FINAL REPORT TO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

22 MAY 2015

AMEP
EVALUATION

C o n t e n t s

List of figures

List of tables

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ARMS	AMEP Reporting and Management System
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
CCS	Complex Case Support
CIT	Central Institute of Technology
CSWE	Certificates in Spoken and Written English
DSS	Department of Social Services
ELT	English Language Training
EPP	Employment Pathways Programme
HSS	Humanitarian Settlement Services
HTS	Home Tutor Scheme
HTSEP	Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Programme
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISLPR	International Second Language Proficiency Ratings
IPG	Individual Pathway Guide
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LLNP	Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme
MRCSA	Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia
MSO	Multicultural Service Officer
MYN	Multicultural Youth Network
NEAS	National ELT Accreditation Scheme
NWG	National Working Group
SAPOL	South Australia Police
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
SGP	Settlement Grants Programme
SLPET	Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training

SPP	Special Preparatory Programme
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TEWR	Traineeships in English and Workplace Readiness
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
USI	Unique Student Identifier

Executive summary

Background

The Department of Education and Training commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), in tandem with an evaluation of the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme.

The evaluations are timely in that the AMEP moved to a new business model in 2011, and the recent co-location of the AMEP and SEE programme within the Department of Education and Training provides an opportunity to explore potential synergies and the strategic alignment between the two programmes.

As a consequence, this is one of three reports which can be read individually but are also inter-related:

— The AMEP Evaluation Report (this report)
— The SEE Programme Evaluation Report
— The AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report.

The AMEP

The AMEP was established in 1948 and was legislated under the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*. The AMEP provides up to 510 hours of free English language tuition to eligible new migrants and humanitarian entrants. Some AMEP clients are eligible to access additional tuition and support under a number of the AMEP sub-programmes.

The AMEP aims to promote and support the acquisition of English language skills by all eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants, through the provision of timely and quality English language services. Through language tuition, the programme aims to produce outcomes in relation to social participation, economic wellbeing, independence, personal wellbeing, all contributing to settlement within, and integration into, the broader Australian community.

Specifically, the AMEP is intended to assist eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants in the development of English language skills that are needed to access services in the general community, provide a pathway to employment, undertake further study or training and participate in other government programmes.

The AMEP clients can undertake training through four tuition modes.

— Classroom-based: full or part-time classroom tuition during the day, evening and weekends and in formal or community-based settings.
— Distance learning: curriculum materials specifically designed for out-of-classroom learning, supported by regular contact with a teacher, often over the internet or the telephone.
— Home Tutor Scheme (HTS): trained volunteers provide one-on-one English language tuition to clients, usually in the client's home (under the HTS, AMEP service providers train and provide professional development for home tutors).

⸺ Self-paced e-learning: online learning modules available to all AMEP clients to supplement AMEP tuition; no hours are deducted from an AMEP client's entitlement.[1]

The programme also allows eligible clients to access additional support and tuition, under two sub-programmes—the Special Preparatory Programme (SPP) and the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training (SLPET) Programme—as well as supporting the learning and settlement needs of clients through the provision of counselling services, childcare and a translation referral service.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation was designed around a set of research questions examining the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and performance management of the AMEP. The research questions were broad ranging, covering the design of the program, its systems for tracking against achievement of programme objectives, as well as operational monitoring and reporting, and its performance in delivering services to meet client needs.

The evaluation sought evidence from multiple sources, involving a scan of programme documentation, analysis of programme administrative and operational data, and extensive consultation with stakeholders across all states and territories, which comprised interviews, focus groups, surveys and a public submission process. The evaluation sought input from multiple perspectives, involving programme administrators, contracted AMEP service providers and a selection of the AMEP clients. Findings and recommendations were also informed by a review of good practices, based on Australian and international literature.

Findings and areas for further consideration

The evaluation found that overall the AMEP is a valued programme that is providing substantial assistance to eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants in promoting and supporting the acquisition of English language skills necessary for successful settlement in Australia.

In developing English language skills, it also is providing a strong focal point for drawing together a range of humanitarian and other related settlement services.

The evaluation makes 12 recommendations, as discussed in the following sections. The recommendations are not listed in order of priority but are organised thematically.

The AMEP comprises a large number of elements, with recommendations making reference to those elements of the AMEP that should be retained and others that should be reviewed. For those elements not linked to recommendations, no change is recommended.

Clarifying programme objectives

**Recommendation 1
Programme objectives**

The AMEP's longstanding objective of settlement for migrants into Australia (through the development of English language proficiency) is clear, and should continue to be its primary goal.

Having said that, the evaluation findings indicate a number of areas where further improvement can be sought. Some of these refer to gaps and issues for clients that relate to the scope and role of the AMEP vis-à-vis other related government programmes. As such,

---

[1] Access to e-modules is available to all members of the public and not restricted to AMEP clients.

links to companion recommendations in the SEE Programme Evaluation Report and AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Reports are noted in these cases.

Improving measurement against objectives

While the language outcomes of the AMEP are consistently measured and reported, outcomes data relating to the AMEP's contribution towards the social participation and economic participation of migrants are not consistently measured or reported.

It is important to acknowledge that broader outcomes and objectives are more difficult to measure, such as settlement outcomes, especially at the level of the individual participant. A longitudinal reporting framework based on integration with other government services, in particular Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and Centrelink, would reduce the costs of tracking individual outcomes over time.

**Recommendation 2
Measurement against objectives**

Measuring the outcomes of the AMEP against its programme objectives could be improved through:

— *developing and implementing the necessary systems in partnership with other government agencies to track individual outcomes over time, and/or*
— *instituting a longitudinal-based approach using a sufficiently robust sample or subset of the AMEP clients to demonstrate and periodically confirm the programme's contribution towards its objectives.*

There may be scope to reduce the administrative burden for the AMEP service providers and the Department by reviewing the number and nature of reports that service providers are required to submit each year. It is more common practice for programmes to require reporting four times a year — an annual report, a half yearly report and two quarterly reports.

**Recommendation 3
Reporting**

The Australian Government should reduce the administrative burden on the AMEP service providers to the extent possible by rationalising the programme's reporting requirements.

Examining eligibility

The targeting of the AMEP to the majority of permanent immigrants through its eligibility criteria is considered appropriate to meet the objectives of the program. In the future, there may be temporary humanitarian visa holders in Australia who, under the current eligibility criteria would not be eligible for the AMEP. Stakeholders suggested that any such visa holders should be eligible for the AMEP.

**Recommendation 4
Temporary humanitarian entrants**

On the whole, the target groups and associated eligibility criteria of the AMEP are appropriate. Further consideration is required to determine if the list of eligible visas should be extended to include temporary humanitarian visa classes.

Assessment tools and instruments

The AMEP benchmark of functional English is, by definition, insufficient for participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) beyond the Certificate I/II level, and higher education, and considered by some stakeholders and AMEP participants as insufficient to gain employment.

While there were calls from some stakeholders for the AMEP to extend beyond the current AMEP benchmark of functional English to include higher levels of proficiency, it is not necessarily the case that this would need to be achieved through the AMEP itself. After

clients complete their AMEP hours, other subsidised training opportunities should be available through foundation courses in the broader VET sector (as discussed in the AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report).

Given the AMEP's emphasis on delivering preliminary English skills in a settlement context, the benchmark level for the AMEP should be retained at minimum at the currently prescribed level of functional English.

The International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR) have been the long-standing and well accepted instrument used to assess proficiency in the AMEP since the late 1970s. They play a particularly important role in ensuring the appropriate targeting and subsequent effectiveness of the AMEP by limiting access to those that have not yet acquired functional English.

There are however a range of other assessment instruments currently being used in the English as a Second Language (ESL) sector. These include the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), both of which are more widely used than the ISLPR.

The ISLPR is well suited to the AMEP and should continue to be used. The assessment of the suitability of other instruments is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but the benefits of diversification to other mainstream instruments such as IELTS and TOEFL should be reviewed.

Enhancing the curriculum

The Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) curriculum framework is generally accepted as suitable for the AMEP's training and assessment. It would appear that the majority of AMEP service providers are satisfied with the prescription of CSWE as the sole curriculum framework for the AMEP. CSWE is seen as having three key strengths: contextualised tuition, development of independent learning skills and national consistency.

Notwithstanding this, some AMEP service providers consider that CSWE is most suitable for clients with higher levels of previous educational attainment and strong language foundations, who are able to build on classroom activities independently. Some also consider that assessment and completion of CSWE learning outcomes is somewhat limited as a measure of competency in discrete language events and not a measure of overall language proficiency. Research in this area supports proficiency based curricula that look at the way in which language is acquired and naturalised to provide more holistic evidence of achievement.

Some stakeholders consider that there could be greater flexibility to broaden the ESL curriculum options available through the AMEP. In some cases, this could facilitate clients' transition to further education and/or support access to vocational courses/modules from a wider range of VET qualifications.

An assessment of the potential suitability of other curricula for the AMEP is beyond the scope of the evaluation, but given the issues identified, further research with respect to the appropriateness of alternate nationally accredited courses is warranted. In the long term, the inclusion of alternative nationally accredited courses would provide AMEP service providers with the choice of a number of comparable, compatible and competitive options alongside the CSWE, whilst also ensuring that the AMEP retains access to diversified curricula.

**Recommendation 7
Curriculum framework**

The CSWE provides the appropriate curriculum framework for training and assessment under the AMEP and should continue to be used. Further research to examine the appropriateness of alternate nationally accredited courses for use within the AMEP is warranted.

Improving client outcomes

On the whole, the AMEP receives significant support from all stakeholders for its contribution to the settlement of migrants in Australia. There are numerous examples of clients achieving significant study, employment and life outcomes. Most stakeholders consider that the programme is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of clients. Most AMEP service providers are able to implement a variety of teaching approaches in accordance with the programme design and within the parameters of their contracts.

A common concern raised by stakeholders was that the AMEP had difficulty in meeting the diverse needs of its clients, particularly due to its reliance on classroom-based delivery, multi-cohort classes, and emphasis on ensuring attendance, as opposed to seeking innovative delivery models and partnerships.

The programme would benefit from research into alternate models of operation. This could include the development of additional incentives for innovative delivery within the program, such as a grants programme to pilot innovative models of delivery, to undertake research into client needs and effective delivery methods, or to establish networks for knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas.

**Recommendation 8
Client outcomes**

Building on the range of concerns expressed by stakeholders in relation to client outcomes, the Australian Government should commission further research to:

— *develop measures of client satisfaction and provider innovation, to measure the extent to which client needs are not being met*

— *determine whether there are alternate cost-effective models of delivery that are not being more widely adopted by AMEP service providers and the reasons for this*

— *assure the government that the AMEP business model incorporates both the flexibility and the incentives for AMEP service providers to identify and meet the needs of prospective clients.*

Based on this research, the programme could benefit from the addition of incentives for innovative delivery, such as a grants programme to pilot innovative models of delivery, to undertake research into client needs and effective delivery methods, or to establish networks for knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas.

Employment and further training pathways

While many AMEP participants have clear aspirations to transition into work and further training, the program, by virtue of its design, does not specifically target achievement of these goals. The proficiency level at which clients become ineligible for, and must exit, the AMEP — functional English — is generally insufficient for employment, VET or higher education. This fact was highlighted in a number of submissions.

Stakeholders raised strong concerns regarding the tension between study in the AMEP and gaining employment. The primary issue here is that the timing of work and AMEP classes are generally conflicting. At the same time, the practical difficulties of workplace delivery should not be understated. These include challenges in identifying willing employers, issues in matching suitable AMEP participants to employers, the costs associated with developing

partnerships with employers, and the practical challenges of ensuring that such arrangements comply with a range of rules and regulations, especially industrial relations requirements and work health and safety laws.

In many respects, stakeholders' concerns with the rate of, and opportunities for, AMEP client transitions to employment or further study may reflect a misunderstanding of the programme's intent and the result in unmet expectations on the part of both AMEP service providers and participants. Further analysis could lead to beneficial proposals for an expanded curriculum, improved pathways and additional resourcing. In the first instance, however, it is important that the intent and objectives of the programme be clearly communicated to AMEP stakeholders. This should also detail the range of post AMEP options that may be available from the broader VET sector, in particular other Australian Government and state and territory government subsidised training pathways.

Recommendation 9
Transitions to work and further training

The intent and objectives of the programme should be clearly communicated to AMEP stakeholders, including details on the range of post AMEP options that may be available within the broader VET sector, including other Australian Government and state and territory government subsidised training pathways.

The training allocation

Despite the wide range of language and literacy needs, the AMEP provides up to 510 tuition hours to eligible AMEP clients. It does not allocate an entitlement of hours according to individual level of proficiency or learning ability, except to the extent that clients entering with higher levels of proficiency are likely to stop being eligible for the AMEP before they reach 510 hours if they achieve functional English.

While the fixed allocation of hours appears to underpin the primary criticism of the AMEP, namely that it is a 'one size fits all' approach, the AMEP is able to take some account for different levels of language learning needs through additional allocations of hours via other means such as SPP and SLPET. The allocation of a fixed number of hours under the AMEP contrasts with current directions in VET funding models which are increasingly based on a universal entitlement and the achievement of competency and training outcomes.

However, the key issue with respect to the allocation of hours under the AMEP is not whether the 510 hour entitlement is the 'right' number of hours; the important policy question is whether every participant should be expected to achieve functional English, and the implied level of resourcing that is required to achieve this outcome. At present, the cap on hours serves an important function by placing a limit on both the individual and total level of resourcing allocated to the AMEP, and in doing so, implicitly accepts that not all participants will achieve functional English.

Recommendation 10
The training allocation

Subject to any significant change to the universal entitlement model, and the attendant increase in funding, the legislated allocation of up to 510 hours should be retained, and the objectives and resulting scope of the programme reaffirmed with AMEP service providers, participants and other stakeholders.

One prospective approach to improve targeting of the allocation of hours – a personalised entitlement based on need as determined by a third party assessor – is discussed further in the report. The introduction of such a model has the potential to more accurately provide AMEP participants with the hours required to achieve functional English. While this may increase the level of resourcing required for some clients, some savings offsets could be achieved through third party determination of when clients have reached the benchmark

level of functional English, mitigating the potential for AMEP service providers to retain clients for longer than necessary where it is in their financial interest to do so. Resourcing would also better match the level of need of the migrant cohort as Australia's intake changes from year-to-year. Modelling of the potential allocations would be needed to provide the government with an assessment of the likely net fiscal implications for the AMEP.

Recommendation 11 Improvements to programme design and efficiency	*The Australian Government should consider introducing a personalised AMEP entitlement based on need. Consideration may be given to the use of third party assessors to determine client entitlement, taking into account the benefits, costs and implementation issues of such a personalised entitlement.*

Increasing choice in the programme

While the model of tendering under the AMEP will continue to deliver some benefits associated with competition for contracts, the AMEP's one-provider-per-region approach is at risk of falling behind other government policies and programmes aimed at delivering improved efficiency, innovation and client outcomes through offering greater choice of provider.

Some focus group clients reported that being limited to one AMEP service provider meant they were unable to provide meaningful feedback to enact change regarding the quality of teaching and course content, particularly due to the lack of alternative options available (other than travelling some distance to another campus/AMEP service provider).

That being said, a critical feature of the AMEP that should not be lost is the presence of high quality providers contracted to deliver the programme; the introduction of increased client choice should not in any way compromise the standards of AMEP service provision. Any introduction of multiple AMEP service providers should only be undertaken in regions where there are viable numbers of participants to support sustainable competition. In remote and regional areas for example, the fragmentation of delivery, duplication of infrastructure, and loss of economies of scale may outweigh the benefits of competition.

A multi-provider model should be introduced in a phased manner, for example beginning with pilots in large capital cities that are already divided into two or more regions. The large cities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth already comprise contiguous metropolitan areas comprising two or more regions serviced by two or more AMEP service providers; merging these regions and overlapping AMEP service provider footprints would make for an immediately competitive market with few attendant risks.

The move to a competitive multi-provider model would constitute a significant change in programme design and therefore should only be introduced following an extended period and process of consultation, analysis, design, and implementation.

The benefits can only be realised if AMEP participants are able to make sufficiently *informed* choices with respect to which providers are likely to be the most suitable for them. Given that AMEP clients by definition suffer from a language barrier, the ability of eligible migrants to select from two or more possible AMEP service providers cannot be assumed. It is likely that for at least some participants, the choice between two or more providers will be at best inconsequential, and at worst daunting.

It is not necessary for all clients to be highly discerning for the benefits of choice to be realised. Even if only a small proportion of customers are capable of identifying positive traits and are able to switch providers accordingly, this is often sufficient to deliver broader benefits and drive improvements across the system.

ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING

It is conceivable that notwithstanding the language barrier, some (possibly many) AMEP participants will be able to identify the types of courses that meet their needs, seek advice from others in their community who have previously had experiences with prospective providers, consult other relevant AMEP service providers on their options, and choose or change AMEP service providers as appropriate.

**Recommendation 12
Provider choice**

The Australian Government should consider the introduction of contractual arrangements that include two or more AMEP service providers competing in a single region. Such an arrangement should be considered where there is sufficient demand to support multiple providers, and should be phased, commencing with pilots in the large capital cities where two or more providers already operate in adjacent regions.

Recommendations list

This section provides a list of recommendations as discussed above in the Executive Summary and in Chapter 7.

The evaluation makes 12 recommendations, as discussed in the following sections. The recommendations are not listed in order of priority but are organised thematically.

Recommendation 1

The AMEP's longstanding objective of settlement for migrants into Australia (through the development of English language proficiency) is clear, and should continue to be its primary goal.

Recommendation 2

Measuring the outcomes of the AMEP against its programme objectives could be improved through:

— developing and implementing the necessary systems in partnership with other government agencies to track individual outcomes over time, and/or

— instituting a longitudinal-based approach using a sufficiently robust sample or subset of the AMEP clients to demonstrate and periodically confirm the programme's contribution towards its objectives.

Recommendation 3

The Australian Government should reduce the administrative burden on the AMEP service providers to the extent possible by rationalising the programme's reporting requirements.

Recommendation 4

On the whole, the target groups and associated eligibility criteria of the AMEP are appropriate. Further consideration is required to determine if the list of eligible visas should be extended to include temporary humanitarian visa classes.

Recommendation 5

Given the AMEP's emphasis on delivering preliminary English skills in a settlement context, the benchmark level for the AMEP should be retained at minimum at the currently prescribed level of functional English.

Recommendation 6

The ISLPR is well suited to the AMEP and should continue to be used. The assessment of the suitability of other instruments is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but the benefits of diversification to other mainstream instruments such as IELTS and TOEFL should be reviewed.

Recommendation 7

The CSWE provides the appropriate curriculum framework for training and assessment under the AMEP and should continue to be used.

Further research to examine the appropriateness of alternate nationally accredited courses for use within the AMEP is warranted.

Recommendation 8

Building on the range of concerns expressed by stakeholders in relation to client outcomes, the Australian Government should commission further research to:

— develop measures of client satisfaction and provider innovation, to measure the extent to which client needs are not being met

— determine whether there are alternate cost-effective models of delivery that are not being more widely adopted by AMEP service providers and the reasons for this

— assure the government that the AMEP business model incorporates both the flexibility and the incentives for AMEP service providers to identify and meet the needs of prospective clients.

Based on this research, the programme could benefit from the addition of incentives for innovative delivery, such as a grants programme to pilot innovative models of delivery, to undertake research into client needs and effective delivery methods, or to establish networks for knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas.

Recommendation 9

The intent and objectives of the programme should be clearly communicated to AMEP stakeholders, including details on the range of post AMEP options that may be available within the broader VET sector, including other Australian Government and state and territory government subsidised training pathways.

Recommendation 10

Subject to any significant change to the universal entitlement model, and the attendant increase in funding, the legislated allocation of up to 510 hours should be retained, and the objectives and resulting scope of the programme reaffirmed with AMEP service providers, participants and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 11

The Australian Government should consider introducing a personalised AMEP entitlement based on need as determined by third party assessors, taking into account the benefits, costs and implementation issues of such a personalised entitlement.

Recommendation 12

The Australian Government should consider the introduction of contractual arrangements that include two or more AMEP service providers competing in a single region. Such an arrangement should be considered where there is sufficient demand to support multiple providers, and should be phased, commencing with pilots in the large capital cities where two or more providers already operate in adjacent regions.

1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the AMEP evaluation, including the evaluation's context, research questions and method.

1.1 Evaluation overview

1.1.1 Evaluation objectives

ACIL Allen Consulting was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to conduct an evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The evaluation was undertaken in conjunction with an evaluation of the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme.

The joint evaluations examined:

— the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and performance management of the AMEP and the SEE programme
— the strategic alignment between the AMEP and the SEE programme, and whether there are opportunities to improve how the two programmes work together.

1.1.2 Evaluation context

An evaluation of the AMEP is considered timely as the programme moved to a new business model in 2011. The move to the revised model has involved significant changes in programme delivery and administration that are yet to be assessed.

An additional impetus for the evaluation is the movement of the administration of the AMEP from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to the Department of Industry in late 2013, then to the Department of Education and Training in late 2014. The co-location of the AMEP and SEE programme in the Department of Education and Training provides an opportunity to explore the strategic alignment between the two programmes.

1.1.3 Evaluation outputs

The joint evaluations of the AMEP and SEE programme have produced three reports:

— The AMEP Evaluation Report (this report)
— The SEE Programme Evaluation Report
— The AMEP and SEE Programme Alignment Report.

1.2 Research questions

The AMEP evaluation research questions are outlined in Table 1. The research questions are grouped under four key areas of investigation: appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and performance assessment.

Table 1   **AMEP evaluation key research questions**

Area of investigation	Research questions
Appropriateness	What are the needs of migrants/humanitarian entrants under each relevant visa classification and are the programme's current target groups appropriate?
	How are these needs assessed, are the benchmarks appropriate, and to what extent is the programme appropriate in addressing these?
	Are there opportunities to improve assessment of these needs through novel assessment tools?
	What are the barriers to migrants/humanitarian entrants accessing and participating in the programme including awareness of the programme and referral opportunities?
	Are there gaps in the coverage or eligibility for the programme?
	How do the two programmes overlap/align? What are the opportunities for improving how the two programmes work together?
	How well does the programme align with broader government objectives including emerging changes to government policies and programmes?
Effectiveness	Are the programme objectives clear and to what extent do they allow for measurement of successful programme outcomes?
	To what extent is the programme effective in achieving the programme objectives?
	To what extent does the programme deliver value to the government and the community?
	To what extent do programme clients value the services provided?
	What would be the effect of changing the number of hours of tuition on programme outcomes?
	What impact does tuition method have on programme outcomes and what method(s) are considered best practice in the provision of vocational training?
	What is the take up and completion rate of the programme? What are the barriers to take up and completion?
	What is the value of the sub-programmes of the programme and to what extent does each of these contribute to the overall objective of the programme?
	What changes could be made to the programme to increase the number of clients able to transition to job pathways or more advanced training at the conclusion of the programme?
Efficiency	Is the programme design and funding model a cost efficient means to deliver services to the identified client groups? What impact do multi-service training providers have?
	Is there duplication of quality assurance monitoring by the National English Language Teaching Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)? If so, what opportunities are there to streamline quality assurance monitoring arrangements?
	Are there improvements that could be made to deliver similar outcomes at a lesser cost?
	What cost effective changes could be made to programme design and delivery to improve outcomes?
	What does it cost to deliver an outcome for a migrant/humanitarian entrant under this programme?
	What are the applicable regulations and legislation in relation to participation requirements and client eligibility? Is there scope for reducing associated regulatory complexity and administrative burden for contracted AMEP service providers and the Department?
Performance assessment	To what extent does the programme have sound data collection methodologies for measuring and reporting against programme objectives/KPIs and client outcomes?
	Are monitoring protocols in place for the programme sufficient?
	Are there opportunities for improved methods for measuring and reporting post programme outcomes data?
	What Australian longitudinal data is available to support an examination of the relationship between clients participating in the programme and employment outcomes in the future?

Source*:* RFQ documentation, AMEP and SEE Evaluation Project Plan

1.3   Evaluation method

The AMEP evaluation method comprised the following activities, described in further detail in the sections that follow:

—— a programme document review, and a national and international literature review

—— analysis of programme data

—— stakeholder consultations including interviews, focus groups, surveys and a public submission process.

1.3.1 Document and literature review

The document review analysed a range of internal documentation relevant to the AMEP's design, delivery and quality assurance. Additional investigation was undertaken to check the accuracy of these documents and to identify other Australian Government or state and territory programmes relevant to the AMEP.

On the basis of this material, the project team prepared an overview of the programme that encompassed programme guidelines, referral processes, eligibility criteria, AMEP service provider contracts, the programme funding model, implementation and reporting documents, and quality assurance and monitoring protocols.

This material informed analysis presented in later chapters of this report and was used to inform the design of stakeholder consultation tools.

The literature review was based on a search strategy that identified a set of key research questions relevant to the programme and its evaluation. Appropriate search terms were derived from this set of questions and an initial search was undertaken to confirm appropriate national and international search targets.

The search targets included national and international journal indexes and a targeted search of selected and highly relevant journals. The search strategy extended to monographs and reports published by academic and research institutes, and reports commissioned by governments. Search terms and strategies were refined over three iterations of searching, and materials selected for inclusion in the literature review were entered into a bibliographic management database.

1.3.2 Programme data analysis

The AMEP evaluation draws on quantitative analysis of the following datasets.

— AMEP de-identified client-level data.
— De-identified AMEP service provider contract prices.
— AMEP aggregate expenditure data.
— Migration data.

The AMEP de-identified client-level data are for clients who participated in the AMEP in any one of the financial years between 2004-05 and 2013-14 inclusive. In most cases AMEP activity is reported by 'year of enrolment', which is the year the client entered the AMEP and not necessarily when the AMEP activity took place.

While the data indicates which financial years clients participated in the AMEP, they do not disaggregate clients' hours by financial year. In this report, hours of training are reported by financial year of client enrolment (called 'year of enrolment'), by client and by financial year in which the hours are estimated to have taken place. In the latter case, each client's hours are allocated evenly to each financial year in which they participated in the AMEP.

Care must be taken when comparing data on hours of training prior to 2011-12 with training under the current AMEP contract. Under the AMEP contracts prior to 2011-2012, AMEP service providers were paid for adjusted offered hours – that is, a client's entitlement of up to 510 hours was adjusted down to account for absences.[2] Since 2011-2012, AMEP service

---

[2] The 'adjusted offered hours' system allowed clients who withdrew (with acceptable reasons) early from a learning activity not to be debited the full hours assigned for that learning activity.

providers have been paid based on actual classroom hours – that is, only hours of attendance are deducted from a client's entitlement of up to 510 hours.

This is likely to have resulted in an over-counting of the hours actually undertaken by clients prior to 2011-12. The Department of Education and Training estimates that under previous business models prior to 2011-12, actual classroom hours were around 75 per cent of the counted hours.

De-identified AMEP service provider contract prices are for the 2011-12 to 2014-15 contract period. In this report, prices are in 2012-13 dollars to aid comparisons with other programmes.

The AMEP aggregate expenditure data are for nine financial years: 2005-06 to 2013-14. Appropriations data are for 2014-15 to 2017-18 and are taken from the 2014-15 Budget. In this report, expenditure is in 2013-14 dollars. Nominal prices are adjusted using the Australian Bureau of Statistics General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index and the 2014-15 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Consumer Price Index inflation forecasts.

The migration dataset is for arrivals to Australia between 2004-05 and 2013-14 inclusive.

1.3.3   Stakeholder consultations

Stakeholder consultations were conducted in four parts, involving interviews, focus groups with clients, survey and public submissions, as discussed further below. These provided valuable insights into the design of the AMEP, training under the AMEP, the effectiveness of the program, funding and efficiency, performance assessment and reporting, and transition from the AMEP to the SEE programme or other types of training.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted nation-wide in the capital cities of each state and territory, and in a regional town in all states and territories apart from the ACT. In NSW, interviews were conducted in two regional towns.

A discussion guide was developed to provide background on the evaluation for interviewees. It also included questions to guide and ensure consistency across the interviews.

A total of 77 interviews were held with AMEP stakeholders, 73 of which were face-to-face and four via telephone. In addition, eight interviews were conducted with dual providers of AMEP and the SEE programme.

The interviews involved a variety of AMEP stakeholders including contracted AMEP service providers, referring agencies, Australian Government and state and territory government officials, migrant and settlement organisations and other organisations with an interest in the AMEP.

Focus groups

Seven focus groups were conducted with AMEP clients across four states — Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania — in both capital cities and regional towns. Focus groups included AMEP clients with a wide variety of language backgrounds, AMEP hours attended and English language proficiency. Where appropriate, translators were used to facilitate focus groups.

Survey

An online survey of AMEP service providers and employers of past and present AMEP participants was developed for the evaluation. The survey included multiple choice and open ended questions, and covered the appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the AMEP, and the strategic alignment between the AMEP and SEE programme. A total of 20 respondents completed the survey.

Public submission process

Organisations and individuals were invited to make a public submission to the evaluation. An invitation was sent to stakeholders and added to the evaluation website. The evaluation received 39 submissions from AMEP stakeholders, including AMEP service providers, service providers from related programmes, teachers, migrant and settlement organisations and other organisations.

1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

— Chapter 2: The current design of the AMEP
— Chapter 3: Client needs and good practices in adult migrant language programmes
— Chapter 4: The AMEP cohort, take up and clients' English language skills
— Chapter 5: The effectiveness of the AMEP
— Chapter 6: Efficiency and performance management
— Chapter 7: The appropriateness and future of the AMEP

2 The current design of the AMEP

This chapter provides an overview of the AMEP, including the programme's objectives, design and curriculum framework. This chapter also details how other relevant Australian Government, and state and territory government programmes and services relate to the AMEP.

2.1 Programme overview, objectives and eligibility

The AMEP was established in 1948 and was legislated under the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*. The AMEP provides up to 510 hours of free English language tuition to eligible new migrants and humanitarian entrants. In addition, some AMEP clients are eligible to access additional tuition and support under a number of AMEP sub-programmes.

In 2013, the AMEP moved from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to the Department of Industry and Science, and to the Department of Education and Training in 2014.

2.1.1 Programme objectives

As set out in the AMEP Services Contract (2011-17) the objective of the AMEP is to:

> …provide settlement focused English language tuition and related services to newly arrived migrants and Humanitarian Entrants who have less than Functional English.

The contract between the Department and AMEP service providers, records that 'there has been an expectation in the past that the programme should be able to equip AMEP clients with 'functional English' in 510 hours of tuition.' It notes that this 'expectation is unattainable and unrealistic' considering the low level of English language skills of many AMEP clients.

As a result, a more accurate description of what the programme aims to deliver is: 'preliminary English skills in a specific settlement context' through English language tuition 'while introducing newly arrived clients to Australian social norms and practices, services, and the rule of law' (AMEP Services Contract, 2011-17).

2.1.2 Programme eligibility

The programme is open to eligible permanent migrants and humanitarian entrants who lack proficiency in English. Some temporary visa subclasses are also eligible for the AMEP.[3] The AMEP is a voluntary programme.

Migrants are eligible for five years from the date of their visa commencement date or arrival into Australia. The programme is available to migrants and humanitarian entrants over the age of 18, and, on a case-by-case basis, those aged 15 to 17 who are not participating in mainstream schooling *(Immigration (Education) Act 1971)*.

---

[3] The following temporary visa classes also have access to the AMEP: Business Skills (Provisional) (Class UR), Business Skills (Provisional) (Class EB), Interdependency (Provisional) (Class UG), Partner (Provisional) (Class UF), Partner (Temporary) (Class UK), Resolution of Status (Temporary) (Class UH), Skilled – Designated Area-sponsored (Provisional) (Class UZ), Skilled – Independent Regional (Provisional) (Class UX), Skilled – Regional Sponsored (subclass 475), Skilled – Regional Sponsored (subclass 487) and Skilled – Regional Sponsored (subclass 489).

English proficiency is assessed by AMEP service providers. Functional English is defined in the Australian Government legislative instrument 'Procedures or Standards for Functional English' (which is associated with the *Act*) as 'basic social proficiency in English assessed at International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) 2 across all four macro skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)'. Migrant or humanitarian entrants who do not have an ISLPR score of 2 or more for each skill group are eligible for the AMEP.

Formal referral to the AMEP does not exist and clients may make direct contact with AMEP service providers. In other instances, clients may be referred by their sponsor, settlement service provider, or Centrelink. For clients 18 years and older, registration with the AMEP must occur within six months of arrival in Australia and classes must commence within 12 months.

2.2   Services provided under the AMEP

Three groups of services are provided under the AMEP – up to 510 hours of tuition, additional tuition through sub-programmes, and supplementary services. This section provides an overview of these services.

2.2.1   The 510 hour training entitlement

AMEP clients can undertake up to 510 hours of training through three tuition modes.

—— Classroom-based: full- or part-time classroom tuition in formal or community based settings.
—— Distance Learning: curriculum materials specifically designed for out-of-classroom learning, supported by regular contact with a teacher, often over the internet or the telephone.
—— Home Tutor Scheme (HTS): trained volunteers provide one-on-one English language tuition to clients, usually in the client's home (under the HTS, AMEP service providers train and provide ongoing advice and support for home tutors).

2.2.2   Additional sub-programmes

The programme allows eligible clients to access support and tuition in addition to the legislated 510 hours, under two sub-programmes.

