

NSW Department of Education

# Multicultural Policies and Services Program Report

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2023-2024

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## About us

The NSW Department of Education's vision is to be Australia's best education system and one of the finest in the world, preparing young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society. The department's goal, as outlined in [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#), is to ensure an equitable and outstanding education system for all students and strengthen trust and respect for the teaching profession.

As the largest provider of public education in Australia, the department has responsibility for delivering high-quality public education to two-thirds of the NSW student population and caters for the needs of students, staff and communities from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. The department respects and values Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Nation Peoples, and aims to treat all people with respect, courtesy, fairness and honesty.

The department supports learners from early childhood through to lifelong learning. It supports and regulates the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, delivers preschool, primary and secondary education through NSW public schools, works closely with the non-government school sector to ensure the delivery of a high-quality and equitable education for all students, builds pathways for lifelong learning, and supports the delivery of a skilled workforce for NSW through VET and higher education.

This report outlines the department's progress in meeting the education needs of culturally diverse NSW against targets identified in the Multicultural Plan. This progress is mapped to the outcomes of the department's Plan for NSW Public Education and Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP) focus areas.

## Plan for NSW Public Education focus areas

1. Advance equitable outcomes, opportunities and experiences
2. Strengthen trust and respect for the teaching profession and school support staff
3. Give children the best start in learning
4. Deliver outstanding leadership, teaching and learning
5. Strengthen student wellbeing and development
6. Provide meaningful post-school pathways.

## MPSP focus areas

Service delivery	Planning	Leadership	Engagement
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## Culturally diverse school communities

NSW is one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world, and this diversity is reflected in NSW public school communities. Students, parents, carers and employees come from a wide range of birth countries, speak many different languages, hold a variety of religious beliefs and identify with many ancestries and cultures. In 2023, over one third of students (306,269) in NSW public schools came from a language background other than English (LBOTE). In department preschools<sup>1</sup>, over half of all enrolments (approximately 51.2%) were LBOTE students. Similarly in 2024, 309,446 students in NSW public schools came from a LBOTE with approximately 51.6% LBOTE students in department preschools.

LBOTE students are those students who speak a language other than English at home and/or have a parent/carer who does. This very large and diverse cohort includes students who are born in Australia or overseas. It includes native speakers of English, students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), newly arrived students from migrant or refugee backgrounds and international students.

**Table 1 - LBOTE and EAL/D learner enrolments in NSW public schools**

Student cohort	No. of students	% All students	No. of students	% All students
	2023	2023	2024	2024
LBOTE students <sup>2</sup>	306,269	38.6%	309,446	39.3%
EAL/D learners <sup>3</sup>	199,509	25.4%	203,762	26.1%

<sup>1</sup> Refers to 101 preschools attached to government primary/infant schools and the John Brothie Nursery School. Not included are the government funded community preschools and long day care centres that provide a preschool program, which provide the majority of preschool education in NSW.

<sup>2</sup> Source: LBOTE Census 2023 & 2024. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, NSW Department of Education.

<sup>3</sup> Source: EAL/D Collection 2023 & 2024. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, NSW Department of Education.

**Table 2 – LBOTE children in NSW Public Preschools**

Cohort	% All children 2023	% All children 2024
LBOTE children <sup>4</sup>	51.2%	51.6%

**Table 3 – Newly arrived learners and students from refugee backgrounds in NSW public schools**

Student cohort	2023	2024
Newly arrived EAL/D learners <sup>5</sup>	11,074	10,704
Students from refugee backgrounds <sup>6</sup>	11,636	12,500
Recently arrived students from refugee backgrounds <sup>7</sup>	2,852	3,979

<sup>4</sup> Source: LBOTE Census 2023 & 2024. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. NSW Department of Education

<sup>5</sup> Includes students in Intensive English Centres and the Intensive English High School. Newly arrived students are students who have arrived in Australia within the last 6 months (18 months for kindergarten students) and need intensive English language support. They can enrol at any time during the school year. Enrolments for 2024 are year to date figures, current at November 2024. Source: New Arrivals Program and Intensive English Program enrolment data, 2023 & 2024, NSW Department of Education

<sup>6</sup> Includes all students from refugee backgrounds enrolled in NSW government schools. Source: NSW Department of Education enrolment data, 2023 & 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Recently arrived students from refugee backgrounds have been enrolled in an Australian school for less than 3 years. Source: EAL/D Annual Survey, 2023 & 2024, NSW Department of Education

**Table 4 – LBOTE student enrolments by language in NSW public schools, 2023-2024**

Language	No. of students 2023	% LBOTE 2023	No. of students 2024	% LBOTE 2024
Indian	69,788	22.8%	72,440	23.4%
Hindi	15,318	5.0%	15,564	5.0%
Urdu	9,142	3.0%	9,571	3.1%
Bengali	7,616	2.5%	7,889	2.5%
Tamil	6,811	2.2%	6,957	2.2%
Punjabi	6,521	2.1%	6,757	2.2%
Nepali	5,529	1.8%	6,170	2.0%
Gujarati	5,267	1.7%	5,365	1.7%
Telugu	4,602	1.5%	4,745	1.5%
Malayalam	3,308	1.1%	3,553	1.1%
Sinhalese	1,936	0.6%	1,975	0.6%
Marathi	1,780	0.6%	1,800	0.6%
Kannada	1,126	0.4%	1,183	0.4%
Indian (other)	832	0.3%	911	0.3%
Chinese	47,080	15.4%	47,831	15.5%
Mandarin	30,364	9.9%	31,541	10.2%
Cantonese	13,701	4.5%	13,454	4.3%
Chinese (other)	3,015	1.0%	2,836	0.9%
Arabic	40,890	13.4%	40,290	13.0%
Vietnamese	16,015	5.2%	16,239	5.2%
Filipino/Tagalog	10,447	3.4%	10,842	3.5%
Korean	8,165	2.7%	8,073	2.6%
Samoan	7,755	2.5%	7,709	2.5%
Spanish	7,805	2.5%	7,686	2.5%
Greek	5,951	1.9%	5,401	1.7%

Language	No. of students 2023	% LBOTE 2023	No. of students 2024	% LBOTE 2024
Dari	4,376	1.4%	4,885	1.6%
Assyrian/Chaldean	4,742	1.5%	4,592	1.5%
Indonesian	4,580	1.5%	4,559	1.5%
Tongan	4,474	1.5%	4,474	1.4%
Persian (excluding Dari)	3,988	1.3%	4,320	1.4%
Thai	4,092	1.3%	4,159	1.3%
Japanese	3,747	1.2%	3,791	1.2%
Turkish	3,630	1.2%	3,575	1.2%
French	3,426	1.1%	3,347	1.1%
Italian	3,607	1.2%	3,259	1.1%
Russian	3,143	1.0%	3,121	1.0%
Portuguese	2,951	1.0%	3,022	1.0%
German	2,962	1.0%	2,907	0.9%
Khmer	2,862	0.9%	2,819	0.9%
Macedonian	2,951	1.0%	2,740	0.9%
Serbian	2,436	0.8%	2,325	0.8%
Mongolian	1,431	0.5%	2,133	0.7%
Fijian	1,714	0.6%	1,697	0.5%
Māori (New Zealand)	1,790	0.6%	1,670	0.5%
Aboriginal English	1,427	0.5%	1,512	0.5%
Afrikaans	1,465	0.5%	1,467	0.5%
Kurdish	1,313	0.4%	1,402	0.5%
Polish	1,285	0.4%	1,239	0.4%
Croatian	1,183	0.4%	1,088	0.4%
Other	22,798	7.4%	22,832	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306,269</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>309,446</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Education Statistics and Measurement Unit, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, NSW Department of Education.  
Extracted in November 2024

Notes:

- LBOTE data is collected each March as part of the Language Background other than English (LBOTE) collection.
- The census of LBOTE students was conducted in all NSW Government schools, including preschools, Intensive English Centres and distance education centres (except hospital schools and Environmental Education Centres).
- A student's country of origin cannot be inferred from their language background, as country of origin is where the student was born, while language background refers to the languages spoken by the student or their parent/carer at home.
- For students who multiple languages are spoken at home, priority is given first to the primary language spoken by the student, and then the language spoken by the parent/carer. This reflects the language that is entered into the first available field in ERN and is at the parent or carer's discretion, not the school.
- LBOTE data for preschool students is not included.
- % of all students is calculated using all enrolments at the time of the LBOTE collection.
- This table shows languages representing the background of 1,000 or more students enrolled from the 2024 LBOTE collection.
- 'Other languages' groups are those languages with fewer than 1,000 total LBOTE students in 2024.



## Terms and acronyms

The following terms and acronyms are commonly used in this report:

**Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG):** A not-for-profit organisation that provides advice on all matters relevant to Aboriginal education and training.

**Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO):** A teacher who is trained to support the principal in promoting anti-racism education in the school and addressing reports of racism.

**Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE):** A specialist area of the department that analyses education programs and outcomes across early childhood, school, training, and higher education.

**Culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse:** Describes the wide range of cultures, ethnicities and ancestries represented in our communities as well as the range of different languages spoken, and religious beliefs held by community members.

**English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D):** Describes students whose first language is a language or dialect other than standard Australian English who need additional support to develop proficiency in English.

**Full-time equivalent (FTE):** Refers to staffing allocations and positions. 1 FTE describes a full-time position, and fractional allocation refers to part-time allocations.

**Higher School Certificate (HSC):** The credential awarded to secondary school students who successfully complete senior high school level studies in NSW.

**Language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE):** Describes students who speak, or have a parent or carer who speaks, a language other than English at home.

**Multicultural education:** Describes a range of programs and services implemented in NSW public schools that respond to schools' cultural diversity. This includes programs that promote intercultural understanding and address issues of racism as well as programs that meet the specific needs of LBOTE students, EAL/D learners, including newly arrived students and students from refugee backgrounds, and culturally diverse communities.

**Newly arrived EAL/D learners:** Describes EAL/D learners who have arrived in Australia in the last 6 months (or 18 months for kindergarten students) who have limited proficiency in English and need intensive English language support.

**Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS):** A not-for-profit organisation that provides culturally relevant psychological treatment and support, and community interventions, to help refugees.

**Students from refugee backgrounds:** Describes students who are refugees, asylum seekers, who have refugee backgrounds, or have had refugee-like experiences.

## Reporting on our targets

The department's activities and achievements are reported against the targets set out in its Multicultural Plan:

1. Our LBOTE, EAL/D and refugee students are well supported in their transition to school, further education and employment, and achieve positive educational outcomes.
2. Students from all cultural backgrounds report a greater sense of belonging, inclusion and wellbeing at school.
3. Our staff are well equipped to support the education of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, including EAL/D and refugee students.
4. Our staff are well equipped to promote student wellbeing, intercultural understanding and to address racism.
5. Our programs and services are informed and improved by a strong evidence base on how to best support the needs of our culturally diverse schools.
6. Our schools are effectively resourced to meet the diverse needs of their LBOTE students and culturally diverse communities.
7. Our leaders are well equipped to promote student wellbeing, intercultural understanding and to address racism.
8. Our systems identify and equitably provide for our culturally diverse school communities and student populations.
9. Our stakeholders work with us to improve student learning and wellbeing.
10. Our schools are able to communicate effectively with parents and carers who do not speak or understand English well.

## Target 1

Our LBOTE, EAL/D and refugee students are well supported in their transition to school, further education and employment, and achieve positive education outcomes.

### Transition to school in the early years

The 3-year Preschool Multicultural Support Program commenced in December 2021 to promote the inclusion of children from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse and refugee backgrounds. The program has 3 streams providing:

- tailored cultural support for children from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds attending preschools
- live webinars and custom resources for educators about culturally inclusive practice in the early years, and
- an online resource library of existing resources, webinar recordings and custom resources about culturally inclusive practice in the early years.

In 2023, the project delivered 680 hours of bicultural inclusion support to 33 preschools across NSW. Additionally, from January to June 2024, 540 hours of bicultural inclusion support was delivered to 33 preschools across NSW. The program includes direct support through visits to children and educators from a cultural support worker in a service, educational webinars and access to a community of practice. The program aims to uplift the capacity of the sector in supporting the needs of children from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. This state-wide initiative has provisions in place to support children and services in metropolitan, regional and remote locations.

In 2021, the Supporting Families into Early Childhood Education pilot project was commissioned by the department in partnership with the Department of Communities and Justice under the NSW Government Brighter Beginnings strategy. The program has been an important pilot program to deliver a place-based funding model to identify and better understand the non-fee barriers to early childhood education faced by children and families experiencing disadvantage. The pilot was decommissioned in December 2023, with learnings from the pilot program enabling the department to explore more effective mechanisms to support vulnerable families to engage with early childhood education.

The Best Start Kindergarten Assessment, Bilingual Assessment professional learning program builds teachers' insights into their students' literacy and numeracy skills in English and home language. This optional bilingual assessment provides additional information about LBOTE students' English language skills, strengths and gaps in conceptual knowledge; first language fluency and literacy; as well as insights into literacy and numeracy practices at home. Supporting guidelines were also created to support the implementation of bilingual assessments in schools.

In 2024, 426 department staff across 9 locations participated in the Planning for High Quality Transition to Primary School professional learning roadshow. This whole-day professional learning embedded evidence-based practice, practical strategies and resources for staff to effectively plan and support transitions to primary school inclusive of newly arrived children, including children from refugee backgrounds and their families during this key milestone of schooling. Through building staff capacity, schools are equipped to ensure young children from refugee backgrounds have the best start in learning.

### **Schools as Community Centres – Supporting children and families transition to school**

There are currently 48 Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) projects located in 48 NSW public schools in communities experiencing marked challenges of disadvantage. SaCC programs are led by a local facilitator who coordinates and manages a range of community engagement initiatives and programs supporting children and their families' connection and sense of belonging to the school community. One of 4 key outcomes of the program is that children will experience a successful transition to school.

