

**Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
Northern Territory  
(ATESOL NT)**

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION  
TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO  
ADULT LITERACY AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS  
KEY PROBLEMS IN REMOTE NT SCHOOLS**

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<p>More than 8 out of 10 people in remote NT communities speak an Indigenous language. In these communities, young people do not use English outside school for social, emotional, practical or other purposes. Learning English is therefore learning a <i>foreign</i> language, a fact that is not recognised in official policy as it is enacted in communities or in pedagogies supported by the NT DoE.</p> <p>Australian and international research is overwhelmingly clear that learning to read in the first/home language is the most effective foundation for literacy in another language.</p> <p>For approximately the last 100 years, scripts, grammars and dictionaries for Indigenous languages have been developed in association with churches, schools and universities. They continue to be refined. They provide a rich resource for young Indigenous learners to learn to read and write in the language they understand and use daily. It is ATESOL NT’s strong view that the failure to support students to gain literacy in the languages they and their communities speak is the single most contributor to poor English literacy attainment in remote Indigenous schools. The lack of value placed on Indigenous languages in NT schools also demeans the status of these languages, erodes young people’s confidence in their cultural identity, and is contributing to the decline and loss of Australian Indigenous languages and their unique world views.</p>	
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Today, the nine remaining bilingual schools struggle to staff their Indigenous language programs, while most schools scramble to provide an Assistant Teacher in each class.

Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers play an invaluable role in supporting students to learn and feel culturally and emotionally safe at school. They are best qualified to meet AITSL’s first Teaching Standard “Know students and how they learn”. These teachers facilitate students learning in and through their first language *and* English. As this vital support has diminished, so too has school attendance.

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Use of NAPLAN to assess and report on the English literacy and numeracy achievements of Indigenous learners of English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) is inappropriate, inaccurate, deleterious and unjust. NAPLAN results do not and cannot provide accurate information on Indigenous EAL/D learners’ levels or progress in developing literacy *because they are not based on EAL/D pathways into literacy in Standard Australian English*. NAPLAN assessments assume norms for mother tongue/fluent English speakers and urban Australian school contexts and experiences.

NAPLAN data is wrongly used to inform system wide targets for Indigenous EAL/D learners and to determine both policies and pedagogies for these learners (see Problems 2 and 4). These targets position Indigenous EAL/D learners as failures in the NT schooling system, which has adverse effects on learners, communities, teachers, school leadership and the culture of the NT DoE itself.

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In remote communities, where English is often spoken as a foreign language, non-Indigenous teachers of bi/multi-lingual are not required to hold EAL/D teaching qualifications. Nor are mainstream teachers and school principals supported by EAL/D Professional Learning. Targeted, appropriate, and effective teaching of Standard Australian English is largely absent from NT schools, especially in remote communities.

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Poor and ill-informed decisions about staffing and pedagogy are prevalent in remote NT schools. A leading factor contributing to this is the lack of culturally competent and knowledgeable leaders at school and regional levels. School leadership is key to addressing many of the problems described in this submission. When a principal understands students’ learning needs and can work with the school’s community, attendance improves and students learn.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
AT	Assistant Teacher
ATESOL NT	Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages in the Northern Territory
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CSWE	Certificates in Spoken and Written English
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language or Dialect
DI	Direct Instruction
DoE	(NT) Department of Education
EP	Employment Pathways (program)
GSB	Global School Budgets
IAC	Independent Commission Against Corruption
IES	Indigenous Education Strategy
ILSS	Indigenous Language Speaking Students (program)
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LANE	Literacy and Numeracy Essentials (program)
LLN	Language, Literacy & Numeracy
MOI	Medium of Instruction
NAPLAN	The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NT	Northern Territory
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate in Education and Training
NTRAI	Northern Territory Remote Investment Agreement
PL	Professional Learning
RWI	Read Write Inc.
SAE	Standard Australian English
SAIS	(NT) Student Achievement Information System
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TSU	Transition Support Unit
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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*To assist the Committee, a top priority recommendation that addresses each problem is highlighted in a box. However, we hope the Committee will also give consideration to the supporting recommendations.*

### Funding to remote schools

#### *Re funding based on attendance*

1. All remote schools should be returned to the pre-2012 model by which Commonwealth money for enrolled students was allocated to schools based on enrolment data, **not** attendance.
2. As a condition of receiving the Commonwealth NT schools' allocation, including extra allocations for very remote schools, the Commonwealth should require the NT Government to provide **publicly available reports** on:
  - a. the **funds allocated** to each NT school
  - b. **enrolments and attendance** in that school for that year
  - c. **employment status and qualifications** of teachers in each school.
3. The NT Government should require schools that do not achieve Year B attendance rates in line with Year A attendance to report on:
  - a. **the reasons** understood to contribute to this declineand
  - b. **the strategies** the school has and/or will undertake to reverse this decline to the extent it is within its power.

#### *Re Global School Budgets (GSB)*

4. All remote school budgets should be allocated **earmarked funding** for EAL/D specialist teacher and Aboriginal Assistant Teacher positions. See also Recommendations 31, 33 and 40b.
5. EAL/D specialists in schools should be managed centrally, to ensure that **EAL/D student data is moderated and entered accurately** into the NT Student Achievement Information System (SAIS).
6. All remote schools should be funded to run **local literacy production centres** to enable these schools to generate their own resources to support bilingual and English language and literacy teaching and learning.
7. NT DoE corporate staff working with remote schools should hold **specialist EAL/D teaching qualifications and relevant experience** to enable them to support schools and provide relevant and informed EAL/D professional learning.

### *Re ensuring and promoting continuity of staffing in remote schools*

8. The NT Government should use Term 1 enrolments for Year A to calculate base funding for Year B and **allocate funds to remote schools on a rolling two-year basis**.
9. **Base funding for Year B should be increased on a per capita basis** if the numbers enrolled exceed Year A enrolments.

### **Investment in evidence-based EAL/D teaching programs**

10. The Commonwealth should offer targeted grants to States/Territories that will support or allow trialling of **effective evidence-based approaches to EAL/D for Indigenous students in the Australian context**, including local production of bi/multilingual teaching materials. Where outcomes are demonstrated, including but not only data that measures students' development of SAE through appropriate EAL/D assessment tools (see also Recommendations 33 and 38), these approaches should be supported by on-going, secure funding.
11. The Commonwealth should decline to support literacy initiatives in NT schools that **rely on imported commercially promoted teaching resources developed for remedial English-speaking students**.
12. The Commonwealth should encourage the NT Government with whatever leverage is at its disposal to **restore, promulgate and support established, evidence-based Australian approaches to teaching English and literacy to learners of English as an additional language/dialect**, including in remote Indigenous contexts.
13. The Commonwealth should encourage the NT Government with whatever leverage is at its disposal to restore **targeted EAL/D school-based positions to be managed by a corporate EAL/D team**.
14. The Commonwealth should encourage the NT Government to **reinstate the ILSS program** to make the teaching and learning of oral language in remote schools a system wide priority.

### **Adult Education programs**

15. English language and literacy programs should be **established in remote communities** to respond to the diverse needs of adults.
16. Adult educators should **work in conjunction with schools to provide a post-school program for early school leavers**.
17. Adult educators should work in conjunction with TAFE and Higher Education providers to ensure that **linkages are made between school and post school education**.
18. Adult educators should provide **informal literacy programs** for community members who wish to increase their skills to participate in broader society.

## Bilingual education

19. The Commonwealth should offer NT education bodies (schools and researchers) **targeted grants to trial and independently assess evidence-based approaches** to bilingual education, including those previously implemented, and local production of bi/multilingual teaching materials for Indigenous students in **the remaining operational bilingual schools** and in other schools who wish to develop bilingual programs in the NT.
20. Schools and communities which have lost bilingual programs should be approached by the NT Government to ascertain the **interest in re-instating one**.
21. The NT DoE should **expand support for the existing nine bilingual schools** through extending practical services located within its corporate team as well as on the ground through increased Aboriginal staffing, especially Literacy Production Centre workers, Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers.
22. DoE corporate staff should be tasked to support schools to **assess mother tongue language use and development**, including reading and writing in the mother tongue, to moderate these assessments, report them and lodge them in the NT SAIS.
23. **The Step model or “Two-Way Staircase” bilingual program model**, which underpinned the earlier NT Bilingual Program, should be reinstated and fully supported in schools with bilingual programs. In this model, both English and the mother tongue are used to reinforce and complement each other in teaching the curriculum.
24. NT DoE should provide **non-Indigenous teaching staff with professional learning that will assist them to participate respectfully, knowledgeably and collaboratively** in bilingual teaching teams with Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers.

## Pathways into secondary schooling

25. The NT Government should provide targeted funding to remote schools so that principals can allocate teachers to senior classes. Year 10 – 12 levels should target young adults in the community who wish to resume their secondary studies and disengaged young people who have returned from boarding schools. The classes should provide students with pathways and support to complete **the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCET) in their own communities**.
26. The NT Government should keep records, which should be publicly available, on **annual enrolment and retention rates** in NT and interstate boarding schools of students from remote communities.
27. The NT Dept of Education Transition Support Unit (TSU) should track the **academic achievements, subsequent employment and suicide rates** of remote students who attend boarding schools.

28. **Training and service provision for the TSU unit** should be improved to enable them to better support families in remote communities who choose to send their young people to boarding schools.
29. The Commonwealth and/or NT Governments offer grants to remote schools to **trial academic and/or vocational post-primary pathways**. Where positive outcomes are demonstrated, these pathways should receive recurrent funding (as per Recommendations 1 – 9 above).
30. The NT Government should reinstate **the role of the NT School of Distance Education** in providing remote community schools with Stage 1 (Year 11) and Stage 2 (Year 12) programs for students wishing to complete their NTCET in community.

### **Aboriginal Teachers and Assistant Teachers**

31. **The number of appropriately trained and qualified Assistant Teachers and qualified Aboriginal teachers** in remote schools should be increased as a priority for the Commonwealth and NT DoE.
32. **A public record of total numbers of Aboriginal Teachers and Assistant Teachers** should be kept by the NT Teachers Registration Board and updated annually.

*See next page for priority recommendation 33.*

33. The Commonwealth should offer to support the NT Government in planning, resourcing, improving, upgrading and evaluating the *Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) Pilot Program* as follows.
- a. A **purpose-built Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program** should be developed and evaluated that:
    - i. contains **appropriate content** for experienced Assistant Teachers in remote schools, which respects and builds on their knowledge as speakers of Aboriginal languages and their status as cultural custodians in their communities
    - ii. **offers** qualifications at levels that are directly tied to NT Department of Education salary scales
    - iii. ensures adequate support for enrolled Assistant Teachers to develop their **academic English skills**.
  - b. Delivery of this program should ensure that:
    - i. teacher educators are **employed onsite** in the remote schools participating in the program
    - ii. teacher educators are qualified, experienced and competent in **EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy** in remote contexts.
  - c. This improved RATE Program should build on the experience of the trial (Feb-June 2021) in four communities and be **progressively extended** to other communities with relatively large populations. These communities could be designated as “hubs” for more comprehensive coverage.
  - d. The stakeholders involved in developing and accrediting this new ITE course should include:
    - i. **employing authorities** (NT Dept of Education/ Independent Schools /Catholic Education)
    - ii. **training providers** (Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute)
    - iii. **accreditation authorities** (the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership/AITSL, the Australian Qualifications Authority/ASQA, and the NT Teachers Registration Board.)

### Appropriate assessments

34. A **nationally consistent measure of English language learners’ proficiency** should be developed as a matter of urgency and used in all NT schools to document student achievements, diagnose needs and inform interpretations of NAPLAN results.

35. Literacy assessment policies and practices endorsed and adopted by the Commonwealth and the NT Government must take account of well-established research that shows that most English language learners:
  - a. can take up to *two years* to develop **social interaction skills** in English.
  - b. can take up to *seven years* to achieve English proficiency that will support real **academic achievement**.
  - c. depend on **rigorous, professional EAL/D teaching and support** to achieve these timelines.
36. The mandate that all students sit NAPLAN should be revised to allow remote schools to **exclude students who are in the Beginning Phase** of learning to read and write in English according to the *ACARA EAL/D Progressions*.
37. The Commonwealth Department of Education should require the **NT Government report on – and make publicly available** – data from its twice-yearly assessments of EAL/D learning as well as NAPLAN assessments.
38. The NT twice-yearly assessments of EAL/D learning should be regionally or centrally **moderated to promote accuracy of EAL/D data** before lodging it in the NT Student Achievement Information System (SAIS).
39. The Commonwealth should require schools and the NT Government in receipt of special grants to support Indigenous education, to **report on outcomes using the twice-yearly EAL/D assessments**.

#### **EAL/D professional learning for teachers, principals and adult educators, and EAL/D qualification requirements for EAL/D teachers**

40. The NT DoE should require:
  - a. all teachers, principals, regional leaders and adult educators to undertake **annual Professional Learning that supports EAL/D pedagogy**.
  - b. all remote schools to employ at least **one teacher with recognised EAL/D teaching qualifications**.
41. The NT Teacher Registration Board and/or the DoE should **record the EAL/D qualifications of all NT teachers in schools**.
42. Initial Teacher Education programs should be required to include **compulsory units on EAL/D learning**.
43. **The CDU postgraduate course in TESOL should be reinstated** and offered to all new teachers to the NT and all teachers working in remote settings.

## Appointments to leadership positions in remote areas

44. The Commonwealth should seek to ensure that **Job Descriptions and on-going Key Performance Indicators for remote school principals and regional directors** include:
  - a. demonstrated ability to **work successfully with Indigenous people in remote communities**
  - b. knowledge and understanding of the **foundational role of first language and culture and how to support good EAL/D pedagogy** in all school learning.
45. The Commonwealth should ensure through its funding arrangements that the NT Government **genuinely empowers school councils to participate actively** in the selection of their school principals. (ATESOL NT does not have confidence in the independence of the NT Council of Government School Organisations/COGSO or its experience and understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities.)
46. The Commonwealth should ensure that the NT Government provides **face-to-face, interactive locally relevant Cultural Competency courses** (not generic online courses), such as the one developed by Aboriginal Resource and Development Service (ARDS) in 2019, and require all principals and leaders within NT DoE to undertake one course and to refresh themselves in these skills and understandings every year.
47. The Commonwealth should **trial an Indigenous Leadership in Schools program** to support Indigenous staff in remote schools who seek promotion.
48. On-going/renewed contracts to school principals and regional directors should be conditional on demonstration of:
  - a. their **engagement and work** with Indigenous community leaders and Indigenous staff, and
  - b. their success in **improving school attendance and learning outcomes** which are not judged solely by NAPLAN results.

## Introduction

This Supplement to the ATESOL NT Submission 105 to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Importance of Adult Literacy is in response to the Committee's invitation to elaborate on our recommendations, for which we thank you.

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference include "the relationship between parents' literacy skills and their children's education and literacy skill development from birth to post-secondary education". We propose that this relationship goes **both ways**: children's experiences of schooling profoundly impact on adults' attitudes to *their own* learning of English and literacy as well as their perspectives on *their children's* learning in school. This inter-relationship is especially strong in small, close-knit communities such as very remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

We are encouraged by the Committee's interest in the connections between Indigenous adult literacy levels, English language learning and remote school education. Our expertise lies largely with remote schools, so school education in these contexts is the main focus of our original submission and this Supplement. In what follows, we summarise the key problems identified in that submission and formulate recommendations that we believe would assist in rectifying each problem.

Below are two quotes which we drew upon during our oral presentation and which highlight significant messages from ATESOL NT:

*Fifty percent of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education For All (EFA): A legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of drop out and repetition.*

World Bank, 2005, p.1

*The current system does not take into account our Yolngu Garma curriculum or Yolngu "Both Ways" pedagogy and curriculum. Our job as educators is to convince the people who control mainstream education that we wish to be included. Until this happens assimilation is still the name of the game, and reconciliation is an empty word, an intellectual, 'terra nullius'.*

Dr Marika, an educator from Yirrkala, NE Arnhem Land

We are conscious that this Supplement does not directly include Indigenous voices, although it is informed by numerous such conversations. A moving speech by the member for Nhulunbuy in the NT Parliament, Mr Yingiya Guyula MLA, is included as Appendix A. This speech celebrates the 2017 landmark *History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory*, written by scholars who have contributed greatly to what he calls the work of providing hope and advice for the future of Indigenous children's education.<sup>1</sup> All the recommendations in this Supplement seek the goal he describes:

*We must not place our children in a position where they are torn between two paths, learning very little from either or falling into the gap. We want our children to have two-way education, two paths travelling so closely side*

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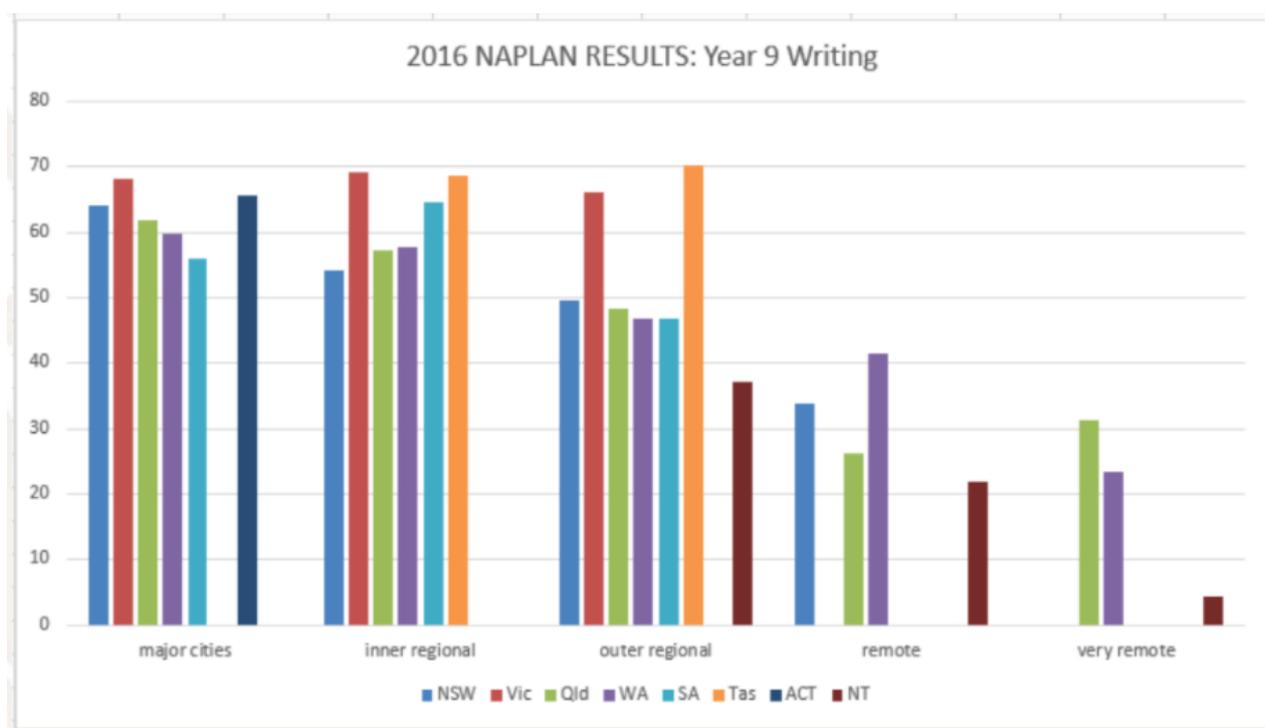
<sup>1</sup> Devlin et. 2017.

*by side that our children can walk on both paths. This is how we will close the education gap.*

From our work in remote communities, ATESOL NT is aware of the chronically low levels of Standard Australian English (SAE) attainment amongst adult populations in remote Indigenous communities. As there is little or no data to support this statement, we draw your attention to the 2016 NAPLAN results (below), which show that in remote communities in the NT, less than 5% of Indigenous Year 9 students were assessed as being “at or above” the minimum standards for writing.

**Less than 5% of Year 9 remote Indigenous students met minimum writing standards in 2016.**

**Table 1: 2016 national NAPLAN results for Year 9 writing**



To address the low levels of SAE in remote communities, ATESOL NT has identified nine problems which are grouped under three key headings:

1. Inappropriate funding for staffing and programs.
2. Lack of educational infrastructure.
3. Inappropriate pedagogical approaches and assessments.

The nine problems are:

### **1. Inappropriate Funding Allocations**

PROBLEM 1: Erosion of funding to remote schools

PROBLEM 2: Lack of investment in evidence based EAL/D teaching programs.

### **2. Lack of Educational Infrastructure**

PROBLEM 3: Lack of adult education programs

PROBLEM 4: Limited access to bilingual education

PROBLEM 5: Restricted pathways into secondary schooling

PROBLEM 6: Lack of Aboriginal Teachers and Assistant Teachers.

### **3. Inappropriate Assessments and Pedagogical Approaches**

PROBLEM 7: Use of inappropriate assessments

PROBLEM 8: Lack of EAL/D professional learning and specialist qualifications for teachers, principals and adult educators

PROBLEM 9: Inappropriate appointments to leadership positions in remote areas.

For each problem we outline its cause and effects, and list our recommendations. We highlight one priority recommendation in a box.

ATESOL NT believes that each of these problems have contributed to the critically low attendance rates that are endemic across remote NT community schools. We argue that each of these problems needs to be addressed if young people and adults living in remote NT communities are to be provided with the opportunity to develop their skills in SAE listening, speaking, reading and writing.

## PROBLEM 1: Erosion of funding to remote schools

Since 2012, the way in which remote Indigenous community schools are funded has severely eroded their ability to retain staff and offer effective programs. A vicious cycle has been created that results directly in reduced student attendance.

