



MEDIA RELEASE

From the Australian Council of TESOL* Associations (ACTA)

New National Plan must not forget English Language Learners

The National Plan for School Improvement increases principals' decision-making powers. It also increases funding for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, Indigenous students, students for whom English is a new language, and students with a disability.

In welcoming these developments, ACTA President Adriano Truscott, noted that 'Australia has an outstanding tradition in teaching English to students learning English as their new language. We need to maintain and further develop what we have achieved. We've learnt over the years that resources and teaching must be not only specialised but also able to adapt to local circumstances. As the most experienced group in this area of teaching, ACTA welcomes the opportunities for flexibility offered by the trend across all states and territories to transfer more responsibility to schools. But new arrangements raise new issues to consider.

'ACTA is concerned to ensure that knowledge and resources developed over many years be fully exploited in a decentralised system. In particular, we urge that specialist system-wide services for students and teachers be maintained and strengthened. Students must not be isolated or ignored as a difficult minority. Teachers must have access to professional development in English Language learning across the curriculum. We also urge systems to ensure that specialist English Language teachers are employed in all schools or areas where English learning needs exist.

'In our view, it would be disastrous for many students and the nation as a whole if the intense work done in recent years on curriculum and assessment for English Language students – work to which ACTA members have made considerable contributions – did not find its rightful place in local decision-making. Agreed standards for identifying these students' English needs, and resourcing and teaching to these standards, are now well established. In its own way, each school must seek to meet these standards. Exactly how is now up to systems and schools to work through, but it must be done. Most importantly, as is required for literacy and numeracy, students' progress in learning English as an additional language or dialect must be consistently monitored by schools and systems, and reported at State/Territory and Commonwealth levels.'

*Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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