



Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Wellington Region Gaps and Priorities

A Summary of Stakeholder Views

Tertiary Education Commission
April 2008

Purpose of this Report

Sector and Industry Briefs, produced by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Stakeholder Engagement Group, summarise key tertiary education needs as identified by relevant stakeholders within the industry or sector.

The target audiences for Sector and Industry Briefs are tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and regional facilitation steering committees.

Sector and Industry Briefs – along with the Tertiary Education Strategy, the Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities, the industry skills leadership work of industry training organisations (ITOs), and regional statements produced through regional facilitation – provide background information to support planning by tertiary education organisations and investment decision making by the TEC.

The views expressed in Sector and Industry Briefs are a TEC summary of stakeholder perspectives, and do not necessarily reflect the TEC's view.

Introduction

The TEC has engaged with stakeholders to understand their views of the quantity, quality, and specialisation of ESOL provision in the Wellington region (Wellington, Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kapiti). This includes gauging the impact of reduction in ESOL provision by Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec) and Whitireia Community Polytechnic (Whitireia). The purpose of this engagement was to provide information to assist decision-making regarding ESOL provision.

Engagement process

Stakeholders raised the question of the impact of a reduction in literacy ESOL provision by WelTec and Whitireia on the Wellington, Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kapiti areas. Consequently, the TEC Stakeholder Engagement Manager with responsibility for the Wellington region was asked to engage with stakeholders to gain their view regarding ESOL provision in region. Approximately 65 stakeholders in the Wellington region were contacted by email, phone, or face-to-face meetings.

Stakeholders were asked to comment on the level of ESOL provision available in the greater Wellington region, with particular focus on any gaps or shortages they had experienced since the recent withdrawal of some ESOL provision.

As providers of ESOL services also advocate for the wider needs of ESOL and literacy learners in the community, it was difficult to separate the needs of stakeholders (the users of tertiary education) from the needs of providers as funded organisations. To resolve this difficulty, engagement with providers was limited to discussion about their view of need rather than their own needs as provider organisations.

At the end of the series of engagements, reports were collated and analysed using thematic analysis. The final draft of this brief was sent to contributing stakeholders to

verify accuracy. Suggested alterations and amendments were included in this final brief summarising stakeholder views.

Some general considerations about ESOL

Many newcomers settle in the Wellington, Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kapiti areas without requiring much in the way of special support, provided that they have access to up-to-date information and advice. However, the Wellington Regional Settlement Strategy (2008) identifies particular settlement issues associated with some specific newcomer groups.

First, the free provision of some key settlement support services (for example language support, most work experience programmes, and job seeking assistance) is currently limited to those with permanent residence. Community organisations also report that the provision of English language services across the Wellington region is uneven and does not meet all need. For instance, ESOL Assessment and Access Specialist Services (EAASS) is an important service in Wellington City but is not funded to provide the same level of service to the Hutt Valley. This is in spite of the fact that more than 20 percent of the overseas-born population of both Hutt City and Upper Hutt City are recent newcomers.¹

Second, while the proportion of quota refugees within the Wellington region is small within total newcomer numbers, this group has high needs and requires specialised support, often over extended periods. The circumstances which led to refugee status, concerns for family safety and reunification, and ongoing turmoil in their home countries add to the complexity of the challenges for resettling these newcomers.

Many newcomers experience barriers to accessing English language courses in the region. For some, such as mothers with childcare responsibilities, this is related to a lack of affordable and 'legal' childcare. Community ESOL providers in Porirua, Wellington and the Hutt Valley all reported that current Early Childhood Education regulations are considered to be a major obstacle for childcare provision at community ESOL classes, because the childcare provided takes place in spaces not specifically designed for children.

Literacy funding allocated by the TEC applies to newcomers who are pre-beginners in English and who hold no more than a primary level of education from their home context. Many newcomers with higher levels of schooling but lacking in English language competence are ineligible for government-funded courses.

Stakeholder groups have been told by the New Zealand Immigration Service to expect up to 100 new refugee migrant families in the Wellington region in 2008.

Types of ESOL courses

A wide range of ESOL courses are offered through institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), private training establishments (PTEs), schools and other tertiary

¹ The Wellington Regional Settlement Strategy (April 2008) states that, at the time of Census 2006, 1,419 residents of Upper Hutt city and 4,650 residents of Hutt City had been in New Zealand less than five years, equating to 20.5 percent and 22.4 percent respectively of the overseas-born population of these cities.

education providers (OTEPs). Funding is provided principally through the TEC with additional funding provided through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).

Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) Case Managers assess their clients' levels of English skills and refer new residents, particularly refugees, to English for Living and English for Work.² Refugees domicile at settlement centres for a maximum of 12 weeks, during which time they are expected to acquire English skills and proficiency adequate for day-to-day life. Immigrants have five years to use pre-purchased ESOL from any provider they choose.

Stakeholder issues - national provision

The following national issues were raised by stakeholders in relation to ESOL literacy provision:

- 1 Elderly migrants generally have considerable difficulty learning English, may not manage the learning process well, and may enrol in classes repeatedly until they are referred to another provider due to the high cost of re-enrolling students in the same courses repeatedly.
- 2 Refugees and migrants with mental health disabilities and complex needs require special literacy ESOL support, together with support from both health and education services. These refugees and migrants often experience long-term unemployment and depression and have needs that are difficult to meet under the current provision arrangements.
- 3 Some learners are adequate speakers of English but are not literate. In employment these learners have difficulty in progressing because of their lack of literacy. They may also not want to complain or ask for time off work for fear of being sacked. For many migrants and refugees employment-based literacy training may be more appropriate than classroom-based training. Many stakeholders suggested that there is a need to improve coordination of the provision of ESOL courses both between ESOL providers and with the literacy and numeracy provision of ITOs.
- 4 Some school leavers with high oracy but low literacy, who may have managed to hide the fact that they cannot read or write, have a need to be trained in a Literacy ESOL programme. These students have a grasp of spoken and informal language and may not appear to require Literacy ESOL when their needs are actually very high. These young people may be disadvantaged in employment and consigned to low paid jobs for a considerable time.
- 5 Sponsored refugees are not able to access study grants to go on to tertiary education, but have to wait two years to gain access to student loans, whereas quota refugees are immediately able to access study support through MSD. Several stakeholders have asked that this policy issue be reviewed.

² These language courses are part of a regime of labour market programmes designed specifically for new residents, such as Migrant Work Experience, Migrant Career Guidance, Migrant Employment Assistance, Employment Coaching-Placement, and City Cadetship.

Stakeholder issues - greater Wellington issues

The following issues were raised by stakeholders in relation to ESOL provision in the Wellington region:

- 1 Many stakeholders questioned whether the amount of ESOL provision in the Wellington region (including Kapiti, Porirua, the Hutt Valley and Wellington City) was adequate following WelTec and Whitireia's decision to reduce their provision of general language development and literacy ESOL programmes.
- 2 There is a reasonable range of general ESOL and literacy provision in Wellington City offered by OTEPS, PTEs and the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector. However, there are waiting-lists for ESOL beginners, ESOL pre-employment (Training Opportunities funding) and ACE-funded general ESOL (level 1-2).
- 3 There are no PTEs offering ESOL in the Porirua area. The Porirua Language Project has designed and set up general English and preparation for employment courses, but these courses fall outside the eligibility criteria for ESOL funding. Consequently, the project constantly has to make applications for small amounts of funding and has waiting-lists for some of its courses.
- 4 There were 38 quota refugees resettled in Porirua 2006/07, with the same number in the Hutt Valley. There have already been 36 quota refugees resettled in Porirua in the first half of 2007/08, with 38 resettled in the Hutt Valley. Numbers are forecast to double for the full year. Additionally, many migrants settle in the Hutt Valley where the cost of housing is lower than in Wellington City.
- 5 There is currently one PTE in Upper Hutt offering a pre-computer programme ESOL course for eight students. However, this course is to be discontinued. Apart from the PTE, Hutt ESOL Home Tutors offers one literacy class for pre-literate Sudanese and Cambodian students. Students progressing from these two courses would normally have travelled to WelTec in Petone or moved to Crenel, a PTE in Lower Hutt that now focuses on providing for Pacific people. Stakeholders suggested that there is a need in Upper Hutt for at least one more ESOL Literacy course as well as an ESOL course that focuses on preparing for further training.
- 6 The availability of ESOL provision in Lower Hutt is also problematic, given that a higher proportion of quota refugees settle in Lower Hutt. There are currently two pre-literacy classes: one for Burmese learners and another for mixed-ethnicity learners. Women make up both of these groups. However, there is no literacy provision for males from ethnic groups other than Burmese. A number of Eritrean refugees are to be settled in the next two intakes.
- 7 There is one PTE with 24 places for ESOL needs. Currently it has 14 places available and says it has capacity for three levels. However, it has indicated at a meeting convened by EAASS for ESOL providers in the Wellington Region that it does not have the professional skills to cater for the needs of beginners.

