Victorian Government’s vision for English as an additional language in education and development settings
Our vision
For all Victorian education and development settings to equip EAL learners with the English language and literacy skills they need to participate in education, the workplace and community life in the 21st century.
Introduction

Victoria is one of the world’s great multicultural and multilingual success stories. Victorians come from over 200 different countries and speak over 230 different languages. Almost a quarter of us were born overseas. In Victoria, our diversity is one of our greatest strengths - it has built a strong and dynamic economy and transformed the way we live.

Central to our success is the capacity of all Victorians, irrespective of where they come from or where their parents were born, to contribute to society and actively engage in what it has to offer.

Key to this, of course, is proficiency in English. The ability to understand and communicate in English allows Victorians to engage in education, more easily find work, and play an active role as citizens. It opens doors to opportunities, and ensures fairness in who can access them. It also gives Victorians genuine choice when it comes to pursuing further education and training, and building a career.

That is why the Victorian Government is committed to equipping all Victorians with the English skills they need to participate in education, the workplace and community life in the 21st century.

Steady and sustained migration into Victoria is a feature of our multicultural society. Each year our state receives around 35,000 migrants who choose to come to Victoria for a range of reasons including for study, business, family reunion and to be safe. We provide a range of services to support their settlement. English as an additional language (EAL) provision is an essential part of this.

It takes a long time to learn and become proficient in a new language, usually from five to 10 years, and those learning English as an additional language, depending on their age and starting point, require targeted assistance in their educational settings for most or all of that time. This Vision articulates our ambition to ensure consistent and high quality EAL provision across all settings – provision that acknowledges the particular and complex challenges these learners face, that complements concurrent learning in other areas, and that encourages the maintenance of first languages and cultures.

In Victoria, we are advantaged socially and economically by our ability to communicate through our common language of English, and to communicate through many other languages. English is a central feature of our society, and is also important globally. That is why the Victorian Government is determined to give every Victorian, including the newest members of our community, the best possible chance to learn English.
The EAL learner cohort is extremely diverse. EAL learners are of all ages, and come from many different countries and cultures. Some indigenous learners will be learning English as a second or additional language. EAL learners bring a range of different skills and abilities to the task of learning English and are at varying stages of English language acquisition when they begin learning English or arrive in Australia. EAL learners also have varying literacy skills in their first language/s. Many are well educated and have strong first language skills, which gives them a valuable foundation for building skills in English. Others encounter formal education for the first time in Victoria, and may not have sound literacy skills in any language. Furthermore, some EAL learners may be going through significant trauma resulting from refugee and pre-migration experiences, family separation, and subsequent settlement issues. All of these often overlapping factors affect how EAL learners engage in learning, and the support they need to be successful must be considered in EAL provision across all settings.

The diversity of EAL learners requires a diversity of responses from the educational providers and settings supporting them. EAL learners are ever present within educational settings. In many early childhood education and care services, schools and training settings, EAL learners are the majority of the learner cohort. The vast majority of educators, trainers and those working in other professional roles will work with EAL learners at some point in their careers, and for many, their whole careers will be built around working with EAL learners.

It is important to recognise that EAL learners participate in most Victorian education and development settings, whether in metropolitan Melbourne, or regional and rural areas. This is why the Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that all education and care professionals in all settings have the skills and knowledge to deliver effective EAL education. We believe that the education and development of EAL learners must be the responsibility of all educators, and not just EAL specialists or educators who work in settings with a majority of EAL learners.

All educators should consider the different needs and pathways of EAL learners in their practice. They should have the capacity to identify EAL learners, monitor progress, facilitate improvement and apply appropriate pedagogy at appropriate stages. Decision makers, such as principals, service managers and coordinators should have an in-depth knowledge about the value of EAL education and how it can be delivered effectively in their settings and communities. Leadership is key to building setting-wide approaches to planning, delivery and assessment, and to ensuring that the individual needs of EAL learners are recognised and met.

Specialist EAL support is key to the success of EAL education. Educators with specialist EAL qualifications and experience are also central players in helping to embed effective EAL provision in the culture and practice of Victorian settings. They are particularly vital in specialist settings, such as new-arrivals programs, and settings with a high number of EAL learners with complex learning and emotional needs.
‘Leadership is key to building setting-wide approaches to planning, delivery and assessment, and to ensuring that the individual needs of EAL learners are recognised and met.’
The following four principles will guide planning and delivery of quality EAL education:

**Participation and inclusion** – ensuring access to EAL support for all EAL learners regardless of age, background, socio-economic status, first-language ability, English language ability, education level or location

**Quality** – underpinning EAL provision by best-practice teaching, flexible and individualised delivery, consistent and comprehensive evaluation of programs and appropriate monitoring and assessment of learner progress

**Diversity** – responding to diverse needs with diverse approaches, enabling settings to develop programs appropriate to their communities and contexts, and to the needs and circumstances of their EAL learners

**Collaboration** – encouraging locally-driven partnerships among settings and sectors, government agencies, the private sector and community and not-for-profit organisations, to assist those involved in the education of EAL learners to respond to their needs, and to support EAL learners and their families to settle into, and participate in, their new communities.

