

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

RESPONSE OF THE WEST AUSTRALIAN  
GOVERNMENT TO:

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO *CHILDREN MISSING OUT – EDUCATION  
SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS ON 457 VISAS STUDENTS  
WITH A DISABILITY*

# **THE WEST AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE - CHILDREN MISSING OUT - EDUCATION SUPPORT FOR: STUDENTS ON 457 VISAS - STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Government commends the Education and Health Standing Committee for its report entitled *Children Missing Out – Education Support for: Students on 457 Visas, Students With a Disability*.

The Inquiry was undertaken to examine the issues surrounding the education of children whose parents enter Western Australia on 457 visas and, specifically, to inquire into:

1. the level and type of educational support given to children of Subclass 457 visa holders; and
2. how funding for school children who have English as a Second Language (ESL) can effect [sic] a child's social and educational development.

The report raises for government the important issues of priorities, obligations and equity in the provision of ESL programs for the children of 457 visa holders. The report is useful for its extensive consideration given to the evidence and submissions, as well as the 23 recommendations provided.

The data on numbers of children attending Western Australian public schools whose parents entered Australia on 457 visas are worthy of consideration in the content of the Standing Committee's report. Over the last five years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of students attending Western Australian schools whose parents have entered this country on 457 visas and thus an increased responsibility on government to consider its obligations to these children.

Information provided by the Department of Education indicates that, in 2005, there was a total of 96 students requiring access to programs in Intensive English Centres in the metropolitan area, or equivalent programs in regional areas. In 2006, this number increased to 303 students. In 2007 the total number of students requiring support was 656. In 2008, the number of students requiring support was 1 294, and in 2009 the number was 2 288.

This increase occurred while overall student numbers in Western Australian public schools remained relatively stable over the same period. The Department of Education considers there will continue to be substantial demand for access to ESL services over the period 2010-2013.

These data give some indication of the extent of the issues that need to be addressed. These issues are complex and have been evident for some years, under both the previous State Government and the current State Government. This also is a matter for the Commonwealth Government; and the State Government actively

continues to pursue the matter of Commonwealth funding for children whose parents enter Australia on 457 visas.

Support for students of parents who enter Australia on 457 visas is a matter of importance for this Government. The data above give a clear indication of recent increases in enrolments of students in government schools, requiring intensive English support, whose parents enter Western Australia on 457 visas. Consideration also needs to be given to students on 457 visas in non-government schools. The actual and predicted numbers of students requiring such support mean that the Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office and independent schools must examine their service provision in this area and look at the ways in which these students, whose parents contribute to the economy and prosperity of Western Australia, can best be supported to learn English.

In addition, consideration must now be given to the implications of the sweeping changes to the Skilled Migration Program, announced by the Commonwealth, subsequent to the release of the Committee's report. It appears that the State will have greater control through a State Migration Plan that will enable Western Australia to prioritise skilled migrants to meet its labour requirements. In return the government will need to recognise its obligations to the children of these migrants.

The Education and Health Standing Committee is therefore to be thanked for its timely report. In providing a response to the recommendations in the report, it will be necessary to outline what is already in train to assist the children of parents on 457 visas to learn English, as the increase in numbers has been recognised for some time. So, while the report is both welcomed and timely, it can be acknowledged that the issues arising from the increasing population of students in our schools requiring intensive English support are already being, and will continue to be, addressed as a matter of priority.

## **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Education and Standing Committee made findings and 23 recommendations in relation to the support required to enable children in Western Australian public schools, whose parents entered Australia on 457 visas, to have equitable access to specialist programs.

For the purpose of making this response, the 23 recommendations are grouped into six broad categories. A response will be provided according to these categories, which are:

1. the Department of Education's 2009 internal review of ESL services;
2. funding and eligibility criteria to access Department ESL programs;
3. provision of information on levels of funding for the Department's ESL programs;
4. building the capacity of mainstream teaching staff;
5. continued negotiations with the Commonwealth Government; and
6. reassessment of the *Schools Plus* processes and implementation of the *Inclusive Schools Review*.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the recommendations under these headings.