- 8 There is consequently a gap in provision that would enable learners to pathway from the ESOL Home Tutor pre-literacy courses into beginner/elementary-level ESOL, before moving either to the pre-employment programme at the PTE or to courses in preparation for further study at WelTec. A programme such as that offered by MCLASS, an OTEP in Wellington, would fit the need.
- 9 In the Wellington region there are a number of ESOL Home Tutors providers in four locations: Wellington City (with Johnsonville and Newlands included), the Hutt Valley, Kapiti and Porirua. The core task is to recruit, train and support volunteer home tutors who will provide one-to-one home tutoring for ESOL adult learners (migrants and refugees) in their homes. Beside this, they provide 11 Social English Groups in different Wellington suburbs, which each meet once a week for 1.5 – 2 hours. However, they do not deliver formal classes.
- 10 Some ESOL learners cannot attend ESOL classes in Wellington City such as mothers with young children or carers for elderly family members. ESOL Home Tutors reports it has a long waiting list and a big demand for its services.

Important gaps in ESOL provision in the Wellington region

ESOL provision in Wellington City offers the most comprehensive range of services in the region. Gaps have been reported in Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt, Porirua and Kapiti.

The needs of refugees and migrants with mental health disabilities, and the needs of older migrants who have difficulty learning English (e.g. the group of older Chinese learners) were raised by stakeholders. Meeting the needs of older Chinese migrants and refugees poses significant challenges to ESOL services in the Wellington region. Combined feedback from across a range of stakeholder communities is that there are significant numbers of refugees and migrants with mental health disabilities. For example, about 40 such refugees and migrants had come to the attention of EAASS with significant health and ESOL needs.

WelTec, the biggest ESOL provider in the area, reviewed its ESOL provision at the end of 2007, deciding to stop offering stages 1 and 2 of its general English courses. Stages 2 and 3 were merged, which made that class difficult to teach. This has affected a number of students at beginner and elementary level because there are no other similar classes in the area.

This affects approximately ten stage one students and 15 low-level stage two students in 2008. At the time of the review it was suggested that other ESOL providers would pick up these students. However, this hasn't happened because providers either didn't have the capacity or the classes available were not appropriate to learners' needs. This has not only affected Lower Hutt but also Upper Hutt, where there are no full-time ESOL classes available.

Is the current range of provision sufficiently flexible to respond to changing patterns of ESOL-related demand?

Stakeholder feedback suggests that there is undersupply of pre-literacy ESOL and beginner/elementary general ESOL courses in Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt, and Porirua. However Hutt Valley Training has 24 funded places but only 10 students currently enrolled.

It seems that undersupply has come about through the reduction in provision by WelTec and Whitireia in beginner/elementary level ESOL.

ACE funding has been made available to the Porirua Language Project's general ESOL and pre-employment ESOL courses, although the availability of this funding is short-term. Likewise, Taita College ACE funding has been transferred to NaeNae College ACE to expand beginner-level ESOL.

However, NaeNae College has identified that elderly Chinese learners are occupying places that could be made available to 18-22 year olds, who are unsatisfactorily placed in the college's reception class. These younger students would be much better suited to taking up the expanded ACE-funded places, or the provision at Hutt Valley training.

How can ESOL provision in the area be improved?

- 1 There are shortages in Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt and Porirua pre-literacy and general beginner/elementary ESOL provision. Approximations of the ESOL places needed are:
 - Upper Hutt (12-15);
 - Lower Hutt (12 women, 10 men and capacity for an Eritrean bilingual literacy group of 10);
 - Upper Hutt pre-training – elementary ESOL (12-15);
 - Porirua general ESOL (15-20, although numbers may increase once the full effect of Whitireia's reduction is felt); and
 - Lower Hutt general ESOL, beginner – elementary (20-25).
- 2 Stakeholder views suggest that there is a need to move ESOL provision outside the classroom, which means training in workplace-based ESOL/ literacy programmes, preparation for pre-trade courses and apprenticeships in conjunction with the providers of those programmes, and building self-esteem, health, wellbeing and employment skills through a multi-service approach to language and skills development.
- 3 ESOL programmes need to be targeted at specific learner needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, such as a programme that fits the learning style and pace of elderly migrants, and a literacy programme for people with high levels of oracy but low levels of literacy who have career aspirations in Early Childhood, Nursing or the trades.

- 4 Stakeholders identify difficulties with current policy settings that require ESOL students to be enrolled in full-time courses before they can get Social Welfare benefits. In this instance full-time means at least 20 hours of tuition per week, which creates an incentive for ESOL providers to offer bigger courses and longer classes so that clients can qualify for a benefit. The current policy may therefore create unnecessary provision for some, while reducing provision for others. Stakeholders would like the TEC to engage with WINZ to discuss this problem.

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For further information on ESOL provision in New Zealand see also *English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – Report on National Gaps and Priorities – August 2008*