Committee Secretary

Senate Select Committee on School Funding

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Australia

25 March 2014

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is pleased to submit the attached response to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding Inquiry into the development and implementation of national school funding arrangements and school reform.

The response was prepared and reviewed by councillors and representatives from each TESOL association in every State and Territory, who together possess extensive expertise in the fields of teaching learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), assessment and reporting, Indigenous education, and literacy education.

We would greatly welcome the opportunity to consult further with the Senate Committee and to collaborate in the development and implementation of quality national assessment and reporting initiatives for EAL/D learners.

Yours sincerely,

Adriano Truscott

President

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TESOL ASSOCIATIONS (ACTA)

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding

March 2014

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations welcomes the move to needs-based funding arrangements as they apply to learners of Standard Australian English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), conditional on:

1. the use of an appropriate means of identifying these learners and their needs.
2. the development of effective means of holding systems and schools accountable for the proper use of these funds.

However, evidence from a survey of our members suggests that current policies directed to increasing school-based autonomy run counter to these conditions in a number of important ways. We note a decline in EAL/D provision overall and a continuing erosion in the quality of what remains.

Needs-based funding, as it applies to EAL/D learners, requires:

1. Accurate identification of EAL/D learners.

2. Appropriate and targeted EAL/D provision by teachers who are qualified in this field.

3. Accountability for allocated EAL/D funding.

4. EAL/D guidance for principals.

5. EAL/D professional learning for all teachers.

6. Revision of the *Better Schools* fact sheet on English proficiency.

7. Positive framing of multilingualism and bi/multilingual students.

2. Introduction

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Select Committee on School Funding.

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

In this submission, we:

1. report on the current grass-roots situation as reported by our members
2. report on particular developments in some States and Territories
3. consider the issue of identifying EAL/D learners
4. make recommendations on quality provision for these learners.

We will address needs-based funding issues and the Inquiry's terms of reference as they relate to these matters.

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

3. The Current Situation for EAL/D Learners at the Grass Roots Level

If the move to needs-based funding is to allow the needs of EAL/D learners (among others) to be truly and effectively addressed, it will be necessary to acknowledge and reverse countervailing trends that are currently subverting and undermining the intentions of even the limited Commonwealth funding now directed to supporting these learners. We refer specifically to policies in various States and Territories to increase school-based autonomy.

Our concerns about this policy direction were first aired in a press release in July 2013 (see Appendix D). ACTA subsequently instituted a survey of its members asking them to reflect and report on EAL/D provision in their particular contexts. Between December 2013 and March 2014, 201 EAL/D educators across Australia responded to this survey. These results are outlined in this section.

The survey respondents taught in metropolitan, rural and remote schools and intensive English centres, servicing new arrivals and migrant, refugee and Indigenous learners. The majority (69%) worked in mainstream schools. Approximately 50% worked with new arrivals. The overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) were in government schools. 85% of respondents described themselves as qualified EAL/D teachers.

Appendix E presents the survey questions and the results of answers to structured/closed questions. Each question also allowed for individual comments, and two questions (12 and 13) solicited further open-ended comment. Over 1000 such comments were made. Including them in this submission is not feasible, since it would extend the submission to several hundred pages. However, on request we would be pleased to provide members of the Inquiry with electronic access to these comments.

In what follows, we outline some key results of this survey.

In response to Questions 5 & 6 on the impact of increased school autonomy on EAL/D provision, 19% reported a positive impact on provision for EAL/D learners and 15% said that EAL/D support had improved. Supplementary comments indicated that these respondents' principals had a good understanding of EAL/D learning and valued specialist EAL/D teachers. For example, one teacher wrote:

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

32% reported that increased autonomy had had no impact and had not changed existing provision (28%).

Just under a majority of our respondents (49%) believed that school autonomy had impacted negatively on EAL/D provision in their context, that provision had decreased or did not exist (43%) and that teachers' time was directed away from EAL/D provision (49%). Representative supplementary comment included the following:

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

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

Reporting on EAL/D provision overall (Question 7), 33% of respondents stated that it was appropriately resourced, 10% believed that EAL/D students were not appropriately resourced, while 57% reported that partial resourcing was in place.

Describing the benefits of targeted EAL/D provision (Question 8), respondents highlighted development of oral proficiency, understanding of language systems, development of Standard Australian English, learning Australian culture and students' increased sense of well-being. We note that literacy teaching, as distinct from specialist EAL/D pedagogy, does *not* have an explicit focus on these learnings. Literacy teaching – that is a focus on developing students' reading and writing skills – proceeds on the assumption that learners already speak and can understand English, have an intuitive grasp of English syntax, morphology and phonology, are users of and exposed to Standard Australian English in their wider environment, and have been raised in an English-speaking urbanised culture. It does not address the issues that arise for those moving from one's home land to an alien environment, or take account of home languages other than English or the effects of trauma,

torture and dislocation that can occur for refugee and some migrant children. (See Appendices B & C for an elaboration of these points.)

In response to a question as to whether school leadership teams had the requisite understandings to support good decision-making for EAL/D learners (Question 10), 28% of respondents reported that their leadership had adequate understandings, 23% stated that leadership's understandings were inadequate, and 48% believed that only partial understandings underpinned decision-making. These reports are the basis for ACTA's concerns regarding the effects of increased school autonomy on EAL/D provision.

We note that previously the NPSI made reference to professional development for principals but that information is no longer available on the NPSI website.

In open-ended comments, these concerns were amplified. For example, some respondents questioned the attitudes of school leaders towards EAL/D students, as follows:

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

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

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

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Many stated that funds which had been earmarked for EAL/D support could be spent on non-EAL/D matters and that there was no guarantee that funds would be spent as intended. The following typify these comments:

> *"There appears to be a tendency to funnel funds intended for EALD students into other projects. EALD students, who are already extremely vulnerable, are being cheated of their rightful support. Cuts to funding for EALD / IEC programs are impacting the quality of teaching."* Qualified EAL/D Teacher, WA Government School, New Arrival/Mainstream

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

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

It was reported that non-EAL/D teachers were being employed with EAL/D funding, and EAL/D teachers were being used to *"to act as a relief teacher for other staff*" (Unqualified EAL/D Teacher, NSW Government School, New Arrivals). We received numerous similar descriptions, for example:

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

> *"EALD specialist teachers are asked to replace a class teacher instead of teaching their EALD learners."* Qualified EAL/D Administrator, Government School, New Arrival Mainstream, NSW

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

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

No accountability measures have been put in place to ensure schools will accurately report on their eligible students' EAL/D learning levels. Respondents also stated that EAL/D positions are held by teachers who lack qualifications or experience in EAL/D teaching. Some said that non-qualified teachers were employed because they 'cost less' or because schools do not have easy access to qualified staff. One teacher wrote:

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

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

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

We suggest that these reports indicate serious challenges to funding the needs of EAL/D learners in any truly effective way. For such funding to fulfil its stated goals, the problems detailed above must be addressed.

