

Plain English Speaking Award Information Guide

PESA



The Plain English Speaking Award (PESA) is a public speaking competition for students in Years 11 and 12. PESA celebrates the power of spoken English as a unifying medium within Australia and an essential tool for global communication. PESA aims to encourage the use of clear and effective spoken English. Since its inception in 1977, the competition has provided an invaluable opportunity for secondary school students to improve their confidence and to develop their speech-writing and public speaking skills.

What is the history of PESA?

PESA began in Victoria in 1977 as a public speaking competition for senior school students and expanded to all states and territories in 1978. Today, PESA operates across WA, NSW and VIC. Historically, state winners have represented their school and state at a national final hosted by each state or territory in rotation. As a direct result of COVID-19, in-person national finals have been replaced with online national finals.

Who is eligible to compete?

PESA is open to all secondary school students in Western Australia. Students must be either Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia. Each school can enter a maximum of two students. Students must be between 15 and 18 years of age (inclusive) on 1 January 2026.

How much does entry cost?

The entry fee for the award is \$30.00 per student (including GST). Please note that fees are due by 1 May 2026 and cannot be refunded even if students withdraw.

How do schools/students enter the competition?

There are four registration forms at the end of this Information Guide.

- Form A: Student Information
- Form B: Student Profile
- Form C: Consent Form
- Form D: Schools Invoice

Please complete Forms A, B and C and send them to the Western Australian PESA Coordinator by 1 May 2026. Form D can be completed and sent to your school's Accounts Department for payment.

How does the competition run?

Schools may select up to two students to compete in the competition. They may wish to conduct an internal competition to select these students. These students will participate in the PESA semi-finals. Western Australia's competition typically consists of two semi-finals, each featuring between five and seven students. The top five students from the semi-finals will progress to the state final. As the semi-finals will be held on different weekends, students will not be notified of their progression on the day of their semi-final. Instead, students will be notified of their progression within 24 hours after the final semi-final. This allows for a fair comparison between all participants, as one weekend may feature stronger competitors than the other. The winner of the state final will represent Western Australia in the national final later this year.

Competition Dates

- **Registration Opens:** 1 March 2026
- **Registration Closes:** 1 May 2026
- **Semi-Final 1:** Saturday, 18 July 2026
- **Semi-Final 2:** Saturday, 25 July 2026
- **State Final:** Saturday, 22 August 2026
- **National Final:** Date to be confirmed (later in the year)

Competition Location and Time

The competition will be held at the hall adjacent to All Saints Floreat Uniting Church at 48-50 Berkeley Crescent, Floreat, WA 6014. The competition commences at 9 am and will be finished by midday.

Please note that if fewer than 10 students register to participate, a single state final will be held instead of the two semi-finals. Should this occur, the competition will occur all day on Saturday, 18 July 2026.

What are the speaking requirements?

At each stage of the competition, students present both a prepared and impromptu speech.

Prepared Speech

- The prepared speech can be on any subject chosen by the student.
- The speaking time for the prepared speech is 8 minutes with a warning bell at 6 minutes, two bells at 8 minutes and a continuous bell at 8 ½ minutes.

Impromptu Speech

- The impromptu speech will be on a subject chosen by the adjudicator. The topic will be subjective in nature. For example, previous topics have included "For the Greater Good" or "It's Time." Wise, keen, and intelligent students may opt to study multiple topic areas that can easily be woven into an impromptu speech.
- Students will receive 5 minutes of preparation time to write their impromptu speech. During this time, they will receive a pen and palm cards to help them develop their speech. Students may use these palm cards when speaking.
- The speaking time for the impromptu speech is 3 minutes with a warning bell at 2 minutes, two bells at 3 minutes and a continuous bell at 3 ½ minutes.

At the state and national final, students also partake in a short three-minute interview conducted by an additional adjudicator.