—— Special Preparatory Programme (SPP): provides additional training hours for eligible Humanitarian Entrants with up to 400 additional tuition hours for AMEP clients who are under 25 and have seven years or less of schooling, and up to 100 hours for those aged 25 years and over who had had difficult pre-migration experiences such as torture and trauma. SPP tuition is primarily contextualised, integrated language learning, with additional orientation for learning aimed at clients with low levels of formal education.
—— Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training (SLPET): provides an additional 200 hour course to selected AMEP clients focusing on learning English while gaining familiarity with Australian workplace language, culture and practices. SLPET includes a work experience component of up to 80 hours. The eligibility criteria for SLPET are as follows:
  – AMEP clients should have completed 75 per cent or more of their AMEP tuition hours or be close to attaining functional English
  – AMEP clients settlement issues must be largely resolved

— AMEP clients must have the necessary communication skills to participate in the workplace

— AMEP clients must have a genuine desire to be employed and be able to accept a job at the end of the course

— AMEP clients must have the necessary motivation and commitment required for the course.

2.2.3   Additional services

AMEP provides a number of additional services to support the learning and settlement needs of clients.

— AMEP Counselling Service: provides up to six hours of training and employment pathway counselling to each AMEP client.

— Childcare: provided free of charge to AMEP clients with children younger than compulsory school age.[4]

— Translation Referral Service: AMEP service providers deliver assistance to eligible migrants (including non-AMEP clients) with lodging documents for translation.[5]

2.3   AMEP curriculum framework

The AMEP's curriculum framework uses the nationally accredited Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE).

— Pre-CSWE level

— Certificate I: Beginner

— Certificate II: Post Beginner

— Certificate III: Intermediate.

Following an assessment of an AMEP client's English language proficiency, background and prior learning experience, clients are placed in one of the four CSWE levels. Clients with limited prior education and exposure to the English language may be placed in a pre-CSWE course that is designed to prepare them for entry into CSWE Level I.

Table 2   **CSWE Levels and nominal hours**

CSWE Level	Nominal Hours to Achieve
Pre-CSWE Course	600
CSWE I Certificate	500
CSWE II Certificate	400
CSWE III Certificate (functional English)	400

Source: AMEP Fact Sheet, Business Model

Each CSWE level consists of core and optional modules on listening, speaking, reading writing and numeracy skills.[6] All modules lead to defined learning outcomes. The modular approach allows AMEP clients to focus on general English skills or to target a particular area

---

[4]   The AMEP covers the cost of childcare by paying AMEP service providers to deliver or arrange childcare.

[5]   AMEP service providers do not provide the translation service but provide handling services, for which they are paid under the AMEP. The Free Translation Service is managed by the Department of Social Services.

[6]   Numeracy modules are not mandatory for completion of a CSWE Certificate.

for development. Within the CSWE framework, the syllabus is designed by AMEP service providers and teachers according to the needs of their particular client group. This aims to give AMEP service providers the flexibility to select curriculum subject matter and delivery in line with changes to settlement patterns and the composition of the migration programme.

2.3.1 Settlement courses

AMEP service providers must deliver the settlement course to all AMEP clients and are able to deliver the course throughout the term, blended into AMEP tuition.

The settlement course helps clients develop basic settlement skills to help them to fully participate in the community. Clients learn a range of essential skills, including (but not limited to) how to access government and community services, such as banking and medical assistance, as well as understanding Australian systems, the law and their rights. Clients exiting the programme are also provided with information regarding post-AMEP pathways including further education, employment and relevant community services.

2.3.2 Youth classes

Some AMEP service providers offer youth-specific courses for clients under the age of 25 years. These are designed to provide a greater level of support for young people who require more intensive English language tuition and for clients aged between 15 and 17 years whose needs cannot be met by mainstream schooling.

Youth-specific courses are tailored programmes with both a social and education focus, which target the specific needs of young people. Courses are sometimes developed by AMEP service providers in partnership with local schools, community groups, youth services and other training providers.

2.3.3 Class size requirements

The maximum AMEP face-to-face tuition class size is 20 clients, as calculated at the start of the third week of that class and averaged over the quarter. SPP classes are restricted to no more than 12 SPP clients (AMEP Service Contract 2011-17).

2.3.4 Hours per week requirements

Full-time study under the AMEP involves a minimum of 20 (up to 15 hours face-to-face and five hours of independent learning per week) hours of study per week, whilst part-time study is defined as less than full-time (Sch 2: Modes of Tuition in AMEP Contract). For full-time clients, a combination of face-to-face tuition and teacher-assisted distance learning can be utilised to meet the weekly study time requirements. More intensive tuition is recommended for the youth cohort aged 15-17 years.

For clients participating in distance learning, a minimum of one hour of teacher assistance is required per week, initiated by the AMEP teacher via telephone or Skype. For each hour of one-on-one teaching for distance learning clients, five AMEP hours are deducted from participants' AMEP entitlement, due to the intensive nature of these one-on-one sessions.

2.4 AMEP service providers

The AMEP is managed through 27 contracts with 11 AMEP service providers delivering general services and one national distance learning service provider. Contracted AMEP

service providers include universities, TAFE Institutes, state education departments, and private educational institutions (Figure 1).

AMEP service providers are able to sub-contract AMEP provision and there are currently 40 sub-contracted service providers, distributed over approximately 270 locations.

Figure 1   **AMEP service providers' locations**
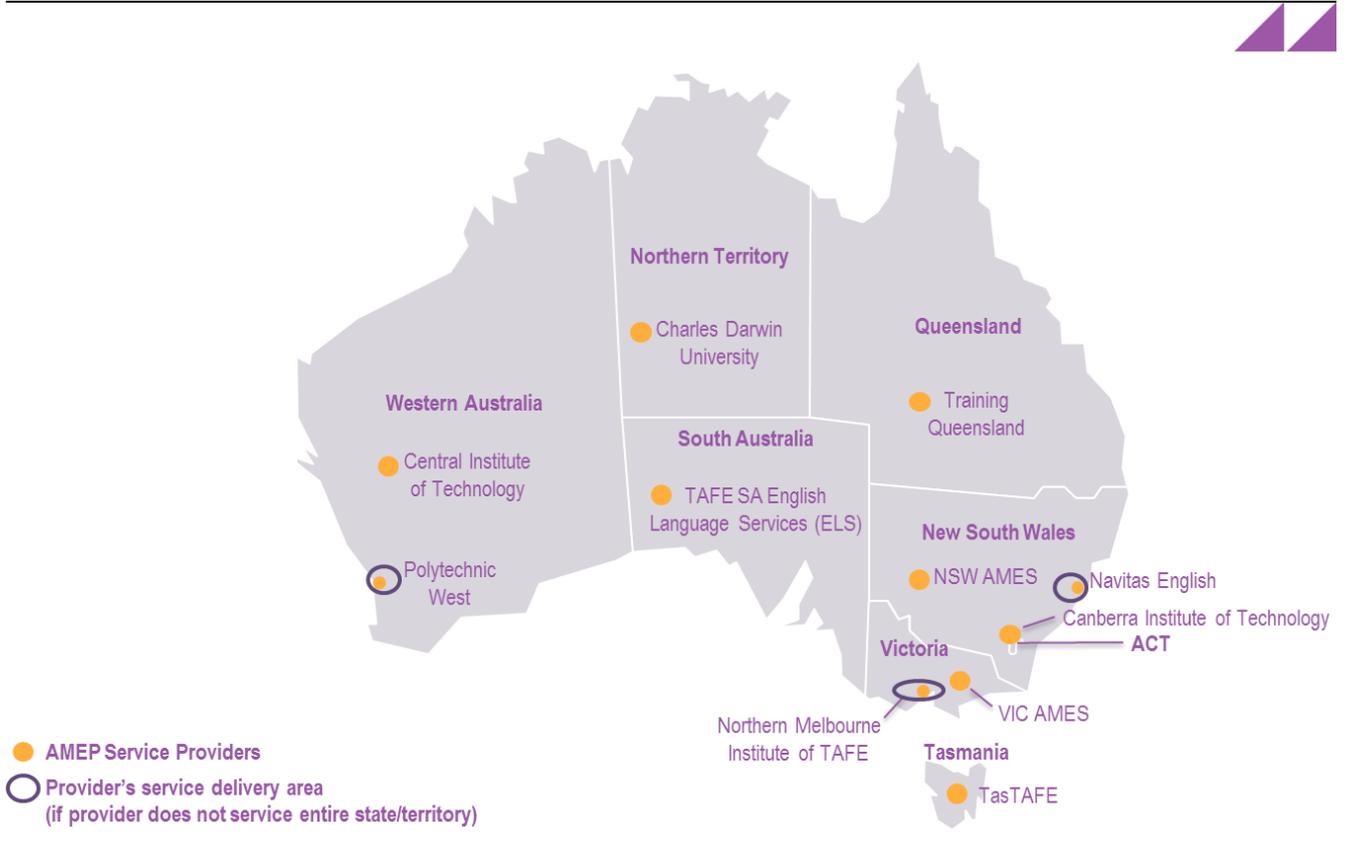
Source: The AMEP documentation

In addition to AMEP service providers, the AMEP engages the National ELT Accreditation Scheme Limited (NEAS) to assess compliance against the AMEP Performance Management Programme.

2.5   Funding model

The AMEP is a demand-driven programme and its annual budget is estimated according to the size and composition of the Australian Government's migration and humanitarian programmes.

Payment rates to AMEP service providers vary across the 26 contract regions as the hourly rates for individual providers were set through a competitive open tender process. When tendering for AMEP contracts, tenderers must specify fixed hourly rates for the AMEP components. The 11 AMEP payment components are detailed in Table 3. AMEP service providers may specify different hourly rates for provision in metro and rural areas.

Table 3 **AMEP payment components**

AMEP component	Payment details
Tuition modes	Description
General Classroom Tuition	The rate for face to face tuition incorporates all administrative costs associated with service delivery, including staffing costs, accommodation, facilities and equipment, data management and reporting, and CSWE licensing fees.
	Different rates may be applied for metropolitan services and for rural and regional area services.
HTS	A flat fee is paid per initial home tutor / client match. Each quarter payments are made for each client in the HTS.
SPP	A separate hourly rate is paid for SPP tuition in recognition of SPP AMEP clients' more complex learning needs.
SLPET	There are two main rates of payment for SLPET: a payment for face-to-face tuition; and a payment for work experience placements.
	The work experience placement fee is a separate one-off payment per client made for organising the client's work experience placement which includes: costs of liaising with employers, organising work placements, and monitoring and supporting clients during work placement.
Distance Learning	Distance Learning is contracted separately to other AMEP services.
Additional services	
AMEP Counsellor	The fee for services by the AMEP Counsellor is paid on an hourly basis for services delivered, and will incorporate all the activities undertaken by the AMEP Counsellor, including interviews and appointments with AMEP clients, promotional activities, networking with other service providers and administration.
Childcare	Childcare is paid on the basis of a fee per child per hour and childcare travel time (the time it takes the client to get to and from the childcare centre in order to attend the AMEP class, up to a maximum of 30 minutes travel time each way).
Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Program (HTSEP)	A flat fee is paid for each new tutor trained and for each professional develop session conducted.
Translation Referral Service	A flat fee for lodging translation documents for eligible clients.

Source: AMEP Funding/Payment Model Fact Sheet 2014

Prior to 1 July 2011, AMEP service providers were paid under an 'adjusted offered hours' model. As a result, AMEP service providers were able to invoice the Government for the number of hours each client enrolled in an activity in their contract region, irrespective of whether the clients attended class.[7]

Under the current business model (2011-17), AMEP service providers are paid under an 'actual hours' model — that is, only for actual hours of teaching provided, not if a client does not attend the class. The revised payment model means that clients with less than functional English can access up to the maximum entitlement of 510 hours irrespective of non-attendance, within five years from eligibility.[8]

---

[7] In consultations, AMEP service providers note that prospective teachers must always be available and classrooms ready for all enrolled students regardless of whether students attend.

[8] That is, hours are only deducted from a client's total if they attend/participate in AMEP and not for the total nominal hours of the learning activity which they are attending.

2.6   Recent programme changes

In July 2011, the AMEP moved to a new business model, which involved significant changes in delivery methods and administration to better align the programme with the needs of migrants and humanitarian entrants.

A key element of the new business model is not only to teach English to migrants and humanitarian entrants, but also to provide them with the skillset to settle in the Australian community. As part of this, an additional 200 hours of vocation-specific tuition, including up to 80 hours of work experience placements are available to eligible clients under SLPET.[9]

The revised business model enhanced the role of the AMEP Counsellor, who provides education and vocational guidance to migrants, and allowed greater accessibility to the programme for youth aged between 15 and 17 years of age.

The key changes to the revised business model and the underlying objectives are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4   **Recent programme changes**

Programme area	Description of major changes
Counsellors	Counsellors have been given an enhanced role, enabling them to provide clients with increased pathways support throughout their tuition.
Employment-Focused Course	The addition of 200 hours of vocation-specific tuition, including up to 80 hours of work experience placements for eligible clients, provides migrants with English language tuition while gaining familiarity with Australian workplace language, culture and practices.
Individual Pathway Guides	The introduction of Individual Pathway Guides (IPGs) to document and monitor client learning goals and outcomes. The IPGs provide clients with a greater level of guidance and support through more clearly delineated pathways to further English as a second language courses, education, employment and vocational training.
Settlement course	The introduction of a settlement course which reinforces important settlement information to all AMEP clients upon entry to and exit from the programme.
Youth	Greater accessibility for youth between ages 15 to 17 years who are not participating in the school system and support for the delivery of youth only classes where possible.
Accountability	AMEP service providers are now paid under an 'actual hours' model – AMEP service providers can only invoice the Department for actual services rendered – clients must attend class or they will not be paid. This has improved the accountability of AMEP service providers, and aims to ensure clients are receiving their full entitlement of up to 510 hours.

Source: AMEP documentation

2.7   Other relevant government programmes and services

The AMEP has important links to other Australian Government, and state and territory programmes and services. Figure 2 provides an overview of some of the most relevant programmes, which are then detailed in the sections that follow.

---

9   SLPET was the successor to the Employment Pathways Programme (EPP) and Traineeships in English and Workplace Readiness (TEWR) courses, which ran in 2008-09 and 2010-11.

Figure 2   **Overview of AMEP and other relevant programme and services**
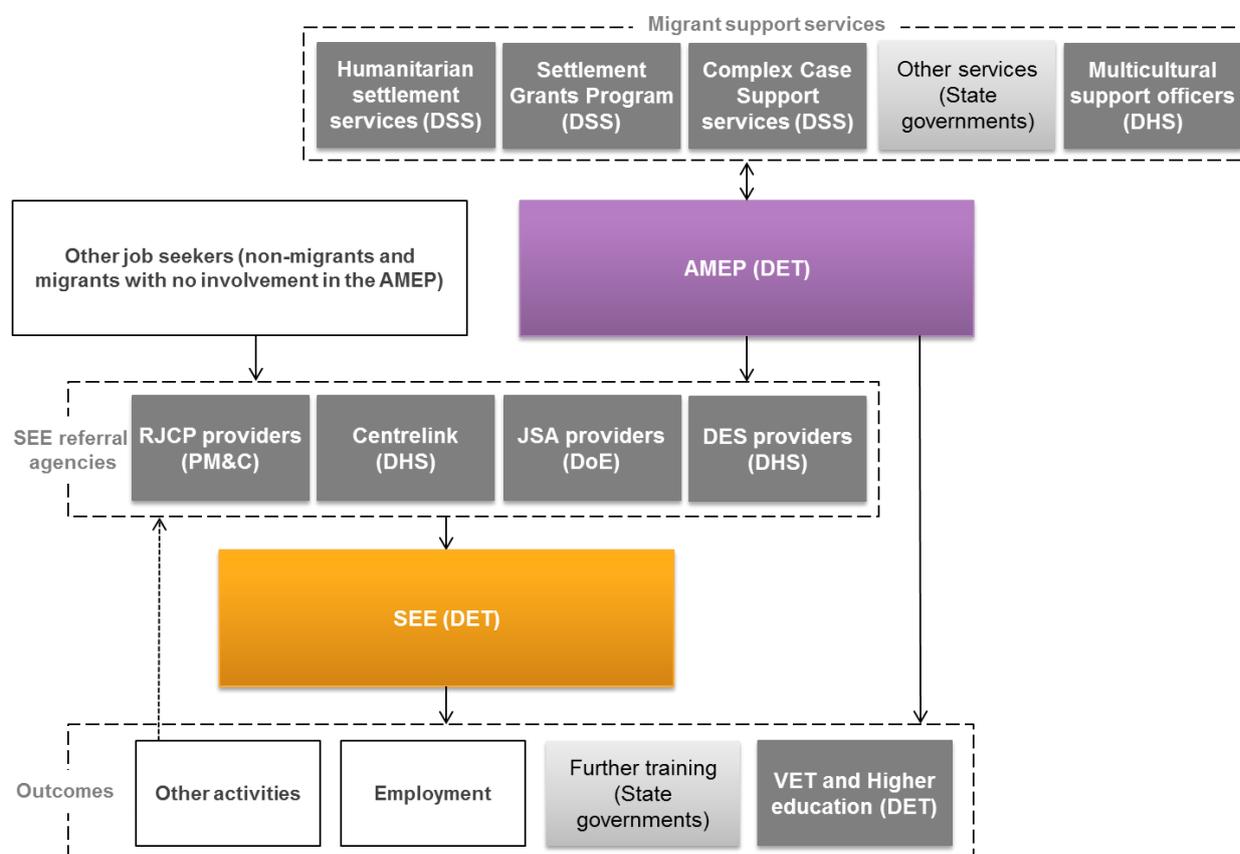
Note: The purple, yellow and dark grey boxes are Australian Government programmes; the light grey boxes are state/territory government programmes; the Australian Government departments in brackets indicates which agency is responsible for the programme. The acronyms are as follows: DHS – Department of Human Services; DET – Department of Education and Training; DSS – Department of Social Services; RJCP – Remote Jobs and Communities Programme; PM&C – Prime Minister and Cabinet; JSA – Job Services Australia; DoE – Department of Employment.
Source: ACIL Allen Consulting

2.7.1   Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) programme

The HSS programme provides newly arrived humanitarian entrants with early, practical settlement support following their arrival into Australia. The HSS programme assists clients with settlement into the Australian community, and is administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

The HSS is not a mandatory programme and clients may be referred to other services or programmes by their case manager if needed. Clients will generally access services under the HSS programme for the first six to twelve months following their arrival to build their independence and integration into the Australian community. The objectives of the HSS programme are to:

— provide clients with tailored support to begin a new life in Australia

— strengthen a client's ability to fully participate in the economic and social life of Australia

— give clients the skills and knowledge to independently access services beyond the HSS programme

— provide services in accordance with the programme's principles.

The objectives of the HSS programme align with the AMEP and in many ways provide a pathway for humanitarian clients to transition from the HSS programme to the AMEP.

HSS programme clients are also able to access other settlement services simultaneously, including the AMEP, as long as there is no duplication of services. The services delivered by HSS providers are tailored to meet the individual needs of clients. Such services may include:

— arrival reception and assistance

— assistance with finding accommodation (short and long term)

— property induction

— providing an initial food package and start-up pack of household goods

— assistance to register with Centrelink, Medicare, health services, banks and schools

— linking with community and recreational programmes.

HSS providers work with other settlement services such as AMEP service providers in order to ensure clients settlement needs are met, both during and beyond the HSS period. HSS clients are usually referred to the AMEP by their case managers, as most humanitarian entrants do not have functional English language skills, which are not an objective of the HSS programme.

2.7.2   Settlement Grants Programme (SGP)

The SGP was introduced on 1 July 2006 and aims to assist eligible clients to become independent, and integrate and participate in the Australian community as quickly as possible following their arrival. The SGP is designed to provide clients with case management, information, advice, referrals, community development and referrals for clients and engagement activities for eligible clients who recently arrived in Australia.

An annual assessment of settlement needs and evaluation of statistical data informs the funding priorities of settlement grants. The SGP is administered by the DSS. SGP funding:

— is provided on an application basis

— may be offered on a multi-year basis

— is usually based on financial years and is provided for a fixed period

— is expected to be fully committed at the beginning of each financial year.

The SGP client group comprises permanent residents who have arrived in Australia during the last five years and are one of the following:

— humanitarian entrants

— family stream migrants with low levels of English proficiency

— dependents of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas with low English proficiency

— select temporary residents who have low levels of English proficiency and are living in remote and regional areas.

There is an overlap between the target client group for the SGP and the AMEP client group, suggesting that many AMEP clients are eligible for, and may receive, settlement services under the SGP.

2.7.3   Complex Case Support (CCS) programme

The CCS programme provides humanitarian entrants with high needs specialised and intensive case management services. It is designed to specifically target clients whose needs are not met by the HSS and SGP. The design of the programme allows for the development of partnerships with settlement and mainstream services to address and overcome the barriers CCS clients face with settlement in Australia.

Clients may participate in CCS services for between 14 days and six months. This is contingent on individual's needs, and is determined in tailored case management planning. CCS clients usually have several intense or critical needs that require access to multiple services such as:

— mental health (including torture and trauma services)

— physical health

— family violence intervention

— personal, grief or family relationship counselling

— special services for children or youth

— support to manage accommodation, financial or legal issues.

The CCS programme is funded by the DSS, and each referral is assessed individually on a case by case basis. DSS provides funding to each service provider to manage clients' case management plans.

The CCS programme targets three primary target client groups, namely refugee entrants, Special Humanitarian Programme entrants, and protection visa holders. Unless exceptional circumstances are evident, these visa holders are eligible for CCS services for up to five years following their arrival in Australia.

CCS target client groups overlap with the target client groups for the AMEP, suggesting that many CCS clients may also be AMEP clients, or may transition to the AMEP following receipt of CCS services. The CCS programme offers multicultural communities services that the AMEP does not currently provide, hence, participation in the CCS programme is intended to allow for a smoother transition to the AMEP.

2.7.4   Multicultural Service Officers (MSOs)

MSOs from DHS assist migrants and humanitarian entrants to connect with Australian Government programmes and services. MSOs build relationships and consult in multicultural communities to identify and develop solutions to the barriers migrants often face when accessing services. They gather feedback on Government initiatives in migrant and humanitarian communities to determine the level of effectiveness of the initiatives, and the level and direction of their impact. MSOs operate throughout Australia in metropolitan, regional and remote service centres, with approximately 70 MSOs in place nation-wide.

The services offered by MSOs complement and work alongside those offered under the AMEP. The objectives of the AMEP in assisting migrants with the development of functional English, and settling and integrating into the Australian community, are supported by those of the MSOs in connecting multicultural communities with government services, and identifying and removing barriers. These services and programmes assist multicultural communities with assimilation and settlement (as well as independence), and create further opportunities for migrants to build on the functional English skills they are developing in the AMEP.

2.7.5   State and territory government programmes

State and territory governments in Australia have policy initiatives in place to support and promote the benefits of multiculturalism. Governments are actively operating in this policy area, particularly through the implementation of various programmes and grants supporting overarching policy initiatives. Some examples are provided below.

⸻ Multicultural Youth Network (MYN) in NSW provides a voice for youth who promote the benefits of cultural diversity, and help to foster acceptance and respect for diversity.

⸻ Skilled Migrant Employment (SkillME) Pilot Project in NSW is part of a strategic priority in the Multicultural NSW Strategic Plan to develop a collaborative process for maximising the skills, experience, and qualifications of migrants.

⸻ Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) conducts a series of initiatives that bridge the gap between South Australia Police (SAPOL) and refugee community groups in South Australia. These projects are part of an ongoing programme that contributes to the successful settlement and integration of newly-arrived humanitarian entrants, their families and communities.

⸻ Multicultural Grants, administered by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion in South Australia is designed to help multicultural organisations promote, showcase and support their cultures and communities.

⸻ Women's Leadership Programme (Programme 1: Women's Leadership Course; and Programme 2: Women's Introductory Leadership Skills Course) is an initiative of Multicultural SA in partnership with the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission and TAFE SA. Both courses are free-of-charge for successful applicants.

2.7.6   SEE programme

The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme commenced in 2013 as the continuation of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP). The SEE programme is the Australian Government's primary programme for helping eligible job seekers to improve their language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force.

While some clients progress from the AMEP to the SEE programme, there are no reliable data on the proportion of AMEP clients that move on to the SEE programme.

2.8   Previous reviews

The AMEP was reviewed by the then Department of Immigration and Citizenship in 2009. In addition, the House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee on Migration has made recommendations on the AMEP (2008-09).

2.8.1   2009 Review of the AMEP

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship undertook a review of the AMEP in 2008-2009. The findings and recommendations of the review informed the new AMEP business model and the re-tendering of AMEP contracts for 2011-17.

2.8.2 Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia, 18 March 2013

The 'Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia' by the House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee on Migration was tabled on 18 March 2013. It focused on how to maximise the benefits of migration and multiculturalism and proposed two recommendations in relation to the AMEP:

1. AMEP should be refined through the provision of flexible learning times, greater personalised services and context specific language services related to employment and tertiary study.
2. The SLPET programme be fully embedded within the AMEP model to ensure that all AMEP service providers offer vocational specific English training and work experience.

3 Client needs and good practices in adult migrant language programmes

This chapter sets out findings from client focus groups undertaken as part of this evaluation. It then sets out best practice principles for adult migrant language programmes, including cohort specific practices.

3.1 Clients' needs as indicated in focus groups

Based on focus groups carried out for this evaluation, the primary goals for the majority of clients are employment, transition to further education or training and settlement/integration into the Australia community. Many clients discussed the importance of learning about Australian cultural and social practices, as well as understanding laws, regulations and fair trading.

Being independent and fitting into the community was repeatedly expressed in the focus groups as an important outcome of the AMEP. Specifically, many clients stated that learning pronunciation, word usage, and rate of speech in Australia is essential for increased confidence and integration and settlement, and is best achieved when taught by native speakers. Some clients aimed to achieve functional English through the AMEP, but felt this was not possible in 510 hours (this issue is discussed further in Sections 5.3 and 7.1.7).

Clients discussed the importance of flexibility with class times. Some clients stated that morning classes are preferred, especially for those with school aged children, whereas others who would also like to obtain part-time employment prefer evening classes. Increasing the flexibility of class times would enable clients to attend to other commitments, such as religious/cultural traditions, and family commitments such as attending appointments.

3.2 Principles of adult migrant language programmes

The provision of settlement services and language programmes for recent arrivals is a means of ensuring that migrants and humanitarian entrants are able to establish themselves in their host country and begin the process of integration into its social, economic and civic life.

Literature in social cohesion and the settlement outcomes of migrants emphasise the multifaceted nature of integration into a host country. This is represented in Jensen's five domains of social cohesion — belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy — where policies, programmes and services can combine to support successful settlement outcomes for migrants and maintain the social cohesion of the host country.

Drawing on the work of Jenson (1998), Ager and Strang (2008) and Dandy *et al.* (2013), a framework for good practice in social cohesion can be developed. The figure below represents the five domains, their definition and supporting practices.

Figure 3   **A framework for good practice in settlement and social cohesion**

Source: Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013; Jensen 1998

In relation to this framework, the AMEP has a primary role in *Inclusion,* with its focus on language training and support for pathways to employment, education and training. Its integration with settlement services and seminars means it also makes a strong contribution to *Participation*, as it provides information to new arrivals and supports their civic education. The connection of AMEP service providers with migrant support services reinforces the *Legitimacy* of diverse communities within a broader, multicultural Australia. Indications of the social and community connections developed by participants and their exposure to a multicultural society (Leith 2012) suggest that the AMEP also contributes to *Belonging* and *Recognition*.

The work of Ager and Strang (2008) emphasises the role of language and cultural knowledge in facilitating the integration of migrants and humanitarian entrants. Their work indicates the criticality of language in securing settlement outcomes such as housing, education, employment and health.

Cheung and Phillimore's study of refugee integration in the United Kingdom (2013) found that refugees (70%) more so than either practitioners (53%) or policy makers and researchers (45%) nominated the ability to speak and write English as a significant indicator of integration. Language fluency was associated with good health, social networks and friendships, and with the ability to access education, housing and employment programmes. In the Australian context, Leith (2012) found that migrants considered the ability to communicate well with 'other Australians' in social contexts a key indicator of integration.

3.3   Good practices in adult migrant language programmes

This section discusses the key insights from the academic literature on good practices in adult migrant language programmes, an overview of which is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4   **Overview of good practices in adult migrant language programmes**

Program delivery	Teaching practice	Pre-migration experience
• Teacher qualifications: bachelor degree + specialist qualification in ESL • Attendance support: flexible scheduling, accessible child care, transport assistance, access to counselling (personal & career) • Free to new arrivals • Multiple delivery modes • Multiple locations accessible to new arrivals • Continuous intake of students	• Content-based instruction (dual mandate of language learning and settlement information) • Student-centred learning • Practices to encourage language use outside the classroom in different contexts • Use of motivational strategies centred on the settlement experience • Emphasis on formative (continuous) assessment	• Use of bilingual support in early learning • Support for first language literacy • Understanding developmental patterns of pre-literate learners • Recognition of traumatic pre-migration experiences and their impact on learning • Adaptive learning strategies that recognise students' cultural learning norms and strategies

Source: Benseman 2014; Burgoyne and Hull 2007; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010; Davis 2009; Leith 2012; Schaetzel and Young 2010; Taylor-Leech and Yates 2012.

3.3.1   Programme type

Programmes for adult migrant language learners generally focus on more than just language and literacy instruction. They also provide learners with access to information necessary for settlement and personal success through access to information about civic culture, access to government services, consumer awareness, opportunities for further education and training, and workplace readiness.

Schaetzel and Young (2010) identify a range of programme types.

— *Lifeskills or general ESL*: focusing on the development of general English language skills, often in the context of daily life.
— *Family literacy*: addressing the family as a whole, providing English language and literacy instruction for adults and children. Often, these programmes include parenting elements and information that parents can use to promote their children's literacy and general educational development.
— *English literacy and civics*: integrating English language instruction with opportunities to learn about civil rights, civic participation and responsibility, and citizenship.
— *Vocational ESL*: programmes concentrating on general pre-employment skills, such as finding a job or preparing for an interview, or targeting preparation for jobs in specific fields, such as horticulture or hospitality.
— *Workplace ESL*: focusing on developing and improving English language skills that are directly relevant to the work setting and often delivered on site.

Derived from its dual objective of language learning and settlement support, the AMEP offers elements of life skills, civics and vocational language learning.

3.3.2   Length of time and intensity of instruction

It has been noted that there is limited research on the length of time it takes adults to acquire a second language. Extrapolation from children's language learning indicates that

several years of intensive language instruction is needed for proficiency; 2-3 years for conversational language and 5-7 years to acquire parity with native English speakers (Schaetzel and Young 2010).

Schaetzel and Young also reviewed the findings of the few studies that have examined language acquisition in adults. One US study examined the 2000 census on the number, educational attainment and English skills of adults who had migrated to the US and were now permanent residents. It found that approximately 600 instructional hours is likely to be required for civic integration or to commence post-secondary education. Another study examined the educational level gains of over 6,500 US-based adult English language learners and found that the more hours of instruction received and the higher the intensity of instruction, the greater the rate of gain across the six educational functioning levels used in the National Reporting System. The effect of instructional hours was particularly strong at the Beginning and Advanced ESL levels. The study also found a general trend toward greater level gains for those clients with high rather than low intensity. Definitions of high and low intensity used in the study were not described by Schaetzel and Young nor was the original study able to be located.

The evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programme examined learners' language proficiency as a result of programme participation. The LINC programme has a dual mandate of language learning and settlement support similar to AMEP. It also supports attainment of the citizenship language requirement, currently set at Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 4 or higher in speaking and listening. The CLB recognises four domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing), three stages (basic, intermediate and advanced) and four benchmark levels at each stage (initial, developing, adequate and fluent). Thus, level 4 CLB represents fluent basic proficiency (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011). Participation in LINC is not limited by instructional hours but by proficiency gains.

It should be noted that use of the CLB is not mandatory in the provision of LINC; however, nearly 80 per cent of teachers use the CLB in assessment and developing curricula and learning materials. It is also important to note that a LINC level, of which there are seven, do not correspond to CLB levels.

The mean number of hours taken to complete a LINC level was 347.4; however, the mean number of hours was higher at 400 hours for Levels 0-3. Furthermore, the evaluation found that

> When students attend LINC classes for 1000 hours or more the gains likely attributable to LINC increase to 1.3 benchmark for listening, 1.2 for reading and 1.7 for writing.
>
> *Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011, p. 35)*

Gains of less than one benchmark were recorded across all domains when less than 750 hours of instruction were undertaken. The rate of gains increased significantly after 750 hours of instruction. For example, for the gain of 1.3 benchmark points in writing, 45 per cent of this gain was achieved between 750 and 1,000 hours of instruction and a similar result was observed for listening. For reading and speaking, approximately 35 per cent of the gain was achieved between 750 and 1,000 hours of instruction (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011, pp. 35-36).

3.3.3   Programme delivery

The diversity of the population which adult migrant language programmes seek to serve means that effective programme delivery requires flexibility. Classes need to vary in terms of

scheduling, location, duration and content in order to maximise learning opportunities for students while recognising the complexity and constraints of adult learners' lives.

