

Developmental Disorders of Language and Literacy Network

Senator the Honourable Simon Birmingham
107 Sir Donald Bradman Drive
Hilton SA 5033
Minister@education.gov.au

December 13, 2016

Dear Senator Birmingham,

We the undersigned, being members of the (Australian) Developmental Disorders of Language and Literacy (DDOLL) Network, are writing to endorse the views of Professors Snow, Castles, Wheldall, and Coltheart in their recent piece on [The Conversation](#) arguing the case in support of a trial of a UK-style Phonics Check in Australia.

The importance of early, evidence-based practice and intervention with respect to early reading success and academic achievement more widely has again been highlighted, with the release in December of the latest [PISA data](#), showing that once again, Australia has slipped backwards on international rankings. This sits alongside further “flat-lining” on 2016 [NAPLAN results](#), as released today.

We hope the Federal Government will see fit to use this ongoing decline as a trigger to re-engage with the [2005 National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy](#) recommendations, so that the systematic teaching of synthetic phonics is mandated in teacher pre-service education and properly supported as the starting point in reading instruction in early year’s classrooms across Australia. In conjunction with this, we seek Federal government support for a [formal trial of a Year 1 Phonics Check](#), in line with recent practice in the UK. We fully support the recommendations contained within this report, as well as the views expressed by Professors Snow, Castles, Wheldall, and Coltheart above.

Yours sincerely,

(Please see over).

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Helen Botham	Speech-Language Pathologist
Dr Caroline Bowen	Honorary Associate in Linguistics, Macquarie University Honorary Research Fellow, School of Health Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal
Associate Professor Lesley Bretherton	Clinical Associate Professor, Paediatrics and Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne Honorary Fellow, Murdoch Children's Research Institute
Professor Anne Castles	Deputy Director, ARC Centre of Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders (CCD) Department of Cognitive Science, Macquarie University
Emeritus Professor Max Coltheart	Centre for Cognition and its Disorders Macquarie University
Rhonda Filmer	Vice-Chair of SPELD NSW
Kate Gurjian	Educational Specialist Private Practitioner for children with learning needs
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Associate Professor Kerry Hempenstall	Associate Professor of Psychology (Retired) RMIT University
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Yvonne Meyer	Committee Member, National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005)
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Emeritus Professor Linda Siegel	University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
Professor Pamela Snow	Head, La Trobe Rural Health School, La Trobe University; Speech-Language Pathologist and Registered Psychologist; Council Member, Learning Difficulties Australia.
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Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall	Director of MULTILIT Research Unit, Macquarie University
Jo Whithear	Canberra Reading Clinic Council Member, Learning Difficulties Australia. Past Vice-President AUSPELD
Mrs Jillian Zocher	Director of Decoding Dyslexia, Central Coast Founder of The Learning Difference Convention and The Australian Dyslexia Learning Difference Handbook

Developmental Disorders of Language and Literacy Network

The DDOLL network was established in 2003 with funding from the Australian Research Council. The group consists of scientists, clinicians, teachers and parents interested in discussing, and disseminating information about, the investigation and treatment of developmental disorders of language and literacy through sound scientific methodology and evidence-based research.

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