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## To Whom It May Concern

The Westralian Association for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (WATESOL), the peak body for TESOL education in Western Australia, is pleased to present for your consideration a submission to the Senate Enquiry **Teaching and learning - maximising our investment in Australian schools.**

The submission was prepared and reviewed by WATESOL councillors and members who possess extensive educational qualifications and expertise in the field of English as an Additional Language or Dialect.

We would welcome the opportunity to consult further with the Senate Committee and to collaborate in the planning, development and implementation of programs and strategies which will enhance educational provision for learners of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D).

Our aim is to develop the Standard Australian English (SAE) language and literacy skills of EAL/D students as we recognise that the principal role of schooling in Australia is teaching SAE language, literacy and numeracy to facilitate involvement within the broader community. We advocate for appropriate methods based on research and best practice to achieve this aim for these students.

Unfortunately, many EAL/D students in Australian contexts are not being provided with appropriate or adequate teaching and learning programs.

In order to best address the diversity of the EAL/D cohort, our submission is presented in three parts, the first concerning migrant/ refugee students, the second concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the third highlighting educational inequities faced by Cocos Malay students in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

In general, WATESOL calls on the Federal Government to ensure that EAL/D learners are not rendered invisible under the umbrella of 'literacy for all', but that their special and diverse EAL/D learning needs are acknowledged and catered for according to international best practice and research based methods. To do otherwise, would be to disempower and alienate some of our most vulnerable young people.

It is our belief that EAL/D learners will benefit from greater accountability by schools over the EAL/D support provided. The answer may lie in a system that monitors their educational outcomes using an appropriate EAL/D-specific monitoring tool (as distinct from judging their second or additional language development according to native speaker criteria) and a Capability Framework for their teachers, which ensures learners have access to appropriate and targeted EAL/D teaching delivered by appropriately qualified EAL/D specialists - ideally with tertiary qualifications in TESOL.

WA has been at the forefront of EAL/D education in Australia in the past decade, thanks to the Department of Education's ESL/ESD Progress Map, a monitoring tool for K-10 EAL/D English language learners and the School Curriculum and Standards Authority's WACE Course in EAL/D. This course was the first in the country to provide formal specialised teaching and learning programs for a broad range of EAL/D learners, including pathways to work, TAFE and university. WATESOL hopes that these gains inform the next chapter of EAL/D education on the national stage, as the Australian Curriculum and the Professional Standards for Teachers are implemented.

Yours sincerely,

Khalin Driver

Ms Khalin Driver, WATESOL President

## **WATESOL SUBMISSION TO SENATE ENQUIRY INTO EDUCATION, 26/10/2012**

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### **1) MIGRANT / REFUGEE**

WA has been at the forefront of EAL/D education in Australia in the past decade, thanks to the Department of Education's ESL/ESD Progress Map, a monitoring tool for EAL/D K-10 English language learners and the School Curriculum and Standards Authority's EAL/D WACE Course, which was the first in the country to provide formal specialised teaching and learning programs for a broad range of EAL/D learners, working towards their future studies at TAFE and university or placement in the workforce.

However, WATESOL would like to draw attention to changes in State education policies for the public system which may work to the detriment of achievement of optimal educational outcomes of migrant and refugee students learning EAL/D, particularly new arrivals.

#### **(a) the effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools;**

WATESOL is particularly concerned about recent changes to the selection process for appointing teachers to Commonwealth and State funded EAL/D programs.

Previously, an EAL/D Staffing Officer was responsible for placing teachers in EAL/D programs across the state by following EAL/D Business Rules which outlined a selection process for staffing EAL/D programs. This process ensured that suitably qualified EAL/D teachers were first sought to teach in funded EAL/D programs.

Recently, those practices have changed. In an effort to bring resources closer to schools and provide schools with greater flexibility in the area of staffing, funds and human resources are now no longer tagged to specific programs. This means that principals can choose to employ teachers to teach in specialist programs such as EAL/D even if they are not qualified to teach in that specialised area.