Critical elements of flexible programme delivery include the provision and accessibility of multiple delivery modes such as full and part time study, classroom-based learning, distance education, online learning resources, and one-on-one tutoring. It is also essential that language learning programmes ensure that classes are available in locations accessible to target groups and include consideration of public transport, community hubs and access to other required support services. A key element identified in the literature was that programmes should be free to eligible new arrivals and with a continuous intake to ensure take up and ongoing participation.

Attendance support in the form of accessible and affordable childcare, transport assistance and access to personal and career counselling were also identified as good practices in programme delivery. These aspects of programme design ensured the greatest participation of the target cohorts (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011; Schaetzel and Young 2010).

The role of teacher qualifications has also been addressed in the literature, with consensus that it is essential to hold a bachelor degree with a formal ESL qualification, such as a Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) diploma or Certificate. Access to professional development is considered critical to maintaining relevant and effective teaching practice for a complex group of learners. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011; Schaetzel and Young 2010).

In particular, the evaluation of the LINC programme found that while it was difficult to assess the impact of such factors as learner's educational background, gender, age, aptitude and intelligence, it was evident that the quality of the language instructor played a significant role in successful language acquisition. Teachers with work-like expectations of learning commitment, enthusiasm, class organisation and an 'English only' rule in the classroom seemed to have more committed and motivated students who made a greater effort to speak English away from the classroom (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011; Derwing *et al.* 2009).

3.3.4 Teaching practice

Content-based instruction was identified as a critical element of adult language learning programmes. Where programmes have a dual mandate of language instruction and settlement information, there is improved language learning as students use their language skills in daily settings outside the classroom. Where learning includes a focus on information to support their settlement, students are more motivated to learn because it has immediate connection with their daily life and their hopes for the future such as further education and training, employment, and helping children through their school education (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011; Schaetzel and Young 2010).

Recommended instructional practice focuses on student-centred learning, the use of motivational strategies and practices that encourage use of language outside the classroom in different contexts such as social situations, work and education. Additionally, the literature emphasises the importance of formative (ongoing or continuous) assessment rather than only summative assessment (Benseman 2014; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011; Schaetzel and Young 2010; Taylor-Leech and Yates 2012).

In their investigation of the independent language learning strategies of participants in the AMEP, Taylor-Leech and Yates (2012) found that participants largely adopted social strategies both within the AMEP classes and their day-to-day lives, though many did not adopt any learning strategy. This means that participants intentionally practised or sought to use their language skills in social settings, rather than through other strategies such as the use of learning materials, self-directed language learning or memorisation or information retrieval strategies.

Taylor-Leech and Yates (2012) also found that strong first language connections in the home and community, low confidence and translation roles taken on by family members could impact on learners' capacity to practice English speaking and listening and their propensity to take risks in speaking English to native speakers. On this basis, Taylor-Leech and Yates recommended that AMEP provision explicitly make use of social networks and extra-curricular activities to practice daily life situations. Additionally, specifically teaching strategies about how to optimise social contact with native speakers was also encouraged.

3.3.5 Pre-migration experience

Recognition of learners' pre-migration experience is strongly supported throughout the literature. This could include the use of bilingual support in the classroom to facilitate translation as well as the communication of unfamiliar learning concepts and strategies and explicit support for first language literacy as a contribution to second language literacy (Davis 2009). The literature recommends progress expectations that are appropriate to the developmental patterns of pre-literate learners, who are far slower than literate learners, along with recognition of traumatic migration experiences and their impact on learning (Benseman 2014). Adaptive learning strategies that acknowledge and leverage learners' cultural learning norms and strategies were also supported (Burgoyne and Hull 2007).

A particular focus of the Canadian and Australian literature was recognition of an often monocultural pre-migration experience that contrasted sharply with these countries' strong multiculturalism. In this context, it is appropriate for programmes to address living in a multicultural society and supporting social connection across cultures. This could be achieved through mixed ethnicity classrooms, use of English as a common language within the classroom and familiarity with the norms and values of a multicultural society (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011; Leith 2012).

3.4 Cohort-specific good practice in adult migrant language programmes

This section details cohort-specific good practices in adult migrant language programmes based on the academic literature. An overview of these good practices is provided in Figure 5.

Figure 5   **Overview of cohort specific good practices**

Refugees	Survivors of torture & trauma	Limited literacy in first language
• Teachers are able to recognise symptoms of mental illness that indicate stress in resettlement (migration, acculturative and traumatic) • Inclusion of relevant health and cultural content • Access to culturally appropriate counselling is visible and supported	• Negotiating learner-centred strategies acknowledges the complexity of personal control and responsibility for the learner • Recognition of and support for psychological barriers to learning (e.g. fear, low self-esteem, inability to trust and negative attitudes towards education) • Personal skills are developed alongside academic skills • Literacy workers are peer and professionally supported to manage personal impacts	• Literacy assessment in first language • Support for formal literacy in first language to assist in understanding language and literacy conventions • Clear routine and emphasis on practice and recycling of content • Repeated oral practice

Source: Adkins and Sample 1999; Benseman 2014; Davis 2009; Horsman 1998; Magro 2007

3.4.1   Refugees

Refugees are acknowledged within the literature as a cohort with particular needs arising from traumatised backgrounds. In these circumstances, the literature recommends that teachers are able to recognise symptoms of mental illness that indicate stress in resettlement (migration, acculturative and traumatic) and are able to support students in accessing culturally appropriate counselling and services. Language programmes that facilitate social contact and inclusion contribute significantly to refugee resettlement (Benseman 2014; Burgoyne and Hull 2007; McDonald *et al.* 2008; Victorian Settlement Planning Committee 2005).

Benseman's interviews with teachers of refugees who had also taught ESL to non-refugees revealed a number of factors impacting upon their ability to learn. These included psychological trauma as seen in increased inattention or distractibility, stress resulting from family members still in dangerous conditions, poor physical health and low levels of literacy that students needed to 'learn how to learn' (Benseman 2014).

The teaching strategies appropriate for this cohort of learners are varied but Benseman's study revealed strong support for bilingual tutors. These tutors were able to help identify and resolve issues in learners' lives, provide instant clarification of language-related difficulties, assist in small group work, act as an intermediary between teacher and learners and pick up subtle cultural signals from learners that might support or impede language learning (Benseman 2014, pp. 99-101).

3.4.2   Survivors of torture and trauma

Survivors of torture and trauma are recognised as learners with complex health, psychological and settlement needs. With regard to teaching practice, the literature demonstrates that recognition of, and support for, psychological barriers to learning such as

fear, low self-esteem, inability to trust and negative attitudes towards education, are essential to successful language learning (Adkins and Sample 1999).

A significant element of this is the teacher's capacity to negotiate learner-centred strategies that acknowledge the complexity of personal control and responsibility for the learner. It is also important for personal skills to be developed alongside academic skills. For this reason, approaches that include mentoring, peer counselling and tutoring, as well as interpreters support of language acquisition, are recommended (Magro 2007). It is also suggested that literacy workers are peer and professionally supported to manage personal impacts (Horsman 1998).

3.4.3   'Women at Risk'

Many women migrants necessarily juggle dealing with the challenges of their own settlement with those faced by their family members, and their frequent role as the primary care giver for their family, including looking after children who are under school age. This can mean that women migrants can find it difficult to give priority to their own settlement needs, including enrolling in, and continuing to stay engaged with, the AMEP. In turn this can delay the achievement of their own settlement outcomes, including participation in the workforce or further educational opportunities (Yates 2011).

These challenges are further heightened for those who arrive in Australia under the Woman at Risk visa programme, which provides for the resettlement of vulnerable women refugees and their dependants, living without male relatives. By definition, those who enter Australia under the Woman at Risk programme have faced a wide range of very traumatic experiences that may include threats to security, sexual violence, physical abuse, intimidation, torture and/or exploitation and such problems can be further compounded by the effects of past persecution sustained in their country of origin or during flight from their country of origin. All of these experiences can contribute to the vulnerability of this group (Bond 2010).

As noted elsewhere in this report, provision of childcare is considered an important feature of the programme that is designed to maximise women's participation. It is also important that the programme continue to take account of women's needs in programme design and delivery.

As discussed below in Section 5.1.1, the SPP, for which most, if not all, Woman at Risk entrants would be eligible, provides support and additional tuition hours to assist in addressing the issues this cohort may face.

3.4.4   Limited literacy in first language

Learners who are pre-literate or have low levels of literacy in their first language are recognised as requiring high levels of individualised support. In these circumstances, access to support in their first language makes a significant contribution to second language acquisition. Literacy assessment in their first language more accurately identifies their literacy levels while bilingual support in class assists in understanding unfamiliar language and literacy conventions such as alphabet, word order and grammar concepts (Davis 2009).

Bensemen (2014, p. 95) particularly notes that 'stair-case' progress in language acquisition should not be expected in pre-literate learners and that progress can be extremely slow. For those students who are pre-literate, English language learning must first address the fundamentals of language and literacy conventions including:

initial word sounds, learning motor skills for forming letters, learning a new alphabet, recalling previous learning, understanding the direction of text, understanding new word orders and learning to listen, analyze, and reflect, using questions.

(Benseman 2014, p. 98)

General teaching strategies included constant revision, sensitivity to maximising an individual's experience of success, use of phonics (especially for low level learners), rote practice of oral skills and a cycle of modelling/acting/role-play/re-cycle/reflection/practise in pairs.

3.5   Implications for the AMEP

The AMEP's dual mandate of settlement and language learning is strongly supported by the literature. There is evidence that this approach enables a deeper understanding of Australian society and its multicultural values among migrants, as well as their participation in their community and in education, training and employment opportunities.

The migrant cohort is complex, with considerable variation in pre-migration experience, participation in formal education and training, and access to social supports in Australia. The literature is consistent in its view that flexibility in programme delivery is critical to participation and successful outcomes for learners. Programme delivery is most effective when class locations are easily accessible, scheduled to accommodate working migrants, and offer other participation assistance such as affordable childcare and counselling. The AMEP is designed to enable providers to offer various learning modes, additional support for vulnerable cohorts such as humanitarian entrants and childcare support. The effectiveness of these features is discussed in the following chapter.

The literature is also consistent on the benefits of programmatic support for good teaching practice. This includes bilingual support in the early stages of language learning, sensitivity to developmental patterns of learners (especially pre-literate learners) and a curriculum framework that supports and encourages content-based and student-centred learning. An emphasis on formative (continuous) assessment is conducive to learner success, as it more accurately reflects learner progress and is used to inform teaching strategies. It would appear that the design of the AMEP is consistent with this principle (this is considered in detail in Chapter 7).

The intensity of instruction, as measured by hours, and its contribution to language gains has been subject to investigation and debate. There is some evidence to suggest that approximately 600 hours is an appropriate minimum to achieve functional levels of language acquisition. However, detailed analysis of learner outcomes and language gains in LINC suggest that between 750-1000 instructional hours is more likely to result in the desired proficiency outcomes. There is agreement within the literature that the pre-migration experience of language learning and education is a strong factor in the length of time required to reach functional levels in an additional language. The effectiveness of the AMEP and its sub-programmes, such as SPP, in meeting the language acquisition needs of low language level learners is discussed in the following chapter.

<div style="background:purple">

4 The AMEP cohort, take up and clients' English language skills

</div>

This chapter details the participation and take up rates of the AMEP, and AMEP clients' characteristics and English language skills.

4.1 AMEP clients and take up by visa stream

In order to examine the take up of the AMEP by the programme's target groups, this section first details trends in migration to Australia and in AMEP enrolments and participation.

4.1.1 Potentially eligible migrants

As noted previously, the AMEP is open to eligible permanent migrants and humanitarian entrants with less than functional English. Figure 6 shows the annual number of migrant entrants into Australia over the last 10 years who are, due to their visas, likely to be eligible for the AMEP. These data include migrants who are not eligible for the AMEP due to their higher proficiency in English. As a result, the data in Figure 6 are for *potentially* eligible migrants.

Figure 6   **Migrant entrants by visa stream with potential AMEP eligibility**
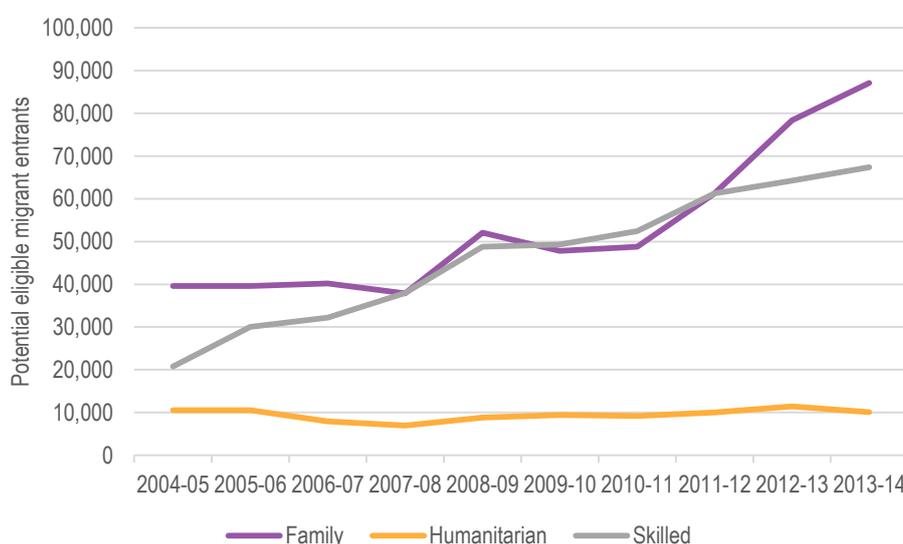
Note: Potential eligible migrant entrants are migrants with an AMEP-eligible visa subclass, excluding those under 18, and excluding primary visa AMEP subclass holders if their AMEP visa subclass is flagged as only for dependents.
Source: AMEP dataset

These data include individuals migrating from English speaking countries. Based on recent settlement data, it is estimated that 20-30 per cent of Family visa stream migrants and 15-25 per cent of Skilled visa migrant are from English-speaking countries and so would be

ineligible for the AMEP. It is unlikely any Humanitarian stream entrants are from English-speaking countries (Settlement Database 2014).

Migrants under the Skilled visa stream may be eligible for the AMEP. Most skilled workers under this stream must meet English language requirements to gain a visa and thus are unlikely to be eligible for the AMEP. But some skilled worker migrants can also apply to bring a partner and/or family members to Australia (who do not face English language requirements) when they migrate and such partners or family members receive the same visa type as the skilled worker migrants.[10]

Over the last 10 years there has been a significant increase in potentially eligible migrants in the Skilled and Family visa streams, while there has been no growth in migrants in the Humanitarian stream.

4.1.2   AMEP enrolments and participation

The AMEP enrolments (that is, clients who join the programme for the first time) over the same period have also increased, as has the number of clients participating (that is, receiving AMEP services) in the AMEP each year (Figure 7).

Figure 7   **AMEP enrolments (new participants) and total participants per year**
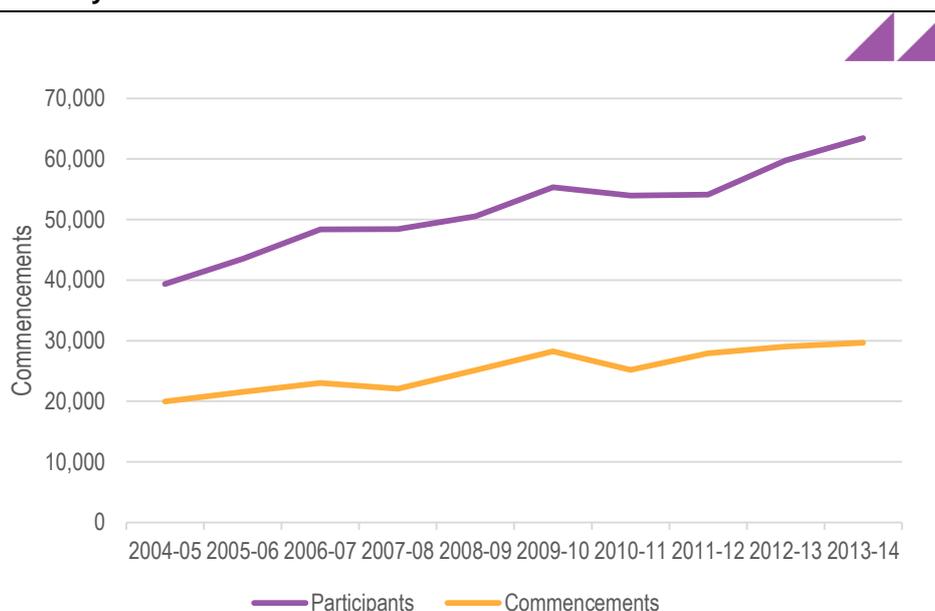
Note: Participants are AMEP clients who received AMEP services in a given year.
Source: AMEP dataset

4.1.3   Estimated AMEP take up

The take up rate for the AMEP differs markedly for different visa streams, with humanitarian entrants much more likely to enrol in the AMEP — an estimated 80 per cent of humanitarian entrants commenced in the programme in 2013-14. The estimated take up rate for Family visa stream migrants is 20 per cent, and Skilled visa stream migrants 8 per cent (Figure 8).

---

[10]   The AMEP dataset provided to the evaluation does not allow the disaggregation Skilled visa stream clients into primary skilled migrants and dependants of skilled migrants.

The differences between visa streams may reflect Humanitarian entrants' greater English language needs and the English language support many Family and Skilled visa streams migrants can access from partners and family members.

While AMEP enrolments have been rising, they have not risen as quickly as the number of potentially eligible migrant entrants, leading to a fall in the estimated take up rate from 29 per cent in 2004-05 to 19 per cent in 2013-14. Estimated take up among Humanitarian entrants is volatile but is not exhibiting a downward trend, while take up among the Family and Skilled visa streams has fallen over the last four years (Figure 8).

Stakeholder consultations carried out for the evaluation did not provide any clear explanation for the fall in the estimated take up rate since 2008-09. It could be caused by cohort characteristics (such as an increase in the proportion of migrants with high level English language skills), provider behaviour, programme design, or other factors (such as increased usage of online courses).

Figure 8   **Take up rate of the AMEP by potential eligible migrants**
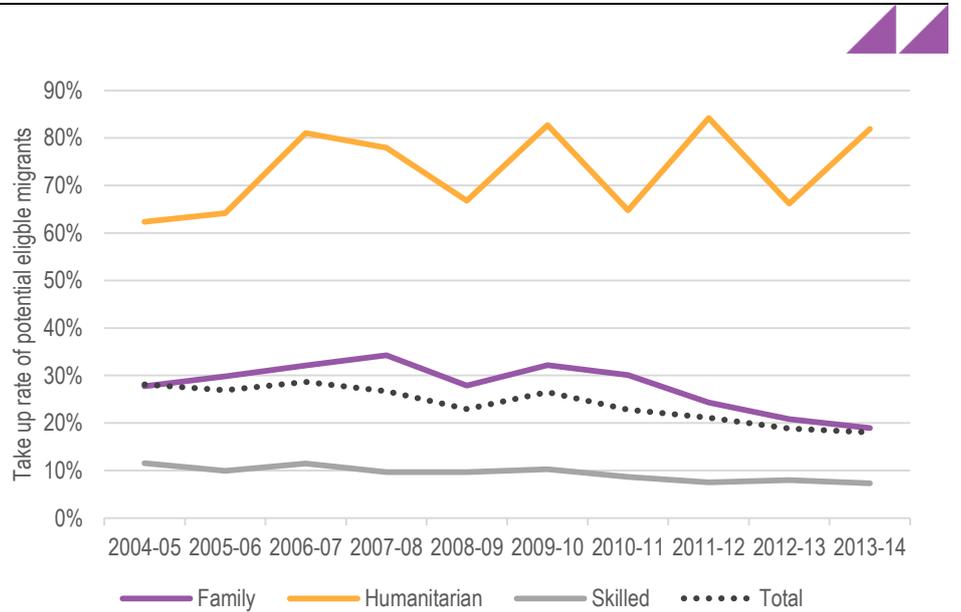
Note: Potential eligible migrant entrants are migrants with an AMEP-eligible visa subclass, excluding those under 18, and excluding primary visa AMEP subclass holders if their AMEP visa subclass is flagged as only for dependents. AMEP clients are clients that have commenced in the programme.
Source: AMEP dataset

Key Finding 1

Over the last 10 years there has been a significant increase in potentially eligible migrants in the Skilled and Family visa streams, while there has been no growth in migrants in the Humanitarian stream.

AMEP enrolments over the same period have also increased, as have the number of clients participating in the AMEP each year.

Estimated take up of the AMEP is highest among Humanitarian migrants and lowest among Skilled migrants, likely reflecting English language need.

Estimated take up of the AMEP by potential eligible migrants appears to have fallen slightly over the last ten years. Estimated take up among Humanitarian entrants is volatile but is not exhibiting a downward trend.

4.1.4   How clients hear about the programme

On entry into the AMEP, clients are asked how they found out about the programme. Finding out about the AMEP from a friend/relative is most common, while visa grant letters are also a frequent way in which clients are first informed of the AMEP. Settlement services play a central role in informing Humanitarian visa stream clients of the AMEP (Figure 9).

Figure 9   **How clients hear about the AMEP**
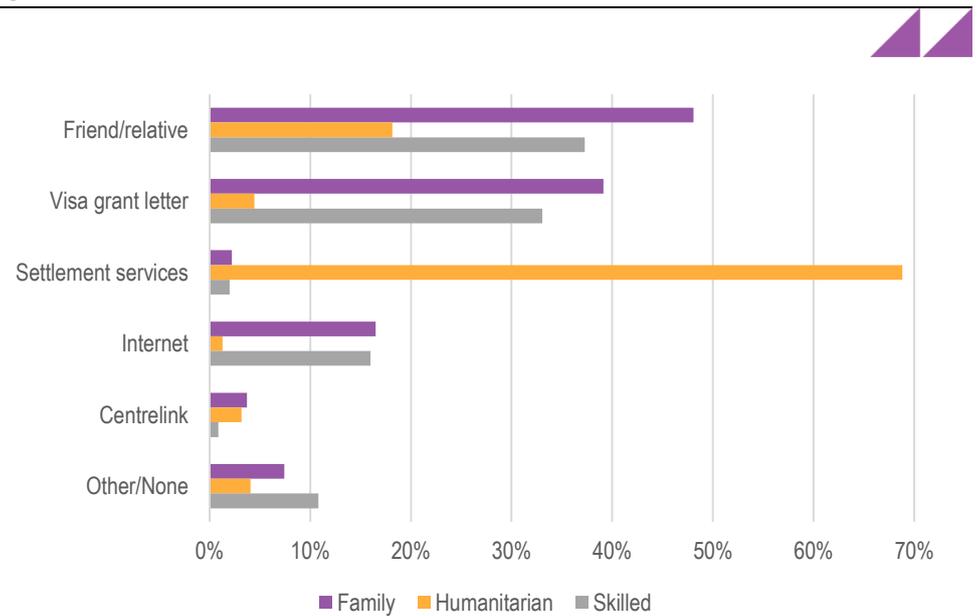
Note: Data for clients commencing between 2011-12 and 2013-14, as data from prior years are incomplete. Data are based on clients' answers to providers on enrolling in the programme. 'Settlement services' refers to clients who answered 'Settlement Service Provider Organisation' or 'IHSS Provider'. 'Other/None' refers to 'Advertisement' (0.5 per cent), 'AUSCO' (0.3 per cent) and 'None of the above' (5.3 per cent).
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations also emphasised the importance of HSS providers in linking recently arrived humanitarian entrants to the AMEP. This was particularly effective in locations where the HSS provider and the AMEP service provider had a close relationship, and would often lead to HSS providers taking clients to enrol in the AMEP shortly after arrival in Australia.

Stakeholders report that most potential clients are well informed about the programme due to provider promotional activities from AMEP service providers, HSS providers, Centrelink and other organisations such as migrant resource centres.

> **Key Finding 2**
>
> Clients' friends/relatives and visa grant letter are important sources of information about the AMEP. HSS providers play a central role in informing Humanitarian visa stream clients of the AMEP.

4.2   The AMEP client profile

4.2.1   AMEP clients by visa stream

The AMEP enrolments have increased in most years since 2004-05. The majority of the AMEP enrolments are migrants in the Family visa stream (55 per cent in 2013-14). Around 28 per cent of enrolments are Humanitarian entrants, while Skilled visa stream migrants account for the remaining 17 per cent (Figure 10).

Figure 10   The AMEP enrolments by visa stream
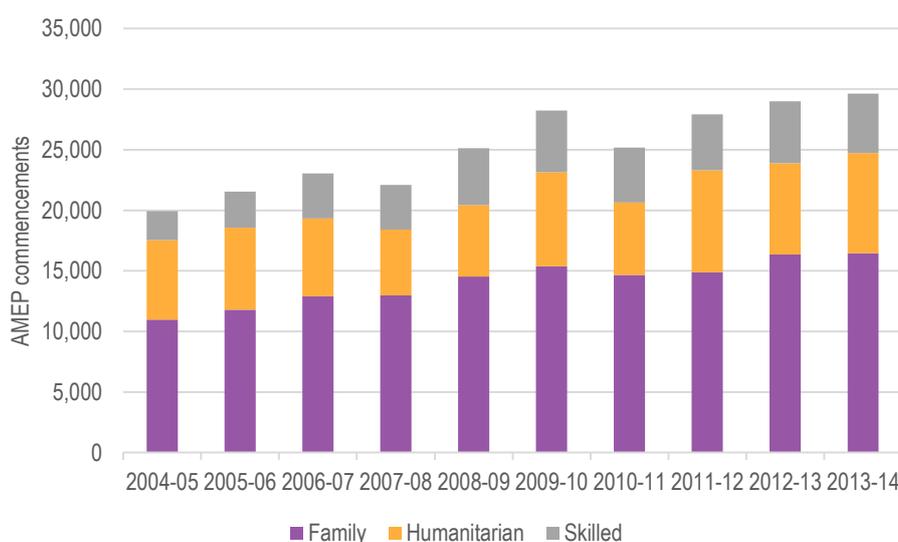
Source: AMEP dataset

The shares of each visa stream have remained relatively steady since 2003-04, apart from a decrease in the share of Humanitarian entrants between 2005-06 and 2008-09 and a corresponding increase in the share of Skilled visa stream migrants (Figure 11).

Figure 11 **Proportion of enrolments by visa stream**
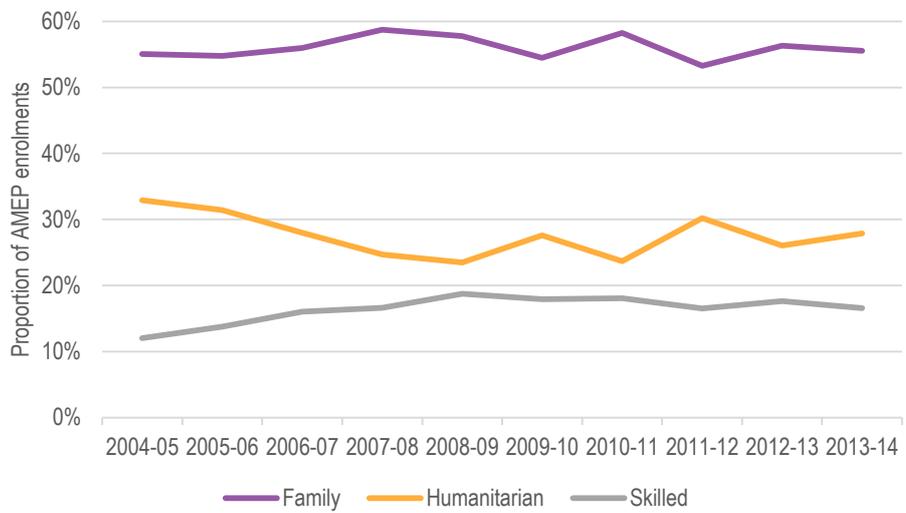
The increase in the share of Skilled visa stream migrants has come from a significant increase in enrolments from this visa stream, albeit from a small base. While the last ten years has seen 50 per cent increase in the number of AMEP enrolments, Skilled visa enrolments rose 200 per cent from 2004-05 to 2013-14 (Figure 12).

Figure 12 **The AMEP enrolment growth by visa stream**
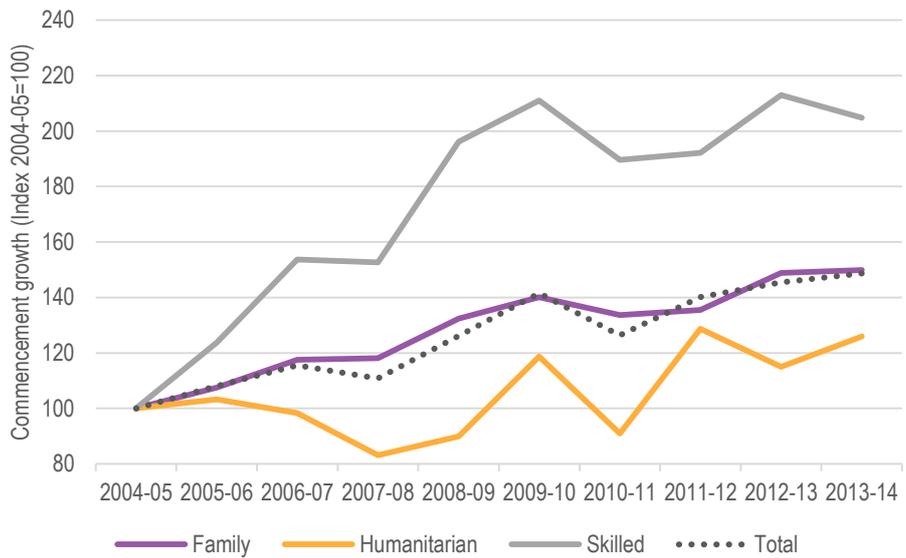
The impact on the AMEP of the growth in Skilled visa stream enrolments and share of enrolments (up from 12 per cent in 2004-05 to 17 per cent in 2013-14) is likely mixed. As set out below in Section 4.3, Skilled visa stream clients have, on average, higher English language skills on entrance to the AMEP, compared to clients from the other two visa

streams. Skilled visa stream clients are also likely to have had less difficult migration experiences than Humanitarian visa stream clients.

Conversely, Family visa stream clients are likely to have more settlement support in Australia from family members who have lived in Australia a number of years, than Skilled visa stream clients who are often migrating to Australia with their family members.

> **Key Finding 3**
>
> Over the past 10 years there has been a significant increase in enrolments from the Skilled visa stream, albeit from a small base, likely caused by increases in eligible Skilled visa stream migrants entering Australia.
>
> The Family visa stream continues to account for the majority of the AMEP enrolments. Of the three visa streams, Skilled visa stream entrants have seen the highest growth and account for a greater share of enrolments than 10 years ago.

4.2.2 The AMEP clients by gender and age

Around 63 per cent of AMEP enrolments are women, although each visa stream has a different gender composition. Almost three quarters of Family visa stream enrolments are women, compared to 40 per cent of Humanitarian visa stream enrolments and 66 per cent of Skilled visa stream enrolments (Figure 13).

This is likely due to the composition of the eligible migrants entering Australian in each visa stream – women are over represented in the Family stream and are more likely to migrate as a partner of a skilled worker migrant. Women are underrepresented in the Humanitarian stream.

Figure 13 **AMEP client visa streams by gender, enrolments 2010-11 to 2013-14**

Male 26%
Female 74%
Family stream, 62,342

Female 40%
Male 60%
Humanitarian stream, 30,227

Male 34%
Female 66%
Skilled stream, 19,196
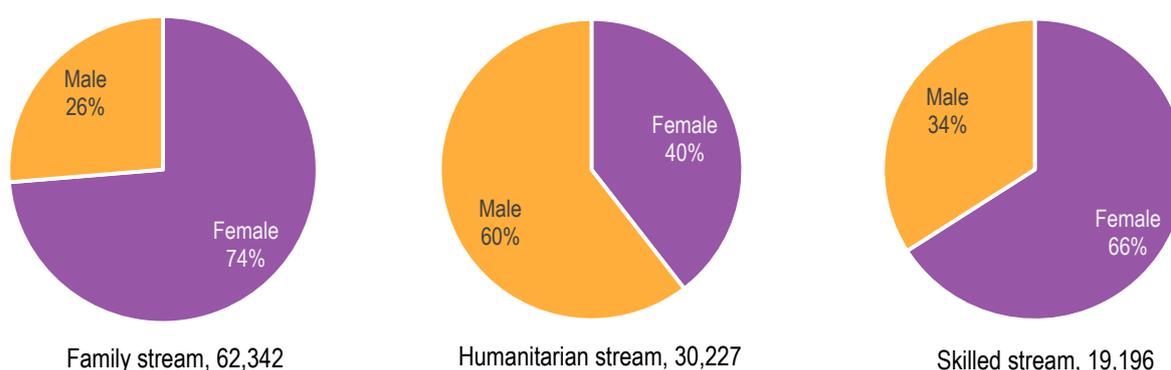
Source: AMEP dataset

The majority of AMEP clients are aged between 20 and 39. Skilled visa stream clients have an age profile concentrated between 30 and 50, while the Family visa stream has the highest proportion of under 30 clients and of clients aged 55 or older (Figure 14).

That Skilled visa stream clients are older may be due to that they are migrating with their Skilled visa partners who must demonstrate in-demand skills, which often take time to gain and/or demonstrate sufficiently. A significant proportion of Family visa stream clients are

aged under 35, possibly reflecting the age at which spousal relationships are formed, in this case between Australian citizens and Family visa stream migrants.

