

The Hon. Prue Car, MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

3rd June, 2024

Dear Minister,

## **Collapse of initial EAL/D teacher education in NSW**

I am writing to express ATESOL NSW's alarm concerning the impact of NESA's discipline study requirements for admission to the graduate entry program - English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) – and the subsequent pre-service training and supply of teachers specialising in EAL/D for NSW linguistically diverse schools.

The study prerequisites in NESA's 2018 Subject Content Knowledge guidelines have led to the virtual collapse of initial EAL/D teacher education in NSW. Macquarie and Western Sydney Universities have ceased all EALD teacher training and there has been a dramatic decline in pre-service EALD teacher enrolments at other universities. Sydney University, now has only six pre-service teachers in EALD method compared with more than 60 in previous years. This situation compounds the present crisis in NSW government schools whereby almost 50 per cent of EALD teachers have no training or qualifications in teaching EAL/D.

The study prerequisites in the 2018 NESA NSW Supplementary Documentation: Subject Content Knowledge requirements for EALD state: *A major or minor in discipline knowledge relevant to EAL/D such as linguistics and/or language studies that provide a grounding in the English language, how it works and a very high level of competency in spoken and written English, and intercultural communication.*

This has been interpreted by NESA as pre-service teachers requiring: *A major or minor study including at least two units of study of the English language system and its acquisition. The remaining units can be drawn from studies in linguistics (of the English language) and/ or textual studies in English including literature and/ or studies of a language other than English.*

This interpretation has meant that only students who can complete linguistics units in English grammar and English second language acquisition are eligible to undertake EAL/D method. This is a change from the study requirements pre-2018 which allowed any combination of units in English, linguistics and languages other than English.

The result has been that very few students can meet current NESA study requirements. English teachers generally major in English and History and cannot fit in the study of linguistics.

Languages teachers generally must study two languages (this used to be the requirement to become a head teacher of languages) and so cannot fit in linguistics study.

The result is that the majority of EALD teachers are now background speakers of Chinese and Korean who can fit the linguistics study into their degrees. This is ironic because the original change in the requirements came about because pre-service teachers who were language background speakers were gaining entry because of their language study without any undergraduate study of English.

The NESA requirement that pre-service teachers must study systems of English language and second language development in their undergraduate degree is also quite restrictive. These units are not offered at most universities. This content has to be covered in tertiary EALD method units as a matter of course as tertiary educators know that they cannot expect this detailed knowledge given the range of backgrounds of students.

The Victorian Institute of Teachers has addressed this issue with study requirements that accept any combination of units, provided that the language study being counted was as a **second language (ie. not the teacher's first language)**. In other words, pre-service teachers cannot gain entry solely on the study of their background language other than English.

I understand that NESA is undertaking a comprehensive review of the adequacy of pre-service training requirements. In this context, ATESOL therefore recommends that NESA adopt the Victorian Institute of Teachers interpretation of the study prerequisites in the 2018 Subject Content Requirements that EALD teachers must have as follows: *A major or minor study drawn from studies in linguistics or studies of a language other than English provided that the language is a second language not only of the background language.*

This requirement is supported by a strong body of evidence that English background speakers learn the grammar and language systems of English when they learn a second language other than English.

ATESOL NSW wholeheartedly supports the comprehensive and systematic approach taken by the Department's EAL/D Workforce Strategy in addressing EAL/D teacher shortages, systemic barriers to effective EAL/D workforce planning and rebuilding specialist EAL/D staffing in schools. However, unless NESA study requirements affecting the beginning pipeline of graduate EAL/D teachers to schools is addressed as a matter of urgency, the effectiveness of the EAL/D Workforce Strategy will be severely compromised.

I look forward to your reply to this critical issue.

Yours faithfully,



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