

## Attachment A



### **Shocking Funding Shortfall of EALD/ESL Programs**

EALD/English as an Additional Language or Dialect (also referred to as ESL-English as a Second Language) programs in public schools have undergone significant cuts over the last 10 years. This is despite the proportion of EALD learners in ACT public schools increasing over the same period.

The AEU's concerns include the reduction in the number of centralised EALD specialists delivering professional development and providing expert support to schools; a significant percentage of EALD students missing out on targeted support and a reduction in Australian Government funding to the New Arrivals programs in the Introductory English Centres.

There are few full-time EALD staffing positions in schools and not all teachers of EALD hold qualifications. This has improved in recent times since the AEU successfully lobbied the Education and Training Directorate (ETD) to provide scholarships to teachers to upgrade to an EALD qualification.

Mainstream teachers are increasingly required to take total responsibility for the acquisition of English by their students with minimal specialist support. There is more demand on classroom teachers, together with counsellors, to support the socio-cultural inclusion of families at school whilst being under pressure to meet literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

The AEU is concerned about the impact on EALD learners of the funding arrangements for schools. NAPLAN indicators are broad and therefore ineffective in disaggregating learners of English as a second/additional language. This makes it difficult for the ETD and individual schools to make accurate distinctions between the different cohorts of students who are below the minimum literacy and numeracy benchmarks. Also, the data does not explain why this has occurred. Unless this is addressed, high needs learners will continue to under-achieve.

EALD experts understand that there is a distinction between English acquisition and literacy difficulties. They recognise the distinctive cognitive, social and cultural dimensions of learning another language. Such expertise is under-valued or not recognised in some schools.

EALD learners cannot be categorised easily, nor should they be. It is often the case that EALD students from refugee backgrounds are also from a low socio-economic background. Refugee students come to Australia with a significant range of experiences, possibly including trauma, sometimes with little or no formal education. These students have very complex emotional and social needs which go beyond requiring just EALD support.

On the other hand, students from a language background other than English (eg. diplomatic family, first generation Australian, overseas exchange student) are not necessarily in the same situation. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that EALD students should not simply be categorised into 'low SES' or 'Literacy and Numeracy', two of the COAG National Partnership areas.

What is clear is the need for a significant funding boost to EALD programs, staffing and support services to meet the needs of students and their families.

The EALD funding issue is a complex one, but here are some facts in a nutshell:

### **Cap on EALD staffing funds**

In March 1981, the then ACT Education Minister made the decision not to fund enough ESL teachers to support all students identified as requiring ESL assistance. Instead the Minister set a 4% ceiling on the funding available for staffing EALD programs. This meant that a maximum of 4% of the total Education staffing budget could be used for ESL staff. This ceiling was adopted as Government policy and appears to remain the current policy.

### **Reduction to the EALD staffing multiplier**

The ESL/EALD staffing provision has been exacerbated even further by the fact that the staffing multiplier (used to calculate how many ESL teacher positions can be funded across the system based on the total student enrolments K – 12) has been reduced from 0.0403 in 1989 to 0.0381 in 1990. The multiplier was then reduced further in 1996 to 0.0364 due to a budget decision to reduce the staffing allocation to ESL.

### **Public education system enrolments linked to the EALD staffing provision**

ACT public school enrolments have, on average, declined over the last decade. As a result, the staffing provision for EALD programs declined since staffing is calculated using a multiplier of total student enrolments. In the last 2 years, average enrolments in public schools have increased slightly and are projected to grow further. Funding for EALD staff should therefore increase.

### **Increased enrolments of EALD students**

According to ETD figures, the funding provision for EALD programs has gradually reduced whilst the number of EALD students in public schools has increased significantly. EALD students now represent 12% of all enrolments. In the period 2000-2011, EALD student enrolments in schools have risen by over 35%.

### **Language Performance Rating (LPR) cut-off has been reduced**

EALD staffing in mainstream schools is allocated based on the needs of EALD students with the highest language needs. This allocation is determined following the annual (August census) assessment of EALD students. Each student is given a Language Performance Rating (LPR). The August EALD Census includes moderated assessment tasks on the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. A Language Performance Rating for each student is calculated from these assessments.