We believe that the move away from a process which supported the practice of selecting the best suitably qualified teacher to teach funded EAL/D programs jeopardises the integrity of the professional EAL/D program, one which requires suitably trained and qualified EAL/D teachers to address the needs of some of our already most at-risk and disadvantaged students in the education system.

As outlined in the Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2012-2015: Excellence and Equity, the Department of Education has identified 'success for all students' and 'high quality teaching and leadership' as key priorities. WATESOL believes that in order to ensure that all EAL/D students achieve successful educational outcomes, it is paramount that the specialty and integrity of EAL/D program be maintained.

AITSL have commissioned for publication a range of Illustrations of EAL/D Practice as part of their professional learning support materials regarding the National Professional Standards for Teachers. In addition, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) has endorsed a national document

entitled *Professional Teacher Standards for TESOL* (refer to Part A, Section E of this submission for more detail or see [http://www.tesol.org.au/ted/std\\_t.htm](http://www.tesol.org.au/ted/std_t.htm)).

WATESOL firmly believes that in this national climate in which the skills of TESOL practitioners are being acknowledged and recognised, state jurisdictions have even greater responsibility to ensure these initiatives can be supported through professional practice.

Unfortunately there appears to be a belief by some that the language learning needs of EAL/D students can be addressed through ‘good literacy’ teaching. However, while some highly skilled good literacy teachers may be effective in providing appropriate programs for EAL/D students, this is not the norm. To ensure the needs of EAL/D students are adequately addressed, firm assurance for the safeguarding and adequate deployment of well qualified EAL/D practitioners is required.

Quality EAL/D programs are a key factor in ensuring successful settlement for new arrivals. They provide for the students’ health and well-being and ensure English language proficiency, enabling students to become contributing citizens of Australia.

Therefore WATESOL is of the view that there needs to be the adoption of a Competency Framework for EAL/D teaching to ensure teachers teaching EAL/D classes have the appropriate specialised knowledge, skills and understandings of the second / additional language acquisition process, can develop appropriate EAL/D programs, use effective EAL/D teaching strategies in the classroom and have the expertise to effectively diagnose the English language learning needs of EAL/D learners.

- Although qualifications can’t guarantee quality performance, the requirement to gain qualifications through completion of studies or completion of studies that have been linked to an EAL/D Competency Framework would at least ensure teachers have engaged in studies with theoretical educational perspectives on second language acquisition process, linguistics, language methodology linked to EAL/D teaching and learning.
- Of concern to WATESOL is also that teachers and administrators’ lack of EAL/D knowledge and expertise could result in incorrect labelling of students as having learning difficulties, special needs, speech impairment, or even worse, mutism.
- By not acknowledging the ‘specialist’ nature of EAL/D pedagogy and the benefits of attaining EAL/D knowledge, skills and expertise through compulsory or additional studies EAL/D specialist programs may risk of being ‘watered down’.
- Best practice in classrooms relies on advice and team work between EAL/D specialists and mainstream teachers; this enriches students' school work by targeting language acquisition concurrently with cognitive academic language proficiency needs. Clearly, the need for the continuation of Intensive English Centres for (newly arrived) Stage One learners is paramount.

In conclusion, effective classroom practices are needed to assist new arrival children to realize their potential in Australian schools. New arrival children have the right to access specialist EAL/D teaching in their early stages of English language acquisition. It is the responsibility of Federal and State Education Ministers to put in place related accountability measures for the use of Commonwealth funding for K-12 English language education, just as they have done for adult new arrival programmes.

NAPLAN, for its cultural and linguistic bias, cannot be seen as a good accountability mechanism to indicate whether a school is adequately supporting their EAL/D students.

Simply exempting EAL/D students from NAPLAN testing, without providing any alternative however, is not the solution as this just renders them invisible. WATESOL advocates for schools accountability through the monitor EAL/D learners' educational outcomes using an appropriate EAL/D-specific monitoring tool, such as the West Australian Department of Education's ESL/ESD Progress Map.

