



National policy framework for

English as
a second
language
education

draft

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FOREWORD

State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers agreed at the June 1997 MCEETYA meeting, that in the context of a national effort to raise literacy standards and outcomes, a taskforce should be established to develop a national policy framework for English as a Second Language (ESL) in education and training, including ESL programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

English is the national language of Australia. For learners whose first language is not English, access to quality English as a Second Language programs is a critical precondition for accessing the curriculum and is fundamental to achieving the goal of full and equitable participation in Australian society.

ESL provision is the educational strategy which makes it possible for these students to achieve optimal educational outcomes. ESL education will reach its full potential in contributing to the development of Australia as a socially just, democratic and economically successful nation, with continuing recognition and support from all governments and within a clearly defined framework of roles and responsibilities.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers have committed to improving the quality of schooling nationally. There is an agreed basis for continued collaborative action between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in ESL education. ESL is well positioned to contribute to the national schooling agenda. It is a critical component of investment in Australian society for the 21st century.

Changes in the educational and broader social context will have direct implications for the resourcing, planning and implementation of ESL programs across Australia.

It is in this context that this policy framework aims to provide a foundation for a collaborative national approach to ESL education in the interests of ESL students and the community as a whole.



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Chair

16 September 1999

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PURPOSE, SCOPE, PRINCIPLES

Purpose

Consistent with the intentions and goals of *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, this policy framework aims to provide a foundation for collaborative action to improve the quality of ESL education in schooling nationally.

To achieve this aim, the policy framework has two goals:

developing common understandings about ESL education in the context of the national English literacy effort

The policy framework outlines shared understandings about ESL students and ESL teaching and learning necessary for the provision and development of high quality ESL programs in schools. It describes the unique position which ESL education occupies in the context of English literacy education for all learners.

setting common directions for improving English language and literacy outcomes for ESL learners

The policy framework establishes common directions for improving English language outcomes for students learning English as their second or additional language, as part of the national effort to raise the literacy standards and outcomes of all students. It also provides for an agreed basis for State, Territory and Commonwealth investment in quality ESL provision.

Scope

This policy framework has relevance for both sectors of schooling (government and non-government) where ESL support is provided in response to identified student need. It covers all stages of schooling from the first year of school to Year 12, and encompasses students entering the school system at any stage with diverse levels of English language competence. The interface of schools with other education and training sectors, including links with early childhood is included to recognise the growing interdependence of the sectors within the context of lifelong learning as a policy goal for all Australians.

The policy framework recognises that State and Territory education authorities have different program and policy approaches to delivering ESL education in order to best meet the diverse needs of ESL learners at a local level.

Principles

The following principles underpin the implementation of the policy framework.

English as the national language

English is the national language of Australia. Proficiency in English is necessary for an individual to participate fully in Australian society.

Shared responsibility

Achievement of optimal educational outcomes for ESL students is a shared responsibility of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

Access to full participation

All ESL learners have the right to access and fully participate in the broad range of schooling experiences at all stages of schooling. They are entitled to supplementary and specific support to develop the English language and literacy skills necessary to achieve optimal education outcomes.

Equitable outcomes

Measures used to assess and report on the outcomes of ESL learners take account of the pathway of second language learning. With appropriate ESL support the English language and literacy outcomes of ESL learners improve, and over time can match those of other student groups.

Culturally inclusive curriculum

Curriculum is developed which values the perspectives of students' diverse cultures. It recognises the value of the students' prior linguistic, social and cultural learning as a resource for new learning and skills transfer as well as an asset in its own right.

Provision of high quality ESL programs

High quality ESL programs are targeted to meet the identified needs of ESL learners and focus on achieving specified English language and literacy outcomes. They are characterised by explicit teaching of the target language and by flexible delivery and continuity of provision. They are informed by teacher understandings about second language learning theory, the English language, literacy and the cultural demands of the curriculum, and the present capacity of their ESL students to meet these demands.

Commitment to continuous improvement

Development of ESL program policy, planning and delivery at all levels is informed by regular evaluation and research.

ESL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA - THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Australia's current cultural and linguistic diversity is demonstrated by the variety of languages other than English spoken as a first language by students. ESL education is the nation's strategy for addressing the specific English language learning needs of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse school population.

ESL programs were first developed in Australia as specific purpose English language programs, to ensure that migrant students, and later Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, were assisted to participate in and achieve at school. These programs are now part of a broader commitment to addressing identified and significant barriers to educational success such as low socio-economic status and low attendance and retention rates.

