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of Australia



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The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) and Australian Linguistic Society (ALS) are pleased to submit jointly the attached response to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing.

The response was prepared and reviewed by councillors and representatives from each organisation who possess extensive expertise in the fields of assessment and reporting, Indigenous education, literacy education and teaching learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D).

We would welcome the opportunity to consult further with the Senate Committee and to collaborate in the development and implementation of quality national assessment and reporting initiatives for EAL/D learners.

Yours Sincerely

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(ALS)**

**Submission to the Senate Inquiry into
the Administration and Reporting of NAPLAN Testing**

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Executive Summary

This submission addresses the Inquiry's third main reference, namely *the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime*, specifically in regard to learners of English as an additional language or dialect (henceforth EAL/D learners).

We submit that NAPLAN assessments currently do not permit the reporting of quality information about EAL/D students' progress or school performance to parents, principals, school communities and systems because:

1. the test data are not disaggregated to reveal EAL/D learners' performance
2. the tests are inaccurate, inconsistent and lack validity for EAL/D learners
3. the focus on English literacy fails to provide a basis for innovation and quality teaching of EAL/D learners, and is narrowing and distorting the teaching EAL/D learners receive.

Our submission provides evidence to substantiate these claims.

We further submit that the NAPLAN assessment regime has given rise to unintended and undesirable consequences for EAL/D learners, negating the equity goals that it seeks to further.

A further concern is that the absence of nationally consistent data on EAL/D learners' performance and progress makes it difficult, if not impossible, to monitor the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on EAL/D learners' educational outcomes.

Our submission includes a proposal for identifying EAL/D learners in conjunction with NAPLAN reporting.

1. Introduction: The Focus of this Submission

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) and the Australian Linguistic Society (ALS) welcome this opportunity to contribute to the Senate Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing.

See Appendix A for descriptions of our Associations.

This submission is directed to the Inquiry's third main term of reference, viz.:

(c) the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on:

(i) the educational experience and outcomes for Australian students

(ii) the scope, innovation and quality of teaching practice

(iii) the quality and value of information about student progress provided to parents and principals, and

(iv) the quality and value of information about individual schools to parents, principals and the general community,

specifically in relation to learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D learners).

We warmly endorse the current policy commitment to advancing educational equity.

We recognise that accurate, quality data is essential to implementing National Partnership agreements and the ongoing development of effective policies and programs.

However, in regard to the above Term of Reference we submit that:

1. a prerequisite for gaining quality information on EAL/D learners' performance and progress is the disaggregation of this group in relation to NAPLAN test data
2. failure to identify EAL/D learners within the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime is excluding these learners from explicit consideration at the national level in pursuing National Partnership equity goals

3. rather than providing quality information on EAL/D students' progress or school performance to parents, principals, school communities and systems, the NAPLAN tests yield inaccurate, inconsistent and invalid data about these students
4. the information on the performance of schools with significant numbers of EAL/D students is, therefore, also liable to be invalid, unreliable and misleading
5. the current NAPLAN focus on English literacy is one major reason for the poor quality of NAPLAN data on EAL/D learners and schools with these learners
6. this focus on literacy also fails to provide a basis for innovation and quality teaching of EAL/D learners, and is – according to our members' reports – narrowing and distorting the teaching EAL/D learners receive.

Given that nationally consistent data on EAL/D learners' performance and progress does not exist, monitoring the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on EAL/D learners' educational outcomes is difficult if not impossible for systems, much less our Associations.

2. NAPLAN Assessment and Reporting: Disaggregating EAL/D Learners

Currently, NAPLAN assessment and reporting allows identification of student groups with reference to:

- Indigenous status
- language background other than English
- socioeconomic status
- gender
- school
- state.

EAL/D learners cannot be identified using these variables because they conflate fluent Standard Australian English users with EAL/D learners.

Indigenous status gives no indication of students' language background.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be fluent users of Standard Australian English, or may be learning Standard Australian English in conjunction with day-to-day use of a traditional Aboriginal language, Aboriginal or Torres Strait creole or a distinctive Aboriginal variety of English. (See Appendix C).

Students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) are nationally reported to be performing within national norms. However, this group includes *unspecified numbers of students who are fluent or virtually monolingual in English*, although other languages are spoken in the home. Indigenous students with complex language backgrounds may or may not be included under this heading, depending on the level of language awareness of systems, schools, teachers, and community members in identifying these backgrounds *NAPLAN data on LBOTE students do not identify those students who are in the process of learning (Standard Australian) English, that is, EAL/D learners.*

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage cannot distinguish fluent English users from EAL/D learners. The Index relates to economic and geographic variables, and the proportion of Indigenous students in schools. *It does not identify the key variable that identifies EAL/D learners, which is linguistic.*

These points also apply (albeit less directly) to the **gender, school** and **state** variables.