Figure 14 **Age group by visa stream, enrolments 2010-11 to 2013-14**
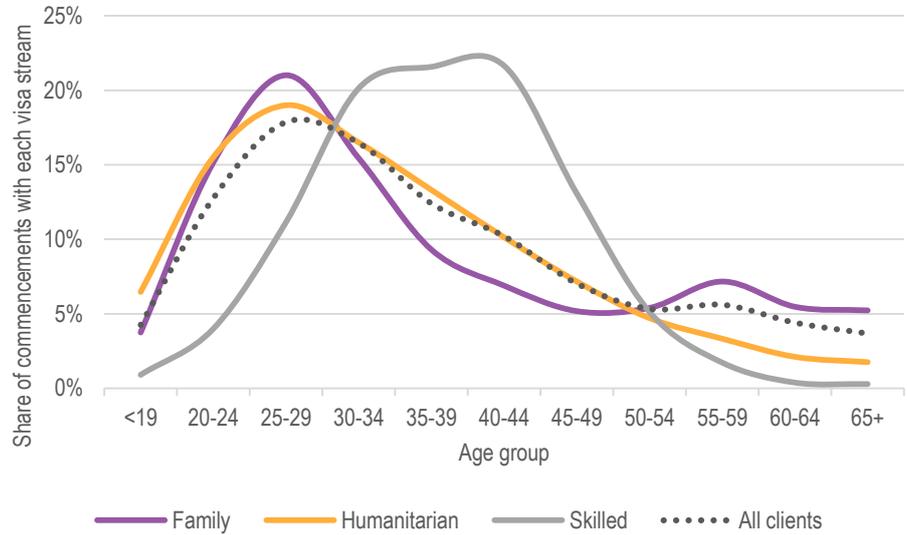
Source: AMEP dataset

The age profile of AMEP clients has changed only slightly over the last 10 years, with a greater share of clients older than 55 in 2013-14, compared to 2004-05 (Figure 15). It is not clear what is driving the change in the age profile of AMEP clients, although the increased share of Skilled visa stream clients (who are older on average) may be partially responsible.

Figure 15 **Age profile of AMEP clients over time, enrolments**

Source: AMEP dataset

Key Finding 4

More than 60 per cent of AMEP clients are women. There are significant gender differences between visa streams with women making up 74 per cent of Family visa stream clients but only 40 per cent of Humanitarian entrant clients.

The age profiles of each visa stream cohort also differs, with Family visa stream clients accounting for most older clients, and Skilled visa stream clients concentrated in the middle of the age distribution.

4.2.3   AMEP clients by country of origin

In 2013-14, the majority of AMEP enrolments were from migrants from North East Asia or Southern and Central Asia (Figure 16).

China (25 per cent of AMEP enrolments), Afghanistan (9 per cent), Iraq (8 per cent) and Vietnam (7 per cent) are the most common countries of origin among AMEP clients.

While in 2004-05, the North Africa and the Middle East region was the largest source of AMEP clients, by 2013-14 the region accounted for just 18 per cent of enrolments. The Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe regions account for 5 per cent or less of AMEP clients.

Figure 16 **AMEP clients' country group of origin, enrolments**

2004-05, 19,939 clients

2013-14, 29,639 clients
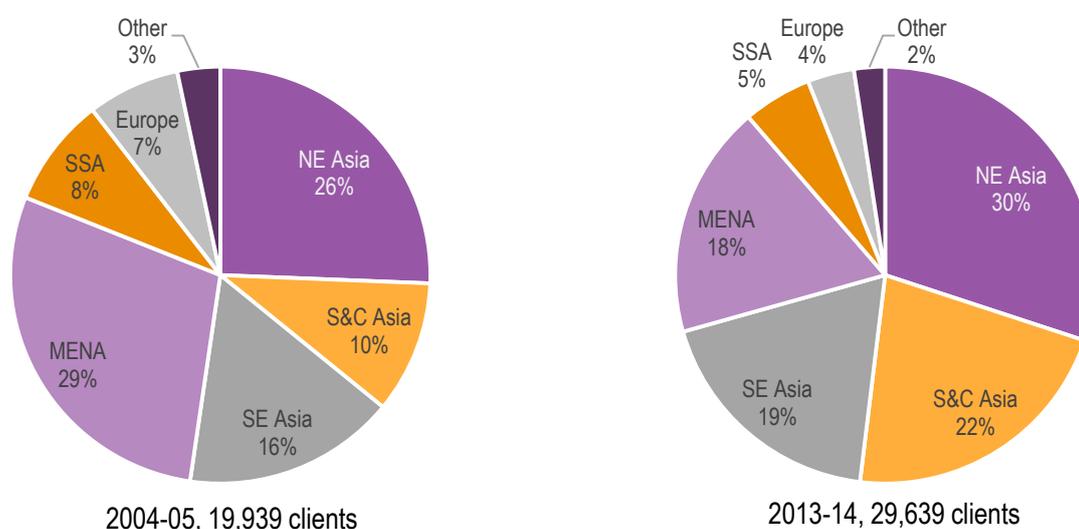
Note: NE Asia – North-East Asia; S&C Asia – Southern and Central Asia (including Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka); SE Asia – South-East Asia; MENA – North Africa and the Middle East; SSA – sub-Saharan Africa.
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 17 shows than between 2004-05 and 2013-14, enrolments by migrants from North Africa and the Middle East North Africa (MENA) fell at an average of 1 per cent a year, and by 11 per cent as a proportion of all AMEP clients. This was largely driven by a fall in enrolments from Sudan.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Europe also saw average annual falls, while significant growth was seen in migrants from Southern and Central Asia (S&C Asia) driven by growth in Afghanistan, Bhutan and India.

Figure 17 **Change in AMEP enrolments by country group, 2004-05 to 2013-14**
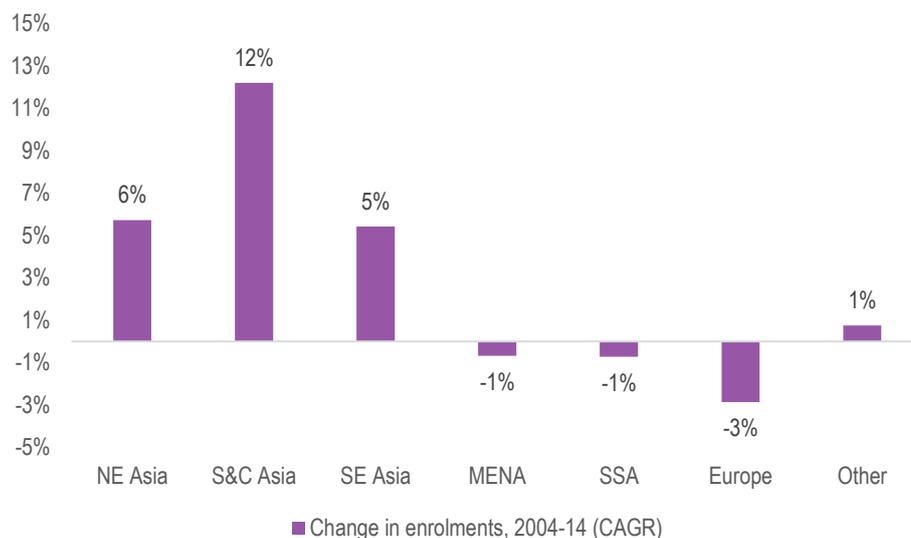
Source: AMEP dataset

These changes in the composition of the AMEP cohort reflect changes in Australian Government migration policy, particularly the increase in Skilled visas granted, and the Humanitarian Programme adapting to international events, for example, the end of the Sudanese civil war.

In consultations for this evaluation, AMEP service providers indicated that the proportion of low level English language skill and/or high needs clients has increased over recent years. As discussed below in Section 4.3, this is not supported by AMEP English language proficiency entry scores.

However, as Figure 16 and Figure 17 make clear, there has been considerable change in the country of origin of clients commencing the AMEP. In consultations for this evaluation, AMEP service providers noted that these changes presented challenges as they must adapt their training delivery to meet the preferences, needs and learning styles of clients from different countries of origin. While average English language skills of AMEP clients have not fallen over the past ten years, providers describe experiencing considerable change in their cohorts, which has necessitated readjustment to the way they offer the AMEP.

Key Finding 5

The profile of AMEP clients by country of origin has changed significantly over the past ten years, driven by changes in Australian migration policy. There has been a large increase in AMEP clients from Southern and Central Asia, and a fall in clients from North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe.

4.2.4   AMEP clients by state/territory and remoteness

The majority of AMEP clients (68 per cent) are located in NSW and Victoria and both states have a greater share of AMEP clients relative to their share of the Australian population (Table 5). Tasmania has the highest proportion of Humanitarian visa stream clients, with 68

per cent of clients in the state from the Humanitarian stream. Western Australia and Northern Territory have the highest shares of Skilled visa stream clients.

Table 5   **State and territory AMEP client cohort make up**

	Visa stream			Share of AMEP clients	Share of Australian population
	Family	Humanitarian	Skilled		
Australian average	56%	27%	17%		
Australian Capital Territory	64%	18%	18%	1%	2%
New South Wales	65%	23%	12%	36%	32%
Northern Territory	54%	22%	24%	1%	1%
Queensland	51%	31%	17%	12%	20%
South Australia	40%	40%	20%	7%	7%
Tasmania	24%	68%	7%	1%	2%
Victoria	53%	27%	20%	32%	25%
Western Australia	51%	24%	25%	9%	11%

Note: Percentage of AMEP clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.
Source*:* AMEP dataset, ABS.

The vast majority of AMEP clients are located in the major cities of Australia, with major cities accounting for significantly more clients relative to their share of the Australian population (Table 6). Humanitarian visa stream clients are overrepresented in regional Australia, while Family visa stream clients make up the majority of clients in remote Australia.

Table 6   **ARIA Remoteness Index AMEP client cohort make up**

	Visa stream			Share of AMEP clients	Share of Australian population
	Family	Humanitarian	Skilled		
Australian average	56%	27%	17%		
Major Cities of Australia	57%	26%	17%	91%	71%
Inner Regional Australia	43%	42%	15%	5%	18%
Outer Regional Australia	44%	38%	17%	3%	9%
Remote Australia	76%	3%	21%	0%	1%
Very Remote Australia	77%	2%	21%	0%	1%

Note: Percentage of AMEP clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.
Source*:* AMEP dataset, ABS.

The location of AMEP clients likely reflects a number of factors related to where migrants live rather than the AMEP itself. It is likely that migrants often choose to live in large cities where they have access to a greater variety of support services (including study options) and in the larger states where there are more likely to be migrants from similar backgrounds.

There is a lack of data on AMEP eligible migrant populations by state/territory or remoteness which means that take up rates cannot be estimated by region.

Key Finding 6

The majority of AMEP clients (68 per cent) are located in either NSW or Victoria. Tasmania has the highest proportion of Humanitarian visa stream clients and Western Australia/Northern Territory have the highest shares of Skilled visa stream clients.

The vast majority of AMEP clients are located in the major cities of Australia. Humanitarian visa stream clients are overrepresented in regional Australia, while Family visa stream clients make up the majority of clients in remote Australia.

4.3   AMEP clients' English language levels

On entering the AMEP, clients' English language ability is assessed using the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR).[11] These entry assessments provide information on the English language skills of the AMEP client cohort, and how the English language skills of the AMEP cohort change over time. Table 7 provides an overview of the ISLPR levels.

Table 7   **Summary of ISLPR levels**

Level	Title	Abilities
0	Zero Proficiency	Unable to communicate in the language.
0+	Formulaic Proficiency	Able to perform in a very limited capacity within the most immediate, predictable areas of own need, using essentially formulaic language.
1-	Minimum 'Creative' Proficiency	Able to satisfy own immediate, predictable needs, using predominantly formulaic language.
1	Basic Transactional Proficiency	Able to satisfy own basic everyday transactional needs.
1+	Transactional Proficiency	Able to satisfy own simple everyday transactional needs and limited social needs.
2	Basic Social Proficiency	Able to satisfy basic social needs, and the requirements of routine situations pertinent to own everyday commerce and recreation and to linguistically undemanding 'vocational' fields
2+	Social Proficiency	This level is significantly better than Level 2 but has not reached Level 3.
3	Basic 'Vocational' Proficiency	Able to perform effectively in a wide range of informal and formal situations pertinent to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation, and in situations which are not linguistically demanding in own 'vocational' fields.
4	'Vocational' Proficiency	Able to perform very effectively in almost all situations pertinent to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation, and generally in almost all situations pertinent to own 'vocational' fields.
5	Native-like Proficiency	Proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same sociocultural variety.

Note: ISLPR levels 3+ and 4+ are not included in the table.
Source*:* http://islpr.org/why-use-islpr/summary-of-islpr/

Figure 18 shows the ISLPR entry assessment scores of clients who have commenced in the AMEP over the last four years. Most clients have a score less than 2 on all four of the ISLPR elements. A score of 2 or higher on all four elements indicates English language social proficiency and means an individual is ineligible for the AMEP.

---

[11]   1.5 per cent of clients do not have an ISPLR entry score entered in the AMEP dataset.

Figure 18 **Entry ISLPR entry assessment scores, enrolments 2010-11 to 2013-14**
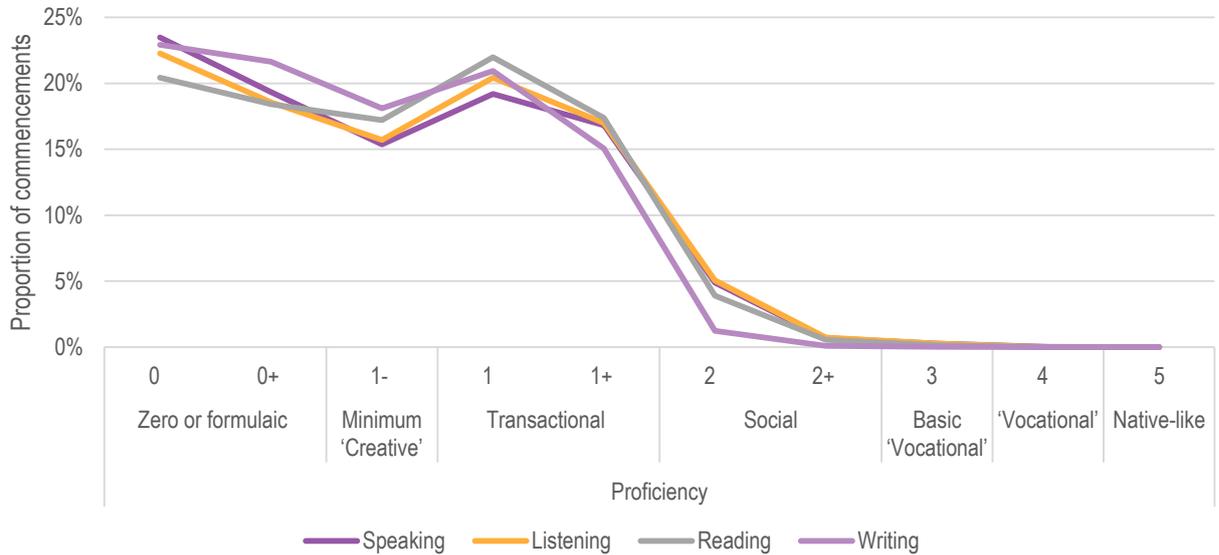
Note: Recording of a client's ISLPR score is mandatory on entry and encouraged at other times.
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations emphasised the particular challenges facing low level AMEP clients, and the corresponding challenges of how the AMEP can meet the needs of this group within the legislated up to 510 hours.

Figure 19 sets out the proportion of recent enrolments with the lowest ISLPR score (0), disaggregated by visa stream. Humanitarian visa stream clients are more likely to score 0 on AMEP entry, with clients from the Skilled visa stream the least likely to be assessed at the lowest ISLPR level.

Figure 19 **Proportion of enrolments with an ISLPR entry score of 0, by visa stream 2010-11 to 2013-14**

Source: AMEP dataset

Similarly, the proportion of AMEP clients entering the programme with ISLPR scores of 0 or 0+ across all four elements is greater in the Humanitarian visa stream (43 per cent) and the Family stream (35 per cent) than in the Skilled stream (28 per cent). In total, 34 per cent of AMEP clients (2010-11 to 2013-14) are assessed as having zero or formulaic English language skills on all four elements of the ISLPR.

The high proportion of Humanitarian visa stream clients with low level English language skills is one of the reasons SPP is offered to clients from this cohort. As discussed in Section 5.1.1, SPP take up among Humanitarian visa stream clients is high and the sub-programme is seen as meeting a clear need.

Figure 20 sets out how ISLPR entry scores have changed over the last 10 years. There was a slight upward trend in average entry scores on all four ISLPR element from 2004-05 to 2012-13, before a slight dip in 2013-14.

Figure 20   **Average AMEP client ISLPR entry score, enrolments**
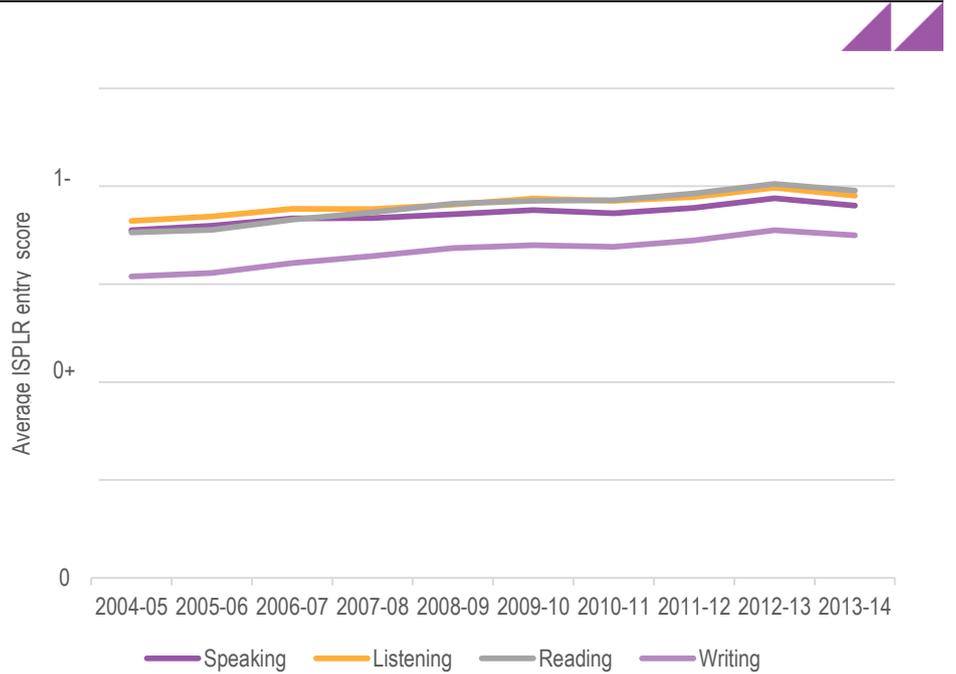
This increase in average AMEP client enrolment scores is partly driven by the increased proportion of clients from the Skilled visa migrant stream – clients from this stream have higher average English language proficiency. As the proportion of Skilled visa stream clients has been increasing, the average entry scores of this cohort have also risen.

The average enrolment scores for the other two migrant streams have not exhibited any trend over the past 10 years. For example, Figure 21 shows entry scores for the Humanitarian visa stream cohort. There has not been a consistent entry score trend in this cohort – Speaking and Listening entry ISLPR scores have been relatively stable, while Reading and Writing have trended upwards slightly over the last ten years.

Figure 21 **Humanitarian visa stream average AMEP client ISLPR entry score**
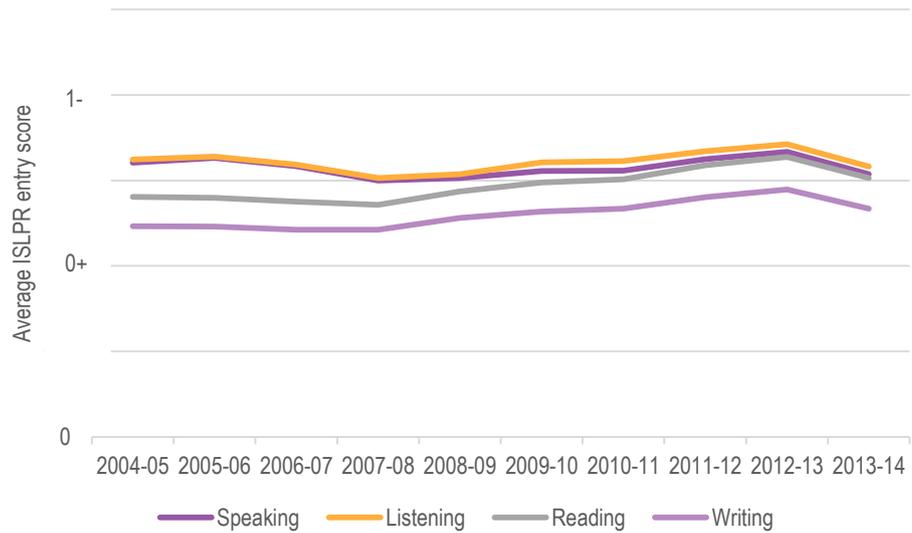
Source: AMEP dataset

In addition to average entry scores increasing, the number of AMEP clients entering the programme with very low ISLPR scores fallen over the last 10 years.

Figure 22 sets out the proportion of clients entering the programme with 0 on all four ISLPR elements, and the proportion with 0 or 0+ on all elements. Both groups fell as a share of all AMEP clients between 2004-05 and 2012-13, before rising in 2013-14. Again, this appears to be in part driven by the increased proportion of AMEP clients from the Skilled visa stream who have higher English language skills.

Figure 22 **Proportion of enrolments with an ISLPR entry score of 0 or 0/0+ on all ISLPR elements**
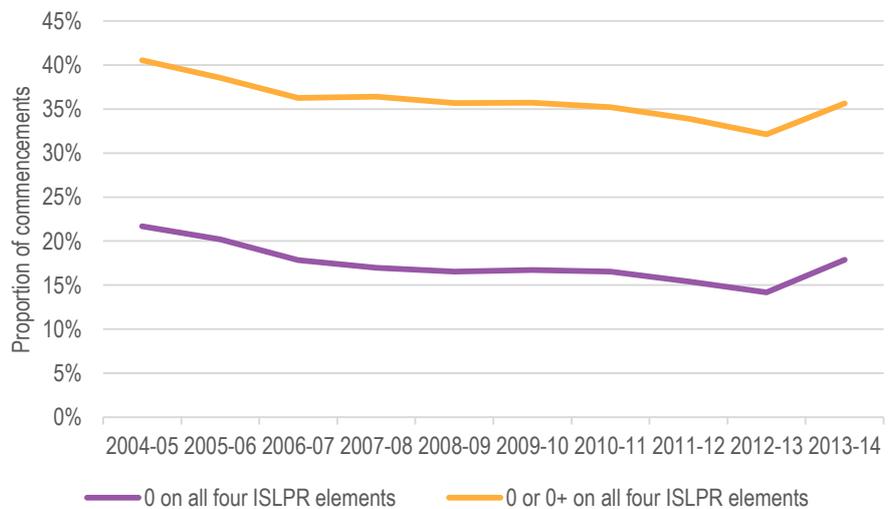
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 23 shows the proportion of clients beginning the AMEP at each Certificate level. It highlights the introduction of the Pre-CSWE Course, which now accounts for almost 20 per cent of AMEP clients on enrolment. There has been little change in the proportion of clients beginning AMEP in Certificate II and III, apart from a slight fall in 2013-14 as the Pre-CSWE Course increased its share.

Figure 23 **Proportion of AMEP clients beginning at each Certificate level**
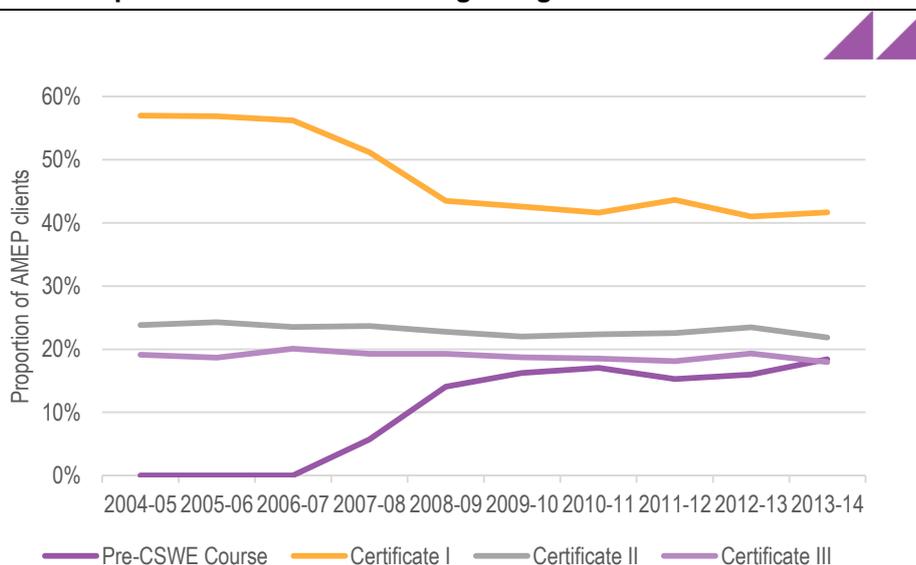
Source: AMEP dataset

Taking the above ISLPR charts in totality, the data show that from 2004-05 to 2012-13 there was a steady increase in the English language skill level of clients entering the AMEP. This improvement occurred in both average entry assessment scores, and with a reduction in the proportion of clients assessed at the lowest ISLPR levels.

An increase in the proportion of Skilled visa stream clients and a fall in the share of Humanitarian visa stream clients has likely contributed to the increase in average AMEP client entry scores over time. Entry scores of Skilled visa stream clients have also been increasing, compounding the impact of the growth in clients from this visa stream.

There have been changes in the country of origin of AMEP clients which may also be contributing to the increase in the English language skill level of clients. For example, there has been strong growth in the share of clients from India (rising from 2 per cent in 2004-05 to 7 per cent in 2013-14) who on average have high entry scores, and a reduction in clients from Sudan (11 per cent to 1 per cent) who do not.

Finally, across the three largest countries of origin of AMEP clients — China, Vietnam and India, which account for 38 per cent of clients commencing in 2013-14 — there has been a steady increase in average scores, potentially due to increased English language tuition in the school and university systems of these countries.

In 2013-14 this increase appears to have reversed with a decrease in average entry scores and increase in the proportion of clients with very low level English language skills. At this stage it is too early to tell what the cause of this reversal is, and whether it will continue.

These changes in entry English language skill level of clients demonstrate the potential impact that migration policy can have on the AMEP, and the importance of flexibility in the AMEP to allow AMEP service providers to adapt to changes in client characteristics.

In addition to pre-existing English language aptitude, AMEP client literacy in their first language can have a significant impact on the speed at which clients are able to learn. This element is not captured in the data.

Consultations for this evaluation emphasised the additional challenges AMEP clients with no literacy in their first language and limited or no schooling faced in learning English. In addition to learning the English language as part of the AMEP, such clients must also learn how to learn and develop literacy skills which are not necessarily English specific.

Key Finding 7

In total, 34 per cent of AMEP clients (2010-11 to 2013-14) are assessed as having zero or formulaic English language skills on all four elements of the ISLPR.

Consultations indicate that some AMEP clients lack literacy in their first language and have limited formal education experience. These clients face unique challenges in developing English skills.

2004-05 to 2012-13 saw an increase in the English language skills of clients entering the AMEP. This change in the composition of the AMEP cohort is likely due to an increase in the proportion of Skilled visa stream clients and in changes in the country of origin of AMEP clients. The increase in cohort entry English language aptitude reversed in 2013-14.

Changes in client characteristics as a result of changes in migration policy emphasise the importance of flexibility in AMEP service delivery.

5 The effectiveness of the AMEP

This chapter examines the effectiveness of the AMEP. It begins by analysing the AMEP sub-programme before looking at completion rates of the AMEP. The chapter then examines the language, settlement and employment outcomes of the programme.

5.1 AMEP sub-programmes

As noted in Chapter 2, the AMEP has a number of sub-programmes. This section examines the take up and effectiveness of the:

— Special Preparatory Programme (SPP)
— Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training Programme (SLPET)
— Home Tutoring Scheme (HTS)
— Distance learning
— AMEP Counselling Service
— Childcare.

5.1.1 The Special Preparatory Programme (SPP)

The SPP provides additional training hours for eligible Humanitarian visa stream AMEP clients — up to 400 additional tuition hours for clients under 25 with seven years or less of schooling, and up to 100 hours for those aged 25 years and over with difficult pre-migration experiences such as torture and trauma.[12]

Figure 24 shows SPP take up by Humanitarian visa stream clients. Take up rose from 2004-05 to 2007-08 before falling with the introduction of the new AMEP business model which required AMEP service providers to meet stricter rules for SPP service provision.[13] SPP take up has increased since 2009-10 and currently sits at around 95 per cent of Humanitarian visa stream clients.

Figure 24 also shows SPP hours completed by those clients estimated to have been granted up to 100 hours of tuition. It shows that most of these SPP clients complete 100 hours of SPP. For clients estimated to have been granted up to 400 additional tuition hours, around 60 per cent complete 400 hours of SPP.

---

[12] For example, an AMEP client under the age of 25 with more than seven years of schooling may be eligible for 100 SPP hours.

[13] Under the new business model, service providers are paid the SPP hourly rate for SPP AMEP clients when clients participate in small SPP classes of up to twelve students. Payment for SPP AMEP Clients participating in larger classes are at the standard rate.

Figure 24 **SPP take up and hours used**

SPP take up, as a proportion of humanitarian stream clients

SPP hours used, proportion of SPP clients
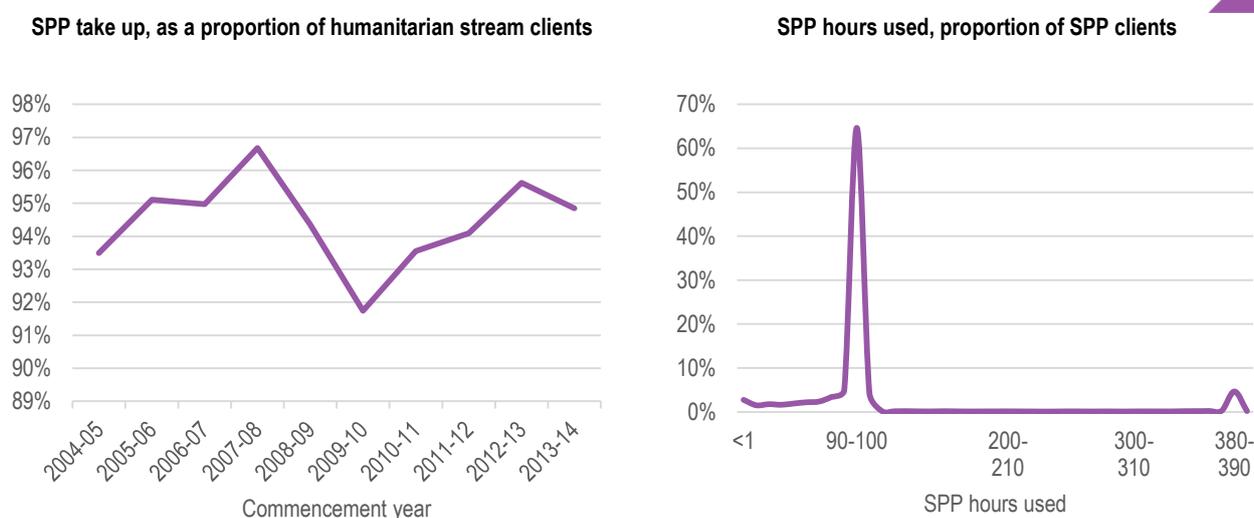
Note: Chart on the right is for AMEP clients commenced between 2004-05 and 2011-12.
Source: AMEP dataset

As discussed in Section 4.3, Humanitarian visa stream clients have lower average English language proficiency on entry into the AMEP than other visa categories. Consultations emphasised that many Humanitarian visa stream clients have also experienced trauma, which can impact on their ability to learn, and that SPP is highly valued and is seen as providing additional and well-structured training to a high needs client group. The new business model arrangements whereby small class sizes are mandated for SPP clients has been accepted by AMEP service providers and, overall, the SPP aligns with good practice in programme delivery for this cohort as identified in Section 3.4.

Key Finding 8

The additional support provided by SPP to high-needs client group is seen by stakeholders as effective and aligns with good practice in programme delivery for this cohort.

There is strong take up of SPP among the target group of Humanitarian visa stream clients and a high proportion of AMEP SPP clients complete their maximum allocation of SPP hours.

5.1.2   Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training (SLPET) programme

SLPET provides an additional 200 hour course to eligible AMEP clients focusing on learning English while gaining familiarity with Australian workplace language, culture and staff practices. Clients are eligible for SLPET if they have completed 75 per cent of their AMEP entitlement or are close to attaining functional English, and meet other criteria as set out in Section 2.2.2.

SLPET, through its predecessors the Employment Pathways Programme (EPP) and the Traineeships in English and Workplace Readiness (TEWR), was introduced in 2008-09.