ESL students usually communicate in a home language other than English and are assessed as requiring additional English language assistance to participate effectively in their formal schooling. ESL students are widely dispersed and reside in urban, rural and isolated communities. They enter the school system with language skills and cultural and cognitive abilities, bringing to the task of learning a range of linguistic and cultural resources that contribute to their English language and content learning.

ESL for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

As the Indigenous peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a unique place in Australian society. There are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and dialects and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not speak English within their family and community groups. A large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students live in remote areas.

ESL programs respond to the recognition that specialised and culturally-appropriate interventions are required to cater for the English learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students both in urban and remote area contexts

ESL for students from immigrant backgrounds

ESL students from immigrant backgrounds may come from overseas countries themselves or be born in Australia to parents who have recently arrived from overseas or parents who are themselves Australian born but speak a language other than English in the home—that is they may be second and third generation Australians. It should be recognised that students for whom English is a second language may require on going English language support for a number of years, and even Australian born, or second generation students from language backgrounds other than English, may need support, whilst not immediately identified as a prime target group.

Over the last three decades significant changes have occurred in the source countries for migrants to Australia. There has been a decline in the numbers coming from English-speaking countries and increases in absolute numbers and the range of source countries which are non-English speaking. Consequently schools provided for a greater number of linguistic and culturally diverse communities than previously. Immigration intake categories have also changed significantly with the greatest changes to intake categories occurring during the 1990s. Source countries for refugees have changed as has the nature of trauma faced by refugees.

Students from language backgrounds other than English are now more dispersed across Australia in response to changing profiles in the immigration intake and the movement of first, second and third generation families away from areas of initial migrant settlement. Changes in the numbers of migrants, their visa status and migrant category, country of origin and place of settlement all affect the level of ESL provision required in schools.

ESL student population

Of a total school population of 3, 143, 000 approximately 387 000 students in infant, primary and secondary schooling come from homes where the primary language spoken at home is a language other than English (1996 ABS census).

In the 1996 National Report on Schooling in Australia, the number of students identified as receiving some form of ESL assistance in all States and Territories was 256, 533 students. This includes any newly arrived students who have completed initial tuition funded under the ESL for New Arrivals program. This figure also includes students whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or a creole. It does not include Aboriginal English speakers. It also does not include students whose first language is English and whose basic need is access to the language and literacy demands of the curriculum.

These figures do not represent the total populations of ESL students in Australian schools as they do not include those ESL students who are ineligible for Commonwealth ESL assistance or ESL students who do not receive ESL support. Statistics which indicate the size of the group who require, but are not in receipt of, ESL support are not available.

The table on page 5 provides more detail on the distribution of Commonwealth funded ESL students by State/Territory by educational sector (Government, Catholic and Independent) for the years 1991 and 1996.

Distribution of ESL Students Eligible for Commonwealth ESL General Support Funding for 1991 and 1996 by State/Territory and by Education Sector

State	Government		Catholic		Independent		State Total	
	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996
NSW	78,094	75,954	17,754	50,334	1,870	2,779	97,718	129,067
VIC	33,490	42,177	39,471	37,501	2,747	2,345	75,708	82,023
QLD	6,611	5,070	9,021	5,461	309	993	15,941	11,524
SA	18,780	9,902	1,773	2,772	183	1,138	20,736	13,812
WA	2,716	4,688	807	6,077	563	779	4,086	11,544
TAS	302	200	205	210	9	30	516	440
NT	n/a	2,379	n/a	532	398	489	398	3,400
ACT	520	2,885	656	1,800	0	38	1,176	4,723
Total Sector	140,513	143,255	69,687	104,687	6,079	8,591	216,279	256,533

Source: National Report on Schooling in Australia 1991 and 1996

n/a - Statistics not available at the time of publication.

Commonwealth ESL Programs

The Commonwealth provides financial assistance for ESL education through the following programs:

English as a Second Language - New Arrivals

The English as a Second Language - New Arrivals (ESL - NA) program assists students who are Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia, who have recently arrived in Australia and whose first language is not English. These students are eligible for ESL-NA funding where their English proficiency is assessed as such that they require intensive English language assistance in order to participate fully in mainstream classroom activities.

Each eligible student attracts a once-only payment which is paid to the education authority responsible for the provision of the student's initial course of intensive English instruction.