4. Particular Developments in the States and Territories

Migrant and Refugee Students

States and Territories operate differently with respect to intensive support for learners in the early stages of developing their English. In what follows, we provide the information that we have on hand, which is incomplete, which in turn reflects the difficulty that attaches to describing this provision.

In Queensland, there are no Intensive English Centres for primary school age children. They go straight to primary schools and receive support from EAL/D teachers, who usually withdraw the student from the classes for 1-2 hours per day. Secondary-age students generally stay in Intensive English Centres for 6-12 months. Exit from these Centres depends on students' English and literacy levels, with extra time allowed for students considered to be at risk because of minimal/no previous schooling. On exiting the Centre, learners usually go to a "second phase" unit where they are supported by an EAL/D teacher in some mainstream classes (often core subjects such as English, History and maybe Science) but not others (for example, Mathematics and electives).

In the Catholic Sector in South Australia (CESA) there are no dedicated Intensive English Centres. New arrivals are catered for within the mainstream classroom and given extra support by teachers funded by the Commonwealth ESL New Arrivals grant, provided they are eligible for this funding.

In the Northern Territory migrant and refugee students receive one year of additional time in intensive English units in secondary school settings.

Our members reported that reductions in EAL/D provision are widespread.

In NSW, the State policy of *Local Schools, Local Decisions* has led to significant cuts in the ESL program. Further, all 32 regional EAL/D consultant positions have been terminated, with only one consultant remaining. These consultants supported hundreds of schools each year in implementing EAL/D programs, and multicultural and anti-racism education. The remaining consultant works with only four schools. Under this policy, all responsibility for the management and operation of the State's English as a Second Language (ESL) Program is being devolved to school principals. Currently there are no guidelines defining or circumscribing the scope of school-based decision-making and no accountability framework applying to school-based management.

In Queensland, it was reported to us that one intensive English Centre was eligible under previous targeted funding arrangements for five full time EAL/D teachers and approximately 79 hours of teacher aide funding, as well as funding for refugee students, which was enough to employ another full-time teacher and thus allow for more intensive help for the needier students. The funding supported classes in selected subjects from the mainstream curriculum for learners in the early stages of learning English. These classes had a targeted English language focus and explicit teaching of basic concepts, literacy and unfamiliar cultural assumptions and beliefs. The new funding model has reduced the Centre's

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allocation of teachers to 2.1 (equivalent full-time) and 16 hours for teacher aides for approximately 230 students, many of them new arrivals.

One of the survey respondents from Queensland described her situation as follows:

> *"Our unit's future is very uncertain. We have qualified EAL/D teachers who are not being appointed to take the place of teachers on leave but rather teachers who have no EAL/D qualifications are being appointed to our unit. Our unit currently has 230 students who are either refugees, migrants or international students. We are currently a staff of 6 qualified teachers, one of whom is employed on refugee funding and works with the most needy of our students. One of our teachers is retiring at the end of the year and will not be replaced and one is on maternity leave and to be replaced by a contract English/Social Science teacher. The teacher employed on refugee funding holds a Masters degree and is uncertain as to how many days she will be employed next year. Our school will become an IPS school in 2015. There was a directive that the unit should be cut to just 2 teachers, if this was to happen, then most of our students would have to be mainstreamed, ready or not."* Qualified EAL/D teacher, EAL/D Unit in state high school, Metropolitan QLD.

A similar reduction of consultants occurred in South Australia and Western Australian in 2013.

In Western Australia, Intensive English Language Centres (IECs) for new arrivals (those who have been in Australia for less than two years) are currently funded according to the average number of students in the IEC over a two year period. The new model will fund IECs according to a census of students at or below a given English language level at the beginning of the February and August semesters. This model will effectively reduce the funds available to IECs because it does not take account of the current practice of continuous enrolments in IECs. Continuous enrolments allow students to be admitted as soon as they arrive in an area and/or are referred on from schools. At the semester beginning, enrolments are always and necessarily low. As the semester progresses, enrolments in some IECs may increase by as many as 100 students. Funding on the basis of average enrolments over a two to three year period allows for these short-term enrolment fluctuations and permits IECs to respond quickly and flexibly as new students arrive. The new system will allow extra staffing to be requested with increased enrolments but will necessarily involve additional red-tape and time delays in making and responding to these requests and finding teachers. The incentive for IECs will be to refuse late enrolments, stranding new arrivals in settings without the specialist teaching that is so vital for an early good start to learning English.

Also in Western Australia, so-called "Cell programs" for primary schools provided valuable support to eligible EAL/D students in a single school or a network of schools with 35 or more eligible EAL/D students. They attracted a 1.0 teacher FTE resource allocation and an equivalent ethnic assistant (EEA) allocation that was shared across participating schools. These Cell programs will cease in 2015 and all the Ethnic Education Assistant[2] positions will be abolished. Students will receive allocated funding, but the school is free to decide on what they will use the funds. As such, as of 2015, there will be no designated EAL/D Support or Cell programs and the responsibility will now rest with each school as to how they will support their EAL/D students in mainstream programs.

On the basis of Australian and international research, a recent report from the NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party concluded that EAL/D programs are undermined by the shift to school-based autonomy in determining priorities and that EAL/D learners "lose out in the shift to flexible, bulk funding regimes." (Michell & Cruickshank, 2013, p. 4). The responses from our members endorse this conclusion.

Indigenous Students

The situation for Indigenous students is complex and varied. Communities vary widely in the languages used, including Aboriginal languages, creoles and Aboriginal English. Location is not necessarily predictive of language learning needs. Thus, a student from an Aboriginal language speaking community can easily find themselves in urban areas for some or most of their schooling.