The identification of these groups and their performance on NAPLAN tests plays a key role in defining, monitoring and rewarding the achievement of equity goals through National Partnership agreements. Failure to identify EAL/D learners as a group in NAPLAN assessment and reporting effectively excludes this group from consideration in relation to national equity goals. This exclusion has at least two important consequences:

1. Without data on how EAL/D learners are performing on NAPLAN tests, **it is difficult to sustain claims for provision that is appropriate to their educational needs and, at the national level, impossible to monitor the effectiveness of any such provision.**
2. Failure to identify these learners within the NAPLAN reporting regime is having **adverse flow-on effects for their educational experiences and outcomes.**

These consequences are elaborated in section 4 below.

3. EAL/D Learners and the Quality of NAPLAN Data

While EAL/D learners are not specifically identified within the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime, nevertheless the tests do generate data about these learners. These data are used to report to parents, principals, systems and the general community about individual EAL/D learners and about schools containing EAL/D learners.

We submit that the data gained from current NAPLAN tests are inaccurate, inconsistent and lack validity for EAL/D learners, because the tests:

- presuppose age-based native speaker English fluency
- presuppose that all students' only mode of communication is Standard Australian English
- assess these learners against age-based, English monolingual assumptions about real-world and school knowledge and skills which do not necessarily hold for EAL/D learners, for example, some Indigenous students, students from some overseas education systems, and refugee students with minimal/no previous schooling
- do not target the knowledge and skills these students actually *do* have
- do not reflect actual English language learning pathways and therefore do not assess the knowledge and skills that might properly be expected of these students
- make cultural, social and linguistic assumptions that do not apply or are inappropriate for EAL/D learners.

The website www.naplan.edu.au states that:

NAPLAN tests broadly reflect aspects of literacy and numeracy common to curriculums in all States and Territories. The types of test formats and questions are chosen so that they are familiar to teachers and students across Australia.

In fact, however, NAPLAN tests presuppose that students' educational experiences have been in English, are Australian-based (often in urban settings) and follow an age-normed trajectory. These assumptions do not hold for migrant and refugee EAL/D learners, who can commence their schooling in Australia and/or English language learning at all ages and year levels. They do not hold for students who have well-developed learning styles and gained valuable knowledge in non-Western, non-urban traditions and cultures. Similarly, they also do not hold for Indigenous students who are not immersed in Standard Australian English. They do not take account of the fact that many Indigenous students are learning English like a foreign language and have very little everyday access to and use for it.

NAPLAN tests do not reflect what is known from research and teachers' experience about the milestones specific to second/other language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Thus, on the one hand, the data they generate do not reflect learners' actual progress. On the other hand, rather than test formats, questions and the contexts they presuppose being familiar to students, test items can prevent EAL/D learners from

demonstrating their competence in what is actually being tested, because they misjudge their linguistic difficulty for EAL/D learners – for example, in regard to the syntax used to form questions, embedded clauses, unfamiliar vocabulary, complicated task instructions and “distractors” (e.g., in Numeracy items), inappropriate stimulus material, and unclear or unfamiliar pragmatic intent.

Unwitting culturally biased assumptions can have the same effect, for example, the assumption that students know about Uluru, frequent the movies or are involved in cooking – which is not the case for, among others, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas, some migrant and refugee students, and students of some religious faiths. Family relationships (and therefore appropriate content) are often assumed which do not apply for many EAL/D learners.

Literacy test results do not provide valid or useful information about EAL/D learners’ literacy, because they conflate quite distinct types of literacy learner with significantly different literacy learning pathways and needs, for example:

- those learning English literacy from a basis of minimal/developing English language proficiency but highly developed literacy skills in languages other than English
- those with limited/minimal/no literacy in *any* language who are learning English and literacy concurrently
- those learning literacy from the basis of fluency in creoles with considerable lexical overlap with English (– these may be Indigenous, migrant or refugee students)
- monolingual English mother tongue speakers (of any age) with minimal/developing literacy
- those learning literacy from the basis of fluency in non-standard varieties of English (– these may be Indigenous, migrant, refugee or monolingual English students)
- any of the above who are well advanced along the pathway of learning English literacy but have yet to reach age-based norms for monolingual Standard Australian English speakers.