*See original submission pp.3-4.*

### Causes

1. **Funding based on student attendance 2012-2021.** In 2012 the NT Government introduced an “effective enrolment” school funding formula, which is based on **attendance records from the previous year (Year A)**. This policy has hugely disadvantaged remote schools with low/unstable attendance.<sup>2</sup> The increasingly dire situation which remote schools now face is detailed by Rorris (2021) in his report *The Schooling Resource Standard in Australia*. According to Rorris, by 2023 NT public schools will be underfunded by 20%, which equates to \$6000 per student and is triple that of the other lowest performing jurisdiction.
2. **Global School Budgets (GSB).** Since 2015, one-line budgets for schools have devolved responsibility for recruiting teachers and providing professional learning to each school. NT Department of Education (DoE) corporate education services now play an increasingly limited and narrow role in providing schools and teachers with support, direction and Professional Learning activities.

### Effects

#### *Funding since 2012 based on attendance*

*The use of attendance data to determine school budgets has created volatility and uncertainty in staffing remote schools. A vicious cycle has been created whereby schools with poor attendance cannot reverse this trend, which continues to spiral downwards.*

- Schools do not know their budgets until the end of the year for which attendance data has been collected (Year A). In practice, **budgets may not be finalised until April of Year B**.
- If numbers increase in Year B, they cannot be adequately catered for because **funding is based on low attendance in the previous year**.
- The late notification of school budgets leads **teachers accept other job offers in Term 4** because they have no assurance of continuing employment.
- The volatility of budgets has led to remote schools increasingly employing **cheaper, less experienced and qualified teachers, including on one-term or six-month contracts, and as casuals**.<sup>3</sup> Casual/contract staff are used frontload staffing for Semester 1 in response to high Term 1 attendance. See also Problems 6 and 8.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Education Northern Territory, September 2017, see graph p.33.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Education Northern Territory, September 2017, p.34

- Students generally enrol in larger numbers in terms 1 and 4. **To staff classes with fewer teachers**, large class rolls and class groups are created. Students find large classes **intimidating and unsatisfactory**, so they cease attending.<sup>4</sup>
- Very remote schools have lost **up to 50% of their budgets since 2011**. Most remote schools have lost teaching positions. See staff photos below from a remote school over this period.



In 2011 this remote community school had over 75 staff.



In 2021 the same school had approximately 42 staff.

- The percentage of students attending school four days a week in very remote communities has dropped from 19% in 2016 to 14% in 2019.<sup>5</sup> Guenther’s 2019 analysis of NT MySchool data, showed that **“schools that have higher levels of funding per student, and schools with lower staff to student ratios, have higher attendance rates.”**<sup>6</sup>
- The pressure on school funding has led to **a loss of permanent positions for Indigenous teachers and Assistant Teachers**: see Problems 4, 6 and 9. Guenther (see above) found that **Indigenous staff** in very remote schools have **“the biggest effect on attendance”**.

### *Global School Budgets (GSB)*

- GSB has caused **a lack of accountability** in how schools spend money. A recent (July 2021) Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (ICAC) investigation found that the NT Government urgently needed to address how very remote schools are funded and to institute “accountability measures and stronger scrutiny of funding provided to government schools.”<sup>7</sup>
- Under GSB, schools decide on how to allocate money for Professional Learning (PL). A **‘scattergun’ approach** has resulted in a lack of coherence and focus in PL across the 70 NT remote schools.

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<sup>4</sup> Responding to our request for detailed information about class sizes, one school principal wrote:

*There is always a drop in enrolled students from the start of the year as time goes on - mostly senior students dropping out I think. So we've gone from around 700 enrolled at the start to about 500 now (term 3)... With X (number of classes) active classes, this averages to over 41 students per roll. Given that the senior years classes tend to have fewer enrolled, this definitely puts some classes (rolls) at well over 50.*

<sup>5</sup> Felicity James “School engagement in NT communities lower than published figures show” ABC, 8th November 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Guenther, J. 2019 “Evidence on what doesn’t work for very remote schools (attendance strategies) and what does”.

<sup>7</sup> Felicity James, ABC Monday 5th July 2021.

- School-based EAL/D specialist positions and EAL/D professional learning were once managed by the NT DoE. The Department now has **few levers to influence teaching and learning**. The main levers now are:
  - travel and expenses for attendance at commercially offered PL events, currently Read Write Inc training. See Problems 2 and 8.
  - employment of all school principals on 2 – 4 year contracts. See Problem 9.
- Similarly, the Department has little control over the method and quality of EAL/D data (including on assessments) submitted by schools, including remote schools. **A significant gap now exists between stated NT DoE policies and reporting and the reality in at least some schools**. See Problems 7 and 8.
- Under GSB, schools cover the salaries of staff on long service leave and therefore have **insufficient funds to cover these teachers' absences**.<sup>8</sup>

## Recommendations 1 - 9

### Re funding based on attendance

1. All remote schools should be returned to the pre-2012 model by which Commonwealth money for enrolled students was allocated to schools based on enrolment data, ***not*** attendance.
2. As a condition of receiving the Commonwealth NT schools' allocation, including extra allocations for very remote schools, the Commonwealth should require the NT Government to provide publicly available reports on:
  - a. the funds allocated to each NT school
  - b. enrolments and attendance in that school for that year
  - c. employment status and qualifications of teachers in each school.
3. The NT Government should require schools that do not achieve Year B attendance rates in line with Year A attendance to report on:
  - a. the reasons understood to contribute to this declineand
  - b. the strategies the school has and/or will undertake to reverse this decline to the extent it is within its power.

### Re Global School Budgets (GSB)

4. All remote school budgets should be allocated **earmarked funding** for EAL/D specialist teacher and Aboriginal Assistant Teacher positions. See also Recommendations 30, 32 and 41b.

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<sup>8</sup> See also footnote 63.

5. EAL/D specialists in schools should be managed centrally, to ensure that **EAL/D student data is moderated and entered accurately** into the NT Student Achievement Information System (SAIS)<sup>9</sup>. See also Problems 7 and 8.
6. All remote schools should be funded to run **local literacy production centres** to enable these schools to generate their own resources to support bilingual and English language and literacy teaching and learning. See Problems 2, 4 and 5.
7. NT DoE corporate staff working with remote schools should hold **specialist EAL/D teaching qualifications and relevant experience** to enable them to support schools and provide relevant and informed EAL/D professional learning. See Problem 8.

### **Re ensuring and promoting continuity of staffing in remote schools**

8. The NT Government should use Term 1 enrolments for Year A to calculate base funding for Year B and **allocate funds to remote schools on a rolling two-year basis**.
9. **Base funding for Year B should be increased on a per capita basis** if the numbers enrolled exceed Year A enrolments.

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<sup>9</sup> SAIS is where EAL/D data for all EAL/D students in the NT is entered twice a year. Because schools no longer employ EAL/D specialists, the NT DoE has very little control over the collection and quality of this data. Nor can they manage the identification of EAL/D learner within schools, because this is also the remit of individual schools. See problem 8.

## **PROBLEM 2: Lack of investment in evidence-based EAL/D teaching programs**

**The NT Government’s 2015 Indigenous Education Strategy focussed expenditure on four programs intended to bring a “consistent approach” to literacy learning in remote NT schools. Five years on, three of the four programs have been abandoned. Reports to ATESOL NT indicate that the fourth is also failing. Millions of dollars have been spent with no measurable improvements in student learning.**

*See original submission pp.5-7.*

### **Background**

*In 2008, NAPLAN results showed that NT students, especially in remote schools, did not meet national norms, a trend that has remined. The NT Government has responded with an increasingly narrowed focus on literacy in English. See also Problems 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9.*

In 2014, the NT Government’s focus on literacy skills led it to cancel the Commonwealth funded **Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ILSS) program**. The program had operated in all remote schools since the 1990s and explicitly focused on the teaching and assessing of oral language in the Early Years. This effectively ended the DoE’s only program which focussed on the teaching and assessing of young Indigenous EAL/D students’ spoken English.

**The 2015-2024 NT Indigenous Education Strategy (IES)** is described by the NT Government as the “basis for the collaborative work between the NT Government and the Commonwealth Government”<sup>10</sup> through the Northern Territory Remote Investment Agreement (NTRAI). The aim of this agreement is to “improve schooling for Aboriginal children, make remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory safer and healthier and increase access to interpreter services and job opportunities for adults”.<sup>11</sup> From 2016-2021, the Commonwealth provided just over \$100 million to the NT Government under this agreement. Central to the IES was to develop the literacy of remote Indigenous students through:

- **Direct Instruction**, a commercial program from the USA, which was rolled in 19 very remote schools from Transition to Secondary.<sup>12</sup> *Costing \$25-30 million, it was defunded in 2018/19.*
- two NT developed literacy initiatives - **Literacy and Numeracy Essentials (LANE)**<sup>13</sup> and **Employment Pathways** (see also Problem 5). *By 2021, both had been cancelled.*

The implementation of DI relied on American coaches being flown into remote communities several times a year to assess student learning. It was especially inappropriate for remote Indigenous contexts because it:

- required lock-step, scripted teaching

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<sup>10</sup> Northern Territory Department of Education Submission to the 2019-2020 Parliamentary *Inquiry into the Education of Students in Remote and Complex Environments*.

<sup>11</sup> National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Investment, 2016

<sup>12</sup> [Direct Instruction and the teaching of reading \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/direct-instruction-and-the-teaching-of-reading)

<sup>13</sup> LANE consisted of 20 Learning Progressions and some model teaching programs. Schools were asked to use these when assessing and planning teaching. In practice, these Learning Progressions and programs were not used because schools found the materials confusing and so there was little uptake. Although the handbook acknowledged that the students were EAL/D learners, it contained no EAL/D teaching strategies or methodology. For the NT Government’s description of these initiatives, go to: [Indigenous Education Strategy - issue 14 - Department of Education](#)

- focused on student errors and testing
- held students back from beginning “DI literacy” until they had mastered the scripted oral English component of the program, which in some communities **meant students were not reading or writing for years**
- made little sense to students and made them feel like failures.

**In 2017, the NT Government replaced DI with Read Write Inc (RWI)**, a commercially produced program from England, which was rolled out across remote and urban schools and is now widely used in Indigenous schools.<sup>14</sup> This program is also unsuitable, especially in remote contexts, because it:

- is designed for British students in **remedial literacy classes** and assumes English is the learner’s mother tongue
- teaches decoding skills using **nonsense words**, which are mystifying for English language learners
- assumes **England as the school context**.

No data currently exists on the impact of RWI on remote students’ literacy skills but informal evidence to ATESOL ACT suggests an outcome similar to DI instruction.

## Effects

- Indigenous communities are experiencing **program fatigue**. Changes of focus and their associated pedagogies and the introduction and then abandoning of different programs (*bilingual* to *EAL/D* to literacy– see Background section of Problem 4) has led community members to feel alienated from their children’s education. Staff and students are reluctant to engage with programs that may be cancelled a year later.<sup>15</sup>
- The NT DoE corporate services are now **focused on implementing the latest literacy program**, Read Write Inc. See Problem 8.
- Indigenous language speakers in the early years of schooling are **confused by and alienated** from RWI literacy classes because:
  - a. students are being taught to **read English before they can speak it**
  - b. RWI reading and writing activities are based on **British English** and do *not* teach authentic Standard Australian English (SAE)
  - c. students **cannot transfer** what is practised in RWI lessons to speaking or reading SAE or other parts of the curriculum
  - d. students **cannot relate their lives and experiences** to the British content in the teaching materials
  - e. the **rigid, one-size-fits-all teaching method** is culturally and pedagogically inappropriate.

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<sup>14</sup> [Read Write Inc. literacy programmes for 4-11 year-olds \(oup.com\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> Tommaso Piva, 2017 p. 380

- **Specific EAL/D teaching methods and resources** are no longer supported in NT schools and are rarely to be found.<sup>16</sup>
- The mandating of the inappropriate, scripted materials and approaches used in DI and RWI has **undermined teachers' confidence and professionalism**. See Problem 8.
- The roll out of these programs was accompanied by the **deskilling of NT DoE corporate services**. See Problem 8.
- ATESOL NT is now the only body that provides EAL/D professional activities for teachers that are directed to **local NT contexts and learning needs**.<sup>17</sup>
- Use of DI and RWI has been accompanied by **widespread student disengagement from school**. "Closing the Gap" targets for school attendance and literacy levels continue to be unmet. See also Problem 1.

### Recommendations 10-14

10. The Commonwealth should offer **targeted grants** to States/Territories that will support or allow trialling of **effective evidence-based approaches to EAL/D for Indigenous students in the Australian context**, including local production of bi/multilingual teaching materials. Where outcomes are demonstrated, including but not only data that measures students' development of SAE through appropriate EAL/D assessment tools (see Recommendations 33 and 38), these approaches should be supported by on-going, secure funding.

11. The Commonwealth should decline to support literacy initiatives in NT schools that **rely on imported commercially promoted teaching resources developed for remedial English-speaking students**.
12. The Commonwealth should encourage the NT Government with whatever leverage is at its disposal to **restore, promulgate and support established, evidence-based Australian approaches to teaching English and literacy to learners of English as an additional language/dialect**, including in remote Indigenous contexts.
13. The Commonwealth should encourage the NT Government with whatever leverage is at its disposal to restore **targeted EAL/D school-based positions to be managed by a corporate EAL/D team**.
14. The Commonwealth should encourage the NT Government to **reinstate the ILSS program** to make the teaching and learning of oral language in remote schools a system wide priority.

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<sup>16</sup> An example of locally produced quality resources is [About Us - Walk Talk Teach](#)

<sup>17</sup> Go to our website to see recent and current offerings: [ATESOL NT](#)

### PROBLEM 3: Lack of Adult Education programs

**In many communities, there is a school, a clinic, a church, a shop and a police station, maybe an arts centre and a few other community organisations. However, spaces are rare for adults to learn how to read, write and negotiate the documents and web sites that control their lives.**

*See original submission pp.8-9.*

#### Causes

- In the mid 1990's, the NT Department of Education **ceased funding remote community adult education programs**. This program began in 1975 and initially employed 35 adult educators (Frawley 2003).
- Since then, programs such as the Certificates I, II and III in Spoken and Written English were occasionally funded.<sup>18</sup> These have been replaced by Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate courses, for example, Certificates in Community Services, Education Support, Aboriginal Health Work, and Ranger programs, which are offered by providers such as Batchelor Institute and Charles Darwin University (CDU). They appear to offer little or no space **for specifically teaching English language and literacy**. These accredited courses are highly regulated and unsuitable for Indigenous adults looking for more informal programs to meet their immediate learning needs. Conversely, VET courses often do not assist students along further learning pathways because assessments are workplace-based, so students do not gain the kind of literacy that would help them progress into Higher Education programs.
- In the few communities where adult education programs exist, they are in demand.<sup>19</sup> For example, reports from the adult education centre at Yuendumu (which is funded by gold mining royalties) documented **over 1600 instances of informal Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) support** requested over an eight-month period (Bauer, 2018, p.136).
- From the early 1990s, a **Diploma of Adult Education was offered by Batchelor Institute to Indigenous students who wanted to become adult community educators**. Graduates worked in a range of community organisations and were instrumental in supporting other adults to return to study and establishing community enterprises (Frawley, 2003). A key component focused on how to deliver basic adult literacy and numeracy to community members. This course was disbanded in the early 2000s and has not been replaced.

#### Effects

- **No relevant English language and literacy courses** exist for adult Indigenous community members. ATESOL NT members who work in remote settings report that there are no government funded literacy programs in these communities for adults who wish to improve their literacy skills.

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<sup>18</sup> These Certificates are designed for use in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Their use in First Nations contexts could be seen as problematic.

<sup>19</sup> These include the three Warlpiri communities in the Tanami desert (Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Willowra) and the Yirrkala community in North East Arnhem Land.

- Apart from Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Willowra and Yirrkala, which have established adult education programs, there are **no systemic plans** in any jurisdiction or through community councils to implement adult language and literacy programs in other remote communities.
- The effect is that adults with minimal/no literacy skills **cannot take control over their own lives**, support their own children in their school education, or themselves access employment or further training and education.
- Furthermore, there are **no Indigenous people employed in adult educator positions** who can mentor or provide support to others who aim to further their education. (We note with interest the evidence provided on 19<sup>th</sup> August by Literacy for Life representatives about the positive effects of co-design with local communities and the use of community members with literacy skills to teach their fellow community members.)

### Recommendations 15-18

15. English language and literacy programs should be **established in remote communities** to respond to the diverse needs of adults.
16. Adult educators should **work in conjunction with schools to provide a post-school program for early school leavers**.
17. Adult educators should work in conjunction with TAFE and Higher Education providers to ensure that **linkages are made between school and post school education**.
18. Adult educators should provide **informal literacy programs** for community members who wish to increase their skills to participate in broader society.

#### **PROBLEM 4: Insufficient access to bilingual education**

**More than 8 out of 10 people in remote NT communities speak an Indigenous language. In these communities, young people do not use English outside school for social, emotional, practical or other purposes. Learning English is therefore learning a *foreign* language, a fact that is not recognised in official policy as it is enacted in communities or in pedagogies supported by the NT DoE.**

**Australian and international research is overwhelmingly clear that learning to read in the first/home language is the most effective foundation for literacy in another language.<sup>20</sup> Gaining literacy in the mother tongue and another language has also been shown to have cognitive and academic benefits in school and beyond.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, children in most NT remote schools are taught solely in Standard Australian English (SAE) and with pedagogies that assume English is their mother tongue and that they need remedial teaching to overcome their literacy “failure”. In fact, the failure lies in the inappropriate and inaccurate way in which NAPLAN assesses their achievements and learning needs.**

**For approximately the last 100 years, scripts, grammars and dictionaries for Indigenous languages have been developed in association with churches, schools and universities. They continue to be refined. They provide a rich resource for young Indigenous learners to learn to read and write in the language they understand and use daily. It is ATESOL NT’s strong view that the failure to support students to gain literacy in the languages they and their communities speak is the single most contributor to poor English literacy attainment in remote Indigenous schools. The lack of value placed on Indigenous languages in NT schools also demeans the status of these languages, erodes young people’s confidence in their cultural identity, and is contributing to the decline and loss of Australian Indigenous languages and their unique world views.<sup>22</sup>**

*See original submission pp. 2-3, 10.*

#### **Background: NT Experience and Evidence re Bilingual Programs**

*We provide this extended section in response to questions asked by the Committee when it heard our evidence.*

##### ***Chronology***

Based on findings from international research and Australian reports, bilingual education was established in the NT from 1973-1978, after which it was gradually under-resourced and understaffed.<sup>23</sup> At its height, twenty-two bilingual programs operated in twenty-one remote NT schools, teaching literacy in Burarra, Ndjébbana, Tiwi, Murrinh-Patha, Maung, Djambarrpuynu, Gupapuyngu, Dhuwaya, Kriol, Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, Arrernte, Luritja and Pintupi.

In 1998, the then-NT Education Minister claimed that students in bilingual programs were not meeting national norms. Supportive evidence was never produced and community opposition to

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<sup>20</sup> Cummins, 1991; UNESCO, 2021; see also [Professional Journal Articles — Thomas and Collier](#)

<sup>21</sup> [“It Made Me Think in a Different Way”: Bilingual Students’ Perspectives on Multimodal Composing in the English Language Arts Classroom - Smith - - TESOL Quarterly - Wiley Online Library](#)

<sup>22</sup> See the Parliamentary report on Indigenous languages

[http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au\\_house\\_committee\\_atsia\\_languages2\\_report\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au_house_committee_atsia_languages2_report_full_report.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Piva, T. 2017, p. 369.

ending bilingual schooling led to the adoption of the bilingual pedagogy called “two-way” learning. From 1999-2008, thirteen Government “two-way” schools remained, all of which were under pressure because of fewer Aboriginal teachers and limited support from the NT DoE.

In 2006, the NT Government’s Indigenous Education 2006-2009 Strategic Plan stated that, on the basis of overseas and local evidence, the DoE “will strengthen the bilingual programme and improve its effectiveness and sustainability to deliver outcomes”.<sup>24</sup> However, from 2008 onwards, the capacity of the remaining bilingual schools to offer these programs was diminished. Financial problems at Batchelor Institute resulted in decreased numbers of Indigenous people from remote communities undertaking teacher training. The supply of these teachers effectively ended when the Batchelor program was absorbed into the mainstream Charles Darwin Bachelor of Education – see Problem 6.

In 2008, in response to NAPLAN results showing that remote Indigenous students were not meeting national standards, the NT Government mandated that all NT schools teach English for the first four hours of the day. This policy severely disrupted the operation of the remaining bilingual schools.

A 2014 review of Indigenous education in the NT led to increased emphasis on boosting NAPLAN results in remote schools – see Problem 7.

Since 2009 to the present (2021), nine schools have remained that are recognised as bilingual. The number of students accessing bilingual programs has dropped from over 4000 in 1998 to approximately 1660 in 2021.

In 2015, the NT Government agreed to support nine bilingual programs and re-instate one corporate officer to support them. According to ATESOL NT’s information, at least one applicant for this position was informed that the program was not to be expanded and their role would be purely for ‘gatekeeper’ purposes.

Overall, the NT Government has adopted wavering and inconsistent policy positions towards bilingual approaches, while also promoting literacy pedagogies and assessments that assume learners are remedial English mother tongue speakers (see Problems 2 and 7). Its policies have served to undermine bilingual approaches and therefore the evidence base that would support advocacy for quality bilingual provision.

### *Evidence*

As just indicated, comprehensive, reliable local NT data to document the outcomes of quality bilingual education is difficult to find. The evidence supporting criticism of bilingual schools in the 80s and 90s was never made public.<sup>25</sup> What is available has been criticised and challenged by reputable experts.<sup>26</sup>

According to Disbray (2013):

A meta-analysis carried out by Silburn et al. (2011) found that “studies by the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET 2004) and academic researchers (Batten, Frigo, Hughes & Namara 1998; Devlin 1995; Lee Selected papers from the 44th ALS conference 2013; Disbray 1993; McKay et al. 1997; Gale, McClay, Christie & Harris 1981; Murtagh 1982) offer limited but consistent

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<sup>24</sup> Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education & Training-NTDEET (2006) “Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006-2009”, pp. 24-25. Cited in Piva, 2017, p. 370.