Speakers of Aboriginal languages, creoles and Aboriginal English are rarely considered as EAL/D learners, even though they come to English with different and distinctive language systems.

In the NT, WA, QLD and SA, teachers are required to teach the age/grade curriculum in English, including reading and writing, with no account taken of the fact that these children, while often multilingual, may or may not speak and understand English.

Funding based on census data creates particular problems for remote schools with Indigenous students, as one of our respondents described at length:

> *"Each semester our school is cast into anxious, demoralising uncertainty as we try to secure student numbers before census day. Through carefully formed relationships*

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[2] EAL/D teachers and multilingual assistants are vital points of interface for the school with the families of EAL/D learners. Students' parents often do not have the capacity, linguistic or otherwise, to actively voice any concerns they might have with changes that are being made to their children's education. Furthermore, they may be unfamiliar with the education system and unable to comprehend how the recent cutbacks will affect their children's schooling.

with families and community members we know what our students are doing. Some are visiting family, some are at funerals, others are taking part in Lore Business which happens around the first census day every year and all of them are fulfilling obligations which form an important part of their cultural education. We have fostered a Community Partnership to strengthen relationships between the school and families which has led to a significant increase in two-way communication and understanding about these 'absences'.

Unfortunately, the funding system for our school doesn't show the same understanding. The system doesn't acknowledge what we know - that those students will come back to XXXX from the mustering and the funerals and the cultural business – and that when they do they will need extra support to catch-up, re-negotiate and code-switch into school ways again. We know that travelling and learning from family are cultural practices (such as Lore Business and all that entails in terms of travel and other related practices) that predate our Education system by millennia, and that new attendance strategies should not ask an age-old culture to re-prioritise. Sadly, the funding rule is black and white – have they been at school in the first 10 days or not? If not, we receive no funding for that student for the semester, whether they are back the day after the funeral or not.

The School Funding model's lack of recognition of students' cultural obligations and school's awareness of valid reasons for their absences and intentions to return to school is not the only reason it is a demoralising time of the year for us as a school. Each semester our small staff is faced with the real risk that we could lose one or more teachers and multiple support staff. Literally a few weeks into a new year at a school perched on the edge of the desert 1000km from Perth, teachers can be told they need to leave immediately because there is no money to pay them. Classes must be split into others, freshly established routines thrown out the window. Worse than that, local community members who the school has worked tirelessly with to bring on board and who add immeasurable value to the school community as AIEO and other staff through their local and cultural knowledge can lose some or all of their work seemingly overnight. In many cases this is after going through a tedious and complex process in order to win the job due to qualification levels, the time it takes to process police clearances and many other barriers. This fosters mistrust of the school and undermines community partnership work, damages personal relationships and has an enormous impact on the lives of those left without a job.

Further, students – who are themselves possible future school staff and community leaders – are at risk of forming the damaging impression that AIEO and other support staff are 'expendable' for the school." Deputy Principal, remote school, WA

From 1999-2013, the Northern Territory Education Department ran the very successful Indigenous Language Speaker Support (ILSS) program, which put an additional teacher per capita value in every remote Year One class. However, this program currently receives no systemic support and only continues at the discretion of principals in some individual schools.

Indigenous learners of Standard Australian English require specialised EAL/D pedagogy taught by teachers who are equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills. This provision depends on appropriate teacher preparation courses, backed by adequate educational policy and resourcing. For needs-based funding to be effective, these issues must be addressed.

We are gravely concerned at the directions taken in the draft of the Northern Territory Department of Education review on "the future of Indigenous Education in the NT"[3]. It is seriously deficient in at least the following respects:

- the 2012 House of Representatives inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities (*Our Land, Our Languages*) is cited in the references but its recommendations are ignored.

- the draft report ignores the vast body of research on bilingualism and multilingual education; its recommendations are both unsupported and contradict this research as, for example, in the statement that it "does not support the continuation of bi-literacy programs" and that "while there is evidence of the effectiveness of these approaches in some settings, the evidence does not support a continued focus in the Northern Territory" (Wilson, 2013, p.61)

- its research methods are inappropriate in using monolingual approaches that lead to conclusions that children have cognitive delays because they do not speak sufficient Standard Australian English.

We support the submission to the Review of Indigenous Education in the NT in stating that "to follow its [= the draft report's] recommendations would be educationally disastrous, socially destructive, morally reprehensible, and economically wasteful" (Grimes, 2014, p.1).

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[3] http://www.education.nt.gov.au/parents-community/students-learning/indigenous-education-review-1 accessed March 21, 2014

We understand that there was considerable slippage between the evidence and views presented public consultations and the final versions of the draft Report (see Devlin, 2014).

5. Identifying EAL/D Needs

In 2010, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) set up a Working Group to address the long-standing question of how EAL/D learners might be identified and their learning trajectories described. Over 12 months of intensive work and consultation achieved an agreed outcome that had previously eluded Australian education systems, despite discussions that began almost at the same time as post-War immigration began. The ACARA *EAL/D Learning Progression and Teacher Resource* is a nationally consistent description of English Language Proficiency.[4] It has widespread endorsement (with some reservations) at all levels, including from ACTA

The EAL/D learning progression provides broad descriptions of the characteristics of learner groups at each of four phases of English language learning for EAL/D students of any age. The phases are labelled:

1. Beginning English
2. Emerging English
3. Developing English
4. Consolidating English

In our view, the document provides a useful basis for determining needs-based provision for EAL/D learners:

> In broad terms, EAL/D students who demonstrate English language proficiency at the Beginning English or Emerging English phases require informed EAL/D intervention in order to access content in the Australian Curriculum. In particular, students who have limited literacy in their first language require informed EAL/D teaching to assist them to develop literacy in English. EAL/D students who are developing or consolidating their English language skills continue to require specific language instruction in their mainstream classes. (p. 11)

The *Review of Funding for Schooling* recommended that the loading for limited English Language Proficiency (ELP) be based on the **'Disadvantaged LBOTE (Language Background Other Than English)'** measure established by ACARA. This measure combines LBOTE with a criterion relating to parents with Year 9 education equivalent or below. The report noted that State systems were better able to measure ELP through their

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[4] http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/EALD_Resource_EALD_Learning_Progression.pdf

own enrolment processes, annual EAL/D surveys and classroom assessments (p. 118). Nevertheless, disadvantaged LBOTE was the measure included in the report and in subsequent modelling because it is currently the only nationally consistent measure available.