See Appendices B & C for a comprehensive description of EAL/D learners and why they constitute a distinct student group. See Appendix D for some specific examples of NAPLAN test items that lack validity for EAL/D learners.

More broadly, literacy skills that are conceived as independent of knowledge, specific content and context are likely to be narrow and contain false cultural assumptions. The view of literacy and what it means to be literate in NAPLAN literacy tests is superficial and limited for all students, including mother tongue English speakers. The so-called “generic” skills that are tested are decontextualised and are not based on what students are actually learning in Key Learning Areas.

The NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime is also narrow and misleading because it conflates *literacy* with *literacy in (Standard Australian) English*. Literacy skills in languages other than English are not included in either testing or reporting. Advanced oral skills (for example, narrative skills in other languages or non-standard varieties of English) are likewise not reflected in tests or reporting. These skills are valuable in themselves and can also provide a rich foundation for written literacies (Kral, 2009; Siegel, 2007). For individual students, schools and systems, these exclusions make NAPLAN reporting misleading, and the source of unproductive anxiety in students, their parents and the community.

Exempting some EAL/D learners from NAPLAN tests does not and will not address these problems, because these exemptions:

- are inconsistent, relying on individual schools’ and parents’ decisions – thus, some schools are exempting EAL/D learners who are likely to drag down overall scores; alternatively, EAL/D learners (or their parents) may insist on learners being included to avoid being stigmatised
- are generally only given to beginner EAL/D learners
- promote major inequities, since they remove EAL/D learners’ performance and progress from scrutiny, attention in policy-making, and claims for resources.

Similarly, these data are misleading in evaluating schools with significant numbers of EAL/D learners. Because NAPLAN test results target English literacy and norms that presuppose native speakers of Standard Australian English rather than progress in EAL/D learning, they give little or no indication of how schools are actually contributing to positive outcomes for their EAL/D learners, and are liable to provide quite distorted pictures of schools with large EAL/D learner populations.

Overall, NAPLAN data provide incomplete, misleading and poor quality information on EAL/D learners’ performance, learning needs and progress, and on schools containing populations of these learners.

4. NAPLAN Data as a Basis for Innovation, Quality Teaching and Improving EAL/D Learners' Educational Experiences and Outcomes

NAPLAN tests are governing educational provision in unprecedented ways because test results drive National Partnership initiatives and incentives. Most importantly, schools and systems are using the NAPLAN results for individual students to determine whether or not they require targeted English language support and for such purposes as subject selections and class placements (including streaming and placement in “remedial” or special education classes).

For EAL/D learners, the increased emphasis on literacy programs and interventions in response to NAPLAN test data does not target their learning needs and can be detrimental.

For Indigenous students, low NAPLAN results have skewed educational interventions away from appropriate EAL/D approaches. Almost entirely in some jurisdictions, rich and intensive EAL/D support programs have been replaced by narrow literacy approaches with low expectations of students, for example, the mechanical reciting of sight-words.

For many EAL/D learners (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), the focus on raising literacy scores is obscuring the need for students to develop oral English, both in its own right and as a necessary foundation for English literacy. NAPLAN data provide no basis for literacy teaching and resources which take account of whether learners' phonology is tuned to Standard Australian English or other sound systems (see Siegel, 2010). Nor do these data reveal where programs should target EAL/D learners with real literacy learning needs, as distinct from those with strong literacy in other languages. Learners are seen to have literacy problems that require remediation, rather than programs that build on their achievements and focus on the next steps in learning English. In some jurisdictions, speech pathologists are being deployed to back up literacy interventions with EAL/D learners, now viewed as language deficient rather than English language learners. NAPLAN data take no account of the time it takes to learn another language or English variety or what is entailed in this task (for some comprehensive analyses, see, for example: August & Shanahan, 2008; Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Malcolm, 2007; Sharifian, Rochecouste, Malcolm, Königsberg, & Collard, 2004; Thomas &

Collier, 2002). They provide no basis for determining the different kinds of support – from intensive ESL programs to bilingual to mainstream approaches – that will assist along the way.

Using NAPLAN test results to evaluate school performance has, in some cases, compounded the difficulties EAL/D learners face. Our members report that parents of other students are withdrawing their children from schools with large populations of EAL/D learners, leaving schools under-resourced and in danger of becoming ghettoised. In Indigenous contexts and remote areas, NAPLAN test results are being used to drive arguments that some schools should be closed, despite the positive outcomes that these schools can demonstrate in relation to other data and criteria. Over time, these same arguments could be used against more schools.