Figure 25 shows the take up of SLPET between 2008-09 and 2012-2013, disaggregated by visa stream. Overall take up has risen since the sub-programme's inception and in 2011-12

9 per cent of AMEP clients undertook SLPET hours. SLPET take up is highest in the Family visa stream.

Figure 25 also sets out the number of hours used by each SLPET client commencing between 2008-09 and 2012-2013. It shows that 81 per cent of SLPET clients use more than 150 SLPET hours (or three-quarters of their SLPET entitlement).

Figure 25 **SLPET take up and average hours**
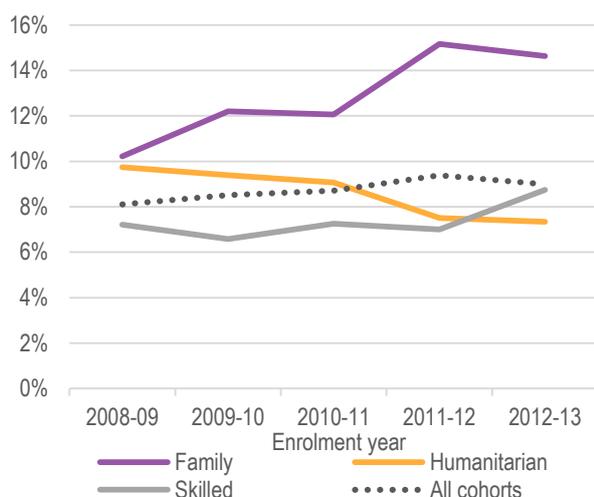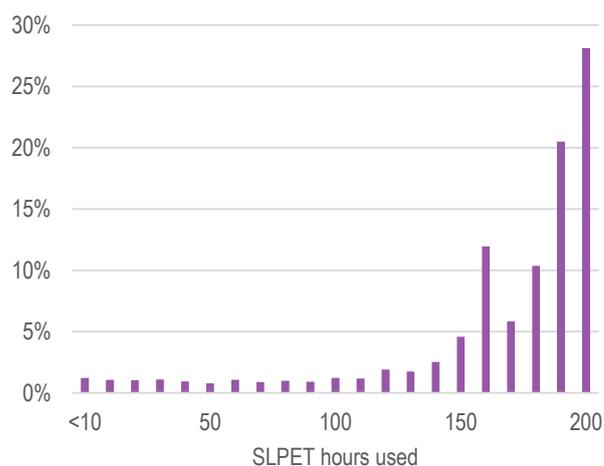
Note: Data for is for 2008-09 to 2012-13 enrolments. Data for 2013-14 enrolments not included as most clients commencing in that year are unlikely to eligible yet.
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations indicated that clients value the SLPET; it is clearly contributing to meeting the needs of clients who would like work experience and learning English skills in a more applied setting.

AMEP service providers see the SLPET as contributing to the employment objectives of the AMEP. The flexibility of the SLPET allows AMEP service providers to tailor the SLPET tuition and work experience to the needs of clients and local labour market conditions.

Consultations also indicated that clients who participate in the SLPET are more likely to achieve good employment outcomes, although it is difficult to isolate the impact of SLPET on these outcomes as SLPET participants have on average high English language skills.

One of the reasons for SLPET's popularity among clients is that it offers participants 200 additional hours (or 40 per cent) on top of their up to 510 hour entitlement. This is attractive to clients who feel that 510 hours is not enough for them to reach their English language goals.

Some clients consulted as part of the evaluation had not undertaken the SLPET but expressed a desire to participate in the sub-programme. Barriers included a lack of English language skills and the fact that some provider locations do not offer the SLPET. Some stakeholders suggested the SLPET be more widely offered in order to increase client take up of the sub-programme.

Key Finding 9

SLPET is seen as performing an important role contributing to the employment objectives of the AMEP. The sub-programme is highly valued by clients, as indicated by consultations for this evaluation, and has a high estimated completion rate based on clients' SLPET hours completed.

5.1.3   Home Tutor Scheme (HTS)

The HTS provides one-to-one tutoring delivered by a volunteer in the client's home or another suitable venue for a minimum of one hour per week. AMEP service providers arrange the tutoring and provide training and professional development to the volunteer tutors.

HTS take up fell over 2004-05 – 2008-09 before returning to around 10 per cent of all clients in 2012-13 (Figure 26). The causes of this trend are not clear from either the AMEP data or from consultations carried out for this evaluation.

While Humanitarian visa stream clients previously had a noticeably higher take up rate of the sub-programme than other cohorts, recently there has been less of a difference in the take up rates of the visa streams. The majority of HTS clients undertake one or two HTS matches (a match is the allocation of a home tutor to a client).

Figure 26 **HTS take up and activity**
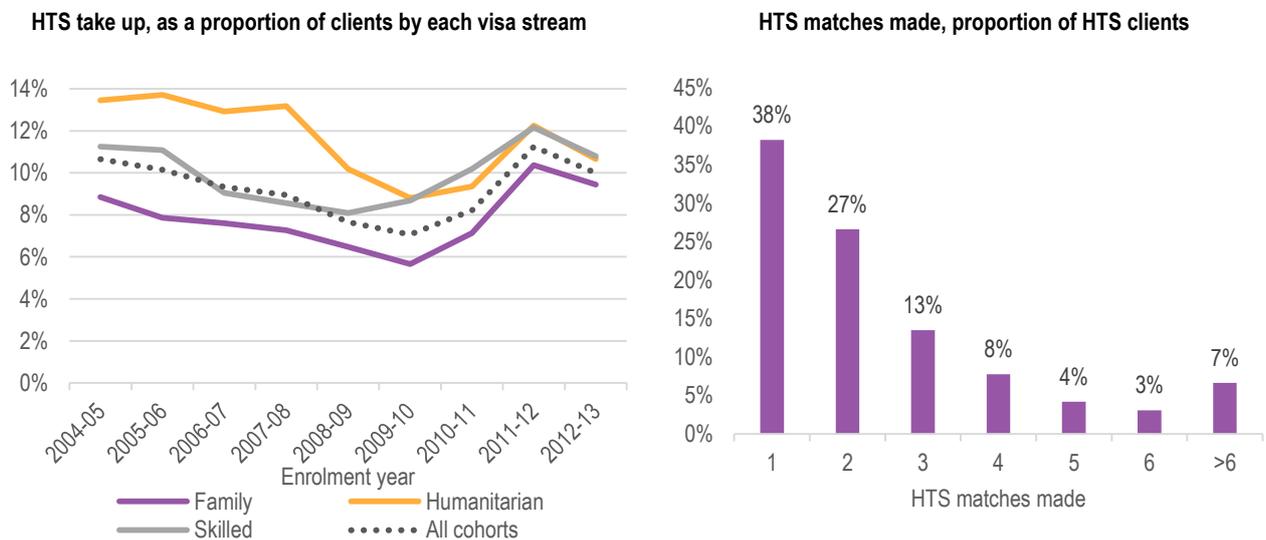
Note: Data for assignments undertaken is for 2010-11 to 2012-13 enrolments.
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations indicated that the HTS is valuable for clients, particularly those with family responsibilities. A number of AMEP service providers indicated that they struggle to source volunteers for the HTS leading to the under-provision of the HTS for some clients.

Key Finding 10

Around 10 per cent of clients participate in the HTS. Of HTS participants, the majority undertake one or two HTS matches.

The HTS is seen as a valuable adjunct to AMEP classroom tuition by stakeholders, although there is concern that the difficulty with sourcing volunteers in some locations is limiting the sub-programme's availability.

5.1.4 Distance learning

Distance learning comprises two components:

— teacher-assisted online distance learning

— teacher-assisted traditional distance learning (which may include audio, CD and hard copy materials).

Distance learning is provided by the AMEP Flexible Learning Network (AFLN), a consortium of AMES Victoria as the lead agent, Navitas English and Charles Darwin University. The AFLN notes that it caters for a 'diverse range of clients' including:

— 'clients who are working and wish to continue to learn English

— clients with home and family responsibilities

— clients who are isolated or in remote geographic locations' (AFLN submission).

Around 10 per cent of AMEP clients participate in distance learning. Take up is much lower among Humanitarian visa stream clients, relative to the other visa streams. Half of distance learning clients are referred one or two times, but almost 20 per cent are referred more than six times indicating that for some clients, distance learning is their primary or only form of AMEP tuition.

Figure 27 **Distance learning take up and activity**

Distance learning take up, as a proportion of clients by each visa stream
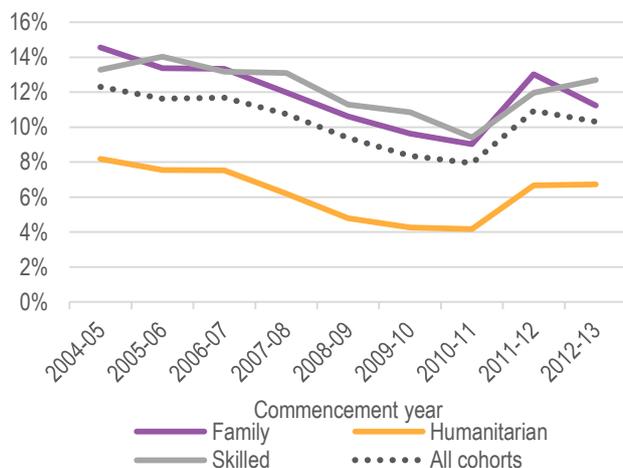
Distance learning referrals, proportion of distance learning clients
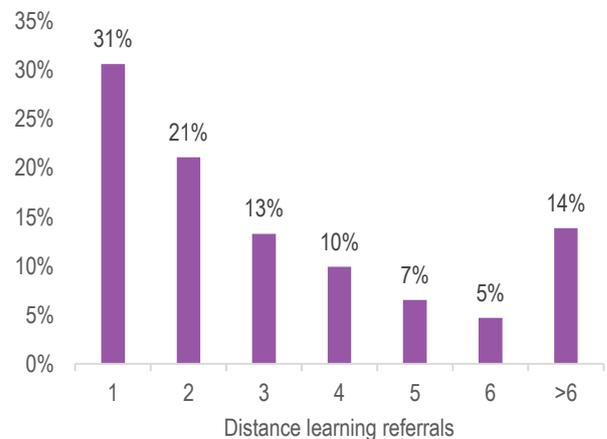
Note: Data for assignments undertaken is for 2011-12 to 2013-14 enrolments.
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations indicated that distance learning is being employed in regional and remote areas where no other training option is available and is being used effectively in many cases. Some stakeholders suggested that distance learning is only beneficial to those who have the capacity to learn independently.

Low take up from Humanitarian visa stream clients is likely to be due to their under-representation in regional and remote areas, and their on average lower English language skills.

Figure 27 sets out distance learning take up by CSWE level. It shows that take up is highest at the Certificate III and Certificate II level and lowest at Certificate I and pre-CSWE level. It is not clear whether clients' preferences or provider behaviour is driving this difference. It may be that clients at lower CSWE levels are more comfortable learning in the classroom, or that AMEP service providers are not offering distance learning to these clients because they believe such tuition is not suited to this cohort.

Figure 27 shows ISLPR level improvement of Pre-CSWE and Certificate I clients, disaggregated by clients involved in distance learning. It shows that the Pre-CSWE and Certificate I clients who participate in distance learning see greater ISLPR improvements relative to clients who do not participate in distance learning.

This may be seen as evidence that distance learning is suitable, and even leads to better outcomes, for low CSWE level clients. Conversely, these results may also be attributable to selection bias — that is, the clients who participate in distance learning are more dedicated and have more studying experience than clients who are not offered distance learning or do not opt for distance learning.

Figure 28 **Distance learning take up and outcomes by Certificate level**

Distance learning take up, as a proportion of clients by CSWE level

ISLPR level improvement of Pre-CSWE and Certificate I clients, disaggreated by involved in distance learning
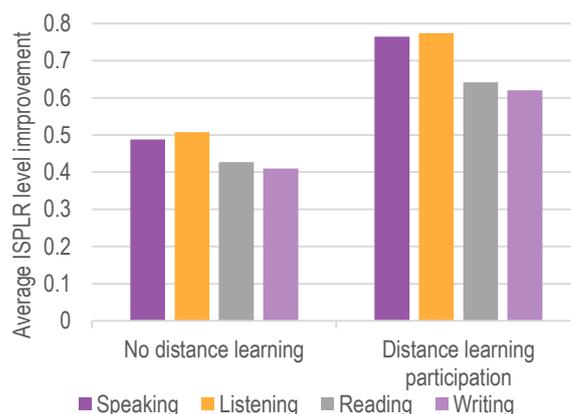
Note: Take up by CSWE level shown for post 2007-08 enrolments due to low pre-CSWE numbers prior to this year. ISLPR level improvement shown for clients commencing in 2004-05 to 2011-12 who have completed more than 500 hours, disaggregated by
Source: AMEP dataset

In 2013 and 2014, a trial of a virtual classroom was conducted for the Australian Government by AFLN. The Virtual Classroom allowed clients and teachers to see, listen and converse with each other and work collaboratively, over the internet.

> The trial found that the Virtual Classroom was beneficial and effective for some AMEP clients – clients with intermediate levels of English and confident IT skills were better equipped to maximise the benefits of the Virtual Classroom than those with lower level language and digital literacy skills.
>
> *– ALFN Submission*

The trial demonstrated the potential of improved technology to address some of the perceived weaknesses of distance learning, such as reduced opportunity for socialisation – with the Virtual Classroom clients able to interact and learn together.

Key Finding 11

Take up of distance learning is around 10 per cent, although considerably lower for Humanitarian visa stream clients. Almost 20 per cent of distance learning clients are referred to distance learning more than six times indicating that for some clients, distance learning is their primary or only form of AMEP tuition.

5.1.5   The AMEP Counselling Service

The AMEP Counselling Service provides up to six hours of training and employment pathway counselling to each AMEP client. The AMEP Counsellor and client complete an Individual Pathway Guide (IPG) which records the client's English language proficiency, goals, progress, achievements, and outcomes.

Under the new business model, AMEP Counsellors conduct an entry interview with each new AMEP client at enrolment. As set out in Figure 29, this has meant that almost all AMEP clients commencing since the enrolment of the new business model in 2011-12 have received Counselling services, as a result of the mandatory requirement for all new AMEP clients to attend an entry interview.

The second chart in Figure 29 shows the number of Counselling hours used by AMEP clients commencing in 2011-12 to 2012-13. Most clients receive 1-2 hours of Counselling, with Humanitarian visa stream clients more likely to use more Counselling hours than other AMEP clients. Of clients commencing in 2011-12 and 2012-13, 5 per cent have used their full allocation of six hours.

Figure 29 **Counselling Service take up and hours used**

Recorded Counselling take up, as a proportion of AMEP clients

Counselling hours used, as a proportion of AMEP clients
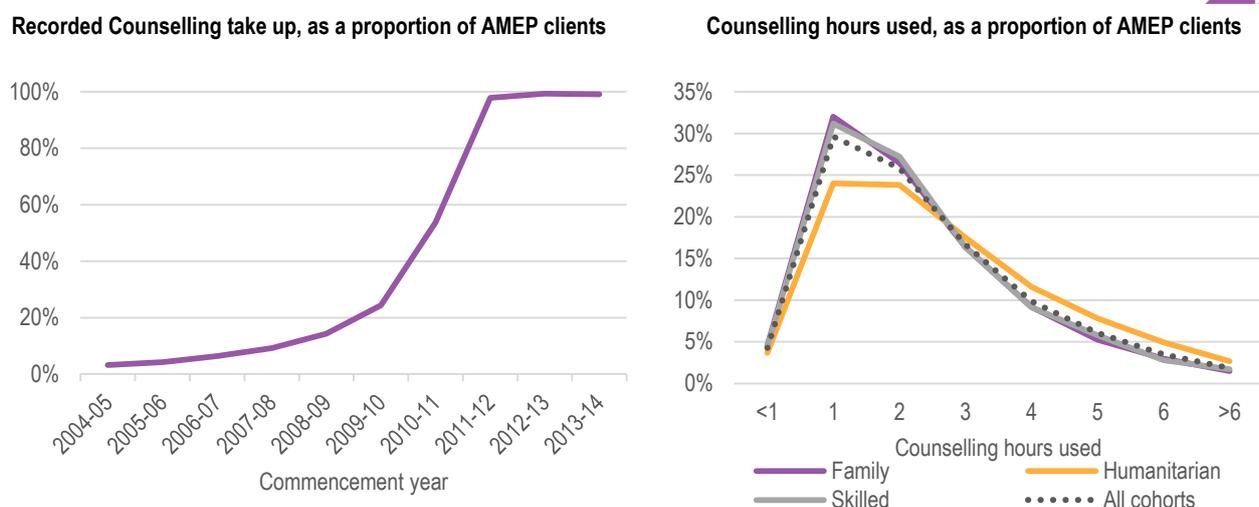
Note: Data for hours of counselling used is for 2011-12 and 2012-13 enrolments. As set out in Figure 31, 76 per cent of AMEP clients do not participate in the AMEP for more than 2 years meaning around three quarters of the AMEP clients who commenced in 2011-12 or 2012-13 are likely to have exited the AMEP.
Source: AMEP dataset

The new business model's approach of providing counselling to all clients is well accepted by AMEP service providers. The AMEP Counselling Service appears to be meeting its goal of improving client skills in navigating their way through the AMEP and the educational, training and employment options available post-AMEP. Access to career counselling in this way aligns with good practice as identified in Section 3.3.

The name of the service, 'Counselling', is seen as misleading by a number of stakeholders as the service focuses on educational pathways advice and Counsellors with the requisite skillsets for this focus. A few stakeholders expressed concern that a limited number of Counsellors were providing mental health and other counselling for which they did not have the requisite skillset.

Key Finding 12

The AMEP Counselling Service is now being used by all clients due to the introduction of entry interviews with Counsellors. Only a small proportion of clients have used their full allocation of six Counselling Service hours, although the service was only introduced in 2011.

While Counselling is seen as meeting its goals, there is concern among some stakeholders that the Counselling Service is misnamed, which may be causing confusion around the Service's objectives.

5.1.6   AMEP childcare

Under the AMEP, providers must arrange childcare for AMEP clients with under school-aged children or children waiting to begin school. The childcare is provided at no cost to AMEP clients. For clients commencing in 2011-12 to 2013-14, approximately 10 per cent used AMEP childcare (Figure 30).

Take up was higher among the Skilled migrant stream cohort, perhaps reflecting the higher proportion of women in the Skilled stream and the fact that Skilled stream visa clients are

likely to comprise young families accompanying a primary applicant who is working. Almost 50 per cent of clients who used childcare use more than 300 hours.

Figure 30 **Childcare take up and hours used**

Childcare take up, as a proportion of clients by each visa stream
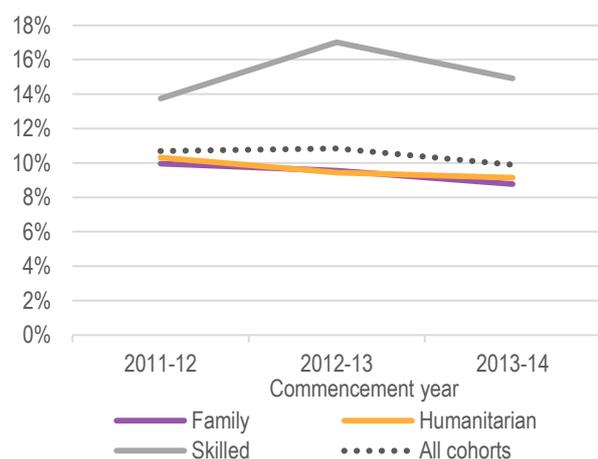
Childcare hours used, proportion of clients using childcare
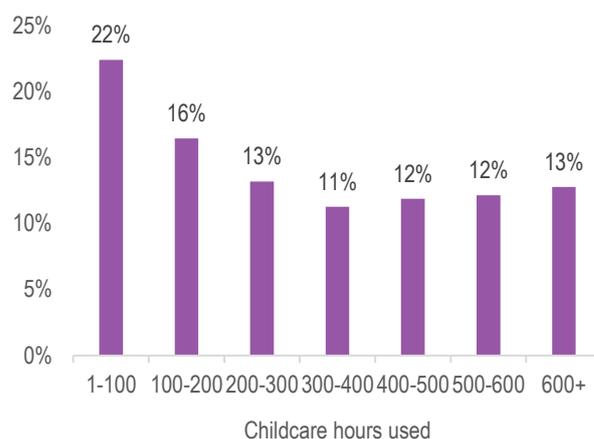
Note: Take up data is for clients commencing in 2011-12 to 2013-14. Hours used data is for clients commencing in 2011-12 to 2012-13. Data on childcare prior to 2011-12 is unreliable as it is likely many providers were not entering childcare data into ARMS, perhaps because there was no separate contract fee for childcare under the previous business model; the classroom tuition fee covered childcare.
Source: AMEP dataset

On enrolling in the AMEP, 12-13 per cent of clients report requiring childcare. Of these clients 83-86 per cent take-up childcare (Table 8). This could indicate that some of these clients do not end up needing childcare, that some clients are not comfortable with formal childcare due to a lack of familiarity with the practice or that some are not having their childcare needs adequately met.

Table 8 **Childcare reported demand and take-up**

| Enrolment year | Report not requiring childcare | Report requiring childcare | | Take-up by clients reporting requiring childcare |
		Have used child care hours	Have not used any childcare hours	
2011-12	88%	10%	2%	86%
2012-13	87%	11%	2%	86%
2013-14	88%	10%	2%	83%

Source*:* AMEP dataset

Consultations indicated that childcare is central to facilitating AMEP class attendance for eligible clients. Without free childcare it appears many clients with young children would be unable to attend AMEP.

While childcare is highly valued by relevant clients and providers, some AMEP service providers expressed concern that they bore the costs of childcare in the case where the client did not attend class and use the childcare place, and that in many instances they had little control over the reasons for non-attendance. In addition, some AMEP service providers noted that the cost of maintaining a capacity for on-campus occasional care is significant, equivalent to the full cost of maintaining an equivalent number of full-time long-day care places.

Key Finding 13

AMEP Childcare is used by 10 per cent of AMEP clients, with clients from the Skilled stream most likely to use childcare. Without free childcare it appears many clients with young children would be unable to attend the AMEP.

5.2   Training outcomes

This section examines the training outcomes achieved under the AMEP, including programme completion and qualification and training attainment.

5.2.1   Retention and completion rates

Completion rates of training programmes such as the AMEP are important as they can be an indicator of the value clients place on the training. A higher rate of completion will also likely increase the impacts the AMEP has on clients.

As there are limited data in the AMEP dataset on programme completions[14], completion rates are estimated using hours completed. It is important to note the distribution of the number of years AMEP clients spend participating in the programme. Based on enrolments between 2004-05 and 2011-12[15], an estimated 76 per cent of clients participate for one or two years in the AMEP (not necessarily continuously).[16] Only an estimated 9 per cent of clients participate in the AMEP for four years or more (Figure 31).

Figure 31   **Number of years AMEP clients spend in the programme**
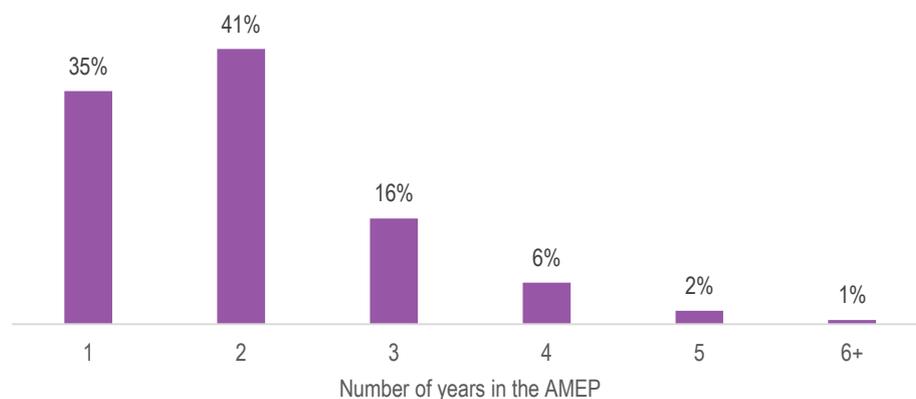
Note: AMEP clients commencing between 2004-05 and 2011-12.
Source: AMEP dataset

As the vast majority of clients do not appear to participate for more than three years in the AMEP, the following analysis of hours spent in the programme is restricted to enrolments

---

14   While there are exit date, exit outcome and exit reason variables in the AMEP dataset, only 8.5 per cent of AMEP clients over the last 10 years had exit information recorded, indicating that these variables are not regularly recorded for AMEP clients.

15   Using a cut off enrolment date of prior to 2011-12 slightly increases the estimated proportion of clients spending more than 3 years in the programme.

16   Full time participation in the AMEP (15 formal tuition hours a week) means a client will complete 510 hours in 34 weeks.

from 2004-05 to 2011-12. It allows the tracking of 2011-12 (and all earlier) enrolments to 2013-14, by which time the majority are estimated to have ceased attending AMEP.

Figure 32 shows the number of hours used by clients commencing in 2004-05 to 2011-12. Around 30 per cent of clients have completed 500 hours or more, and could be considered to have completed or very nearly completed their AMEP entitlement. The average number of hours completed is 330.

Figure 32 **AMEP hours used, enrolments 2004-05 to 2011-12**
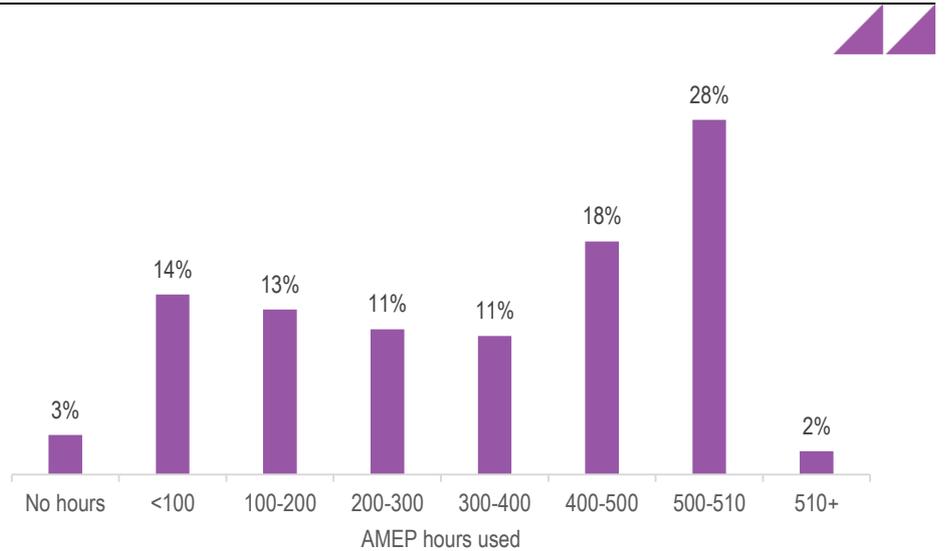
Note: AMEP clients commencing between 2004-05 and 2011-12.
Source: AMEP dataset

Humanitarian visa stream clients (37 per cent) have a higher completion rate than Family (27 per cent) and Skilled stream clients (25 per cent) (Figure 33).

Figure 33 **AMEP hours used by visa stream**
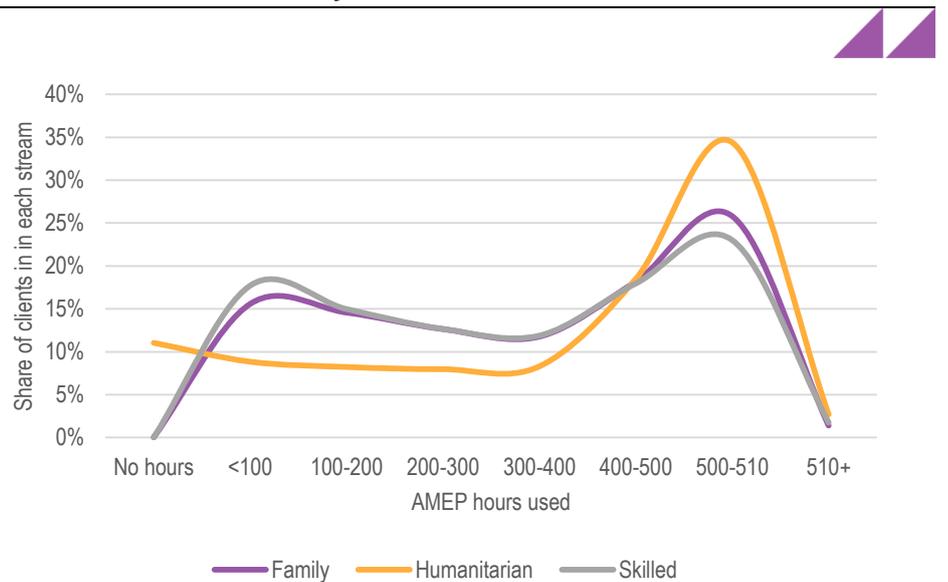
Note: AMEP clients commencing between 2004-05 and 2011-12.
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations indicated a number of potential reasons for the distribution of hours seen above:

⸺ Some clients enrol with the AMEP and decide the training is not suitable for them – 15-20 per cent of Family and Skilled visa stream clients undertake less than 100 hours in the AMEP.

⸺ Some clients leave the AMEP prior to using their entitlement of up to 510 hours when they feel they have met their English language goals.

⸺ Some clients leave the AMEP when they gain employment.

⸺ Some clients leave the AMEP to pursue other training (including the SEE programme – the requirement that AMEP clients complete 460 hours of AMEP before accessing the SEE programme no longer applies under the new business model).

⸺ Humanitarian clients are more likely to have greater English language needs (as discussed in in Chapter 4), and therefore will use their entitlement of up to 510 hours.

As this list makes clear, exit from the programme before completing 510 hours is not necessarily an issue for the AMEP – the programme is voluntary and clients often decide that they have achieved their settlement objectives, including employment or English language training, prior to the 510 hour mark.

Notwithstanding this, stakeholders reported that some clients are leaving the programme too soon, jeopardising their medium to long term settlement. For example, there was a concern that some clients are leaving the AMEP for entry-level employment which, due to low English language skills, may be insecure or may not support their longer term progression, as a result of inadequate language skills limiting their career potential. If such clients completed 510 AMEP hours, they would have a greater chance to attain sustainable employment and, in the medium and long term, of progressing to higher skill jobs.

Other clients appear not to be completing their entitlement due to personal or health issues, or due to unsuitability of the primarily classroom-based tuition of the AMEP. Inflexible training hours also appear to be an issue in a limited number of locations. Some AMEP service providers are addressing this latter issue through the provision of training hours which meet the needs of employed clients or clients with family obligations.

Issues in relation to clients not completing 510 hours and how the AMEP may better meet the needs of clients are further discussed in Section 7.1.5.

> Key Finding 14
>
> An estimated 30 per cent of clients have completed 500 hours or more, and could be considered to have completed or very nearly completed their AMEP entitlement. The average number of hours completed is 330.
>
> There are many valid reasons for clients not completing their allocated hours, including leaving the programme for employment or because clients consider their English language goals are met. At the same, it is likely that some clients are leaving AMEP too early, restricting their medium to long term settlement.

5.2.2 Qualification and other training attainment

Another important measure of the outputs of the AMEP is qualification and other training attainment. Each qualification, module and learning outcome achieved through the AMEP indicates English language skills attainment.

Figure 34 shows that 34 per cent of AMEP clients complete a CSWE Certificate or the pre-CSWE course. Certificate I is the most common qualification gained through the AMEP. Just as Humanitarian visa stream clients are more likely to complete 510 AMEP hours, they are also more likely to gain a qualification under the AMEP.

Figure 34 **Proportion of clients completing each CSWE Certificate and proportion completing any CSWE Certificate by visa stream**

Proportion of AMEP clients completing each CSWE Certificate

Proportion of AMEP clients completing a CSWE Certificate by visa stream
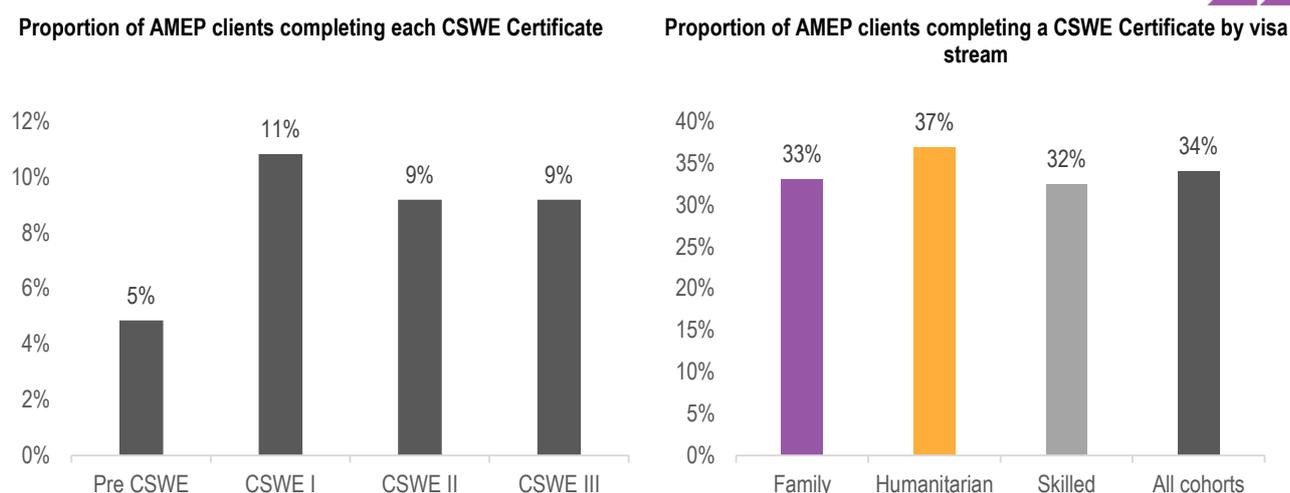
Note: Clients commencing in 2004-05 to 2011-12.
Source: AMEP dataset

A large proportion of AMEP participants — 66 per cent — do not complete a Certificate. However, evidence of attainment can also be measured according to the completion of modules that make up a full Certificate. For example, the successful completion of the CSWE Certificate I or Certificate II or the pre-CSWE course requires completion of seven modules; in the Certificate III it is nine modules. While some clients may not achieve a Certificate in their time participating in the AMEP, the achievement of modules indicates clients improving their level of English language proficiency.