<sup>25</sup> Wigglesworth, Gillian & Lasagabaster, David, 2011. pp. 5-6

<sup>26</sup> Devlin 2010, cited in Tommaso, Piva, 2017 p. 376

evidence that some NT bilingual education programs have been comparatively effective in improving student academic results” (Silburn et al. 2011: 26). Certainly there is no evidence that ‘English-only’ remote schools perform better than bilingual schools.<sup>27</sup>

In response to questions asked when ATESOL NT gave evidence to this Inquiry, a Committee member has used 2015 and 2019 data from the MySchool website to compare NAPLAN data from twelve schools categorised according to their use of bilingual-biliterate or monolingual English pedagogy:

- 1) four schools known to ATESOL NT to be **implementing bilingual-biliterate pedagogy across the curriculum in daily classroom practice** – we term these *Operational Bilingual schools*.
- 2) four schools designated by the NT DoE as “Bilingual” which are resourced and staffed to offer bilingual education but which, according to ATESOL NT knowledge and feedback from these schools, are **not implementing bilingual-biliterate pedagogical practice** in line with current (or previous) bilingual/biliterate operational policy – we term these *Nominal Bilingual) Schools*.
- 3) four similar remote schools which teach in **English as the official medium of instruction only** – we term these *English MOI schools*.

MySchool NAPLAN data on student results and attendance was analysed according to:

- each of the above school types
- schools achieving the **highest average student results** in each NAPLAN test category (reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy) for each Year Level tested (Levels 3, 5, 7 & 9).<sup>28</sup>

### *NAPLAN Test Scores*

Table 2 below compares the three school types according to which school type averaged *the highest NAPLAN results* for 2015 and 2019.

**Table 2: Which type of school has gained the highest NAPLAN scores?**

REMOTE SCHOOL TYPE	2015 <i>Gained highest scores in:</i>	2019 <i>Gained highest scores in:</i>
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b> (n. 4)	11 NAPLAN categories	9 NAPLAN categories
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b> (n. 4)	0	6
<b>English MOI Schools</b> (n. 4)	9	5

**TOTAL TEST CATEGORIES** (reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy) for Years 3, 5, 7 & 9 = 20.

<sup>27</sup> Disbray 2013 <https://minerva.access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/40960/Disbray.pdf?sequence=1>  
Silburn S, Nutton G, Arney F & Moss B 2011. The first 5 years: starting early. Topical paper commissioned for the public consultations on the Northern Territory Early Childhood Plan. Darwin: Northern Territory Government.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.myschool.edu.au> NAPLAN Data. Sourced August 2021.

Table 2 shows that:

- in 2015, the **four operational bilingual schools** received the highest NAPLAN results in *eleven* NAPLAN test categories, and outperformed the two other school types
- in 2019, **the four operational bilingual schools continued to outperform the other two school types** but declined against their own 2015 performance
- in 2019, the **four nominal bilingual schools improved their NAPLAN scores** – see Problem 6 for a possible explanation
- from 2015 to 2019, **the English-medium schools’ performance deteriorated.**

*Participation in NAPLAN tests 2015 / 2019*

Figure 1 shows rates for student participation in NAPLAN tests for 2015 and 2019 according to the three school types.

**Figure 1: Participation in NAPLAN tests according to type of school**

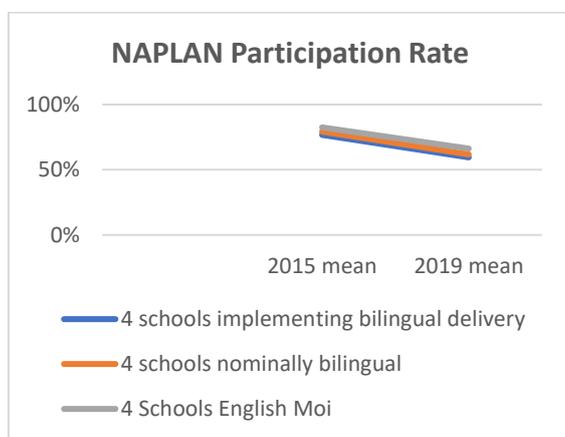


Table 3 provides the same data in a different format.

**Table 3: Participation in NAPLAN tests according to type of school**

REMOTE SCHOOL TYPE	NAPLAN participation rate 2015 mean	NAPLAN participation rate 2019 mean
4 Operational bilingual schools	77%	60%
4 Nominal bilingual schools	79%	62%
4 English MOI schools	83%	66%

Figure 1 and Table 3 show that participation in NAPLAN tests **dropped by 17%** in all schools between 2015 to 2019. This drop may reflect schools’ and students’ weariness with inappropriate assessments that repeatedly show them as failing.

### Attendance 2015 / 2019

Figure 2 shows attendance rates for 2015 and 2019 according to the three school types.

**Figure 2: School attendance according to type of school**

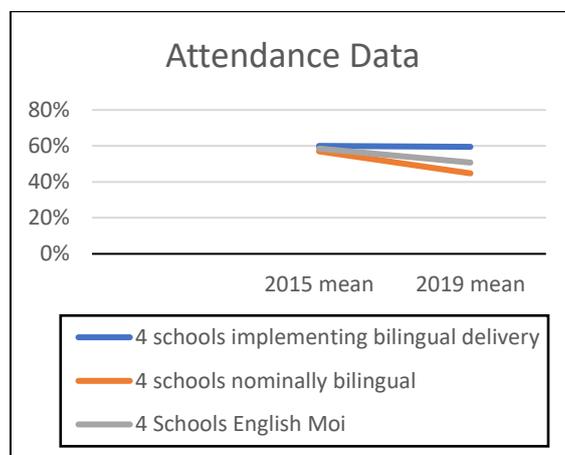


Table 4 provides the same data in a different format.

**Table 4: School attendance according to type of school**

REMOTE SCHOOL TYPE	School Attendance Rate 2015 mean	School Attendance Rate 2019 mean
4 Operational bilingual schools	77%	60%
4 Nominal bilingual schools	79%	62%
4 English MOI schools	83%	66%

Graph 2 and Table 4 show that:

- the four schools implementing bilingual delivery **maintained their attendance rates** between 2015 and 2019
- attendance at the **nominally bilingual schools dropped** by 17%
- attendance at the **English-medium schools dropped** by 8%.

For a detailed breakdown of the summary data above, please see Appendix B.

ATESOL NT acknowledges that these data raise more questions than they answer and that, inevitably (given that there are only 9 bilingual schools), these results are not statistically significant. However, they give a clear indication that:

- **in-depth and comprehensive analysis is needed to evaluate the outcomes** from bilingual and monolingual English approaches to teaching/learning in the NT
- the claims for **improved outcomes from genuine bilingual-biliterate pedagogy are credible**, independent of other cultural, linguistic, psychological and anecdotal evidence/arguments supporting its use
- monolingual English programs do not appear to be **improving outcomes for remote Indigenous students** and may be making them worse

- data on the use and vitality of Indigenous languages taught in bilingual schools, including literacy in those languages, should be added to considerations of educational outcomes.

Further, ATESOL NT is firmly convinced that if **appropriate measures of English language learning outcomes** were used in this type of analysis (see Problem 7), the evidence would be definitive that student outcomes overall are improved by quality bilingual teaching/learning.

### **Effects of previous and current policies towards bilingual learning/teaching**

- A key finding of the 2020 National Indigenous Language Report was that “**all of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are under threat**”.<sup>29</sup>
- Between 2005-2014 **the number of Indigenous languages spoken in Australia declined** from 145 to 120. The number spoken by children declined from 18 to 15.<sup>30</sup>
- An important link would appear to exist between **the vitality of traditional Indigenous languages in the NT and teaching them in school**. Djambarrpuyngu, a dialect of Yolngu Matha, is the language taught in one of the NT’s 9 bilingual schools at Galiwin’ku. It is the only Indigenous language to significantly increase its speakers from 2011-2016.<sup>31</sup> The languages with next largest number of speakers (the Yolngu dialects, Dhuwaya and Gupapuyngu) are taught at Yirrkala and Milingimbi respectively.
- Children and young people in over 60 remote schools are being **denied the opportunity to learn to read and write in and through a language they understand**.
- Students, young people and adults who live in remote communities in which Indigenous languages are under pressure from English, face a future in which the **positive health and wellbeing effects** associated with people who speak Indigenous languages will be diminished.<sup>32</sup>
- The remaining nine bilingual schools **struggle to staff their schools with the Indigenous teachers and Assistant Teachers** needed for these programs.<sup>33</sup>
- Remote Indigenous students are not developing the literacy skills in their first language which would **support their English literacy development**. (See Appendix D for an example of writing in both English and Djambarrpuyngu by an Indigenous student learning in a bilingual program in a remote community school).
- The loss of bilingual programs has **contributed to disengagement with schooling** in remote areas. For example, in 2011 two remote schools whose bilingual programs were undermined

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<sup>29</sup> National Indigenous Languages report p.42

<sup>30</sup> Simpson and Wigglesworth, 2018 p.6

<sup>31</sup> Simpson et al. 2018, p.119

<sup>32</sup> Shalley, F et al 2017 p.22

<sup>33</sup> In bilingual schools, Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers teach children in and through L1 across the curriculum in most Learning Areas up to Year 4. They continue to do this after Year Four as appropriate. *Indigenous Language and Culture* is one of the Learning Areas taught through L1. ILC is taught in all remote Indigenous schools, including English-medium of instruction schools. Historically these Assistant Teachers were provided with full and appropriate teacher education qualifications (not merely VET certificates) as part of their employment conditions: see Problem 6.

by the 2009 First Four Hours policy reported that since the policy's introduction, attendance had fallen from 60% to 47 % (Lajamanu) and from 59 per cent (Yuendumu) to 34 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

## Recommendations 19 - 24

19. The Commonwealth should offer NT education bodies (schools and researchers) **targeted grants to trial and independently assess evidence-based approaches** to bilingual education, including those previously implemented, and local production of bi/multilingual teaching materials for Indigenous students in **the remaining operational bilingual schools** and in other schools who wish to develop bilingual programs in the NT.
20. Schools and communities which have lost bilingual programs should be approached by the NT Government to ascertain the **interest in re-instating one**.
21. The NT DoE should **expand support for the existing nine bilingual schools** through extending practical services located within its corporate team as well as on the ground through increased Aboriginal staffing, especially Literacy Production Centre workers, Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers. See Problem 6.
22. DoE corporate staff should be tasked to support schools to **assess mother tongue language use and development**, including reading and writing in the mother tongue, to moderate these assessments, report them and lodge them in the NT SAIS.
23. **The Step model or “Two-Way Staircase” bilingual program model**, which underpinned the earlier NT Bilingual Program, should be reinstated and fully supported in schools with bilingual programs. In this model, both English and the mother tongue are used to reinforce and complement each other in teaching the curriculum.<sup>35</sup> *See diagram on the next page.*
24. NT DoE should provide **non-Indigenous teaching staff with professional learning that will assist them to participate respectfully, knowledgeably and collaboratively** in bilingual teaching teams with Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers. See Problem 8.

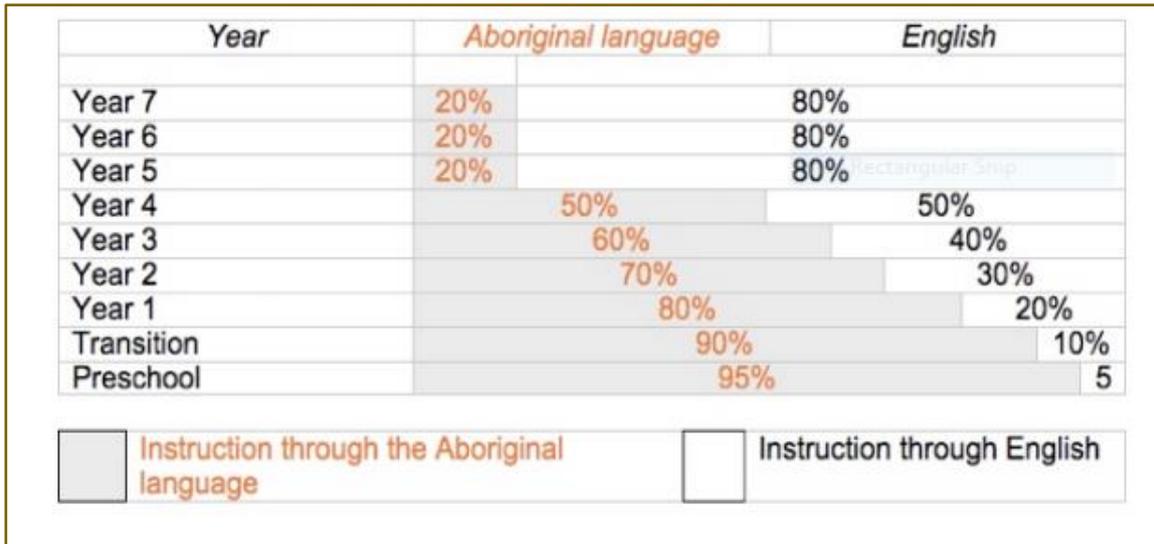
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<sup>34</sup> Dan Harrison, January 18, 2011

<sup>35</sup> For a concise overview of this model and other bilingual models, see:

[Global Lessons: Indigenous languages and multilingualism in school programs | by First Languages Australia | Global Lessons: Indigenous languages and multilingualism in school programs | Medium](#)  
[Case study — Warlpiri bilingual programs in the Tanami, Northern Territory | by First Languages Australia | Global Lessons: Indigenous languages and multilingualism in school programs | Medium.](#)

### The Step “Two Way” Bilingual Model



(Source: Devlin, 2011, p.267)

## PROBLEM 5: Restricted pathways into secondary schooling

**Pathways into secondary schooling for students in very remote communities have become increasingly limited, thereby removing incentives for these students to succeed academically and increasing their and their parents' alienation from formal schooling.**

*See original submission pp. 6 & 10.*

### Causes

- The NT Government's Indigenous Education Strategy has **restricted the options** for very remote students to undertake secondary education. After 2015, their options were:

*either:*

attending **boarding schools** in Darwin and other Australian cities<sup>36</sup>

*or:*

participating in local **vocationally-oriented "Employment Pathways"**<sup>37</sup> – in very remote schools, this program focussed on literacy and numeracy. **However, this program was terminated in Term 3 2020.**

- Since 2015, there has been a **53% national increase** in Indigenous students attending boarding schools.<sup>38</sup>
- To date there are **no publicly available independent evaluations** of Indigenous scholarship programs, partnerships, transition support services or specific boarding school programs. Independent and rigorous research likewise is lacking into the efficacy of Commonwealth and NT government unofficial policies that effectively require remote secondary students to complete their secondary schooling in boarding schools.

### Effects

- In 2020 when the Employment Pathway (EP) program was cancelled, 537 students across 32 remote schools were no longer taught from a recognised curriculum. For senior students, the **EP units they had completed no longer contribute towards an NT Government recognised qualification.**<sup>39</sup>
- ATESOL NT understands that **funding for remote schools was reallocated** to support building NT boarding schools.

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<sup>36</sup> The recommendation that remote secondary students attend boarding school came from the 2014 Wilson review "Share in the Future" which informed the IES. It was based on data that was claimed to show that number of remote NT Certificate Education & Training graduates had trended down since the first students graduated in 2003. See Appendix C for the graph which Wilson referenced in the review. It actually shows an increase in NTCET graduates since 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Employment Pathways (EP) was an NT developed curriculum which included providing teaching resources to remote schools to develop secondary students' literacy and numeracy skills. It replaced the NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) as a senior secondary option for students who did not want to go to boarding school. See : [Remote secondary school choices - NT.GOV.AU](#), [Navigating New Pathways To Employment - Department of Education](#) and [Wrapping It Up - Department of Education](#) In Term 3 2020, this program was abruptly cancelled. Students who had completed the Certificate found that was no longer accredited course, while those who had completed units had nothing recognised to show for 3-4 years of study. According to one remote principal, students felt jaded and disappointed these students felt and lost confidence in their school.

<sup>38</sup> Isabella Higgins, November 8, 2020 ABC

<sup>39</sup> Department of Education Annual Report 2019-2020 p.13

- **Suicides of students** in boarding schools (or after having left them) have generated Indigenous community fears about sending their children to these schools. These concerns are well founded, given that suicide is the leading cause of death for NT Indigenous youth in rural and remote communities.<sup>40</sup>
- Students are **not adequately prepared for boarding** school.
- Many find boarding school difficult and drop out. A recent study found that 59% of Indigenous teenagers from one remote NT community dropped out of boarding school in their first year.<sup>41</sup>
- If students drop out of boarding school, **completing secondary education is virtually impossible** because they are very discouraged and also local options do not exist.
- Students returning to their communities from boarding schools, whether or not they have done well, **have difficulty finding employment locally**. This experience can make them feel they are failures and that attempting secondary education is pointless.
- The sense of failure experienced by students who drop out of boarding school, and the lack of employment opportunities for those returning, **discourages other younger students** in the community to continue their education.
- For those willing to risk sending their children away, the options are also limited. The same study found that families were “**experiencing difficulty identifying schools and securing boarding places** for their children”. Less than a third receive assistance from the NT Government’s Transition Support Unit.<sup>42</sup>
- Restrictions on students’ returning to their communities due to **the COVID-19 pandemic** has intensified community anxiety about students leaving.

### Recommendations 25-30

25. The NT Government should provide targeted funding to remote schools so that principals can allocate teachers to senior classes. Year 10 – 12 levels should target young adults in the community who wish to resume their secondary studies and disengaged young people who have returned from boarding schools. The classes should provide students with pathways and support to complete **the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) in their own communities**.

26. The NT Government should keep records, which should be publicly available, on **annual enrolment and retention rates** in NT and interstate boarding schools of students from remote communities.

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<sup>40</sup> Robinson, G. et al, 2020

<sup>41</sup> O’Bryan, M.& Fogarty, B. (2020), p.13

<sup>42</sup> O’Bryan, M.& Fogarty, B. (2020), p.15

27. The NT Dept of Education Transition Support Unit (TSU) should track the **academic achievements, subsequent employment and suicide rates** of remote students who attend boarding schools.
28. **Training and service provision for the TSU unit** should be improved to enable them to better support families in remote communities who choose to send their young people to boarding schools.
29. The Commonwealth and/or NT Governments offer grants to remote schools to **trial academic and/or vocational post-primary pathways**. Where positive outcomes are demonstrated, these pathways should receive recurrent funding (as per Recommendations 1 – 9 above).
30. The NT Government should reinstate **the role of the NT School of Distance Education** in providing remote community schools with Stage 1 (Year 11) and Stage 2 (Year12) programs for students wishing to complete their NTCET in community.

## PROBLEM 6: Lack of Aboriginal Teachers and Assistant Teachers

Since the 90s the number of Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers<sup>43</sup> in remote school has declined as opportunities for training and qualifying for these roles has contracted.<sup>44</sup> These positions are also vulnerable due to the reduction in remote school funding caused by the “effective enrolment” formula: see Problem 1.

Today, the nine remaining bilingual schools struggle to staff their Indigenous language programs, while most schools scramble to provide an Assistant Teacher in each class.

Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers play an invaluable role in supporting students to learn and feel culturally and emotionally safe at school. They are best qualified to meet AITSL’s first Teaching Standard “Know students and how they learn”.<sup>45</sup> These teachers facilitate students learning in and through their first language *and* English.<sup>46</sup> As this vital support has diminished, so too has school attendance.

*See original submission p.7.*

### Causes

*A significant loss of targeted and appropriate training and qualification opportunities has undermined the status and availability of qualified Aboriginal staff in remote schools, as follows:*

- Until 2012 Batchelor Institute offered an undergraduate teacher education program that was specifically designed to provide **recognised qualifications for Aboriginal teachers to teach in remote schools**. 75% of Batchelor’s teacher education graduates worked in bilingual schools. In the late 80s, these schools provided first language instruction to over 50% of remote Indigenous students in the NT.<sup>47</sup>
- In 2012, that program was **merged with the mainstream Bachelor of Education program** at Charles Darwin University (CDU). The lack of English language support for remote students and the inappropriate content contained in CDU’s mainstream program, including an absence of EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy content, caused students transferring from Batchelor to CDU to realise that the course was not appropriate and consequently **the majority of these students ceased their studies**.
- **The progressive defunding of bilingual programs** from the late 1990s onwards has undermined the perceived need for qualified Aboriginal teachers and, correspondingly, a reduction in positions.
- **Targeted provision for training and qualifying Aboriginal teachers** is now confined to the pilot *Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE)* Program, which has been offered to

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<sup>43</sup> In NT bilingual schools, Aboriginal staff performing crucial support roles in classrooms came to be referred to as “Assistant Teachers” to acknowledge the central role they played in supporting student learning.

<sup>44</sup> Lee et al., 2014 p.51. This decline is also reported by AITESOL NT members working in remote schools.

<sup>45</sup> AITSL = Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership. This body sets national Standards that guide State/Territory KPIs for teachers and promotion pathways.

<sup>46</sup> See also footnote 32.

<sup>47</sup> Lee et al.

Aboriginal Assistant Teachers (ATs) in four remote schools, who want to become teachers.<sup>48</sup>  
The program is unsatisfactory because:

- **fly-in staffing is inflexible** in regard to timetabling and student availability
  - the content **assumes no prior experience** in teaching, remote schools or cultural knowledge
  - the content **does not include teaching EAL/D or bilingual pedagogy**, and
  - support is limited in assisting the Assistant Teachers to **develop academic English skills**.
- Bachelor Institute now offers Certificates III, IV and a Diploma in Educational Support, which qualifies Assistant Teachers. These Certificates are governed by ASQA accreditation requirements. They are **unsuitable for Aboriginal Assistant Teachers from remote communities** because they:
    - include **only limited content on bilingual and EAL/D pedagogy**
    - do not provide **explicit English language support**.

Without this content and support, the Certificates do not offer these Assistant Teachers a genuine pathway into higher education teaching qualifications.

- The number of **DoE permanent Assistant Teacher positions has been reduced**. Assistant Teachers are now increasingly frequently employed as casuals by local school councils. They have no entitlements and their employment is insecure. With budget cuts to remote schools (see Problem 1), many casual Indigenous school staff have **lost positions**.