In 1998, the Commonwealth committed \$34, 580, 000 in funding under the ESL-NA program.

Literacy and Numeracy Program

The aim of the Literacy and Numeracy Program is to foster the acquisition by all students of appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. Funding is targeted at students who are educationally disadvantaged in terms of their literacy and numeracy outcomes. This may be due to a range of factors including a language background other than English. ESL Students are a target group within this program.

In 1998, \$165, 238,000 was made available to education authorities through the Literacy and Numeracy Program. The funds are allocated to State and Territory education authorities according to a combination of two mechanisms one of which applies the former ESL- General Support mechanism.

English as a Second Language - Indigenous Language Speaking Students

The English as a Second Language - Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ESL-ILSS) program facilitates the entry of Indigenous students into education by providing intensive English language tuition to each eligible student. The target group for this program is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are commencing formal schooling in English for the first time, and who live in communities and homes in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are heard and spoken, and who are assessed as unable to participate in the classroom in English.

Each eligible student attracts a once-only payment which is paid to the education authority responsible for the provision of the student's initial course of intensive English instruction.

In 1998, \$7 300 000 was provided to education authorities under the ESL-ILSS program. The ESL-ILSS program is currently funded until the end of 1999.

Planning for the provision of ESL

Changes in Commonwealth migration policy, State and Territory educational policy and settlement demographics all have an influence on the number and type of students requiring assistance as well as on the nature and location of ESL provision. These changes have direct consequences on resourcing, planning and implementation of ESL programs.

Australia's response to often unpredictable global events, such as refugee and humanitarian emergencies has a bearing on its immigration program and as a consequence the enrolment of newly arrived students requiring ESL assistance in schools.

As a result of inter-governmental agreements and increasing globalisation of the Australian economy there is also a considerable increase in the numbers of students seeking ESL support who hold temporary residency status. Some of these learners are highly mobile and here for highly variable periods of time, under a variety of international agreements and treaties.

ESL Interface across Education and Training Sectors

The senior years of schooling is characterised by a steady increase in the non-English speaking background students as a proportion of the total school population. This trend is supported by higher retention rates for Non English Speaking Background (NESB) youth compared to English speaking background students and changes in the labour market, youth allowance and the Adult Migrant Education Program.

At the same time there is also an increase in the numbers of adults requiring ESL support within school re-entry and vocational transition programs. These students may fall outside the school funding categories and recent arrival category and may not be registered as job-seekers.

The increasing priority given by Governments to vocational education and training means that schools and ESL learners have opportunities to access a greater range of pathways from school to further education, training and employment. A competency based vocational education curriculum has been adopted nationally. There are a range of new arrangements for apprenticeships and traineeships, workplace learning may now count towards the Year 12 credential and accredited training, and the range of VET providers with whom schools form partnerships has diversified. It is important that all these options and the standards required to achieve recognised outcomes clearly specify the English language skills required and provide appropriate support for ESL students at risk in the transition from school to work for further education and training..

ESL Interface with National Literacy Goals

In March 1997 Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to a national literacy and numeracy goal:

That every child should be numerate and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.

The Ministers also adopted a sub goal:

That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

The development of literacy and numeracy benchmarks is an integral component of the National Plan.

The literacy benchmarks articulate nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for literacy at a particular year level and allow for State and Territory reporting to the Australian community of aggregated student achievement data against common standards to the Australian community.

The April 1999 Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century outlines the direction for the development of Commonwealth, State and Territory educational priorities for improving Australian Schooling for the next century. Its outcomes improvement framework challenges all education systems in their efforts to enable all students to achieve satisfactory outcomes, in particular, those relating to literacy and numeracy.

The National Goals acknowledge that schooling should fully develop the talents and capacities of all students. This includes a commitment that all students will attain "the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level" (Goal 2.2). The Goals acknowledge that schooling should be socially just so that "the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students" (Goal 3.2).

The National Goals for Schooling place particular emphasis on literacy outcomes as a means of determining the effectiveness of schooling and ensuring equity of educational outcomes.

English as a Second Language (ESL) learners are a significant target group encompassed within national commitments seeking improvements in the educational outcomes of all students. ESL education aims to ensure that ESL students attain literacy and numeracy skills at an appropriate level and that the learning outcomes of ESL students improve and, over time, match those of other students.