In 2023, 6,904 children aged 0-8 years of age regularly participated in a SaCC program. 1,277 of these children identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander and 2,346 identified as having a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse background, including 293 families from refugee backgrounds.



Images source: NSW Department of Education Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) Annual Report 2023

In 2024, the department announced the delivery of 100 new public preschools by 2027, which will be co-located on NSW public school sites. 82 of the schools selected have a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse population greater than 10%. A site selection process was undertaken during 2023-2024 which prioritised schools in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage where children are experiencing developmental vulnerability and there is insufficient supply of preschool places. This will create up to 4,620 places, allowing more than 9,000 additional children to benefit from quality early childhood education in the year before school.

## Transition to school support for new arrivals and refugees

Newly arrived EAL/D learners and students from refugee backgrounds are provided with intensive English tuition and transition support to prepare them for schooling in NSW. Newly arrived secondary and Year 6 aged students in greater Sydney, Wollongong and Armidale receive intensive English tuition in an Intensive English Centre or the Intensive English High School before enrolling in a mainstream secondary school. Primary aged new arrivals and secondary aged new arrivals in areas without an Intensive English Centre instead receive intensive English tuition at their local school through the New Arrivals Program.

In 2023, a total of 11,074 newly arrived students, including 2,418 students across 15 Intensive English Centres (IECs) and the Intensive English High School, received intensive English and transition support. In 2024 to date, 10,704 newly arrived students, including 2,910 students in IECs and the Intensive English High School, have been supported. Of these, 1,962 students in 2023 and 2,062 students in 2024 were from refugee backgrounds.

In 2023-2024, Bilingual School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) at schools and intensive English sites, provided first language and bicultural support to newly arrived students, including those from refugee backgrounds, and facilitated communication between schools and students' families.

In 2022, the Intensive English Outreach program was established. The initiative is a collaborative program designed and co-delivered by specialist staff from the New Arrivals Program (NAP) Rural and Regional team and the Central Sydney Intensive English High School. The program specifically caters for the learning needs of newly arrived students in rural and regional settings. In 2023, 23 students accessed the program and in 2024, 45 students accessed 8 lessons delivered daily.

The Transition to High School report automates student data and information sharing as students transition from primary school to Year 7. The report includes a range of student demographic, enrolment, attendance and learning information, including a students' EAL/D phase, language

spoken at home and refugee status, improving how schools work together to support students' continuity of learning and wellbeing as they transition to high school.

Refugee Action Support Partnerships are a joint initiative of the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation, Western Sydney University, University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University and the department. In 2023, 35 university students studying education provided homework support and assistance with academic language and literacy to 96 students from refugee backgrounds across 8 high schools and 2 primary schools. In 2024, 30 university students studying education provided tuition to 80 students across 6 high schools and two primary schools.

### **Transition Programs – Cabramatta High School and Intensive English Centre**

Cabramatta High School provides support to students who enter the IEC through the 'Settling In' wellbeing program which is delivered by the school psychologist, supported by bilingual SLSOs, with students and families linked to external agencies where appropriate. While in the IEC, students participate in skills workshops such as art therapy, cooking skills, HPGE mathematics, wellbeing sessions with community services, gardening skills, sports skills and STEM education.

For students in transition from the IEC to mainstream high school, there is the 'Leaver's Program' which is delivered by a teacher from the IEC and an EAL/D teacher from the high school. This strengths-based program prepares students for high school education, with students developing skills to navigate the expectations, opportunities and challenges of the next phase of their education. In their first term of high school, the students receive ongoing support with the 'Helping Hand Program' which is delivered by the same teachers, providing students with the confidence to share their experiences of high school and successfully transition to their new learning environment.

For post-compulsory school-aged IEC students and targeted students in the high school, at the end of each semester the school collaborates with Technical and Further Education (TAFE) to provide an opportunity for students to explore the possibilities of vocational education. In Term 4 of each year, the IEC delivers a Year 11 bridging course to support students transitioning to Year 11 the following year. The bridging course assists students to develop the required skills in literacy and numeracy to navigate the demands of senior study.

All programs are regularly evaluated based on feedback from staff and students resulting in evidence-informed decisions for future planning.



## Careers education and employment pathways

Ngaarr Dhuwi Girls Academy Program aims to provide a mentoring program to support female Aboriginal students in years 7-12 to make active choices toward realising their full potential in all aspects of their education, development, cultural identity and wellbeing. By the end of 2023, the program was delivered in 6 NSW public schools.

The department engaged the Clontarf Foundation to provide mentoring and support services for 4,633 male Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in Year 7 to 12 across 59 NSW public school sites.

The Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Grant (EDAEG) adopts a number of strategies to develop and support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people through the creation of training and employment opportunities. Promoting diversity, innovation and service responsiveness in the NSW workforce, the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Grant subsidises the salary, development and support costs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees in public service agencies and local government authorities, in particular, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (OCHRE) Opportunity Hubs aim to provide Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people from year 5 - 12 with the confidence and knowledge to follow a supported pathway between school and further education and/or employment. Opportunity Hubs support linkages between education and sustainable jobs for Aboriginal young people.

Ready Arrive Work (RAW), a partnership initiative with JobQuest Penrith and the department, provides work readiness education for students from refugee backgrounds in NSW public schools in metropolitan Sydney and rural and regional NSW. The program assists high school students from refugee backgrounds to explore vocational learning pathways in a supportive and positive environment. It aims to equip students with a better understanding of employment, workplaces, career planning and pathways which can lead to a successful career after completing school. In 2023, RAW was implemented in 6 schools and assisted 108 students. In 2024, RAW was delivered in 21 schools and assisted 283 students.

The Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program bridges the gap between secondary schools and industry, enabling students to explore a broad range of career pathways. With a strong commitment to inclusivity, RIEP prioritises support for students from disadvantaged and students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. 26 field officers work closely with schools and local industry across NSW to create tailored programs that meet the needs of students and employers. Special attention is given to designing initiatives that cater to

diverse student cohorts, ensuring equitable access to career exploration and development opportunities. Since 2023, RIEP has delivered over 151,000 career exploration opportunities to students from 799 NSW schools, connecting them with over 2,600 industry partners.

In 2023, RIEP worked with the department to provide industry connections and financial support for the RAW Careers Expo in Southwestern Sydney, focusing on students from refugee backgrounds. The event connected over 180 students from 9 local schools with 15 industry partners from sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Automotive, Defence, Transport, Aged Care, Hospitality and Retail Trade.

The department funds The Bread and Butter Project under the Social Impact Outcomes Fund which aims to support women facing disadvantage through job-focused social enterprises. The project supports women from a refugee background to secure sustainable employment by providing workplace-based training in artisan baking, support to complete a Certificate II and wrap-around support. The project has supported 7 women through the program and into permanent employment.

The department provides free Supervisor Workshops to employers who directly supervise apprentices or trainees. Supervisors are made aware of variations across cultures, how to support young people from culturally, linguistic and religiously diverse backgrounds in the workplace, and how workplaces can reasonably accommodate cultural and religious practices.

In 2023, the Careers NSW School Trials delivered school-based career advice services in 61 schools. The program offered career consultation appointments and mock interview for students in years 9 to 12; careers information sessions for parents and carers of high school students; and group careers exploration session for students in Year 7 and 8. The program was delivered across metropolitan, regional schools, rural and Connected Community schools. Appointments and information sessions with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contracted providers could be specifically organised for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. Interpreter services were available if required. In 2023, over 9,000 students engaged in the program.

In 2024, the Apprenticeship and Traineeship (A&T) Roadmap commenced, informing the strategic direction for the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships in NSW through to 2026 and beyond. It emphasises the importance of A&T as a key pathway to sustainable employment and lifelong learning for students and school leavers. The roadmap ensures the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships is both efficient and effective, improving learning outcomes for participants, increasing completion rates, and addressing the evolving skills needs of industry across NSW. With a strong focus on equity, the roadmap prioritises support for underrepresented groups, including women and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. By strengthening the recognition of prior



learning, expanding foundational skills programs, and offering flexible delivery models, it aims to reduce barriers to participation. The use of data-driven approaches ensures interventions are targeted effectively, providing greater opportunities for equity groups to engage with and successfully complete apprenticeships and traineeships, aligning with the broader goals of the NSW training system.

The Bert Evans Apprenticeship Scholarship provides financial assistance to apprentices who face hardship. The scholarship recognises the barriers some individuals face and provides targeted support to ensure they can complete their apprenticeships successfully. The scholarship is available to applicants from metropolitan and country areas, including apprentices from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. By helping apprentices who have experienced hardship, the scholarship aligns with the department's broader goals of promoting equity and access, ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed in their chosen pathways.

The Get Back in the Game program provides one-on-one place-based case management for young people aged 15-21 years, who are not in education, employment or training, or are disengaged from their schooling. It is a service stream that seeks to support young people to find pathways into education, employment, or training through providing holistic support that varies based on the needs of each individual client, including referrals to support services, assistance with enrolment into Vocational Education and Training (VET), supporting connections to apprenticeship, traineeship and employment opportunities, and ongoing support for the first 6 months of their education or employment. In 2024, 20 of the 923 enrolments into the program were for young people from a language background other than English spoken. Around 50 young people identified as having a non-indigenous/non-Caucasian background, these young people mainly identified as Pacific Islander or Middle Eastern.

The Asylum Seeker Employment Skills Support (ASESS) program is an economic development outcome-based program that assists eligible participants by addressing the barriers they experience in finding sustainable and skilled employment. The program is structured around the Language, Education and Employment Plan (LEEP), a multi-stage progression system designed to support participants at various stages of their employment journey. The ASESS program offers a range of initiatives to help participants to develop suitable career paths and help them gain sustainable and skilled employment.

Inclusive Career Strategies for Students from a Refugee Background professional learning is delivered in Term 4 each year to careers advisors, transition advisors, teachers and EAL/D teachers supporting senior students, school counsellors, year advisors and executive staff, school-based apprenticeship and traineeship officers. The session provides information about the refugee

experience and its impact, demonstrates collaborative practices within schools and offers strategies on how to effectively communicate with students from refugee backgrounds and their families. In 2023, 44 teachers from 37 schools participated in the professional learning. The 2024 professional learning will be delivered in late November.

The Educational Pathways Programs Innovating Careers Education initiative aims strengthen careers education to ensure students have access to sound advice, great training pathways and work opportunities. In 2023-2024 the initiative delivered a range of industry-specific events, careers exploration experiences, parent community and industry engagement sessions and professional learning for school staff, including:

- **Pasifika student career exploration** - 105 Pacific Islander and Māori students participated in career mentoring sessions with over 20 volunteers and Pasifika mentors from a range of careers including NRL players, firefighters, police, AI project officers, and school principals. Students visited a mini careers expo and networked with organisations including Western Sydney University, Commonwealth Bank, NSW Council for Pacific Communities, Australian Museum, Talk2meBro, and School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs).
- **Pasifika and Māori Wayfinding Teacher professional learning** - teachers explored strategies to increase engagement and guide career pathways for Pasifika students, including increasing educational aspirations. The professional learning provided information in Pasifika Value Systems in Australia, career and educational aspirations and strategies for engagement through Understanding and Nurturing the Vā.
- **Parent TAFE and University Pathways Tour** – parents visited higher education campuses to learn more about VET and academic pathways to higher education for their children, including interactive information sessions about studying at TAFE NSW, Western Sydney University (WSU) and University of Wollongong campuses.

### **Educational Pathways Program (EPP)**

#### Barbering workshop at Bonnyrigg High School

Students were taught how to barber by social media sensation and barber educator, Mohomad El Haj (MJ) from Ministry Barbers, whose story and mentorship inspired students to explore post-school pathways. During the Look & Learn Barbering Workshop, students learnt some essential barbering skills including correct clipper grip, posture, fading and blending, as well as soft skills like customer service, communication and teamwork.



Source: NSW Department of Education, X post, @dizdarm, 2024

In 2023-2024, the Educational Pathways Program (EPP) delivered five Regional Conferences to engage school communities in discussion and capture feedback to guide program improvement as part of effective evaluation. Bringing together educators, students, and industry representatives, the conferences highlighted the importance of hearing from student and parent voices and explored new strategies for enhancing VET across EPP schools. The conferences included panel discussions with principals, students, parents and industry representatives, focusing on the opportunities and challenges within their own regions and shared valuable insights and advice based on their diverse experiences.

## Transition to further education

The department provides seed-funding through the Collaboration and Innovation Fund to university-led projects that support priority areas of the NSW Higher Education Strategy and the department's Plan for Public Education. Funding has been awarded for the following programs:

- The University of NSW Start @ Uni project aims to address the academic skills gap between high school and university for students from regional and remote areas, culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds and those of migrant or refugee backgrounds. The project delivered an open access student-facing digital resource, Uni Ready, which launched in November 2023, and a resource for teachers of first-year university students to build their awareness of inclusive teaching practices. These resources are supporting smoother student transitions and promoting equity in higher education.

- The University of New England (UNE) Oorala Academy is a place-based education strategy in regional NSW high schools to prepare Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander students for higher education. The project has increased engagement with schools across NSW, as well as local Aboriginal organisations, to support pathways into university studies. The project has also supported UNE academics to develop community-based projects, including the Life Story project which builds on the curriculum available through the English 1 module. The UNE pathways team has used the project to promote pathways into UNE degrees to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learners.
- The Australian Catholic University (ACU) Uni Step-Up program provides eligible senior secondary students the opportunity to study two first year university units for free while still in school, with the option of articulating into a related undergraduate degree on completion of the program. The program targets people from low socio-economic backgrounds and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities. The first cohort commenced the program in September 2023, with 71 students receiving offers to study a related undergraduate degree at ACU. A second cohort of 84 students commenced in July 2024. The program is expanding to include non-recent school leavers, with a focus on women.
- Western Sydney University (WSU) Innovation program aims to increase the engagement of females and individuals from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities across the entrepreneurship landscape. The project will include a suite of initiatives including the Academy U Schools engagement program, targeted streams of the Venture Makers entrepreneurship training program, targeted streams with Launch Pad accelerator programs, and research commercialisation investments. The Academy U program partnered with 15 secondary schools and provided pre-university education programs to 6,500 students who are female and/or from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. In 2023-2024, 243 students participated the Venture Makers programs, 633 students participated in entrepreneurship workshops, 35 founders had their entrepreneurial projects accelerated by the Launch Pad Accelerator program, and WSU met its goal of investing in five research commercialisation projects led by female researchers or researchers from culturally, linguistically or religiously diverse backgrounds.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 3, & 6

MPSP focus area: Service delivery & Engagement

## Target 2

Students from all cultural backgrounds report a greater sense of belonging, inclusion and wellbeing at school.

