

Intensive English Centres forum



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Future action for fortifying the longterm outlook for intensive English centres (IECs) was considered by more than 120 members during an in-person/ Zoom forum on 5 November.

Members from across 15 metropolitan and regional IECs agreed to meet again and consider community, political and industrial action should the future of intensive English provision for new arrival students come under threat.

When Australia's immigration and humanitarian intake programs halted in response to the coronavirus pandemic, IECs faced uncertainty over enrolment numbers; with no new enrolments and existing students transitioning to mainstream schools. In response, Federation proposed, negotiated and secured teacher entitlements and an extension of students' time in IECs. An Intensive English Program Contingency Strategy Plan was then put in place for 2020. The contingency strategy allows for IEC teachers and Intensive English Program (IEP) staff to be deployed to support the system, local area high schools, primary schools, English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) teachers, mainstream teachers, families and communities, along with maintaining operations for currently enrolled and transitioning IEC students. Standard timetabling practice continues as the priority, with teachers allocated in accordance with student enrolment numbers within each centre.



Forum discussions emphasised the roles and responsibilities of IEC leaders and teachers regarding the IEP implementation guidelines.

For IEC deputy principals/head teachers, these include:

- engaging in collaborative and professional dialogue with Intensive English Program staff to negotiate work arrangements for each staff member
- collaborating with Intensive English Program staff and school principals to determine the form and content of the interventions to be implemented in other school settings
- determining the number of staff required for the purposes of normal timetable operations
- determining which students require additional support within the IEC/Intensive English High School
- creating timetables for all staff within the IEC/Intensive English High School and for those implementing interventions in host schools or other settings
- overseeing the implementation and evaluation of the Intensive English Program Contingency Strategy.

And for IEC teachers:

- working within the Intensive English Program setting in accordance with timetable requirements determined by the IEP executive
- delivering interventions in high schools, including team teaching and providing additional EAL/D support in schools with high numbers of transitioning or new arrival students
- delivering interventions in primary schools where needs are identified and where there are significant numbers of recently arrived EAL/D students in year 6
- delivering professional learning if, and when applicable
- providing EAL/D expertise to support recently arrived EAL/D students in high schools, policy updates and programs in line with school interventions being delivered.

The contingency strategy provides clear guidelines for staff being deployed out of IECs and all members are advised to note that:

- Intensive English Program staff deployed out of the IEC for interventions should work from their Intensive English Program site at least one day per week in order to maintain connections and plan with their Intensive English Program Executive and colleagues
- Intensive English Program staff are not to be rostered onto the host high school's timetable or used as casual relief in their settings
- Intensive English Program staff must be able to return to their usual IEC roles and operational timetables as student enrolment numbers return.

Federation will pursue the ongoing implementation of the IEP Contingency Strategy to ensure all IECs and their students have access to the specialist staff, funds and resources needed for the smooth and equitable operation of these centres in 2021 and beyond.

In the current political context, new arrivals into Australia may have waned but the defence of quality IECs and their expert teachers has not. We must stand ready to preserve these regional resources so that the moment the borders re-open and new arrival students begin enrolling again, our IECs will be ready to work at full capacity and be appropriately resourced and funded.