**(b) the structure and governance of school administration - local and central - and its impact on teaching and learning;**

WATESOL has grave concerns about apparent discrepancies between the accountability for the expenditure of Commonwealth funding for English language programs for school age versus adult new arrival migrants and refugees to Australia. It is the association's understanding that Commonwealth funding for Adult Migrant education programs is dependent on a rigorous tender process and is monitored closely. On the other hand, Commonwealth funding for the provision of EAL/D programs for school-aged children is untagged and provided to schools with little accountability for how it is spent.

In WA, EAL/D teachers and administrators in Department of Education schools have expressed their concerns that resources designated to eligible EAL/D programs are being utilised by the schools to support non-EAL/D programs. This can happen if, for example, there is not a strong advocate for EAL/D learners on the school Finance Committee when these decisions are made.

It is of concern that greater autonomy for school principals within a self determining structure has removed the accountability from central office in relation to EAL/D programs and also assumes school administrators have EAL/D knowledge and expertise when making these decisions. There appears that there are no measures in place to ensure there is transparent accountability in relation to these processes.

Resource allocation for EAL/D students is linked to visa categories, date of arrival in Australia and time students have been in the Australia. Currently there is no accountability in place to ensure financial resources provided to schools is linked to EAL/D student progress and measured against an appropriate and valid monitoring tool (e.g. WA's ESL/ESD Progress Map). With the autonomous school structure transparent accountability is less transparent if transparent at all? Unless resourcing is allocated and sustained through student proficiency and progress in line with the ESL/ESD Progress Map, the system will not be able to how effective a resource is in assisting students? Who is currently the 'watch dog' for the resources provided to schools and for how this is being used to address the specific needs of EAL/D students. Who monitors their progress in relation to resources provided? Who is 'looking out' for EAL/D programs?

Resource concerns also apply to special needs and Languages (formerly Languages Other than English, LOTE) in the WA DoE. However, Education Support Centres and Language Development Centres have Principals. These Principals are specialists and advocates for their students' special needs and will ensure teachers employed to work in these programs are suitable qualified and or experienced. These centres are located on site in schools however they are autonomous with their own principals – here is the safeguard for these programs. Unfortunately there is no such safeguard for Intensive English Centres (IECs).

With the announcement that the refugee intake will be increased to 20,000 there need to be structures in place to ensure this cohort will be appropriately catered for within our schools and education systems and that their parents / family members can be guaranteed that quality EAL/D-appropriate teaching and learning is taking place.

**(c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education;**

The degree of influence family members will have on supporting the rights of their children to receive a quality education will be determined by several factors. Family members who:

- have limited or no English skills,
- are non literate in any language,
- have had limited or no education,
- have come from countries where parents are not expected to be involved with their child's education or question their child's schooling,
- come from countries where you do not question authority or from countries with oppressive regimes / war / refugee camps,
- have different cultural expectations in relation to education,
- are transitory for some time after arrival in Australia,
- have limited or no understanding of the educational / school structures and systems,
- have limited or no understanding of the rights of their child to receive a quality education (let alone know what quality education is) and how they would exercise those rights if they felt their child was not getting a fair deal;

are less likely to engage with the child's school, therefore reducing their capacity to advocate for the rights of their child. Many of these parents are happy that their family members are alive and their children are finally receiving an education. Generally the perception is that what is provided for their child in Australia must be good / better compared to what they have come from.

Often the EAL/D teachers at schools are the ones who take the time to engage Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) parents into school communities and offer a link to community programs for parents as well (e.g. community based language/conversation programs for adults). This helps parents be more involved in their childrens' lives and understand what their children are experiencing. In undermining and potentially replacing specialist EAL/D teachers, schools run the risk of further alienating some of their most disadvantaged students and their families.

Families from backgrounds of multiple disadvantage (e.g. humanitarian visa entrants) do not have the capacity to advocate for the rights of their children in any context. This cohort must have advocacy provided for them in relation to their children's educational rights and this is best provided by well qualified EAL/D teachers.

