

**OFFICE OF NON-GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS AND SERVICES**
MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ETHNIC SCHOOLS BOARD

Hon. Jay Weatherill MP
Premier of South Australia
State Administration Centre
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Review of Boards and Committees-Ethnic Schools Board

Dear Premier,

As per your letter of 8 July 2014 (PREM14D03458) as per your request, please find below my submission, forwarded to you through Hon. Jennifer Rankine MP, Minister for Education and Child Development.

The Ethnic Schools Board (ESB) over twenty-five plus years has gained the respect and admiration of respective communities served by instilling the importance of traditions through fairness and impartiality, whilst showing sensitivity towards the needs of each community.

The ESB has always been prepared to develop policies and practices to ensure the participation of young people with disabilities in mainstream ethnic schools.

Throughout its existence the ESB has obtained a wealth of experience in providing a means for children and young people, particularly those from recently arrived communities, to bridge the gap between their own language and culture and those of mainstream schooling. Immigration occurs in waves with Asian, Middle Eastern, African and refugee families being the dominant arrivals of today.

It is in this situation that the role of ethnic schools, with the guidance of the ESB, is fundamentally important to their successful integration into the wider Australian community. This is at the heart of the success story of multiculturalism.

The key roles of the Ethnic Schools Board (ESB) as an advisory committee to the Minister for Education and Child Development include:

- provision of accurate and timely advice to the Minister on matters concerning ethnic schools and the work of the Board
- regular formal and informal briefings to the Minister and /or Ministerial staff on the work of the Board
- registration visits to ethnic schools to ensure that they are compliant with the Children's Protection Act (1993), Department of Treasury and Finance guidelines and government requirements
- distribution of government funding to ethnic schools. As the granting body, the ESB needs to be transparent, to be at arm's length from the Minister, and to be fair in order to avoid criticism of political bias.
- provision of quality training and development designed to address the requirements for registration set by the Board and the needs of personnel in ethnic schools especially in

the areas of reporting abuse and neglect and learning in order to provide appropriate child protection and survival language teaching and learning skills

- liaison between ethnic schools and mainstream schools across sectors and other key stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning of languages at various levels and in various configurations
- close collaboration with teams and departments involved in Child Protection requirements
- development, monitoring and review of policies for ethnic schools e.g. harassment and bullying.

At present the Ethnic Schools Board carries out a very important function in contributing directly to child safety through the screening and training programs it has in place for personnel in ethnic schools. Through these processes the Board assists teaching and management personnel in ethnic schools to complete application forms for screening and Child safe Environments Compliance Forms. In addition the Board also delivers up to eleven *Responding to Abuse and Neglect* courses per year through the delivery of specially developed and approved material. The Board's extensive knowledge of its client group and long experience in providing this service have underpinned this work.

The establishment of the Ethnic Schools Board is a manifestation of South Australian governments' commitment to multiculturalism. Ethnic schools provide access, choice and continuity in language learning and broaden the range of languages available to learners at a relatively low cost to the government. Ethnic schools are seen as a third tier of languages education and they have been recognised as complementary providers. Therefore it is important that the Ethnic Schools Board be bipartisan, independent, impartial and highly representative of the very groups with which it works.

The Ethnic Schools Board comprises thirteen members:

-the Chair, a prominent South Australian of multilingual and multicultural background	
-the Chair of the Multicultural Education Committee (MEC) (or appointed deputy)	-the Chair of the Executive Committee of The Ethnic Schools Association of SA Inc. (ESA).
-two nominees of the Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child development (DECD)	-a representative of the tertiary sector
-a nominee of the Minister for Multicultural Affairs	- three representatives of teaching personnel in ethnic schools
-a nominee of the Ministerial Advisory Committee to Non-Government Schools	-two representatives of parents in ethnic school

Currently the Board has three vacancies due to resignations hence operating with ten appointed members, including the Chair. Upon the vacancies being filled, the Board will include five members who are active representatives of the teaching and management personnel in ethnic schools. In addition, although currently representing other stakeholder groups, three other members have been or are now actively involved with an ethnic school themselves. In all this represents 72.7% of the Board having a personal connection with ethnic schools and actively participating in the decision making processes that directly affect those schools.

It is submitted that future Ethnic Schools Boards consist of eleven appointees thus reducing the Board by two positions, namely only one nominee for the Chief Executive DECD in lieu of two; and the representative of the tertiary sector. In addition, it is submitted that the representation of ethnic schools themselves continue through two representatives of parents whilst the three remaining positions be of two representatives of teaching personnel (a reduction of one), and the other to be a representative of management committees of ethnic school authorities to bring the knowledge and expertise of managing ethnic schools. In reducing the numbers on the Board to eleven members, the cost would be reduced to approximately \$14,000 per annum. Members of the Board give freely of their time to participate in working parties and to undertake after-hours registration visits.

In the past the ESB has considered whether the registration and accreditation of ethnic schools should be part of the work of the Education and Early Childhood Services Standards and Registration Board. The Board decided against it on the grounds that ethnic schools do not offer a full curriculum in eight learning areas and that they are largely run by volunteers. Many of these volunteers, although they are speakers of a number of other languages, still have trouble understanding and speaking English in various registers.

