

14 October 2020

To: Honourable Chris Hipkins (Minister of Education)
From: Daryl Streat (President, [TESOLANZ](https://www.tesolanz.org.nz))
Regarding: Covid-19 Impacts on the English Language Sector

Dear Minister Hipkins,

Thank you for your letter of 17 June regarding the Government's response to the impacts of Covid-19 on the English language teaching sector. The extension of the wage subsidy, as well as the Government's recovery plan for the international education sector, have been welcomed by many. However, there is a strong feeling that these actions alone will not be enough.

The \$1.5 million PTE ESOL Provision Fund will help meet the needs of learners PTEs. However, several TESOLANZ members questioned why the organisation eligibility only applied to category 1 providers, when NZQA's own EER process has stated either high confidence or confidence in category 2 providers' ability to deliver ESOL programmes. We do not feel the currently available funding will be enough to stem the already significant losses across the PTE sector.

Also, our concerns are not restricted solely to PTE English language schools. ESOL teachers work across all areas of education. We recently surveyed the sector regarding job confidence as well as the impacts of Covid-19. As it stands, job losses and restructures are already happening across all sectors of education. Historically, English language teachers have been one of the most marginalised teacher groups; facing insecure work conditions in under-resourced roles. However, the work they do benefits international and domestic students alike. Throughout the past eight months, in addition to PTE employees, teachers in universities, ITPs, and schools have lost employment. If the international education sector is to recover quickly, then retaining staff will be critical.

Retention of ESOL teaching staff will be a severe issue for the sector as confidence in employment is at an all-time low. While most teachers in the sector are reasonably confident of retaining some level of employment throughout 2020, next year is a different story. Our recent sector survey showed that almost 50% of teachers have little confidence in retaining employment in 2021. Low confidence and significant disruption will result in many qualified ESOL teachers seeking other options. Without teachers, it will be challenging to realise the quality international education sector envisioned in the Ministry's Recovery Plan.

The sector is well-aware of the funding related to the International Education Sector Recovery Plan. However, almost 40% of the sector are unsure if it is adequate, while more than 50% feel that it is not. The main concerns were as follows:

- There is little confidence the plan will address 2021 concerns
- There is no focus on universities or ITPs (currently there is significant concern around job security in the tertiary sector) and some institutions have already made moves to privatise delivery

To date, engagement on sector recovery has mainly been a top-down approach. This is understandable. However, TESOLANZ fears that such an approach will result in teachers' long-standing concerns being ignored. The Ministry of Education and Education New Zealand are engaging with Sector Peak Bodies

through an advisory process. However, TESOLANZ believes that such a process has resulted in an overly heavy focus on the recruitment side of international education. Such approaches have, in the past, resulted in the concerns of teachers and students being side-lined. The Strategic Recovery Plan envisions a future international education sector that is diversified, sustainable and resilient. Also, a sector that delivers high-quality programmes and outstanding pastoral care can only do so with the support of quality academic staff. If we are to realise this future sector, then educationalists must have a voice in its creation.

I have read carefully the Government's statements on the future of International Education in Aotearoa, New Zealand closely. I believe firmly that the Government envisions a sector that prioritises quality teaching and learning for all learners. This includes both those who have a second language other than English and those who have chosen to make our country their new home. [Chris Beard's \(ISANA\) recent article](#)¹ highlights how the Covid-19 moment is a rare opportunity for a new dawn in International Education. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages will continue to be a critical component of the education sector, and it is, therefore, essential that we grasp this opportunity to inform how learners are supported.

To this end, TESOLANZ seeks three outcomes:

- Greater clarification about how the ESOL sector (domestic and international students across all areas of education) will be supported into 2021
- A statement from the Ministry of Education that public sector entities should endeavour to retain staff
- Providing TESOLANZ with a voice as one of the Sector Peak Bodies who advise the Government

As stated in our letter of 8 May 2020, we would value the opportunity to fully explain to the Ministry of Education how the ESOL sector is being impacted, and how it can be empowered to be more resilient in the future.

Nāku iti noa, nā,



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¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07294360.2020.1825344>