## **1. THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S 2009 INTERNAL REVIEW INTO ESL SERVICES**

### **Recommendation 1**

In recommendation 1, the Education and Health Standing Committee has recommended that the Minister make available to the Parliament, the Department of Education's report on its review of ESL education in Western Australia, the Minister's response to the review's recommendations and the Department's response.

In 2009, the Department was aware of the growing humanitarian entrants and ESL 457 visa students and the resultant shortfall between funding and actual costs. The Department recognised that the needs of children on 457 visas required careful consideration. On this basis the Department undertook a routine internal review into the provision of ESL services in public schools. While the Committee's report did not extend to non-government schools, it appears that it would be worthwhile to undertake a similar review in these schools to ascertain the extent of the issues faced in this sector.

The Department's consideration of its internal review into the provision of ESL services in public schools is being used as the basis for developing an action and implementation plan for the ongoing provision of services and support to ESL students. The plan will detail actions to enhance program provision taking into account key policy directions following the de-merger with the Department of Training and the progress of the Independent Public Schools initiative. The action and implementation plan will enable more effective and efficient delivery of ESL services to support teachers and students across public schools.

The plan will be framed around four strategic drivers for improvement and will propose ways for reinvestment of the existing financial resources as well as alternate program provision models.

The four strategic drivers are:

- A system-wide coordinated approach;
- ESL teaching and learning is effective and evidence-based;
- School leadership and whole-school engagement; and
- Monitoring of student and school performance.

Improved models of program provision will focus on sharpening the current delivery of service, and include:

- a review of the current eligibility criteria to access program provision;
- improved levels of support for mainstream schools;
- improved systems to monitor student performance; and
- incorporation of ESL learners' needs into all Departmental literacy initiatives.

This recommendation is accepted subject to the review's internal status as a continuing working document and associated timelines. The internal review, which remains a working document, will be considered by the Department's Corporate

Executive. The issues that are raised there, and any actions that arise, once they have been endorsed by that group, will be considered by the Minister. Following that, it will be provided to the Education and Health Standing Committee. In addition, information will be sought and advice provided on the situation in non-government schools.

## **2. FUNDING AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO ACCESS DEPARTMENT ESL PROGRAMS**

### **Recommendations: 2, 3, 5, 15, 17, 19**

The Standing Committee has made a number of recommendations regarding ESL program funding and eligibility criteria with a view to enabling all ESL students, regardless of visa category, access to an appropriate level of ESL specialist support.

The Government concurs in principle with the recommendations that call for access to ESL support to be provided on the basis of identified educational need. This principle should always underpin the allocation of resources to education.

In particular, recommendation 3 calls for the ESL funding model used in Western Australia to provide ESL education for all students who need it, including 457 visa students. As part of its internal review into the provision of ESL services in public schools, the Department is considering a range of funding models and has examined practices in other States and Territories (highlighted by the report of the Standing Committee).

The Committee's recommendation that a funding model be established that supports the provision of English as a Second Language managers, ESL coordinators, ESL teachers, ESL support staff, infrastructure and resources in Western Australian schools (recommendation 2) has cost implications that require further analysis regarding provision of information on existing funding levels, budget savings, revision of criteria, additional Commonwealth funding, flow-on effects to funding grants for non-government schools and adoption of any means-tested cost-recovery regime. This is part of the budget process. In addition, the specific nature of this recommendation raises operational issues that would be best resolved by the Department of Education.

Alternative models of ESL provision will consider the needs of students who are currently deemed ineligible for ESL support, including those on temporary visa 457. This addresses the Standing Committee's recommendation that the ESL funding model used in Western Australia should provide ESL education for all students who need it, including ESL visa students.

