



20 April 2023

## **JOINT STATEMENT**

### **Australian Education Union and Australian Council of TESOL Associations**

#### **English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) Education in Schools**

Well targeted and supported specialist English language programs are essential to developing the English proficiency that some 600,000 English language learners from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee backgrounds need in order to meet the academic English language and literacy demands of the Australian curriculum and succeed in school.

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 wellbeing.

Over the last two decades, Australia's national commitment, effort and capability through this equity provision has disintegrated. EAL/D learners have disappeared as a national equity cohort from the 2008 Melbourne and 2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) education declarations; and the Commonwealth Government has devolved all responsibility for EAL/D service provision to State and Territory governments. Further devolution of decision-making and the underfunding of public schools have resulted in the diversion of untied funding, increased EAL/D teacher casualisation and unqualified, out-of-field EAL/D teaching, and widespread erosion of EAL/D teaching support to students.

The failure of governments to protect and prioritize high quality English language and literacy provision has affected all aspects of EAL/D education, 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.

As Australia emerges from the pandemic and resumes immigration in the national interest, as well as supporting non-native English speakers already resident in Australia, Commonwealth, State and Territory, and local leadership is needed to restore our leading role in EAL/D education and rebuild effective English language and literacy provision for EAL/D learners in Australian schools.

We call on Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to commit to national reform and revitalisation of EAL/D in schools through inclusion of EAL/D education as an equity priority in the 2025 *National School Reform Agreement*, informed by the [National Roadmap for English as an Additional Language or Dialect \(EAL/D\) Education in Schools](#). The Australian Council of TESOL Associations and the Australian Education Union will work together to further these aims to secure pathways to best support English language learners through EAL/D provision in schools.

#### **For further information:**

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