In summary, the Commonwealth, States and Territories have been providing ESL programs over many decades to meet the English language learning needs of the full range of ESL students throughout Australia. In this context, given the national commitment to achieving outcomes in numeracy and literacy, and the critical contribution which ESL education must make to the national effort in achieving these outcomes, establishing an ESL policy framework is timely.

The next section of this document outlines the goals of the policy framework. These goals underpin a framework for national collaboration and action to ensure ESL takes its proper place in contributing to the national goals for schooling in Australia.

THE GOALS FOR ESL EDUCATION

This policy framework identifies two national goals for ESL education. These are elaborated in turn.

Goal 1 - Developing common understandings about ESL education in the context of the national English literacy effort

ESL education is an essential component of the national literacy strategy. An understanding of the role of specific and targeted ESL programs in achieving higher literacy levels for all Australians, is fundamental to the success of the national literacy effort.

What is ESL education?

Teaching and learning throughout the curriculum takes place in the English language. ESL education provides students with the necessary English language skills to allow learning to take place in English.

ESL education is the provision of teaching and learning programs targeted to meet the English language learning needs of students who are learning English as a second or additional language in the course of their schooling. ESL education encompasses understandings about second language and literacy development and applies them to understandings about teaching, learning and assessment.

The aim of ESL education is to support ESL students' English language learning through explicit teaching and to improve learners' literacy outcomes to a level where they can fully participate in schooling and can successfully pursue further education and training.

ESL education achieves this aim through:

- identification of English language knowledge and skills required by ESL learners for successful participation in learning activities throughout the curriculum
- assessment of ESL learners' English language competence and learning needs to inform targeting and tailoring of effective programs of English language support
- planning, implementation and evaluation of targeted and integrated programs of English language support based on assessment of ESL learners' needs and developing English language competence

ESL education also involves a cultural orientation to the practices and expectations of education and training in Australia. It assists students from diverse cultural backgrounds to become acquainted with these expectations, in a way that develops students' appreciation of themselves as bilingual or multilingual members of a multicultural society, and values and incorporates the skills and cultural orientation of their diverse backgrounds.

ESL education involves:

- a whole schools approach to meeting the needs of ESL learners where ESL specialists and mainstream teachers work together to meet the needs of the range of ESL learners
- access by new arrivals to intensive or targeted new arrivals programs
- provision of ongoing support following an initial intensive program
- employment of specialist trained ESL teachers
- provision of ESL specific materials and resources
- application of second language learning theory to teaching practice.

Who are ESL learners?

ESL learners are those students, who are in the process of learning English as their second or additional language, and, who require specific English language teaching support in order to fully participate in all aspects of the curriculum. ESL learners may commence schooling in Australia at any age and stage of schooling, and at any time of the school year.

ESL learners' backgrounds differ widely.

They may be:

- Aboriginal students or Torres Strait Islander students who speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or dialect, Aboriginal English and/or a creole
- Australian-born students from families of immigrant backgrounds where English is not the main language spoken at home
- Overseas born students – either permanent or temporary residents, both newly arrived and longer term.

ESL learners are a diverse group of students with varying needs who bring to the task of learning a range of linguistic and cultural resources that contribute to their English language and content learning. Throughout their schooling ESL learners are in the process of becoming bilingual or multilingual users of English.

Differences between language and literacy learning in a first language and second language

Learning a second language is different from learning a first language. Learning a second language draws on the skills and understanding of the first language. As a consequence the process of teaching English as a second language differs significantly from the process of developing English language literacy for English speaking students.

Students for whom English is the mother tongue have acquired fluency in spoken English by the time they commence school. The task of schooling is to extend that ability into the written forms of the language as well as continuing to develop oral skills. ESL learners on the other hand are acquiring oral English language at the same time as they are developing skills in written English.

ESL learners approach the task of second language learning in different ways depending upon their personal resources in language and literacy. Some students will be orally fluent only in their first language, while others will be proficient in all aspects of their first language. In most cases this first language proficiency will correspond with the age and stage of schooling of the learner. Some older ESL learners however may not be proficient in their first language due to background factors such as lack of educational opportunities in their home countries or interrupted schooling.

ESL and literacy teaching

In Australian schools successful literacy learning requires the development of high levels of spoken and written English in a variety of domains and formal learning contexts.

For ESL learners, even those who have acquired apparent fluency in oral English, such literacy learning is neither automatic nor certain. Acquiring everyday communicative ability in English, while an essential foundation for learning, does not ensure ESL learners gain control over the formal oral and written language of schooling.