## Effects

- Knowledge about and appreciation of **the crucial role of Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers in remote schools has declined** due to the reduced numbers of qualified Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers in remote schools, and the lack of Professional Learning provided to non-Indigenous teachers to support their understanding of working in intercultural teaching teams.
- This lack of appreciation applies especially to the **NT DoE and the principals** they appoint to remote schools – see Problem 9.
- There is **no publicly available data** on the number of Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers in NT schools.<sup>49</sup>
- Remote schools are **struggling to provide Assistant Teachers for each class**, according to reports to ATESOL NT. Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers are crucial in mediating classroom learning and wider school experiences for students with minimal/no English, because they are local, can explain things in the language the children speak and can mediate

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<sup>48</sup> The ATs are enrolled in an Undergraduate Certificate which consists of four units from the CDU Bachelor of Education course:

[Undergraduate Certificate Remote Educators \(NRED01 - 2021\) | Charles Darwin University \(cdu.edu.au\)](#). See also [Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education \(RATE\) Pilot Program - Department of Education](#)

<sup>49</sup> For this reason, we cannot provide accurate data on the reported decline in numbers of these teachers.

and explain the Western cultural practices of the classroom. Reduced Aboriginal staffing has limited **schools' ability to address these students' needs**. See Appendix A.

- The declining number of Aboriginal staff in remote schools has been accompanied by **declining student attendance**. As already noted (Problem 1), a 2019 analysis of MySchool data found that the number Indigenous staff had the biggest impact on school attendance.<sup>50</sup>
- The loss of Indigenous staffing positions in schools has deprived adults in remote communities of **a pathway and incentive to further study and to develop their literacy skills**.
- Positions for Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers are one of the few paid NT public service positions that values Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge. The loss of these teachers sends a message to communities that **their languages and culture lack value**.

### Recommendations 31-33

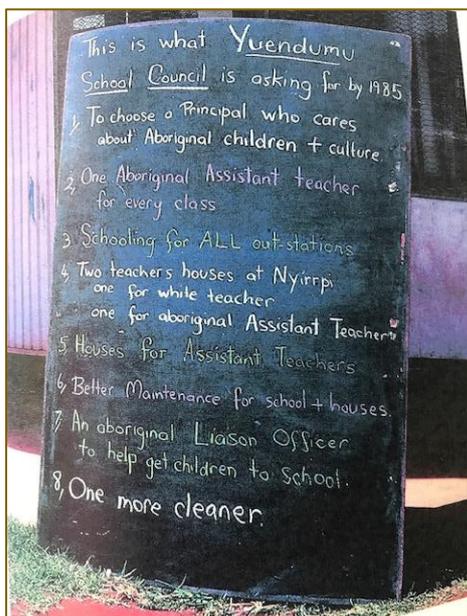
31. **The number of appropriately trained and qualified Assistant Teachers and qualified Aboriginal teachers** in remote schools should be increased as a priority for the Commonwealth and NT DoE.
32. **A public record of total numbers of Aboriginal Teachers and Assistant Teachers** should be kept by the NT Teachers Registration Board and updated annually.

See next page for priority recommendation 33.

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<sup>50</sup> Guenther, J. 2019 "Evidence on what doesn't work for very remote schools (attendance strategies) and what does".

33. The Commonwealth should offer to support the NT Government in planning, resourcing, improving, upgrading and evaluating the *Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) Pilot Program* as follows.
- e. A **purpose-built Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program** should be developed and evaluated that:
    - i. contains **appropriate content** for experienced Assistant Teachers in remote schools, which respects and builds on their knowledge as speakers of Aboriginal languages and their status as cultural custodians in their communities
    - ii. **offers** qualifications at levels that are directly tied to NT Department of Education salary scales
    - iii. ensures adequate support for enrolled Assistant Teachers to develop their **academic English skills**.
  - f. Delivery of this program should ensure that:
    - i. teacher educators are **employed onsite** in the remote schools participating in the program
    - ii. teacher educators are qualified, experienced and competent in **EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy** in remote contexts.
  - g. This improved RATE Program should build on the experience of the trial (Feb-June 2021) in four communities and be **progressively extended** to other communities with relatively large populations. These communities could be designated as “hubs” for more comprehensive coverage.
  - h. The stakeholders involved in developing and accrediting this new ITE course should include:
    - i. **employing authorities** (NT Dept of Education/ Independent Schools /Catholic Education)
    - ii. **training providers** (Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute)
    - iii. **accreditation authorities** (the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership/AITSL, the Australian Qualifications Authority/ASQA, and the NT Teachers Registration Board.)



#### Not a new issue....

The issue of more Assistant Teachers was raised over 35 years ago at Yuendumu during a House of Representatives Inquiry into Aboriginal Education (26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1985). But this time the call is not just for more Assistant Teachers but appropriate training for Assistant Teachers and Aboriginal Teachers together with recognition of the key role they play in the teaching of language and literacy in remote NT community schools.

Source of Photograph: Baarda, 2021, p.359.

## PROBLEM 7: Use of inappropriate assessments

Use of NAPLAN to assess and report on the English literacy and numeracy achievements of Indigenous learners of English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) is inappropriate, inaccurate, deleterious and unjust. NAPLAN results do not and cannot provide accurate information on Indigenous EAL/D learners' levels or progress in developing literacy *because they are not based on EAL/D pathways into literacy in Standard Australian English*. NAPLAN assessments assume norms for mother tongue/fluent English speakers and urban Australian school contexts and experiences.

NAPLAN data is wrongly used to inform system wide targets for Indigenous EAL/D learners and to determine both policies and pedagogies for these learners (see Problems 2 and 4). These targets position Indigenous EAL/D learners as failures in the NT schooling system, which has adverse effects on learners, communities, teachers, school leadership and the culture of the NT DoE itself.

### Causes

#### *Policy*

- The false assumption by Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments that **learning literacy is the same as learning English** together with the **national status of NAPLAN as a measure of schooling achievement** have led to an exclusive focus on NAPLAN results in directing NT Government initiatives, policies and strategies for remote Indigenous education. Thus the 2015 Indigenous Education Strategy (IES) refers exclusively to NAPLAN as the means of measuring its impact on student achievement in remote schools.<sup>51</sup>
- Data that would give **more accurate information on EAL/D learning needs and achievements is now disregarded**. Data from an EAL/D assessment system are collected, reported, entered in the NT SAIS every semester, and are available to NT DoE but these data are no longer referenced in NT Indigenous education strategies or initiatives.<sup>52</sup> The processes and practices that once ensured that these data were accurate have been abandoned or downgraded. See Appendices D and E for examples of EAL/D assessment data.<sup>53</sup>
- In 2014 the NT Government's Treasurer John Elferink stated that **NAPLAN data would determine school funding**.<sup>54</sup>
- NAPLAN is used to set **unrealistic targets**, such as the Indigenous Education Strategy goal that in ten years all Indigenous students will be achieving at the same NAPLAN levels as non-Indigenous students.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> A Share in the Future, Indigenous Education Strategy 2015-2024, p.7

<sup>52</sup> SAIS is the central data base into which ESL data is entered every semester.

<sup>53</sup> Appendix E provides an example that shows how EAL/D assessment data can provide a more accurate picture of student English levels. These levels are assessed as *Beginning, Emerging, Developing* and *Consolidating*. It comes from a region which has a mix of remote and urban students.

<sup>54</sup> AM Radio January 25th, 2014

<sup>55</sup> Indigenous Education Strategy: A Share in the Future, 2015, p.7

- The ACARA NAPLAN benchmarks are based on national norms for English fluent/mother tongue speakers. In many remote communities, English is a foreign language: see Problem 4. Results from using NAPLAN to assess these students are inaccurate and misplaced.

## Effects

### *On support for teaching and learning*

- The focus on NAPLAN results has led to a dramatic decrease in the provision of EAL/D Professional Development and resources for remote teachers. Instead, schools have been mandated to teach **inappropriate remedial literacy strategies** designed for English mother tongue/fluent speakers: see Problem 2.
- Teacher knowledge has diminished (in some places to zero) about and use of the NT EAL/D *Learning Progressions* to plan, monitor and assess students. Without training in use of this resource, teachers no longer have the correct language and concepts to identify and describe waystages and milestones in learning English.<sup>56</sup>

### *On students*

- If assessed against the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progressions, the majority of remote Indigenous students are in the *Beginning* and *Emerging* phases of learning to read and write in English. See Appendices D and E. **These students cannot engage with NAPLAN tests.**
- When NAPLAN tests are administered, students are instructed to sit quietly in the room and colour in the bubbles on the test pages.<sup>57</sup> The tests are therefore **strange, confusing and progressively alienating for these students.**
- Consequently, Indigenous students in remote communities have **consistently failed NAPLAN tests** for the past 13 years.
- The **requirement** that all students sit NAPLAN tests has therefore effectively **mandated remote Indigenous English language learners to fail.**
- These **experiences of failure are re-enforced every semester by “Es” on the students’ reports** because their schoolwork is assessed against the ACARA English and Maths curriculum
- Indigenous students are therefore extremely discouraged and withdraw from schooling.<sup>58</sup>

### *On the NT Department of Education*

- Because NAPLAN only reveals what remote EAL/D students *can’t* do, not what they *can* do, it has created a **discourse of failure** that permeates all levels of Indigenous educational provision in the NT.

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<sup>56</sup> The *EAL/D Learning Progressions* describe EAL/D development with reference to 4 phases: *Beginning*, *Emerging*, *Developing* and *Consolidating*. Descriptors for each stage are used for observing and describing proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The NT DoE requires teachers to use this reporting tool. But without training in its use, teachers do not understand it and frequently fail to recognise to whom it applies. See Problem 8.

<sup>57</sup> A scene in the movie *In My Blood It Runs* shows the teacher telling students always to colour in a box because they have a 1 in 4 chance of getting something correct.

<sup>58</sup> Closing the Gap 2020, School attendance (<https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/school-attendance>)”

- The on-going failure to meet unrealistic and inappropriate NAPLAN targets has created a **culture of evasion** within senior levels in the Department.
- Using NAPLAN data to determine the learning needs of remote Indigenous students has created a **dissonance between those in NT corporate education services and staff in remote schools**, because the latter *know* that NAPLAN data is invalid and that these tests are primarily an exercise in their students colouring in bubbles.
- Since 2008, the NT DoE's response to low NAPLAN results in remote schools has been to purchase expensive, vigorously marketed commercial remedial literacy programs from the USA and subsequently England. These programs have only served to **perpetuate the same failures**: see Problem 2. Principals who have wanted to make locally appropriate decisions about teaching and learning have been pressured to adopt these programs. See Problem 9.

### Recommendations 34 – 39

34. A **nationally consistent measure of English language learners' proficiency** should be developed as a matter of urgency and used in all NT schools to document student achievements, diagnose needs and inform interpretations of NAPLAN results.
35. Literacy assessment policies and practices endorsed and adopted by the Commonwealth and the NT Government must take account of well-established research that shows that most English language learners:
- a. can take up to *two years* to develop **social interaction skills** in English.
  - b. can take up to *seven years* to achieve English proficiency that will support real **academic achievement**.
  - c. depend on **rigorous, professional EAL/D teaching and support** to achieve these timelines.<sup>59</sup>
36. The mandate that all students sit NAPLAN should be revised to allow remote schools to **exclude students who are in the Beginning Phase** of learning to read and write in English according to the ACARA *EAL/D Progressions*.
37. The Commonwealth Department of Education should require the **NT Government report on – and make publicly available** – data from its twice-yearly assessments of EAL/D learning as well as NAPLAN assessments.
38. The NT twice-yearly assessments of EAL/D learning should be regionally or centrally **moderated to promote accuracy of EAL/D data** before lodging it in the NT Student Achievement Information System (SAIS).
39. The Commonwealth should require schools and the NT Government in receipt of special grants to support Indigenous education, to **report on outcomes using the twice-yearly EAL/D assessments**.

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas, Wayne & Collier, Virginia (2002). [ERIC - ED475048 - A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement., 2002](#)

## **PROBLEM 8: Lack of EAL/D professional learning for teachers, principals and adult educators, and lack of EAL/D qualification requirements for EAL/D teachers**

**In remote communities, where English is often spoken as a foreign language, non-Indigenous teachers of bi/multi-lingual are not required to hold EAL/D teaching qualifications. Nor are mainstream teachers and school principals supported by EAL/D Professional Learning. Targeted, appropriate, and effective teaching of Standard Australian English is largely absent from NT schools, especially in remote communities.**

*See original submission pp. 10-11*

### **Causes**

- Global Schools Budgeting, funding based on school attendance, and the focus on NAPLAN results has created **priorities for school principals** that override and do not promote the employment of EAL/D specialist teachers. See Problem 1.
- The NT Dept of Education (DoE) favours online EAL/D Professional Learning packages that do not allow remote teachers or principals **to be mentored** in the rigorous use of EAL/D teaching strategies or be supported in using the NT EAL/D *Learning Progressions* to assess, monitor and report on students' English development, and to plan their teaching accordingly. See Problem 7.
- The Graduate Certificate in TESOL offered by NT DoE and Charles Darwin University (CDU) was **discontinued in 2014**.
- The CDU Bachelor of Education (primary) has only **one unit (out of 32) on EAL/D issues**.
- The NT Teachers Registration Board **does not keep records of teachers with EAL/D expertise or qualifications**.
- Adult learning in remote communities is primarily associated with **VET Certificates which do not include explicit teaching of English and literacy** and therefore do not promote a demand for EAL/D teachers or professional learning. See Problems 3 and 6.
- DoE-supported Professional Learning focuses on literacy approaches based on assumptions (and sometimes evidence) about how *English-speaking* students learn to read and write, **not research and evidence on Indigenous EAL/D learners**. See Problems 2 and 4.
- Without EAL/D specialist teachers on staff, data on EAL/D students has been compromised and EAL/D data is entered without being moderated. English language learners are **not identified as EAL/D** on enrolment and in transition from primary to secondary, so schools do not see a need for EAL/D-qualified teachers. See Recommendation 5 and Problem 7.

### **Effects**

- Job descriptions for remote teaching positions, as well as corporate positions advertised to support remote schools, **do not have EAL/D qualification requirements** in their selection criteria. No positions in NT schools require teachers to have or pursue EAL/D qualifications.
- The DoE has delivered **no specific EAL/D Professional Development** over the last six years

- The lack of EAL/D Professional Learning leaves teachers in remote schools **without the skills and understanding they need to teach English language learners** or any awareness of the importance of affirming students' home language and culture through their teaching and programming.
- The lack of EAL/D Professional Learning for teachers of Indigenous students can lead to teachers **inadvertently harming students' self-esteem and confidence in their identity**. Two scenes in the film *In My Blood It Runs* capture how easily this can happen.<sup>60</sup>
- NT DoE EAL/D data sets that were used to monitor students' progress in SAE in remote schools **no longer provide reliable information** for teachers to use when planning.
- **NT DoE corporate officers lack EAL/D pedagogical knowledge and the experience** necessary to work with teachers in remote schools.
- DoE literacy programs over the last 8 years have diminished the EAL/D knowledge and understandings of **regional leaders and school principals**.
- The use of commercial programs has **de-skilled and de-professionalised many remote teachers**.

### Recommendations 40 - 43

40. The NT DoE should require:

- a. all teachers, principals, regional leaders and adult educators to undertake **annual Professional Learning that supports EAL/D pedagogy**.
- b. all remote schools to employ at least **one teacher with recognised EAL/D teaching qualifications**.

41. The NT Teacher Registration Board and/or the DoE should **record the EAL/D qualifications** of all NT teachers in schools.
42. Initial Teacher Education programs should be required to **include compulsory units on EAL/D learning**.<sup>61</sup>
43. **The CDU postgraduate course in TESOL should be reinstated** and offered to all new teachers to the NT and all teachers working in remote settings.

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<sup>60</sup> Rather than describe these scenes, we recommend that Committee members view this film, which is set in the NT.

<sup>61</sup> See ACTA submission to the 2021 *Quality Initial Teacher Education* review: [Advocacy | Australian Council of TESOL Associations](#)

## **PROBLEM 9: Inappropriate appointments to leadership positions in remote areas**

**Poor and ill-informed decisions about staffing and pedagogy are prevalent in remote NT schools. A leading factor contributing to this is the lack of culturally competent and knowledgeable leaders at school and regional levels. School leadership is key to addressing many of the problems described in this submission. When a principal understands students' learning needs and can work with the school's community, attendance improves and students learn.**

### **Causes**

- **Selection criteria for leadership positions** in remote regions and schools do not require knowledge or proof of cultural competence to work in Indigenous contexts.<sup>62</sup>
- **Quality cultural competence training** is not provided for new principals (or any part of the NT public service) working in remote Indigenous communities.
- **Systemic acknowledgment is lacking within the DoE** about the complexity and diversity of educational issues in remote Indigenous contexts.
- **No mentoring programs** exist for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff in leadership positions in remote NT schools.
- Directors and principals are employed **on 2 - 4 year contracts** that require them to implement NT Government policy, strategies, and initiatives. They are not encouraged to seek out or foster community-led decisions about schools and education.

### **Effects**

- Applicants who have **little or no experience working with Indigenous people and communities are commonly appointed** to principal and leadership positions in remote communities.
- In the selection process for principals, **consultation with school councils in remote communities** is either disregarded or poorly managed.
- **Current and future Indigenous educational leaders are not supported** to develop their skills and abilities to take on responsibilities in schools.
- School principals who lack remote Indigenous teaching experience or **knowledge contribute to the chronic low level of remote students' attendance.**
- Budgetary pressures (see Problem 1) have caused principals to make **poor decisions that have led to Indigenous staff losing positions in remote schools.**<sup>63</sup>
- Principals who **lack knowledge about EAL/D learning and the cultural competence to engage with remote communities** have not questioned the mandating of commercially

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<sup>62</sup>A recent job description (22/8/2021) for the Regional Director of the East Arnhem Region - a region which has 13 schools, 11 of which are remote Indigenous community schools – makes no reference to working in Indigenous communities. In fact, the words “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal” or “community” do not appear in the Job Description.

<sup>63</sup> One school leader told ATESOL NT that, over the last eight years, permanent Aboriginal teachers and ATs had lost their positions because, instead of being asked to sign *Leave Without Pay* forms when taking leave for family or cultural reasons, they were given resignation forms, which they signed not realising that, on their return, they had no job.

marketed literacy programs. Those wanted to make locally based decisions around teaching and learning have **insufficient knowledge and confidence to resist pressures** to adopt these programs.<sup>64</sup>

### Recommendations 44 - 48

44. The Commonwealth should seek to ensure that **Job Descriptions and on-going Key Performance Indicators for remote school principals and regional directors** include:
  - a. demonstrated ability to **work successfully with Indigenous people in remote communities**
  - b. knowledge and understanding of the **foundational role of first language and culture and how to support good EAL/D pedagogy** in all school learning.
45. The Commonwealth should ensure through its funding arrangements that the NT Government **genuinely empowers school councils to participate actively** in the selection of their school principals. (ATESOL NT does not have confidence in the independence of the NT Council of Government School Organisations/COGSO or its experience and understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities.)
46. The Commonwealth should ensure that the NT Government provides **face-to-face, interactive locally relevant Cultural Competency courses** (not generic online courses), such as the one developed by Aboriginal Resource and Development Service (ARDS) in 2019, and require all principals and leaders within NT DoE to undertake one course and to refresh themselves in these skills and understandings every year.
47. The Commonwealth should **trial an Indigenous leadership in schools program** to support Indigenous staff in remote schools who seek promotion.
48. On-going/renewed contracts to school principals and regional directors should be conditional on demonstration of:
  - c. their **engagement and work** with Indigenous community leaders and Indigenous staff, and
  - d. their success in **improving school attendance and learning outcomes** which are not judged solely by NAPLAN results.

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<sup>64</sup> In at least one case about which ATESOL NT is aware, the principal was blacklisted by the DoE and felt forced to find work interstate.

## Conclusion

ATESOL NT's supplementary submission documents nine key problems which we believe have contributed to the current low levels of adult and school children's literacy in remote communities. We offer recommendations that specifically address each problem, indicating a priority recommendation for each.

Over the past thirty years in remote NT communities, Indigenous children, young people and their schools have been increasingly disadvantaged. In the last ten years, they have experienced a regressive funding formula, radically declining professional support, a narrowing of local educational options for children and adults, a misplaced focus on NAPLAN results and panicked, coercive policy and program responses that deflect scrutiny of *system* failure onto children, families and communities.

The result has been declining numbers of knowledgeable and skilled principals and teachers –most notably, qualified Aboriginal and English language teachers – and wasteful spending on misdirected and damaging remedial literacy programs, first from America and, when that failed, from England.

It is not an exaggerating to claim that, behind the adverse Closing the Gap statistics on education, remote schools are spiralling into crisis.

At the heart of this crisis lies conflicting approaches to the languages spoken by Indigenous children and their communities, and the role of these languages in young people's education, culture, identity, place in the local community and contribution to Australian society. On one side of this conflict is a bilingual pedagogy which values and promotes these children's languages. On the other side is a version of literacy that takes no account of learners' first language/s and cultures.

Common and intersecting threads run through our recommendations. They are underpinned by the recognition that:

- the mother tongue and culture are foundational for *all* learning
- Indigenous educators and local communities have an essential and pivotal role to play in remote NT schools
- learning, including learning literacy, must start in the mother tongue, be supported by it, and progress through it
- fully developed bi/multilingualism is a rich cognitive, cultural and knowledge resource for individual children and adults, and their communities.

The underlying thrust of our recommendations is clearly stated by Mr Guyula: "*two paths travelling so closely side by side that our children can walk on both paths.*"

It follows that pedagogy for teaching English and literacy in English must build from and respond to the other language(s) spoken by learners. The pathways for learning a second/additional language are not the same as those followed in learning the mother tongue. This learning will be expedited by teachers who have specialised in teaching English as an additional language/dialect and are competent and supported to work in cross-cultural contexts.