As recommended, provision and access will also be considered in light of this State's obligations under the National Education Agreement (recommendation 15) and weighed against the Standing Committee's recommendation 19, which calls for the Department of Education to consider implementing a means-tested cost recovery program to obtain payment of fees by 457 visa holders for ESL support in schools.

The Standing Committee examined practices in other States and Territories with respect to provision for students' ESL needs. In New South Wales and the

Australian Capital Territory, legislation allows a means-tested fee to be administered for students whose parents are in Australia on a temporary visa. This is an option that also is being considered by the Department and it is expected that a range of options will be put forward in due course.

The Standing Committee's recommendations, relating to funding and eligibility criteria to access ESL programs, highlight the complexity of these matters. The Standing Committee recommends variously that:

- access to English as a Second Language programs should be provided on the basis of educational need; a sound principle, previously acknowledged;
- the Department of Education should review funding received from State Treasury with a view to allocating additional funding to the provision of ESL programs for temporary visa 457 students; and
- the Department should consider means testing to recover the cost of specialist English as a Second Language programs for temporary visa 457 students.

In principle, the need for a funding model for the provision of ESL 457 students in Western Australia is accepted. Each recommendation on its own has inherent merit and is worthy of close consideration. When viewed as a suite, however, the complexities that surround funding for specialist English as a Second Language programs for temporary visa 457 students become readily apparent.

A balanced and comprehensive approach will require careful consideration of each of these recommendations individually and collectively so that the Department of Education and the non-government sector can make best use of their available funds while meeting the State's obligations under the *National Education Agreement* and, where viable and responsible, consider whether a user-pays model will be consistent with the underlying principle that provision of service should be commensurate with educational need.

Further, on the matter of funding, the Standing Committee's recommendation that the Department of Education review the amount of funds received from the State Treasury for 2009 and direct a proportion of monies received to the provision of ESL programs for ESL 457 students (recommendation 5) is a matter that the Department is considering in relation to the range of funding options alluded to previously.

### **3. PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON LEVELS OF FUNDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S ESL PROGRAMS**

#### **Recommendations: 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 16**

The Standing Committee made a range of findings and provided a number of recommendations related to the levels and sources of funding provided for the Department's English as a Second Language programs. Funding is, of course, a key issue for consideration, as is highlighted in the Standing Committee's consideration of funding levels and eligibility criteria for access to specialist programs. Likewise, the source of funding for specialist English as Second Language programs requires close consideration, which is why the Standing Committee has noted that, in the past, the Commonwealth formula for State funding has excluded additional funding for ESL programs for 457 students.

Where information is readily available, these recommendations are accepted.

Accordingly, the Standing Committee has recommended that the Minister ascertain whether the Commonwealth's funding formula under the *National Education Agreement* adequately provides resources to Western Australia to provide ESL Programs to ESL 457 students (Recommendation 4).

As indicated previously, the Department of Education continues to pursue the matter of funding for temporary visa 457 students with the Commonwealth Government. It appears that the Commonwealth Government does not sufficiently share responsibilities in relation to support for the specific learning needs of children whose parents enter Australia on 457 visas. Families who enter Australia on 457 visas contribute to the nation's wealth and economic development and the Commonwealth Government has a responsibility to ensure that proper arrangements are in place to support the needs of such families, particularly in relation to the principle of providing for the education of children according to their educational need.

In relation to this recommendation, the Government has raised and will continue to pursue the matter of funding with the Commonwealth Government, with a view to achieving a more satisfactory funding outcome for Western Australia.

The Standing Committee has recommended that the Department of Education review its funding allocation to ascertain the amount of monies dedicated to ESL programs for ESL 457 students in 2009, 2010 and 2011; and report to Parliament on the amounts allocated (Recommendation 6).

Work in relation to this recommendation has been underway for some time now. The allocation of funding to programs is subject to the Department of Education's budget review processes and is reported to Parliament through the Parliamentary estimates process. The Department's budget position also is reported to Parliament through its Annual Report, which is, of course, produced on a financial year basis, rather than a calendar year basis, as recommended by the Standing Committee.