In September 2012, the Australian Government agreed to fund two projects (endorsed by the Strategic Policy Working Group (SPWG) in July 2012) to:

1) Investigate any improvements that could be made to the 'disadvantaged LBOTE' measure; and,

2) Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of a more accurate, nationally consistent ELP measure.

The result of the first project showed that disadvantaged LBOTE should *not* be used to assess students' eligibility for the ELP loading because it did not identify the right students, and bore little relationship to the size of the cohort needing support. It concluded that a new, nationally consistent measure is needed that is both more accurate and has greater validity. The study showed that the *EAL/D Learning Progression* is a clear candidate for that role (See Appendix F for research into the use of this tool). The second project presented a cost-benefit analysis of developing a nationally consistent ELP measure, with a focus on a national trial of the EAL/D Learning Progression.

ACTA supports these conclusions.

With regard to Indigenous students, it would seem that the *Review of Funding for Schooling* did not consider these students as potential EAL/D learners and they are considered separately from limited English language proficiency students. However, as we have already pointed out, many Indigenous students, particularly in remote areas, do in fact have a language background other than English. They may well be at the Beginning English or Emerging English phases of the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression when they enter primary school. This fact was recently acknowledged and addressed in the *Capability Framework for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners*, developed collaboratively by several education authorities (Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2013) as well as in the 2012 House of Representatives inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities (*Our Land, Our Languages*).

Better Schools Fact Sheet on English Proficiency

This one-page document was released by the Commonwealth in July 2013 to assist policy-makers and teachers. In contrast to the ACARA Learning Progression, it quite problematic for at least the following reasons (see also Appendix G):

- it assumes that EAL/D learners are synonymous with those from homes where a language other than English is spoken (Language Background other than English students); the latter group includes fluent users of Standard Australian English and should not automatically attract a special needs loading
- it makes no reference to using the EAL/D Learning Progression to identify EAL/D learners
- it cites the Australian Early Development Index data, which is based on tests administered in Standard Australian English rather than in the home language of the child; it is therefore a misleading measure of development, since children may have passed all milestones in another language.
- it focusses on literacy and numeracy rather than the English learning needs of students with low English proficiency.

6   Recommendations

1. **Accurate identification of EAL/D learners.** ACTA urges immediate work on a nationally consistent English Language Proficiency measure with a particular focus on ACARA's EAL/D Learning Progression, building on the trialling work of NSW DECS. This is essential for the implementation of correctly targeted funding for EAL/D learners and is a matter of urgency.

2. **Accountability for allocated EAL/D funds**. ACTA recommends that the Commonwealth require transparency and accountability from the States and Territories for EAL/D allocated funding, which in turn requires similar transparency and accountability from schools. Accountability must include requirements that funding directly addresses EAL/D learner needs through use of specialist staff, such as EAL/D teachers and multilingual staff, both teachers and teacher aides.

3. **Guidance for principals.** ACTA recommends that principals in schools with multilingual populations be provided with guidelines and resources to appropriately manage the EAL/D learning of those populations.

4. **Professional learning for teachers**. ACTA recommends the national development of creative solutions to meet the needs of schools that cannot readily access EAL/D expertise, such as the development of online training courses (e.g. the *Online Course*

– *Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners* which being development by the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment), EAL/D regional teacher networks and/or the mandating of teacher preparation courses to include compulsory units on EAL/D pedagogy and multilingual education.

5. **Revision of the *Better Schools Fact Sheet on English Proficiency*.** ACTA recommends that, as a matter of urgency, the fact sheet on English proficiency be withdrawn from circulation and rewritten to reflect the most up-to-date understandings of how learners are best supported in English language development.

6. **Positive framing of multilingual students.** ACTA recommends that the term "low English proficiency" be replaced with terminology that describes English language learning as a positive developmental process, such as *multilingual learners* or *learners of English as an additional language or dialect*.

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APPENDIX A
What is ACTA?

The **Australian Council of TESOL Associations** (ACTA) is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Our membership comes from all educational sectors: pre-schools; schools; adult, community, TAFE and other VET settings; consultancy services in state and territory Education Departments and the Independent and Catholic sectors; and university teacher education departments. Our objectives are to:

- ensure access to English language instruction for speakers of other languages and dialects (Indigenous, refugee and migrant background, and international students)

- encourage implementation and delivery of quality professional programs at all levels, and

- promote study, research and development of TESOL at state, national and international levels.

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APPENDIX B
Who Are EAL/D Learners?

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

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

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

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages and creoles;

- Aboriginal, Pacific Island, Singaporean, African, Indian sub-continent and other English varieties that are significantly different from Standard Australian English in regard to comprehensibility and world view;

- one or more of the multiplicity of languages throughout the world.

EAL/D learners may:

- have been born overseas or in Australia;

- use varying amounts of English at home and at varying proficiency levels;

- be just starting in an Australian school or have been there for all or most of their school lives;

- have attended school overseas and may have achieved at high levels in their mother tongue;

- have never been to school in Australia or anywhere else;

- have had their schooling seriously disrupted by war, traumatic experiences, frequent moves and other dislocations.

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

APPENDIX C
How Are EAL/D Learners Distinctive?

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

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

- EAL/D learners (from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds) will have age-appropriate oral skills in another language/variety but may not speak or (fully) understand Standard Australian English – hence many need assistance in building oral English skills as a foundation for learning literacy in English

- migrant and refugee EAL/D learners may enter Australian schools at any age – hence the age-related English and educational norms for Australian-born, mother tongue English speakers will not apply to many of these learners

- EAL/D learners may or may not have advanced literacy skills in a language other than English but assessments in English will not reflect/reveal their literacy and numeracy skills in other languages

- EAL/D learners' cultural and social understandings cannot be assumed to be the same as those of English mother tongue speakers – hence the cultural and social assumptions embedded in assessments may be quite misplaced.

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

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

> In the 2001 Census, about one in eight Indigenous Australians (12 percent) reported that they spoke an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home. The majority (about 80 percent) reported that they spoke English. However, the Census

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

APPENDIX E
ACTA Press Release July 2013

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

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

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

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

As the peak body for local State/Territory Associations, ACTA has both a locally grounded and nation-wide understanding of EAL/D issues. We see the current trend to decentralise school administration and resourcing as an opportunity for genuine flexibility that will allow schools to respond appropriately and effectively to the very diverse contexts in which they operate.