Fundamental to ESL teaching is the idea that second language and literacy learning cannot be left to chance or the mere hope that ESL learners will eventually pick up the language they need for success in school. Effective literacy intervention for ESL students requires teaching practices that address the underlying cultural and linguistic causes of any literacy difficulties which ESL students may experience. Without appropriate specialist teaching support, ESL learners are at risk of reaching a literacy ceiling from which they will have difficulty making further progress at school.

Research^{1,2} indicates that ESL learners usually require up to five to seven years with appropriate support before developing sufficient competence in English to perform academic literacy tasks to a standard equivalent to that of their English speaking peers.

ESL learners require explicit teaching employing ESL strategies, to achieve optimal levels of literacy in English. Whilst all teachers provide frameworks and stage learning to support their students, ESL teachers focus on building specific linguistic scaffolding so that the steps to learning are not insurmountable for ESL learners. Such pedagogy requires a detailed understanding of the critical role of language in learning.

ESL teaching assists learners to become confident and competent users of English through:

- assessing the ESL status and ESL learning needs of students on entry to school
- recognising the variable impacts on students' literacy performance of cultural and experiential factors (such as 'world' knowledge, level and continuity of previous education, whether concepts of print are well developed from first language literacy practices, family literacy practices and characteristics of the first language writing system)
- valuing and building on the ESL learner's first language experience
- highlighting the language and cultural foundations of literacy teaching and learning which are critical to the ESL target group's success in literacy
- focusing on the specific linguistic and cultural demands of the curriculum
- providing structured and appropriately targeted opportunities for ESL learners to develop spoken and written English in the context of real learning tasks.

ESL teaching is a necessary component of any comprehensive literacy strategy in Australia. By addressing ESL learner needs and facilitating their English language development, ESL teaching makes a direct contribution to improved literacy levels of all students.

¹ Cummins J (1984) Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy

² Collier V (1989) How long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in the second language, TESOL Quarterly 23.3:509-530

Goal 2 - Setting common directions for improving English language and literacy outcomes for ESL learners

The following section of this policy framework outlines broad issues affecting the policy, planning and administration of ESL by the Commonwealth, State and Territory education systems. It provides the rationale for common nationally agreed directions for improving English language and literacy outcomes for ESL learners, and informs the proposed framework of action, which follows.

Monitoring the English literacy performance of ESL students - a challenge

As part of the national commitment to improving educational outcomes for students, Ministers have agreed that the literacy and numeracy benchmarks will provide the means of measuring the standards of achievement of all Australian students and their progress towards the relevant national goals for literacy and numeracy.

The agreement to new National Goals for Schooling creates an imperative for the national effort in ESL education. ESL education will play a key role in ensuring that a large proportion of Australian students meets the Goals, so it is important that the contribution ESL education can make in meeting these goals is demonstrated.

ESL learners' diverse entry points to primary and secondary schooling, their differing degrees of second language literacy and their varying exposure to and experience of English, all impact significantly on their reported levels of literacy performance in English. These crucial background factors require specific analysis in order to make fair and valid comparisons with the literacy performance of students from English speaking backgrounds and to make informed decisions about appropriate follow up language and literacy support.

To ensure that ESL students benefit from the national literacy effort, it is essential that strong and effective linkages between ESL education and the National Goals of Schooling and efforts in literacy and numeracy are developed.

A national agenda for reporting in ESL

A national approach is needed to reporting in ESL. Such an approach requires a program of work undertaken collaboratively by jurisdictions with a focus on providing meaningful analysis of the results of the national benchmarking data in relation to ESL learners and on documenting the contribution of the ESL input for ESL learners over time.

This program of work would involve reporting to Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers (CESCEO)/Ministers on the following