Recommendations 8-11 and 13-14 relate to the provision of detailed information by the Department of Education to the Minister for Education to assist with the further investigation into, and reporting on, ESL provision for students on visa 457. As previously indicated, the Department of Education has undertaken an internal review into the provision of ESL services in public schools. Where the review is readily able to provide information that conforms to the Committee's request, and the information is directly pertinent to the consideration of future provision based on educational need, it will be included in the information to be provided to the Education and Health Standing Committee, consistent with the response to recommendation 1 (above). This information will assist in clarifying funding for, and provision of, ESL services for students on visa 457.

Recommendation 16 recommends further reviews at departmental, district and local levels to determine student numbers and costs. As far as resource constraints allow, this information will be provided where it assists with deliberation concerning future provision for ESL services for students on visa 457.

In relation to this recommendation, the Minister has already provided data on the number of temporary visa 457 students in the preamble to the response to the Standing Committee's report. As indicated, the Department will provide the other data referred to in this recommendation. As far as time and effort permit, the Department of Education Services will also seek similar information for non-government schools to determine the extent of demand in the non-government sector.

The Government welcomes approaches to policy making that are based on sound evidence. The provision of further quantitative information, as suggested by the Committee, will assist in the creation of an evidence base for future consideration and decision-making in the provision of ESL services.

#### **4. BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF MAINSTREAM TEACHING STAFF**

##### **Recommendations: 7 and 18**

The Standing Committee's report suggests that mainstream teachers lack the confidence to provide education to temporary visa 457 students who have specialist English as a Second Language support needs. Accordingly, the Standing Committee has recommended that the Department of Education reviews the current provision of ESL education in Western Australia to ascertain whether mainstream teachers can be better equipped to facilitate the education of temporary visa 457 students (Recommendation 7).

In association with the identified need to continue building the capacity of mainstream teaching staff to meet the needs of temporary visa 457 students, the Standing Committee further recommended that the Department of Education investigates establishing a volunteer program to assist with the delivery of ESL education in those schools with high concentrations of non to minimal English speaking students (Recommendation 18).

Catering for the needs of temporary visa 457 students who require specialist English as a Second Language programs is a facet of education to which all school staff contribute. Public schools in Western Australia have culturally diverse student populations, and I know that West Australian teachers value such diversity and are already highly skilled in supporting the range of learning needs that ensue.

With respect to the Standing Committee's recommendations 7 and 18, for 2009/10, the Department has committed additional funding of \$200,000 from the ESL program to provide a comprehensive professional learning program for mainstream teachers. This provision will enable approximately 60 teachers to be trained in internationally recognised courses, including *ESL in the Mainstream*, *Language and Literacy*, *ESL and New Arrivals*, and *Powerful Ways*. Accordingly, recommendation 7 is accepted.

The Western Australian *English as a Second Language/English as a Second Dialect Progress Maps (ESL/ESD Progress Maps)*, a monitoring and assessment tool designed for ESL students, will be published for schools by the end of February 2010. This resource will be available online and will enable all teachers to monitor and plan for students' second language progress. Professional learning to support



the use of the *ESL/ESD Progress Maps* is currently being developed and will be available to school staff from late in Term 1, 2010.

Further teaching and learning resources will be made available to school staff throughout 2010 via the Department's website and the availability of these resources will be made widely known to teachers and school leaders. In addition, teachers will have access to ESL resources produced both locally and nationally through the Department's website.

Currently, two volunteer programs, the *School Based Volunteer program* and *Sparks*, operate in schools that have enrolled large numbers of ESL learners, including temporary visa 457 students. These programs will continue to offer support to students and their effectiveness will be monitored by the Department.

## **5. CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**

### **Recommendation 12**

The Standing Committee reported that the mechanism for determining National Education Agreement funds was unclear to the Committee and it appears that the process applicable to the provision of specialist education for students on temporary visa 457, remains unchanged. On this basis the Standing Committee has, therefore, recommended that the Minister for Education advise the Commonwealth that the existing formula used to determine *National Education Agreement* funding does not adequately cater for the provision of specialist education such as ESL programs for Subclass 457 students.