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

- all education systems in all States/Territories **maintain and strengthen the specialist EAL/D services that support schools, teachers and learners**
- **the work that has been done nationally and locally in developing EAL/D perspectives in curriculum, assessment and reporting** is utilised and further developed
- **all education systems ensure that properly trained and qualified EAL/D specialist teachers are employed in schools**, that is, teachers who (i) know and can use nationally and locally developed EAL/D resources, programs, and

assessment and learning materials, (ii) can accurately determine English language needs, provide targeted language-focused teaching, and (iii) work collaboratively with mainstream teachers across the curriculum

- all teachers are encouraged to pursue **professional development opportunities to improve their capabilities in working with EAL/D learners across the curriculum**
- **the effectiveness of the new arrangements in benefitting EAL/D learners is consistently monitored at local, State/Territory and national levels**.

APPENDIX E
ACTA State of EAL/D Survey:
Results of Structured Questions

State of EAL/D in Australian Schools Survey 2013

Q1 Which school sector do you work in?

Answered: 197   Skipped: 4
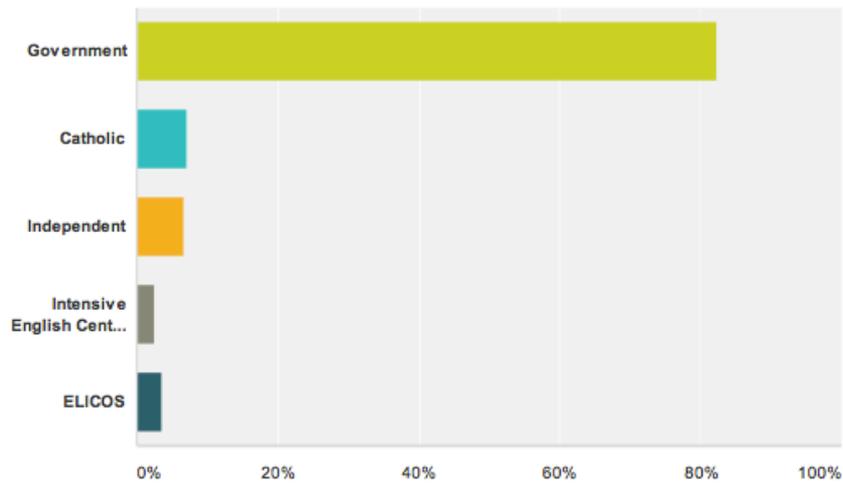
Answer Choices	Responses	
Government	82.23%	162
Catholic	7.11%	14
Independent	6.60%	13
Intensive English Centre (or equivalent)	2.54%	5
ELICOS	3.55%	7
Total Respondents: 197		

Q2 Which state/territory do you work in?

Answered: 195   Skipped: 6
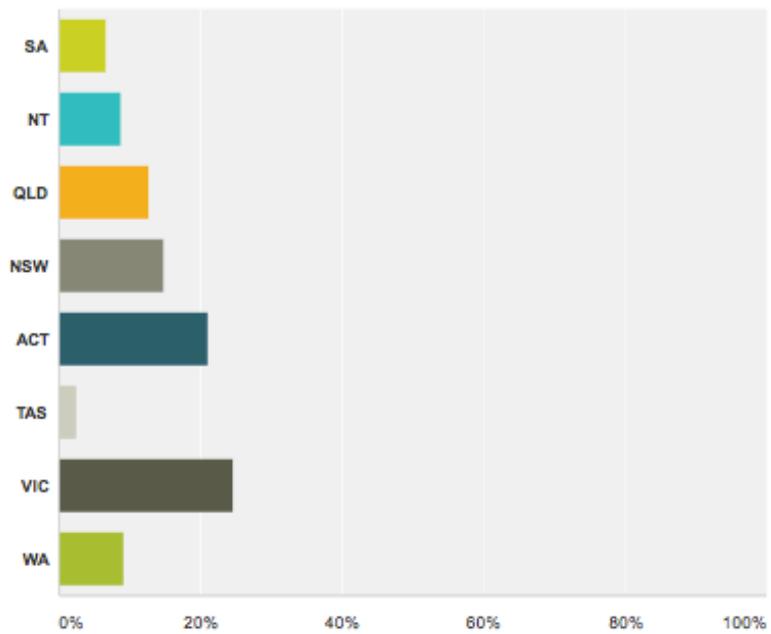
Answer Choices	Responses	
SA	6.67%	13
NT	8.72%	17
QLD	12.82%	25
NSW	14.87%	29
ACT	21.03%	41
TAS	2.56%	5
VIC	24.62%	48
WA	9.23%	18
Total Respondents: 195		

Q3 Describe your EAL/D context (Tick more than one box if necessary).

Answered: 191   Skipped: 10
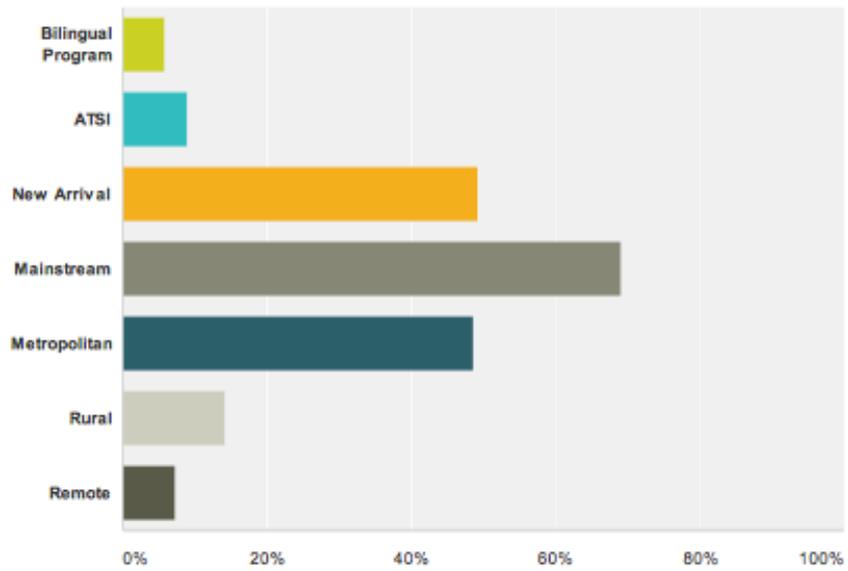
Answer Choices	Responses	
Bilingual Program	5.76%	11
ATSI	8.90%	17
New Arrival	49.21%	94
Mainstream	69.11%	132
Metropolitan	48.69%	93
Rural	14.14%	27
Remote	7.33%	14
Total Respondents: 191		