- **The literacy performance of ESL learners from available benchmark data:** benchmark data provides a snapshot of student achievement at a particular point in time in relation to standards of literacy and numeracy. These standards relate to achievements of students whose first language is English and to their number of years in school. Adequate analysis of the benchmark data should be informed by an analysis of the performance of ESL students within the cohorts being assessed and supported by appropriate assessment procedures and reporting protocols. This would require an agreed definition of students with an ESL need for this purpose and the disaggregation of ESL student cohort into subsets, in order to provide meaningful information on their literacy performance.
- **Documentation by jurisdictions of their approaches to assessment and reporting of progress in English competence of ESL learners:** such approaches would take into account ESL students' individual starting points in English and background factors as indicated above. This would allow reporting of progress of ESL learning within each jurisdiction. As part of this exercise, jurisdictions could undertake as far as possible to introduce comparable assessment measures.
- **The feasibility of introducing over time, nationally comparable reporting on progress in English competence of ESL students:** such reporting would take into account those differences in English language development that are particular to ESL learners. The equating exercise for assessment procedures for literacy and numeracy has demonstrated how difficult it is to achieve nationally comparable reporting where the assessment tools are different. In the ESL arena jurisdictions could examine, early, any opportunities they could take, to introduce comparable assessment mechanisms. These must be inclusive enabling all learners to demonstrate their ability. Efficiency of assessment and care not to overburden schools would be important considerations. Valid but efficient approaches such as sampling could be explored.
- **The capacity to collect, analyse and make use of data on the English language and literacy outcomes of ESL students:** such data would include data from the national benchmarking project on the literacy outcomes of ESL students as well as data reporting on progress in English of ESL students. This data would provide a valuable resource to inform planning and implementation of national professional development strategies and improve the quality and impact of ESL provision, nationally.

A national agenda for raising the literacy outcomes of ESL students

A national approach is needed to ensure that the information provided by the reporting of ESL outcomes is used to improve the effectiveness of ESL provision.

Such an approach requires a collaborative program of work focussing on those key factors affecting the quality of ESL program delivery. This program of work would involve reporting to CESCEO/ministers on the following.

- **Determination of the total ESL cohort and Equitable Resource Allocation:**
Resourcing of the ESL program needs to be based on a clear understanding of time it takes to develop literacy in a second language, the nature and numbers of students requiring ESL support, the diversity of their needs and their distribution between States and Territories and systems and sectors. This understanding could be achieved through a mapping exercise to determine the diversified nature of learners and a program of work to further develop a policy basis for equitable resource allocation. Such a mapping exercise would more accurately determine the extent of support necessary for the whole range of ESL students including students who:
 - are from a language background other than English who require intensive English language support, but were born in an English speaking country
 - are Australian born from language backgrounds other than English, with limited exposure to English prior to entering school and are in need of intensive ESL support
 - hold temporary residence status and are not full fee paying overseas students.

A full picture of the ESL cohort and the diverse needs of ESL learners within the cohort would provide a basis to consider how to ensure equitable resource allocation.

- **Collaboration on Program Management and Curriculum Development:**
A collaborative national approach to ESL program and curriculum development would provide the opportunity for a greater sharing of materials, resources and approaches to program delivery. A sharing of information about program delivery could assist in improving learning outcomes for all ESL learners. States and Territories could particularly benefit from a collaboration in developing approaches to address common curriculum issues such as meeting the needs of more isolated ESL learners, and examining the ways in which technology has been used to assist with learning. A collaborative national approach to ESL program and curriculum development could yield efficiencies and contribute to increased standards in program delivery.

It is also recognised that the presence of significant numbers of ESL students in Australian schools has implications for the effective implementation of national educational priorities and curriculum initiatives such as literacy and numeracy, early childhood education and vocational education and training. Effective implementation of such priorities and initiatives requires that the English learning needs of ESL students are specifically addressed from their inception.

- **Teacher Education and Professional Development:** The increasing cultural linguistic diversity of the school population, the national priority on literacy and new language learning opportunities offered by advances in technology highlight the need for continued teacher professional educational development in the area of ESL. Effective teacher education requires that all teachers have adequate knowledge of language learning theory and skills in applying ESL strategies to assist the second language and literacy learning of ESL students in their classes. Cross-cultural training is also an essential component in preparing teachers to work effectively in multicultural or bicultural classrooms.

Tertiary institutions with their expertise in preservice and post graduate ESL course development are well placed to support this agenda in partnership with educational systems.

- **Quality Standards, Evaluation and Research:** Continuous improvement of ESL programs requires ongoing program evaluation and research related to English language literacy outcomes of ESL students and recognised best practice in ESL teaching. Measuring the impact of teaching on the English language and literacy outcomes of ESL students requires sustained qualitative and quantitative research.

National collaboration on research issues in ESL will add value to the literacy efforts of individual education systems.

- **Technology to improve ESL support to ESL students:** High quality instructional materials enhance the teaching and learning process. Such materials need to be technologically innovative and updated.