ATESOL NT proposes that priorities in reversing the downward spiral that is clearly underway in remote Indigenous schooling are:

1. **Supporting local Aboriginal Teacher Assistants to qualify as teachers.** This requires more than simply offering qualifications or enrolling mainstream teacher education units. Rather, it

requires content appropriate to and respectful of the people and the task in remote schools. It requires developing skills in appropriate EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy. It requires substantive support in developing academic English to access and demonstrate the necessary knowledge. See Recommendations 30-32.

2. **Reinstating bilingual and EAL/D pedagogy and assessment at the centre of remote schooling.** Active steps must be taken to increase the supply and appointment of qualified Aboriginal teachers, upskilled Assistant Teachers, qualified EAL/D teachers and teacher consultants, and school leaders who understand the importance of staffing their schools with these teachers. Local EAL/D teacher qualifications must be reinstated along with on-going EAL/D Professional Learning for all NT schools and principals. See Recommendations 10-14, 19-24, 40-49.
3. **Placing remote schools on a secure financial basis.** Key outcomes, including community engagement, should be monitored and schools should be supported (rather than punished) when outcomes do not improve. See Recommendations 1-9.
4. **Upgrading and reinstating local provision of adult education, teacher education, secondary education.** Pathways between and from each of these should be developed, including appropriate English and literacy support. See Recommendations 15-18, 25-27.

ATESOL NT thanks the Committee for inviting us to make this supplementary submission. We appreciate the interest you have shown in the issues we raised in giving evidence to you and hope you will be able to make use of this effort to clarify our initial evidence and offer clear proposals. These proposals seek to support Indigenous children, young people and adults living in remote communities to use formal schooling to their benefit, learn the English they need, gain employment and be advocates for themselves and others. Central to this endeavour will be retaining, gaining, building from and taking pride in their languages, knowledges and cultures.

This submission was prepared by a Working Party of ATESOL NT.

Liz Easton	President, ATESOL NT
Fran Murray	Representative on ACTA
Carmel Lawrence	Secretary, ATESOL NT Committee
Michele Willsher	Treasurer, ATESOL NT Committee.

Darwin, NT 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021

## APPENDIX A:

### Speech by Mr Yingiya Guyula MLA in the NT Parliament 16/08/2018

**Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy):** Mr Deputy Speaker, today I stand to celebrate and congratulate the work of many educators across the Northern Territory-Yolngu and Balanda-whose achievements are documented in this book: *The History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory*.

Some of these people are here in the gallery, as you can see. Mr Brian Devlin and the people who put their effort into this book. I feel proud to have you here as I speak.

This book tells the story of our experiences and education, and the importance of language. Not just in the classroom but as the language of instruction.

My own story is told in this book by my Waku, John Greatorex. I grew up living on my mother's country and my father's country, until the age of about 10. My education began through a Yolngu school system. I was taught by my kin, and learned about the world from my Yolngu perspective.

When I was 10 years old, I told my parents I wanted to go to school in Galiwinku. Initially I was placed in Year 7 because of my age, but because I didn't understand any English, I was moved down to Year 1. There were many children laughing at me, because I did not understand English.

The Year 1 teachers explained concepts in my language, and as an intelligent 10 year old, I quickly mastered the concepts, as they were explained in my first language. When I moved back to the classroom with children my own age, I quickly surpassed their ability.

I waved goodbye to those children who had laughed at me as I was moved up several grades very quickly, and eventually I was chosen to attend Dhupuma College with all the other high-achieving students.

There are two important reasons why I achieved these outcomes in school. Firstly, I had a Yolngu education until the age of 10, when I was intellectually capable of understanding another world view, and I was strong in my Yolngu identity.

And secondly, I achieved at school because I was sent back to Grade 1 where western concepts were clearly explained in my first language.

This book brings stories from Alice Springs town camps, Areyonga, Barunga, Galiwinku, Numbulwar, the Pintupi-Luritjpa region, Mapuru, Milingimbi, Santa Teresa, Tiwi, Wadeye, Willowra, Wurrumiyanga, Yuendumu, Yipirinya, Yirrkala and homelands. These are stories about two-way education.

Two weeks ago I told a few stories at Garma about two-way education. This is a story from later in my life when I was training to become a pilot. I found myself following two paths. One path was the Balanda life of studying to be a pilot. The other path was about learning my Yolngu education—songlines, manikay, paintings—the law and the knowledge that would contribute to my becoming a leader.

But these paths were not travelling side by side. They were travelling off in different directions and the gap between them was growing wider. I became like a dog running between two masters, from one path to the other and back again.

Eventually, I had to come back to the path of Yolngu education and lead my pilot life behind because the gap had grown too wide and I needed to continue learning the Yolngu way of life, the law and the land to sit with my elders and receive the knowledge.

The experience gave me great insight into the Western schooling experience. I see the current education system is failing our children because it fails to close the gap by bringing two cultures and languages together. Our communities and children cannot see the relevance of school when it does not relate to our Yolngu world.

Many schools are working very hard to achieve these goals, but they have not been well supported and are often undermined. This is the problem. In order for Aboriginal students to be successful, the government and Department of Education have to share their power or hand it over. Currently, the entire power concerning our children's education does not rest with Yolngu people. It is out of our hands. When I say, 'Yolngu people', I am referring to Aboriginal people.

This reflects our whole community experience. It is why Yolngu leaders are pursuing treaty and have done for a long time. As Brian Devlin states:

"The history of bilingual education must be set as part of a larger story of Aboriginal people's struggle to take back control of [our] lives, to express and live [our] own identities and organise [our] communities according to [our] values and aspirations."

Schools that have had bilingual education programs ...

Have enabled "Aboriginal teachers, parents and community members to take their rightful place in the schooling of their children by playing an active role in the design, delivery and control of education."

Current government policies are about community-led schools. I am eager to see real changes. I do not mean through the few community consultations, I mean handing over authority to the Aboriginal nations so that we can appoint our teachers, school leaders and strong ESL teachers, we can decide the direction of our curriculum—both Western and Yolngu. We can revitalise Yolngu teacher training and homeland education.

Our schools should be filled with Yolngu educators, elders and knowledge. We must not place our children in a position where they are torn between two paths, learning very little from either or falling into the gap. We want our children to have two-way education, two paths travelling so closely side by side that our children can walk on both paths. This is how we will close the education gap.

This book shows us that two-way education is a pathway for developing genuine community-led schools. I thank the authors and contributors for documenting an important history that provides hope and advice for the future. I want to provide a copy of this book to the Parliamentary Library Service with the hope that others may read about this history, about the schools and communities in their electorates and understand that the survival of Aboriginal culture and the future is dependent on a strong two-way education approach.

\*\*\*\*\*

## APPENDIX B

### Comparison of NAPLAN test results in operational bilingual schools, nominal bilingual schools and English-only schools

The data below compares NAPLAN test results for 2015 and 2019 from twelve remote schools categorised according to their use of bilingual-biliterate or monolingual English pedagogy:<sup>65</sup>

1. **Operational Bilingual schools**, defined as *implementing bilingual-biliterate pedagogy across the curriculum in daily classroom practice*
2. **Nominal Bilingual schools**, defined as designated by the NT DoE as “Bilingual”, resourced and staffed to offer bilingual education but, according to ATESOL NT knowledge, *not implementing bilingual-biliterate pedagogical practice*.
3. **English medium of instruction schools**: schools teaching *in English only*.

This categorisation of the 12 schools is based on ATESOL NT members’ current knowledge about these schools and our practical experience in/with them.

The different school types were compared according to their **NAPLAN results** in each test category for each Year Level tested.

The data presented in the main text (Problem 6) will not be repeated here.

The data is presented below in three ways:

1. 2015 and 2019 school scores in **each NAPLAN test category** (reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy) and for **each Year Level** (Levels 3, 5, 7 & 9)
2. A chart summarising **increased/static/declining NAPLAN test scores from 2015 to 2019**.
3. Data showing **the school type gaining the highest NAPLAN scores** in each test category in 2015 and 2019.

Data from the summary chart in section 2 is summarised in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Trends in Scores for NAPLAN Test Categories according to School Type 2015 & 2019**

SCHOOL TYPE	No. test categories trending <u>upwards</u> from 2015 to 2019	No. test categories trending <u>downwards</u> from 2015 to 2019	No. test categories with <u>no change</u> from 2015 to 2019
<b>Operational bilingual</b> (n. 4)	11	8	1
<b>Nominal bilingual</b> (n. 4)	9	11	-
<b>English medium</b> (n. 4)	11	8	-
<b>TOTAL ALL SCHOOLS</b> (n. 12)	31	27	1

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.myschool.edu.au> NAPLAN Data. Sourced August 2021.

Table 5 shows:

- no difference in scores between Operational Bilingual schools and English Medium schools in 2015 and 2019 – both school types **trended slightly downwards**.
- scores from Nominal Bilingual schools **trended slightly upwards** from 2015 to 2019.

Table 6 disaggregates these data according to Year Level.

**Table 6: Trends in Scores for NAPLAN Test Categories according to School Type and Year Level**

YEAR LEVEL	OPERATIONAL BILINGUAL (N. 4)		NOMINAL BILINGUAL (N. 4)		ENGLISH MEDIUM (N. 4)	
	<i>Trending up</i>	<i>Trending down</i>	<i>Trending up</i>	<i>Trending down</i>	<i>Trending up</i>	<i>Trending down</i>
<b>Year 3</b>	3*	1	2	3	3	2
<b>Year 5</b>	1	4	0	5	1#	3
<b>Year 7</b>	4	1	4	1	4	1
<b>Year 9</b>	3	2	3	2	3	2

\* plus 1 category stayed the same

# plus no data for 1 category

**Table 6 shows a very similar pattern across all three school types in the way scores trend between 2015 and 2019:**

- *in Year 3*, scores from Operational Bilingual and English medium schools trend upwards by 1 category from 2015 to 2019, while Nominal Bilingual schools trend downwards by 1 category. These differences between both time periods and schools are **probably a matter of chance**
- *in Year 5*, all schools **trend downwards** from 2015 to 2019
- *in Year 7*, all schools **trend upwards by the same number of categories** and the upwards trend would appear to be significant
- *in Year 9*, all schools repeat the same pattern of **trending upwards in 3 categories and downwards in 2**.

It would appear that Year Level has a greater impact on NAPLAN score trends than does school type, and that the greatest improvements have occurred in Year 7 students between 2015 and 2019, while scores trended downwards for Year 5 students.

Overall, it seems impossible to draw clear conclusions regarding **school types and trends** in NAPLAN scores from 2015 to 2019.

Our conclusion is along similar lines to our statement in our main text (Problem 7), namely that the small number of bilingual schools (and especially the small number of truly operational bilingual schools) coupled with the other problems facing remote schools in the NT, make it impossible to produce clear answers to important questions about an issue that we believe is fundamental to the success of children in these schools.

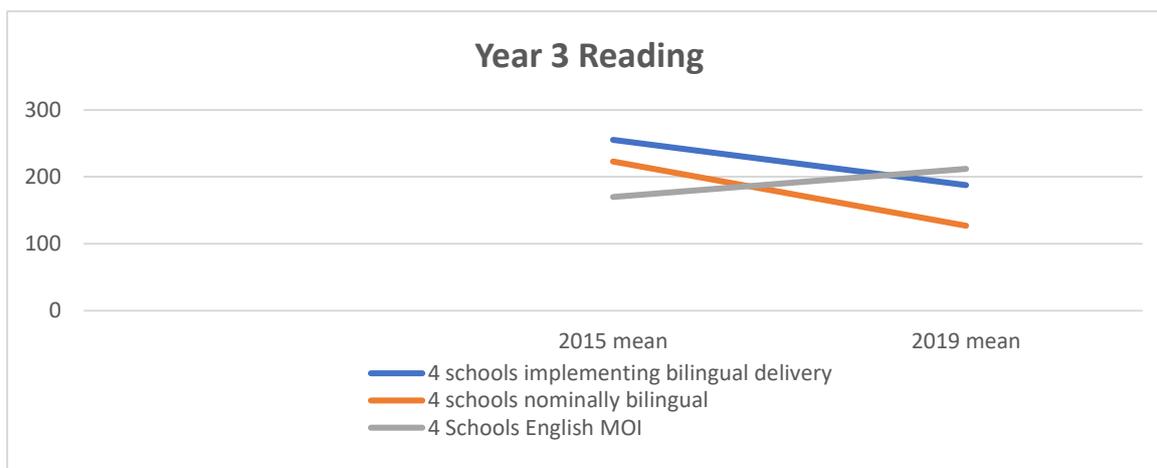
*See next page for a complete breakdown of these data.*

**1. 2015 and 2019 scores for EACH SCHOOL TYPE in each NAPLAN test category (reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy) for each Year Level (Levels 3, 5, 7 & 9)**

**YEAR 3**

Year 3 Reading	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	255	188
4 schools nominally bilingual	223	127
4 Schools English MOI	170	212

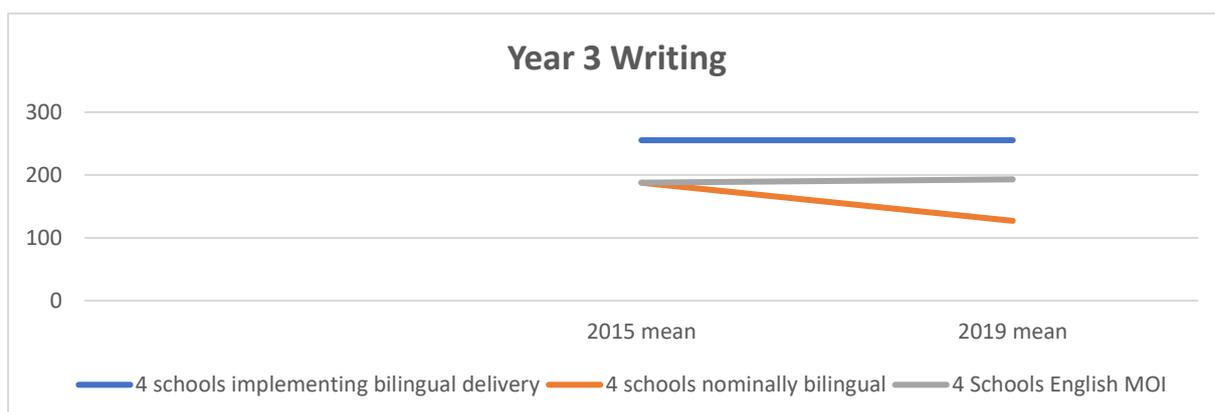
**Red font** = highest score for that year.



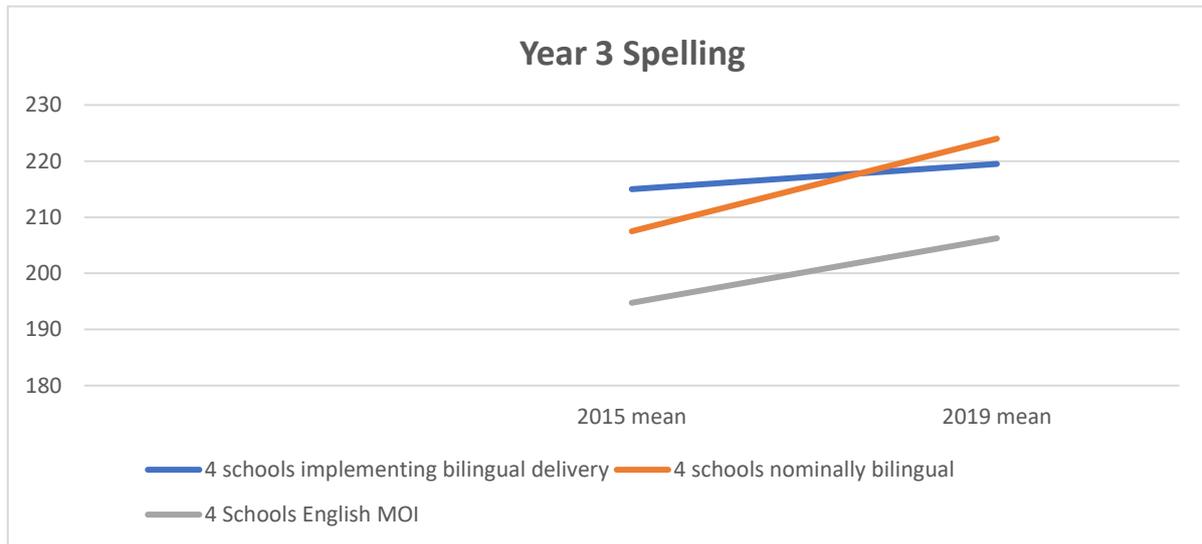
*NB: students in Bilingual Schools using the research-informed Staircase Model have yet to use their developing spoken English in formal literacy work.*

*Ongoing decline in practice-based support for bilingual schools is reflected in the decline in bilingual schools' data since 2015. This decline also coincides with the introduction of 'Synthetic Phonics' reading approaches that remote schools are expected to use to teach English literacy, irrespective of Bilingual status.*

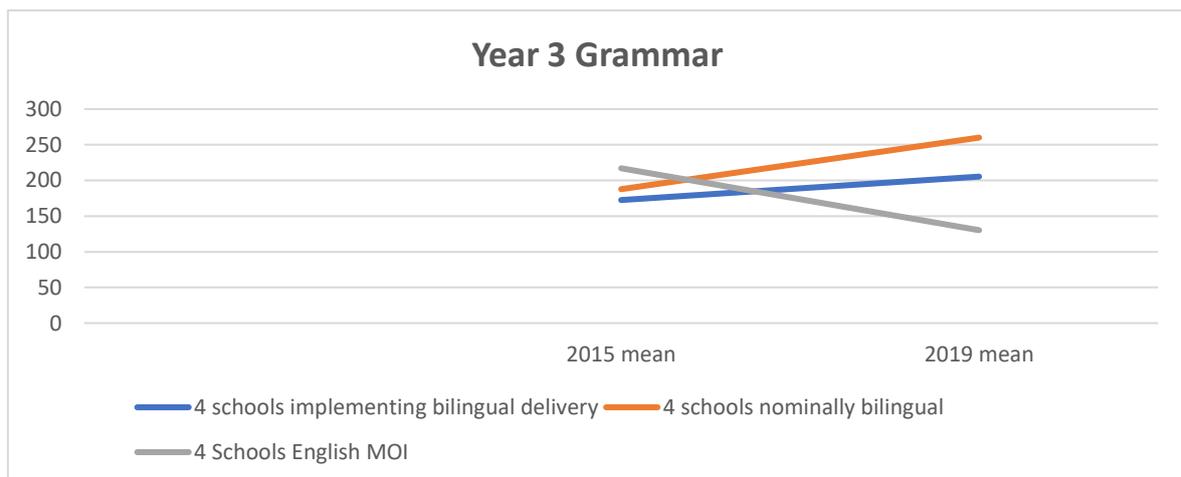
Year 3 Writing	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	255	255
4 schools nominally bilingual	188	127
4 Schools English MOI	188	193



Year 3 Spelling	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	215	220
4 schools nominally bilingual	207.5	224
4 Schools English MOI	195	206

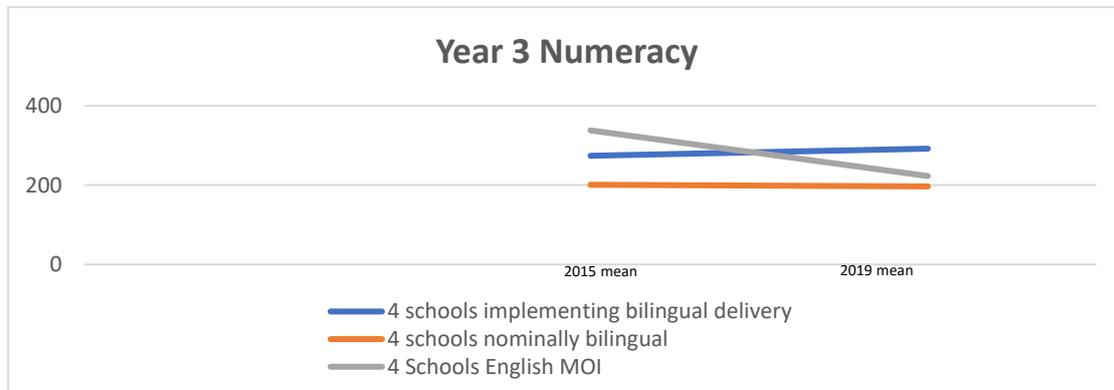


Year 3 Grammar	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	173	205
4 schools nominally bilingual	188	260
4 Schools English MOI	217	130



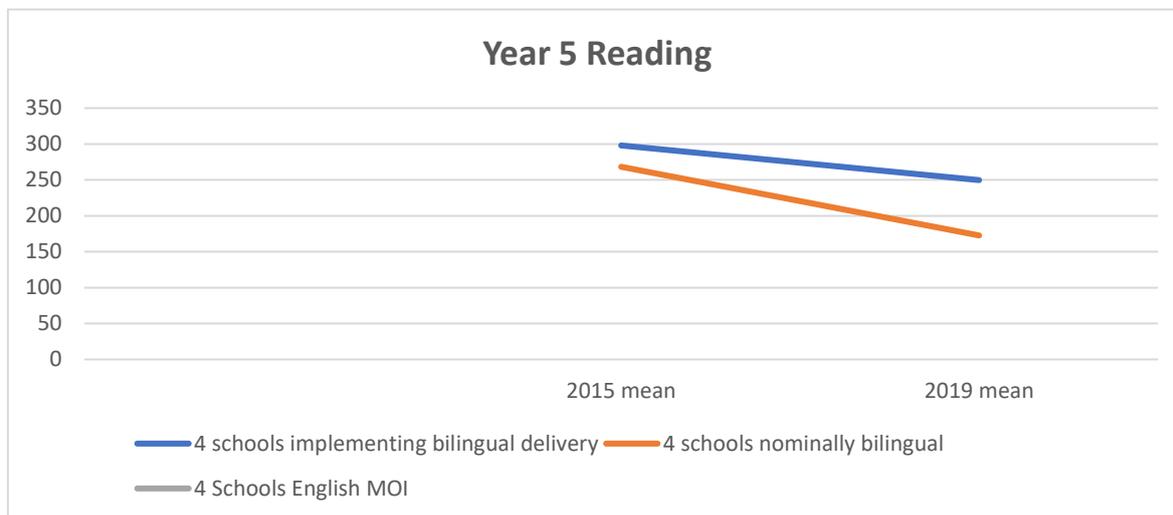
*NB: Grammar and Spelling taught and assessed as discrete skills do not have the evidence behind them to support the achievement of comprehension and application of communicative reading and writing in an additional language. The data reveals as much, see results for Reading and Writing.*