## Q4 What is your role at your institution? (Tick more than one box if necessary)

Answered: 196 Skipped: 5
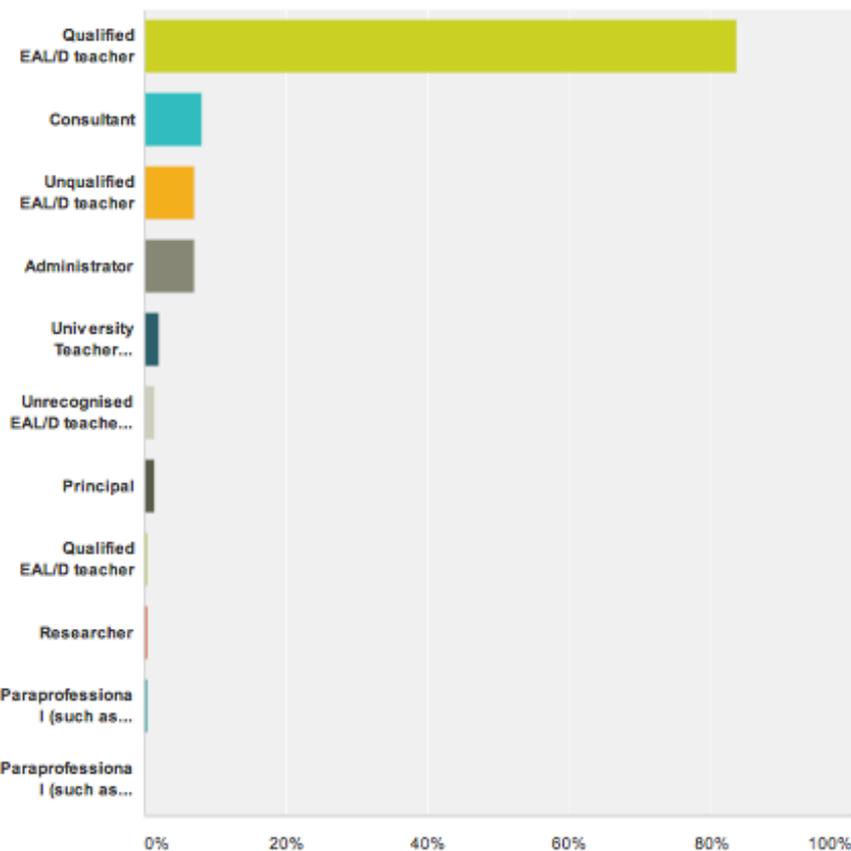
Answer Choices	Responses	
Qualified EAL/D teacher	83.67%	164
Consultant	8.16%	16
Unqualified EAL/D teacher	7.14%	14
Administrator	7.14%	14
University Teacher Educator	2.04%	4
Unrecognised EAL/D teacher (qualified, but currently not providing EAL/D support)	1.53%	3
Principal	1.53%	3
Qualified EAL/D teacher	0.51%	1
Researcher	0.51%	1
Paraprofessional (such as Teaching Assistant)	0.51%	1
Paraprofessional (such as Teaching Assistant)	0%	0
Total Respondents: 196		

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Q5 Currently EAL/D funding and support is being decentralised and managed at the school level. Overall, do you deem the impact of school autonomy as positive, negative or neutral for your EAL/D context?
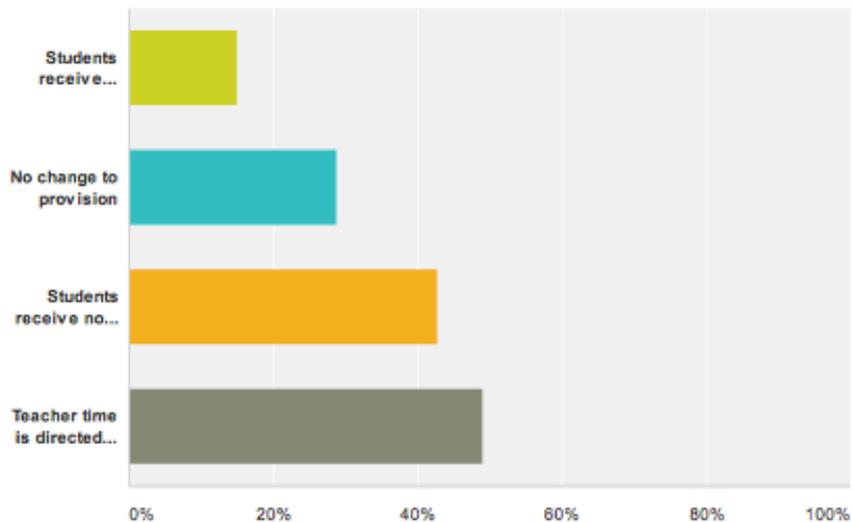
Answered: 196   Skipped: 5
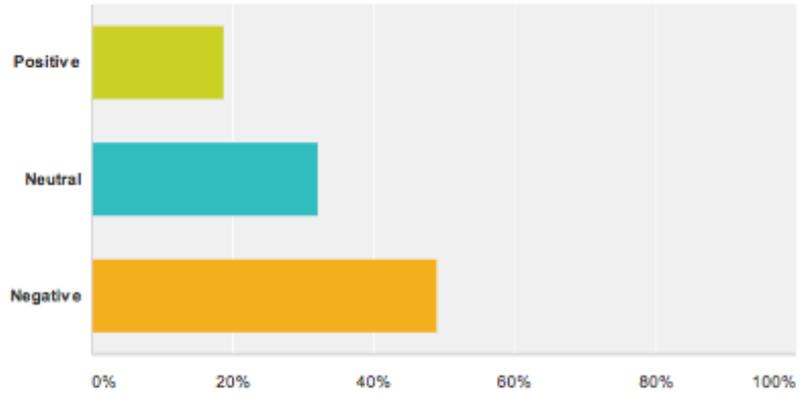
Answer Choices	Responses	
Positive	18.88%	37
Neutral	32.14%	63
Negative	48.98%	96
Total		196

Q6 According to your observations, what has been the impact of decentralised school funding on the provision of EAL/D support to EAL/D students?