Although both DECD and the School of Languages deal with first languages maintenance and development programs, in neither of these settings are teachers able to provide the close community setting and the continuous opportunities for authentic language immersion that ethnic schools and their language specific communities can provide. However the Ethnic Schools Board believes that money could be saved by these three providers if training and development opportunities could be shared among all of them. The introduction of a number of national curricula in community languages through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (e.g. Korean Turkish, Hindi, Arabic is a strong imperative to work together; The Ethnic Schools Board looks forward to facilitating the development of a revised Statement of Collaboration to lay the foundations for such a cooperation between DECD, MEC, ESA and ESB.

Since its inception the Ethnic Schools Board has worked closely with The Ethnic Schools Association of SA Inc. (ESA). Currently ESA is undergoing many changes as a totally new staff takes on the responsibilities of the Association. This situation was brought about by the retirement and unexpected resignation of two key members of the ESA staff. The Board believes that ESA is in no position to carry out additional responsibilities, save and except with the guidance of the Board.

Generally both the Multicultural Education Committee (MEC) and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRCSA) have extensive experience in working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. However they do not have experience in the registration and distribution of funding processes, the latter of which the Board shares now with the Corporate Team of the Office of Non-Government Schools and Services. The Ethnic Schools Board has initiated a working relationship with the Migrant Resource Centre to assist newly emerging communities,

both urban and rural, to commence new ethnic schools. Equally the ESB will continue to be represented on the Executive Committee of the Multicultural Education Committee and to participate in its work.

This review of boards and committees has provided the Ethnic Schools Board with a valuable opportunity to review its current role and processes. In 2013/14 the ESB involved itself in identifying ways to support its students with additional needs as well as to address the particular teaching and learning needs of teachers who work with 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation learners of a language. Prior to this the Ethnic Schools Board worked collaboratively with a number of Aboriginal groups who were exploring ways to revive and reclaim their own languages. This is an ongoing process to assist with the preservation of Aboriginal languages just as the Board carries out this role with non-Aboriginal languages. At the same time the ESB also developed a plan to recognise the efforts of senior secondary students in the delivery of their community's cultural and linguistic programs through credit towards their SACE study. In 2014/2015 the ESB is considering the expansion of a program that already exists in some ethnic schools. This program works with the parents and caregivers of the students involved in the learning of the language and culture by providing them with English classes and assistance with various types of information that will assist them in settling in to a new life in South Australia. At a recent community forum for the Burmese community, hosted by the Migrant Resource Centre, three Es were identified as the keys to successful settlement-English, education and employment. Both community and panel members identified that learning English was the most difficult and also the most critical for the women who were often housebound because of young families and lack of transport.

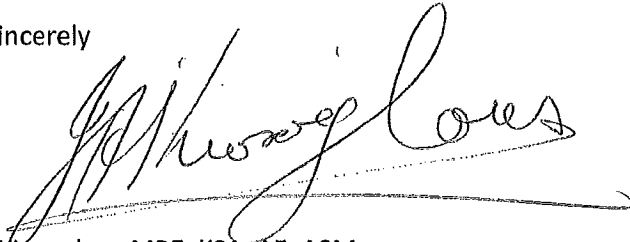
To be "attractive" to Aboriginal communities and to build in the role of teaching English for new arrivals, the Ethnic Schools Board would be prepared to consider changing its name e.g. Community Languages Board. Such a change in no way would suggest that ethnic school authorities would need to change their names. Further consideration could be given to changing the Terms of Reference of the Board and slightly increase its staffing. Through the use of volunteers in the community and also at TAFE a cost effective support service could be delivered to parents of ethnic school students who often wait for their children for the two hours the ethnic school is in progress. The ESB also plans to possibly use this forum to assist ethnic schools to develop appropriate accountability processes and to assist with policies and processes to better manage Child Protection requirements such as screening and training.

Thus far this response has largely retained the ESB as a Ministerial Advisory Body. It has not addressed whether the Board should become a statutory body or take a status somewhere between a statutory and an advisory body. One of the major arguments for becoming a statutory body is to strengthen the Board's role in matters such as Child Protection compliance. Limits to the authority of the Board currently affect its ability to deregister a non-compliant ethnic school unless the Minister instructs the Board to do so. The ESB would prefer this option to continue and would advise that this is formalised through a revision of the Terms of Reference for the Board and within the conditions of the current funding agreements which exist between the Minister and each individual ethnic school authority.

The ability of a well-functioning ESB supported by DECD has been a great success story over many years as waves of migrants have come to South Australia. It has also successfully blended families where parents between themselves have different first language skills and cultural understanding to ensure that strong family and community outcomes are achieved.

I would be pleased to provide any further information on this submission, should this be required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John A Kiosoglous', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John A Kiosoglous MBE, KSA, AE, ASM
Chairman, Ethnic Schools Board

cc. Hon. Jennifer Rankine MP
Minister for Education and Child Development

14/8/14

PREM14D04235



Hon Jay Weatherill MP
Premier of South Australia

Mr John Kiosoglous
Chairman
Office of Non-Government Schools and Services
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Dear Mr Kiosoglous

Thank you for your letter of 14 August 2014 to the Premier of South Australia, the Hon Jay Weatherill MP, about the Boards and Committees Reform.

Your letter has been sent to the Minister for Education and Child Development, the Hon Jennifer Rankine MP as she has been asked to provide advice to Cabinet on the future of your board or committee.

Should you have any queries about your letter, please contact the Minister's office on telephone 8226 1205.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jay Weatherill".

**Premier's Correspondence Unit
Office of the Premier**

15 August 2014

cc: Office of the Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, Minister for Education and Child Development