Interview

- The interviewer may ask questions directly related to the student's speech. Students are, therefore, asked to send a copy of their speech to the Western Australian PESA Coordinator two weeks before the competition to allow the interviewer time to prepare relevant questions.
- The interviewer may also ask the student questions about their interests, hobbies, subjects studied at school, major awards and achievements, short-term ambitions and/or long-term ambitions. Questions will be developed based on students' responses in Form B, 'Student Profile'.
- The interview is 3 minutes with a warning bell at 2 minutes, two bells at 3 minutes and a continuous bell at 3 ½ minutes. Students are permitted to finish their sentence at the 3-minute mark; however, reaching 3 ½ minutes will be considered poor timing.

What are the rules of the competition?

Other than the eligibility criteria and speaking times detailed above, it should also be noted that students are not allowed to use props or external aids, such as PowerPoint presentations, during their speeches. Students are encouraged to speak from palm cards and must present without a lectern or microphone. Students are also expected to finish at or just beyond the official speaking time. It will be considered poor timing to reach the continuous bell. As students are representing their school they are expected to wear their school uniform.

What are the adjudicators looking for?

The adjudicators will make their decision based on the matter, manner and method the students employ in presenting their speeches. They will expect the students to be confident and engaging. The speeches themselves should be developed logically to a convincing conclusion in the time allowed. The adjudicators will, in particular, be looking for knowledge of the subject matter, skilful development of the theme and the effective use of plain English. Students are also expected to demonstrate a balance between personal opinion and information as well as a balance of humour and sincerity in their speeches. Adjudicators will consider all components (prepared speech, impromptu speech and interview) equally when making their decision.

What are the prizes?

All students involved in the competition will receive a certificate acknowledging their participation. The winner of the state final will receive a cash prize of \$200. The second-place student will receive a cash prize of \$100. The third-place student will receive a cash prize of \$50. The state winner can display the PESA shield at their school for one year. All prizes are donated by the Australia-Britain Society (W.A. Branch) Inc who proudly sponsor the Plain English Speaking Award in Western Australia.

Contact Details

If you have any questions about the Plain English Speaking Award, please get in touch with the following people:

Olivia Fuderer

PESA Coordinator for WA
Email: ofuderer@gmail.com

Clare Gray

Australia-Britain Society PESA Liaison
Email: claregray99@yahoo.com.au

Plain English Speaking Award Registration Forms

PESA



FORM A

Student Information

Student Details

Student Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age: _____

Home Address: _____

Student Email: _____

School: _____

Year Level: _____

Teacher Details

Teacher Name: _____

Teacher Email: _____

Speech Information

Topic of Speech: _____

Preference for Semi-Final Date

If numbers permit and there are two semi-finals, students will be randomly assigned to a semi-final weekend. Students from the same school will be grouped together for ease of teacher attendance. If there are two semi-finals, they will be held over two weekends:

- **Saturday, 18 July 2026**
- **Saturday, 25 July 2026**

If you can only attend one weekend due to a scheduling conflict, please note your preferred weekend below.

Preferred Date: _____

Please complete Forms A, B and C and send them to the Western Australian PESA Coordinator at ofuderer@gmail.com by **1 May 2026**.

FORM B

Student Profile

During the state and national finals, a brief three-minute interview will be conducted. During this interview, you may be asked questions about your speech or the following areas. Please fill in the information below to assist with this process.

Interests and Hobbies

Please list your interests and/or hobbies that you enjoy:

Subjects

Please list the subjects you are currently studying:

Major Awards/ Achievements

Please list any significant awards or achievements you've received:

Short Term Ambitions

Briefly list or describe your goals or plans for the near future:

Long term ambitions:

Briefly list or describe your long-term career or life goals:

Please complete Forms A, B and C and send them to the Western Australian PESA Coordinator at ofuderer@gmail.com by **1 May 2026**.

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FORM C

Consent Form

Agreement to Participate

I, the participant (or parent/guardian), confirm that I have read and understood all the information provided in the Plain English Speaking Award Information Guide. I agree to follow the rules of the competition and consent to my participation or, if applicable, my child's participation in the event.

