are being used as evidence that EAL/D learners who perform poorly on NAPLaN tests require intensive literacy tuition and other remedial approaches, which are almost invariably inappropriate (see Table 1 above);
- (vi) NAPLaN test items are biased against some EAL/D learners—culturally and in regard to their actual achievements;
- (vii) in some cases, including in the ACT, NAPLaN testing is having unintended and perverse effects on system and school accountability practices (e.g. a deliberate focus on students who have most chance of improving NAPLaN results) to the detriment of EAL/D learners;
- (viii) the use of NAPLaN test results to determine provision is undermining ESL programs and support in the ACT and elsewhere.

NAPLaN literacy data on under-performing students generates initiatives that target reading and writing, which **neither tackle the causes of EAL/D learners’ under-performance nor assist them in achieving the English they actually need** (see Table 1 above).

Use of NAPLaN data to estimate needs **takes no account of those who drop out of school because they cannot cope.** In regard to EAL/D learners, Indigenous students and refugee youth with minimal/no previous schooling are at highest risk in this regard. The fact that school and system performance is now judged against these data **provides schools with incentives to encourage these students to leave.**

Further, because EAL/D learners are not disaggregated within NAPLaN results, **on-going test development has no basis for improving test validity and reliability for these learners**—the evidence is not available to support the refinement of test items (in all areas) to reflect EAL/D learners' actual learning needs, knowledge or progress. Texts and items persist that are inappropriate or obscure for these learners. Attested examples include an assumption that students know about Uluru, frequent the movies or are involved in cooking—which may not be the case for, among others, Aboriginal students, some migrant and refugee students, and students of some religious faiths. Many items assume a relationship between age, family relationships (and therefore appropriate content) and English language and literacy levels, which does not apply to older students with minimal/no previous schooling. Equally, many items misjudge the linguistic difficulty for EAL/D learners, for example, in regard to syntax (e.g. embedded clauses and question formation), familiar/unfamiliar vocabulary and pragmatic intent.

ATESOL ACT wholeheartedly endorses the Commonwealth's commitment to furthering educational equity. However, we are gravely concerned regarding what we believe to be the unintended effects for EAL/D learners.

We urge this Inquiry to investigate and document these effects as they are now becoming apparent in the ACT, and to press the Commonwealth government to reform the development and administration of NAPLaN tests to give explicit attention to EAL/D learners.

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations, the national body to which ATESOL ACT is affiliated, has recently submitted recommendations towards remedying the current situation to the Commonwealth Minister for Education. ATESOL ACT endorses these recommendations, which are attached as Appendix E.

## **ATESOL ACT Recommendations on ACT Government Responses to National Partnerships**

ATESOL ACT recommends:

23. That, concurrent with its initiatives in response to National Partnerships, the ACT government maintain and strengthen **designated ESL policy development, programs and staffing**, and that this designation **be distinguished** from literacy programs and staffing.
24. That DET undertake a Territory-wide and school-by-school **analysis of NAPLAN results mapped against students rated from 1-5 on the Language Proficiency Rating scale**, and include this analysis in reporting on NAPLAN data.
25. That this Inquiry commend **the ACTA recommendations** listed in Appendix E to the ACT Government as a useful basis for informing future National Partnership negotiations.

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## APPENDIX A

### Terms, Acronyms and Related Issues

Terminology relating to English language learning is variable and shifting. Table 2 below describes commonly used terms and related issues. The notes in column 3 are simplified outlines of matters that are complex, problematic and the focus of extensive discussion in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics.