Figure 35 shows the number of modules achieved by AMEP clients commencing in 2004-05 to 2011-12 who have received one or more hours of training. The average number of modules achieved is 4.5.

As the figure shows, a relatively large proportion of clients (over 20 per cent) from the Family and Skilled stream commence the AMEP but do not complete any modules. This does not include clients who are participating in the AMEP through the HTS – the HTS itself does not have outcomes which are recorded.

Figure 35 **Modules achieved by AMEP clients**
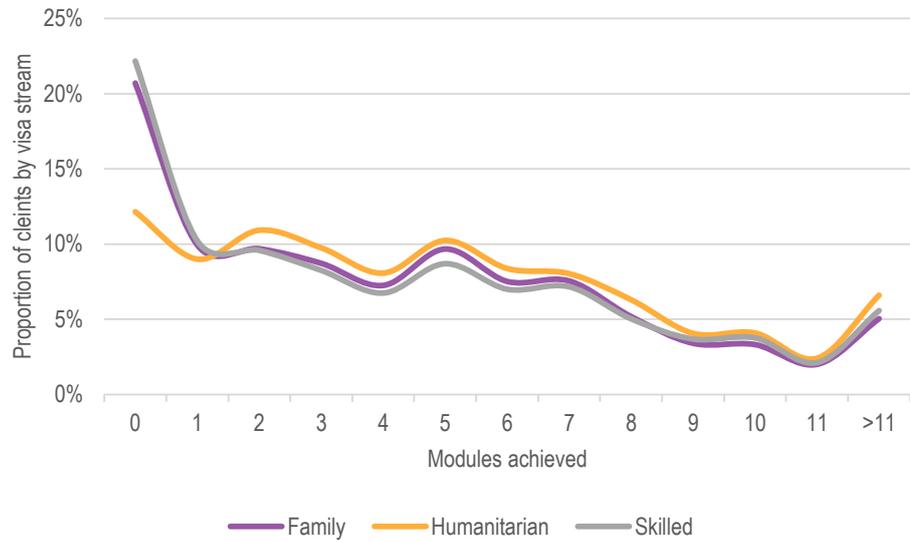
Note: Clients commencing in 2004-05 to 2011-12 who have received one or more hours of training.
Source: AMEP dataset

Key Finding 15

Around a third of AMEP clients complete a CSWE Certificate or the pre-CSWE course through the AMEP. On average AMEP clients achieve 4.5 modules.

Figure 36 shows the total number of modules achieved in the AMEP over the last ten years, disaggregated by Certificate level. CSWE was re-accredited in 2008, 'resulting in significant changes to curriculum, learning outcomes and core modules at each CSWE level' (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008).This may have contributed to the significant increase in the number of modules being completed in 2008-09 (up 61 per cent in one year).

The number of modules achieved fell from 2009-10 to 2011-12 before growing strongly in 2013-14. CSWE was re-accredited again in 2013, making it difficult to determine whether the increase in modules achieve in 2013-14 is due to curriculum changes or the introduction of the new business model, under which AMEP service providers are now paid on actual hours.

Figure 36   **Modules achieved in the AMEP**
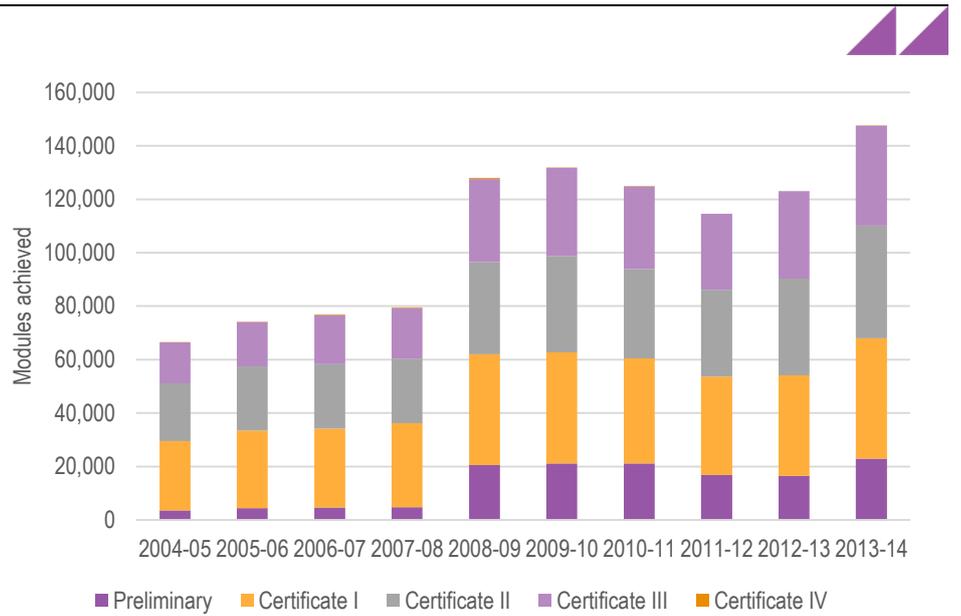
Source: AMEP dataset

Within each CSWE module there are two or three learning outcomes which must be achieved to complete the module. Figure 37 sets out the total number of learning outcomes achieved in the AMEP over the last ten years, disaggregated by Certificate level.

Figure 37   **Learning outcomes achieved through the AMEP**
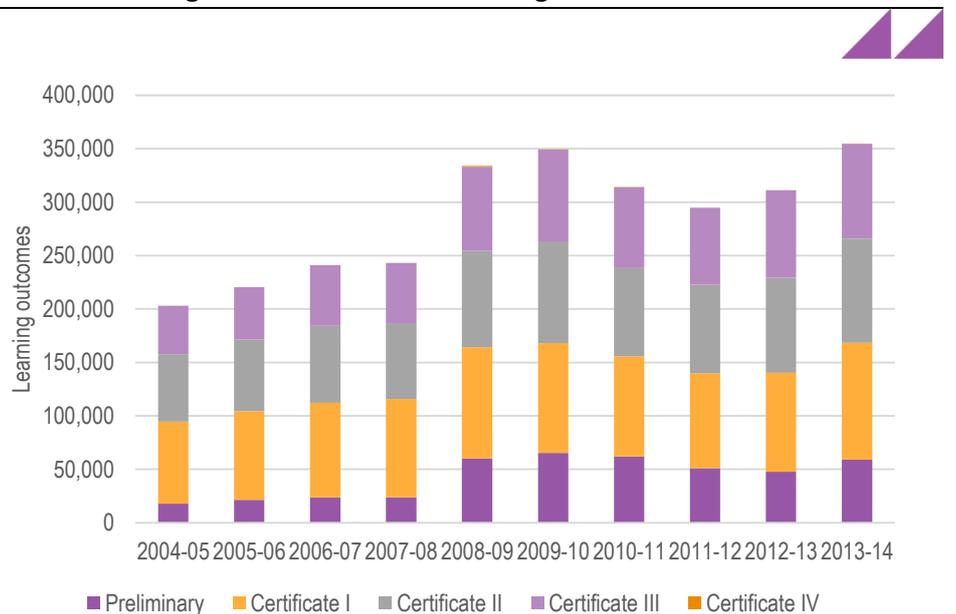
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 38 sets out the average modules and learning outcomes achieved per participating AMEP client per year. Possibly due to changes to the CSWE training package, there was an increase in both measures in 2008-09, and another uptick in 2013-14. In 2013-14, 2.3 modules and 5.6 learning outcomes per participant were achieved through the AMEP.

Figure 38 **Average modules and learning outcomes achieved per participating AMEP client, per year**
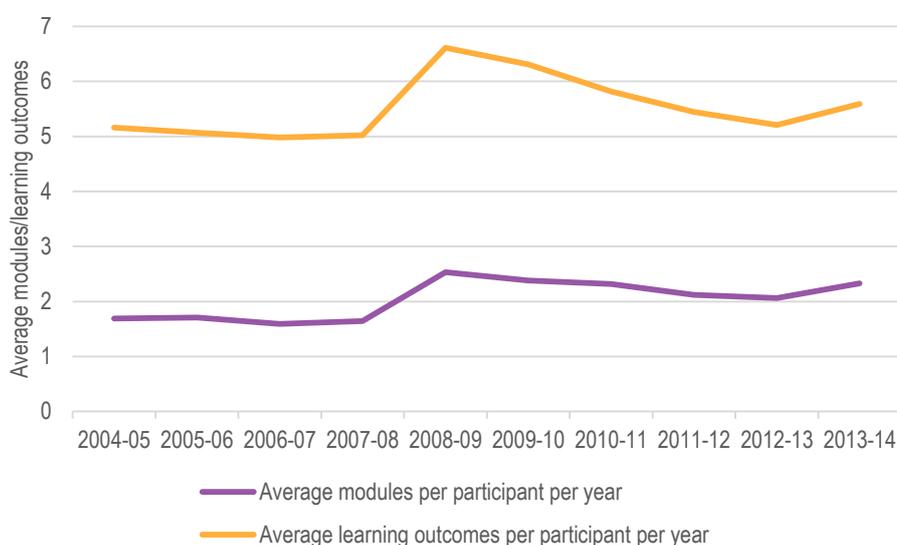
Source: AMEP dataset

Key Finding 16

In 2013-14, an average of 2.3 modules and 5.6 learning outcomes per participant were achieved through the AMEP.

It is possible that changes to the CSWE training package in 2008 led to a significant increase in the number of modules being achieved through the AMEP. Since that time there has been a downward trend in the number of modules and learning outcomes achieved per participating client per year until 2013-14, at which time the trend reversed, potentially linked to further CSWE training package changes.

5.3 Language, settlement and employment outcomes

This section examines the language, settlement and employment outcomes of the AMEP.

5.3.1 Language outcomes

Language outcomes can be considered prerequisites of settlement outcomes, as settlement includes: social participation; economic wellbeing; independence; personal wellbeing; and integration into the broader Australian community (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2012). Without English language skills it would not be possible to achieve many elements of settlement.

This section examines AMEP clients' language outcomes using ISLPR scores. AMEP clients complete the ISLPR assessment on entrance into the AMEP and intermittently as they progress through the AMEP at the discretion of the service provider and client. As ISLPR assessments are not compulsory on exit, and as some clients exit the AMEP without

prior notice, some clients have not had an exit ISLPR assessment. As a result, the below ISLPR analysis may understate the gains clients make through the AMEP.

One difficulty with measuring the impact of AMEP on language outcomes is controlling for other English learning activities clients may be undertaking outside of AMEP classes and the general improvements in English language proficiency as a result of residency in Australia. While for many clients the AMEP may be the only formal English language tuition they receive in their first years in Australia, clients will also gain English language skills through social interactions, media, and interaction with other service providers to name a few.

Figure 39 bears this out. Examining just those clients who complete between 490 and 510 hours, clients who complete their hours in one year witness a smaller ISLPR improvement than clients who take more years to use their AMEP entitlement.

To account for this and to attempt to isolate the impact of the AMEP, much of the following analysis is restricted to clients who have spent one or two years completing their AMEP hours. This restriction excludes less than a third of AMEP clients – 71 per cent of clients take one or two years to use their AMEP hours.

Figure 39 **Average improvement by years in the programme, clients completing more than 500 hours**
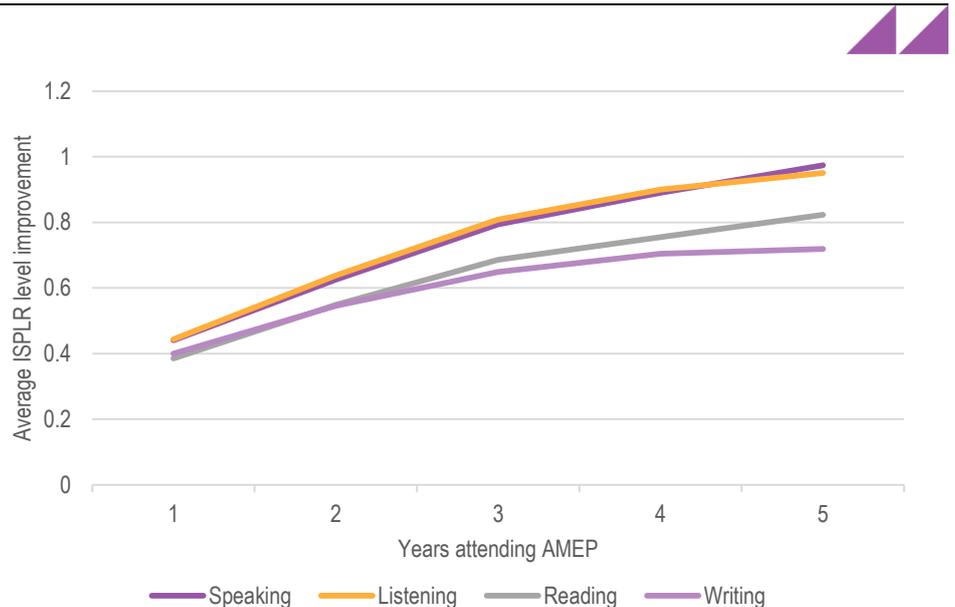
Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 40 shows the positive impact AMEP has on client English language skills. As the number of hours clients receive under the AMEP increases, the average ISLPR level improvement also increases.

Figure 40 **ISLPR level improvement by hours in the AMEP**
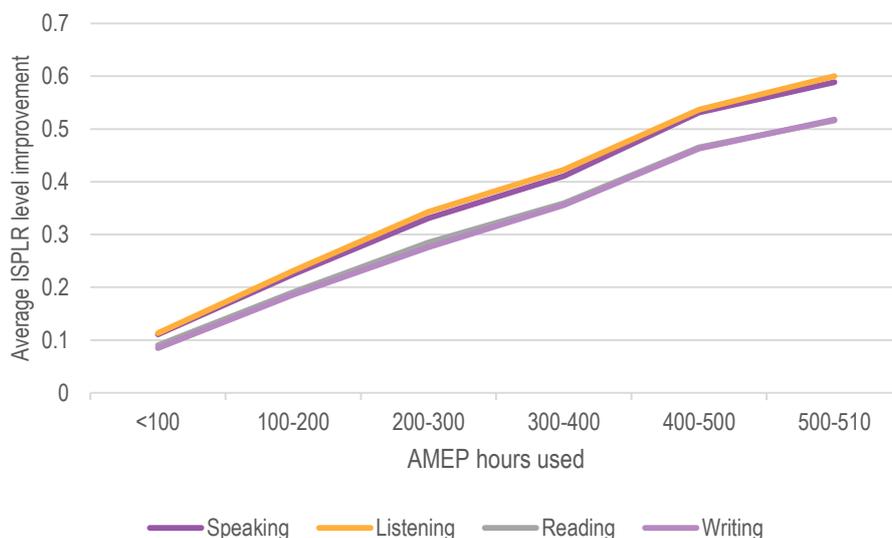
Note: Clients commencing in 2004-05 to 2013-14, 1 to 2 years in the programme. Clients with more than 510 hours excluded due to the small sample size.
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 41 shows that there is a difference in the average ISLPR improvements in clients from the three visa streams. Skilled visa stream clients see the greatest average improvements, with Humanitarian visa stream clients achieving slight higher average improvements than Family visa stream clients.

While it is not possible to be definitive about what is driving differences across the visa streams, it is likely that Skilled visa stream clients, on average, have higher literacy in their own language and more experience in formal learning environments, which likely allow them to see greater gains through their time in the AMEP.

Skilled visa clients are also more likely to be employed than Family and Humanitarian visa stream clients – being employed provides opportunities to learn and practice English language skills outside of AMEP classes.[17]

---

[17] In the AMEP dataset, 25 per cent of Skilled visa stream clients self-report as employed on enrolment, 10 per cent of Family visa stream clients and 3 per cent of Humanitarian visa stream clients. It is not mandatory for providers to collect these data.

Figure 41 **ISLPR level improvement by visa stream**
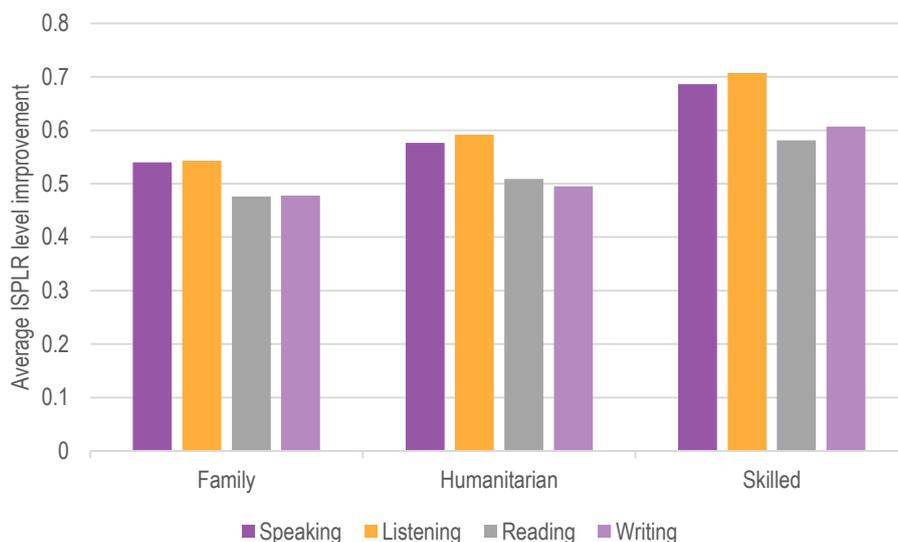
Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12 enrolments, 1 to 2 years in the programme, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

Key Finding 17

The AMEP is effective in improving client English language skills – on average, completing more AMEP hours leads to greater assessment scores on the ISLPR, even after taking into consideration time spent in Australia.

Clients from the Skilled visa stream see greater English language improvements on average than clients from the Family and Humanitarian visa streams. This may be due to a greater level of experience in formal education settings among Skilled visa stream clients, and the higher proportion of Skilled visa stream clients employed while studying through the AMEP.

One significant challenge and important role for the AMEP is in providing language instruction to those that have no prior knowledge of English. Figure 42 shows that the AMEP has reduced the share of clients scoring 0 on speaking and listening from around 30 per cent to 16-17 per cent. Overall it is clear that AMEP is improving the overall speaking and listening skills of participants, as observed in Figure 42, with shifting curve of ISLPR results towards the upper levels of the assessment framework.

Figure 42 **Speaking and listening ISLPR distribution on entry and after more than 500 hours**
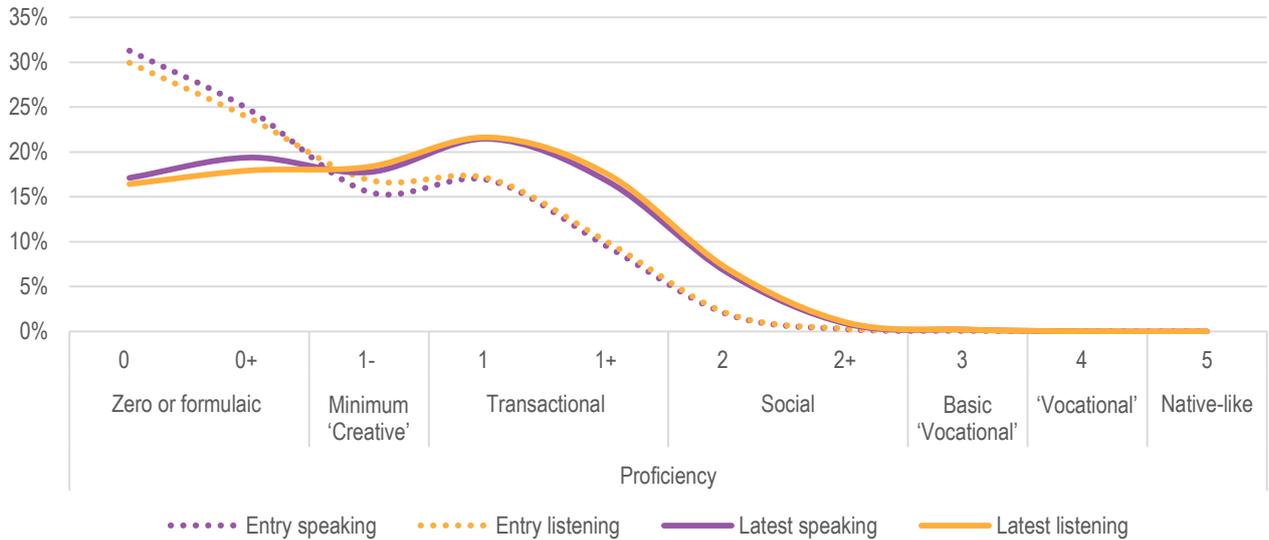
Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12 enrolments, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 43 demonstrates how AMEP reduces the proportion of clients scoring 0 or 0+ on the reading and writing components of ISLPR, and again is shifting the curve towards the ISLPR scores.

Figure 43 **Reading and writing ISLPR distribution on entry and after more than 500 hours**
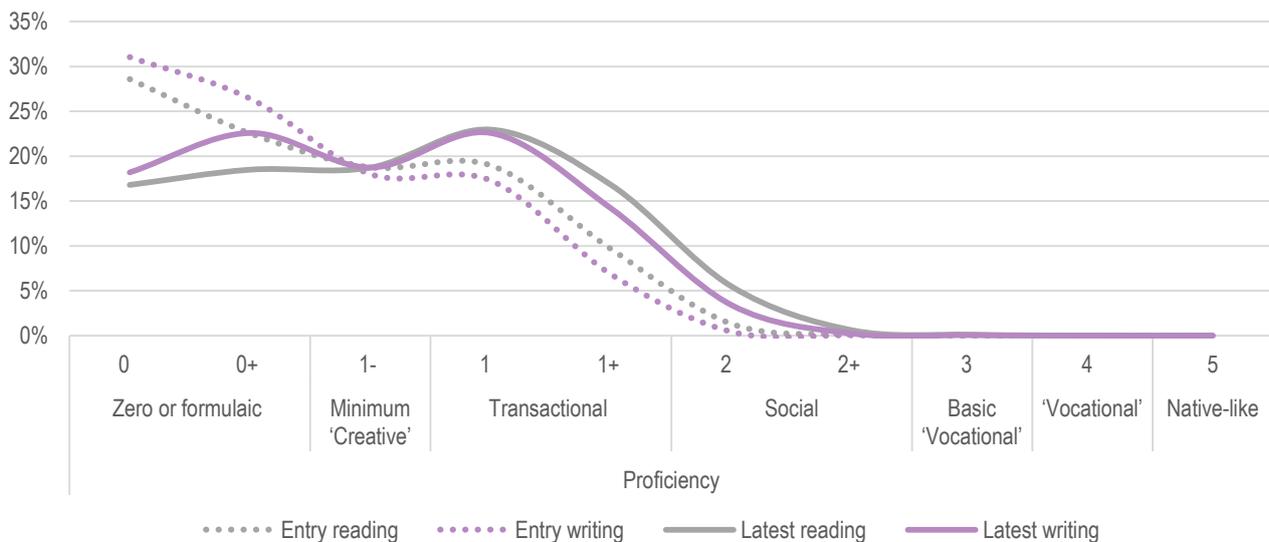
Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12 enrolments, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

While across the programme there is improvement in the four ISLPR areas, 28 per cent of AMEP clients leave the programme with 0 or 0+ on all four ISLPR elements, indicating zero

or formulaic English language proficiency. While this is a significant reduction on the proportion entering the programme at this level (45 per cent), it indicates that for many clients, the programme's 510 hours are not sufficient to significantly improve their English language skills (Figure 44).

From this analysis, it appears that no visa stream group is being particularly under-served by the AMEP as all cohorts witness around a 35-45 per cent fall in the proportion of clients with 0 or 0+ on all four ISLPR elements.

The AMEP defines 'functional English' as a score of 2 or higher on all four of the ISLPR macro skills. Around 7 per cent of AMEP clients achieve this level of English language skills after 500 hours. There is not a significant difference between the visa stream cohorts, with Humanitarian visa stream clients more likely to leave with functional English than Family and Skilled visa stream clients.

Figure 44 **AMEP client language outcomes**
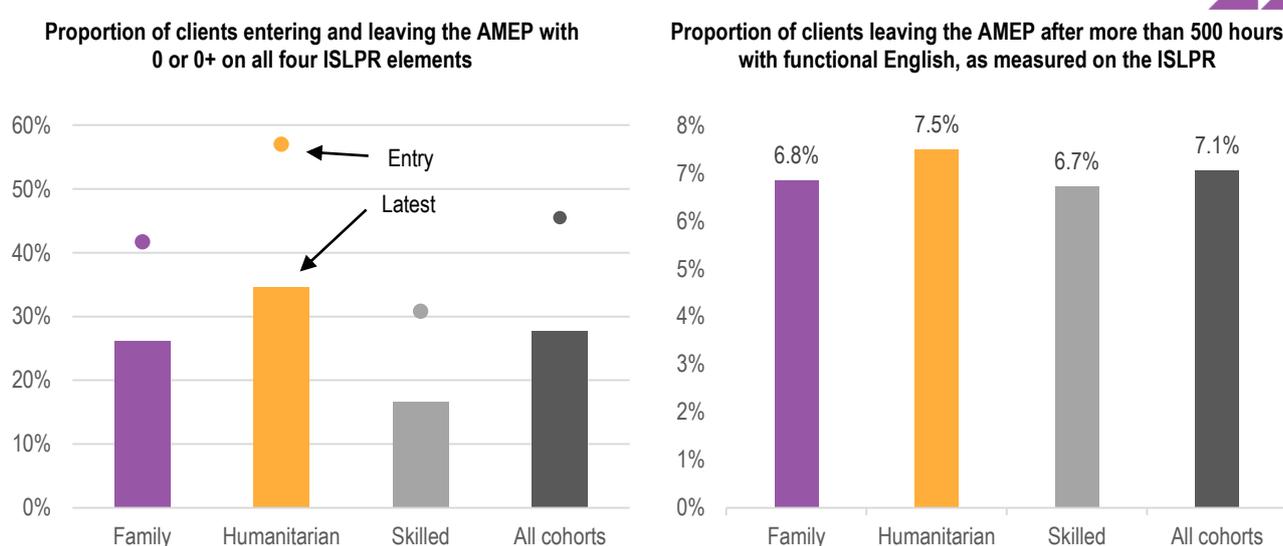
Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12 enrolments, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

Consultations indicated that the vast majority of AMEP clients are committed and value the programme highly. Despite this commitment, in many cases a very low level of English language skill on programme entry means social proficiency is unlikely to be obtained through the current AMEP. This is recognised in the programme's design and objectives as discussed in Section 7.1.1.

The relatively small proportion of clients achieving English proficiency after more than 500 hours in the AMEP led many stakeholders to query whether the up to 510 hours entitlement is sufficient to meet the needs of many AMEP clients. Some stakeholders suggested that the entitlement should be raised; noting that 2,000 hours of tuition may be needed to reach functional English proficiency. These stakeholder views reflect evidence in the literature that functional language acquisition is more likely to be achieved when tuition is in excess of 750 hours (see Section 3.3). Other stakeholders preferred to see a tailored calculation of hours allocated based on client need, or a competency-based structure whereby clients would exit

the programme after reaching a certain level of English language skill. These issues are discussed further in Section 7.1.7.

> **Key Finding 18**
>
> Over a quarter (28 per cent) of AMEP clients leave the programme with 0 or 0+ on all four ISLPR elements indicating zero or formulaic English language, down from 45 per cent on enrolment. Around 7 per cent of AMEP clients achieve this level of English language skills after 500 hours.
>
> The proportion of clients leaving the programme with low level English language skills led many stakeholders to query whether the up to 510 hours entitlement is adequate to meet the needs of AMEP clients.

5.3.2   Settlement outcomes

As discussed above there a number of positive language outcomes generated by the AMEP. Through improving clients' English language skills AMEP contributes to the following settlement outcomes.

— Access services in the general community.

— Provide a pathway to employment.

— Undertake further study or training.

— Participate in other government programmes.

Some public submissions demonstrated the value of the AMEP:

> AMEP is a significant and substantial supporting mechanism to the settlement process as it builds client capacity to access services and participate in community activity through improving language skills, personal development and general wellbeing. [Many] AMEP participants who successfully complete the program will assume leadership roles in their respective communities and increase their employment potential.
>
> *Confidential submission*

> We believe that the program encompasses a holistic approach that identifies settlement as more than just English lessons, but a process where students build knowledge, learn about their new community, develop skills to access mainstream services and understand Australian systems and culture. This enables them to make informed decisions, feel that they belong in their new community, build social networks and develop their employability and job seeking skills.
>
> *Inner and Eastern Sydney Migrant Interagency submission*

Consultations indicated that the AMEP is able to contribute to positive settlement outcomes due to the programme:

— effectively integrating language and settlement components by providing language training using settlement issues (including dedicated settlement classes as detailed in Section 2.3.1)

— delivering experimental learning and work experience

— providing wrap around services for clients

— offering flexible training modes

— contributing to the coordination and integration of services for clients

— providing clients with relationship building and networking opportunities with other clients from whom they can learn about settlement experiences

— offering information about further education and training, and employment in Australia.

As set out in Section 2.7, the AMEP forms a central part of the services available to migrant and humanitarian entrants. Non-AMEP service providers emphasised the importance of the AMEP to the services they deliver to migrants and humanitarian entrants, and the settlement outcomes benefits being realised by coordination and collaboration between service providers of different programmes. In the limited locations where coordination and collaboration between service providers was not strong, stakeholders expressed concern about suboptimal settlement outcomes.

Focus groups undertaken for this evaluation support other consultation data collected. Clients note that AMEP provides them with much of the information they need to settle in Australia, use government and health services and carry out daily activities such as shopping. AMEP clients use the programme to learn about future education and employment options, working in Australia, and job search strategies. Clients value settlement-specific tuition and guest speakers (such as police and traffic officers) which help them understand their rights and obligations.

Stakeholders point to a number of other signs of settlement success including surveys of clients, attendance and retention, and positive outcomes from the AMEP Counselling Service.

> The AMEP, through its various programs is highly effective in contributing to settlement and employment outcomes. This is reflected in a number of ways:
> - Anecdotal and qualitative information from the Counselling Services offers examples of successful settlement
> - Part time and flexible study options assist a range of learners
> - Learner feedback through surveys and focus groups is consistently positive with references to the AMEP contributing to successful settlement and employment outcomes
> - Student attendance and retention ensure student engagement with learning and settlement in Australia
>
> *Confidential submission*

> For those clients who are eligible, the AMEP contributes significantly to settlement and employment outcomes by providing not only access to English language classes, but also social connections and information about pathways to employment. For example, students participate in mainstream community events, obtain information and practice in relation to participating in the community, and engage in activities that reinforce their settlement journey including how to articulate their needs in English.
>
> *Settlement Services International*

Stakeholders saw an opportunity for the programme to better measure settlement outcomes, but were cognisant of the complexity and resources required to assess the settlement effectiveness of AMEP.

> There is currently no national longitudinal study around the AMEP and this approach in the past has been the most rigorous method of measuring effectiveness in successful settlement in the Australian community.
>
> *Confidential submission*

Key Finding 19

The AMEP plays an important role in assisting clients achieve settlement outcomes. Participation in the programme helps clients access services in the general community, develop networks in their community, understand their rights and obligations and can provide a pathway to employment and/or further study or training.

The AMEP is able to contribute to positive settlement outcomes by effectively integrating language and settlement components, delivering experimental learning and work experience and offering flexible training modes.

5.3.3   Employment outcomes

Employment outcomes are a subset of settlement outcomes but due to the importance placed on employment by clients and the centrality of employment and economic opportunity to settlement, it is discussed here separately.

While the programme contributes to language and settlement outcomes for all clients, in the short term the AMEP likely only contributes to direct employment outcomes for some, normally higher level clients.

Focus groups undertaken with clients for this evaluation emphasise how important employment outcomes are for many clients. AMEP clients saw employment as a way to use the skills they had developed in their country of origin, contribute to Australian society and develop economic independence.

SLPET, as discussed in Section 5.1.2, plays an important role in enabling the employment goals of some clients. Employment-focused tuition is also embedded in classroom tuition providing information on working in Australia and developing clients' job search skills. For example, many AMEP service providers use the '*How to job search and information on working in Australia, information on Australian workplace and culture'* booklet.

