



ABN: 21 088 258 199
Incorporated Association A02327 (ACT)

Bruce Wilson
Indigenous Education Review Team,
Department of Education
GPO Box 4821
Darwin NT 0801

9 March 2014

Dear Mr Wilson,

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) would like to offer itself as a source of consultancy on *Indigenous Education Review in the Northern Territory*.

ACTA is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). ACTA therefore represents and advocates on behalf of teachers, parents and guardians, and English-language/dialect (EAL/D) learners. These include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional/heritage languages, creoles and varieties of Aboriginal English, as well as migrants, refugees and international students, in all education sectors and contexts across Australia.

As you mention in *Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory: Draft Report*, the focus of the report is the “English language skills and knowledge that underpin success in the western education system” (p. 7). ACTA resolutely advocates for the most appropriate and effective pedagogy that achieves these ends, as supported by international best practice and research. As such, ACTA is firmly committed to the position that the specific home languages, knowledge and skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must be acknowledged and included, as the platform for further learning so that educational programs and initiatives can cater in an effective way to the English language and literacy learning needs of these students. This needs to happen in order to achieve the objectives stipulated in the Australian Curriculum and in national English literacy testing.

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Establishing literacy skills is essential and is most efficiently achieved through the language the students understand and speak, whilst being taught the English required for success in school. Recent local and international data confirm the efficacy of this pedagogical practice.

The review team will have been made aware of the community capacity building as a result of Assistant Teachers having a teaching role in classrooms that are bilingual and biliterate. As recently as 2013, 12 Indigenous teachers of long standing in their remote community schools upgraded their qualifications from a Diploma of Teaching to a Bachelor of Education.

As the national association for TESOL, we have released a range of position statements, reports and submissions that are of direct and pertinent relevance to the Inquiry, including:

- ACTA Submission to the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 'The effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy' (attached)
- ACTA's joint submission (with Applied Linguistics Association of Australia and Australian Linguistic Society) to MCEECDYA on the Stage 2 Consultation Draft of the Indigenous Education Action Plan (IEAP) 2010–2014 (attached)
- ACTA's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities (attached)
- Inquiry into the Australian Human Rights Commission Amendment (National Children's Commissioner) Bill 2012 (attached)

These documents are numerous and available on our website. They reflect robust and [relevant research](#) in English language learning, and are written by teams expert in education and academia. To this end, we would welcome the opportunity to consult further with the Indigenous Education Review Team, and to collaborate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Review. We believe this will assist educators to continue to enhance the capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Northern Territory and Australia.

Please note that Indigenous Education has been chosen as one of the main strands for our fourth ACTA International Conference to be held in Melbourne on 30 September-2 October 2014 <http://tesol.org.au/ACTA-Conference/ACTA-International-Conference-2014>. Our conference organisers have scheduled Keynote Presentations which will specifically address English language learning issues and initiatives for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect in Australian schools.

We would certainly welcome the attendance and input from members of Indigenous Education Review Team at our conference.

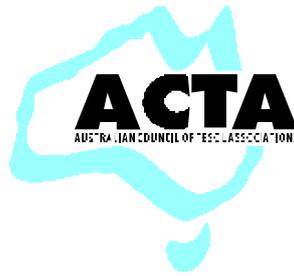
Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adriano Truscott', with a stylized, cursive script.

Adriano Truscott

President,

Australian Council of TESOL Associations.



WHO WE ARE

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

ACTA represents and advocates on behalf of teachers, parents and guardians, and English-language learners, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional/heritage languages, creoles and varieties of Aboriginal English, in all education sectors and contexts across Australia.

ACTA's objectives are

- to ensure **access to English language instruction** for speakers of other languages and dialects (from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee and migrant backgrounds, and international students)
- to encourage and facilitate **implementation and delivery of quality professional programs** at all levels, and
- to promote **study, research and development of TESOL** at state, national and international levels.

ACTA's membership comes from all educational sectors: pre-schools; schools; adult, community, TAFE and other VET settings; consultancy services in state and territory education departments and the independent and Catholic sectors; and university teacher education departments.