**(d) the adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment;**

For EAL/D teachers, tools to create and maintain optimal learning are considered to be the following:

- Knowledge, experience, skills and understandings related to EAL/D pedagogy
- EAL/D Qualifications / courses of study / competency framework
- Physical resources – Teaching and learning materials,
- School support staff Ethnic Education Assistants, School Psychologists
- Curriculum inclusive of EAL/D students
- Differentiated curriculum
- Appropriate assessment tool
- Appropriate reporting processes
- Appropriate Professional Learning
- Equitable deployment of resources
- Appropriate support within the school from colleagues and administrative staff
- Appropriate support from DoE

The adequacy of any tool is always determined by its appropriateness, suitability, equitable deployment, accessibility, quality assurance, procedures and monitoring and accountability to ascertain their effectiveness (in relation to addressing the specific needs of EAL/D students).

However, even the best tool if used by an unqualified person will not produce the best results. Also, if there is no uniformity in the provision and use of tools across schools then equity of educational offerings and therefore outcomes will not be achieved.

**(e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system;**

**Selection:**

In the situation where school administrators are required to have knowledge, experience and understanding of EAL/D student needs (and of all specialist programs) what measures are in place to ensure this is so? School selection panels should be required to include panel members that have specialist knowledge of the position being applied for e.g. EAL/D Cell teacher / IEC Teacher.

**Training**

EAL/D units need to be compulsory at the university level. Graduates should be graduating with some degree of knowledge and understanding of EAL/D pedagogy, assessment etc. This is imperative especially when qualification 'requirements' are not required and with the new self determining structures in schools otherwise how do we guarantee quality assurance regarding EAL/D programs and teaching?

**Professional Development and Career Progression**

WATESOL suggests that a new Capability Framework could be born out of the ACTA-endorsed 'Professional Standards for TESOL Practitioners' document, developed some years ago in South Australia, as a supplement to AITSL's National Professional Standards for Teachers. A set of 27 standards for the teaching of ESL students, by TESOL specialists, were developed and 9 key standards identified, see: [http://www.tesol.org.au/ted/std\\_t.htm](http://www.tesol.org.au/ted/std_t.htm) .

WATESOL also supports the development of an EAL/D Teacher Capability Framework for teachers of new arrivals to Australia (migrants/ refugees), such as that being drafted at present through the Department of Education Queensland for teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners (refer to ACTA's submission in response to the draft Framework at: [http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/243\\_ACTA\\_Capability\\_Framework\\_final.pdf](http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/243_ACTA_Capability_Framework_final.pdf)

Such a supplement is needed, in recognition of the specialist skills and knowledge of EAL/D teachers, as indicated in the excerpts from ACTA's submission to MCEECDYA on the draft National Professional Standards for Teachers (21 May 2010) at <http://www.tesol.org.au/Issues/National-Professional-Standards-for-Teachers> :

**Conclusion**

It is clear that EAL/D teachers' work is distinct from that of literacy teachers because EAL/D students' needs are different. They are learning a new language as well as learning about a new culture and conventions of communication and socialising. They are learning to be literate in a new language with different communicative practices and family and societal expectations about everything from schooling, relationships to workforce participation. Often their education has been interrupted by conflict and their journey to Australia. They may also be encountering new viewing technologies and media for the first time, even if they arrive in Australia in their late teens. Furthermore, they are

learning to listen and speak in English as well as to read, view and write. They do not have the oral vocabulary and cultural vernacular possessed by Australian native speakers of English who are struggling to meet literacy standards and require literacy “intervention”. These students do not have a problem, they are learning a new language and are entitled to support in this.

In the latest ACTA Journal, Russell Cross from the University of Melbourne states that:

The mainstream system is unable to identify the specific second language literacy needs of ESL learners, and instead renders them invisible with a lack of any clear differentiation between native and non-native speaker competence. (June 2012, p11)

WATESOL calls on the Federal Government to ensure that these students are not rendered invisible under the umbrella of ‘literacy for all’, but that their special EAL/D learning needs are acknowledged and catered for, as befits new Australian residents and, hopefully, future citizens. To do otherwise, is to disempower and alienate some of our most vulnerable young people, leaving them without a voice or the ability to engage with our democratic system.

