



We often talk about team spirit being important to the achievement of a group or organisation and this has certainly been the case with the hard working and dedicated ATESOL Committee of 2015.

ATESOL ACT has always achieved a high standard of professional learning opportunities for its members and interested colleagues. The events listed below did not just happen in 2015 but are the result of individuals giving of their time; individuals having a commitment to sharing information; individuals interested in building the capacity of teachers to assist English language learners; and individuals working together with common beliefs about the students and families at the heart of the association's objectives.

One of the strengths of the committee is the acceptance that as professionals we all lead very busy lives and that even a small commitment to ATESOL ACT can make the difference. By this I mean the actions like bringing the juice for an event, minding the signs and bringing them to events, checking the enrolment list and informing the organisers, or finding those tennis balls. Without the sharing of jobs the task of running events would be more difficult. Many hands make for light work. Thank you: Lucy Bitmead, Libby Glasgow, Diana Chu, Robyn Hammond, Fern Hyde, Laurel Rodrigues, Isabel Winch, Jo Bragg and Joanne Zions.

I would like to pay particular thanks to the committee members who organised the Scaffolding Literacy – Community of Practice events. Unlike the other well organised events, this one required a bit of arm-bending to encourage colleagues in schools to present information, as well as additional meetings to coordinate the content of the presentations. Thank you Fern and Laurel and all those teachers who presented on the day.

This opportunity also gives me a chance to thank the members of the executive who have that watching brief, be it Lena keeping us floating along with the funds, Jakki keeping us up to date with information or Lesley's broad view of making sure things are not forgotten and the website is up-to-date. Thank you for your support during the year.

It should also be recorded that Jakki, Lesley and Jill have been steadfast in their commitment to ATESOL ACT – They have been there as long as I can remember the association existing. That long term commitment should not go without a very special thank you.

Besides the very well received professional learning events, ATESOL ACT is on the brink of having a new constitution and becoming incorporated. Thank you Robyn and Jakki for the sustaining meals over which we wrote and rewrote the constitution with Lesley. What fun!

The events offered during 2015 are but part of a bigger story – a story which involves the place of EAL/D learners in our schools and other places of learning. We are in challenging times as our links with the national body, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), demonstrates. We await the results of the national State of EALD Schools Survey but so far the 300 response are indicating concerns about EAL/D programs in schools – a similar result to the 2013 survey. It would seem that school autonomy does not come with the checks and balances of accountability required for students requiring specialist support.

It is with great disappointment that we see the local Education Directorate's response to a question in the Assembly, "Are all teachers delivering specialist English language support classes qualified to do so?" recorded as:

All Canberra public school teachers have, as a minimum, a bachelor level qualification, and are registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Specialist qualifications are not required as all classroom teachers are required to differentiate the curriculum to cater for individual learning needs of all students. Ongoing professional learning and specialist resources support teachers to meet individual needs. Canberra public school teachers are not required to have additional post graduate qualifications, although a number of teachers with these qualifications elect to work in IECs and mainstream schools.

The result of this is that the specialist role is under attack and we hear of specialist Introductory English Centres employing new graduates in specialist short term programmes and having to combine classes to train teachers on the job. This is alarming if true.

In terms of transparency and accountability, the use of LBOTE as a measure of EALD performance continues across the country, even though we know this measure needs data to be disaggregated to identify the performance of EALD learners. If not they are subsumed in the larger LBOTE cohort.

We can but hope that schools and other educational institutional have a plan for the new refugees which Yvette Berry MLA, told us about at the Annual Dinner. The dinner was not as well attended as we would have liked but we again raised enough money to sponsor 14 Cambodian provincial teachers to attend CamTESOL in 2016.

I am confident the next ATESOL ACT committee will continue to act in the interest of members by providing excellent professional learning. The challenge for the general membership is to activate their interest in providing feedback to leaders in schools, to organisations and to politicians about the needs of EALD students and their access to specialist support.

Thank you for your interest and support during 2015. If I have forgotten anyone or anything please excuse the omission and know I am thankful for your interest and participation.

Events in 2015

- ATESOL ACT Annual Dinner – 4 November 2015
- Scaffolding Literacy – Community of Practice – 31 October 2015
- Tai Chi and Tennis Balls: Haptic Techniques for Teaching Pronunciation – 19 September 2015
- Using the Portraits in the National Portrait Gallery with Students Learning English as Speakers of Other Languages – 14 May 2015
- Why Oracy is Critical for Improving Inferential Comprehension – 21 February 2015

Jennifer Mayers
President 2015