Year 3 Numeracy	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	274	292
4 schools nominally bilingual	201	197
4 Schools English MOI	338	223



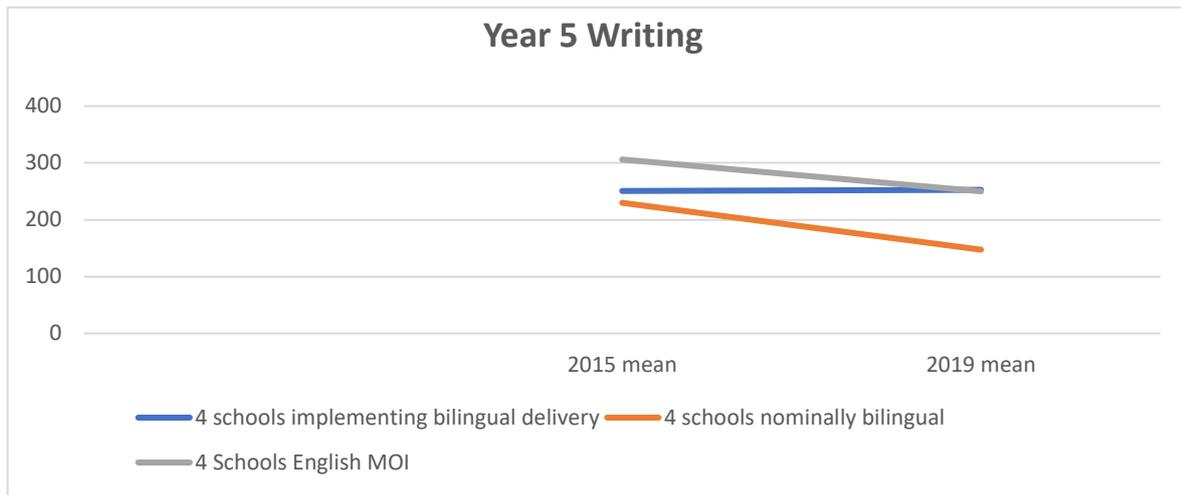
**YEAR 5**

Year 5 Reading	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	298	250
4 schools nominally bilingual	268	173
4 Schools English MOI	n/a	267

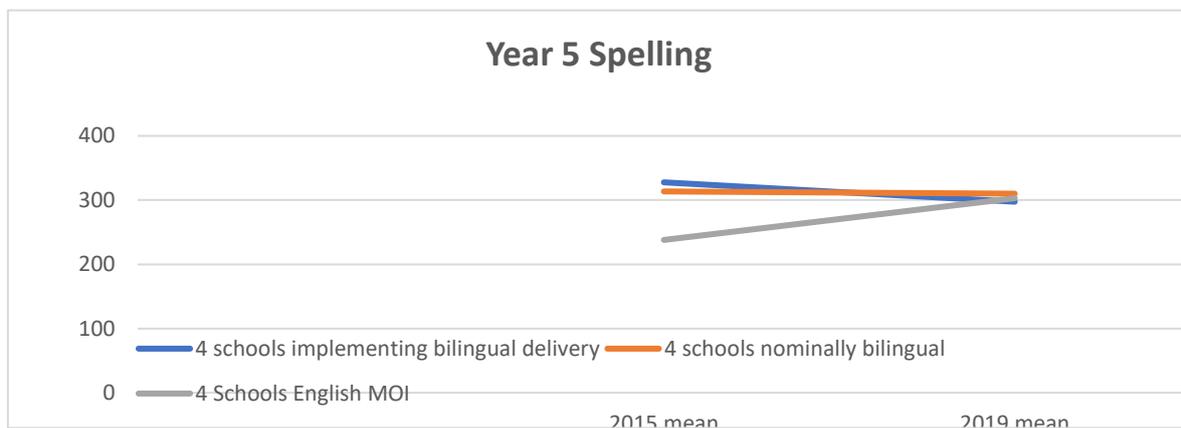


*No data for 2015 for the English MOI schools, so not shown in line graph.*

Year 5 Writing	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	251	253
4 schools nominally bilingual	230	147
4 Schools English MOI		250

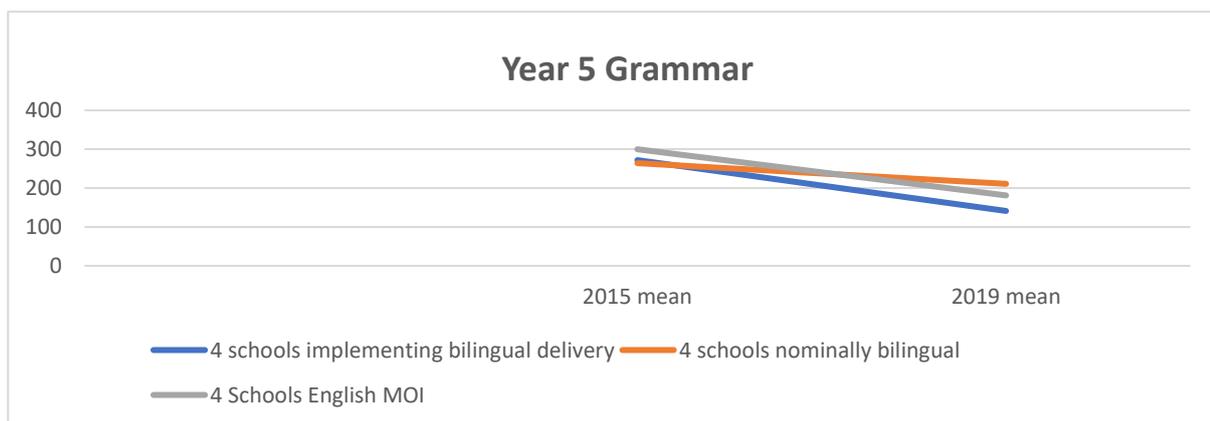


Year 5 Spelling	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	328	298
4 schools nominally bilingual	314	310
4 Schools English MOI	238	303

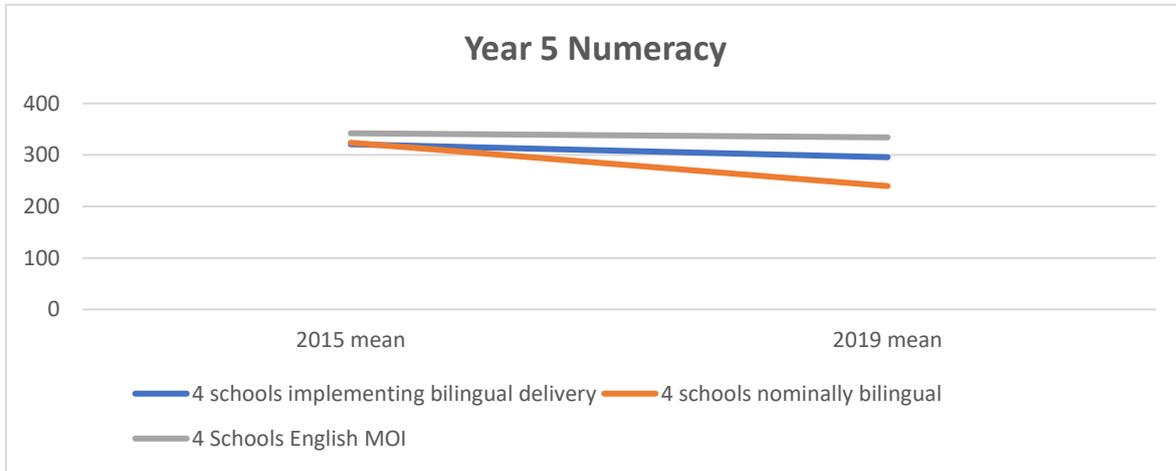


*NB: Grammar and Spelling taught and assessed as discrete skills do not have the evidence behind them to support the achievement of comprehension and application of communicative reading and writing (literacy skills) in an additional language. The data reveals as much, see results for Reading and Writing.*

Year 5 Grammar	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	272	141
4 schools nominally bilingual	264	211
4 Schools English MOI	300	181

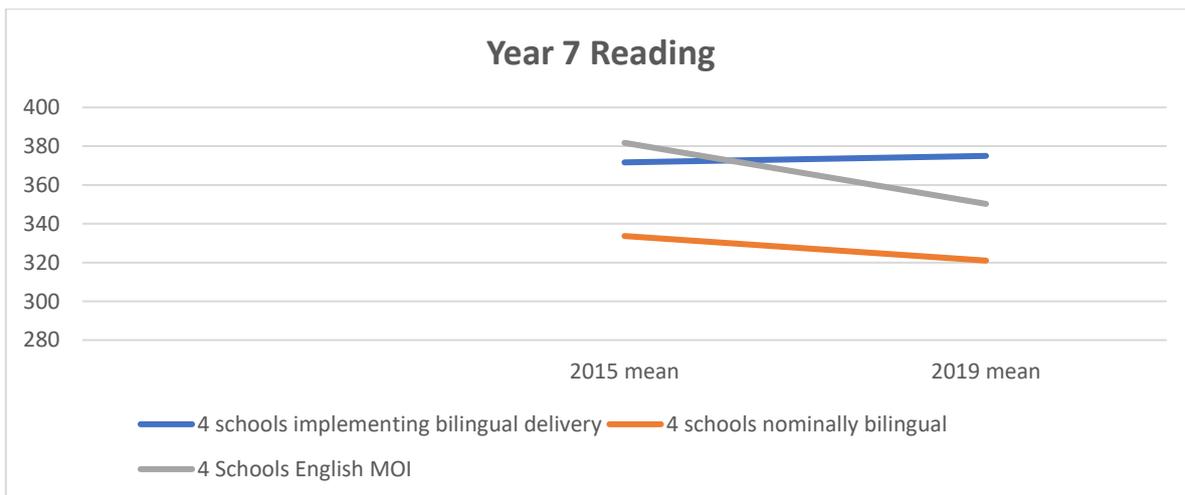


Year 5 Numeracy	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	321	296
4 schools nominally bilingual	324	240
4 Schools English MOI	342	334

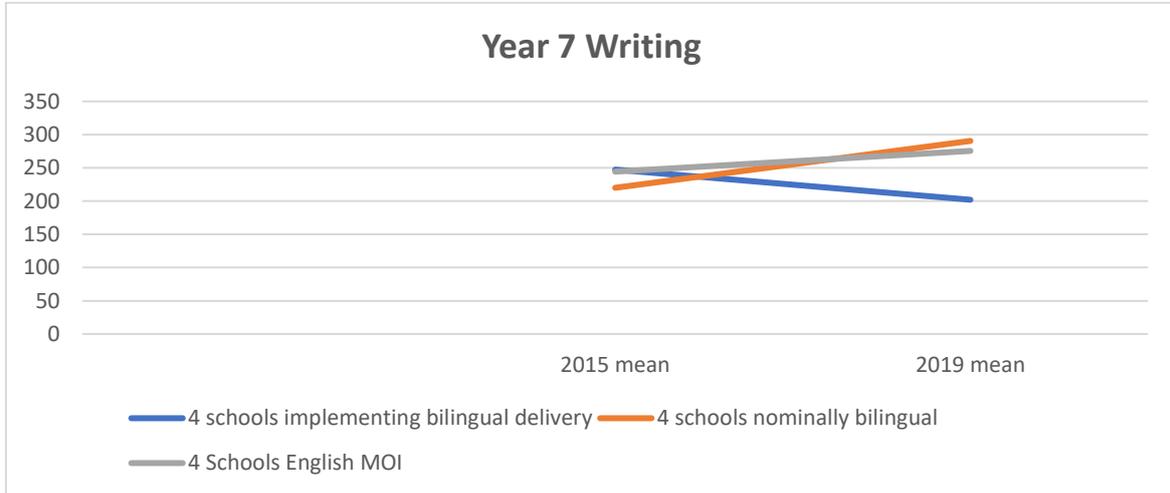


**YEAR 7**

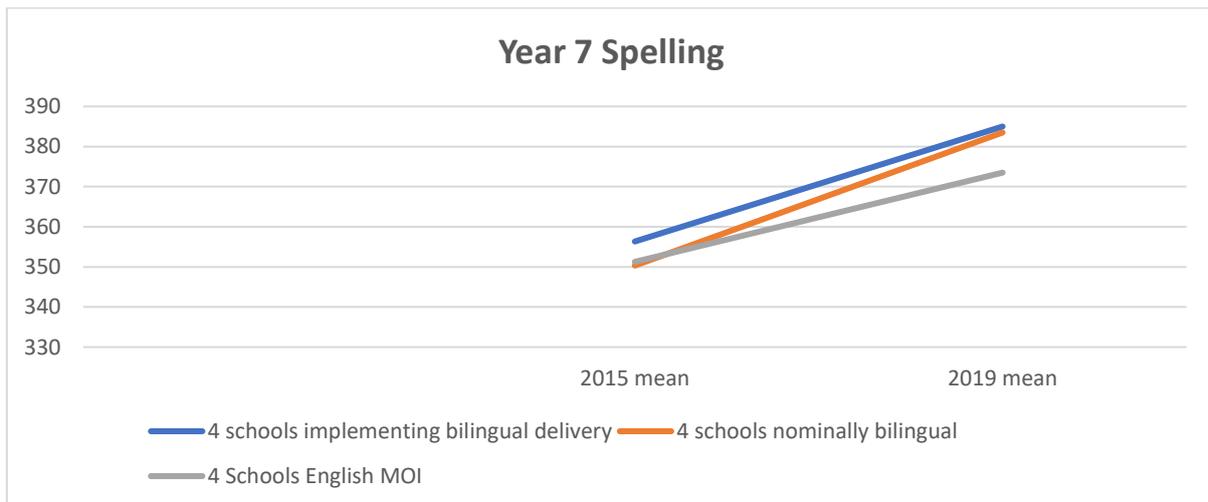
Year 7 Reading	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	372	375
4 schools nominally bilingual	334	321
4 Schools English MOI	382	350



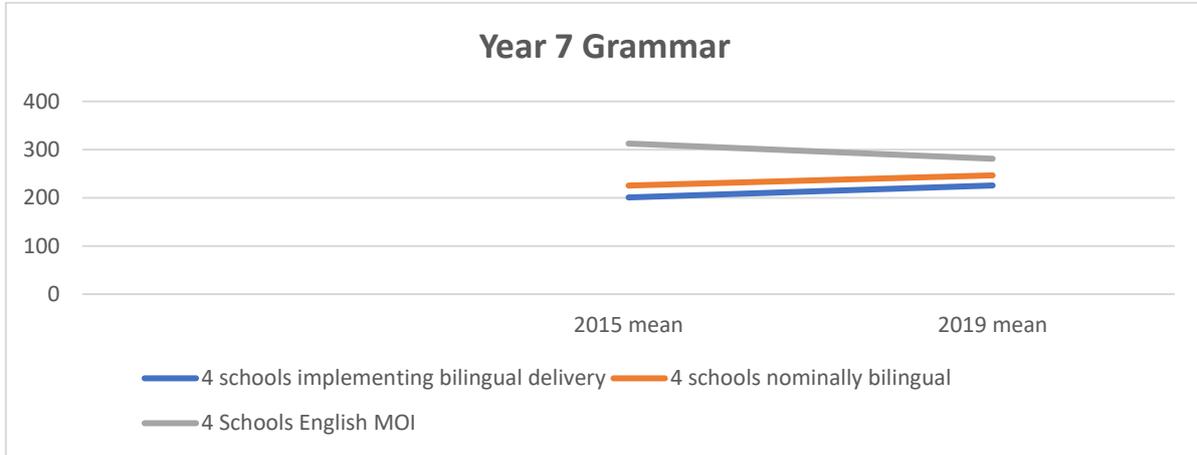
Year 7 Writing	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	247	202
4 schools nominally bilingual	220	291
4 Schools English MOI	244	276



Year 7 Spelling	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	356	385
4 schools nominally bilingual	350	384
4 Schools English MOI	351	374

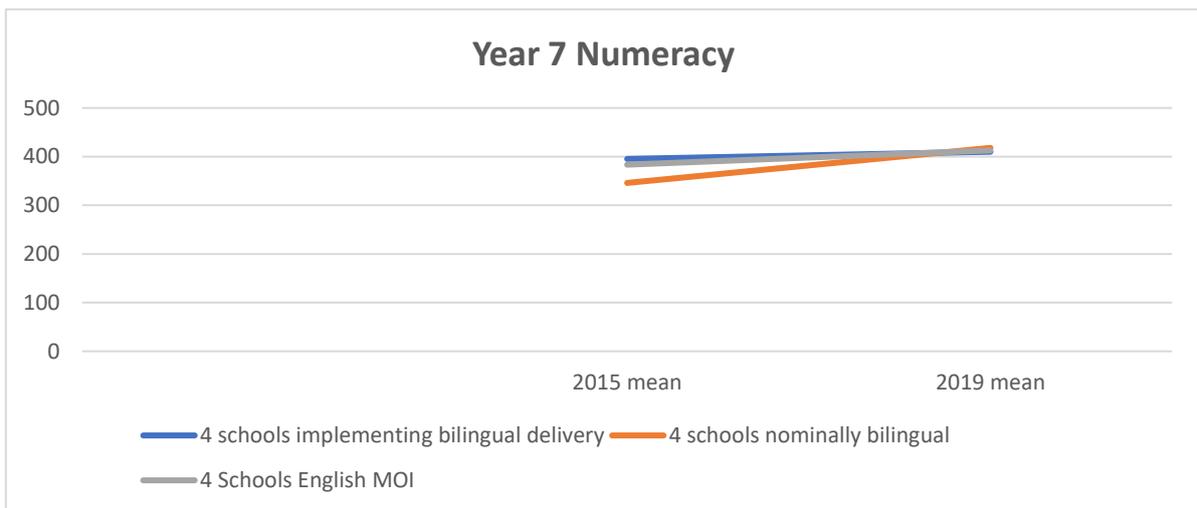


Year 7 Grammar	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	201	226
4 schools nominally bilingual	225	247
4 Schools English MOI	313	281



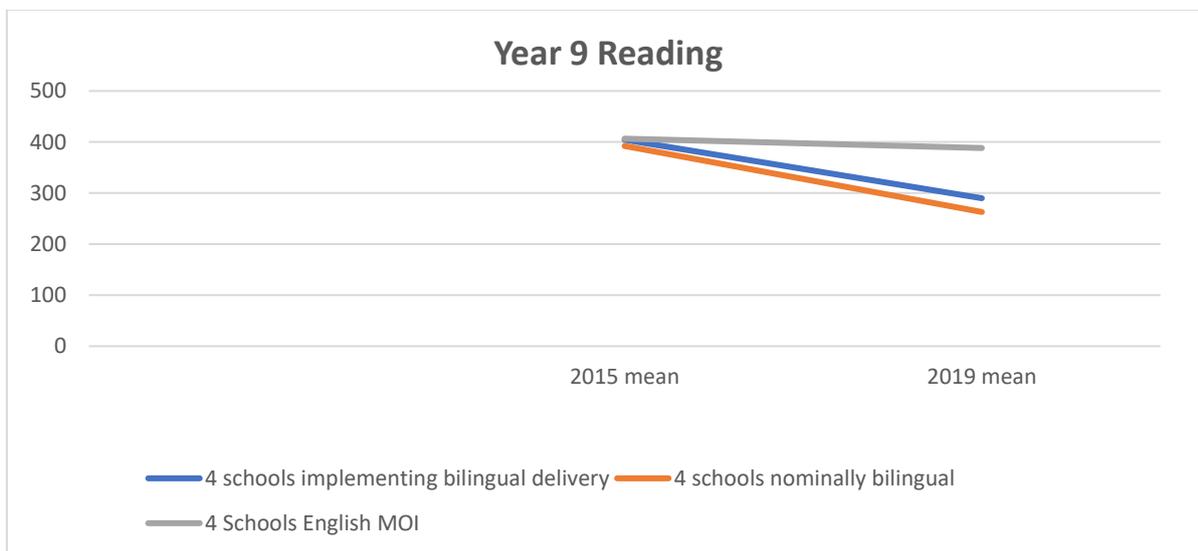
*NB: Grammar and Spelling taught and assessed as discrete skills do not have the evidence behind them to support the achievement of comprehension and application of communicative reading and writing (literacy skills) in an additional language. The data reveals as much, see results for Reading and Writing.*

Year 7 Numeracy	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	395	410
4 schools nominally bilingual	346	418
4 Schools English MOI	384	413