### Promoting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Languages and Cultures

The NSW AECG and the Department of Education work in partnership to deliver and support the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest initiative. A Nest is a network of communities bound together by their connection through an Aboriginal Language. A Nest Footprint is a geographical location or a designated area in which schools may access funding to teach the relevant Aboriginal language and culture under the Nest structure. Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are designed to provide a continuous learning pathway for Aboriginal students. The Language skills and knowledge of Aboriginal Language and culture holders and/or speakers from local Aboriginal communities is critical to the continuing development and support of teaching and learning in the Nests. There are currently seven Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, with the hopes to grow and expand in the future.

#### **Gamilaraay Language and Culture Program – Walhallow Public School**

Walhallow Public School has 100% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student enrolment. The Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) facilitates the school's Gamilaraay Language and Culture Program. The program involves weekly lessons that are a part of the regular school timetable. The students learn Gamilaraay Language, the Language of the Gamilaroi Nation, to connect to Culture and support the revitalisation and preservation of Aboriginal Languages. The students continue to share knowledge with their families and the wider community. Language is taught through songs, games and visual resources. Students are regularly asked to sing at community events.

In 2023, the school consulted community, staff and students to develop a set of school wide learning dispositions based on a local cultural story. The artwork created to support the implementation of the dispositions was designed by the students, along with past student Kayleb Waters from Ngurrambaa. Yiluwidi, the Blue Flyer, spreads the messages of the learning dispositions around the school of what it means to be a 'great learner'.

The school partnered with Primal Fitness, Ngurrumbaa and Balabalaah Maarru to provide our students with unique wellbeing experiences. Students learnt about being connected to Country through kinaesthetic activities, including building spears, carving coolamons, community yarn ups, fishing at their local fishing hole and learning traditional dance. Connecting with Primal Fitness during the After School Wellbeing Program enabled the students to participate in physical activity, while building self-esteem and developing social skills. Ngurrumbaa and Balabalaah Maarru fostered community engagement through Aboriginal Cultures.

The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre delivered high quality early learning and culturally inclusive resources to 24 Aboriginal pre-schools and pre-schools with significant Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student enrolments.

The department is committed to developing culturally appropriate representations of Country in new and upgraded development, in close partnership with local Aboriginal communities and the AECG. The department endeavours to incorporate local Aboriginal language in naming of physical elements of new schools, wherever possible and with the consent and support of local Aboriginal Elders and community.

## Cultural inclusion in education and care settings

The early education and care sector operates under the National Quality Framework, which includes the National Quality Standards and two national approved learning frameworks, Early Years Learning Framework and Framework for School Age Care. The department's Regulatory Authority staff provide support to education and care services and regulate, assess and rate services that are aligned with these frameworks.

Both learning frameworks promote respect for diversity as a key principle fundamental to curriculum decision-making and achieving positive educational outcomes for children. This principle underpins educators' practices which value the cultural and social contexts of children and their families. The department's Regulatory Authority staff assess and provide support relating to cultural inclusion when visiting services.

The department regulates and supports over 6,100 early education and care services in NSW through monitoring and compliance, assessment and rating, and approval processes. Where required, work is adapted to support the needs of educators and families from culturally diverse backgrounds. Regulatory Authority staff offer interpreters through TIS National, if needed, when conducting service visits.



## Targeted wellbeing programs

The Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) supports the psychological welfare of children and young people of refugee background. STARTTS works in close partnership with education systems and directly with school communities to improve education, employment and mental health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people of refugee background. In 2024, the department approved the expenditure of \$4,600,378 over a five-year period via an agreement with STARTTS to provide targeted trauma support services to promote the safety, well-being and belonging of students from refugee backgrounds and their families through the provision of a school-based support program.

The program includes:

- individual and trauma-informed group-work assessment and interventions
- professional learning and consultation for school staff
- development and support of school clusters to promote partnerships and implement whole-school approaches and systemic changes in schools.

The Refugee Student Counselling Support Team (RSCST) provides direct, secondary and tertiary support to students to build capacity in the provision of refugee support across NSW. The team provides consultation in counselling and complex case support, designs and delivers professional learning and projects, and delivers tailored group interventions to support the safety, wellbeing and belonging of students from refugee backgrounds. The team works with the STARTTS School Liaison Program team and the Multicultural Education team to provide coordinated psychological care for newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds, and with a variety of other agencies to support refugee families. The team also participates in Refugee Education Networks across NSW schools in collaboration with Multicultural Education, STARTTS, local staff and EAL/D teachers to foster support, collaboration, capacity building and networking opportunities for staff in areas with high numbers of students from refugee backgrounds.

In 2023, the RSCST worked directly with 79 schools to build the capacity of staff who support students from refugee backgrounds across NSW. This included the delivery of 121 consultations to provide information and support complex cases and 100 professional learning sessions for 1,233 staff. The team also provided 178 individual and group intervention sessions for students.

In Term 1 to term 3 2024, the RSCST consulted with 58 schools to help support the psychological needs of students from refugee backgrounds across NSW. The team also provided professional learning to support the practice of 916 staff across the state. Resources and training materials

were developed to support school counselling staff to work effectively across diverse cultures and formed part of the new School Counselling Service Induction Hub.

A resource was developed and disseminated to support school counselling staff to enhance their understanding and skills when engaging in psychological assessment with students of refugee backgrounds. A comprehensive guide was also developed and circulated to support staff working with newly arrived students in NSW Intensive English Centres. During the year, the team also explored the implementation of an attachment and play-based classroom intervention (Sunshine Circles®) in several NSW primary schools with high enrolments of students from refugee backgrounds. This involved supporting the training and capacity building of teachers in these schools. Both teachers and students reported highly positive feedback following the program.

The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre has a collection of resources to support school wellbeing programs for students from refugee backgrounds, including flood and fire disaster survivors. These resources were developed in collaboration with Senior School Psychologist leaders to support trauma recovery in the areas of theory, intervention, classroom settings, assessment, supervision, and language and culture.

### **Embedding trauma-informed practice – Hampton Park Public School**

Since 2019, Hampton Park Public School has conducted a School Partnership Program with KidsXpress, a children's mental health service, with the overarching goal to embed trauma informed principles and practice. A Trauma Informed Education Consultant and two Expressive Therapists from KidsXpress are based in the school, working collaboratively with staff and providing support to the school community.

In 2023 and 2024 the school ran the 'Circle of Security' parenting program for Rohingya mothers. Newly arrived families from refugee backgrounds, may experience social isolation. The program was facilitated by the KidsXpress Trauma Informed Education Consultant and an early childhood counsellor from NSW STARTTS. An SLSO from Rohingya background, who is a trusted community leader, was key to identifying and inviting participants.

To improve accessibility, the school provided a space so that the program could be run in the school grounds, a Rohingya interpreter and childcare was provided, and finished at school pick up time. An unintended outcome was an increased awareness of the appropriate pathways to communicate concerns for their children to resolve issues at school. There was an increase in parent participation and engagement in the school community following involvement in the parenting support program.



## Promoting anti-racism education and cultural inclusion in schools

Every NSW public school is required to nominate at least one teacher to be a trained Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO), who assists the principal in promoting anti-racism education and addressing reports of racism. This role is promoted to students, staff and the wider school community. Eradicating expressions of racism and challenging the attitudes that allow them to emerge is the shared responsibility of all NSW public school staff. Individual schools plan and implement anti-racism education programs that suit their local context.

NSW public schools and department workplaces across the state emphasised the importance of anti-racism education on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. During Harmony Week, schools celebrated inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for all Australians, as well as recognition for Aboriginal peoples as Traditional Custodians of the land. Through Harmony Week activities, students learnt about Australian cultural diversity and the contributions of communities from diverse cultural backgrounds. The department provided resources for Harmony Week for schools and workplaces. The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse staff network and the department also invited staff to attend an 'Everyone belongs' online Learning Café event to celebrate cultural diversity.

The Anti-Racism in Action (ARiA) program was delivered to 119 teachers from 61 schools in 2023 and 2024. The program includes a full day professional learning for Stage 3 (Years 5 and 6) teaching staff who are then supported to deliver a sequence of 8 lessons in their classrooms. Students are supported to identify, prevent and understand the impacts of racism, as well as to respond effectively and confidently as anti-racism upstanders. The program was developed by the NSW Department of Education in collaboration with Western Sydney University, based on the 2017 Australian Research Council Linkage Project Speak Out Against Racism (SOAR) student and staff surveys, led by the Australian National University, together with Western Sydney University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Technology Sydney and Deakin University, in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, the Victorian Department of Education and Training, and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

The annual City Country Alliance (CCA) Leadership Summit is held in Term 4 each year, connecting NSW public school communities from rural, regional and metropolitan areas to promote cultural exchange. The summit includes student workshops that build intercultural understanding and prepare students for lives as engaged, globally informed citizens in a culturally diverse world. Teacher professional learning workshops included information on the Community Languages program, anti-racism education and building staff capacity to meet the needs of students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, including those learning EAL/D. In

2023, Students and teachers from 22 schools across NSW participated in the CCA Leadership Summit.

The Calendar for Cultural Diversity promotes intercultural understanding, cultural and linguistic diversity, community harmony and social inclusion across NSW public schools and their communities. The Calendar for Cultural Diversity and accompanying school planners are published on the department's website for schools to download, along with a range of online resources to support the calendar's use in schools. Over 100 artwork submissions from 40 schools were received for the 2024 calendar. In 2024, the Calendar for Cultural Diversity webpage was viewed over 15,000 times.

In 2023-2024, the department developed communication strategies to promote initiatives and campaigns that support anti-racism, cultural inclusion and belonging in schools and workplaces, including:

- Refugee Week communications supported schools in celebrating Refugee Week and recognising the contributions people from refugee backgrounds make to the Australian community. Activities during Refugee Week promote empathy and cultural inclusion in schools and workplaces.
- 'My Future, My Culture, My Way' campaign communications reached over 4.2 million residents in NSW. This state-wide campaign supports Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students through the journey to attaining the Higher School Certificate (HSC) by supporting them, their parents and carers, and communities. This campaign recognises that staying connected to culture is important throughout a student's studies. It helps students to stay strong, in mind, body and spirit, and to reach their full potential.
- NSW Aboriginal Languages Week resources were promoted across schools to celebrate and honour Aboriginal languages. Local Aboriginal communities across NSW are currently working to reclaim, revitalise and maintain their languages through the teaching and learning of Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in schools. This initiative highlights the importance for schools to work in partnership with their local Aboriginal communities, in line with local cultural principles and protocols.
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination communications promoted the recognition of the day across the department in 2024. The dedicated Staff Noticeboard article received 533 views.

- Harmony Week resources were promoted for all staff to celebrate in schools and workplaces. Information published on the department's online Staff Noticeboard article received 2,740 views. The department's CALD staff network and the department invited staff to an online Learning Café event to celebrate cultural diversity within the department, membership in the network increased by 71% as a result of the event.
- Launch of the department's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-35 was communicated across schools and workplaces, reaffirming the department's ongoing commitment to eliminating all forms of racism in the NSW public education system. Communications included resources for staff, students, and communities to effectively address and prevent racism in our schools and workplaces.
- Advice to schools on how to support school communities during the Voice referendum, including advice on how to manage discussion and conduct themselves regarding the Voice referendum both before and after the vote. Advice for school staff was viewed by up to 83% of principals and 58% of teachers.
- The department shared advice on how to support the wellbeing of students, staff and communities, and resources including communication templates in community languages during the conflict in the Middle East.

## Exploring culture and identity through the arts

The Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition for students in Stage 2 and Stage 3 provides an opportunity for positive cultural expression and for students to develop an understanding of Australian multicultural society. The range of topics provided for speakers prompts thoughtful enquiry into the nature of issues such as prejudice and racism, helping students to consider the broad concept of what it means to belong in a multicultural society, and to challenge pre-conceived notions of identity. The messages conveyed through the competition broaden the understanding of both speakers and the diverse audiences who participate in the program. Feedback from experienced adjudicators helps guide students to a broader understanding of multiculturalism and its many facets. The competition also encourages students to explore their own personal experiences and gives them an opportunity to research their own family and cultural backgrounds. This contributes to the building of positive inter-generational relationships and allows students to develop greater understanding of their own cultural heritage and identity. In 2023, 2,009 students participated in the competition. In 2024, 1,929 students participated.

The Multicultural Playwright Program aims to foster social inclusion, a greater sense of belonging and cultural understanding by providing students from language backgrounds other than English, and EAL/D learners, including students from refugee backgrounds the opportunity to collaborate and share knowledge, skills, values and experiences in an engaging performance context.

Throughout this program, tutors, teachers and industry professionals work with students to provide creative opportunities and reflective experiences to inform a performance work that celebrates and expresses cultural diversity and personal identity. In 2023 and 2024 the program ran in Bankstown and Coffs Harbour, with a final performance for the Bankstown program during Refugee Week.

The event was live streamed and shared with participating students' communities both locally, nationally and internationally.