**Table 2:  
Terms and Acronyms Related to Learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect**

Terminology	Acronym	Background & problems in using this terminology
<i>Teaching English as a foreign language</i>	<b>(T)EFL</b>	This term came into use in England in the post-War period and was used to describe English language teaching either <b>in non-English speaking countries</b> or to <b>short-term visitors to England</b> .
<i>(Teaching) English as a second language</i>	<b>(T)ESL</b>	This term was coined to distinguish EFL from teaching English <b>in immigrant contexts</b> . The term has been criticised because it obscures the fact that, for many learners, English is not their second language but their third, fourth ... etc. It is also seen to imply that other languages are subordinate to, rather than different from, English. In preparing this submission, we note that a <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> article (Molloy, 2009) uses the term “ <b>English as a subsequent language</b> ”, which provides a different meaning for the ESL acronym.
<i>(Teaching) English to speakers of other languages</i>	<b>(T)ESOL</b>	This term was coined to <b>include both EFL and ESL teaching</b> . It has been criticised because the word “other” is interpreted as placing English as central and positioning these languages as somehow alien and/or lesser.
<i>(Teaching) English as an additional language</i>	<b>(T)EAL</b>	This term was coined in England to meet the criticisms of “ESL” and “ESOL”. It has been criticised because it smooths over the power relationships that require immigrants to learn English and implies that English is a mere optional addition to their repertoire of languages.
<i>Limited English proficient</i>	<b>LEP</b>	This term was <b>common in the USA</b> but is being replaced by ELLs (see below). It was never taken up in Australia. It has been criticised because of the acronym’s unfortunate onomatopoeic connotation (cf. leper) and also because it implies a deficit in learners.
<i>English language learners</i>	<b>ELLs</b>	This term has <b>replaced LEP in the USA</b> . It has been criticised because it implies beginning learners of English. Some Australian educators also reject it as an American import.
<i>Non-English speaking background</i>	<b>NESB</b>	This term was developed to <b>include those born in Australia in homes where English is not spoken</b> . It has been criticised because it is English-centric and does not acknowledge learners’ proficiency in other languages.

Terminology	Acronym	Background & problems in using this terminology
<i>Language background other than English</i>	<b>LBOTE</b>	<p>This term has replaced NESB.</p> <p>It is criticised because it does not distinguish between <b>those learning English</b> and those fluent in English although other languages are used in the home.</p>
<i>Variety</i>	n/a	<p>This term is used by linguists as a <b>neutral, non-value laden way to refer to the different forms a given language takes</b>. Thus, for example, standard Australian English is seen as a variety, just as are the different forms of Aboriginal English, African English or Indian English, and British and North American regional varieties.</p>
<i>Indigenous students</i>	n/a	<p>This naming is considered unacceptable by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups because it is insufficiently specific. They prefer <b>“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders”</b>.</p> <p><b>From an English language learning perspective, race-based terms are inadequate because they do not identify students’ main language.</b> Indigenous students may speak fluent standard Australian English as their main or only language, in which case they are not English learners. However, other students’ main or only language may be a traditional Aboriginal language or creole, and can therefore be called <b>ESL/EAL learners</b>.</p> <p>However, some people object to this naming because it can be interpreted as grouping these students with migrant-background students, which is highly offensive since they come from the <i>only</i> group in Australia that cannot be described as migrant-background.</p> <p>In contrast, others strongly support this terminology because it makes clear that these students (i) are English language learners, (ii) should be entitled to as much support as migrant-background English learners, and, equally importantly, (iii) should be supported in maintaining and developing their other language(s).</p> <p>Either way, the ESL pedagogy appropriate for Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander English language learners is quite different from that for migrant/refugee background students, because its content and cultural assumptions must be quite different.</p> <p>Speakers of distinct varieties of Aboriginal English are described in some jurisdictions speakers of as <b>English as an additional dialect (EAD)</b>. However, this is also problematic because it can be interpreted as implying that Aboriginal Englishes are inferior forms of English (see above re the term <i>variety</i>). However, these students require very specific teaching approaches to support their learning of standard Australian English (see Table 3 below).</p>
<i>Creole</i>	n/a	<p>A “<i>creole</i>” is defined by linguists as a language that has emerged from combining the features of two or more other languages, usually in trading and/or colonial situations. In initial stages, where the language has no native speakers, it’s referred to as a “pidgin”. However, when the language is established and has native speakers (i.e. children are raised speaking this language as their mother tongue), it is termed a “creole”.</p> <p>Although the distinction between pidgins and creoles seems clear, in fact common usage of these terms and their meanings is not. So, for example, one of the main languages in Papua-New Guinea is Nuigini Tok Pisin, which is, in fact, now a creole.</p> <p>In the Australian context, sensitivities exist around mislabelling Aboriginal creoles (as spoken for example in northern Australia) as dialects or Aboriginal English. <b>Aboriginal creoles qualify as languages other than English</b> because they cannot be understood by those who only know standard English, and vice versa. Creole speakers face a very particular language learning task in mastering standard Australian English.</p>

## APPENDIX B

### English and Educational Needs of Older Learners with Minimal/No Previous Schooling

Adapted from Moore, H., Nicholas, H. & Julie Deblaquiere, 2009, *Refugee Young People with Minimal/No Schooling in the Adult Migrant English Program*. Commonwealth of Australia: AMEP Research Centre, La Trobe and Macquarie Universities, pp. 31-33.