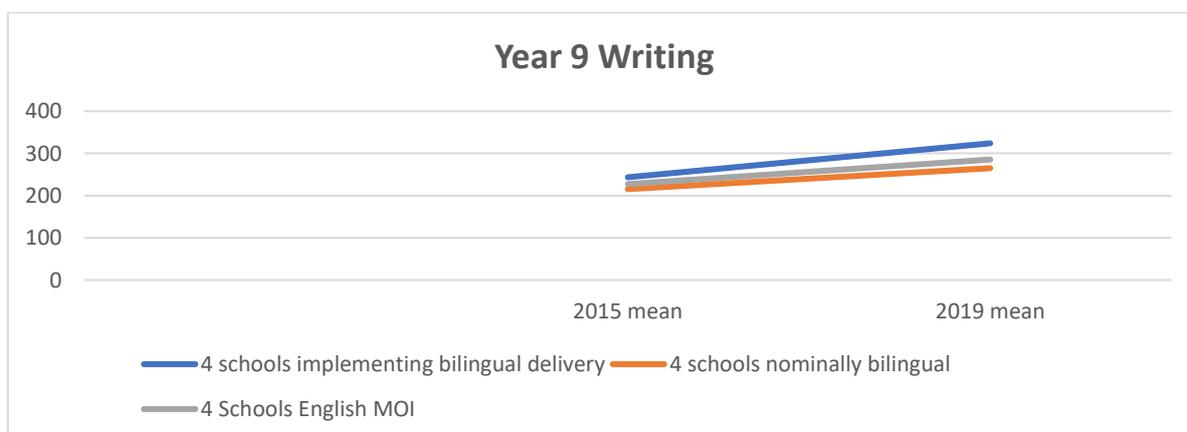


**YEAR 9**

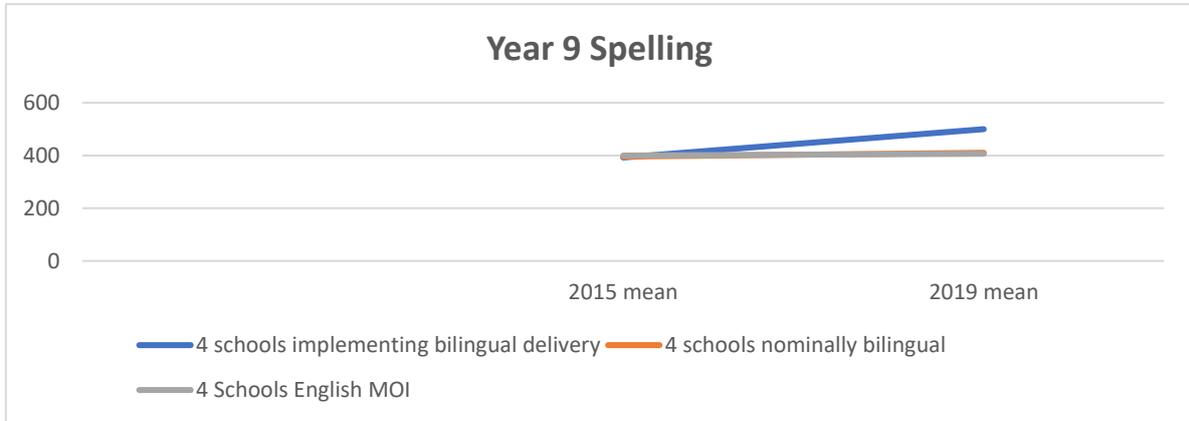
<b>Year 9 Reading</b>	<b>2015 mean</b>	<b>2019 mean</b>
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	<b>405</b>	<b>290</b>
4 schools nominally bilingual	<b>392</b>	<b>263</b>
4 Schools English MOI	<b>407</b>	<b>388</b>



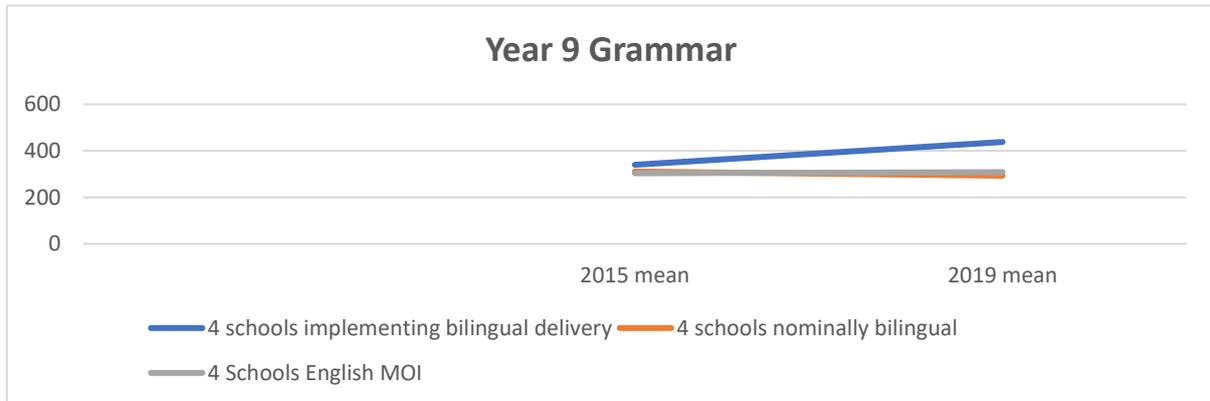
<b>Year 9 Writing</b>	<b>2015 mean</b>	<b>2019 mean</b>
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	<b>244</b>	<b>324</b>
4 schools nominally bilingual	<b>216</b>	<b>265</b>
4 Schools English MOI	<b>227</b>	<b>286</b>



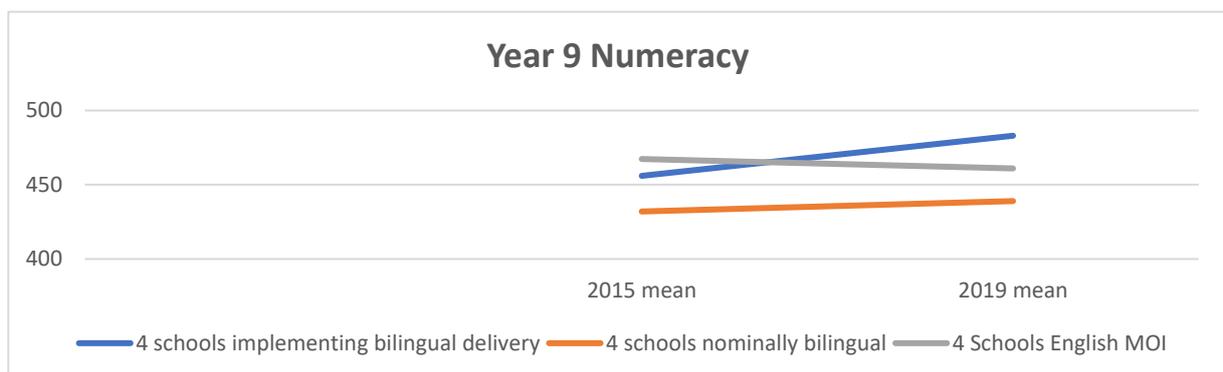
Year 9 Spelling	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	393	500
4 schools nominally bilingual	396	411
4 Schools English MOI	400	407



Year 9 Grammar	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	340	438
4 schools nominally bilingual	311	293
4 Schools English MOI	304	308



Year 9 Numeracy	2015 mean	2019 mean
4 schools implementing bilingual delivery	456	483
4 schools nominally bilingual	432	439
4 Schools English MOI	467	461



## 2. Trends in NAPLAN Scores between 2015 and 2019

Average score **lower** in 2019: 

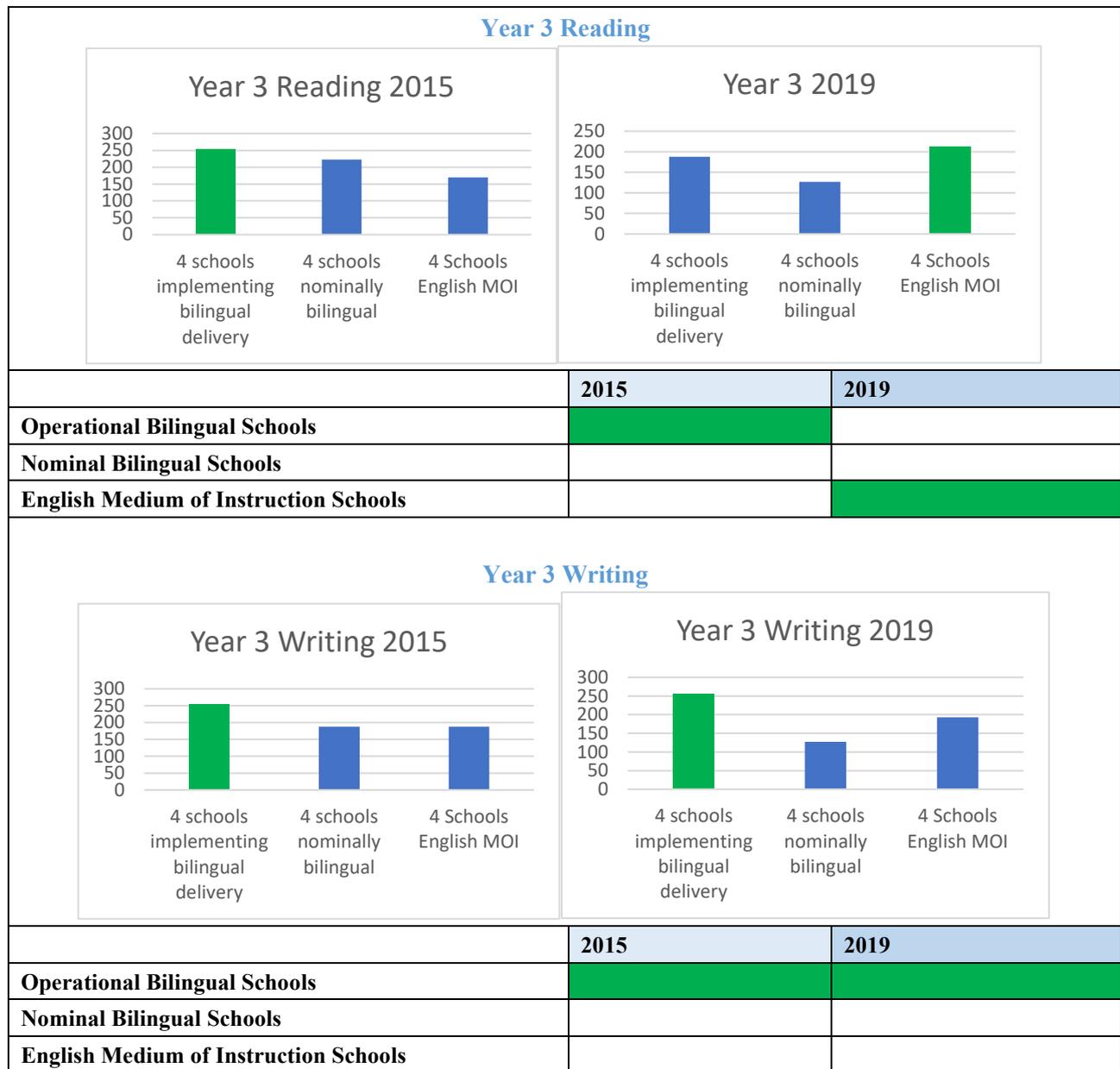
Average score **higher** in 2019: 

Average score no change in 2019: 

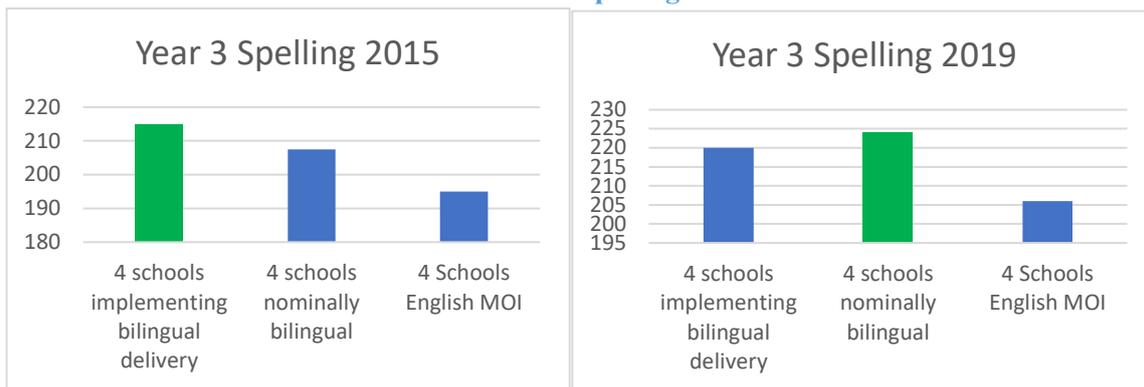
	SCHOOL CATEGORY		
	Operational Bilingual	Nominal Bilingual	English MOI
<b>Year 3</b>			
READING			
WRITING			
SPELLING			
GRAMMAR			
NUMERACY			
<b>Year 5</b>			
READING			n/a
WRITING			
SPELLING			
GRAMMAR			
NUMERACY			
<b>Year 7</b>			
READING			
WRITING			
SPELLING			
GRAMMAR			
NUMERACY			
<b>Year 9</b>			
READING			
WRITING			
SPELLING			
GRAMMAR			
NUMERACY			

### 3. Type of school that gained the highest score in 2015 and 2019

Highest score shown in **green column**

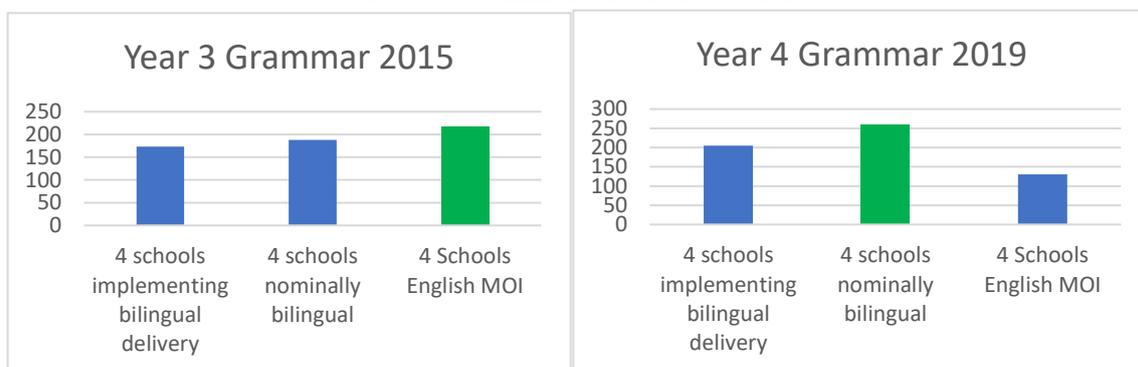


### Year 3 Spelling



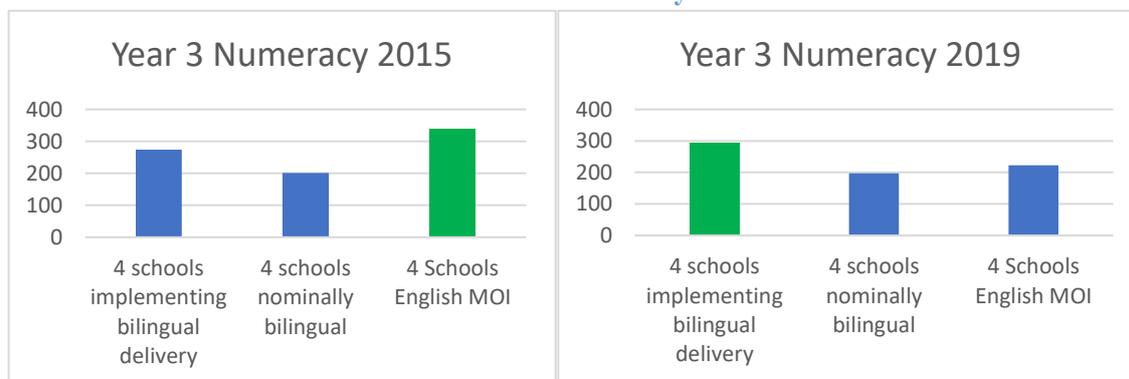
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 3 Grammar and Punctuation



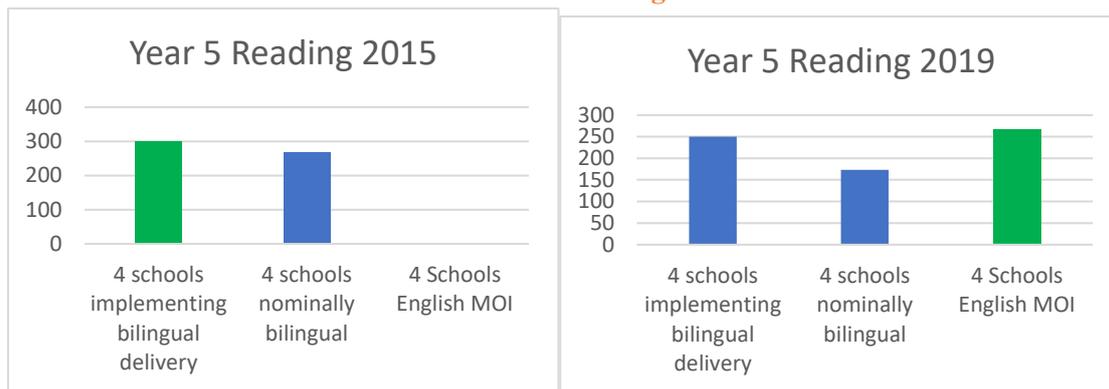
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 3 Numeracy



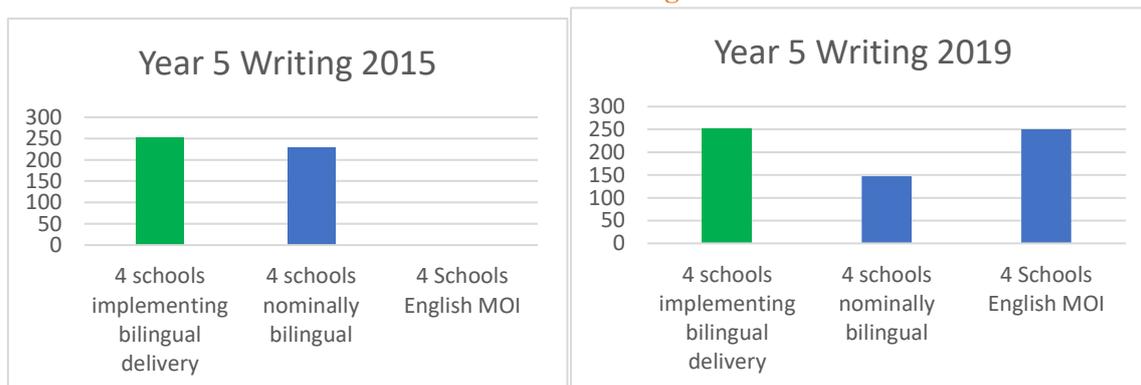
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 5 Reading



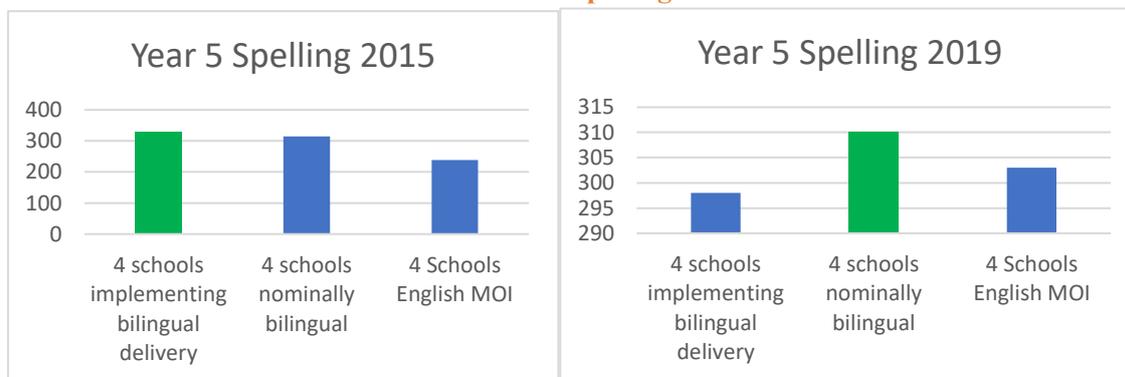
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 5 Writing



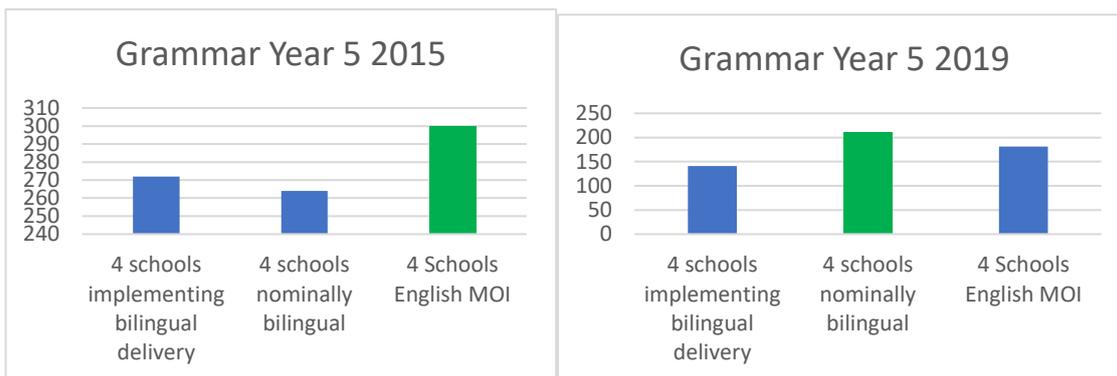
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 5 Spelling



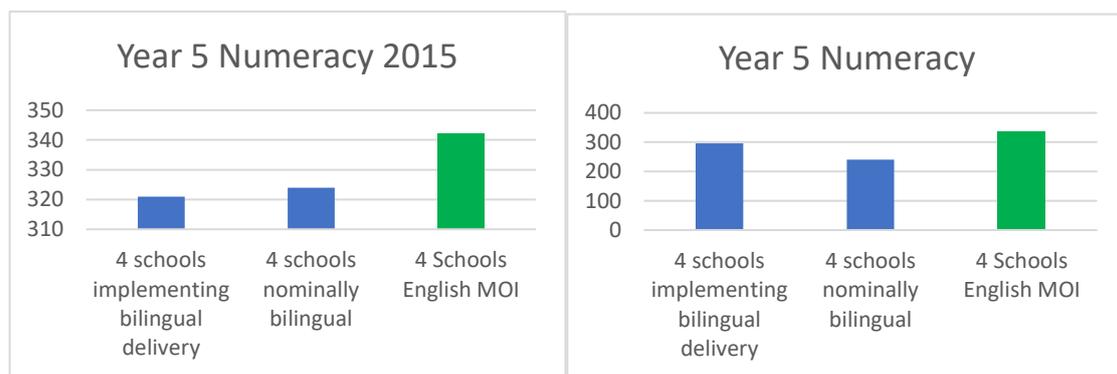
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 5 Grammar and Punctuation