As indicated previously, the State Government considers that the Commonwealth Government does not meet its responsibilities in relation to support for the specific learning needs of children whose parents enter Australia on 457 visas.

The State Government will continue to pursue this matter with the Commonwealth Government in relevant Ministerial forums. Accordingly, this recommendation is accepted.

## **6. REASSESSMENT OF SCHOOLS PLUS PROCESSES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS REVIEW**

### **Recommendations: 20, 21, 22 and 23**

The Standing Committee found that the current eligibility criteria for *Schools Plus* funding in government schools was inadvertently excluding some students with disabilities, including students on temporary visa 457, who otherwise required significant, and often ongoing, teaching and learning adjustments. The Standing Committee recommended that the Department review the current eligibility criteria for *Schools Plus* and the current use of Indicated Groups, with a view to adopting a purely functional assessment approach focusing on educational needs.

These findings point to the principle of access being provided according to educational need.

Specifically, the Standing Committee recommended that the Minister for Education report to the Parliament on the implementation, by the Department of Education, of recommendations proposed in the Inclusive Schools Review (Recommendation 20).

The *Inclusive Schools Review (Pathways to the future: A report of the review of educational services for students with disabilities in Government Schools)* was completed in 2004. A ten point implementation plan was developed by the Department in response to the *Inclusive Schools Review's* recommendations. This plan and the seven underlying principles of quality, inclusive education have been progressively implemented since 2004, and continue to inform the Department's work. As a result, this recommendation continues to be implemented.

The Standing Committee recommended that the Department of Education initiate a review of the current eligibility criteria for *Schools Plus* and the use of Indicated Groups with a view to adopting a purely functional assessment approach focusing on educational needs (Recommendation 21).

A reassessment of *Schools Plus* began in July 2009 and will be completed in March 2010. The purpose is to simplify both the application process and the mechanism for allocating funding. As a result, this recommendation is accepted.

In responding to this recommendation, it should be made clear that temporary visa 457 students always have been eligible for funding under *Schools Plus* and remain so. Notwithstanding, the Standing Committee's recommendation in relation to *Schools Plus* and its intent of ensuring that temporary visa 457 students are not inadvertently excluded from access to such funding is timely.

The Standing Committee recommended that the Department of Education review its current application process for *Schools Plus*, with a view to simplifying the process to decrease the amount of time and resources required to complete funding applications (Recommendation 22). This recommendation continues to be implemented.

This has been a focus of the reassessment of *Schools Plus* and has resulted in the development of a simplified process that operates on-line. This process will be trialled in Independent Public Schools in 2010 with a view that from 2011, all public schools can use an online process to apply for funding to meet the identified needs of children who require significant teaching and learning adjustments.

From 2011 *Schools Plus* funding will be transferred to schools following verification of eligibility through use of the online checklist. This formula-based allocation of funds will allow schools to respond more immediately to the requirements of special needs students, including temporary visa 457 students.

The Standing Committee has recommended that the Minister for Education negotiate with ministerial counterparts in other jurisdictions as to what steps can be implemented to ensure that there is a greater level of parity between the States and Territories concerning eligibility criteria for financial support and resourcing for programs similar to *Schools Plus* (Recommendation 23). This recommendation is accepted and has informed the internal reassessment of *Schools Plus*.

As part of the reassessment of *Schools Plus*, the Department of Education has taken into account consideration of processes and models of funding across all other States and Territories to ensure that definitions and funding criteria have national currency. This cross-jurisdictional collaboration will continue in order to ensure that parity is maintained to the extent that this is sensible and practicable.