A total of 52 students and 7 teachers participated in the Multicultural Playwright Program in 2023. In 2024, 38 students and 4 teachers participated in the Sydney-based program, the Coffs Harbour program will be completed in Term 4, 2024.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 3, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Service delivery

## Target 3

Our staff are well equipped to support the education of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, including EAL/D and refugee students

### Support in times of crisis

The department's Support in Times of Crisis webpage provides resources and advice to assist schools in supporting the needs of their communities in times of local and international crises. The page is updated as required to respond to emerging events. Content includes advice for schools whose students, in particular students from refugee backgrounds, may be affected by wars and overseas tensions, natural disasters such as flood and fires, and world crises such as the conflict in the Middle East.

### Supporting teachers of EAL/D learners

The Teaching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners course (The EAL/D Hub) is a nationally developed online resource that provides 25 hours of professional learning to support teachers in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners. This professional learning resource provides 8 training modules (including 29 e-books) that are aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Capability Framework – Teaching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners. There are currently over 1,200 course enrolments.

The Aboriginal Ways of Using English professional learning is a one-hour course for teachers to increase their understanding of the language backgrounds of Aboriginal students in NSW who use Aboriginal English as their main home dialect and who may require additional support in learning Standard Australian English at school. Currently there are over 1,000 course enrolments.

During 2023-2024, teachers of EAL/D learners including primary and secondary classroom teachers and subject teachers, participated in a wide range of state-wide professional learning programs to assist them in meeting the needs of EAL/D learners. In 2023, Identifying and Supporting EAL/D Learners PL was developed and released. The course provides teachers of EAL/D learners with support for identifying EAL/D learners language needs, understanding the needs of specific groups such as newly arrived and students from refugee backgrounds, and explores how to effectively program to meet their needs.

**Table 5 – EAL/D education professional learning for teachers, 2023 – 2024**

Course title	Enrolments	Enrolments
	2023	2024
Teaching English Language Learners (TELL)	297	55
Using the EAL/D Learning Progression	705	375
Identifying and supporting EAL/D learners	516	647
EAL/D Annual Survey Information	414	1032
Numeracy for EAL/D learners	188	140
Enhancing assessment task notifications for EAL/D learners (Stage 4 and 5)	26	26

The EAL/D Newsletter is published online each term and supports over 1,200 subscribers across the state. This newsletter provides information and updates to support teachers of EAL/D learners and school leaders.

The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre provided Intensive English outreach kits to support secondary newly arrived students in rural and regional NSW schools. It also provided subscribers with updates of new and popular resources for professional learning and teaching and learning materials to support the delivery of equity programs in schools.

### **EAL/D Project - Orara High School**

Orara High School's EAL/D Project aimed to improve the school's culture and practices in EAL/D education to better support staff and students. The project focused on embedding EAL/D pedagogy across all Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The project aimed to improve academic outcomes for EAL/D learners, including students from refugee backgrounds, enhance cultural inclusivity and promote professional development in EAL/D best practices.

The core activity of the project involved working with teachers from two Stage 4 classes with a high number of EAL/D learners. These teachers, from various KLAs, participated in professional learning sessions focused on strategies such as dialogic pedagogy, vocabulary instruction and

culturally inclusive practices. Teachers applied these strategies in their classrooms and reconvened to reflect on their implementation, fostering a cycle of continuous improvement.

The project led to improved engagement and academic outcomes for EAL/D learners, increased staff awareness of the needs of EAL/D learners, and greater collaboration across school faculties. Additionally, the project helped to establish a more inclusive school culture, where EAL/D pedagogy was recognised as valuable for all learners. The professional learning sessions also enhanced the leadership role of teachers contributing to their capacity to guide other teachers in adopting inclusive teaching practices. Staff involved in the project developed their expertise and then led groups when the project was delivered across the school to all staff.

The project's success was evidenced by positive shifts in both teacher and student feedback, highlighting increased cultural inclusivity, improved teaching practices and stronger student engagement. Data demonstrated an increased sense of belonging and improved confidence in teacher capacity for students learning EAL/D.

## Building leadership and expertise in EAL/D education

In 2023-2024, the department allocated 1,000 Full-time equivalent (FTE) specialist teaching positions to schools across the state with EAL/D enrolments. This staffing allocation is distributed to schools each year and provides EAL/D learners with EAL/D specialist teachers to support their English language development.

The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy continued to be implemented in 2023 and 2024 to build the capacity of NSW public schools in delivering the best possible outcomes for EAL/D learners. In 2024, a three-year extension was granted with 31 EAL/D Education Leaders continuing to provide high quality, evidence-based professional support and advice for school leaders and teachers, developing their capacity to address the English language, literacy and learning needs of EAL/D learners in their schools.

Experienced EAL/D teachers are encouraged and supported to share their expertise within professional networks and become facilitators of registered professional learning in EAL/D education. In 2023 and 2024, EAL/D Connect networks provided professional support for EAL/D specialist teachers. There are 33 EAL/D connect networks across the state coordinated and led by an EAL/D specialist teacher. Network coordinators are professionally supported by EAL/D Education Advisors and field-based EAL/D Education Leaders. Network coordinators participated in four professional learning days each year that were tailored to build their leadership skills and their capacity in maintaining networks.

During 2023-2024, specialist EAL/D teachers, including teachers newly appointed to EAL/D teacher roles, participated in training to build their expertise and support them in leading EAL/D education programs and pedagogy. In August 2024, an EAL/D conference was held with almost 200 attendees including EAL/D specialist teachers, school executive staff, corporate staff and teachers of EAL/D learners.

**Table 6 – Professional learning for EAL/D teacher specialists, 2023- 2024**

Course title	Enrolments	Enrolments
	2023	2024
Leading EAL/D Education	55	64
Text types – A guide to writing model texts	N/A	66
Teaching English Language Learners (TELL) Facilitator Training	24	13
TESOL Seminars	257	252

The EAL/D conversations podcast continues to provide information about EAL/D education in NSW public schools. The podcasts explore elements of second language acquisition and highlight practices that support effective teaching and learning for EAL/D learners. In 2023-2024, four new podcast episodes were released focusing on co-teaching with EAL/D specialists and obtaining higher levels of accreditation as an EAL/D specialist teacher.

The EAL/D Statewide Staffroom provided members with advice and courses designed to assist them in meeting the needs of EAL/D learners. In 2024, the membership of the EAL/D statewide staffroom grew to over 4,000 people including EAL/D teachers, teachers of EAL/D learners, School Administration and Support Staff (SASS), school executive and corporate staff. In 2023-2024, 24 EAL/D statewide staff meetings were held focusing on a range of topics including supporting newly arrived learners and students from refugee backgrounds, enrolment of EAL/D learners and reporting to parents.

## Literacy and numeracy strategies for EAL/D learners and students from refugee backgrounds

The department has a wide range of strategies in place to optimise literacy and numeracy outcomes for students from all backgrounds, including EAL/D learners and students from refugee



and refugee-like backgrounds. A wide range of registered professional learning modules and resources for teachers are available to schools to support literacy and numeracy. Advice, resources and frameworks developed by the department's Literacy and Numeracy team continue to be enhanced to target the specific learning needs of EAL/D learners. The Literacy and Numeracy resource packages are collections of learning sequences designed to help teach specific literacy or numeracy skills and concepts. The packages offer comprehensive, evidence-based curriculum resources in one location and support teachers to be able to adapt activities to meet the varying needs of EAL/D learners.

The Numeracy for EAL/D learners professional learning course supports Years 3-12 teachers of EAL/D learners to understand their students' numeracy learning needs and increases their knowledge of evidence-based strategies to improve students' numeracy learning across KLAS. There have been 624 course enrolments with 327 course completions.

Professional development opportunities to support teachers and EAL/D Education Leaders in assisting EAL/D learners to achieve the HSC minimum standard continued to be provided. Numeracy resources for classroom teachers and EAL/D specialists are available on the HSC minimum standard google site to support numeracy for EAL/D learners and assist teachers to embed explicit numeracy teaching and learning activities across the curriculum.

The department's tool to track students' literacy and numeracy progression, PLAN2, has been enhanced with data on students' EAL/D learning progression phase. This enhancement assists all teachers of EAL/D learners to more effectively target classroom instruction in literacy and numeracy.

### **2024 Staff Development Day**

On the Staff Development Day in Term 2, 2024 devoted to implementation of the new curriculum, all teachers of EAL/D learners were given the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge to adapt the department's sample teaching and learning programs. Adapting a sample unit for EAL/D learners was part of the suite of professional learning delivered. The facilitated course, stepping participants through identifying the language and literacy demands of a Stage 1 English sample teaching and learning unit, was completed by teachers. Once the English language and literacy skills were identified, participants then considered a variety of strategies to adapt the unit for their cohort. The EAL/D pedagogy embedded in the course included backward mapping, explicit teaching of new language, text structures and language features, a focus on using visuals to teach meaning, and message abundance.

Feedback from the 1,292 teachers who completed the evaluation recognised the clarity and value of the course, for example: 'As a current EAL/D teacher, this course was great to reflect on current knowledge and understanding. Also, as it was done with a colleague meant we could discuss and confer [on] current practices,' 'Great intro to how EAL/D students learn and how to implement and support it within the programs' and 'Great course, gets your critically thinking about how to adapt the existing units to develop the language acquisition of EAL/D learners.' Adapting a sample unit for EAL/D learners met a need in department teachers to be stepped through the process of recognising language and literacy demands of the curriculum.

## Supporting teachers of students from refugee backgrounds

In 2023-2024, teachers in metropolitan, regional and rural areas participated in a range of registered and non-registered professional learning programs to assist them in meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of students from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds, and their families.

**Table 7 – Professional learning in refugee education, 2023-2024**

Course title	Enrolments	
	2023	2024
Teaching students from a refugee background	57	2
S.T.A.R.S. in schools: Supporting students from refugee backgrounds	585	177
Teaching Students from a Refugee Background Facilitator Training	13	13
Facilitator training: S.T.A.R.S. in Schools	25	16
Inclusive career learning strategies for refugee background students	41	N/A
Classrooms of Possibility	166	625

In 2023, the Classrooms of Possibility five hour on-line professional learning course and associated website was developed to provide support for teachers catering to the needs of

students from refugee backgrounds. The course and website provide resources based on the UTS and NSW Department of Education research 'Classrooms of Possibility: Working with students from refugee backgrounds in mainstream classes'. These resources support primary and high school teachers working with students from refugee backgrounds. A series of videos demonstrate different elements of EAL/D pedagogy in the classroom with accompanying discussion questions, suggestions for professional learning activities and further professional readings. Since its launch in October 2023, 791 EAL/D and mainstream teachers have completed the course.

In 2024, a new interactive evaluation and planning tool was developed and added to the department's website to enable schools to assess their capability to support students from refugee backgrounds and their families and to determine focus areas for whole school improvement in refugee education.

In 2023 and 2024, Refugee Student Education Networks delivered professional and collegial support to primary and secondary school staff across NSW to facilitate the development of strategies, sharing of ideas, provision of advice and building of resources to support students from refugee backgrounds. The STARTTS School Liaison Team and the RSCST collaborated with Refugee Student Network coordinators to strengthen links between schools, settlement services and local community organisations as well as building expertise and understanding of EAL/D pedagogy to support students from refugee backgrounds. 8 networks hold termly meetings attended by a range of school staff, including mainstream and EAL/D teachers, executive, school counselling staff, administration staff, SLSOs and Community Liaison Officers (CLOs).

## Strengthening expertise in languages education

The department's website offers a comprehensive suite of curriculum resources to support the delivery of languages K-12. Language teachers in NSW public schools have access to ongoing professional development through Languages Networks and Statewide Staffrooms. Professional learning opportunities are provided through regular network meetings and webinars, which aim to enhance teaching practice and support teachers in delivering high-quality language education to students.

The Primary Languages Statewide Staffroom and the Languages Statewide Staffroom have members from public schools K-12 across NSW. The staffrooms allow members to ask questions, share ideas and collaborate to support languages education. Statewide staff meetings offer teachers a range of short professional learning opportunities.

Language Networks across NSW provided additional professional support for language teachers. There are 12 Primary Languages Networks across the state to support teachers with the

implementation of the Modern Languages K-10 Syllabus in the K-6 settings, including the Community Languages Network. Networks are led by school-based teachers and are supported by the department's Primary Languages team. The team provides funding and professional learning to the networks, including implementation support for the Modern Languages K-10 syllabus and leadership training for network leaders. The department also provides funding for Language Teacher Networks which support language teachers in NSW public schools, the networks are K-12 and cross-sectoral.

The Embedding Aboriginal Pedagogies in Languages Guide and professional learning supports primary and secondary language teachers to include Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching practice while maintaining the focus on core curriculum content. Aboriginal perspectives are found in Aboriginal processes, rather than in Aboriginal content. The guide unpacks each of the 8 Aboriginal ways of learning within the context of language learning, including how to align each process with languages pedagogy and suggestions for communicating with students about each process. The Embedding Aboriginal Pedagogies in Languages professional learning has been delivered since 2022 at language network meetings and conferences.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Service delivery & Engagement

## Target 4

Our staff are well equipped to promote student wellbeing, intercultural understanding and to address racism

### Building capacity in Aboriginal education

Developing culturally educated and safe school environments and eradication of racism is a focus of the NSW Jurisdictional Plan for Closing the Gap, with community consultations calling for better cultural understanding across government agencies.

The department continued to work in collaboration with the NSW AECG to deliver outcomes articulated in the Partnership Agreement, *Walking Together, Working Together*. The NSW AECG delivered *Connecting to Country* professional learning to corporate, senior executive and school staff. *Connecting to Country* is an Aboriginal community cultural awareness teaching program. This program provides a cultural conduit between the state's teachers and Aboriginal peoples and communities. Teachers are offered a unique opportunity to engage directly with Aboriginal Australians at the local community level.

Aboriginal Cultural Education – *Let's Take the First Step Together* professional learning provides all department staff with foundational information on various historical and contemporary aspects of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Cultures. The foundational learning of this course encourages staff to reflect on their current knowledge of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Histories and Cultures and to consider how this new knowledge can be applied to all aspects of their work. This training supports the implementation of the Partnership Agreement between the NSW AECG and the department. Department employees have the capacity and responsibility to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students through an appreciation and respect for the oldest living culture in the world. Training is mandatory on commencement of employment and then completed every three years.