EAL/D learners will benefit from an educational system that monitors their educational outcomes using an appropriate EAL/D-specific monitoring tool (as distinct from judging their second or additional language development according to native speaker criteria) and a Capability Framework for their teachers, which ensures students have access to appropriate and targeted EAL/D teaching delivered by appropriately qualified EAL/D specialists. - ideally with tertiary qualifications in TESOL .

## **SECTION 1 REFERENCES**

ACTA's submission to MCEECDYA on the draft National Professional Standards for Teachers (21 May 2010) at: <http://www.tesol.org.au/Issues/National-Professional-Standards-for-Teachers>

ACTA’s submission to the draft EAL/D Teacher Capability for teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners (October 2012):

[http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/243\\_ACTA\\_Capability\\_Framework\\_final.pdf](http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/243_ACTA_Capability_Framework_final.pdf)

Cross, Russell, ‘Reclaiming the territory: Understanding the specialist knowledge of ESL education for literacy, curriculum and multilingual learners’, TESOL in Context, Vol 22, No.1 (June, 2012) pp4-17.

DoE WA, Excellence and Equity: Strategic Plan 2012-2015

## **(2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**

With respect to ATSI students, WATESOL would like to applaud the release of the Senate Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities which supports many of the points we make in our submission, in particular:

### **Recommendation 14 – Bilingual education programs**

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments to provide adequately resourced bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities from the earliest years of learning, where the child's first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact).

### **Recommendation 15 – NAPLAN alternative assessment tool**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) alternative assessment tool for all students learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect.

### **Recommendation 21 - Compulsory EAL/D training for teaching degrees**

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal to include a compulsory component of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) training for all teaching degrees.

### **Recommendation 22 – In-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training**

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal that all teachers already working in schools in Indigenous communities be required to complete in-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training as part of mandatory professional development.

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General comment for response:

The Inquiry must focus on the need for more qualified Aboriginal teachers, principals, assistants and Aboriginal and islander Education Workers in aiming for positive outcomes in Aboriginal Education. In general there must be clear support for, 'acknowledging, embracing and developing a positive sense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identity in schools' as noted in the federally endorsed 'Stronger and Smarter' philosophy. Real and practical cultural inclusivity is essential but schools need guidance in how to achieve this in a manner that is sustainable.

National and international research conducted by Gay, Cummins and others, into the importance of maintaining first language and culture (not to mention West Australian research such as that by Malcolm, Sharifian, Rochecouste and others into the positive impact of using a two-way approach) must be used to inform the thinking that underpins the inquiry and subsequent findings, and educational policy itself. The incorporation of Indigenous culture and the teaching of Indigenous languages must come through strongly in the document.

NOTE:

Orhan Agirdag, *Bienvenu a toutes les langues (All Languages Welcome Here) Educational Leadership*, April 2009, pp20-24 expresses it like this:

.... Cultural discontinuity between students' home-based and school-based experiences can have a negative effect on their academic performance, well-being and sense of belonging at school.

The larger the gap between these two experiences the greater the disadvantage of cultural discontinuity (Gay, 2000). When students have to leave their primary language at the school gates, they also leave a part of their cultural identity behind. As Cummins (2001) noted, 'To reject a child's language in the school is to reject the child' (p.19). Therefore, educators must try to close the gap between language learners' identities, which are intricately tied to language, and the school culture.

The importance of Indigenous languages and cultures must be addressed as it is obvious from all the research that the gap will widen if the teaching of Indigenous languages and cultures is not strongly featured in schools.

According to Agirdag p 22 there are three practices to avoid in teaching students who have a first language other than the medium of instruction and these are:

- Insisting on a monolingual classroom.
- Banning Home Languages outside the School.
- Restricting praise to Second Language proficiency.