While *Schools Plus* is designed for government schools, further research may be required to determine if non-government schools with temporary visa 457 students with ESL needs require consideration. Such consideration would, of course, need to be in the context of a wider budgetary process.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

In conclusion, the Education and Health Standing Committee is to be commended for its report: *Children Missing Out – Education Support for: Students on 457 Visas, Students With a Disability*.

The Standing Committee's report raises a range of issues and concerns about priorities, obligations and equity. While these issues may previously have been identified in various forums, the report's recommendations will assist the Government in considering future policy options in this area. In turn, this will help to ensure that provision for children attending Western Australian public schools and non-government schools, whose parents entered Australia on 457 visas, and who require specialist English as a Second Language Programs, continues to meet demand. The Standing Committee's recommendations also will help to ensure that Western Australian schools and teachers are well equipped to provide for the learning needs of temporary visa 457 students.

As such, the Standing Committee's report is highly valuable in taking forward educational provision for children attending Western Australian schools whose parents enter Australia on 457 visas, and ensuring that this will be provided in a way that is both principled as well as appropriately resourced and managed.

I look forward to continuing to provide advice in various forums on the Government's progress in this area.

## **APPENDIX**

### **1. THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S 2009 INTERNAL REVIEW INTO ESL SERVICES**

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education make available to the Parliament the Department of Education and Training (DET) report on its review of ESL education in Western Australia and the response of the Minister and DET to the review's recommendations.

### **2. FUNDING AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO ACCESS DEPARTMENT ESL PROGRAMS**

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education establish an adequate funding model that provides for the provision of English as a Second Language (ESL) managers, ESL coordinators, ESL teachers, ESL support staff, infrastructure and resources in Western Australian schools.

#### **Recommendation 3**

The ESL funding model used in Western Australia should provide ESL education for all students who need it, including ESL 457 students.

#### **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training review the amount of funds received from the State Treasury for 2009 and direct a proportion of monies received to the provision of ESL programs to ESL 457 students.

#### **Recommendation 15**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training revise the current eligibility criteria for enrolment in the different types of ESL programs, in light of its obligations under the National Education Agreement as the Committee finds that ESL 457 students are eligible to attend Intensive English Centres.

#### **Recommendation 17**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training change the access criteria for ESL programs so that access to them is granted in accordance with the educational needs of the student, rather than a visa category.

#### **Recommendation 19**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training consider implementing a means-tested cost recovery program to obtain a payment of fees by 457 visa holders for ESL support in schools.

### **3. INFORMATION ON LEVELS OF FUNDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S ESL PROGRAMS**

#### **Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education ascertain whether the Commonwealth's funding formula under NEA adequately provides resources to Western Australia to provide ESL Programs to ESL 457 students.

#### **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training review its funding allocation to ascertain the amount of monies dedicated to ESL programs for ESL 457 students in 2009, 2010 and 2011; and report to Parliament on the amounts allocated.

#### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that to assist the Minister for Education with her investigation and reporting on the issue of ESL education for ESL 457 students, that the Department of Education and Training provide the Minister information as to:

- a. the total amount of Commonwealth funding provided to public schools through New Arrivals Program in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009;
- b. the allocation of the funding toward:
  - i pre-primary ESL programs.
  - ii primary ESL programs.
  - iii secondary ESL programs.
- c. the funding formulae used for such programs, where appropriate; and
- d. restrictions placed on the use of that funding.

#### **Recommendation 9**

The Committee recommends that, to assist the Minister for Education with her investigation and reporting on the issue of ESL education for ESL 457 students, the Department of Education and Training provide the Minister information as to:

- a. the total amount of Commonwealth funding provided to public schools through the Recurrent Grants Program, Literacy and Numeracy Special Learning Needs Programs and ESL country areas funding in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009;
- b. the allocation of the funding toward:
  - i pre-primary ESL programs.
  - ii primary ESL programs.
  - iii secondary ESL programs.
- c. the funding formulae used for such programs, where appropriate; and
- d. restrictions placed on the use of that funding.