The Aboriginal Education Statewide Staffroom aims to promote Aboriginal Culture as it is today by providing a platform to highlight contemporary Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sources, events, authors, artists, and academics. It seeks to influence the current narrative and amplify the voices of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander educators. Additionally, it offers a space where educators can access and share resources to support the integration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives into curriculum teaching and learning.

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework has been developed for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector to ensure culturally safe and responsive environments in all ECEC settings in NSW. Consisting of a reflective tool and an array of resources, the framework enhances the knowledge, understanding and practice of Aboriginal Culture in all ECEC settings. The framework aims to improve cultural safety and responsiveness for Aboriginal children and families and enhance all children's knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal Peoples and Culture by promoting diversity and reconciliation.

In 2024, the department developed professional learning and resources to support schools to respectfully teach Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander creative arts works, practices, practitioners and knowledges. In collaboration with Aboriginal Education and Communities, the Creative Arts Curriculum Team developed resources for School Development Day 2 in Term 1. A series of video interviews with Aboriginal arts practitioners in Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts were also developed as a resource for teachers. Resources will continue to be developed in 2025 and beyond, including planned professional learning and sample units of work for the new Creative Arts syllabus that feature content about Aboriginal creative arts practices, practitioners and protocols.

## Strengthening the delivery of anti-racism education

NSW public schools have access to professional support and resources that assist them in identifying and appropriately addressing all forms of racism. New resources and professional learning programs are developed, and existing supports updated, in response to emerging needs. Specialist anti-racism education officers are available to provide advice and support in response to complex cases.

A range of anti-racism professional learning programs and resources are available to schools across the state:

- The Racism: Its Nature and Impact on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples professional learning course specifically focuses on racism experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The course includes academic research and the lived experiences of teachers, students and community members to engage participants in evidence-based learning. It is designed to be facilitated in a face-to-face setting to promote discussion and an exchange of ideas. Since its release in June 2023, 358 people have completed the course.

- The Challenging Racism Panel Discussion professional learning deepens staff understanding of the impact of racism in the school context. It can be undertaken individually, in small groups or as a whole school professional learning activity. In 2023-2024, 232 staff completed the course.
- In 2023-2024, 1,118 participants completed the Facing up to Racism professional learning. This online course develops the skills and confidence of school staff in identifying, discussing and challenging racism in a positive and constructive way. It provides participants with an understanding of the historical origins of racism, impacts of racism, dimensions of racism in Australia and the overt and covert ways in which racism manifests. It challenges participants to interrogate their practice and examine their own standpoints and biases.
- The Anti-Racism – Foundations for Change professional learning was released in July 2024, with 410 staff completing the course so far. This course builds on the knowledge and skills gained in the mandatory Anti-racism policy training. It aims to set firm foundations for all staff to prevent and respond to racism. It is framed around the idea that to eliminate racism a deeper understanding of its impact is required and a commitment to anti-racism actions are needed to prevent it.
- A session on Creating Racism-Free schools was developed for the Term 2 2023 School Development Day dedicated to Aboriginal Education. The training session focused on how racism confronts Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples every day and encouraged staff to reflect on their understanding about the impacts of racism. Schools engaged in meaningful discussion and collaborated on ways to challenge racism and build culturally safe environments for students, staff and the community.
- An online Anti-Racism Education Statewide Staffroom continues to support ARCOs, teachers, school leaders and other staff with over 2000 members so far. The staffroom provides opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of resources, information and strategies for countering racism. It also provides a space for professional learning and discussion, including opportunities for staff to build understanding of anti-racism concepts and strategies.
- A wide range of new and updated anti-racism education resources were added to the department's website to support teachers, school leaders and other staff. The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre also provided anti-racism education resources and information to schools as well as tailored anti-racism kits to suit the needs of individual teachers and school contexts.

- Racism. No Way, the national anti-racism education website, is managed by the department on behalf of all Australian schools. It provides a wide range of online resources for teachers about the impact of racism and countering it in schools. Consistent with the recommendations of the evaluation, the site's content and navigation have been updated in 2023-2024 to meet the needs of teachers and school leaders nationally. In 2023, new resources on religious discrimination were published on the site, including information for teachers about the impact of Antisemitism and Islamophobia on students.

In 2024, the department reviewed existing professional learning courses for opportunities to build staff capacity to recognise religious intolerance and bullying and understand its impacts. To support this, the department increased collaboration with faith organisations to strengthen understanding of specific religions through professional learning for staff. Additionally, K-12 curriculum resources across KLAs were reviewed for opportunities to increase content that explores and promotes religious diversity to support greater understanding of religious communities and their experiences.

The Anti-racism policy requires all schools to have a trained ARCO who is a teacher trained to support the principal in promoting anti-racism education in the school and addressing reports of racism. A range of supports are available for ARCOs:

- Funding to support two days relief for ARCOs each year is provided to every school. This funding is used to enable ARCOs to undertake professional learning and perform key aspects of their role.
- ARCOs are required to complete a 10-hour training course which develops their capacity to understand and identify racism, apply correct procedures and policies as well as practise skills in resolving issues and planning and implementing anti-racism initiatives. A total of 30 tutors were supported to deliver anti-racism professional learning. This included training 6 additional tutors to deliver the ARCO training. Anti-racism education professional learning was delivered in schools by ARCOs, school leaders and teaching staff who contextualised learning for their own settings. Almost 1,000 teachers and other staff participated in ARCO training.
- Local and statewide ARCO Networks provided additional professional support for ARCOs in 2023 and 2024. They provided opportunities for ARCOs to collaborate, share resources and participate in collegial discussions. Network meetings provide safe and supportive spaces which connect ARCOs within local and/or like communities of schools. The networks provide access to updated information relating to anti-racism education initiatives



and strategies. Plans are in place to recruit additional network coordinators and launch further networks in 2025.

### **Local ARCO Networks - Strengthening the ARCO role**

Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) networks have been established to support ARCOs in their role. These communities of practice provide supportive environments for ARCOs to connect and share ideas and resources. The number of networks has expanded in recent years, starting with 9 local and statewide networks in 2022, expanding to 15 networks in 2023 and 25 networks in 2024.

ARCOs value being able to meet and connect with other schools in their area, discussing challenges and opportunities in a supportive environment. An ARCO from a high school in South West Sydney organised a group of high school students to visit one of their local primary schools and deliver a speech on anti-racism to students in Years 3-6:

“The students were incredibly attentive and engaged throughout the presentation, and it was clear that our message of inclusivity and respect resonated deeply with them. We received commendations from the staff and executive team, who appreciated the clarity and impact of our presentation.

“It was rewarding to witness the students actively processing the ideas we shared, and we’re hopeful that our visit will have a lasting, positive impact on how they approach diversity and inclusion in their daily lives.

We’re looking forward to expanding this outreach by visiting other primary schools in the future, as we believe fostering an early understanding of anti-racism can create a more inclusive community for all students.”

Another ARCO at a regional K-12 school was able to share their school’s procedures for effectively responding to and preventing racism at a recent local network meeting. They commented:

“There was lots of discussion and involvement from attendees. We discussed how to join the statewide staffroom, and I shared some of the resources and professional learning available from the department. We also discussed how to manage multiple incidents of racism using school procedures and flowcharts for effectively following up.

“There was a wide range of experience in the room, from ARCOs who had been in the role for less than a year to ARCOs with over 10-years-experience.”

## Building culturally inclusive schools

Resources and professional learning to assist schools in developing culturally inclusive practice continued to be developed. Resources available on the department's website include information that strengthens teachers' understandings of the increasingly complex nature of culture in school communities, as well as teaching materials for building intercultural understanding amongst students.

The department's curriculum team have developed a range of teaching and learning resources to support building student's intercultural understanding through the curriculum across a range of syllabus areas, including:

- Creative Arts - licensing works by culturally diverse arts practitioners to provide models and scaffolds for exploring diverse values, identities and perspectives in Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts. This includes commissioning professional dance works, scripts and artworks by artists from culturally diverse backgrounds and broadening understanding of music to include Western and non-Western instruments and styles.
- Modern Languages K-10 - resources and activities to support the Modern Language K-10 syllabus were developed to include culturally diverse content, differentiation for EAL/D learners and opportunities for students to build intercultural understanding.
- English K-6 - sample units were developed to include a diverse range of fiction and non-fiction texts that reflect contemporary, historical, and cultural contexts. The selection of texts features Australian literature, including works by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander authors, as well as literature from other cultures to promote intercultural understanding and provide students with opportunities to connect their experiences to the texts. Teaching and learning activities support students in valuing their linguistic capital, ensuring they are active participants in the classroom.
- Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre offered a collection of over 70,000 resources to support the delivery of EAL/D, multicultural and bilingual education provision in schools across the state. The centre provides bulk loans of resources to schools to assist them in meeting the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds and in building intercultural understanding and culturally inclusive learning environments.

The department's Universal Resources Hub (URH) supports school improvement by providing high quality resources that are underpinned by evidence-based practices. Resources include literacy, numeracy, school attendance, assessment and school planning resources. Resources are available for all staff to use to support the education of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

students, students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, including EAL/D learners and students from refugee backgrounds.

Engaging Culturally Diverse Communities is a one-day professional learning course designed for principals, aspiring school leaders, teachers and school support staff. The course aims to build knowledge of effective ways to engage diverse school communities. In 2023, the course content was updated, and face-to-face delivery recommenced in metropolitan and regional areas for school and education support staff. 145 participants have enrolled in the course during 2023-24.

PD in Your Pocket (PDIYP) Program is a resource delivering education and a community of practice to family day care services. The multi-format resource of webinar, video, podcast and booklet considers the linguistic diversity of the family day care sector and aims to increase accessibility for educators from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. Specialist topics also include embedding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives in family day care services.

### **Learning about religious diversity – Woolgoolga Public School**

Woolgoolga is home to a large Sikh population and over a third of students come from Punjabi speaking homes, these students are supported by two community language teachers. Woolgoolga Public School receives a significant number of non-local enrolment applications from Indian families resulting from strong support structures for students from Indian backgrounds.

Two local community language teachers coordinated a combined schools professional learning day at both Woolgoolga's Sikh Temples in Term 3 2024. Staff from Woolgoolga, Sandy Beach and Corindi Public Schools joined Woolgoolga High School staff to develop understanding of and appreciation for the Sikh religion. The Sikh temples have since extended the invitation to local schools to bring students to the temples to learn about Sikhism and Indian culture. This is with a view to broadening community understanding and ensuring an inclusive and respectful transition to Woolgoolga High School for all primary school students.

The State-wide Community Liaison Officer/Community Engagement Officer (CLO/CEO) Network provides community engagement staff with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively foster school and community links, deliver information and support with education-related issues. The network also facilitates communication between schools, families and the wider school community. Network meetings are held twice a term and provide an opportunity for participants to engage with current issues, share ideas, and strengthen community networks. The network also provides

support and mentoring to new Community Liaison and Community Engagement Officers across the state.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Service delivery & Engagement

## Target 5

Our programs and services are informed and improved by a strong evidence base on how to best support the needs of our culturally diverse schools.

### Inclusive curriculum planning

The Curriculum Planning for Every Student in Every Classroom professional learning is an online, self-paced course which presents evidence-based strategies to equip K-12 teachers to optimise learning and improve equity for all students, including students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. The professional learning has been collaboratively developed by specialist teams with expertise in Aboriginal education, curriculum, inclusive education, multicultural and EAL/D education as well as teams who support the needs of high potential and gifted students.

The department provides a range of resources that support teachers and leaders to explore and reflect on research about effective strategies for inclusive and culturally responsive curriculum planning practice and pedagogy, including:

- Diversity, inclusion and representation – Resourcing the curriculum
- Cultural Context in Standardised Tests
- English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) effective school practices
- Revisiting gifted education
- Strong strides together – Meeting the educational goals for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students
- Universal Design for Learning evidence base.

### Whole school strategies for improving student outcomes

In 2023, 10 metropolitan primary and secondary schools and 2 regional secondary schools successfully completed Leading EAL/D Education projects. In this year long program, participating schools develop inquiry-based projects developed after an evaluation of their EAL/D education practices. Schools gathered evidence and data to inform their projects which aimed to improve the

learning and wellbeing of EAL/D learners. School teams attend professional learning days that helped guide the development of their projects. In 2024, 12 metropolitan schools and 1 regional school successfully achieved intended outcomes. Two schools withdrew from the course due to school and staffing constraints. Schools completing projects record their findings and these recordings are used as an illustration of EAL/D pedagogy and best practice to support other schools.

## Identifying effective school practices in EAL/D education

In 2024, the department continued building the capacity of NSW public schools in meeting the needs of EAL/D learners by providing support through the EAL/D Education Leaders in 25 principal networks. The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy was evaluated in 2023 to provide evidence of early outcomes and impact to support directions in 2024. The evaluation reported strong uptake and support for the strategy, and 31 EAL/D Education Leader positions have been extended to January 2027. In 2025, the strategy will include an EAL/D Leader role in Connected Community schools.

In 2024, the department provided funding for the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Early Childhood Pedagogies (CLRP) research project conducted by Western Sydney University. The project examines how culturally, and linguistically responsive pedagogies are enacted and progressed in NSW public schools and early childhood education services in NSW. The CLRP project provides expertise in transforming early childhood practices through culturally responsive pedagogies and action research. The focus of the project is the continuity of learning from preschool to Stage 1 with attention to children's language development. 5 primary schools and early childhood education services in NSW participated in the project which involved working directly with teachers to identify and develop effective culturally and linguistically responsive early childhood practices. The case studies and findings are published on the project's website comprising resources for teachers, case study videos and an end of project conference.