#### **(a) the effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools;**

The teaching and learning in Australia takes place in an increasingly multi-ethnic reality. Education is as much a cultural operation as it is linguistic. While the linguistic abilities of children in school are vastly diverse, **potential is only acknowledged in a language and culture that will be unfamiliar to a large number of those students.** Therefore, multilingual students who are trained (rather than educated) monolingually, are not reaching their full potential, despite the overwhelmingly proven and internationally accepted cognitive benefits of bi/multilingualism.

In relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D students, their presence has, by and large, been subsumed into mainstream education, and overlooked in discussions of EAL/D service provision, which is traditionally associated with non-Australian groups such as new arrivals. While new arrivals do not share the same history of colonisation and marginalisation, ATSI students are still learning standard English as an additional language/dialect.

The problem here for ATSI students is three-fold: firstly, the importance of their own languages/dialect, which they use for thought and living, and their knowledge systems are being ignored; secondly, the differences in cultural conceptualisations of ATSI learners and their generally non-ATSI teachers and learning resources are assumed to have no impact on the child's learning, when evidence shows such differences have in fact a strong influence on learning (Sharifian, et al. 2012); and thirdly that 'mainstream' education is, for the non-Standard Australian English speaker, equivalent to an 'English submersion' or 'sink-or-swim' form of education based on monolingual teaching and learning practices and expectations. While this approach may not be intentional, the result is cognitively damaging, pedagogically unsound and not to mention assimilatory.

MCEETYA has argued that it is essential 'to recognise that sound teaching practice reflects the ability of the educator to match an appropriate teaching practice to the needs and strengths of the Indigenous learner' (MCEETYA, 2000c, p. 4). If this is the case, then clearly English submersion programs, which have been the rule rather than the exception in Indigenous education for over 150 years, are pedagogically, as well as ethically, inappropriate.

In addition, the need for appropriate multicultural learning programs for ATSI learners was originally (in terms of Senate inquiries) emphatically and very accurately reflected in the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts Report on a national language policy (1984). While this recognition has been reinforced in subsequent federal initiatives, such as the National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008 (MCEETYA), a monocultural approach to teaching and learning (and teacher preparation) has persisted. It would be beneficial to refer to the positive aspects of the *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005 -2008* and the subsequent *Review* lead by Professor Peter Buckskin. Both documents placed great emphasis on the valuing and maintaining of Indigenous or first culture/language as the imperative for fostering well being (identity) and promoting achievement of educational outcomes, particularly literacy and numeracy in Standard Australian English.

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners are far from an homogenous group, teaching and learning programs in Indigenous contexts generally require a bicultural approach (such as through Two-Way learning) and equally importantly bicultural outcomes (students have developed academic proficiency in both home and school languages). Currently the under-preparation of teachers and under-appreciation of the demands of multicultural education (by institutions) create a tension for all parties that results in ineffective learning, suffering community relationships and enduring disenchantment.

With respect to ATSI students, the development of relationships is crucial and greatly influences the effectiveness of teaching. In particular, knowledge of the local language can be of a great advantage in the community. Courses like the Pitjantjatjara Summer School at the University of South Australia should be made available at least as an option for teachers during pre-service and in-service training. Such courses serve as an example to all teacher preparation institutions. (Language courses used to be compulsory in the Northern Territory, but were de-funded, as were bilingual programs, due to budgetary constraints).

**(b) the structure and governance of school administration - local and central - and its impact on teaching and learning;**

The benefit of a local school administration is the ability for schools to make decisions that are directly impacting on them at the local level. This flexibility is important, especially in small and remote schools where often the rules devised within a central system far away within a metropolitan area, have not taken account of local issues. However, when it comes to EAL/D education, some aspects of a local school administration can be particularly problematic. For EAL/D governance, the following points are of key concern with a devolved system:

- There is a need for centralised support and advice regarding the best monitoring process and teaching strategies to be used with EAL/D learners. In a devolved system, schools working alone run the risk of making misinformed decisions when it comes to delivering programs that meet EAL/D students' needs, such as using programs that were designed for students with learning difficulties or difficulties, calling in a speech pathologist or using lower grades literacy materials with older EAL/D students. This tendency has been documented in Australia as well as Canada with respect to Aboriginal students. We know that such approaches are causing more damage than good. There is an absolute need to ensure that EAL/D funds are used for EAL/D programs. This can be best administered through the support a dedicated, centralised system.
- With regards to Aboriginal EAL/D many of the remote schools have similar issues. For each of those schools to work in isolation does not help educators and students cope with the issues

of high staff turnover and students mobility throughout a vast area of country. A central approach for these matters can help manage these problems as it provides continuity of support.