While many AMEP participants have clear aspirations to transition into work and further training, the programme by virtue of its design precludes achievement of these goals for most clients. The proficiency level at which clients become ineligible for and must exit the AMEP – functional English – is, by definition, generally insufficient for much employment, VET, and higher education. This fact was highlighted in a number of submissions:

> This language level is primarily linked to social context and not to employment or further education contexts. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection suggest that an IELTS test result of an average score of at least 4.5, or equivalent Pearson or TOEFL iBT tests, would be evidence of functional English. This is equivalent to above 2 ISLPR score (and ACSF 2-3). The effectiveness of the AMEP in contributing to settlement and employment outcomes is thus limited by the guidelines.
>
> *– AMEP service provider confidential submission*

> The AMEP is not a vocational pathways program and due to the language and settlement needs of its clients, is not in a position to provide vocational training which might be perceived as constituting the needs of employers. Given that the considered 'functional English' exit point of the AMEP is ISLPR 2 and it is generally accepted by reputable training providers that a higher level of basic vocational proficiency of ISLPR3 is a minimum requirement for all but the most repetitive vocational tasks (e.g. catalogue delivery) it is not within the scope of the AMEP to provide such training to meet employer needs.

> …the AMEP aligns to the needs of employers, not by providing vocationally skilled or competent employees but by developing the pre-requisite settlement and language skills necessary to develop these vocational skills in later programs such as the SEE.
>
> *– TAFE Queensland submission*

And as set out above in Section 5.3.1, most clients do not exit the AMEP with English language proficiency at a social level, nor at the higher, vocational level.

While AMEP is not designed to lead to employment outcomes for all clients, focus group participants contended that the AMEP could be more supportive of those clients who do gain employment while partway through their up to 510 hour entitlement. Participants argued that some clients must cease AMEP classes when employed because some AMEP service providers do not offer employment-friendly classroom hours.

> While some AMEP providers have part-time and evening classes available, RCOA [Refugee Council of Australia] understands this is not consistent across the country. As such, when there are no part-time or evening classes available, people are forced to choose between working and learning English. Due to various financial pressures many community members face, many feel forced to undertake employment and thus have no option to continue their English classes.
>
> *– The Refugee Council of Australia submission*

Key Finding 20

Focus groups undertaken with clients for this evaluation emphasise how important employment outcomes are for many clients. AMEP clients saw employment as a way to use the skills they had developed in their country of origin, contribute to Australian society and develop economic independence.

While many AMEP participants have clear aspirations to transition into work and further training, the programme by virtue of its design, precludes achievement of these goals for most clients. The proficiency level at which clients become ineligible for and must exit the AMEP — functional English — is, by definition, generally insufficient to gain employment and participated in VET or higher education.

Stakeholders argue that some AMEP service providers could deliver the programme more flexibly to allow employed clients with more opportunities to continue their AMEP tuition outside of work hours, for example through evening and weekend classes.

6 Efficiency and performance management

This chapter examines the efficiency of the AMEP, including trends in expenditure over time and the prices paid to AMEP service providers. The second half of the chapter focusses on the performance assessment and management aspects of the programme.

6.1 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the cost of programme producing outputs and outcomes. This section examines the efficiency of the AMEP, beginning with AMEP expenditure by component and over time.

6.1.1 AMEP expenditure

Classroom tuition accounts for almost two thirds of AMEP expenditure. The second largest expenditure component is childcare, which accounts for around 15 per cent of expenditure (Figure 45).

Figure 45 **AMEP expenditure, 2013-14**
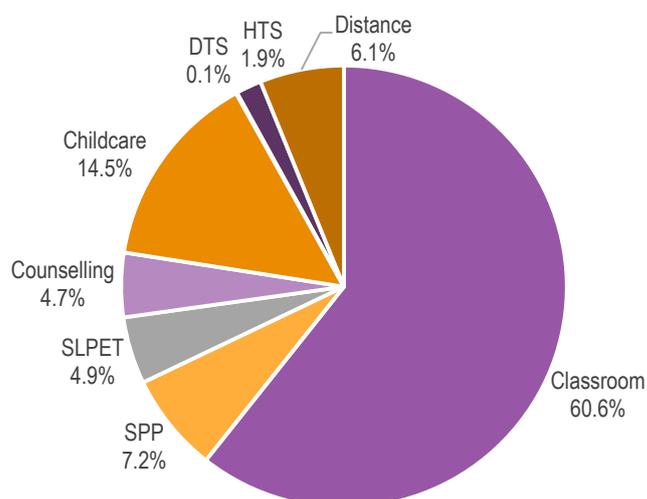
Note: For 2013-14 expenditure.
Source: AMEP Expenditure dataset

Real AMEP expenditure has been varied in recent years, but on the whole there has been an upward trend since 2004-05. The current 2014-15 Budget appropriation indicates that AMEP expenditure is expected to trend down slightly over the next four years from the peak in 2013-14, although it will remain above pre 2012-13 levels (in nominal terms) (Figure 46).

Part of the decrease in AMEP budget appropriations may be due to changes in the Australian Migration Programme. At the time of the 2014-15 Budget, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2014) was forecasting that total permanent migration to Australia will fall from 94,000 in the year to September 2014, to 90,600 in the year to June 2018 — a 4 per cent fall. The Humanitarian visa stream, which has the highest proportional AMEP take up rate (see Section 4.1), is forecast to see a greater fall in arrivals — a 24 per cent drop to June 2018.

Figure 46 **Total AMEP real expenditure and budget appropriation from the 2014-15 Budget, 2013-14 dollars**
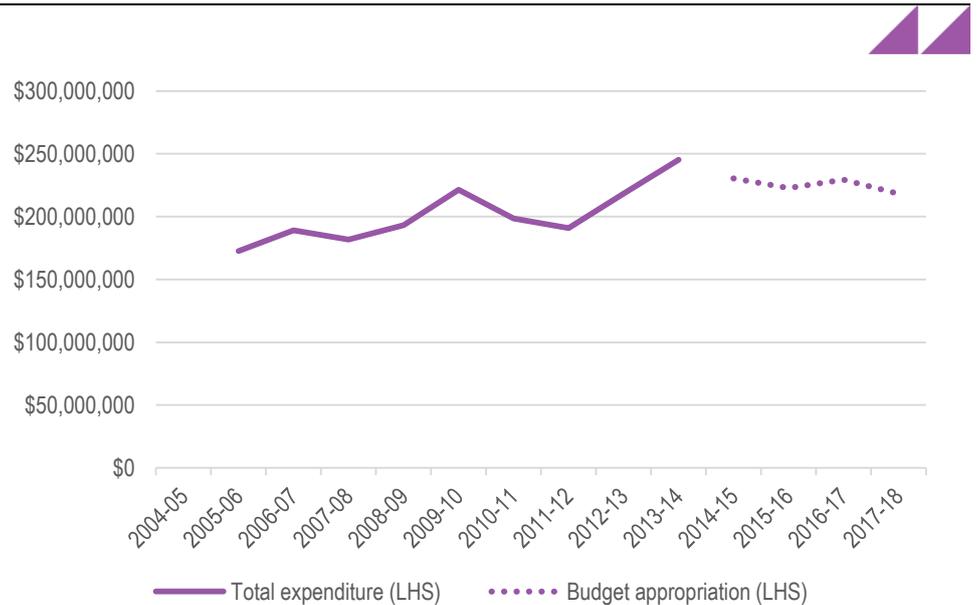
Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Real data generated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A) and 2014-15 MYEFO CPI forecasts.
Source: AMEP expenditure dataset

Figure 47 and Figure 48 below disaggregate AMEP expenditure by sub-programme area.

Prior to 2011-12, classroom tuition expenditure included childcare and tuition-related counselling expenditure. As a result, it fell in 2011-12 when childcare and counselling were given their own contract fee. Figure 47 attempts to control for this by combining classroom expenditure with childcare and counselling. It shows that there was a fall even when the expenditure items are combined in 2010-11 and 2011-12, but growth resumed in 2012-13.

Figure 47   **Selected AMEP expenditure components, 2013-14 dollars**
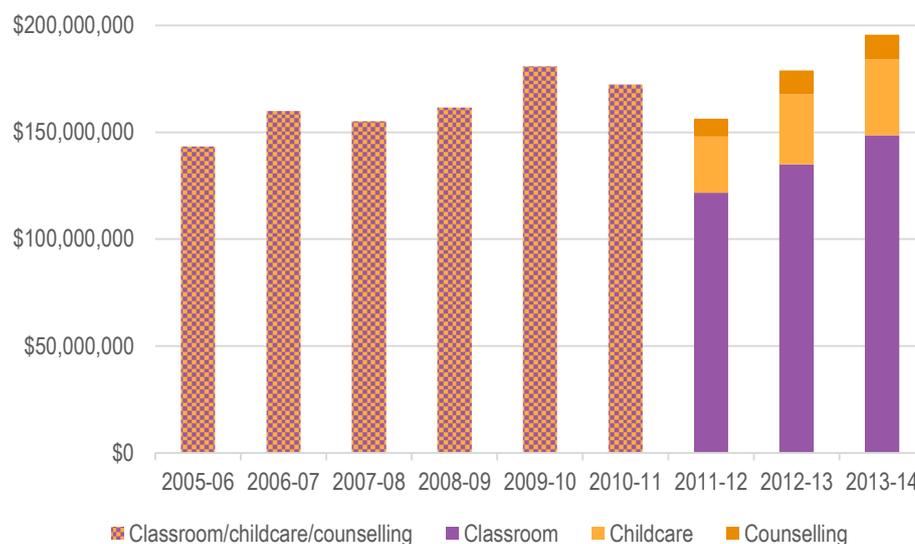
Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Real data generated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A).
Source: AMEP expenditure dataset

Figure 48 shows a fall in SPP expenditure after 2009-10, due to policy changes noted in Section 5.1.1, before recovering somewhat in 2013-14 when the Department relaxed SPP requirements in some cases.[18] Distance expenditure has trended up since 2009-10, as has SLPET since 2011-12.

---

[18]   The commencement of the new business model in 2011-12 resulted in changes for how service providers deliver SPP. Payments are only made when SPP clients attend a dedicated SPP class. Since 2013-14, the Department has allowed SPP payments where an SPP client attends a AMEP class, upon written agreement from the Department, so that providers with low numbers of SPP clients are paid for the additional support provided to the SPP clients.

Figure 48   **Selected AMEP expenditure components, 2013-14 dollars**
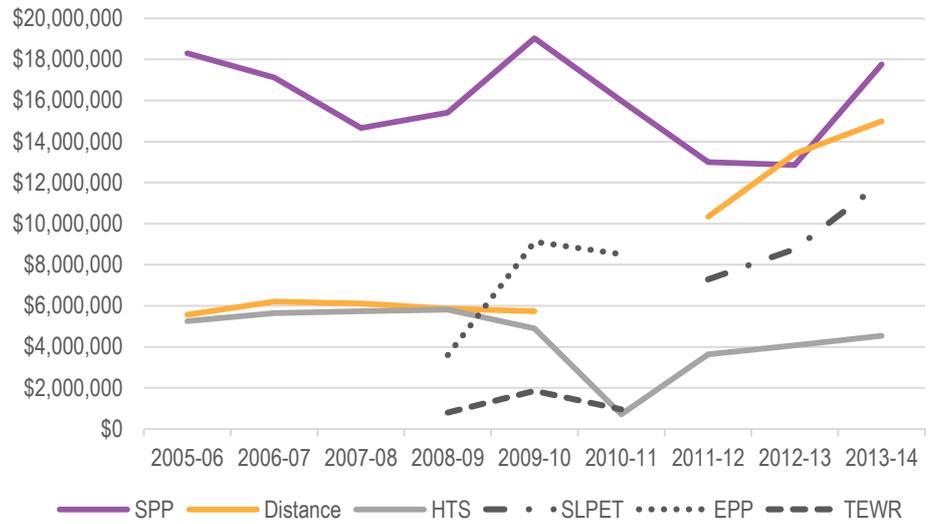
Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Real data generated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A).
EPP: Employment Pathways Programme. TEWR: Traineeships in English and Workplace Readiness. (These sub-programmes were the forerunner of SLPET.)
No data for Distance in 2010-11.
HTS expenditure for 2010-11 only includes HTSEP and does not include other HTS expenditure under AMEP in 2010-11.
Source: AMEP expenditure dataset

These changes in expenditure items have seen the overall composition of AMEP expenditure change over the last 10 years, with classroom expenditure accounting for a smaller share of total expenditure (Figure 49). Distance learning has increased its share of expenditure from 3 per cent before 2011-11 to 5-6 per cent in the three financial years since. The emergence of the SLPET (and its predecessors) is also clear from the figure below. The changing composition of AMEP expenditure reflects programme changes, particularly over the last five years, which have seen an increase in the number of training options available under AMEP.

Figure 49 **AMEP expenditure components share of total funding, per cent**
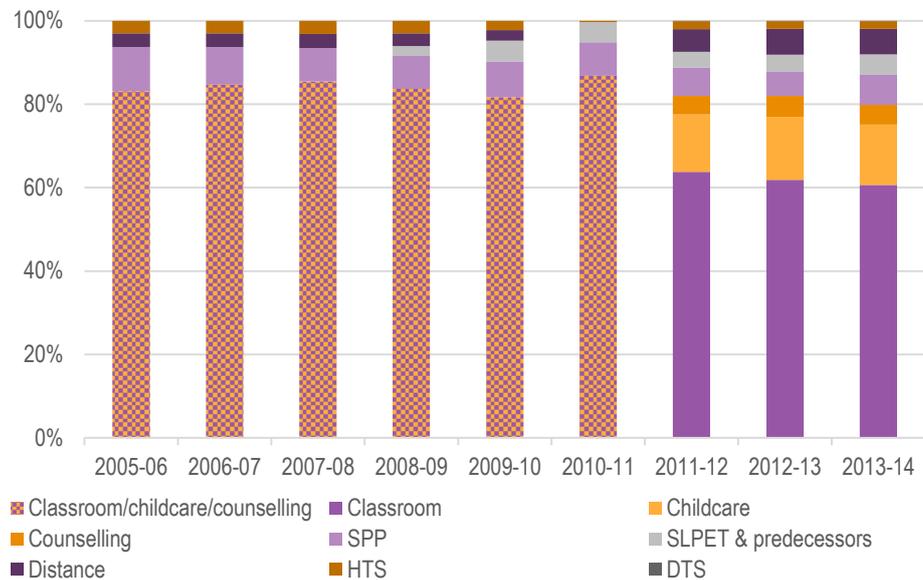
Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Real data generated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A).
'Classroom/childcare/counselling' for 2010-11 includes Distance and HTS.
'SLPET and predecessors' includes the Employment Pathways Programme and the Traineeships in English and Workplace Readiness.
Source: AMEP expenditure dataset

Key Finding 21

Classroom tuition accounts for almost two thirds of AMEP expenditure, with childcare accounting for 15 per cent. Total real AMEP expenditure has fluctuated in recent years, but on the whole has exhibited an upward trend since 2004-05 due to increasing client numbers.

6.1.2   AMEP expenditure per output

To measure efficiency accurately, both outputs and outcomes must be recorded at the same interval as inputs — in this case by financial year. As noted previously, AMEP hours per year are not available due to dataset limitations, so cannot be used in any efficiency analysis.

Another measure of efficiency is the number of clients serviced through the programme for the level of expenditure. Figure 50 shows AMEP expenditure and client enrolment and participation. Programme cost appears to broadly mirror participants over the forward estimates. In future, there is forecast to be a decline in participants.

Figure 50 **Expenditure (2013-14 dollars), and participant and enrolment numbers**

The real government cost per AMEP participant has varied between $3,500 and $4,000 over the last 10 years (Figure 51). From 2011-12, expenditure per participant has increased 10 per cent to $3,900 in 2013-14.

Figure 51 **Total programme expenditure per participant, 2013-14 dollars**

Another measure of efficiency is the amount of programme expenditure needed to produce module and learning outcome achievements under the AMEP. This measure shows that the real cost of each AMEP module achieved fell significantly in 2008-09, largely due to the training package changes discussed in Section 5.2.2. Over the five years to 2012-13, the cost per module increased before falling slightly in 2013-14 to $1,660 (Figure 52). The fall in 2013-14 coincided with the training package changes. Real expenditure per learning outcome has increased since 2008-09 to around $700.

Figure 52 **Total programme expenditure per module and learning outcome, 2013-14 dollars**
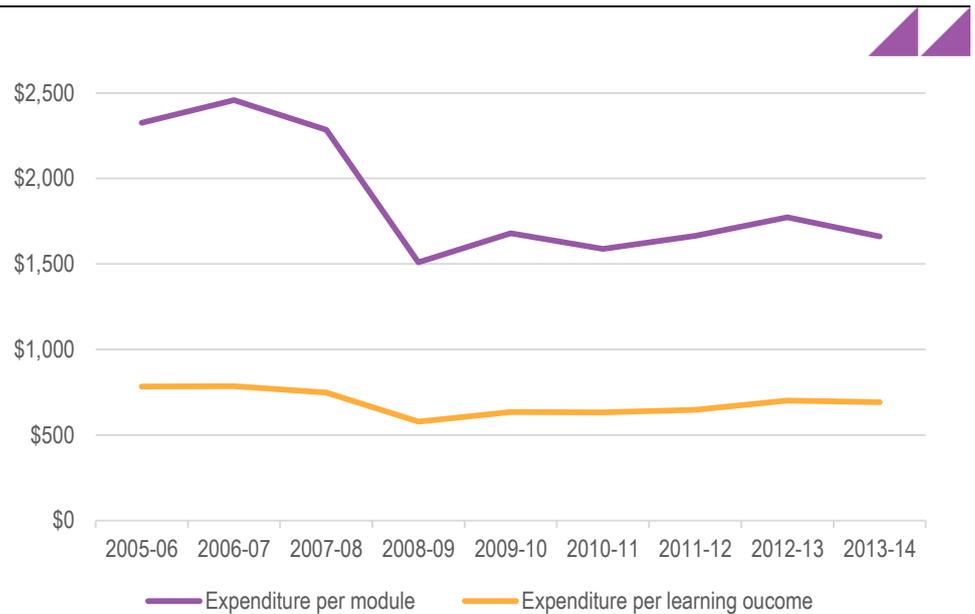
Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Nominal data deflated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A). No expenditure data available for 2010-11.
Source: AMEP dataset and AMEP expenditure dataset

Figure 53 shows a scatter plot of modules achieved and AMEP expenditure. More efficient years are in the top left hand corner, while less efficient years are closer to the bottom right. Yellow markers are used to denote the new business model years. The new business model does not appear to be correlated with changes in efficiency.

Figure 53 **Scatterplot of modules achieved and expenditure**
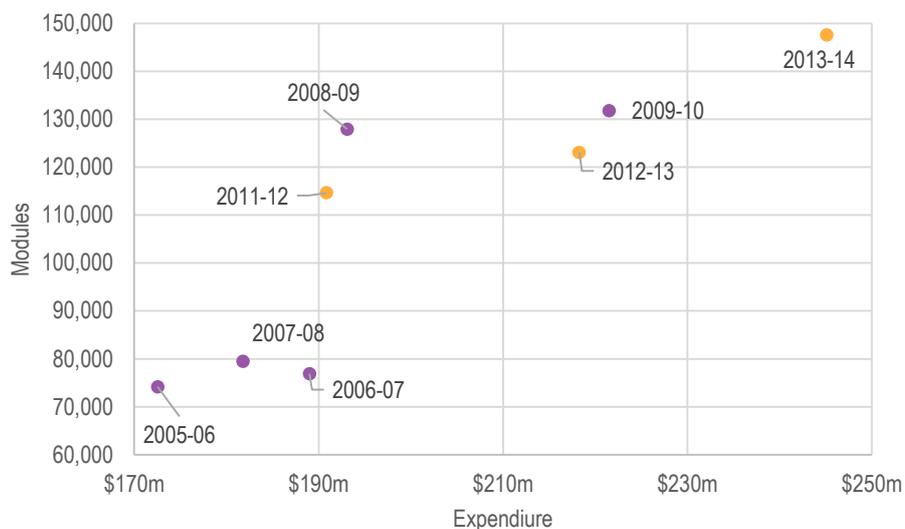
Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Nominal data deflated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A). No expenditure data available for 2010-11. Yellow markers are for the new business model years.
Source: AMEP dataset and AMEP expenditure dataset

Key Finding 22

The real government cost per AMEP participant has increased 10 per cent from 2011-12 to reach $3,900 in 2013-14.

Over the five years to 2012-13, the real cost per AMEP module increased, before falling slightly in 2013-14 to $1,660. Real expenditure per AMEP learning outcome has increased since 2008-09 to around $700.

6.2   Performance assessment and management

The AMEP performance assessment and management framework has five major components, discussed in the sections below.

⎯ The Assessment Task Bank (ATB).

⎯ AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS).

⎯ AMEP service provider reporting.

⎯ Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

⎯ Auditing and quality assurance.

6.2.1   Assessment Task Bank

Assessments for the AMEP are managed by NEAS — the organisation which also provides a monitoring/auditing function for the AMEP — on behalf of the Australian Government. The ATB is an online resource of assessment tasks for teachers employed by AMEP service providers. It is a collection of tasks held in a secure location to be used for assessment under the CSWE framework.

Representatives from all AMEP service providers comprise the National Working Group (NWG), which is continually developing and testing new tasks for the ATB. The NWG liaise and meet regularly to assess, modify, validate and pilot assessment tasks for the ATB. The ATB is designed to facilitate a national programme that is consistent and enables the learning outcomes of AMEP participants to be measured in a consistent way across the country (NEAS, 2015).

While it is not mandatory, consultations indicated that AMEP service providers value the ATB highly and consider the assessments well designed and easy to use. The ATB reduces complexity for AMEP service providers and the Department of Education and Training by providing standardised assessments, as opposed to each provider developing assessments which would then need to be audited.

Key Finding 23

The Assessment Task Bank is highly valued by AMEP service providers for helping to improve the efficiency of AMEP delivery through standardising assessments.

6.2.2   AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS)

The AMEP is supported by an information system known as the AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS), which is used to support AMEP policy development, service delivery and administration. ARMS functionality includes client management and educational history tracking, AMEP learning activity management and administration, and basic staff management facilities. The information that must be recorded on ARMS by AMEP service providers includes (but is not limited to):

— AMEP client profile details
— AMEP client attendance records
— Tuition hours
— AMEP counselling hours
— Mode of tuition
— Updating Individual Pathway Guide data entered into ARMS by the AMEP services provider
— Reporting information
— CSWE learning outcomes
— Completion of CSWE modules
— Certificates of attainment
— The issuing of CSWE Certificates.

The AMEP service provider must certify to the Department of Education and Training that financial invoices are an accurate reflection of the services provided in the invoice period. The AMEP service provider is required to enter all information on ARMS regarding the services delivered within 14 calendar days from the end of each month. The Department is not able to make payments until data has been entered into ARMS. The AMEP service provider must ensure all data entered into ARMS is quality controlled and supported by verifiable records, such as teachers' records of client contact (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012).

Consultations for this evaluation revealed that stakeholder views on the ARMS vary widely. Some consider the database easy to use while others argue there is significant scope to make it more user friendly. There was a strong view that modification to the ARMS to allow AMEP service providers the ability to run detailed extractions would aid provider management. As some knowledge of the AMEP business and database query language appears to be an essential pre-requisite, AMEP service providers may also need to undertake further ARMS training to fully realise its capability. At the same time, future modifications to ARMS should use the opportunity to simplify and enhance the user interface.

> Key Finding 24
>
> The ARMS is used effectively, but additional training and usability enhancements would improve provider ability to run detailed extractions for their individual purposes.

6.2.3   Service provider reporting

AMEP service providers are required to provide six reports to the Department of Education and Training each year — four quarterly (most data for this report is generated by ARMS), one half yearly and one annual report (DIAC, 2012).

Quarterly reports

AMEP service providers are required to submit a report for each of the contract regions they are responsible for. Quarterly reports for general services involve AMEP service providers reporting on: performance against key performance indicators; client data; and programme delivery methods such as the SPP, SLPET, HTSEP and the HTS. Quarterly reports for distance/e-learning services involve the distance /e-learning provider reporting on: performance against key performance indicators; client data; and distance learning online registrations and usage (Department of Industry, 2014).

Half yearly report

A half yearly report for general services requires AMEP service providers to report on: clients (produce a client profile and report on client outcomes); service delivery (including SPP, SLPET, the HTSEP and the HTS; client support (including counselling, referrals to 'other' services (that is, non-AMEP), referrals post-AMEP, and referral to 'other' government programmes); client feedback (including client satisfaction and client complaints); distance learning; and other areas (including childcare, reporting against contract plans and good news stories) (Department of Industry, 2014).

Annual report

AMEP service providers must submit an executive summary with the annual report, including key achievements across the contract region, challenges and priorities for the coming year. In addition, they must provide the Department with an independently audited annual financial statement. The annual report for general services involve AMEP service providers qualitatively and quantitatively reporting on: tuition methods, additional services, and other key areas. This is the same for distance/e-learning services (Department of Industry, 2014).

Consultations indicated that AMEP service providers see the formal AMEP reporting requirements as onerous and question the utility of providing six reports to the Department each year. There may be scope to reduce the administrative burden for AMEP service providers and the Department by reviewing the number and nature of reports providers are required to submit each year.

Key Finding 25

AMEP service providers find the formal AMEP reporting requirements onerous and question the utility of providing six reports to the Department each year.

There may be scope to reduce the administrative burden for AMEP service providers and the Department by reviewing the number and nature of reports providers are required to submit each year.

6.2.4 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The performance of AMEP service providers are measured using 23 KPIs. The AMEP KPIs are aligned to the strategic direction of the programme under the new business model, and aim to assess the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. The quality of service delivery is measured through a combination of AMEP client satisfaction results, information provided in service provider reports and quality assurance processes.

There are three compliance levels for each KPI. A green compliance level indicates that the KPI has been met by the AMEP service provider. An amber compliance level indicates marginal KPI failure, up to 5 per cent variance, and strategies for management must be put in place. A red compliance level indicates significant KPI failure, greater than 5 per cent variance, and immediate management attention is required (Department of Industry, 2014).

Consultations indicate that some AMEP service providers consider the KPIs to be too numerous and too focused on formal assessment, which it is feared, may sometimes detract from language learning. One provider suggested that 'the KPIs would better reflect the effectiveness of the programme if they addressed, in a more balanced way, the settlement outcomes as well as language outcomes.'

Settlement outcomes are more complex and difficult to measure than English language outcomes, so the AMEP currently measures the 'number of clients who have participated in a settlement course', rather than settlement outcomes.

Key Finding 26

While AMEP KPIs are extensive, some AMEP service providers consider them too numerous and focused on formal assessment. AMEP service providers also contend that settlement outcomes should be better captured in the KPIs.

6.2.5 Auditing and quality assurance

NEAS is contracted by the Australian Government to provide independent verification and quality assurance for the resources, facilities and processes used in the delivery of the AMEP by each service provider. NEAS conducts an annual desk audit of submitted information and documentation, as well as an annual on-site assessment of each AMEP service provider.

NEAS requires that all AMEP service providers report on: the premises; professional and administrative staff; educational resources; programme delivery; client support services; programme evaluation; and programme promotion.

The quality assurance processes offered by NEAS are in place to ensure that the services delivered by AMEP service providers, with respect to resources, facilities and processes, are maintained at an appropriate standard, and that a beneficial and positive learning experience will be achieved by clients whilst undertaking the programme. Through ongoing quality monitoring, NEAS checks that only providers offering high standards of English instruction and administrative practice continue to be authorised providers within the AMEP (NEAS, 2011).

Consultations indicate that most AMEP service providers are satisfied with the role and professionalism of NEAS. The NEAS audits are undertaken in an effective and collaborative manner which helps improve the operations of providers.

As RTOs, all AMEP service providers are subject to quality assurance monitoring by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or the relevant state body. ASQA audits focus on training organisations meeting the RTO accreditation requirement and delivering training and assessments in line with training packages. In consultations, few AMEP service providers indicated that there was overlap between NEAS and ASQA (or the equivalent state body).

Key Finding 27

The role of NEAS is valued, with its audits undertaken in an effective and collaborative manner that help improve the operations of AMEP service providers.

There is little evidence of duplication in quality assurance monitoring by the NEAS and ASQA (or the equivalent state body).

6.2.6 Additional areas for potential performance assessment

Overall, the AMEP performance assessment and management system is well placed to monitor and report on the performance of AMEP with the programme having sound data collection methodologies for measuring and reporting against programme objectives and client outcomes.

Having said this, measuring and reporting settlement and employment outcomes was raised as an area requiring further attention. Some AMEP service providers suggested that greater integration of ARMS with other government databases would allow settlement, training and employment outcomes to be better tracked as part of AMEP. The linking of the new Unique Student Identifier (USI) to social services databases could aid such outcome measurement. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Key Finding 28

AMEP performance assessment and management system is well placed to monitor and report on the performance of AMEP. Greater integration of AMEP systems with other government databases would allow settlement, training and employment outcomes to be better tracked as part of AMEP.

7 The appropriateness and future of the AMEP

This chapter examines the appropriateness of the AMEP and makes recommendations on how the programme could be improved, based on analysis in previous chapters.

7.1 Potential improvements to the AMEP

7.1.1 Clarity of programme objectives

As set out in the AMEP Services Contract (2011-17) the objective of the AMEP is to:

> …provide settlement focused English language tuition and related services to newly arrived migrants and Humanitarian Entrants who have less than Functional English.

The AMEP is considered by most stakeholders to be an integral part of the Australian Government's strategy to ensure that eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants are able to gain foundation English language and settlement skills and to therefore confidently participate in Australian society.

The outcomes clearly specified in the AMEP Services Contract are generally well understood by the programme's stakeholders.

Language versus settlement

While language and literacy are central to the objectives of the AMEP, most stakeholders consider that this is a means to an end, with settlement being the programme's ultimate goal. In some cases, AMEP has been referred to much more than this:

> …the AMEP is proud to be more than just a language program. It is a major settlement tool, enabling students to avoid the isolation which comes from being unable to communicate. You only have to visit an AMEP classroom to understand what an important role it plays in easing recently arrived migrants into their new environment – the practical advice and information provided by teachers, the lively multicultural atmosphere where tolerance is both necessary and appreciated, the opportunities for friendship during what can be a very lonely and bewildering period in a person's life, and of course the chance to learn and practise new linguistic and cultural skills in an encouraging and non-threatening environment.
>
> *The Hon Phillip Ruddock MP 1998, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs*

> The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is the Australian Government's largest settlement program. The AMEP reflects the government's commitment to long-term sustainable settlement outcomes for newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants through integrated, targeted and well designed programs that support clients in their transition to life in Australia. The Australian Government considers gaining English language proficiency is key to successfully settling in Australia.
>
> *Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011*

The 'double mandate' of settlement and language is entirely consistent with a content-based instruction approach to language training. The objective of settlement is compatible with the immediate task of teaching English as a second language. In fact, the literature indicates that these objectives are complementary for two reasons:

— Learners in such content-based programmes are able to master the content offered in their course, while concurrently improving their language ability.

— Learners develop intrinsic motivation as they are exposed to new ideas and information relevant to their immediate circumstances (see Section 3.3).

The double mandate of settlement and language is a feature shared with the Canadian system and the review of the LINC programme concluded that "the double mandate of language training and settlement/integration does not dilute the language training; in fact the settlement mandate strengthens the language component" (CIC 2010).

Settlement versus employment

There was a degree of debate amongst stakeholders consulted with respect to the primacy of certain objectives over others, in particular the balance between settlement and employment. Prior to transfer of the AMEP to the Department of Education and Training, the move to the Department of Industry, and the gradual introduction of an emphasis on employment over time (see Martin 1998), stakeholders expressed concern that an increasing emphasis on employment and economic participation may gradually start to displace the programme's longstanding primary objective of settlement.

These concerns were raised by both stakeholders and AMEP service providers in consultations and in submissions to the evaluation.

> …the settlement success of the AMEP should not be lost sight of in an attempt to achieve job outcomes.
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

> Although employment pathways are important it is vital to maintain settlement as the focus of AMEP.
>
> *SCOA submission*

> A large number of service providers consulted emphasised the need to keep AMEP a settlement-focused program, separate from the employment-focused English language programs available. The goal of AMEP is to give people the English language skills that they need to settle well in Australia, not simply the skills they need to secure employment.
>
> … Undermining the settlement focus of the AMEP could in turn undermine the development of language skills essential for successful settlement, and thereby undermine the capacity of new arrivals to navigate life in Australia.
>
> *RCOA submission*

Some stakeholders were also concerned that the separation of settlement related functions of government increased the risk that the AMEP would become less embedded in, or coordinated with, other settlement services and programmes in DSS.

> Those consulted for this submission have highlighted their concern that the move to the Department of Industry will remove the strong links the AMEP has with other settlement programs found under the Department of Social Services. Programs such as HSS and SGP have often worked closely with AMEP providers to address various settlement issues new arrivals face. By moving to two different departments, RCOA is concerned that these strong links will be lost.
>
> *RCOA submission*

A number of stakeholders and submissions explicitly advocated for the AMEP to be moved to either DSS or DHS. Such proposals have not been considered in this report as they are beyond the scope of the evaluation.

The tension between settlement and employment outcomes is further complicated by the fact that the focus of the AMEP on functional English by definition precludes training to a level that may be required for employment — see discussion in Section 7.1.6 below.