### **EAL/D Vocabulary Project – Cowpasture Principal Network**

The Cowpasture Principal Network serves a diverse student population, with over 100 cultural and language groups represented. 86% of the total student population come from Language Backgrounds Other than English, 65% are learning EAL/D, and 9% are from refugee backgrounds. The demand for EAL/D education has increased in schools across the network.

The EAL/D Vocabulary Project was developed in collaboration with the Director, Educational Leadership (DEL) and EAL/D Education Leaders to support students by developing teachers'

expertise in the explicit teaching of vocabulary. Professional learning was delivered by EAL/D Leaders, and partner academics from the University of Western Sydney and University of Wollongong.

Schools worked with the EAL/D Education Leaders to develop a specific area of focus under the broad question: To what extent are teachers implementing vocabulary strategies to differentiate the learning for all students to improve academic writing?

In 2024, teachers across KLAs engaged in professional development in Terms 1, 2 and programming days in Term 3 which included lesson observations, and feedback and planning sessions. In Term 4 all schools reported on their work, progress and the impact of the project at a Vocabulary Showcase Day.

## Commitment to continuous improvement

Information and data on the effectiveness of multicultural education professional learning programs are collected each year to ensure staff are well supported to meet the needs of their culturally diverse communities. This includes data collected through MyPL, the department's professional learning platform for teachers and leaders, and through the EAL/D Annual Survey which collects information on the qualifications and professional learning needs of school staff delivering EAL/D education and information about ARCOs in schools. These data sets are analysed on an ongoing basis to improve professional support mechanisms for schools in EAL/D, anti-racism, refugee and multicultural education.

The evaluation of the Anti-racism policy's revision and subsequent implementation was finalised in 2024 and provides an evidence base to inform policy direction. The evidence suggests that the revision of the policy, together with the actions of the Multicultural Education team to support policy implementation, have improved awareness of the policy as well as awareness of an individual's responsibilities under the policy. The evaluation also found that the training prepared people to implement the policy in their workplace. The evaluation explored the effectiveness of this training, and findings show this training has supported thousands of individuals to understand their responsibilities under the policy and prepare them to implement the policy in their workplace.

The EAL/D School Evaluation Framework assists schools in evaluating the effectiveness of their whole school EAL/D student support programs and in planning improvements linked to the School Excellence Framework.

The School Excellence in Action resource includes information for school leaders on achieving excellence for EAL/D learners. This resource provides schools with information about ways to use data informed practice to support EAL/D learners.

The Refugee Student Readiness Survey was updated in 2024 and is now called Evaluation and Planning Tool Supporting Students from Refugee Backgrounds. This interactive document has been published on the department's website and helps schools assess their capability to support students from refugee backgrounds and their families to determine focus areas for improvement.

## Identifying the needs and participation rates of LBOTE students

CESE collects and analyses data on student diversity and performance to identify student needs and inform educational provisions. Examples of this work include analysis of phonics check development for EAL/D learners and supporting researchers to select sites based on school community demographics and student populations. A Language Diversity bulletin is produced by CESE each year which documents enrolments of students from language backgrounds other than English enrolled in NSW public schools and the languages spoken in their homes.

The EAL/D Annual Survey collects data on the English language needs of EAL/D learners and this data is used to allocate EAL/D education resources to support student needs.

The department also conducts focused research projects that provide valuable information on the diverse needs of students, and specific student cohorts in culturally diverse settings.

### **These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Planning & Service delivery



## Target 6

Our schools are effectively resourced to meet the diverse needs of their LBOTE students and culturally diverse communities.

### Equity loading for English language proficiency

In 2023, the equity loading for English language proficiency provided 1000 FTE teaching positions and \$53 million in flexible funding to support 198,000 EAL/D learners in 1,700 schools. In 2024, the loading provided 1,000 FTE teaching positions and over \$60 million in flexible funding to support 197,000 EAL/D learners in 1,657 schools.

This loading ensures that schools can deliver ongoing EAL/D education support to assist EAL/D learners develop sufficient proficiency in academic English to successfully engage with the curriculum at all stages of learning, and across learning areas.

### Targeted resources for newly arrived students and students from refugee backgrounds

In the 2023-2024 financial year, more than \$30 million was allocated through the New Arrivals Program (NAP) to deliver on-arrival, intensive English language support to newly arrived EAL/D learners in NSW public schools. Primary schools and some regional high schools received funding through this program to engage specialist EAL/D teachers to support students. Schools with newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds were also provided with funding to engage SLSOs to provide bilingual support for students and their families. In 2023, the NAP provided funding to 833 schools supporting 8,656 students. In 2024, 783 schools with 7,794 students have been supported to date.

IECs and the Intensive English High School were allocated resources to deliver intensive English tuition and transition support to newly arrived secondary aged EAL/D learners in Sydney, Wollongong and Armidale. These specialist sites also provided bilingual, specialist counselling and additional learning support as required to support students' transition to school. There are 15 IECs located in Sydney, Armidale and Wollongong and the Intensive English High School located in central Sydney. The Intensive English Outreach program provides additional specialist support to newly arrived students in regional and rural areas using online technologies.

In addition to a higher level of resourcing for English language development, recently arrived students from refugee backgrounds (in an Australian school for less than 3 years) attracted targeted funding to support their more complex learning needs. In 2023, over \$2.2 million was allocated to 456 schools to support 3,384 recently arrived students from refugee backgrounds. In 2024, over \$1.9 million was allocated to support 2,852 recently arrived students from refugee backgrounds in 490 schools.

The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre provided a range of resources and support materials to 270 principals, and over 21,600 resources to support newly arrived students in NSW public schools.

## Additional support for newly arrived students from the Middle East and other areas of conflict

After October 2023 students began to enrol in NSW public schools due to the conflict in the Middle East, mainly Palestinian students from Gaza. To facilitate the enrolment of these newly arrived students, the department adjusted its policies for students on tourist/visitor visas to allow automatic exemption from temporary resident education fees and access to NAP. This ensures that students can access school education and receive intensive, on-arrival English language support as required. Students continue to arrive in 2024, many still arriving with tourist/visitor visas with the hope of converting to permanent visas. More recently, students have been arriving from Lebanon as Australian citizens, but because they have been living overseas for a long time or were born overseas, their on-arrival needs are still significant. The department attended sessions organised by the settlement services to help these newly arrived families during the process of enrolment. Information on how to best support students arriving due to this conflict was added to the department's website.

School support continues for students from Afghanistan and Ukraine. Resources on the ways schools can best support this student cohort, and their families remain on the department's website and the EAL/D Statewide staffroom provides additional resources and specialist advice for staff. Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre continues to provide bilingual and LOTE resources to support New Arrival Programs in schools.

## Accessible curriculum resources

The department provides distance education for eligible students to broaden curriculum options for students who are isolated or whose special circumstances prevent them from attending school regularly. This is an equity provision supporting students who have language backgrounds other than

English (LBOTE), students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) and students from refugee backgrounds. The NSW School of Languages specifically provides a range of language subjects through distance education increasing the breadth of curriculum and providing for culturally diverse school communities and student populations.

Creative arts curriculum infographics are resources that support the implementation of the creative arts syllabus. The infographics are available for key creative arts syllabus terminology to be used as classroom posters or in digital resources. By connecting key terminology with images, the infographics create opportunities to support vocabulary acquisition for students learning English as an additional language or dialect.

### **Strengthening access to intensive English support for secondary students in rural and regional NSW schools**

Newly arrived students in rural and regional secondary schools require intensive English support to learn English and engage in curriculum learning. The NAP provides a teacher allocation to schools relative to the number of eligible newly arrived students.

To increase the opportunity to access intensive English support for students in schools with low level NAP teacher allocation and schools impacted by the teacher workforce shortages, online Intensive English Outreach classes were increased enabling the support to reach more students.

In 2024, eight classes per day were delivered supporting students from Foundation to Level 2. Support includes daily lessons for students in schools across NSW and dedicated school-based classes for schools with larger cohorts of newly arrived students but without access to staff to deliver Intensive English.

Online lessons are provided for up to 50 minutes per day for an average of two school terms per student. Lessons are guided by the outcomes in the Intensive English Programs Curriculum Framework (IEPCF) using topics from across the curriculum that are aligned to school-based KLA topics where possible. Evidenced based EAL/D practices drive lesson delivery. These high challenge and high support practices include dialogic pedagogy, designed-in and contingent scaffolding focussing on language learning outcomes delivered through secondary curriculum content.

The program is coordinated by the Head Teacher, Intensive English Outreach with a teacher allocated to support the program. The Head Teacher Intensive English Outreach is responsible to the Principal, Central Sydney Intensive English High School (CS IEHS), for the management and implementation of teaching programs, and support to foster the development of English language

and literacy outcomes so students can engage in and continue learning in mainstream classrooms in their schools.

In addition to intensive English lessons, the intensive English staff provide advice to class teachers and school coordinators thus building teacher capability to provide wrap-around support for newly arrived students learning English.

During 2023, 23 students from 21 schools were supported through Intensive English Outreach and during 2024, 47 students from 23 schools were supported through Intensive English Outreach as the level of support was increased to meet demand. Students in schools from Tweed River High School in northern NSW to Batemans Bay HS on the south coast were engaged in Intensive English lessons.

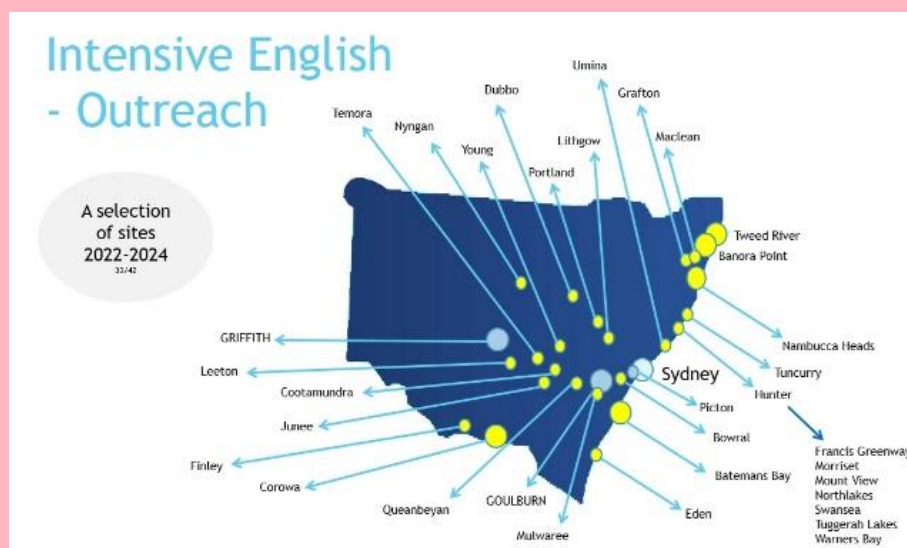


Image source: Central Sydney Intensive English High School

Murrumbidgee Griffith and Murrumbidgee Wade high schools were supported with daily intensive English lessons timetabled to suit the school timetables. Goulburn HS, a new addition to this type of support in 2024, will receive support until the school is able to staff the teacher allocation.

The support receives ongoing favourable evaluations from students and the school staff. For example: 'Supportive class, structured learning and positive enforcement of learning for our student' - Lithgow HS.

### These actions relate to:

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Planning & Service delivery

## Target 7

Our leaders are well equipped to promote student wellbeing, intercultural understanding and to address racism.

### Developing meaningful reconciliation action

The department's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) May 2023 – May 2025 is founded on building trust and confidence with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, families and communities to create safe workplaces and to ensure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best possible educational outcomes. RAPs enable organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation and are based on the core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities.

The Innovate RAP is the second stage of the department's RAP process and follows the Reflect RAP for corporate staff launched in 2019. Reconciliation Australia's RAP Framework provides organisations with a structured approach to advance reconciliation. The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow organisations to continuously develop their reconciliation commitments.

Significant consultation occurred across 2021 and 2022, including through workshops, reflection sessions and surveys with executive staff, corporate staff and schools to inform the development of the Innovate RAP. The Innovate RAP commits the department to gaining a deeper understanding of our sphere of influence, and establish the best approach to advance reconciliation across corporate offices to educational settings by focusing on:

- Relationships: How we will cultivate relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities and how we will engage with stakeholders.
- Respect: How we will educate our staff about reconciliation, how we will acknowledge and celebrate key Indigenous dates and how we will influence peers and customers.
- Opportunities: How we will provide opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities through employment, mentoring and procurement.

## Leading anti-racism education

In Term 3, 2024, the department launched the Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2035. It reaffirms our ongoing commitment to eliminating all forms of racism in the NSW public education system and provides a long-term plan for effectively addressing and preventing racism in our schools and workplaces. This will remove barriers and enable equitable opportunities and experiences for students and learners, staff and communities in schools and educational support workplaces.

The strategy will be supported by two-yearly implementation plans that outline what will be done to improve the experiences of students and learners, staff, families and communities across NSW public education in three focus areas:

- setting firm foundations for effective anti-racism action
- building everyone's capacity to contribute to anti-racism action in our schools and workplaces
- building strong anti-racism systems and processes for our schools and workplaces.

Senior leaders will drive and be accountable for the delivery of workstreams and activity identified in implementation plans. The strategy is an ongoing commitment, recognising that the elimination of racism will need sustained and focused effort.

Consistent with the Anti-Racism Strategy, a workshop has been designed to be delivered by school leaders to build anti-racism leadership capacity within NSW public schools. It articulates the case for change, provides an overview of the Anti-Racism Strategy and encourages school leaders to reflect on and discuss common manifestations of racism in schools. It asks participants to consider how things can be done differently or better to promote equity and cultural inclusion across NSW public schools.

The Anti-racism policy provides direction and guidance on preventing and eliminating all forms of racism in NSW public education. It applies to all employees, students attending NSW public schools, parents, carers, volunteers and contractors. In 2023 and 2024 the policy and procedures were revised, and additional support and guidance documents and resources were published on the department's website. All staff are required to complete the mandatory Anti-racism policy training course which aims to increase staff understanding of the nature and impact of racism, familiarise staff with the Anti-racism policy and increase staff understanding of their responsibilities in implementing the policy.