The Victorian Government’s Vision for English as an additional language in education and development settings forms part of our comprehensive plan to transform and re-focus the way languages, civics, citizenship and multicultural education, are supported and taught in Victorian education and development settings.

This Vision aligns with the Vision for Languages Education by recognising that all learners should be proficient in English, but also engaged in learning other languages. That is why both statements echo the importance of maintaining first languages, and capitalising on the linguistic diversity in our settings to encourage bi and multilingualism.

The two statements can and should be read together. In doing so, we underscore our commitment to strengthening our multicultural society through embedding literacy in our common language, defining our common rights and responsibilities, enhancing languages learning and celebrating our linguistic and cultural diversity.
This Vision has also been developed to complement and build on current state and national government policy positions and frameworks, including:

**Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008**

The declaration focuses on providing equitable learning opportunities for all students across all Australian governments and sectors. It aims to provide access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination, reduces the effects of disadvantage, contributes to social cohesion and promotes personalised learning.


The strategy acknowledges that high-level English skills, along with intercultural skills, and proficiency in at least one language in addition to English are critical for Victorian students. It states that school leaders need to provide programs to meet the additional needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) and new arrival students.

**The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989**

Articles 28 and 29 relate to the rights of children to appropriate education and to the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.


**The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006**

The charter sets out our freedoms, rights and responsibilities. It enshrines basic civil and political rights in law, and requires public authorities, including government schools, and their employees to act compatibly with human rights and to consider human rights when making decisions and delivering services.

**The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, 2009**

The framework advances all children’s learning and development from birth to eight years. It acknowledges the maintenance of first or home languages in the construction of identity, while recognising that children can successfully learn English as an additional language through quality exposure to English, explicit modelling and language teaching.

**The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Companion to the AusVELS, 2012**

The EAL Companion to AusVELS places the learning tasks of EAL learners within the context of the English language and literacy skills that all students need for success across all domains.

**The ESL Framework, 2009**

The adult ESL curriculum framework, comprising 10 ESL Certificates, is used by TAFE and ACE community settings for EAL student assessment.


**The EAL Handbook, 2015**

This handbook provides advice to schools on programs for supporting students learning English as an additional language.

Realising the Vision

The Vision will not be realised without the effective delivery of specialist EAL programs, and the effective inclusion of EAL provision in all education and development settings. This requires matching the needs of EAL learners with successful programs and pedagogical approaches.

Settings should draw their approaches from local and international evidence and best practice, but should also continually evaluate their own methods and programs and adapt them to changing needs, skill levels and circumstances.

What will success look like?

• When all EAL learners are making progress and have access to appropriate support
• When all educators can identify particular learner needs and apply the right approaches to meet these needs
• When EAL learner progress in all settings is accurately monitored using appropriate assessment tools and strategies
• When all educational leaders understand the importance of EAL provision and embed it in their education and care settings
• When EAL learner needs are routinely taken into account when developing and implementing programs at the setting and policy level

Evaluation of EAL provision should consider:

• EAL learner data/results – data such as the time taken to move from early stages of English language acquisition to proficiency, and student movement into vocational education and higher education pathways
• EAL teaching practices and methodologies
• EAL learner participation and retention rates
• Assessment tools and techniques
• Resources/funding – what resources are available, and how they are directed to improving English language and literacy across all programs and at all life stages
• Professional development – professional development for specialists, non-specialist-educators, professionals and leaders and how it builds their capacity to respond to different EAL learners and learner needs
• Qualifications and certification – how certification arrangements at the senior secondary level might be enhanced to better support EAL learners
Strengths and challenges

Strengths

Our Vision builds on strong foundations.

EAL provision has a long history in Victoria. Targeted provision emerged in the 1940s to meet the English language needs of non-English-speaking migrants who came to Victoria after World War II. Since then, specific provision, offered mostly through schools, and through targeted programs for adult learners has supported successive waves of migrants and refugees and has been funded by successive state and federal governments.