At system level, the emphasis on literacy has led some systems to disperse EAL/D expertise, downgrade requirements for specialist EAL/D qualifications, and wind back professional development activities on EAL/D learning. Proportional to student intakes, funding for on-arrival ESL programs has been reduced, because new arrivals are exempt from national testing for the first 12 months after arrival and are therefore irrelevant to performance data. Some of our members have been instructed to focus their teaching on NAPLAN practice items rather than EAL/D learning needs. We understand that subjects such as Music, Art and Languages have been dramatically downgraded in many schools. Some schools' focus on community relations has been seen to be extraneous to the effort to boost literacy scores. Our members report examples of “gaming” the system, where authorities have focused on assisting schools where test scores are relatively easy to raise, rather than schools with populations, including EAL/D learners, whose learning gains require more complex, long-term approaches.

In short, the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime is significantly undermining educational opportunities for many EAL/D learners. However, since data is not nationally available on these learners, it is impossible to determine the effect on their educational outcomes.

5. How Might EAL/D Learners Be Identified Within the NAPLAN Assessment and Reporting Regime?

National data have never been collected on the entire cohort of EAL/D learners in Australian schools. (See Appendix B for a description of these learners.)

Prior to the National Partnership agreements, national census data on one group of migrant and refugee EAL/D learners was available through the ESL-NA [New Arrivals] program. Likewise, the ESL-ILSS [Indigenous Language Speaking Students] program provided census data on Indigenous learners at beginner levels in learning Standard Australian English in their first year of schooling. However, the numbers in these programs gave a quite limited indication of English learning needs, since they simply reflected the criteria used to determine two small sub-sets of EAL/D learners' eligibility for Commonwealth funding. The replacement of these Commonwealth-funded programs by National Partnership agreements has meant that even these limited national data are no longer available.

Identifying EAL/D learning needs requires reputable, specific-purpose EAL/D assessment tools and frameworks that are appropriate for use in Australian schools. EAL/D assessment frameworks now exist in all states, territories and systems, and can be used with confidence as a basis for the immediate disaggregation of EAL/D learners' NAPLAN results. In fact, Australia has led the world in developing assessment methodologies for EAL/D learners in schools, and some have been used as models internationally.

We submit that NAPLAN results must be disaggregated for EAL/D learners to allow a more accurate interpretation of these learners' results at school, system and national levels.

See Appendix E for a list of EAL/D assessment tools and frameworks developed for use in Australian schools.

6. Conclusion

Our Associations are deeply concerned that, far from providing a basis for advancing educational equity in regard to EAL/D learners, the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime is marginalising these learners to the point where their educational achievements and needs are invisible at the national level. At local levels, the tying of NAPLAN reporting to National Partnership goals and incentives has dramatically weakened state/territory/system provision that supports EAL/D learners. Quite fundamentally, it is undermining understandings of EAL/D learning needs. The absence of specific data on EAL/D learners completes this process of making them invisible, since the effects of these developments cannot be systematically monitored.

We hope this Senate Inquiry finds the information and arguments in this submission a useful basis on which to develop its recommendations. We would be pleased to provide

further expert input to the Inquiry and to support, in any way we can, improvements to national assessment and reporting in Australian schools.

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APPENDIX A

Who are ACTA, ALAA and ALS?

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Our membership comes from all educational sectors: pre-schools; schools; adult, community, TAFE and other VET settings; consultancy services in state and territory Education Departments and the Independent and Catholic sectors; and university teacher education departments. Our objectives are to:

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

The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) is the national association for those involved in *teaching, learning, research and scholarship related to language and languages in applied settings* (e.g. education, the law, health, business, translating and interpreting). Our membership is comprised of teachers, teacher educators, academics and researchers, including many with long-standing experience in language and education issues. Among these are internationally renowned assessment experts, two of the lead Australian Curriculum writers, and researchers into the impact of NAPLAN in remote Indigenous communities. The Association's aims include advocacy on behalf of this professional community to government and other bodies regarding language and related issues.

The Australian Linguistic Society (ALS) is the national organisation for linguists and linguistics in Australia. Its primary goal is to *further interest in and support for linguistics research and teaching in Australia*. Many members are staff or students at

universities or research institutes within Australia and internationally, while others work for State/Territory Education Departments, including in implementing policy within Indigenous communities.