In 2024, the department implemented revised Community Complaint procedures and Staff Complaint procedures, which clarify and streamline the complaint process. In particular, the

revised procedures make it clear that concerns about employee conduct are managed with reference to Professional and Ethical Standards Guidance on Misconduct and concerns about student behaviour are managed with reference to the Student behaviour policy and associated guidance. The revised procedures and supporting resources also provide direction and guidance on cultural safety, psychosocial safety and reasonable adjustments in the complaint process.

To support the revised Community Complaint procedures, the Professional and Ethical Standards team led a statewide roadshow for Executive Directors Public Schools, Directors Educational Leadership, Principals, key education support staff and stakeholders to introduce the revised complaint procedures, completing 140 sessions across Term 2 and 3 2024. Guidance on Community Complaints on the department's intranet webpages was revised in 2024, to provide detailed guidance for schools on engaging with parents and carers in the complaint process and providing information about the complaint process to school communities. Additional guidance is available for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families about the complaint process, including a video resource, which are published on the department's Your Feedback webpages.

In 2024, the department published the new Discrimination Standards, which clearly defines and describes the legislated types of discrimination and supports staff to prevent, recognise and report discrimination in schools and workplaces. The Discrimination Standards are published in the policy library for all department staff, so they have specific actions to promote a culturally safe workplace.

In August 2024, the department launched a new helpline for students, their families, school communities, and staff to report religious intolerance. The helpline was informed by an internal review of department reporting mechanisms and consultation with representatives from religious organisations. Further advice on how to report religious intolerance was published online along with the launch. The helpline was a key focus of the election commitment to tackle religious intolerance.

The department has developed case studies on racism and religious intolerance for delivery as professional learning to teachers on staff development days. The case studies are designed to stimulate discussion about acceptable standards of staff conduct and to explore sound values in accordance with legislation and the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

In 2024, department surveys and other sources of data were reviewed to identify what information exists and channels to collect data that would improve knowledge on incidents of religious intolerance experienced by students and staff. The department has commenced collecting data in the investigation case management system as to whether allegations of staff misconduct received constitute allegations of racism and religious intolerance.



## Leading EAL/D education

To further support leaders, a full review and consultation process was undertaken to update the Intensive English Programs Operational Guidelines. The guidelines are due for publication in late 2024. They will provide schools with advice on:

- the specialist nature of IECs and the unique nature of each setting
- the funding models used to support intensive English sites
- the role and responsibilities of Intensive English Program executive staff
- the effective operation of IECs within the broader school context
- the role of IECs as a system-wide resource.

## Building leadership capacity

The department provides leadership development programs to build and support the capacity of school leaders through the School Leadership Institute, the programs and resources include:

- Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (SL-APLP) includes 3 seminars which support senior leaders in schools to explore teaching methods that emphasise Aboriginal methods for teaching culture. The program includes strategies for school leaders to embed these into practice, develop a deep understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and connection with country and discuss how to effectively engage with local Aboriginal communities.
- The Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP) is delivered by the School Leadership Institute (SLI) in partnership with the University of Newcastle and the University of Wollongong to support the leadership development of assistant principals and head teachers. Over 12 months, the program provides targeted, evidence-informed professional learning to build on strengths and develop the capacity of middle leaders to grow as learning leaders who create impact, drive improvement, and enhance student and teacher learning outcomes. One key theme covered as part of the program is ‘Belonging,’ this theme covers the importance of belonging, the role of middle leaders in fostering belonging and how middle leaders can engage with the community to build broader connections.
- The Deputy Principal Induction Conference (PIC) outlines the role, responsibilities and practices of deputy principals in leading learning. The aim of the conference is for participants to understand their role in enhancing their leadership impact and includes sessions on Inclusive Education and Leading Aboriginal Education in Partnership.

- PIC is a core component of engagement for newly appointed, first-time principals or long-term relieving principals. Outcomes of the PIC are aligned to the key accountabilities of the Principal Role Description. The PIC is grounded in evidence-informed research and aims to deepen principals' understanding of their role; support principals in meeting their accountabilities, including key department policies and priorities; develop leadership capability by strengthening school leadership and management practices to lead school improvement for all students through student-centred leadership. Keynote seminars include Leading Aboriginal Education in Partnership and Inclusive Education – Policy and Practice.
- Middle Leader Induction Conference (MLIC) provides an orientation of the role of middle leadership for first-time, newly appointed assistant principals and head teachers. Long-term relieving assistant principals and head teachers are also welcome to register for the program. Participants attend a 2-day conference delivered online through seminars with department and leadership experts, as well as learning conversations with middle leader peers. Each year, experts from Delivery Support and Inclusive Education teams deliver a 60-minute seminar that supports middle leaders to enhance their understanding of department policies and relevant legislation regarding inclusivity and disability, while also strengthening their understanding of the role middle leaders play in inclusion. Another 60-minute seminar is delivered by Aboriginal Education and Communities. They support middle leaders to deepen their understanding of department policies and legislation crucial to their middle leader role, while gaining insight into leading with greater cultural competence.

Applying an Equity Lens in Education professional learning resources provide education support staff with resources that deepen their understanding of the department's commitment to equity, including for students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, students from refugee backgrounds and students living in regional and remote areas. The resources include guidance for educational support staff to understand the department's equity framework, analyse how data is used to measure equity and barriers affecting different groups of students and learners, and apply an equity lens in policy analysis and design.

The Cultural Responsiveness Evaluation Framework equips staff in NSW public schools and early childhood settings to promote student wellbeing, intercultural understanding and to address racism. The framework is aimed at challenging existing assumptions and power relationships in education, signalling a new way of doing business, understanding the impact of our work, and re-defining culturally responsive practice in Aboriginal education. The framework uplifts the cultural capability of staff and leaders across the department and provides continuous learning opportunities on Aboriginal ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. This continuous learning aims to achieve

organisational change through ensuring policies, programs and work environments are culturally safe and responsive for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, students, children, families and the broader community.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Planning & Leadership

## Target 8

Our systems identify and equitably provide for our culturally diverse school communities and student populations.

### Fair and equitable access

The Equity Placement Model helps make access fairer for more high potential and gifted students in our community. Under the model, up to 20% of student places at each selective high school and opportunity class are held for high potential and gifted students from underrepresented groups, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

### Needs based funding

The department's needs-based funding model allocates resources to schools each year on the basis of identified school and student needs. To ensure schools are well equipped to support their diverse student populations and communities, four equity loadings - Aboriginal background, socio-economic background, low level adjustment for disability, and English language proficiency - are provided to address the needs of student cohorts with additional learning needs. In addition, schools receive targeted funding for individual students who require high or moderate level adjustments for disability, newly arrived students and students from refugee backgrounds.

Data collected through the EAL/D Annual Survey is used to determine the equity loading for English language proficiency allocated to schools to support the English language development of EAL/D learners. Through the survey, schools also report on the English language needs of their refugee, international and Aboriginal EAL/D learners. Schools receive the equity loading for English Language Proficiency as an EAL/D teacher allocation and/or flexible funding.

### New Arrivals Program (NAP) funding review

In 2023, the NAP funding process and allocative formula were revised and updated to provide a more equitable distribution of the resource and to ensure NAP funding was more responsive to student and school needs.

The revised allocative formula incorporates a sliding scale through which NAP funding to schools is informed by the level of English Language Proficiency (ELP) equity loading each school receives.

As a school's ELP equity loading, including the EAL/D staffing component, varies from year to year depending on the reported level of English language proficiency need, the school's NAP funding entitlement also varies. This is in response to the school's capacity to provide English language support for their newly arrived EAL/D learners. Other changes to the allocative formula include:

- the provision of up to 4 terms of funding for all eligible newly arrived EAL/D learners
- an increased weighting for eligible newly arrived EAL/D learners from refugee backgrounds
- a weighting for newly arrived EAL/D secondary students to provide more intensive English language learning support, recognising the increased challenge of learning academic English within a limited timeframe in secondary school.

## Languages programs

In 2024, 42,987 students in 137 participating schools learned one of 29 languages through the Community Languages Program K-6. The Community Languages Program is delivered in schools to provide home language support to newly arrived EAL/D learners and heritage language lessons to LBOTE students. The program runs during school hours and aims to help schools connect meaningfully with local communities. It is designed to support students' language skills, providing an inclusive environment where students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are recognised and valued.

The Community Languages Schools Program provides funding to not-for-profit, incorporated community organisations who deliver out-of-school programs that support school-aged students to maintain their background or heritage language. In 2023 and 2024, more than 300 organisations received funding to operate community languages schools. They provided more than 3,000 volunteer teachers who taught a total of 62 languages in 2023 to over 35,000 students and 63 languages in 2024 to over 36,000 students across approximately 600 locations.

The Secondary College of Languages is a NSW public, co-educational secondary school that offers a pathway for students from other public schools and educational institutions to study their background community language on a Saturday, where that language is not available at their own school. In 2023, 24 languages were offered to over 2,700 students in Years 5 to Year 12.

The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre supported community languages programs in NSW public schools by providing an extensive range of Language Other Than English (LOTE) teaching materials to borrowers, including bilingual dictionaries and literary texts in over 100 different languages.

Teaching English as Additional Dialect (EAD) kits were developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Education and Communities to provide teaching resources for teachers of Aboriginal students who use Aboriginal English as their main home dialect.

## International student programs

International students from countries and regions around the world enrolled in NSW public schools in 2023 and 2024 for an Australian study experience or to finish their school education. This program offers international students the opportunity to experience our inclusive school culture, first-class teaching and learning, gain high-level English language skills, and experience an Australian lifestyle. Students may apply to complete their secondary education in a NSW government school or for up to 2 years of study in primary school. Students who successfully complete their studies in Year 12 are awarded a Higher School Certificate (HSC) and an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). In addition, the academic achievements of international students and their contributions to the school and wider community were recognised at the annual NSW Government Schools International Student Awards Ceremony.

The annual Department of Education (DE) International School Staff Training Day provides training and professional development for school staff supporting international students enrolled in NSW government schools. The training ensures school staff are aware of legislative requirements around the enrolment of and support for international students, as well as provides an opportunity for school staff to share best practices in supporting international students. The event focuses on ensuring staff are equipped to support the unique wellbeing needs of international students. The 2024 event attracted 168 staff across 86 schools and intensive English centres.

## Supporting senior students

The HSC English EAL/D (2 unit) course is intended for students who have been educated overseas or in an Australian education institution using English as the language of instruction for less than five years.

The department has developed a Stage 6 Work Studies curriculum resource to support teachers when delivering the Work Studies syllabus to Stage 6 EAL/D learners. This career learning resource was developed to address the career competency learning needs of EAL/D learners.

## Growing specialist expertise

To ensure NSW public schools are well positioned to meet the future learning needs of culturally diverse communities, including the needs of a growing EAL/D learner population, a number of new initiatives were introduced as part of an EAL/D workforce plan for all NSW public schools. The plan focuses on three areas:

- Strengthen the EAL/D entitlement model and modernise policy settings
- Improve EAL/D workforce configuration and governance settings
- Advance attraction and retention to the EAL/D profession.

In 2023-2024, Teach & Learn Scholarship Program in EAL/D education continued to attract and support teachers to undertake further study to increase the availability of EAL/D teacher specialists in schools. The scholarships provide eligible participants with up to \$20,000 per year of full-time study for a maximum of two years, study leave provision and retention of salary during course practicum. Since the scholarship launched in 2020, 63 teachers have commenced on program to retrain in EAL/D education, with 36 of these teachers having completed studies and 25 still studying.

With support from the department, a 45-hour course is being delivered by the Sydney Institute of Community Languages Education (SICLE) in collaboration with WSU for community language teachers to become qualified to teach in NSW public schools. This project assists in addressing the teacher shortage in NSW schools. Since 2023, a least 13 participants have attained NESA teacher accreditation through the SICLE pathway and are employed with the department. Each of these teachers has accreditation to teach EAL/D as well as another curriculum subject. In Semester 1, 2025, up to 60 students will be supported to progress to a Master of Teaching at Western Sydney University.

The department provided opportunities for appropriately skilled teachers to access permanent positions as Community Languages Teachers. Administered by the Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE) at Sydney University, the Community Languages Teachers test is intended to increase the number of qualified teachers available to support students in maintaining their home languages. This initiative ultimately aims to enhance language learning opportunities for students across NSW public schools.



## Supporting workforce diversity and inclusion

In 2023, the department released the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-2026, the strategy celebrates diversity and details actions for all staff to help ensure our workplace is an environment where people feel represented, included and valued. A literature review completed during the development of strategy found that the presence of diverse teachers within school workforces has been associated with improved student outcomes, including academic achievement, reduced exclusions and dropout rates, and higher aspirations for continued study.

In 2024, the department developed six new Human Resources policies and 45 new procedures that provides all staff with direction and guidance to create inclusive, respectful and culturally safe school communities and workplaces that support students, staff and families from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, including:

- Our culture policy - demonstrates the commitment to creating open, supportive and inclusive workplaces where staff are safe, respected, included, valued and inspire to bring their whole selves to work.
- The Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Standards - promote respectful, inclusive and fair workplaces that reflect the diversity of the schools and communities we serve. It recognises the value of attracting and retaining people with diverse skills, experiences and backgrounds.
- Recruitment and onboarding policy - support hiring managers to follow fair equitable recruitment practices using a range of recruitment and onboarding processes to ensure it attracts the best talent, while upholding the principles of merit, diversity, ethics and child protection.
- The Induction and onboarding policy - supports hiring managers to create a localised and personalised induction to introduce new staff to the department, their workplace and their role. It requires consideration for the new staff member's cultural and language background, and that of their workplace and colleagues.
- Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Descent process - provides guidance on several options for staff to confirm their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent in the department.
- Positive workplace culture policy - provides guidance and resources for staff to create and maintain a respectful, engaged and inclusive workplace culture.