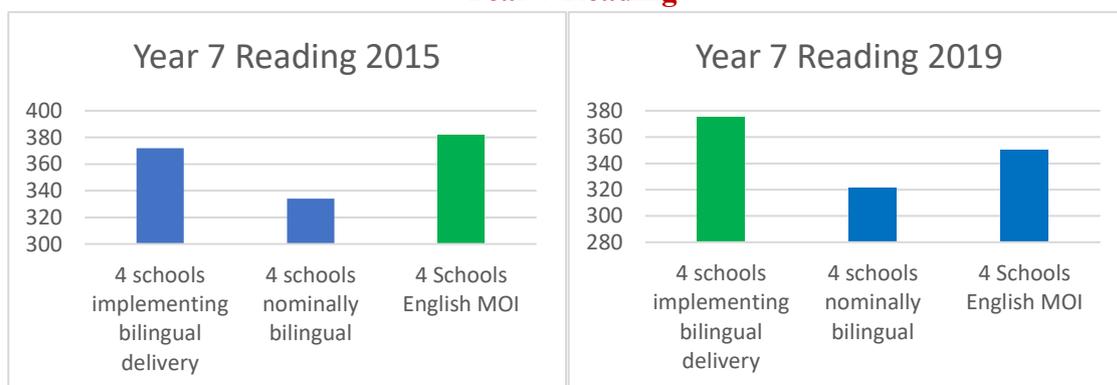
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 5 Numeracy



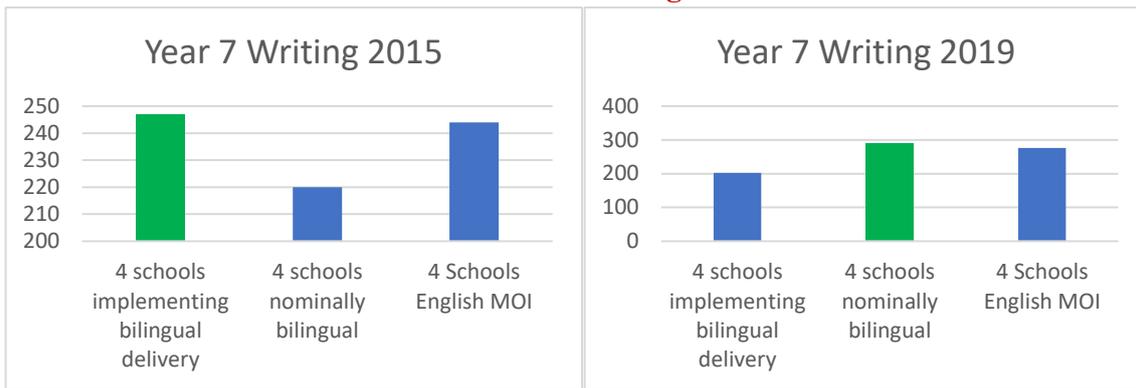
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 7 Reading



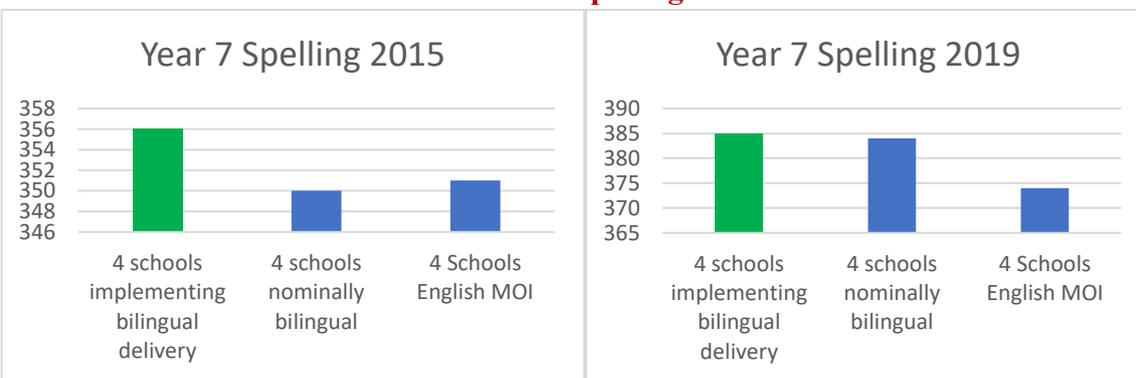
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 7 Writing



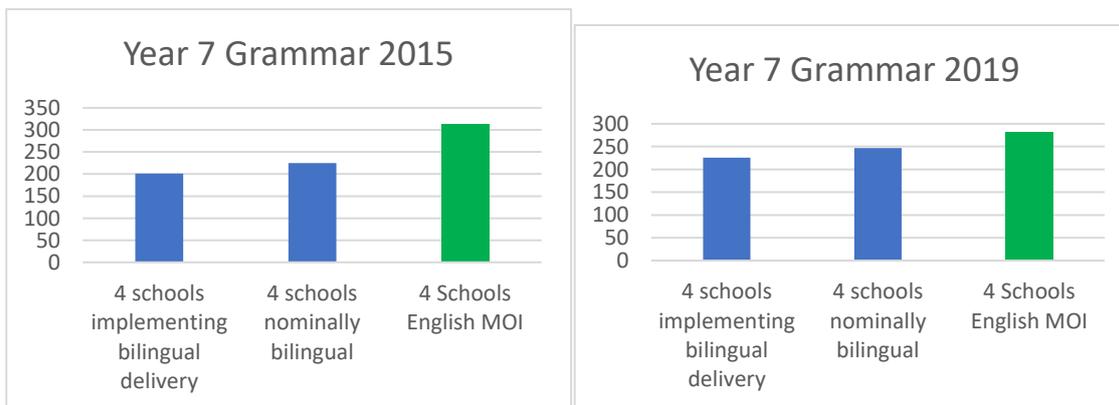
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 7 Spelling



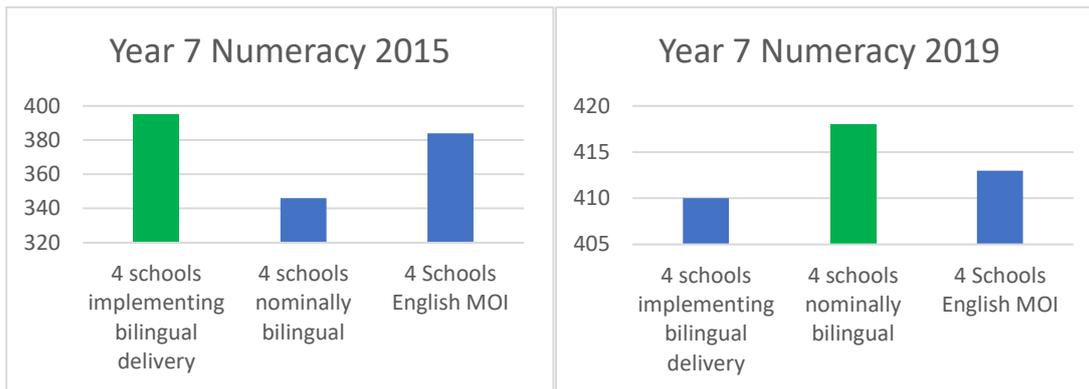
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 7 Grammar and Punctuation



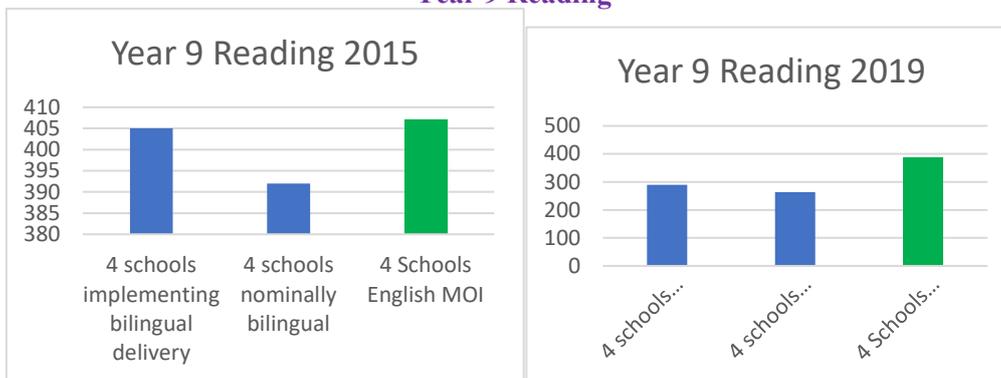
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 7 Numeracy



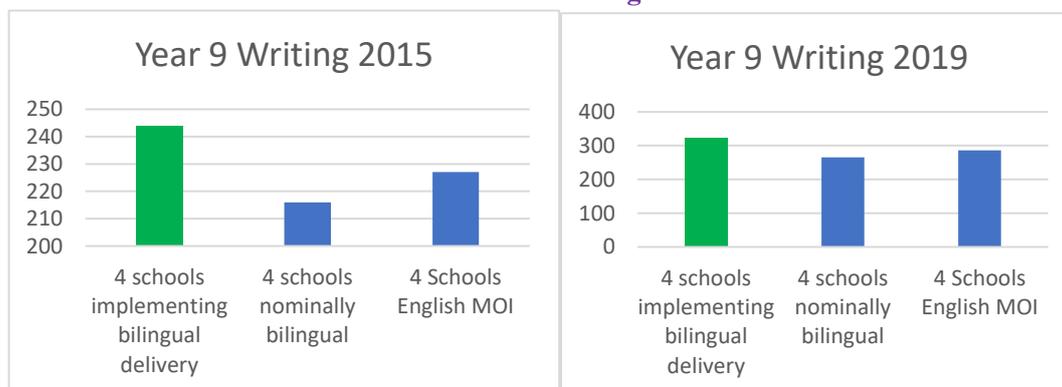
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 9 Reading



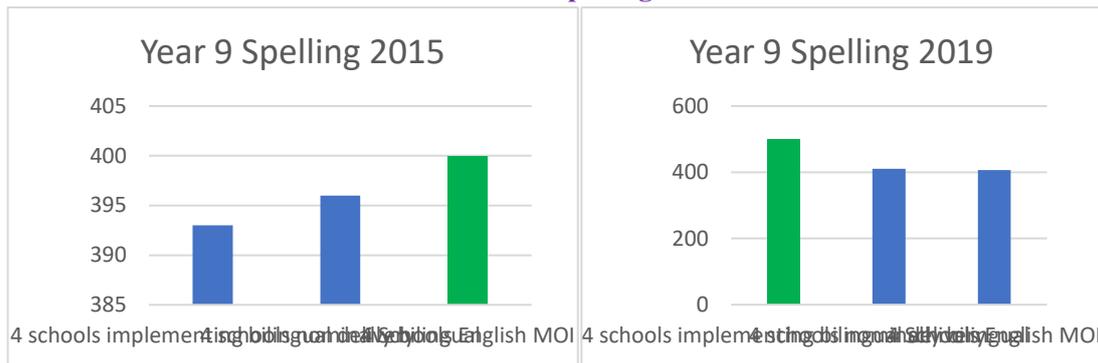
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 9 Writing



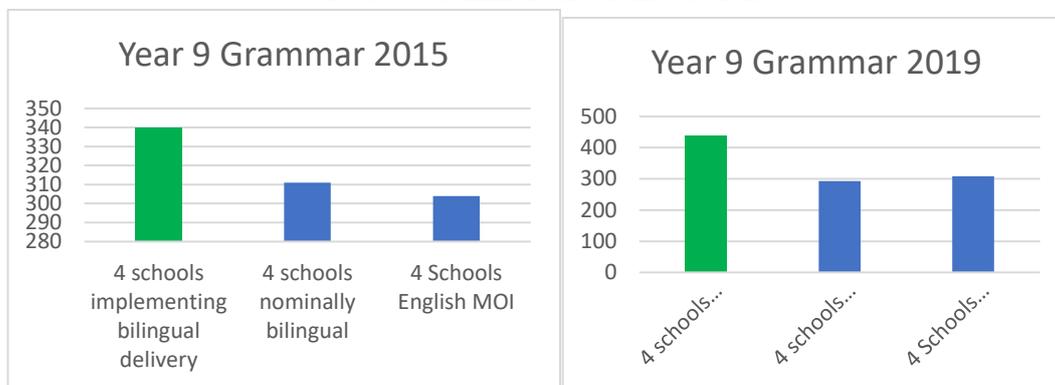
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 9 Spelling



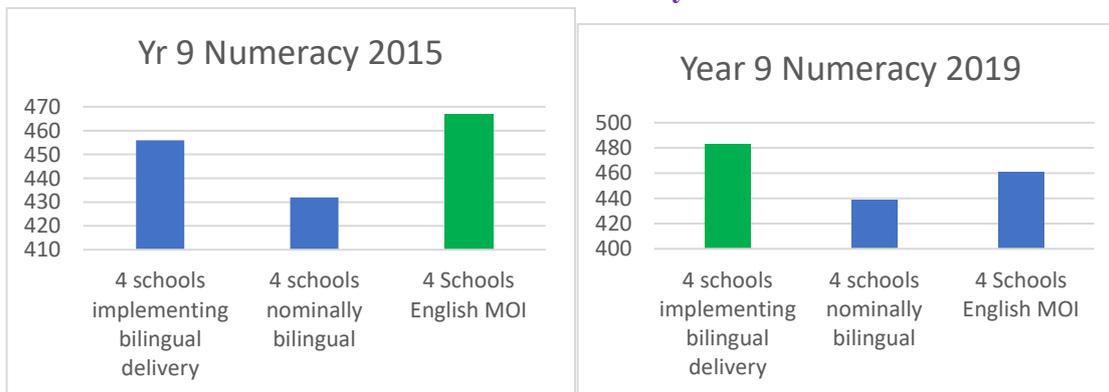
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 9 Grammar and Punctuation



	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

### Year 9 Numeracy



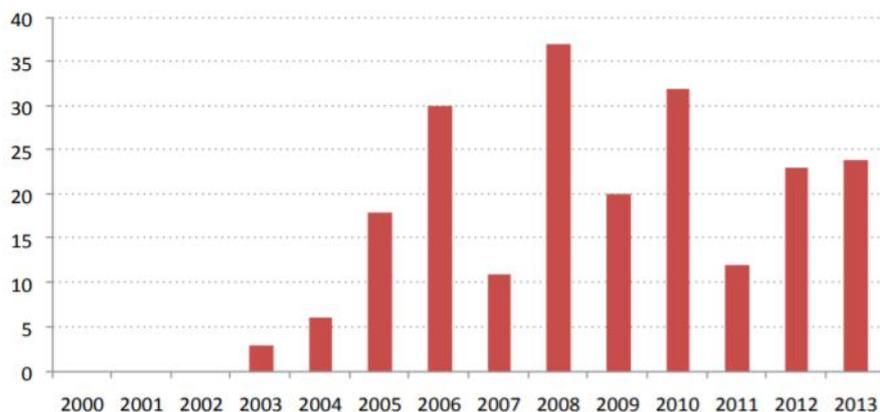
	2015	2019
<b>Operational Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>Nominal Bilingual Schools</b>		
<b>English Medium of Instruction Schools</b>		

## APPENDIX C:

### NTCET Completions in Very Remote Government Schools

From Wilson, Bruce (2014), “A share in the future. Review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory”. Retrieved from: <http://www.fobl.net.au/index.php/au-TI/current-issues/59-a-share-in-the-future-review-of-indigenous-education-in-the-northern-territory> p.141.

Figure 19: Very Remote Northern Territory Government Schools - Indigenous NTCE/NTCET completions (not including Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy)



Nevertheless, there are examples of small-scale successes. A few very remote schools generate programs, usually based on VET, offering the chance for students to complete a qualification. These small successes are encouraging, but do not provide a firm basis for system provision. Patterns of results over time in each school suggest that while some schools achieve a measurable improvement for a period in student achievement, these are not sustained in the longer term.

APPENDIX D:

Two examples of writing in English and Djambarrpuynu  
from a bilingual program in a remote school

Draft 3

Name: ..Serina.....  
Date: ..9/4/16.....

	Nunhili South Americanjur yothu mala mirinyuju gan malnj' thurr.	At south America baby whales were born.
	Easter Islandjur bul manydjiy mala walalany gan nupar lukanharaw walalanj djamarrkulur.	At Easter Island the whales were attacked by sharks.
	Hawaikinjur yolnyu mala nupar marthanyyu nunhiyi nalapal' nha mirinyujuny lunharaw ga lukanharaw.	At Hawaii people followed the old whale with their boat to kill the old whale.
	Yurr nayi nalapalyu mirinyuju gan dur' yurr nunhi marthany.	So the old whale rammed the boat.
	bala nayi gajal nhangju gurruzumirriny noykurr wulangurr.	The his family he took them to the deep deep of the ocean.
	Nathil yolny ga mirinyuju gan dharanamin. yurr dhiyan bala nayi yolny ga gan mari buna nhangju.	Long time ago peoples and the whales were to family each other, but but this time the people does not know them they just want to kill them.
	Benuryiny nayi gajal walalany bala Antarcticaali. walnamirrillil wanjali.	Then he took them to Antarctica, to the safe place
	Nunhili Antarticanjur nayi jakul Kahuy. bala walal wandin Whangaralila. gunga yunaraw nhangju.	At Antarctica he heard Kahuy, then they ran to Whangara, to help Kahuy.

	Narrator	Talk of Each Character
 page 1	Koro Apirana was concerned, he quietly asked himself.	"Why hasn't there been any rain for eight years? Why are there no fish in the sea?"
	He blamed Kahu. He said to Nani Flowers.	"When Kahu was born, that's when things started to go wrong for us."

Translate into Djambarrpuyngu

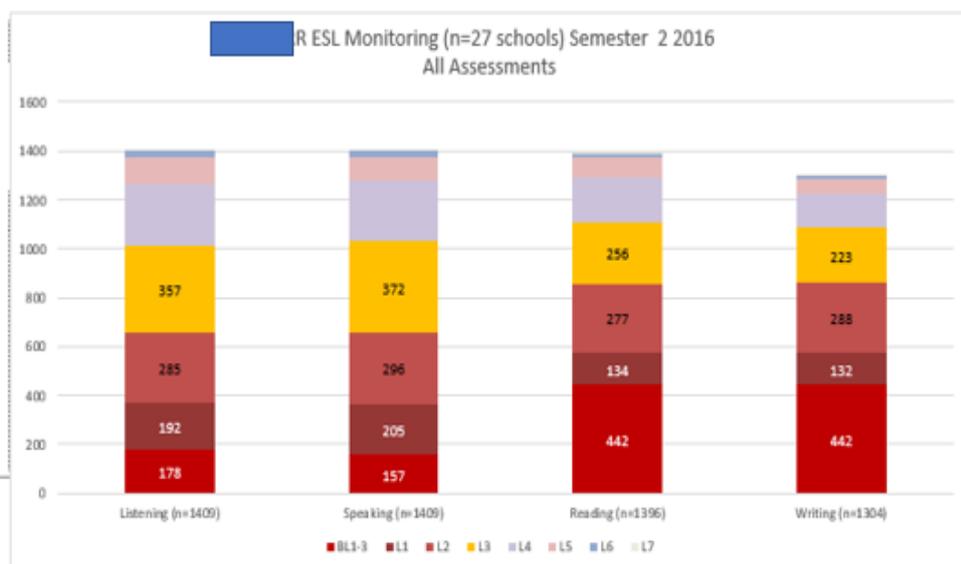
"Nhaku napurrun ga baynung  
 dhuka dharyurri dambu-  
 mirriw ga dambimirriw  
 dhungarray? Nhaku muka  
 nunka baynung guya  
 nunha gapunjur?"

"Nunki Kahung dhawd-  
 gayanan, lala nayi  
 nunhi warrnamha  
 dirramurrungun  
 madagin dhaw'yurr-  
 nha lili nayi gan  
 nunhi Kahung djalthin  
 yawirringu gan"

APPENDIX E:

Example of EAL/D assessment data from schools lodged biennially in SAIS

ESL student data



This graph displays the ESL levels (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) for all **PaRS** schools at the end of 2016 (apart from a couple where data was unavailable).

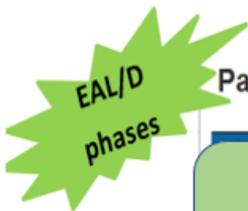
As you know the ESL levels are used to assess and monitor students' SAE proficiency as a result of the teaching and learning program.

The red, maroon and ochre colours (below orange) show the number of students in the Beginning and Emerging phases of learning English i.e. BL1—L2 levels of learning English. The yellow part of the bar shows the number of students at Level 3 Progressing. There are about 40 students who are at the high end of Level 3 (L3 Achieved) which is where they need to be to succeed to be part of the academic language of learning of our school system (and to achieve NAPLAN).

Overall the information here (from BIC) is showing us that 1,045 students across **PaRS** who will not be accessing the academic language demands of the classroom, the book language and the curriculum unless they are receiving

APPENDIX F:

Example of data based on ACARA *EAL/D Progressions* (2016)



Palmerston And Rural Region

	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating	Total	
School	3	8	4	3	18	
School	3	10	32	61	106	
School	7	12	43	20	82	
School		1	1	5	7	
	12	2	2		16	
Primary School		1	11	9	21	
School	2	6	9	22	39	
School	4	10	28	21	63	
School	8	38	66	26	138	
	154	36	12	4	206	
Primary School	2	6	9		17	
Primary School	23	28	27	23	101	
	40	23	8	1	72	
	43	15	2	1	61	
	1	1		2	4	
		36	27		63	
School	64	69	37	10	180	
School	5	15	3		23	
School	56	24	5	6	91	
School	11	10	2		23	
School	18	18	8		44	
School	18	27	42	13	100	
			1		1	
School	7	5	8	3	23	
	2	6	1		9	
	17	10	11	6	44	
www.nt.	<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>1552</b>

EAL/D phases

- 500 Beginning = 917
- 417 Emerging
- 399 Developing
- 236 Consolidating

Total no. of EAL/D students = 1552

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