

Australian Council of TESOL Associations

MEDIA RELEASE



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WELCOME REFORMS TO THE ADULT MIGRANT ENGLISH PROGRAM

The Australian Council of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Associations congratulates Acting Immigration Minister Alan Tudge for the reforms to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) announced at the National Press Club on Friday (28/08/2020).

“These reforms will open up English language tuition to those who need it most,” said ACTA President Margaret Corrigan. “We are delighted that these reforms will **allow adult migrants to access English classes when they are best able to learn.** From now on, people can attend classes when they know they can make good use of them. They will also be able to learn in manageable stages, for example, by gaining some basic English, putting it to use in the community and workplace, and later returning to class to go further.”

Along with other advocacy groups, ACTA has campaigned for many years to reverse restrictions on access to the AMEP. “These restrictions explain the backlog of adult migrants whose English is insufficient to gain good jobs,” said AMEP spokesperson and ACTA Vice President, Dr Helen Moore, AM. “Since 1992, time limits have pressured people into classes after arriving in Australia at the same time as they are confronted by other urgent needs, such as gaining work to put food on the table. Immediate survival needs cause many new arrivals, especially men, to start AMEP classes and then drop out as soon as they get work, never to return to learning English. The time limits also discriminated against women caring for young children.”

“The reforms also remove the one-size-fits-all limit on tuition hours (approximately six months), based on the false assumption that everyone, from those with university degrees to those with minimal/no previous schooling, started English at the same point and learned at the same rate,” said Ms Corrigan.

“Importantly, the reforms will allow learners to access tuition until they achieve vocational English and can gain employment or enter mainstream training,” said Dr Moore. “Migrants will no longer have to sort through the red tape to try and find the English courses for which they are eligible. Their teachers will no longer have to apply to multiple funding sources to keep people in classes where they are progressing but their AMEP eligibility has run out. The AMEP will become a one-stop shop that can provide both continuity and flexibility to meet different learning needs.”

“AMEP teachers know that adult migrants want to learn English,” said Ms Corrigan. “But anyone who’s tried learning another language knows that it takes a huge amount of effort. Clearly, those with little English are now among the most vulnerable in the massive unemployment statistics created by the COVID-19 crisis. We are pleased that the Government has eliminated the barriers that have locked people out of the English classes they need to get work and to access further education and training.”

For more details, contact ACTA President Margaret Corrigan (0433 766 969) or Vice-President Helen Moore (0410 708 975).