The LPR scale is 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 for age and year level
- 4 – 5 above average

### **Increasing language needs of EALD students**

The number of EALD students in mainstream schools identified with a LPR less than 2.00 (below average English speaking competence) is increasing.

In 2011, the cut off for full funding is a LPR of 1.75 (well-below average English speaking competence) and for partial funding a LPR of 2.00. This trend of funding provision on a declining LPR rate has led to an increasing number of students with low LPRs who do not receive targeted EALD support in schools.

In 2011, only 55% of all EALD students with an LPR below 4 (average English proficiency for age and year level) were funded, since funding is only allocated to support those students who have an LPR of 2.00 or below. This means that 45% of all EALD students do not get any targeted support from an EALD teacher. (ie. students between the LPR funding cut-off of 2.00 and 3.99). Those EALD students who do not 'generate' funding must be supported by mainstream teachers and school counsellors in the main.

EALD teachers in all settings have an important role in providing expert advice to other teachers, including strategies on how to support EALD students in mainstream classes and information about the cultural backgrounds and sensitivities relevant to students and their families.

EALD teachers not only teach English but are often the major support for students and their families who are developing understandings about living in Australia and attending schools in Australia.

The AEU believes that a simpler method of calculating the EALD staffing is needed. This should be based on the total number of EALD students (with LPR 0-4) in public school settings and their individual language and social needs. This means no caps on staffing, no linking EALD staffing to overall public school enrolments and no

continual reduction in the cut-off for targeted support for EALD students. Rather, funding should be provided based on each student's LPR and the level of assistance required to raise their language proficiency to at least average English proficiency for their age and year level.

### **The importance of EALD support in the early years**

In the early 1990s the preschool sector had 1 EALD support teacher in each of five regions throughout the ACT. Sometime between the 1990's and 2010 there were 2 EALD Support Teachers to work with all preschool EALD students and their teachers across the ACT regardless of the total number of EALD children in mainstream preschools or their English language needs.

In 2010 these 2 EALD Support Teachers assisted at least 225 EALD students (who had an LPR of 2 or below) across more than 75 ACT preschools, along with their teachers. Based on the current EALD staffing formula, hypothetically, if these students were all located in one site, many more EALD teachers would be allocated to the sector to provide support for EALD students.

At the end of 2010, the ACT Government imposed budget cuts on Education and Training. This resulted in these two EALD Support Teacher positions being cut. This was short sighted and an abrogation of the ETD responsibility to provide access to a high quality education for all students.

There is agreement among educators that the early years of development are critical so the more support provided early on, the better the opportunities and outcomes for children as they grow up. Therefore adequate investment in the early years is critical. To remove or reduce support to preschoolers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will make it even more difficult for public schools to provide equitable access to a high quality education for an already disadvantaged group of students.

EALD resources must be increased significantly in order to provide adequate levels of support not only in preschools but throughout the whole public education system.

The funds available to provide targeted EALD support are already stretched to the limit and do not fund all EALD students with support needs. The EALD teachers in primary schools (some of whom are part-time) are already stretched beyond their limits as they work hard to support EALD students and their teachers. The cuts to the Early Childhood EALD support teacher positions have resulted in an increased workload for EALD teachers and School Counsellors in primary schools.

The AEU welcomes ETD's assurance that "preschool teachers will be supported through an intensive EALD professional development program." It is unclear who in ETD will be responsible for providing this professional learning (PL) or what it will entail. AEU believes that it must be high quality, ongoing professional development rather than a one-off session. If it is to be the two EALD Executive Officers who will develop and implement this PL, this is yet another reason to maintain both their

positions in the long term. To date, no-one in the Literacy and Numeracy section has been approached to provide this professional learning either.

The AEU believes there is a need for at least four EALD Support Teachers to work in the preschool sector.

### **EALD Teachers: professional learning and support**

The *Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum* (LUAC) program was a successful professional learning program for mainstream teachers delivered in the early 1990's. It was established to indirectly support EALD students not resourced with EALD staffing.

