

**6 August, 2021**

**To:** Honourable Chris Hipkins (Minister of Education)  
**CC:** Ibrahim Omer, Golriz Ghahraman  
**From:** Daryl Streat (President, [TESOLANZ](#)), Gwenna Finikin (Primary Sector Coordinator, [TESOLANZ](#))  
**Regarding:** ESOL funding for NZ born children of former refugee parents

Dear Minister Hipkins,

TESOLANZ thanks the Ministry of Education for the on-going support of children from refugee backgrounds and the recognition of the complex needs of these learners.

However, we are concerned that the current funding for children from refugee backgrounds is inequitable as those born in New Zealand are eligible for only 12 terms (three years) of funding compared to 20 terms (five years) for those born overseas. This means a child with similar needs around listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the classroom, who was born overseas, is able to access on-going support. It is inequitable that a child from a similar background and with similar educational needs, but who was born in New Zealand, is no longer funded for support.

Children from refugee backgrounds are impacted by the trauma experienced by their whānau, regardless of where they are born.

TESOLANZ has identified a number of different factors which affect learning and well-being for both New Zealand born and non-New Zealand born students.

- the after effects of trauma on parents and other whānau
- coping with the loss of close family members
- lack of support networks
- lack of, or limited, participation in ECE
- lack of parental literacy in home language due to lack of, or interrupted, schooling, as well as in English, means their children require on-going support in school
- social, health and economic barriers faced in the resettlement process
- the lack of digital access, and consequently an inability to engage in learning, for example during COVID
- on-going political instability in their home countries

After three years of schooling, academic language skills are at a very early stage of development. Whilst a student will have their basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) established, it will take at least another two years to fully develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). A non-New Zealand born student continues to receive funded support during this time, while their New Zealand born counterpart, in the same classroom, does not.

We acknowledge that there is a Refugee Flexible Funding Pool offering schools resources to support children from refugee backgrounds, but this is targeted to newly arrived families and is not available to New Zealand born students.

TESOLANZ believes that extending the funding allocation for New Zealand-born students of refugee backgrounds to five years (20 terms) would reduce the current inequity and ensure that schools could meet the stated purpose of the 2020 Education Act:

***Purpose of Act***

*The purpose of this Act is to establish and regulate an education system that—*

*(a) provides New Zealanders and those studying in New Zealand with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities that they need to fully participate in the labour market, society, and their communities; and*

*(b) supports their health, safety, and well-being; and*

*(c) assures the quality of the education provided and the institutions and educators that provide and support it;*

TESOLANZ considers that extending funding to address this equity issue would be a straightforward and accessible mechanism to ensure equity. This would enable schools to more effectively continue to meet the ongoing challenges these children face in building relationships and accessing the curriculum beyond foundation English and towards the literacy levels of their peers.

Ngā mihi nui,

**Gwenna Finikin**

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