Answered: 173   Skipped: 28

Answer Choices	Responses	
Students receive improved provision	15.03%	26
No change to provision	28.90%	50
Students receive no provision/ less provision	42.77%	74
Teacher time is directed away from EAL/D service provision	49.13%	85
Total Respondents: 173		

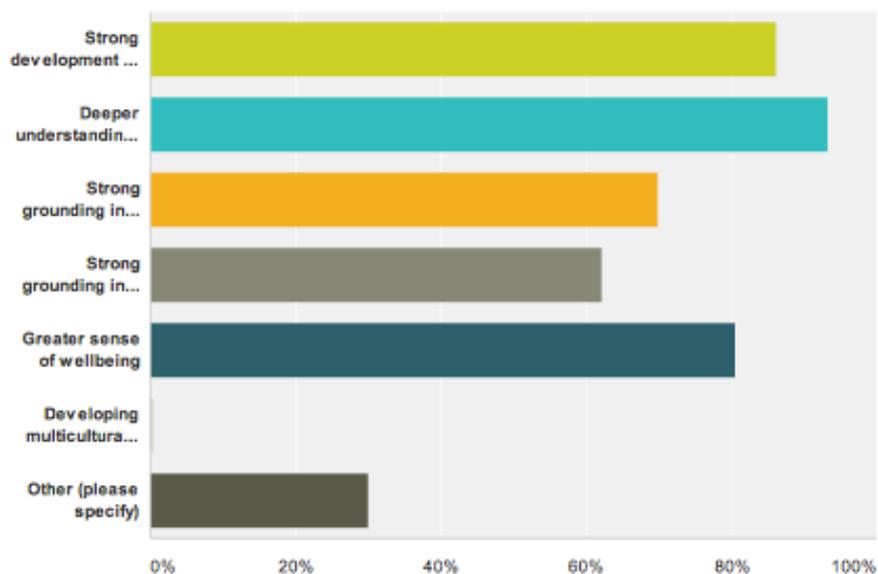## Q7 Are your EAL/D students receiving appropriately resourced programs?

Answered: 188   Skipped: 13
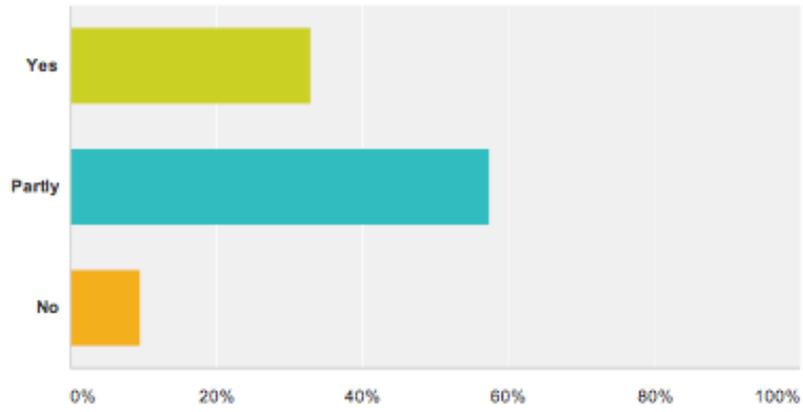
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	32.98%	62
Partly	57.45%	108
No	9.57%	18
Total		188

Q8 In your view, what are the benefits of a targeted EAL/D provision compared to a non-EAL/D based program? (Click more than one box if necessary)
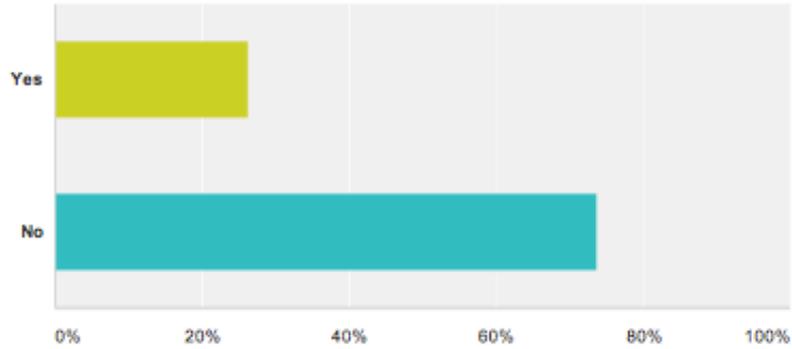
Answered: 196   Skipped: 5

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strong development of oral proficiency.	86.22%	169
Deeper understanding of language systems (grammar, meaning, pragmatics, cultural considerations, etc).	93.37%	183
Strong grounding in SAE language skills	69.90%	137
Strong grounding in Australian culture	62.24%	122
Greater sense of wellbeing	80.61%	158
Developing multicultural identity	0.51%	1
Other (please specify)	30.10%	59
Total Respondents: 196		

## Q9 Are there any programs being used at the school which compete with the provision of EAL/D services?

Answered: 187   Skipped: 14

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	26.20%	49
No	73.80%	138
Total Respondents: 187		

