



File Ref: C32 & H7

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Education and Training
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

**ESL Executive Officer Position To Be Cut
URGENT ACTION REQUESTED**

Dear Minister Barr

We write to you as members of the Education and Training Directorate's *Literacy and Numeracy Reference Group*.

We wish to express our deep concern that the ETD is planning to cut one of the two ESL Executive Officer positions at the end of 2011. As both these officers are vital in supporting all schools, we call upon you as Minister for Education and Treasurer to immediately intervene in this decision and provide funding to ETD to enable both positions to be retained on an ongoing basis.

Both these officers are invaluable in providing a wide range of specialist ESL professional development to the entire ETD workforce. They also implement and coordinate ESL programs across the public school system for students in preschool to Year 12.

The 2 ESL Executive Officers provide significant levels of support to the entire public school workforce (ESL and IEC teachers, classroom teachers, school leaders, and administrative staff), including:

- Professional learning for teachers including *Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms (TESMC)* (9 week course) and *Incorporating Strategies for an Inclusive Curriculum (InSinc – 5 week course)*.
- Professional learning: *ESL in the Mainstream for the Early Learner (ESLMEL)*, 8 week course) – this course has run for some time but recent targeted funding for preschool teachers to attend this course has been provided following the cut to two Preschool ESL Support Teacher positions as the result of the Efficiency Dividend in 2010.
- Manage the scholarships program for teachers to upgrade to Graduate Certificate in TESOL – this is important as many ESL teachers in schools do not have an ESL qualification.
- Cultural awareness training for all staff, particularly those involved in the enrolment process of new ESL students or those staff who support refugees and asylum seekers experiencing trauma as the result of persecution or war.
- Australian Curriculum – professional learning in supporting teachers to incorporate English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) across the curriculum.
- Professional development, advice and support to all ESL teachers in administering the ESL census in February and August each year.
- Professional learning in data collection, use and limitations, linking student, school and ESL census data with considerations of student's language acquisition, culture and demographics.
- Professional learning in meeting the increasingly complex needs of ESL students and using ETD endorsed programs to support students.

- Supporting Introductory English Centre staff, programs and providing professional development.
- Management of new refugee support programs (particularly in the secondary sector where there is a chronic need) to support refugee students to settle into the IEC, get used to a new culture, learn a new language, receive counselling and to transition successfully from the IEC into a mainstream school.
- Evidence-based practices and policy development to support the ongoing work of ESL staff across all public schools.
- Advocacy for ESL students and their complex learning needs. Many ESL teachers and most other teaching staff do not have ESL qualifications therefore may not understand the important difference between the skills needed to acquire a language and those to develop literacy in one or more languages.

ESL students now make up 12% of the total public school enrolments. This is an increase of 35% since 2000. In the 1990s and early 2000s there were 5 ESL Executive Officers and 5 Preschool ESL Support Teachers. Now there are only 2 Executive Officers to meet the significant professional needs of teachers and support staff who serve many more ESL students with much more complex issues than a decade ago.

Currently, 45 % of ESL students miss out on any targeted support from an ESL teacher. These students are reliant on their classroom teachers receiving significant support and professional development from the 2 ESL Executive Officers.

The plan to cut 50% of the ESL Executive Officer positions will be devastating to the entire ETD system, effectively resulting in the above support being halved and expert advice and corporate knowledge being lost. These ESL Officers need to remain at current levels, if not more, especially with the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, a new ESL Policy and Procedures, growing migration numbers and increasing refugee needs, new IEC curriculum requirements and the updating of the ESL census. Many programs may be lost, such as new projects to support the significant needs of refugee students, as it will be impossible for one Executive Officer to manage the workload involved in all of the above activities.

We request your immediate intervention in the plan to cut one ESL Executive Officer from the ETD Central Office, as a matter of urgency.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further.

Regards



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