Responsibility Disclaimer

I acknowledge that the Australia-Britain Society (W.A. Branch) Inc., its affiliates and representatives, the Western Australian PESA Coordinator, and the Adjudicators will not be responsible for any comments made by participants in the Plain English Speaking Award and that any opinions expressed by the participants do not necessarily reflect the views the aforementioned individuals.

Media Consent and Usage Rights

I, the participant (or parent/guardian), authorise the Australia-Britain Society (W.A. Branch) Inc, its affiliates, and their representatives to:

- Copyright, use, and publish my (or my child's) speech, photographs of my child, and/or video footage of my child in print and/or electronically in connection with the Plain English Speaking Award.
- Use my (or my child's) speech, photographs, and video footage, with or without my (or my child's) name, for any lawful purpose, including but not limited to publicity, advertising, and web content to promote the Plain English Speaking Award.

Speech Ownership and Legal Compliance

I understand that I (or my child) am fully responsible for the content of my (or my child's) speech. I am aware that my speech may be printed, published, recorded, or distributed. I agree that my speech will comply with Australian laws regarding defamation, slander, libel, and plagiarism.

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/guardian Name: _____

Parent/guardian Signature: _____


Date: _____

Please complete Forms A, B and C and send them to the Western Australian PESA Coordinator at ofuderer@gmail.com by **1 May 2026**.

FORM D

Schools Invoice

Your school's Accounts Department will require a copy of this form for payment. Please fill out your school's name and address, select/highlight the number of students competing, fill in the total and send it to them for payment.

 AUSTRALIA-BRITAIN SOCIETY (W.A. BRANCH) INC		<h1>INVOICE</h1>
Australia-Britain Society (W.A. Branch) Inc PO Box 3044 Yokine Western Australia 6060		ABN 50 511 297 294
Bill To		
School Name		
Street Name		
Suburb		
Postcode		
Description		
Registration fee for the Plain English Speaking Award (PESA)		Amount
1 student @ \$30		\$30.00
2 students @ \$30 each		\$60.00
TOTAL:		
Bank Details		
Bank	ANZ Bank	
Account Name	Australia-Britain Society (W.A. Branch) Inc	
BSB Number	016-268	
Account Number	3925-19054	

Plain English Speaking Award

Extra Information

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Western Australian PESA Past Winners 1978 – 2024

Year	First name	Last name	School
2025	Samantha	Lee	Iona Presentation College
2024	Ruth	Vincent	Corpus Christi College
2023	Sophia	Marra	Santa Maria College
2022	Subi	Thomas	Hale School
2020-21	<i>No competitions due to COVID-19</i>		
2019	Zachary	Matthews	Guildford Grammar College
2018	Jemima	Reid	Santa Maria College
2017	Esther	Nixon	Ursula Frayne Catholic College
2016	Natasha	Tonga	Shenton College
2015	Sam	Coten	Corpus Christi College
2014	Rebekah	Craggs	Corpus Christi College
2013	Lachlan	Sudlow	Hale School
2012	Xavier	Evans	Churchlands Senior High School
2011	Adam	Kovalves	Ballajura Community School
2010	Shane	Chandra	Hale School
2009	Sam	Scaife	Perth Modern School
2008	Michael	Honiball	Churchlands Senior High School
2007	Sophie	Bowen	Corpus Christi College
2006	Emma	Greeny	Iona Presentation College
2005	Izaak	Lim	Guildford Grammar School
2004	Jenny	Jiang	Presbyterian Ladies College
2003	Thom	Smith	Mt Lawley Senior High School
2002	Jessie	Giles	Mt Lawley Senior High School
2001	Georgia	Henderson	Presbyterian Ladies College
2000	Nastasya	Tay	Presbyterian Ladies College
1999	Amy	Boggin	Rockingham Senior High School
1998	Shanthi	Robertson	Penrhos College
1997	Daniel	Underhill	Willetton Senior High School
1996	Julie	Taylor	Presbyterian Ladies College
1995	Emma	Stopher	St Mark's Anglican Community College
1994	Bree	Shilken	Perth College
1993	Fiona	Seaward	Harvey Agricultural High School
1992	Jason	Maroudes	Applecross Senior High School
1991	Andrew	Horobin	Carine Senior High School
1990	Sarah	Jones	St Brigid's College
1989	Karl	Laufmann	Guildford Grammar
1988	Elisabeth	Moran	Iona Presentation College
1987	Christie	Phillips	St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls
1986	Lindy	Sardelic	Presbyterian Ladies College
1985	Sandra	Crockford	Mt Lawley Senior High School
1984	Richard	Douglas	John Curtin Senior High School
1983	Betta	Keranati	Willetton Senior High School
1982	Harry	Protoolis	Balga Senior High School
1981	Stuart	Shepherd	Scotch College
1980	Sean	Hawkes	Hale School
1979	Susan	Wittenoom	John XXIII College
1978	Leon	Cohen	Scotch College