The 2023-2024 ECEC Scholarships Program supports current and aspiring ECEC professionals to reduce the financial barriers associated with obtaining ECEC qualifications. The 2023-2024 program received a record 2,328 applications. Of these, 41% of applicants identified they speak a language other than English, providing a strong indication that the program supports people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds.

The ECEC Professional Learning Program is delivered in partnership with TAFE NSW. The aim of the program is to provide all ECEC professionals across NSW, regardless of their qualification, access to relevant, fee-free professional learning to address burnout and support retention. This will include universally available online micro-skills and webinars, and targeted leadership development programs.

The program opened in November 2024 with a phased delivery of learning products, specifically webinars and resources. Underpinning the program is the intent to enable access to professional learning and ensure equity in participation.

The program prioritises support and investment in both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ECEC professionals, and ECEC professional in Regional Rural and Remote settings through tailored programs and individualised financial and non-financial supports.

Participation targets are expected to be set for TAFE NSW to engage at least 29% of participants that have culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds and 4% of participants to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

MPSP focus area: Planning and Leadership

## Target 9

Our stakeholders work with us to improve student learning and wellbeing

### Strengthening community connections

In 2024, the department's Multicultural Education team continued working with settlement service organisations to support newly arrived students and their families in NSW public schools. The Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) aims to improve settlement outcomes for new arrivals through a focus on English language, education and employment outcomes. Multicultural Education attends quarterly Humanitarian Settlement Program Network (HSPN) and Refugee Settlement Network (RSN) meetings to strengthen agencies' understanding of:

- Department's approach to engaging students from refugee backgrounds and their families
- Current concerns students from refugee backgrounds face in NSW public schools
- Programs and initiatives to enhance students from refugee backgrounds' experience and education outcomes.

In 2024, a new dedicated position Aboriginal Engagement and Regulatory Practice Advisor, was introduced to uplift efforts and activities in culturally responsive regulation. The role's purpose is to review existing operational processes and approaches and provide cultural advice and recommendations to staff to continuously improve their approach to supporting and engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander services, families and stakeholders. From this work, it is intended that staff will be better equipped with culturally responsive approaches and decision making.

In June 2024, the inaugural Multicultural Youth Forum was held in Armidale, the forum is a collaboration between the Multicultural Policy and Engagement Team at the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), Mosaic Multicultural Connections and the department. Students participated in panel discussions to express the challenges and barriers they are facing as young people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. Approximately 80 students participated in the forum, including students attending the Armidale IEC and students from refugee backgrounds.

## Stakeholder consultation

The Secretary's Multicultural Education Advisory Group is the department's formal mechanism for consulting with representatives of key stakeholder groups on significant matters relating to education in a culturally diverse society. Members meet four times each year and include representatives from Multicultural NSW, Ethnic Communities' Council, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, NSW Teachers' Federation, Association for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Primary Principals' Association and Secondary Principals' Council.

In 2023, the department collaborated with Multicultural NSW to host ECEC roundtables across NSW as part of the Regional Engagement Program (REP). These roundtable discussions were held at 10 different locations across NSW. The roundtables brought together multicultural organisations and community members to share their insights and experiences of how factors such as migration pathway, pre- and post-migration experiences, language background, and disability and additional needs influence accessing and participating in ECEC.

In 2024, the Multicultural Children's Strategy Working Group was established to support the department's Early Childhood Outcomes in ensuring policy and programs are informed by sector and community perspectives. The working group includes eight external members, including representatives from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities, service delivery organisations, the ECEC sector, researchers and academics.

Multicultural Education represents the department on the Joint Partnership Working Group (JPWG) on refugee settlement. Convened by Multicultural NSW and chaired by the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement, the JPWG brings together senior representatives from all levels of government and the community sector for strategic discussion to drive better settlement for outcomes for refugees in NSW through supporting the implementation and evaluation of the NSW Settlement Strategy. The JPWG provides a mechanism for all levels of government and the community sector to:

- Feed into NSW Government settlement decision-making through a formal link with the NSW Government Immigration and Settlement Planning Committee (GISPC)
- Advise on escalation of issues to the Commonwealth Government, via Multicultural NSW, to the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG).

In 2023-2024, the department consulted with a range of organisations and faith groups to develop or strengthen resources, policies and programs that support anti-racism and multicultural education. Individual schools consulted with their communities, parents and carers in relation to local educational matters, including strategies for enhancing the learning and wellbeing of students from culturally,

linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. To tackle religious intolerance, quarterly meetings and ongoing consultation between faith leaders and the department were established in 2024 to ensure religious representation to support related work and build community relations.

## Community partnerships

Community Hubs Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers grassroots programs that connect families with their school and with existing services. The program has been recognised as a leading model to engage and support migrant women with young children, helping them to better understand the Australian education system. There are 25 community hubs located in NSW public schools in Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Parramatta, Liverpool, Wollongong and Coffs Harbour Local Government Areas. Community Hubs are supported by a designated support agency, including Settlement Services International, STARTTS, Karitane Linking Families, and Liverpool City Council.

### Community Partnerships – Cowpasture Principals Network

In the Cowpasture Principals Network, there are Community Hubs located in Prairievale Public School and Hoxton Park Public School. The Community Hubs facilitate strong community partnerships across primary and secondary schools, university, TAFE, the Southwestern Sydney Health Team (WHIN) Nurse program and Communities for Children – Fairfield. These partnerships are integral to promoting equitable access to support and opportunity for children and their families.

In 2023 and 2024, community mothers at Prairievale Public School, with the support of the Community Hubs Leader and the Director, Education Leadership (DEL), created a book to share with their children and the community. The stories tell their own journeys to Australia as refugees or migrants, and articulate hope for the future out of the difficult times they experienced. The group of 20 mothers came together to support one another as newcomers to Australia, to share their stories, their pain and their hopes for their children. The women reported that they valued the support of the school and seek to empower their children through education, giving them opportunities that they never had.

OCHRE Opportunity Hubs are local networks that develop personalised transition planning from school into tertiary education, training and/or employment for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people partnering with existing services. Opportunity Hubs are responsible for many elements of the school to further education/employment transition, including:

- working with schools to assist Aboriginal young people to develop career aspirations, maximise retention and completion to year 12 or equivalent, and providing clear pathways to enable successful transitions to secondary school, sustainable employment and/or further education and training.
- coordinating opportunities for Aboriginal young people that facilitate connection to culture, identity and community and support a holistic approach to their wellbeing.

The Adult and Community Education (ACE) program is key to the delivery of training and support to students experiencing disadvantage across metropolitan, regional and remote areas of NSW. In 2023-2024 the program provided funding to 31 ACE providers across NSW who are local, learner-centred, inclusive not-for-profit organisations that deliver foundational skills and broader higher-level training. The ACE program provides support for EAL/D learners, students from refugee backgrounds or who are seeking asylum, and students who require considerable additional support to effectively participate in community or employment and students who experience educational disadvantage impacting their ability to succeed in training.

In 2023, the department partnered with Aboriginal Community Collected Organisations (ACCOs), under the Sector Strengthening Partnership, to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in their transition to school, including children who speak a dialect of English, particularly Aboriginal English. In 2024, parents of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children reported a greater sense of belonging, inclusion and wellbeing in prior-to-school settings as a result of this partnership. The Gudjagang Gulgul committee and the ACCOs partnership also increased the collaboration of Early Childhood Outcomes with stakeholders such as NSW AECG and SNAICC National Voice of our Children to improve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students learning outcomes and wellbeing.

The National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) program is for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people in NSW public secondary schools. The program delivers structured sporting and mentoring programs to strengthen culture, build self-esteem and enable a strong sense of autonomy through personal development. NASCA currently operate, in partnership with the department, across 15 NSW public school sites to provide mentoring, wellbeing and support services to up to 1,460 Aboriginal girls in NSW public schools.

The department has partnered with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice to continue to provide the Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP) until 2026. The DAFP funds advocacy services to help all individuals with disability and their families to access NSW Government funded services. Program providers include the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW. The

department has been providing supplementary funding to this program to support access to the DAFP for NSW public school students, including prospective students, and their families.

The program offers free individual advocacy support to help parents and carers of students with disability understand and navigate the NSW public education system and seek reasonable adjustments for their child. It also supports access to statewide services for persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6

MPSP focus area: Engagement & Service Delivery



## Target 10

Our schools are able to communicate effectively with parents and carers who do not speak or understand English well.

### Interpreters supporting schools

The department regularly utilises translations and interpreting services, to facilitate discussions with approved providers, educators, families and members of the public with culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds in NSW public schools and ECE services.

Schools are encouraged to use interpreters to assist in communicating with parents or carers who do not speak or understand English well, are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. Onsite, online and telephone interpreters are used to facilitate communication with parents and carers.

Parents or carers who don't speak English well can use the Telephone interpreting service to assist them to contact their school or Education office at no charge to themselves. An audio message on how to use the service is available in 45 languages.

Total expenditure for interpreters in schools in the 2023-2024 financial year was approximately \$657,949. From 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2024, 3,981 onsite interpreters provided support in 526 public schools and education offices. In the same period, 11,205 telephone interpreters supported parents and carers across 804 public schools.

The 10 most requested languages for onsite and telephone interpreting are shown in the tables below.

**Table 8 – Onsite interpreter assignments in schools**

Language	Number of requests
Arabic	1192
Mandarin	661
Dari	332
Vietnamese	290

Language	Number of requests
Persian	205
Auslan	153
Korean	133
Cantonese	109
Pashtu	88
Turkish	62

Assignments for the period 1 October 2022 to 130 September 2024

**Table 9 – Telephone interpreters used by schools**

Language	Number of requests
Arabic	3376
Mandarin	1784
Dari	958
Vietnamese	915
Persian	517
Cantonese	358
Korean	326
Kurdish Kurmanji	325
Thai	192
Mongolian	184

Assignments for the period 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2024

## Translated documents and resources

The department provides a wide range of documents and school information in translation to support parents and carers. These translations are available in up to 45 languages on the department's translated documents website. Data on community languages spoken across school communities and interpreter usage are used to determine the community languages selected for translations each year.

In 2023-2024, a range of documents for parents and carers were translated into Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Chinese-Simplified, Chinese-Traditional, Dinka, Filipino, French, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Khmer, Kirundi, Korean, Kurdish Kurmanji, Lao, Mongolian, Nepali, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Tongan, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

The department spent about \$148,000 on translations in the 2023-2024 financial year. New department translations, provided in up to 36 languages, included:

- Updated advice about selective high schools and opportunity classes
- Anti-racism policy update advice for parents
- Every Day Matters – attendance communication
- Letter to accompany attendance concerns
- Australian Early Development Census fact sheet and parent letter
- General Permission to publish and disclose information form
- Moving into Year 7 2024 update
- Knives in schools factsheet update
- NDIS consent form
- Behaviour code for students.

A variety of translated resources have been developed for parents and carers providing information on getting ready for early education and care, including a series of animated videos on various topics such as, what is preschool, getting ready for preschool, and transitioning to school. A

printable resource is also available on these topics. The resources are available in 5 languages: Arabic, Chinese simplified and traditional, Punjabi and Vietnamese.

Tell Them From Me is a suite of surveys designed to measure student engagement and wellbeing. The surveys are used to capture student, parent and teacher voices and provide reliable evidence for schools to use in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The parent survey, student survey and parent information forms are available in 23 community languages.

The department is developing 3 videos in 5 languages to provide updated information for parents on selective high schools and opportunity classes, these videos will be available by the end of 2024.

In 2023 and 2024, the department allocated a certain percentage of its media budget for campaign activities towards reaching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities, in accordance with the NSW Government Advertising Guidelines. For the 2023-2024 financial year, this requirement was 7.5% of the media budget. The budget for the 2024-2025 financial year is 9%. In most cases, assets were also translated into community languages. The budget does not include translation or production costs.

The department adopts inclusive consultative process in planning and implementing school infrastructure projects, including analysing the demographics of the local community, including languages spoken, and providing translated documents and engaging interpreters as appropriate.

An update to the Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) procedure provides guidance and direction on the process for suitably qualified department employees who have a basic level of competence in Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) or a language other than English and provide on-the-spot language assistance in school communities and the workplace. The CLAS enables department administrative and support staff, non-school-based teaching service (NSBTS) staff including their managers and principals who use their language skills to provide on-the-spot language assistance to have their skills recognised and be paid an allowance.

**These actions relate to:**

Plan for NSW Public Education focus area: 1, 2 & 3

MPSP focus area: Engagement & Service Delivery

## Future directions

Actions	MPSP Focus Area
Develop the next Implementation Plan 2026-2027 of the department's Anti-Racism Strategy.	Planning
Implement the Multicultural Plan 2024-2027 outlining department actions that meet the needs of students, staff and families from culturally diverse backgrounds.	Engagement
Implement the Multicultural Children's Strategy to ensure that every family has access to affordable, quality early childhood education and care.	Engagement
Continue to implement the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy to improve the staff experiences and drive a culture of belonging for all staff.	Engagement
Continue to strengthen communication strategies to ensure people from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds have equitable access to information about services and provisions.	Engagement
Continue to consult with key stakeholders to ensure the needs of students and families from Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities are appropriately supported.	Engagement
Continue to implement the Anti-racism policy and enhance strategies for countering racism impacting on students, staff and communities.	Service delivery
Continue to implement strategies which build the capacity of staff in meeting the needs of students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds.	Service delivery
Implement strategies for retaining and expanding specialist positions which meet the needs of LBOTE students and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse school communities.	Service delivery
Continue to implement and strengthen strategies that build culturally safe, inclusive and respectful learning and working environments that are free from racism and discrimination.	Leadership
Continue to implement the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy and build instructional leadership in Aboriginal Education in schools.	Leadership
Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of provisions which aim to address the needs of culturally diverse NSW and promote equity and harmony in NSW public schools and department workplaces.	Leadership

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