

# Life Raft Australia?

**CALD Students:**  
*increasing numbers at Australian universities over the past 10 years.* Many are ...

- coming with expectations to succeed;
- coming with dispirit schooling backgrounds;
- coming lacking English as a first language.

CALD STUDENTS often find “making it alone” in the Australian university context - a struggle at best and at worst an impossibility!

**Some universities are trying to bridge this gap.**

**University of Tasmania**  
**Bridging the Gap:**

Australian universities are now developing support programs, including those to assist with the demands of academic English.

**UTAS provides** both individual appointments with senior staff and drop in assistance from trained student mentors.

**Academic English difficulties for CALD students:**

*Practical difficulties understanding a lecture:*

- the speed of the talk, the accent and intonation, the peppering of purely Australian colloquial phrases, the complex theoretical terminology.

*Extent structure of 1<sup>st</sup> language diverges from English:*

- essay writing is a main form of assessment at Aust unis;
- English essay structure: main point first, then add confirming details and evidence.

English language proficiency –

**International Students** studying at Australian universities - entry requirement between IELTS 6 & 7.

**Skilled Migrant entry to Australia** - at least IELTS 6 [minimum for successful workplace communication].

English language proficiency –

**CALD university students**, as domestic students, for equity reasons, have **NO English language requirements!**

## AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION

1999-2000

- humanitarian immigrants = 7,267
- migration program immigrants = 52,377  
(Hugo, Rudd & Harris, 2001, p.31)

2008-2009

- humanitarian immigrants = 13,507
- migration program immigrants = 171,318  
(Australian Government Department of Immigration Services, 2009, p.33).

**Academic English difficulties for CALD students :**

**Assignment questions misunderstood** - literally interpreted in strict grammatical form, **without understanding the nuances of key words and phrases.**

**Plagiarism**-resulting from lack of writing proficiency + culturally valuing the words of the expert.

**Bridging Support**  
**Academic writing & study skills**

- reading strategically
- critical thinking
- note taking
- planning/writing assignments
- subject specific writing styles
- grammar & expression
- referencing
- revising for exams
- oral presentation techniques

**Recommendations for Success**

1. Acknowledge cultural diversity and divergence from Australian expectations of Academic English.
2. Prepare CALD students for rigors of academic study with entry requirement of IELTS 6-7.
3. Ensure fully adequate ongoing academic writing/study skills support is provided to CALD university students.

ABSTRACT

NO. 1AY0062

**CALD = Culturally and linguistically diverse**

2010 Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development, Hong Kong. June 10-14, 2010.