

Power of the collective delivers IEC win



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Member action at the local level and Federation's representations to the Department will see a new Intensive English Centre (IEC) established in the northern NSW town of Armidale from the commencement of the 2020 school year.

Federation members at Armidale must be applauded and congratulated for their activism. They saw inequity as it related to their teachers and students and used their collective power as Federation members to seek enhancements for their teachers, students and public education system.

In August, Armidale Teachers Association members held a Federation multicultural forum to discuss the matters of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) teaching and learning and the provision of intensive English for their students.

It was clear that the current structures and provision for newly arrived students based in Armidale were far from satisfactory. This was in relation to both addressing student need and the provision of adequate facilities and resources for the teaching, learning and settlement requirements of these students and their families. Its impact was being felt across both primary and secondary teachers in public schools in the area.



At that meeting, the Armidale Teachers Association unanimously passed the following motion: "Armidale Teachers Association demands that the Department of Education provide, as a matter of urgency, adequate structures and resources to support newly arrived students from refugee, migrant and EAL/D backgrounds. We expect that the Department of Education will liaise with Federation to address this situation as a matter of urgency."

Federation, in its representations to the Department, outlined the inequities currently facing intensive English provision in Armidale compared with other areas of settlement in metropolitan Sydney and Wollongong, including but not limited to, inadequate facilities, poor resourcing, and the unfairness of staffing provisions.

It highlighted the Department's own policy on the matter as it relates to the establishment of a regional IEC, as well as the enrolment patterns, ongoing student numbers and need in Armidale, including the surrounding area, which would be serviced by the regional resource of a new IEC located at Armidale Secondary College. This would also cater for year 6 students who are eligible to enrol in an IEC.

Federation has secured the following commitments from the Department in relation to the establishment of

Armidale IEC for the 2020 school year:

- from term 1 2020, EAL/D teacher and executive staffing entitlements as per the Department's policies for IECs
- a minimum of seven classes will initially be established
- the IEC will be initially located at Armidale Secondary College and then relocated to the new high school upon completion
- a communication strategy to both the public school community and beyond about the new IEC
- professional learning for staff on the role, purpose, curriculum and pedagogy etc. of an IEC
- recognition and commitment to intensive English provisions in other regional areas experiencing similar settlement patterns.

The significance of this win is not just for the provision of the IEC but goes to the very centre of Federation's social justice principles of social inclusion and cohesion.

The only other regional IEC in NSW, Warrawong IEC, was established in 1979, 40 years ago. In 1991, Bankstown IEC became the last metropolitan centre to open, despite significant growth of student numbers and need in this area across NSW public schools.