

The English Australia Action Research Programme

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Cambridge Assessment English and professional body English Australia completed a highly successful Action Research Programme which funds classroom-based teacher research in order to support professional development while also encouraging new insights into teaching challenges.

The Cambridge English/English Australia Action Research Programme is focused on teachers of ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students); English Australia is the professional body for ELICOS institutions across Australia, both public and privately funded. The Action Research Programme helped equip ELICOS teachers with the skills required to explore and address key teaching challenges, with findings shared locally, at the annual English Australia Conference, and through publication (for example in Issue 56 of the Cambridge English *Research Notes* series).

A wide range of research projects received funding on topics such as assessment (an area of particular concern for Australian teachers), the teaching, learning and assessment of speaking, and (in 2014) a focus on reading. The two organisations worked together

to deliver the Action Research Programme; English Australia liaises with its members and with individual teachers, while Cambridge English provided material and professional support. Expert input was also provided by Professor Anne Burns of the University of New South Wales.

English Australia reported that the Programme has raised the professionalism of Australian ELICOS teachers in a number of ways, including the development of teacher peer networks, greater engagement with academic researchers, and enhanced professional development. Research findings have been published widely, and national and international recognition is growing. In 2013, the success of the Action Research Programme was formally recognised when representatives from Cambridge English and English Australia, together with Professor Burns, received an International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) Award for Best Practice/Innovation in International Education for what the IEAA described as 'a ground-breaking development'.

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