Today high quality EAL provision exists in many settings. For example, government schools provide intensive English language programs for newly arrived students, with targeted funding given to schools for students for up to five years. The Catholic sector provides targeted support for EAL learners, with schools receiving funding that takes into account the level of EAL enrolments, and the Independent sector provides funds to schools through the Australian Government’s Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs, and New Arrivals Programs. Many schools which have been educating EAL learners for decades have EAL provision embedded in their curriculum. Early childhood services understand that demonstrating respect and celebrating diverse cultural practices is an important part of supporting all parents and young children to settle into services and engage with programs, and to begin their English language learning. Early childhood professionals provide welcoming, culturally appropriate physical environments and programs, and provide interpreters and information in other languages whenever possible.

Many TAFEs, ACE and VET providers provide accredited EAL programs that prepare adult learners for work and community engagement. Victoria’s training entitlement has encouraged greater and more flexible opportunities for Victorians to gain EAL training, and has contributed to significant growth in participation in EAL programs, such as the Victorian ESL certificates.

Our strengths are not just found in the settings where EAL provision is well established and effectively delivered.

Strengths also exist in the very machinery of our education and development system which we will need to rely upon to extend the quality and reach of EAL provision across the state.

For example, Victorian educators are part of a strong professional development culture, where knowledge, advice and experiences are regularly shared within and across settings. Opportunities regularly exist for educators to improve and diversify their practice.

Victoria also has regular, transparent and targeted assessment and data collection tools and processes, and channels which can advise settings on program development, implementation, assessment, and resourcing for learners with particular needs.

The rapid development of information and communication technology, and its increasing use in settings, is another key strength of our system which should be harnessed in our endeavour to deliver high quality EAL education.

To realise our Vision for EAL education and development, it is vital to build on existing EAL approaches and programs, but also draw on the strengths that characterise education in this state, strengths which enable us to continuously drive improvement and facilitate reform.

There are many services in Victoria providing support and assistance for EAL learners, including the following:

• AMES provides on-arrival settlement support, English language and literacy training, vocational training and employment services. http://www.ames.net.au


• VicTESOL is the professional association for EAL teachers and provides professional learning opportunities. www.victesol.vic.edu.au
Challenges

Realising the Vision will also require us to face, and overcome, some significant challenges.

Valuing EAL provision as more than an add-on – the value of EAL provision needs to be understood more broadly. Where EAL provision is viewed only as an ‘add-on’ to programs developed for mainstream learners, and not linked to mainstream programs, connection among programs, and continuity of learning, is easily lost.

Although specialist programs targeting EAL learners are a central and crucial part of overall EAL provision, an EAL focus needs to be part of all teaching and learning. In all contexts, good EAL provision requires a certain amount of specialist knowledge and ‘language aware’ pedagogy. When all education and care professionals have this knowledge, and when ‘language aware’ pedagogy is embedded in practice across all learning areas, EAL learners will have the best chance to engage in learning, and stay engaged for life.

Training all education and care professionals in EAL provision – Providing educators, all those working with children and young people, leaders and managers in all settings with core knowledge of the needs of those learning English as an additional language is a key challenge. It is vital to ensure that EAL learner needs are understood and met, particularly as learners transition between settings. Overcoming this challenge will demand strong commitment, collaboration and leadership within and across settings.

Catering to diverse learners and learner needs – The English language learning and settlement needs of EAL learners can overlap in intricate ways. Many learners are refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, are in community detention, have experienced trauma, or have settlement issues. Those who have little or no literacy in their first languages, or experience in formal educational settings, like schools, have very particular and complex educational needs.

All learners bring a wealth of life experience and language skills to the task of learning English, and all learners need responses that take into account what they bring to this task and to working in a new learning environment.

Some indigenous learners in Victoria will also be learning English as an additional language, particularly those who have come from interstate, and who have learnt an Aboriginal language as their first language.

International students and students with families here on temporary visas also have a range of particular needs and skills, and often require different approaches to provision from those learners who are settling in Australia.

EAL learners with disabilities will similarly require innovative approaches to provision, that will allow them to build their English language and literacy, and increase participation in general learning.

It is also important to recognise when EAL learners are gifted or talented, and to explore with them, their families and their educational providers, the educational programs and pathways that can enable them to reach their full potential.

Ensuring continuity of provision – EAL learning is a long-term process, requiring on-going responses that not only adapt to, but follow the learners as they move between settings and locations, and reach different transition points in education, work and life.

In recent times, changing settlement patterns into rural and outer metropolitan areas has placed increased pressure on settlement, education and development and language services. It is therefore vital to provide access to quality provision in these parts of the state, but also to ensure that learners can continue learning, as seamlessly as possible. Long-term coordinated support among settings, regardless of sector or location, is needed to ensure that learners reach proficiency in English. The innovative use of ICT can assist in broadening access and provision for learners, and in providing resources and professional development for educators.