The combined membership of our associations represents an outstanding array of educators and researchers with contributions to and internationally recognised publications on Australian Indigenous languages and creoles, Indigenous varieties of English and Standard English, second and additional language learning, language assessment and language education.

APPENDIX B

Who Are EAL/D Learners?

EAL/D learners have diverse histories and backgrounds. They can be found among the following groups:

- 1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders**
- 2. recently arrived and longer-term resident migrant and refugee students**
- 3. Australian-born migrant/refugee-background students**
- 4. temporary entrants to Australia**, e.g.: school-aged international students; exchange students; children of tertiary international students, temporary skilled workers, temporary professional entrants, international defence force personnel, diplomats, etc.

EAL/D learners' main language(s) may be:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages and creoles;
- Aboriginal, Pacific Island, Singaporean, African, Indian sub-continent and other English varieties that are significantly different from Standard Australian English in regard to comprehensibility and world view;
- one or more of the multiplicity of languages throughout the world.

EAL/D learners may:

- have been born overseas or in Australia;
- use varying amounts of English at home and at varying proficiency levels;
- be just starting in an Australian school or have been there for all or most of their school lives;
- have attended school overseas and may have achieved at high levels in their mother tongue;
- have never been to school in Australia or anywhere else;
- have had their schooling seriously disrupted by war, traumatic experiences, frequent moves and other dislocations.

These complex histories and backgrounds impact on students in many ways, including their pathways into Standard Australian English and English literacy.

APPENDIX C

How Are EAL/D Learners Distinctive?

The pathway in learning another language or significantly different variety/dialect of a language is not the same as the pathway for those who have been learning that language or variety from infancy. *It follows that, if assessment is to provide useful and effective information on EAL/D learners' achievements, progress and learning needs, it should map their progress along their actual learning pathways.*

In regard to the variety of English that constitutes the required norm in Australian schools, EAL/D learners differ – in different ways – from English mother tongue speakers *and* from each other. For example:

- EAL/D learners (from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds) will have age-appropriate oral skills in another language/variety but may not speak or (fully) understand Standard Australian English – hence many need assistance in building oral English skills as a foundation for learning literacy in English
- migrant and refugee EAL/D learners may enter Australian schools at any age – hence the age-related English and educational norms for Australian-born, mother tongue English speakers will not apply to many of these learners
- EAL/D learners may or may not have advanced literacy skills in a language other than English but assessments in English will not reflect/reveal their literacy and numeracy skills in other languages
- EAL/D learners' cultural and social understandings cannot be assumed to be the same as those of English mother tongue speakers – hence the cultural and social assumptions embedded in assessments may be quite misplaced.

EAL/D learners face the complex task of simultaneously learning Standard Australian English as a new language or variety, coming to grips with a different culture, acquiring English literacy, and gaining school-specific knowledge.

In regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners, a recent report (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2006) stated that:

In the 2001 Census, about one in eight Indigenous Australians (12 percent) reported that they spoke an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home. The majority (about 80 percent) reported that they spoke English. However, the Census does not differentiate between standard Australian English and Aboriginal English. Kaldor and Malcolm ('The language of school and the language of the Western Australian Aboriginal schoolchild – Implications for education', *Aborigines of the West: Their Past and Their Present*, p. 411) suggest that 'Aboriginal children's speech today is probably best seen as a post-creole continuum,' and Harkins ('Structure and Meaning in Australian Aboriginal English', *Asian Englishes: an international journal of the sociolinguistics of English in Asia/Pacific*, 2000, 3 (2): 60) asserts that 'Australian Aboriginal English ... is now the primary language of internal and wider communication for the majority of Australian Aboriginal people.' The literature also reveals that standard Australian English spoken by Indigenous students frequently shows evidence of conceptual features that are not shared with non-Indigenous speakers. Aboriginal English shows itself at the level of conceptualization, even when it is not so apparent at the level of linguistic form. (See, for example, the extensive body of work by Ian G. Malcolm, as well as recent work by F. Sharifian, 'Cultural conceptualisations in English words: A study of Aboriginal children in Perth'). (p. 33)

APPENDIX D

Some Examples of NAPLAN Test Items that Pose Unintended Problems for EAL/D Learners

The following examples come from the 2010 Year 3 (8 year old) NAPLAN Numeracy and Literacy tests.

