Education for every child

Australia is home to the oldest continuous culture in the world and a country whose vibrant and multicultural diversity is ever increasing.

With approximately 600,000 students identified as English as an Additional language/dialect (EAL/D) in government and Catholic schools in Australia, we know that support for every child is vital.

Most importantly every child in Australia has a right to quality education.
Unfortunately, in recent years many teachers would report that support for EAL/D students (which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) has been inconsistent or in most cases lacking.

A lack of EAL/D teachers has resulted in many schools trying to fill the gaps the best they can.

Schools in WA have access to the EAL/D Progress Map to plan, monitor and assess students needing support in developing Standard Australian English from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds whether from overseas, born in Australia and or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This excellent tool is available for all school-based ages but does require teachers to understand how to use and implement it.

In WA, there has been an increase in funding for EAL/D students, but with the shortage of EAL/D trained teachers, schools are having to try to find staff to fit these roles.

The increase in funding also still does not help schools prioritise EAL/D students where there are such severe budget constraints.

Another key issue affecting EAL/D students is the impact of larger class sizes. If we want to make meaningful and long-lasting change to quality teaching and learning, we must also reduce class sizes so that we can support the learning needs of all students.
Several solutions to these problems were highlighted in Australian Council of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Associations' (ACTA) *National Roadmap for EAL/D education in Schools document of May 2022*.

- Restore adequate needs-based funding for migrant, refugee and Indigenous English language learners – this would help address current funding anomalies and its impact on how schools can manage EAL/D support.
- Equip all pre-service teachers to cater for EAL/D learners in their classrooms – thus giving pre-service teachers with a basic understanding of how to teach effectively, whilst working with a range of linguistic and cultural needs.
- Review specialist EAL/D teacher education programs – AITSL should work with EAL/D experts to help develop accreditation specifications for specialist TESOL programs which range from initial teacher education to post-graduate levels.
- Rebuild EAL/D professional learning, leadership and school development.

To read their full report visit.

On a national level, the Australian Education Union and ACTA recently released a joint statement, asking for EAL/D students to be given a priority of equity in the next National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA).

It read: *"In our linguistically diverse school communities shaped by Australia's ongoing migration program, its growing language diverse and Indigenous population, this equity provision is a vital component of government investment in high-equity, high-quality education that supports all students' academic achievement, school completion, further learning opportunities, employment prospects, civic participation and personal well-being."*

The joint statement highlights the failure of governments to protect and prioritise English language and literacy needs including:

- Inadequate levels and methods of needs-based English language funding.

- Lack of transparency and accountability for the allocation and use of needs-based English language funding.
- Lack of national identification of the EAL/D learner cohort and any reporting of their English language levels, learning or progress.
- Downsizing or abolition of education system EAL/D professional support.
- Lack of targeted education and training provision pathways for vulnerable young people from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- Failure of teacher regulation authorities and higher education providers to ensure all teachers are equipped to teach English language learners in Australian classrooms.
- Absence of national workforce planning for specialist EAL/D teachers.

The statement calls upon federal and state governments to commit to a national reform and prioritisation of EAL/D in schools, whilst being informed by the National Roadmap of EAL/D in Schools report for the 2025 NSRA.

The SSTUWA hopes that the new NSRA will invest in EAL/D priorities so that all students from all backgrounds will be supported.

The AEU and ACTA will continue to work together regarding EAL/D support and provisions in schools. To read more turn to page 26 of this *Western Teacher*.

In the meantime, we urge all teachers to continue to report on the increasing needs of diversity in their classes.



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