Computer-assisted language learning and assessment allow for increased flexibility of delivery and management of learning. The potential of new information technologies can be harnessed, with national collaboration, to permit expanded curriculum development, greater customisation of computer-assisted language learning and more effective delivery of ESL to remote and isolated areas and to disparate, dispersed and disadvantaged groups of students.

ESL teachers are considering how their work might be reshaped, and research is now beginning to illuminate some of the implications for ESL learners across the curriculum and to identify potential applications in language and literacy development.

New modes and new contexts in ESL teaching and learning will require an investment in teacher training, new materials, new tools and new designs for tailoring learning to meet specific needs more effectively.

The common directions identified above have implications for common action. A framework for such common action follows.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

This framework for action elaborates the common directions which arise out of Goal 2. The common directions fall broadly under two specific objectives with relevant strategies proposed for each. The two objectives are:

Objective 1 - The reporting of progress in ESL

Objective 2 - The raising of literacy outcomes of ESL students

Objective 1 - The reporting of progress in ESL

Common Directions	Strategy
1. Monitor literacy performance of ESL students using existing literacy benchmark data	<p>1.1 Develop a nationally agreed definition of ESL students</p> <p>1.2 Ensure there are mechanisms to accurately identify all ESL learners on entry to school at any level</p> <p>1.3 Develop protocols and guidelines to support appropriate analysis, reporting and use of bench mark data on ESL students</p> <p>1.4 Collect and report literacy outcomes of ESL students from existing benchmark data</p>
2. Develop a process for nationally comparable reporting on the English language and literacy progress of ESL students	<p>2.1 Map systems' current approaches to report on the English language literacy outcomes of ESL students</p> <p>2.2 Identify impediments to collection by systems and schools of data on ESL student's progress in English language and literacy</p> <p>2.3 Investigate systems' ability to undertake nationally comparable reporting on improvements in English language literacy of ESL students relative to their individual starting points based on existing ESL frameworks</p>

Objective 2 - Raising the literacy outcomes of ESL students

Common Directions	Strategy
3. Determine the total ESL cohort and equitable ESL resource allocation	<p>3.1 Undertake a mapping exercise to determine the nature and numbers of students requiring ESL support as a basis for examining options for the most equitable resource allocation</p> <p>3.2 Review support for provision of ESL for all newly arrived students, including those students who gain permanent residency after a waiting period*</p> <p>3.3 Review the current Commonwealth assistance to newly arrived non-English speaking students*</p>
4. Collaborate nationally on program and curriculum development	<p>4.1 Establish a mechanism to allow for ongoing collaboration nationally on ESL program and ESL curriculum development and to maximise the benefits offered by new technologies in the delivery of ESL curricula</p> <p>4.2 Ensure inclusion of the specific needs of ESL learners in all national literacy strategies</p> <p>4.3 Ensure inclusion of the specific requirements of ESL learners in national curriculum and program initiatives, in particular, Vocational Education and Training and Early Childhood initiatives</p>
5. Strengthen the ESL focus of teacher education and professional development	<p>5.1 Develop national standards for the teaching of English as a second language by generalist and specialist teachers in primary and secondary schools for use by tertiary institutions in developing their teacher training courses</p>
6. Promote quality standards, evaluation and research in ESL education	<p>6.1 Develop and trial quality standards frameworks for use by State/Territory systems and schools to incorporate in their continuous improvement processes</p> <p>6.2 Collaborate nationally to ensure improved research and evaluation of ESL teaching, learning and assessment</p>

*Resolutions from the 7th MCEETYA meeting in 1997 allow for the Commonwealth, in consultation with States and Territories, to implement these strategies.

Appendix A : TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP

Ms Katherine Henderson (Chair)	Department of Education, Northern Territory	From February 1999
Dr Harry Payne (Chair)		December 1997- January 1999
Dr. Evan Arthur Ms Colette Colman	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	
Mr Shane Williams Ms Claire Houston	Education Queensland	
Ms Hanya Stefaniuk Mr Michael Michell	NSW Department of Education and Training	
Ms Roslyn Beaton	Department of Education, Victoria	
Ms Marie Dungey	Department of Education, Tasmania	December 1997- December 1998
Ms Marie Ellison		From February 1999
Mr Kostas Fotiadis Mr Mark Williams	Department of Education, Training and Employment South Australia	
Ms Gwenda Steff	Education Department of Western Australia	
Ms Cecil Nielson	Department of Education, Northern Territory	
Mr Tony de Silva (Executive Officer)		