In this study, the following learner groups were identified within the Adult Migrant English Program. These descriptions also apply to learners in post-elementary grades in Australian schools.

#### **(1) Those with no English whatsoever, no literacy in any language and no previous schooling.**

This group were described by teachers as having “no concept that what we say we can write down in one form or another”. These learners come from societies that do not use written language, for example, Dinka tribespeople and herders in the rural areas of southern Sudan. A common teacher description was that these learners don’t know how to hold a pen. They were also said to have no notion that writing is sequential or that pages are numbered. Other educational needs less overtly related to literacy were described as learning to tell the time, acquiring spatial/temporal/numerical concepts and gaining the basic cosmological, geographical, historical and scientific understandings that come with school learning. These students are said to make very slow progress (which is, in fact, to misunderstand the progress they do make). In interview, one teacher explained:

We’re basically taking [these] students from that visual and tactile world that they’ve learned so much to a much more abstract form of learning. And that takes time.

#### **(2) Those with no English and no schooling but who have been exposed to literacy in the wider society.**

Although these learners also lack formal education, teachers distinguished them from the previous group on the grounds of their experience of *others’* reading and writing, and use of it to convey information. These learners come from places such as northern Sudan, where Arabic is prevalent, or via literate societies such as in Syria and Egypt, where they have lived as refugees but not attended school. Their needs to acquire the fundamental concepts gained from schooling may be somewhat less acute than those in the first group. They were said to gain basic literacy skills a little faster than the first group.

**(3) Those who may have a few English phrases, no English literacy, minimal schooling, and some literacy in a language other than English.**

This group is generally described as having very disrupted schooling in their home country or in refugee camps, having come from war zones in the Middle East and Africa. Some males have some literacy in Arabic from studying the Koran. They may have a few phrases in English picked up along the way. This group are different from the first two groups and may progress more rapidly in their schooling.

**(4) Those with some fluency in a variety of English as their second/other language, little or no English literacy, some schooling and some literacy in a language other than English.**

Some students have experienced schooling considered normal in their own country but inadequate for enrolment in age-equivalent classes in Australia. An interviewee who had taught in Africa for several years told how classes in some countries are taught by a child from the grade above; the whole class shares the one book. In other areas with no schools, she said, governments simply hand out the book for each grade to anyone who wants it; those who have read the grade 12 book are liable to say they've done grade 12.

Some learners in this group may be more or less fluent in spoken English varieties that Australian English speakers perceive as hard to understand, for example Liberians and those who have spent long periods in Kenyan camps. In interview, one teacher described some West Africans' use of English as follows:

People who've grown up speaking African English, if not as their first at least their on-going second language, find it really hard to accept that it's not received [sic] standard English, that they're pretty well unintelligible and that their grammar has certain anomalies compared with Australian English. ...They come up with 18th Century constructions. Linguistically, it's fascinating. But it's not going to help them in the workplace or in study.

These learners' fluency in spoken English is commonly not matched by literacy skills, which teachers described as often very weak. Teachers reported that these students can be shocked when assessed as requiring English language tuition.

**(5) Those in any of the above groupings who also have specific cognitive and learning disabilities.**

Although learning disabilities exist in any population, their incidence can be expected to be higher among those who have been exposed to the kinds of trauma many refugees have experienced. Teachers often report feelings of helplessness when they suspect these problems.

## Appendix C

### Learner Types and Recommended Programs/Interventions

The table below summarises the kinds of programs and interventions that are recommended for different types of EAL/D learner.