Q10 Does your site leadership team have the requisite understanding of EAL/D matters to administer funds/make decisions on behalf of these students?
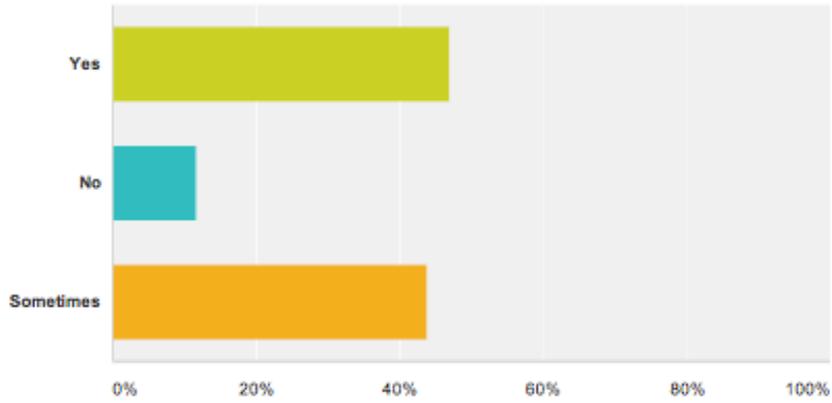
Answered: 192   Skipped: 9
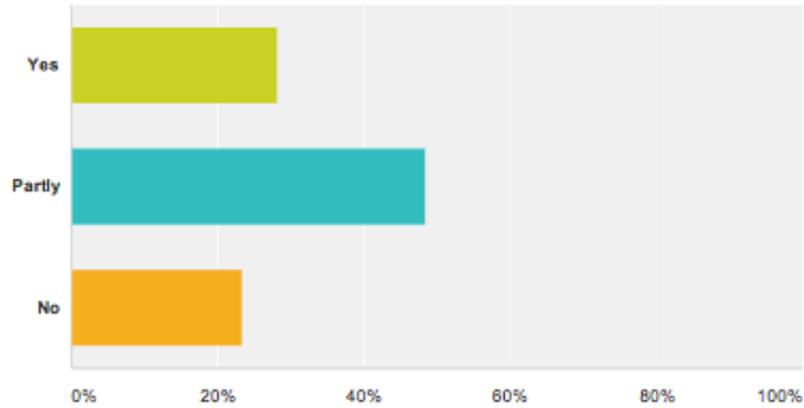
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	28.13%	54
Partly	48.44%	93
No	23.44%	45
Total		192

Q11 Do you feel supported in your role as an EAL/D teacher in your school?

Answered: 187   Skipped: 14

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	47.06%	88
No	11.76%	22
Sometimes	43.85%	82
Total Respondents: 187		

Q14 Does your role at your site (such as a school) include the promotion of cultural diversity/acceptance and intercultural understanding? If so, what sort of activities are you involved with?

Answered: 191   Skipped: 10
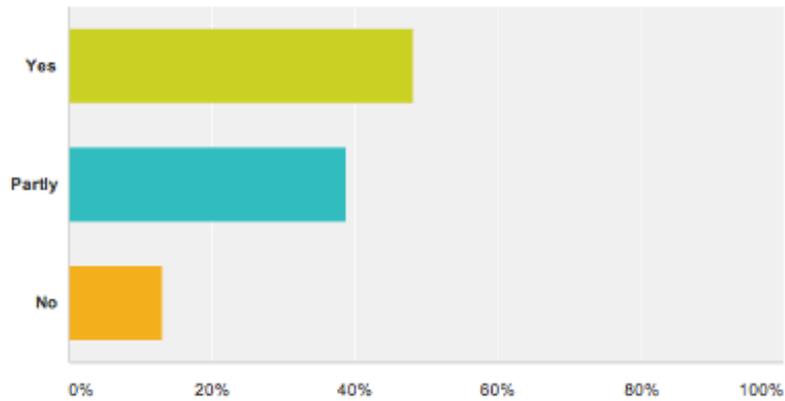
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	48.17%	92
Partly	38.74%	74
No	13.09%	25
Total		191

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APPENDIX F
Results of the NSW Trial of the
EAL/D Learning Progression

A trial conducted in 2012 by the NSW Department of Education and Communities, with approximately 100 teachers and 1,000 students, showed that the EAL/D Learning Progression enabled both ESL specialist and non-specialist teachers to make consistent judgements of English language proficiency across the four language modes and the four phases.

The trial considered three research questions:

1. *Can teachers with a diversity of experiences and expertise in ESL education, assess each of the four language modes consistently using the EAL/D Learning Progression, across a broad range of EAL/D students?*

2. *Is there sufficient evidence to support the intended interpretations and uses of teachers' EAL/D Learning Progression phase assessments?*

3. *What are the successful elements and useful resources identified by teachers from the trial process?*

The report of the trial concluded that the trial provided sufficient reliability and validity evidence for the Learning Progression to be used as a broad measure of English language proficiency.   The report's recommendations included that the EAL/D Learning Progression be:

1. be implemented and used in NSW schools
2. be mapped against new NSW syllabi
3. be trialled nationally

APPENDIX G
Better Schools Fact Sheet – English Proficiency Overview
Analysis by ATESOL NSW

Issue in fact sheet	Why this is an issue	Preferred action for DEEWR
The process for allocating funding to support students learning English as an additional language	It is unclear why funding for 'low English language proficiency' is set at 10%. This seems to be an arbitrary amount. Intensive support is required to support students to beginning in English followed by graded ongoing support over time. The allocation of an arbitrary 10% would be inadequate support and does not account for varying levels of need for EALD support over time.	Determine funding based on costs of employing specialist support or based on the average per capita amount allocated across Australia. Graded allocation of funding with a greater amount for beginners and diminishing amounts of funding for those who have developing or consolidating proficiency in English.
The interim approach using Language Background other than English.	In NSW this approach was compared with an interim approach of using LBOTE and length of time students have been learning English. However in other states length of time may be a better proxy.	Investigate the best process to use as a proxy by reviewing the data currently available in each jurisdiction.
The need for achieving a consistent definition of English language proficiency	Currently no consistent measure is used across Australia although ACARA's EAL/D Learning Progression is a viable tool.	Adoption of the EAL/D learning progression after trialling across Australia to ensure it is a valid measure for the diversity of EAL/D students across Australia
The need to allocate funds to a broader range of EAL/D students not just those who are 'low' levels of proficiency	Research shows learning English as an additional language requires ongoing support over time (Cummins, et.al. 2012). The allocation of support should be not only for low English proficiency but	Graded allocation of funding

	also provide ongoing specialist support for those who are developing and consolidating English language proficiency.	
The suggested way of using funds	Research shows that specialist EAL/D teacher support makes a significant difference to EAL/D student learning outcomes. Funding should be targeted towards improving English language proficiency.	Accountability measures should be in place that ensure funding is used to support identified EAL/D learners develop English language proficiency.
Misrepresentation of NSW data	The last paragraph describes the findings of NSW research. The report on the NSW research acknowledged that the findings could not be extrapolated across Australia as the refugee and in particular the Aboriginal student population differed significantly from state to state. The term 'educationally disadvantaged' is very loaded and should not be used in this context. The NSW research indicated lower NAPLAN test results for EAL/D students with limited English proficiency.	Delete this paragraph.