### **Recommendation 10**

The Committee recommends that, to assist the Minister for Education with her investigation and reporting on the issue of ESL education for ESL 457 students, the Department of Education and Training provide the Minister information as to:

- a. the total amount of State funding provided to public schools, and the programs, or funding mechanism, through which such funding was provided in 2007, 2008 and 2009 for:
  - i pre-primary ESL programs.
  - ii primary ESL programs.
  - iii secondary ESL programs.
- b. the funding formulae used for such programs, where appropriate; and
- c. any restrictions placed on the use of that funding.

### **Recommendation 11**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education undertake a review of the current funding arrangements for ESL programs in Western Australia, with particular reference to the funding of those for ESL 457 students. To assist the Minister with such a review, the Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide the Minister information as to:

- a. the total amount of Commonwealth funding provided under the NEA Specific Purpose Payment for 2009 to public schools, and to be provided in 2010;
- b. the allocation of the funding towards:
  - i pre-primary ESL programs.
  - ii primary ESL programs.
  - iii secondary ESL programs.
- c. the funding formulae used for such programs, where appropriate; and
- d. any restrictions placed on the use of that funding and, where evident, the nature of such restrictions.

### **Recommendation 13**

The Committee recommends that, to assist the Minister for Education with her investigation and reporting on the issue of ESL education for ESL 457 students, the Department of Education and Training (DET) provide the Minister with information as to the:

- a. total amount of additional funding that the DET received for public schools;
- b. the source of such funding;
- c. allocation of such funding by the DET, in particular, the ESL programs and schools that benefited from the additional funding; and
- d. any restrictions placed on the expenditure of such funding.

### **Recommendation 14**

The Committee recommends that, to assist the Minister for Education with her investigation and reporting on the issue of ESL education for ESL 457 students, the Department of Education and Training provide the Minister information as to the:

- a. total amount of State funding (not sourced from the Commonwealth) and the programs, or funding mechanism, through which such funding was provided to public schools in 2007, 2008 and 2009 for:

- i pre-primary ESL programs.
  - ii primary ESL programs.
  - iii secondary ESL programs.
- b. the funding formulae used for such programs, where appropriate; and
- c. any restrictions placed on the use of that funding.

#### **Recommendation 16**

The Committee recommends that:

- the Minister for Education conducts a review at a department, district and local level to determine the number of ESL students within the State, with particular reference to the number of ESL 457 students.
- the Minister provide to Parliament details concerning the per student cost of providing the different types of ESL programs to ESL 457 students.
- the Minister provide to Parliament information about the amount of funding dedicated by the Department of Education and Training to providing ESL programs for ESL 457 students in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

### **4. BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF MAINSTREAM TEACHING STAFF**

#### **Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training review the current provision of ESL education in Western Australia to ascertain whether mainstream teachers can be better equipped to facilitate the education of ESL 457 students.

#### **Recommendation 18**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training investigate establishing a volunteer program to assist with the delivery of ESL education in those schools with high concentrations of non to minimal English speaking students.

### **5. NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**

#### **Recommendation 12**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education advise the Commonwealth that the existing formula used to determine NEA funding does not adequately cater for the provision of specialist education such as ESL programs for Subclass 457 students.

### **6. REVIEW OF SCHOOLS PLUS PROCESSES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS REVIEW**

#### **Recommendation 20**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education report to the Parliament on the implementation, by the Department of Education and Training, of recommendations proposed in the Inclusive Schools Review.

**Recommendation 21**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training initiate a review of the current eligibility criteria for Schools Plus and the use of Indicated Groups with a view to adopting a purely functional assessment approach focusing on educational needs.

**Recommendation 22**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training review its current application process for Schools Plus, with a view of simplifying the process to decrease the amount of time and resources required to complete funding applications.

**Recommendation 23**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education negotiate with her counterparts in other jurisdictions as to what steps can be implemented to ensure that there is a greater level of parity between the States and Territories concerning eligibility criteria for financial support and resourcing for programs similar to Schools Plus.