Ensuring access to senior secondary certification – EAL learners can face significant challenges in completing their senior secondary education, especially if they enter the school system following little or disrupted schooling. A review of the provision of EAL programs at the senior secondary level will ensure that access to senior secondary education is available to all EAL learners.
**Supporting learners as they settle into Australian society** – EAL learners face cultural differences in Victorian education and development settings and in society in general, and supporting them to become actively engaged and connected to education and the broader community is another key challenge. A focus on intercultural understanding, in particular on ensuring they understand expectations around education in Victoria, will not only help learners to improve their English, it will help them thrive in their settings and beyond.

**Engaging families and communities** – Children and their families understand how important it is to learn English, but may have very different expectations about how an additional language is best learnt, how long it actually takes, and how families can be involved in the process. Engaging in an open dialogue with families and communities on the benefits of particular kinds of EAL provision, and how EAL programs connect to current and further education, and to work, is vital. This dialogue should include a strong focus on the benefits of maintaining their first languages. Making the connection between family support and quality EAL provision should happen as early in the process as possible. In this context, the work of bilingual workers in assisting families to understand the education and training system is invaluable.

**Supporting and celebrating bilingualism** – Another message that needs to be reinforced among families, and communities and education and development settings, is that the maintenance and development of learners’ first languages is as important as learning English, and that education and development can continue in more than one language. Learners who have strong first language and literacy skills not only have a stronger basis for learning English, but will benefit personally from maintaining and improving literacy in their first languages. Learning English should not come at the expense of maintaining a first language. It is our challenge to ensure that learners have opportunities to maintain their first language skills and wherever possible, to continue to develop skills in their first language. This is particularly vital in the early years, where research shows that cognitive and thinking skills in a child’s first language is key to the construction of identity, and developing literacy skills in other languages, such as English.

The benefits of speaking more than one language are increasingly clear, and as EAL learners gain literacy in English, they stand to benefit from their ability to speak more than one language. Supporting bi and multilingualism keeps linguistic diversity alive in Victoria, and by actively facilitating it encourages all Victorians to learn languages.
Future action

Community agencies and volunteers offer valuable additional services to schools in the settlement process, and also in developing English skills that promote educational success and social inclusion.

Future action

The Government’s commitment to improving EAL education and development will require sustained and coordinated effort from many partners.

Building partnerships

Building partnerships, or learning communities, among settings and sectors is central to realising our Vision.

Working together from the outset will identify service gaps, and avoid duplication in delivery. It will allow partners to collect similar data and information, which can be analysed, evaluated and compared as a basis for program development.

Partners can also pool and target resources towards cohorts of most significant need, such as refugee children and young people.

Education and development settings should work with each other, but also with settlement services and community groups, to meet the initial English language needs of newly arrived families, as they settle into their new communities, and as they progress through our system.

Partnership should embrace pre-service teacher training and professional development bodies to ensure that teaching resources are shared, and that the value of EAL provision is recognised by educators early.

ICT can also be used to link settings and services, help them share data and develop complementary responses.

Innovative and successful approaches developed in one setting or service need to be shared with others.

The more we share our skills, knowledge, information and experiences, the more cohesive and coordinated our EAL provision will be.
Next steps

The following actions will position EAL education and development settings to take the next steps in realising the EAL Vision:

• Identify action that each sector can implement to contribute to the Vision for EAL provision
• Collect case studies of quality EAL provision to publish online to share best practice across education and development settings
• Build on current practice to develop a strategic plan for EAL provision in schools that will focus on access and equity, gaps in provision, review of funding models, teacher capacity, and effective use of all sources of funding to build sustainable support for EAL learners
• Review current provision for EAL learners at the senior secondary level
• Identify mechanisms and processes so that sectors/settings can improve data collection and ensure continuity of provision across settings, and locations
• Identify and provide case studies of early childhood settings and school programs that promote retention of learners’ first languages, as they learn English

• Develop an on-line EAL Toolkit for identifying the level of English language proficiency of students in schools, to inform learning and teaching
• Develop a cross-Departmental interpreting and translating approach to ensure that information is easily accessible by EAL learners and families
• Undertake research into the capacity of teachers, paraprofessionals and educational leaders to deliver EAL education, and to determine the professional development required to meet the complex and changing needs of EAL learners
• Develop good practice resources for EAL provision in the higher education and skills sector to encourage training providers to form partnerships and boost professional development.