**(c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education;**

This matter is of great importance with respect to EAL/D children. Often EAL/D family members have literally no voice and are unable to influence the school in any way due to a range of factors including language/culture barriers, negative and oppositional relationships with the school institution based on their own experiences and poor communication on the part of the school (this has been the case in many ATSI communities). A number of schools strive to develop positive community relationships and effective school councils, but these attempts too often can be deprioritised or restructured due to teacher (and principal) turnover.

A ‘quality education’ can have conflicting interpretations. As the AER report *The Case for Change* recognises, there has been much negotiation between communities and school for bilingual/bicultural programs in the NT, SA and WA. And while the right to such an education is recognised in Human Rights mechanisms (such as the Rights of the Child, and the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), this continues to be a contentious issue in Australia where monolingual education is mainly used.

**(d) the adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment;**

We know NAPLAN is absolutely not adequate for EAL/D Learners. The inappropriateness of large-scale standardised tests with respect to evaluating the standard English proficiency of EAL/D learners has been well documented over time in Australia as well as the United States (August and Hakuta, 1997).

There is a need for a more non-eurocentric, bi-cultural approach to testing children speaking another language or dialect as a first language that recognises, tests in and builds on home language and social/emotional/cognitive competencies while also testing and developing SAE competencies. This would overcome the problem of children being diagnosed as ‘deficient’ whereas they may well be multilingual and possess many skills not currently valued by the mainstream culture but are vital to maintaining well being within their cultural context and could be used for further language learning.

Furthermore, materials developed by or with local ATSI educators, such as bilingual teachers or Aboriginal or Islander Education Officers (AIEO), can be invaluable in the classroom. Creation of such recourses, however, requires support by administration as well as inclusion in teacher preparation.

**(e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system;**

Factors that impact on these areas are numerous and range from cultural and social influences that underlie institutions, to the economy and related political persuasions. A key factor should be the students – their holistic needs and how best to empower them to make informed life choices. The discussion paper “Education of Teachers of Indigenous Students in Early Childhood Services and Schools” (MCEETYA, 2001a) argues that teacher quality and ATSI outcomes are **directly related** and that teachers have a responsibility to prepare “all students for a productive and rewarding life as citizens in a democratic and multicultural Australia and by their commitment to achieving educational equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” (ibid, p.3).

As such, there should be an emphasis in teacher training and development around the achievement of cultural competencies so that all teachers have some elementary preparation necessary in understanding Aboriginal children or migrant/refugee children's needs. Ignorance of cultural competencies has been proven to be obstructive and repelling for EAL/D students (Siegel, 2010; Sharifian et al. 2012).

It is important that teachers understand that these children will bring with them a culture and language which may not be Standard Australian English (SAE) and that the valuing and use of these in the school setting contributes to their wellbeing and positive sense of belonging.

Teachers will face a range of social, emotional and cultural challenges in remote settings. Preparation of teachers needs to begin at the university level if there is to be any hope of halting the cycle of disenchantment which can be so destructive to effective teaching and learning.

The employment of specialist-trained teachers in rural/remote settings or with high enrolment of EAL/D students can greatly support non-trained teachers in creating appropriate teaching and learning programs.