**Table 3:  
Learner Types and Recommended Programs/Interventions**

Type of EAL/D learner	Types of programs and other interventions that are appropriate for these learners	Assessment of these learners
<i><b>New Arrivals</b> (migrants, humanitarian entrants, international students, dependants of international students, business people and diplomats).</i>	<b>Intensive English Language Programs</b> (2–24 months, depending on previous schooling and English language learning). These programs should include English language, cultural and social understandings, support for transition into mainstream contexts, and increasingly prolonged experiences in mainstream classrooms.	In addition to NAPLAN testing, these learners' progress should be monitored and guided using <b>recognised EAL/D-specific assessment tools</b> together with assessments of their adjustment to Australian schooling.
<i><b>Learners in the first 2 years of learning English</b> (speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Aboriginal creoles, community languages and international students who have learned English as a foreign language).</i>	<b>Additive bilingual programs; parallel EAL/D classes and short-term intensive classes</b> that support learning standard Australian English and learning through English in the mainstream classroom.	EAL/D learners entering mainstream classrooms should be comprehensively assessed using these tools to determine their needs for EAL/D support across the curriculum.
<i><b>Post elementary grade learners with minimal/no previous schooling</b> who have completed intensive on-arrival English programs.</i>	<b>Bridging programs</b> to mainstream school or TAFE programs (1-2 years); <b>special English language units and courses; homework support</b> . In addition, <b>integrated English support from specialist ESL teachers</b> working in collaboration with mainstream teachers using, for example, small group work, modified tasks, and language-across-the-curriculum approaches, including computer-based elaborations.  These learners may require <b>long-term support</b> —research shows that it may take 7-10 years before grade norms are reached (August and Shanahan, 2008; Collier 1987; Howard Research, 2006).	
<i>Speakers of <b>non-Australian varieties of English</b> in the first 1-2 years after arrival in Australia.</i>  <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers of <b>distinctive varieties of Australian English</b>.</i>	Special care must be taken to ensure <b>these varieties are treated as legitimate</b> and not denigrated or regarded as inferior.  Mainstream teachers need to collaborate with EAD specialist teachers with <b>expert knowledge of these varieties' distinctive pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and pragmatics</b> .  The focus should be on learners:	

Type of EAL/D learner	Types of programs and other interventions that are appropriate for these learners	Assessment of these learners
	(1) acquiring standard Australian English for academic purposes, and (2) appreciating the characteristics and uses of different English varieties. Short-term intensive programs may be appropriate in different cases.	
<i>EAL/D learners who have been <b>in English medium schools for 2-5 years.</b></i>	<b>Special EAL/D programs, including accredited courses in higher years; integrated English support from specialist EAL/D teachers</b> working in collaboration with mainstream teachers using, for example, small group work, modified tasks, language-across-the-curriculum approaches, co-planning and co-teaching, computer-based EAL/D support in specific subject areas.	
<i>EAL/D learners who have been <b>in English medium schools for 5-10 years.</b></i>	<b>Tutorial and homework support; computer-based, self-paced programs; special EAL/D programs</b> , including accredited courses and English for Academic & Study Purposes.	

## APPENDIX D

### ACTA TESOL Teacher Standards (Short Version)

For a more complete version, go to: <http://www.tesol.org.au/Teacher-Education/Links/ACTA-Standards-for-TESOL-Education>

#### **What makes an accomplished TESOL teacher in Australia?**

##### **Dispositions**

Accomplished TESOL teachers espouse the values of cultural inclusivity, multiculturalism, multilingualism, reconciliation and anti-racism.

Accomplished TESOL teachers appreciate the pivotal role of language and culture in learning, teaching and socialisation.

Accomplished TESOL teachers commit to reflective practice and program evaluation that is responsive to students' cultural and linguistic history and environment.

##### **Understandings**

Accomplished TESOL teachers are familiar with and can critique existing provisions, policies, and curriculum and assessment frameworks.

Accomplished TESOL teachers understand the linguistic, cultural and contextual factors and processes involved in the development of English as an additional language.

Accomplished TESOL teachers know a range of teaching and assessment practices and resources, and can evaluate them in terms of the context.

##### **Skills**

Accomplished TESOL teachers respond to students' experiences and aspirations by developing appropriate educational provisions.

Accomplished TESOL teachers appropriately select and sequence language and culture content to provide for and critique meaning-making in diverse texts and contexts.

Accomplished TESOL teachers scaffold students' learning and English language development through appropriate classroom interaction, negotiation, teaching strategies, activities, materials and assessment.

## Appendix E

### The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA): Recommendations

These recommendations are developed and explained in:

***Towards a national policy framework for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) in Australian schools: A discussion paper submitted by the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), October, 2009.***

The paper is forthcoming on <http://www.tesol.org.au/Issues>

#### ACTA recommends:

1. **That NAPLaN data be disaggregated to reflect the performance of learners of English as an additional language or dialect**, that is, students:
  - (i) whose main language is a language or distinct dialect other than standard Australian English, and
  - (ii) who have had less than seven continuous years of education in an Australian or overseas educational institution where English is the medium of instruction.
2. That National Partnership reporting include **a mandatory requirement for States/Territories to collect and report on EAL/D learners**:
  - (i) as defined in recommendation 1 above, *and*
  - (ii) as identified through State and system level EAL/D assessment scales/benchmarks.
3. **That system and school performance measures be disaggregated to allow tracking of EAL/D learners** as defined in recommendations 1 and 2.
4. That, until NAPLaN data are disaggregated as per recommendation 1, **whatever other data is available on EAL/D student needs**, for example as per recommendation 2 (ii), **be explicitly deployed to inform the development of the National Curriculum, diagnose students' needs, and fund programs to support and promote learning.**
5. That the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) articulate **an explicit and comprehensive policy specifically regarding EAL/D students.**
6. That ACARA commission, as a matter of urgency, the development of **a national approach to EAL/D data collection** which will:

- (i) **describe English language development** as appropriate to EAL/D learners' actual progress
  - (ii) inform future **NAPLaN test development**
  - (iii) be used in conjunction with NAPLaN test data to **interpret those data**
  - (iv) complement and extend **the proposed National Curriculum literacy continuum**
  - (v) acknowledge and utilise **the extensive work already done in States and systems** on assessing EAL and EAD development
  - (vi) **have credibility** with EAL/D educators, researchers, assessment experts and professional associations.
7. That ACARA explore the possibility of further disaggregating NAPLaN data **to track differentiated EAL/D groups** within the definition in recommendation 1 above (not only the whole EAL/D population) to permit a better understanding of these groups' progress and needs. EAL/D sub-groups that should be explicitly tracked are:
- (i) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional Aboriginal languages, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander creoles and dialects, and Aboriginal English(es)
  - (ii) the students in (i) above according to the type of program in which they are enrolled, specifically bilingual and monolingual English programs
  - (iii) migrant, refugee, international students and dependants of temporary residents, according to (a) visa sub-class, (b) the dominant language(s) in the home, and (c) length of time in Australia
  - (iv) Australian residents and citizens born in non-English speaking countries
  - (v) Australian-born students whose main language is a language other than English.
8. That ACARA ensure that **NAPLaN test trials** explicitly differentiate between the performances of EAL/D students as per recommendations 1 and 7.
9. That ACARA explore the potential for developing **test accommodations/adaptations and locally appropriate tests** for EAL/D learners.
10. That ACARA create processes for **routine consultation** with:
- (i) recognised experts in the acquisition of second/additional languages and dialects/varieties
  - (ii) experts in cultural appropriateness for different EAL/D learner groups
  - (iii) teachers and professional associations
- regarding:*
- (a) tests' appropriateness and test preparation processes in each test cycle;

(b) the on-going development of NAPLAN tests.

11. That ACARA create **an EAL/D Task Force** to monitor the development of National Partnerships in regard to EAL/D assessment and learning.
12. That ACARA authorise the development by EAL/D specialists in collaboration with a national EAL/D Task Force of **nationally consistent standards for assessing EAL/D learning**.

These standards could seek to achieve consistency across existing ESL/EAL/D scales in different States/Territories. An alternative shorter-term goal would be to align or map the scales currently used in different systems against each other, but with a longer term view of creating a common tool.

In order for this exercise to have maximal credibility, it should be conducted in close consultation with the ESL profession, those working in Indigenous education and the wider education community.
13. That **each National Curriculum Learning Area description include explicit statements aimed to alert teachers** to their responsibilities in:
  - (i) recognising the diversity of EAL/D learners in their classrooms;
  - (ii) assisting all students to meet the general language and subject specific literacy demands of their teaching area;
  - (iii) understanding and supporting EAL/D learning needs.
14. That each **National Curriculum Learning Area description be mapped:**
  - (i) in the short-term, against one or more of the **ESL/EAL/D assessment frameworks** recognised and used in the States/Territories
  - (ii) in the longer term, against the **nationally consistent scales** as per recommendation 12.
15. That **the National Curriculum Literacy Continuum** be:
  - (i) mapped against one or more of the EAL/D assessment frameworks recognised and used in the States/Territories
  - (ii) scrutinised in the light of this mapping to consider how and where EAL/D learners relate to the norms proposed in the Literacy Continuum
  - (iii) revised and extended where necessary
  - (iv) in the longer term, be mapped against the nationally consistent scales as per recommendation 12, and further revised and extended.
16. That the **National Curriculum Learning Areas and Language/Literacy Continuum be used as the basis for NAPLAN tests** and not vice versa.

17. That **the MCCETYA national agreement on teacher accreditation** include the requirement that specifications of teacher standards, pre-service courses and other professional development programs:
- (i) explicitly address the learning needs of EAL/D learners and how they might be assisted across the curriculum
  - (ii) include familiarisation with using recognised ESL scales to identify EAL/D learners.

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