<u>Test</u>	<u>Test Question</u>	<u>Skill being Tested</u>	<u>English language skills and/or cultural knowledge required to answer the question correctly</u>
<p>Numeracy</p> <p>Note: <i>all</i> the test items are presented in English words and sentences; none are solely in numerical form.</p>	<p><i>What is between the bed and the toy box?</i></p>	<p>Mapping</p>	<p>Although a student may understand the mathematical <i>concept</i> ‘between’ (which is the focus of this test item), they also need to know this English <i>word</i>, question formation and vocabulary to answer the question. Hence this item is as much a test of English as it is of mapping skills. (In other words, a Year 3 candidate may be able to answer this question with ease in another language.)</p> <p>The item also presents an urban, economically advantaged view of a child’s bedroom (containing a toy box, bookshelves, a desk and chair for studying) which would be quite alien to many EAL/D learners (Indigenous, migrants and refugees). (Similarly, another item describes students going on an excursion that includes a zoo, an aquarium and a movie, none of which would be familiar to Year 3 children in remote Indigenous schools.)</p>

	<p><i>Which spinner is most likely to stop on white?</i></p>	<p>Probability</p>	<p>The question assumes native speaker control of English comparative structures (<i>most likely</i>).</p> <p><i>Stop on white</i> is highly elliptical (leaves out words – <i>the white section</i>), idiomatic, abstract and metaphorical.</p> <p>These two features are combined in complex clause embedding (<i>is most likely to stop on</i>) which require quite advanced English for EAL/D learners but are easily understood by native speakers.</p> <p>EAL/D learners need to be able to recognise what a <i>spinner</i> is.</p>
	<p>Prompt: <i>Swimming was the most popular, football was more popular than cricket, netball was less popular than football.</i> Question: <i>Which column shows football?</i></p>	<p>Graph reading</p>	<p>The item assumes native English speaker mastery of a series of complex comparative English structures. Although supposedly testing the ability to read a column graph, the test is equally testing the ability to read these comparative and superlative structures in English.</p>
	<p><i>Which of these is impossible?</i></p>	<p>Logic</p>	<p>Using a pronoun (<i>these</i>) in forward ellipsis (leaves out <i>the following options</i>) makes the question more difficult.</p> <p>Being able to answer this question is entirely dependent upon knowing the word <i>impossible</i>, rather than the logic it purports to test.</p> <p>(The use of elliptical <i>of these</i> occurs in several other items.)</p>
	<p><i>How many of these shapes have exactly four sides?</i></p>	<p>Recognition of shapes.</p>	<p>Without knowledge of the English word <i>exactly</i>, this question cannot be answered.</p> <p>(Similarly, several items that test addition assume knowledge of the word <i>altogether</i>.)</p>

Literacy	<p><i>Which is the correct order of the 4 missing words:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>African four rare male - lions</i> • <i>Four rare male African – lions</i> • <i>Male African four rare - lions</i> • <i>Rare male African four-lions.</i> 	<p>Language Conventions: correct ordering of adjectives</p>	<p>Native English speakers can probably answer this question intuitively. However, without this intuition, an EAL/D learner must have skills of abstraction that would be difficult for some 8 year olds, <i>and</i> the ability to formulate and apply the rule viz.: ‘number’ before ‘age’ before ‘gender’ before ‘origin’.</p> <p>The item therefore discriminates against EAL/D learners, who will only be able to answer this question correctly if they can formulate and apply a syntactic rule that even much older native English speakers would have difficulty doing explicitly.</p>
	<p>Sentence within a reading text:</p> <p><i>Ants have two strong jaws called mandibles. Ants use these to carry food and other objects, to build nests and protect themselves.</i></p> <p>A question at the end: <i>What is one way ants use their mandibles?</i></p> <p><i>A. To smell food</i> <i>B. To sense danger</i> <i>C. To pick things up</i> <i>D. To talk to other ants.</i></p>	<p>Reading comprehension</p>	<p>This item assumes the reader has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mastered ellipsis and can refer <i>these</i> back to <i>mandibles</i>, • a vocabulary that can match <i>carry</i> with <i>pick up</i>, and <i>objects</i> with <i>things</i>. <p>A native English speaker with 8 years of immersion in Standard Australian English may have this receptive vocabulary. An EAL/D learner is unlikely to have developed this level of thesaurus.</p>

See also Wigglesworth, G., & Simpson, J. (2009). *NAPLAN language assessments for Indigenous children in remote communities: Issues and Problems*.
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APPENDIX E

EAL/D Assessment Tools and Frameworks Developed for Use in Australian Schools

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