

ATESOL ACT SUBMISSION TO THE ACT GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO LITERACY & NUMERACY IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Outline

Draft 3 / 02 / 2024

1. Intro

- ATESOL ACT - who we are
- Focus of this submission is EAL/D
- Inquiry a response to pressure from:
 - advocates of the “science of reading” (Q.5);
 - NAPLAN results;
 - forthcoming ACT election
- Problems with Inquiry timeline & getting input from teachers (exhausted; just returned from summer vacation)
- Re the Consultation Paper questions ([Inquiry into literacy and numeracy in ACT public schools - Education](#) Appendix B):
 - who is the target audience for these questions?
 - difficulty in answering them and evaluating answers that stem from selective “evidence” / real research / personal opinion / loudest & best-financed voices.

2. Why consider EAL/D?

- What is the intersection between learning EAL/D and learning literacy?
- Focus should extend beyond early schooling to all Year levels: EAL/D learners enter school at any level; BICS versus CALP.
- EAD (effect of siloing Indigenous concerns & disconnecting them from language issues)
- Problems with the “science of reading”.

3. Issues

3.1 Data and accountability – *what we don’t know and need to know*

The Ed. Directorate as a closed shop:

- how can Consultation Paper Questions re what’s working effectively (or the reverse) be answered without publicly available data?
- why NAPLAN and similar data is insufficient and being manipulated to further commercially motivated agendas
- limitations on what ATESOL ACT can knowledgably submit.

Publicly accessible data is needed on:

1. EAL/D learners (Q 7)

- numbers
- EAL levels

- Year levels
- locations
- EAL versus EAD

2. Teachers

- EAL/D specialists
 - Locations
 - Qualifications:
 - Formal - specialist EAL/D (incl level); mainstream
 - Informal PL
- Mainstream teachers
 - Pre-service units
 - Informal PL

3. Programs

- Types & nos. of EAL/D programs:
 - IECs (we do know how many & where but not teachers – see above)
 - schools
- Types of EAL/D support
- Professional development for teachers and schools

4. **Resources:** see Creagh article.

5. **Expenditure on all of the above.**

3.2 School autonomy – effects (Q. 4, 9, 10)

- Some basic requirements: see 3.3 below
- Commercialisation (Creagh et al. [Commercialisation in Australian public education and its implications for the delivery of English as an Additional Language/Dialect: an EAL/D teacher perspective - UQ eSpace](#))
- Lack of accountability – e.g. the EALD Policy document

3.3 Supports & interventions (Q. 11, 12, 13, 15, 16)

- Recruiting qualified specialist and mainstream teachers
- Use of specialist teachers & consultants
- Incentives for upskilling
- Career paths
- Resources for teaching (see Creagh article)
- Collaboration with & support for professional associations.

4. Issues raised by ATESOLACT Committee (to be integrated into the above)

- The disregard for EALD specialist and qualifications:
 - Failure to require them for those teaching EAL/D learners;
 - Using teachers with EAL/D qualifications out of field and as relief teachers
 - Consequences for learners – teaching & advocacy
 - Consequences for mainstream teachers lacking access to specialist EAL/D advice & support

- Vicious cycle created, including the loss of respect for EAL/D expertise
- Training provided by UC:
 - the need for teachers to have qualifications
 - the adequacy of those provided at UC
- Need to quarantine funding for EAL/D – no accountability for how EAL/D money is spent
- Yesterday’s full-day training program run by Directorate EAL/D Team -- excellent session but overwhelming even for someone with EAL/D qualifications & experience (who is also teaching mainstream English and a LOTE)
- Massive job testing new students in time frame for Census despite this good training session
- Needs of international students – funded but a low priority in actually using these funds
- What does autonomy of principal mean in terms of programs, etc
- Disaggregation of EAL/D in NAPLAN data – only LBOTE
- The advantages of the common approach to literacy in the Catholic system, especially common terminology, the emphasis on repetition, the kind of approach demonstrated in PD from Misty last year.

5. Recommendations – for discussion

1. Institute employment requirements for specialist EAL/D and mainstream teachers, accompanied by incentives to upgrade and career pathways for specialist teachers.
2. Collect and report EAL/D data in the public domain (Parliament; Directorate website; school reporting).
3. Implement Adult Literacy Inquiry Recommendation 8.¹
4. Treat “science of reading” proponents and “evidence” with scepticism – widen scope of research and evidence to disaggregate EAL/D cohorts.
5. Find a pathway between a common approach and deprofessionalising teachers (scripted teaching).
6. Increase collaboration with outside bodies, including professional associations.

¹ Para. 3.208: The Committee recommends that, as part of the new National School Reform Agreement, commencing in 2023, the Australian Government seek the agreement of the states and territories to:

- require a proportionate number of qualified English as a second or additional language (TESOL) educators to be provided, on an ongoing basis, to the number of enrolled English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners in schools
- undertake an appropriate and consistent EAL/D assessment for EAL/D learners in Australian schools, with the results of the EAL/D assessment, along with the number of qualified TESOL educators in schools, to be published alongside NAPLAN data on My School
- implement a replacement to the language background other than English identifier in the index of community socio-educational advantage that better identifies EAL/D learners for the purposes of school resourcing.