### **Cycle of mutual disenchantment:**

A case in point would be the deployment of teaching staff to remote locations where traditionally there has been a high teacher turnover. Staff entering a community tend to be experientially and professionally unready to meet the demands of multicultural teaching and learning. Furthermore, they may be under-supported in the class because of a lack of funds to maintain an optimal class size and the absence of Aboriginal teaching assistants. Consequently, despite being initially very motivated, they suffer a great deal of emotional stress, and inevitably and understandably quit, leaving the students stranded (again) and the school under immense pressure to maintain some kind of pedagogical and administrative balance. A new teacher is brought in, and the cycle continues. This disruption is devastating to all, but especially to learning, particularly when students are expected to deliver academically in a language that is not their own in inconsistent educational settings. Teachers are also not able to foster the kinds of relationships that experience and research tell us is so crucial in ATSI contexts. Furthermore, this cycle perpetuates negative stereotypes of Aboriginal learners, their communities and "remote" education, and it also reinforces an enduring negative image of the school and its efforts. This final point is to be stressed: communities (and children) expect teachers to move on (a year can be considered as a long appointment in some cases) and so they may not engage as much as they could do or would like to with the school and its staff. It should be noted that teachers are expected by the Department of Education to leave remote locations after around 3 years, which only adds to the fragility and overall negative phenomenon of teaching in ATSI communities not located in metropolitan areas.

Teacher (and principal) retention needs to be taken seriously and approached strategically, particularly in schools that require (though are rarely supplied with) experienced and appropriately prepared staff. High quality staff, particularly those with knowledge of and expertise in EAL/D, local languages and two-way pedagogy are essential for success in these locations.

### **(f) other related matters.**

Contrary to the current trend for cessation of these practices, there is a need for much more cohesion and collaboration between projects focusing on the needs of Indigenous students. For example, community/school partnerships, the Aboriginal Education Action Plan 2010-2014, the David Manfield project all looking into individual education plans.

Senate recommendations to develop collaborative school clusters in remote areas to better plot and record attendance of students would be a realistic way to progress. Not only could attendance be better recorded in this way but student achievement could also be better assessed, recorded and reported. This system would also allow a sharing of teacher expertise and resources.

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**(b) the structure and governance of school administration - local and central - and its impact on teaching and learning;**

- Schooling is financed by the Commonwealth, but delivered by WA. (But, the Cocos Malay people have no State-level voting rights).
- Implementation of bilingual programme was problematic due to limitations of WA-sourced staff and short-sighted leadership, and from 1990s, learning has been through English submersion.

**(c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education;**

Politically, the school has been subject to administrative struggles between state and federal levels and their agendas. There has been a progressive diminishing of community involvement over past 30 years. Parents are currently told to speak English at home.

- Students enter school with oral skills in home language (Malay) and Arabic-reading skills, but these are not valued or used by the school, and families are now complaining of poor English learning.
- Malay seen as the ‘enemy’ of good English-language learning, which demeans children’s cultural identity.
- Attempts to elevate matters by Cocos Malays have been unsuccessful.
- Widespread fear of challenging long-term teachers by their former students (now parents).

**(e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system;**

What the school is officially doing in terms of EALD: Selection, Training, Professional Development  
EALD qualifications are not compulsory in WA for teaching EALD students, however DoE states that Cocos teachers receive “annually updated E.S.L. ... qualifications.” Meaning?

- The School Plan 2012 notes 85% ESL and a “strong cross-cultural commitment and use of English as Second Language strategies.” Using ESL/ESD Progress Maps.
- Under the focus area of “Literacy and ESL” the target is to reduce the number of students under the minimum standard. They prioritise creating/using ‘bilingual resources’. However, there is evidence that teachers are struggling with applying EALD pedagogy.

**What has the school actually been doing?**

- Bilingual teaching aides are used merely as interpreters. Teaching staff do not fully understand the aides’ potential teaching roles, nor what bilingual education means.
- No Malay-speaking teachers. No EALD-qualified teachers. At various times, those with these skills have been marginalised in the school (particularly if they were not from WA). The LOTE teacher is under instructions not to speak Malay with children outside formal lessons. Most WA-sourced LOTE teachers have not had sufficient Indonesian language proficiency to teach the secondary pupils.

[SEE: The separate submission to the committee on Cocos schools by Pauline Bunce. Submission No. 2.]