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Adjudication Marking Sheet

Criteria The dot points below are not intended to be marked individually.	COMPONENT 1 Prepared Speech 8 minutes	COMPONENT 2 Impromptu Speech 3 minutes
Subject Matter Is the prepared speech subject matter suitable and substantial? Is the speech original and intelligent in its exploration of the subject? Did the student develop the argument logically and effectively? Was there a satisfactory conclusion which lent a sense of completeness to the speech? Did the speech carry a convincing message?	/25	/20
Use of Plain English Was the message or point of view conveyed in a clear understandable and appropriate language? Were the pace, tone and volume suitable and effective? Did the student succeed in communicating effectively with the audience? Did the student avoid distractions such as over pacing, extravagant gestures, dramatization? Was the student's style fluent and natural? Was the speech spoken, not read? Was the speech length 8 minutes +/- 20 secs? Was the impromptu speech length 3 minutes +/- 20 secs?	/25	/20
TIMING INFRINGEMENTS		
SCORES	/50	/40
Criteria The dot points below are not intended to be marked individually.	COMPONENT 3 Interview 3 minutes	General Comments
Did the student respond to questions intelligently and fluently? Did the student reveal wide general knowledge and detailed knowledge of the subject matter of her/his prepared speech? Was humour, if used, used effectively? Did the student convey an impression of sincerity and conviction?		
SCORES	/10	Total /100

About the Australia-Britain Society



The Australia-Britain Society is an independent, apolitical organisation whose role is to maintain, encourage and strengthen the numerous links between Australia and Britain.

In 1971, two sister societies were founded by the respective Prime Ministers of Britain and Australia to recognise the value of a continuing relationship that would contribute to historical and cultural exchanges. The Australia-Britain Society was first founded in NSW, and later, branches were developed in the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, and Queensland. The Western Australia Branch was established in 1982. Each Branch operates as an independent incorporated body but with the synthesis of a common aim to promote and foster cultural links between Australia and Britain. These cultural links are expressed through cultural exchanges and observance of significant Australian and British events such as Australia Day, the Queen's Birthday and Remembrance Day.

In 1994, The Australia-Britain Society Foundation was formed by the then-national body of the Australia-Britain Society under the auspices of the Cook Society. The Foundation provides a specific body for tax-deductible donations for specific purposes embraced by the Foundation Trust Deed. The Foundation is listed on the Australian Government Register of Cultural Organisations.

The Australia-Britain Society Foundation administers the Foundation Fund, which provides a range of grants and scholarships *"for fostering, promotion and development of the performing and other arts in Australia with particular emphasis on the arts and culture as being part of the British Isles and without restricting the interpretation of this clause."* There is a strong focus on, but not limited to, the visual and performing arts, literature, and the English language.

The Australia-Britain Society, Western Australia Branch, administers the foundation's sponsorship of the state Plain English-Speaking Award (PESA). This includes cash prizes and expenses for the state PESA winner and WA PESA Coordinator to attend the national final if held interstate.

The Australia-Britain Society Western Australia also provides a state grant to the Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) to be used by a graduate to travel to London for additional tuition or training.