In 1992 changes were made to the EALD program, resulting in the introduction of a 7 year limit for funding EALD students and the redirection of EALD staffing points to create 5 LUAC positions. These positions have progressively decreased, with only 1 LUAC officer appointed in 2007. The LUAC Program, now replaced by *InSinc - Incorporating Strategies for an Inclusive Curriculum* – has been presented to Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators so they have the strategies to share with others. The course is also available as in-school PD and will be provided to the new Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers who start next year. EALD teachers are concerned that the *InSinc* course no longer has a strong focus on supporting EALD students (as the LUAC course did) but is more about strategies to support literacy in all students.

At the beginning of 2009, the LUAC position was reclassified as an EALD Executive Officer and included the delivery of the *InSinc* course as part of their role. The course is identified as part of the targeted programs for the Literacy & Numeracy Section.

The AEU is concerned that the new Literacy and Numeracy coordinators in each school will be seen as a replacement for EALD specialists. EALD teaching requires an understanding of specific English language teaching strategies, socio-cultural issues and training in carrying out the EALD Census.

### **2010-11 Budget Cuts to the ETD Central Office**

During the 2010 Efficiency Dividend Review, the positions of Central Office EALD specialists were at risk of being cut. The AEU is pleased to note that one (1) SLC EALD Executive Officer position will continue, but has expressed great concern (share by the P & C Council and the ACT Principals Association) that the second EALD Executive Officer position will be cut at the end of 2011. The AEU calls for the retention of both of these central office positions for the long-term. There is a significant and ongoing need for schools to have access to expert support, advice, corporate knowledge, professional learning and resources. The SLC Executive Officers support EALD teachers in relation to pedagogy through on-site coaching and provide valuable support to schools in relation to the identification of EALD students and EALD data management and analysis (including the annual EALD census).

Many teachers of EALD students do not have a Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) qualification. Some are currently upgrading their

qualifications at the University of Canberra through a ETD targeted scholarship (which came about as the result of lobbying by the AEU) and others are completing the 9 week *Teaching EALD Students in the Mainstream Classroom* course (which is now accredited as a unit within the Graduate Certificate-TESOL by UC) presented by the two EALD Executive Officers. There are many more EALD teachers remaining who could undertake professional learning or study to gain specialist qualifications. All teachers in the public education system must have a sound understanding of the how to meet the needs of EALD students, the development of language, intervention strategies and cultural issues. The two EALD Executive Officers have the capacity to undertake this important work and should therefore be retained in their central office positions for the long term.

The AEU believes that ACT ETD needs to employ centralised expert EALD staff to provide systemic support, professional development and quality teaching strategies to specifically target EALD learners.

At the same time that system-level EALD support is being reduced, more and more schools are reducing their EALD teacher positions to part-time due to the reduced level of EALD funding. Many EALD teachers are untrained in EALD methodology, an understanding of the effects of socio-cultural issues on learning, or the role of an EALD teacher during the EALD Census process. This contravenes ETD's policy to employ EALD teachers with minimum qualifications in EALD.

EALD teachers have expressed concerns about the practice in some schools of combining EALD students with Learning Assistance (LA) students into the one learning group. The needs of these LA students are different because their learning difficulties stem from a completely different cause. EALD students require specific English language instruction in vocabulary, grammatical structures and acknowledgement of prior learning.

The AEU believes that ETD should continue to fund scholarships to enable teachers to obtain ESL qualifications and maintain their skill set through the Teacher Professional Learning Fund. In discussions about the use of the Scholarship Fund, the AEU will continue to advocate for ESL to be one of the targeted scholarship areas.

### **Federal Government changes to ESL funding**

In 2009 the Federal Government has changed funding arrangements for the ESL New Arrivals Program and ESL General Support Funding Grants which went towards supporting programs in Introductory English Centres (IECs). These funds have been rolled into a 'Specific Purpose' base. ACT ETD now decides how these funds will be directed rather than being targeted towards programs for new arrivals.

Introductory English Centre programs, which provide full-time support to newly arrived students with little or no English, need to be assured of adequate funding and staffing levels and the ongoing future of the programs. The AEU understands that

class sizes in IECs have been growing but additional teachers have not been employed to ease the pressure despite assurances from ETD that this would occur.