At the time of the evaluation, there were no examples to indicate such fragmentation or displacement of the AMEP's settlement objective occurring, but concerns were generally expressed that this could pose a future risk for the programme.

Recommendation 1

The AMEP's longstanding objective of settlement for migrants into Australia (through the development of English language proficiency) is clear, and should continue to be its primary goal.

7.1.2   Measurement against objectives

The language outcomes of the AMEP are consistently measured and reported. As discussed in Section 4.2.4, the level of English language proficiency is assessed for each individual participant to determine their eligibility at the outset, and then periodically to assess progress towards functional English.

Outcomes data that measure delivery of the objectives of the AMEP, however, are not currently collected. For example, AMEP's contribution towards the social participation and economic participation of migrants are not consistently measured or reported.

Recommendations to more comprehensively measure programme outcomes and objectives (as opposed to outputs) were previously made as part of the 2007 Audit of the AMEP:

> Overall, we believe that the department is well placed in terms of managing access and delivery of AMEP services to its clients, but less well placed to **demonstrate** that delivery is contributing to positive societal changes at the policy level, particularly in an environment of increasing complexity, ambiguity, and public scrutiny.
>
> *Enrst and Young 2007, AMEP Audit Report*

Stakeholders, in particular AMEP service providers, are acutely aware of the fact that there is currently limited reporting of participant outcomes in relation to the programme's objectives.

> Outcomes are currently measured by successful completion of CSWE certificates, Modules and Learning Outcomes and by participation in a Settlement course. These measures do not encourage flexibility or relevance as they cannot capture a client's progression into employment or further study, or adequately measure competence in settlement situations.
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

It is important to acknowledge that the broader programme outcomes and objectives are more difficult to measure, especially at the level of the individual participant. A longitudinal reporting framework based on integration with other government services, in particular HSS and Centrelink services, would reduce the costs of tracking individual outcomes over time.

Given the strong evidence of the importance of language and literacy in settlement (see Section 3.2), a comprehensive reporting framework for all participants may not be required *per se*. Rather, longitudinal studies of a sample or subset of AMEP participants may be sufficient to demonstrate and periodically confirm the programme's contribution towards the objectives of improving the social and economic participation of migrants. Such studies could build on the foundation of research undertaken previously by those associated with

the AMEP Research Centre (see for example Yates *et al.* 2010 and Yates and Wang 2014) as well as other surveys and research studies (such as Hugo 2011 and SRC 2014).

As noted above in Section 6.2.3, AMEP service providers find the AMEP reporting requirements of six reports each year to be time-consuming, with some of the six reports each year duplicative. As such, there is scope to reduce the administrative burden for AMEP service providers and the Department by reviewing the number and nature of reports required, for example to four times a year — an annual report, a half yearly report and two quarterly reports .

Recommendation 2

Measuring the outcomes of the AMEP against its programme objectives could be improved through:

- developing and implementing the necessary systems in partnership with other government agencies to track individual outcomes over time, and/or
- instituting a longitudinal-based approach using a sufficiently robust sample or subset of AMEP clients to demonstrate and periodically confirm the programme's contribution towards its objectives.

Recommendation 3

The Australian Government should reduce the administrative burden on AMEP service providers to the extent possible by rationalising the programmes reporting requirements.

7.1.3   Target groups

The target groups for the AMEP are based on the various visa classes, as outlined in Section 2.1.

For the improved economic and social participation by migrants, it would be preferable to have eligibility criteria that err on the side of being inclusive rather than exclusive. The risks of being overly inclusive are low, given that there is a strong element of self-selection and a low likelihood that those with little or no prospect of benefitting would remain in the programme for long.

The coverage or targeting of the AMEP and its associated eligibility criteria are inclusive of the majority of permanent migrants, and is appropriate for the objectives of the programme.

Skilled Stream Primary Applicants

Primary applicants arriving in Australia via the skilled migration stream are not currently excluded from participating in the AMEP. Given the high level of English language proficiency that needs to be demonstrated by primary applicant skilled migrants for their visa (typically at a level higher than functional English), not excluding such migrants from the AMEP may be seen, *prima facie*, as questionable.

Recent research has found that Skilled visa stream primary applicants achieve strong employment outcomes and even though eight-in-ten migrants were from countries where English was not the main language spoken, almost nine-in-ten migrants reported high levels of spoken English (The Social Research Centre (SRC), 2014).

In 2013-14 skilled stream migrants made up 17 per cent of AMEP participants, however the data does not allow this to be disaggregated into primary applicants and dependents. In consultations with AMEP service providers, it is often reported that the vast majority of participants from the Skilled visa stream are dependents of the primary applicant.

On balance, therefore, it does not appear that the inclusion of primary applicants from the Skill stream imposes a significant cost on the AMEP. As long as AMEP service providers are appropriately assessing the English language proficiency of participants at the outset (through the ISLPR), the number of primary skilled migrants expending hours in the AMEP should continue to be negligible. Furthermore, the proportion of participants with little to gain from the AMEP that subsequently give up their time and energy to remain in the programme would be expected to be low.

Temporary visa holders

In the future, there may be temporary humanitarian visa holders in Australia who, under the current eligibility criteria would not be eligible for the AMEP. Stakeholders suggested that any such visa holders should be eligible for the AMEP.

Contingent on other policy decisions, it may be appropriate for these visa holders to be included in the AMEP's target groups. The decision to expand AMEP eligibility will need to be considered in the context of other services that temporary humanitarian visa holders may be able to access.

> Recommendation 4
>
> On the whole, the target groups and associated eligibility criteria of the AMEP are appropriate. Further consideration is required to determine if the list of eligible visas should be extended to include temporary humanitarian visa classes.

7.1.4   Assessment tools

The needs of clients and potential clients are discussed in Section 3.2 and the instruments used as part of the AMEP to assess client needs are discussed in Section 2.1.

Considering the literature and the international experience, possible improvements to the assessment of needs and benchmarks used span two areas.

1. The benchmark level of English language proficiency
2. The use of more efficient assessment instruments.

1. The benchmark level of functional English

The benchmark level of functional English for the AMEP is embodied in the eligibility and exit criteria being at ISLPR Level 2. Given the focus on settlement outcomes, *prima facie* the benchmark level of English language proficiency would appear to be appropriate:

— Achievement of functional English — also known as *basic social proficiency* — would allow any individual migrant to be "able to satisfy basic social needs, and the requirements of routine situations pertinent to own everyday commerce and recreation and to linguistically undemanding 'vocational' fields" (ISLPR, 2014).

—— The level below ISLPR 2 — ISLPR 1+ *transactional proficiency* — would appear to be inadequate as it would only allow a migrant to Australia to "satisfy own simple everyday transactional needs and limited social needs".

—— The level above ISLPR 2 — ISLPR 2+ *social proficiency* and ISLPR 3 *vocational proficiency* — would appear to be unnecessarily advanced, as it would meet the minimum entry requirements for VET courses and university respectively.

The benchmark level of English language proficiency could be considered equivalent to the benchmark level used in the LINC programme in Canada, which provides for English or French language training to newcomers up to Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 4 or higher, which would be considered to be Fluent Basic proficiency (CIC 2011).

As listed above, by definition the benchmark functional English level is regarded as insufficient for VET and higher education. Some stakeholders and AMEP participants also consider this level of English to be insufficient to gain employment; more specifically, that it is inadequate for employment in the field in which they are formally trained. This reflects research by Hugo (2011), for example, which has shown that the skills of humanitarian entrants are not being fully utilised and there is "significant mis-match shown between skills and occupation".

As such, there were calls from stakeholders for the AMEP to extend beyond the current benchmark English language proficiency level to include higher levels of proficiency on the ISLPR scale and/or inclusion of CSWE IV.

> Particularly for clients who come into the AMEP program at CSWE III level, it would be helpful to them if they could continue to use their AMEP hours in higher English or other courses. This would increase students' English ability and make them more job ready and able to transition to mainstream vocational courses.

> CSWE IV courses (both Employment and Further Study focus) bridge the gap between the achievement of functional English and genuine suitable job pathways and advanced training and should be able to be offered under AMEP funding, particularly for students of working age who enter the program at a higher ISLPR level.

> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

Whether or not the AMEP is intended to provide the level of English proficiency necessary for migrants to make full use of their skills is a policy consideration beyond the scope of this evaluation. It would appear that this is currently addressed through the high levels of English proficiency required to be demonstrated by applicants in the skilled migration stream.

While some stakeholders support the expansion of the AMEP to encompass CSWE IV to better prepare migrants for Certificate III VET courses or employment, it is not necessarily the case that this would need to be achieved through the AMEP itself. After clients complete their AMEP hours, other subsidised training opportunities should be available through the broader VET sector. This in turn would depend on the Australian Government's funding of other programmes such as the SEE programme, and state and territory government funding of foundation skills programmes. The links to the SEE programme and to other government policies and programmes were discussed in Section 2.7. The alignment of the AMEP and the SEE programme across different levels of proficiency is also discussed in the AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report.

Recommendation 5

Given the AMEP's emphasis on delivering preliminary English skills in a settlement context, the benchmark level for the AMEP should be retained at minimum at the currently prescribed level of functional English.

2. The use of more efficient assessment instruments

There are a number of potential areas for improvement in this respect, discussed in the following sections in relation to the ISLPR and CSWE respectively.

The ISLPR

The initial assessment of clients using the ISLPR plays a particularly important role in ensuring the appropriate targeting and subsequent effectiveness of the programme by limiting access only to those that have not yet acquired functional English. The ISLPR has been the long-standing instrument used to assess proficiency in the AMEP since the late 1970s.

The ISLPR[19] was developed "for use in assessing placement, evaluation of progress, setting realistic goals to guide course design and delivery, referral and guidance of clients and the setting of longer-term English language objectives within which the AMEP might operate" (Martin 1998). As discussed in the AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report there are a range of other assessment instruments currently being used in the ESL sector including the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which are both more widely used than the ISLPR.

While the ISLPR appears to be a somewhat specialised instrument primarily used in the AMEP, stakeholders do not raise any issues with its use; many acknowledge its suitability and usability for the purposes of AMEP entry and exit assessments.

> The test is perfect for migrants, user friendly, not confronting and most importantly time efficient – unlike the PTA used by the SEE program.
>
> *Central Institute of Technology*

> The International Second Language Proficiency rating scale (ISLPR) has been developed to specifically assess culturally and linguistically diverse clients.
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

The suitability of the ISLPR is also reflected in the fact that it has been designed to be easily tested, designed to test 'real life' language, rather than vocational or academic language; this aligns well with AMEP's benchmark of functional English.

The ISLPR also supports the continuous intake model of the AMEP with the flexibility of comparatively short one-to-one test interviews and quick turn-around of test results.

Central Institute of Technology (CIT) in WA highlights one potential issue with respect to the ISLPR; given the proprietary nature and limited use of the instrument, the ISLPR is highly reliant on the organisation — ISLPR Language Services Pty Ltd — and associated individuals that developed, own and subsequently maintain the instrument and its

---

19   Known as the Australian Language Proficiency Ratings (ALPR), then the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR), before becoming the ISLPR.

accreditation framework. CIT has taken steps to reduce its reliance on ISLPR Language Services by working with them to develop the capability to independently train its own ISLPR testers.

CIT also highlights the lack of a periodic re-accreditation of testers (as compared to the IELTS system for example) as a potential weakness.

The requirement for both entry and continual ISLPR assessments has provided the programme with valuable data to analyse participant English language levels (see Section 5.3.1).

While ISLPR has a long history in the AMEP, and stakeholders and AMEP service providers appear to be satisfied with the use of the ISLPR, there may be a case to consider whether other mainstream testing instruments such as IELTS and TOEFL could also be used in the programme. The assessment of the suitability of other instruments is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but such diversification of instruments could assist in future-proofing the AMEP.

In summary, the ISLPR is suited to the AMEP as evidenced by:

— wide stakeholder support for the ISLPR

— the ISLPR's alignment with the AMEP's benchmark for English language proficiency and focus on non-academic language skills and settlement

— the ISLPR's speed which supports the continuous intake model of the AMEP and encourages the collection of data on clients' English language skills.

Recommendation 6

The ISLPR is well suited to the AMEP and should continue to be used. The assessment of the suitability of other instruments is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but the benefits of diversification to other mainstream instruments such as IELTS and TOEFL should be reviewed.

The CSWE curriculum framework

AMES NSW developed the nationally accredited Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) curriculum framework and this was implemented nationally in 1993 (Martin 1998). The CSWE curriculum framework is generally accepted as a suitable curriculum framework for AMEP training and assessment. It would appear that the majority of AMEP service providers are satisfied with the prescription of CSWE as the sole curriculum framework for the AMEP.

CSWE is seen as having three key strengths: contextualised tuition, development of independent learning skills and national consistency.

The CSWE curriculum framework allows training providers to create or align a syllabus for the provision of English language courses using real life examples and settlement contexts relevant to AMEP clients. An example of the contextualised curriculum framework is the CSWE I modules set out in Box 1.

Box 1 **Certificate I in Spoken and Written English modules**

Core module

Basic Learning Strategies

Elective modules

Giving Personal Information

Comprehending and Participating in Short Transactional Exchanges

Comprehending Spoken Information and Instructions

Comprehending and Participating in Short Conversations

Comprehending and Telling Spoken Recounts

Comprehending and Leaving Telephone Messages

Comprehending Written Instructions and Completing a Short Form

Comprehending and Composing Written Descriptions

Comprehending and Composing Written Recounts

Comprehending and Composing Short Informal Written Texts

Comprehending Short News and Information Texts

Comprehending and Performing Addition and Subtraction With Decimal Whole Numbers

Comprehending and Using the Metric System of Measurement

Source: CSWE curriculum framework

As a result of the contextualised CSWE curriculum framework, clients are more likely to find the AMEP tuition engaging, and the AMEP can contribute to improved settlement outcomes for clients through tuition which addresses settlement needs.

> The use of the accredited curriculum Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) nationally provides a rigorously developed and reviewed structure for delivery of both the language and settlement outcomes vital to meeting the clients' settlement and language learning needs.
>
> … the capacity within the CSWE curriculum to contextualise the AMEP to settlement needs of clients through the use of real life contexts demonstrates the tenants of the Communicative Approach which is generally considered by most contemporary language practitioners as best practice in language training.
>
> *TAFE Queensland Submission*

> The CSWE curriculum is a flexible and practical framework for contextualised curriculum development centred on settlement needs.
>
> *Victoria University submission*

CSWE is also seen as providing clients with a foundation for further learning and study. AMEP clients may go on to further vocational and/or higher education after exiting the AMEP and all clients will continue with their English language learning, even if informally. CSWE develops clients' independent learning skills leaving them better placed to undertake further learning.

> The CSWE course contains within it a focus on students becoming independent learners and equips them with skills to pursue further learning beyond AMEP.
>
> *CIT submission*

> In CSWE language classes, students study modules on learning strategies which teach them about learning styles and techniques in adult vocational education. Students are asked to

> evaluate and develop their own learning styles as well as learning how to become independent learners.
>
> *NSI submission*

As a nationally recognised qualification framework, CSWE provides a standardised and transferable curriculum framework. This allows for a consistent curriculum and assessment across the AMEP, and means that clients moving between AMEP service providers are able to continue with the same curriculum while studying with the new provider. The fact CSWE is part of the VET sector training packages also means it provides a pathway to further training.

> AMEP curriculum and its use of certificates in spoken and written English (CSWE) curriculum assessment framework, aligns the program directly with the Australian Qualification Framework that is used in the education and training sector in Australia. This is helpful for those who attain functional levels of English and are assessed as competent to participate in other training and learning programs.
>
> *MDA submission*

> By using an accredited curriculum (CSWE) for delivery, clients receive a standard of teaching and learning that is nationally recognized and transferable. Whilst providing a structure for delivery, the CSWE allows contextualization of delivery method and content to best suit the needs of differing cohorts of learners. As part of the Australian Qualification Framework, CSWE provides a clear pathway for further training.
>
> *TAFE Queensland Submission*

There are however a number of varying views with respect to the compulsory nature of the CSWE curriculum framework. First, some AMEP service providers consider that while the CSWE is an appropriate curriculum framework for a large proportion of AMEP learners, it is most well suited to clients with higher levels of previous education and strong language foundations who are able to build on classroom activities independently. One provider considers that:

> …the demand to measure in discrete events does not provide a programme that can provide the building blocks for proficiency [and that] clients come with a range of learning styles, experience and needs and a wider choice of curricula would better meet this range of clients
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

Second, assessment and completion of CSWE learning outcomes is considered somewhat limited as it is "only a measure of competency in discrete language events and not a measure of overall language proficiency". Rather proficiency based curricula that looks at the way in which language is acquired and naturalised could provide more holistic evidence of achievement than the CSWE outcomes (AMEP service provider confidential submission). This concern has been echoed in the research.

> Within the CSWE, learning outcomes are defined as 'what an individual can do' with language. However, it can be argued that the learning outcomes described in the CSWE still take a competency-based approach in that the assessment criteria are described as whole texts with specific, required and optional elements.
>
> *AMEP Research Centre (2007)*

The Canadian Language Benchmarks on the other hand, differ from CSWE assessment by measuring outcomes in terms of language proficiency (AMEP Research Centre, 2007).

Third, other providers consider that while there was no reason not to use the CSWE, allowing flexibility to broaden the ESL curriculum options available in the AMEP could in some cases "facilitate a smoother transition to the SEE programme (for clients whose pathway is from AMEP into SEE)" (AMES VIC submission).

Fourth, some AMEP service providers recommend that at higher levels, CSWE III should be substitutable with courses/modules from other VET qualifications to provide AMEP clients with a stronger vocational focus.

> At Certificate 3 and 4 levels there should be flexibility to incorporate VET units funded through AMEP.
>
> *Confidential submission*

> Greater employment outcomes may also be achieved if we could combine AMEP and VET delivery in a dual certificate model for higher level clients.
>
> *VU submission*

An assessment of the potential suitability of other curricula for the AMEP is beyond the scope of the evaluation but given the issues identified, further research with respect to the appropriateness of alternate nationally accredited courses is warranted. In the long term, this would provide AMEP service providers with the choice of a number of comparable, compatible and competitive options alongside the CSWE, whilst also ensuring that the programme itself is supported by a range of diversified curricula.

Recommendation 7

The CSWE provides the appropriate curriculum framework for training and assessment under the AMEP and should continue to be used.

Further research to examine the appropriateness of alternate nationally accredited courses for use within the AMEP is warranted.

7.1.5   Improving client outcomes

On the whole, the AMEP receives significant support from all stakeholders for its contribution to the settlement of migrants in Australia. There are numerous examples of clients achieving significant study, employment and settlement outcomes. The data on attainment set out in Sections 5.2 support this feedback with around one third of AMEP clients achieving a qualification through the programme. Further, there is a strong correlation between AMEP hours and ISLPR improvement (Section 5.3).

Apart from the primary question regarding the adequacy of AMEP hours — discussed at length in Section 7.1.7 — the focus groups undertaken confirm the high value the vast majority of participants place on the programme.

Most stakeholders consider that the programme is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of diverse clients and data on attainment indicate no significant difference between the attainment outcomes of clients from the different visa streams (see Section 5.2). Most AMEP service providers report that they are able to implement a variety of teaching approaches in accordance with the programme design and within the parameters of the contract.

> The AMEP allows for the contextualization of the content of any Learning Outcome to suit the language / settlement needs of a cohort of humanitarian entrants equally as well as to a group of clients who predominantly hold spousal visas, or, as is usually the case, to a cohort of clients from mixed visa streams. The current inclusion of SPP and SLPET programs further allow the AMEP to provide suitable learning experiences for clients from different visa streams with different settlement and language needs.
>
> *TAFE Queensland submission*

That being said, a number of stakeholders are concerned that the AMEP is a 'one size fits all' approach. Based on consultations undertaken for this evaluation, this concern appears to hinge on three key characteristics that typify training delivery in the AMEP:

1. reliance on classroom-based delivery
2. insufficient cohort specific classes[20]
3. emphasis on ensuring attendance as opposed to innovative delivery models and partnerships.

1. Reliance on classroom-based delivery

The vast majority of AMEP training delivery is classroom-based. The AMEP dataset does not allow analysis of the proportion of AMEP hours clients spend in the classroom, but as set out in Section 6.1.1, most expenditure under the programme is for classroom delivery.

As outlined in Section 3.3, critical elements of flexible contemporary programme delivery include the provision and accessibility of multiple delivery modes and classes that are varied in terms of scheduling, location, duration and content in order to maximise learning opportunities for clients while recognising the complexity and constraints of adult learners' lives.

There is an understandable concern that the traditional reliance on classroom-based delivery has not kept pace with either the needs of clients or advances in training delivery through other modes.

Similarly, there appears to be some concern that there are insufficient options available to clients when it comes to the timing of classes. AMEP service providers generally take the view that sufficient number of options are made available, however other stakeholders like the Refugee Council of Australia report that this is not always the case – there is at least some degree of regional variation and differences between the providers.

> The AMEP is a flexible program that allows clients to work on a part-time or full-time basis while also attending English language classes. Providers respond to individual needs with class timetabling and access to the Home Tutor Scheme and Distance Learning.
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

> Refugee community members have also provided feedback that the AMEP program is not flexible enough to support those who wish to study part-time and work part-time. While some AMEP providers have part-time and evening classes available, RCOA understands this is not consistent across the country. As such, when there are no part-time or evening classes available, people are forced to choose between working and learning English.
>
> *RCOA Submission*

It is likely that the range of options offered is constrained by what AMEP service providers consider to be feasible/viable. Consultations with AMEP service providers highlighted the fact that the combination of the volume of clients and the hourly rate paid constrain their ability to offer more tailored courses or a wider range of options to clients, especially outside of metropolitan areas.

In Canada, just over 20 per cent of LINC classes are offered in the evening (19 per cent) or on weekends (3 per cent). There is not comparable data available but stakeholder reports

---

[20] Cohort specific classes are not mandatory and can generally only be held when a provider has a sufficient number of clients at a similar CSWE level.

suggest that many AMEP service providers only offer classes during the day. Some provides offer classes that accommodate parents' pick up and drop off times for their school age children.

2. Insufficient cohort specific classes

Section 3.4 discusses the specific additional requirements of specific adult migrant cohorts, including refugees and survivors of torture and trauma. While the SPP specifically targets the latter group, stakeholders cited the fact that there are few cohort specific classes to indicate that AMEP service providers are not sufficiently focused on the specific and diverse needs of eligible migrants. For example, classes specifically for youth and women are available and highly valued, but uncommon.

> Young people have better learning outcomes when they are placed in targeted youth programs, as they are specifically tailored to the young people's language, educational and socio-emotional needs. While the availability of such programs has increased, there are still not enough youth-specific classes to address the needs of the high numbers of young people coming though Australia's humanitarian program.
>
> *RCOA submission*

> It is also important that young people are supported with youth specific classes which address the disrupted education experience which may have been experienced by humanitarian entrants. A contextualised learning experience which includes relevant and appropriate recreational activities to keep youth engaged and connected have proven effective.
>
> *SCOA submission*

A related issue is the current requirement that standard classes have no more than 20 clients (and SPP specific classes have no more than 12 clients). As Victoria University's submission outlines, this creates practical issues for AMEP service providers in a programme where there is considerable volatility in attendance and retention. The contemporary literature suggests that class sizes are not a significant determinant of client outcomes, compared to other factors like teacher quality. In some instances it is possible that constraints like maximum class numbers inadvertently limit the ability of providers to offer a greater variety of targeted classes.

3. Emphasis on ensuring attendance as opposed to innovative delivery models and partnerships

Under the AMEP contract, AMEP service providers 'must constantly plan for the evolution of the Services and modify the manner in which the Services are provided to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the Services and their delivery' (clause 27.6).

With the move to payments on the basis of hours attended, some stakeholders question whether AMEP service providers have placed excessive emphasis on ensuring attendance rather than improving delivery. Stakeholders cited a few notable innovations and partnership models in consultations (for example offering classes around work hours and partnering with non-AMEP service providers to provide more comprehensive settlement support) but these appear to be the exception rather than the rule.

As an example, one AMEP service provider highlighted that the lack of a firm research and evidence base limits the ability of providers to adopt potentially novel and cost-effective alternate models of delivery within the confines of commerciality and the KPIs.

> Opportunities to be more flexible in response to changing policies, client profiles and the economic and social environment are limited. Providers want to offer a range of programs and encourage continuous innovation that maximises outcomes for clients and the Program but are restricted by lack of a firm research and evidence base on which to make decisions, the need to ensure ongoing economic viability and the need to meet inflexible KPIs.
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

It should be noted that the Department is not wholly responsible for AMEP-related research. Industry research and continued improvement by AMEP service providers should also contribute to innovation and evidence-based service delivery.

The various limitations of the AMEP offering outlined above were echoed by some focus group participants. That being said, there was no opportunity for the evaluation to engage with those participants who had left the programme because the AMEP had not met their needs.

For the purpose of the evaluation, there is insufficient evidence to measure the extent to which client needs are not being met or whether there are cost-effective models of delivery that are not being more widely adopted by providers. The counterfactual of client needs not being met by the programme will be difficult to observe, and warrants further research. This could include:

— measuring client satisfaction across clients who do not commence, do not complete, or do complete the programme
— collecting data on the AMEP offering including:
    – when, where and how often classes are offered
    – which cohorts the AMEP might specifically cater to
    – the mode of study, any special content included and partnerships with other organisations in training delivery.
— ongoing collection of case studies of innovative delivery
— research on barriers to innovation and client-focused delivery within the programme.

In the future, the government needs to be assured that the AMEP business model incorporates both the flexibility and the incentives for AMEP service providers to identify and meet the needs of the AMEP's prospective clients.

Alternate models of operation for the AMEP which may promote the necessary flexibility and appropriate incentives are outlined in Section 7.2. Whether or not such significant changes to the AMEP model are adopted, the programme would nonetheless benefit from the research outlined above, as well as the development of additional incentives for innovative delivery within the programme, such as a grants programme to pilot innovative models of delivery, to undertake research into client needs and effective delivery methods, or to establish networks for knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas.

Recommendation 8

Building on the range of concerns expressed by stakeholders in relation to client outcomes, the Australian Government should commission further research to:

- develop measures of client satisfaction and provider innovation, to measure the extent to which client needs are not being met
- determine whether there are alternate cost-effective models of delivery that are not being more widely adopted by AMEP service providers and the reasons for this
- assure the government that the AMEP business model incorporates both the flexibility and the incentives for AMEP service providers to identify and meet the needs of prospective clients.

Based on this research, the programme could benefit from the addition incentives for innovative delivery, such as a grants programme to pilot innovative models of delivery, to undertake research into client needs and effective delivery methods, or to establish networks for knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas.

7.1.6 Transitions to work and further training

It is important to reiterate that while many AMEP participants have clear aspirations to transition into work and further training, the programme by virtue of its design does not specifically target achievement of these goals. The proficiency level at which clients become ineligible for and must exit the AMEP – functional English – is, by definition, generally insufficient for much employment, VET, and higher education. This fact was highlighted in a number of submissions and discussed in Section 5.3.

Notwithstanding this, many stakeholders acknowledge that the AMEP does nonetheless make an important contribution in ensuring that migrants are on the *pathway* towards employment and/or further training. The AMEP provides eligible migrants with the proficiency to progress into employment and/or further training where higher levels of proficiency can be subsequently achieved.

> …in the end, most professional jobs/careers require students to retrain in the Australian education system through a mainstream TAFE or university course (or gain accreditation or RPL for prior qualifications). AMEP successfully serves as a language building block to help students achieve their goal rather than providing specific job focused courses.
>
> *AMEP service provider confidential submission*

Meeting the needs of employment-focused migrants

The majority of stakeholders raised strong concerns regarding tension between study in the AMEP and gaining employment, as discussed in Section 5.2.1. This is of particular relevance for the subset of migrants who are highly driven to gain a job, whether to provide remittances back to their family in their home country, to repay debts accumulated, to cease receiving income support, or to become more independent in Australia.

The primary issue is that the timing of work and AMEP classes are generally conflicting.

> Once an individual gains employment, their ability to participate in AMEP classes, ordinarily delivered during business hours, is limited. Their need to participate in English language training, however, is not reduced by their employment status. Continued language training alongside employment is essential to help migrants and refugees meet their employment aspirations and prevent them from becoming confined to the lowest rungs of employment.
>
> *ACSL Submission*

However, even where evening, part-time or any other compatible class times are available, many clients still drop out of AMEP completely.

This can often mean an adverse long-term outcome for the client, particularly if they find themselves limited to low-skilled, low-paying and unsecure jobs.

The provision of appropriate training to meet the needs of employment-focused migrants has been a long-standing issue in Australia.[21] In the past, some stakeholders have proposed delivery to AMEP clients at their place of work, however such proposals understate the practical difficulties of workplace delivery. Feedback from AMEP service providers highlight challenges with respect to the scale required for viable workplace delivery, the difficulties in identifying willing employers and matching suitable AMEP participants, the costs associated with developing enduring partnerships with employers, and the practical challenges of ensuring that such arrangements comply with a range of rules and regulations, especially industrial relations requirements and work health and safety laws.

> …implementing effective employment focused language systems is difficult as policymakers must find ways to design cost-effective programs that are sufficiently tailored to the needs of a wide range of occupations and that take account of immigrants' underlying literacy skills and their financial and family circumstances.
>
> *McHugh and Challinor 2011*

McHugh and Challinor (2011) identify the following approaches as being among the most effective:

— language instruction contextualised for the workplace

— simultaneously providing language instruction with formal skills training

— sharing the burden of capacity building through partnerships among employers, unions and teachers

— encouraging workplace-based instruction

— taking into account the needs of non-traditional clients (such as part-time clients or parents).

As discussed in the previous section, the evaluation found only limited use of innovative approaches to meet the needs of employment-focused migrants. There are several examples of innovative approaches.

— A partnership between ACSL, TAFE Queensland and the local meatworks employer in Biloela (near Rockhampton) where refugee job seekers were able to attend specially organised local classes on their Rostered Days Off.

— The incorporation of work observation into AMEP classes where the CSWE learning outcomes are contextualised to encourage clients to observe and discuss workplace practices, thus developing the language of work and increasing confidence of clients to engage in job pathways.

To some extent the SLPET component of AMEP was introduced specifically to address these needs. That being said, the SLPET component is not appropriate to all participants and is only available those who have achieved a higher level of English language proficiency.

---

[21] Martin (1998) records that as early as 1952 courses specifically focusing on employment were being offered. Examples cited include a three months' pre-employment course was conducted for migrant workers in the Victorian Government Railways and by 1959 classes for employees had commenced at the Gas and Fuel Corporation, Containers Ltd, Bradford Cotton Mills and Robert Bosch Pty Ltd (Martin 1998).

SLPET provides clients with the opportunity to study English within the context of the Australian workplace. The course introduces AMEP clients to the Australian workplace, provides contextualised English language tuition plus an invaluable work experience component.

AMEP service provider confidential submission

TAFE Queensland would like to reinforce their belief that the selection of participants for SLPET Expansion courses needs to be managed very carefully as there are dangers inherent in taking clients into vocational pathways before their language and settlement needs have been met.

TAFE Queensland submission

In our experience the SLPET courses are particularly useful for supporting students in their pathway to employment however both staff and students feedback their frustration at the end of the course because they are too short.

VU submission

As discussed in Section 5.3, at higher Certificate levels some AMEP service providers have suggested introducing integrated work training and AMEP language delivery by allowing for other VET units to be delivered alongside training under the CSWE curriculum framework. In some cases providers have offered AMEP concurrently with vocational units, often called 'taster' courses, funded under state/territory government general VET programmes. Policy changes around funding and the how many times an individual is allowed to commence a VET courses in some states/territories has restricted use of the taster course approach.

It is ultimately difficult to adopt a prescriptive approach to ensuring that the needs of employment-focused migrants are met by the AMEP. The needs of participants and viable options available to AMEP service providers to meet those needs are highly diverse. As discussed in the preceding section, this is an area that warrants further research.

Alternate models of operation for the AMEP which may promote the necessary flexibility and appropriate incentives to ensure that the needs of employment-focused migrants are met are outlined in Section 7.2.

Transitions into further study

The issue of whether the language and literacy level of functional English is sufficient for further study was discussed in the previous section. Stakeholders suggest that there are a number of changes that could be made to the AMEP to improve pathways into further study in the broader VET sector.

Stakeholders and focus group participants both highlighted the need for better information about the broader VET sector in the range of available courses and training providers. Based on some of the focus groups undertaken, it would appear that this information is sometimes available to AMEP participants, typically on an *ad hoc* basis depending on the provider. Given the increasingly complex nature of the tertiary education system in Australia, relevant information could be delivered through a specific unit on post AMEP options for study, or more individual advice through the AMEP Counsellors.

As already discussed, the flexibility to include units from other VET courses will also facilitate improved transitions to further study by providing participants with both the experience and the accredited units towards further study.

Given the increased likelihood that younger migrants will want to go on to further study, specific youth transition programmes have been proposed.

> As they typically have a history of disrupted education, young people from refugee backgrounds often require additional time and support to acquire sufficient literacy to cope with Australian education/training system expectations. RCOA therefore recommends that a targeted funding stream by introduced to support the systemic development of youth transition programs that bridge the gap between on-arrival English programs and mainstream education, training and employment. Such a funding stream should be based on best practice examples, such as Granville TAFE's Migrant Youth Access Program and the NMIT Young Adult Migrant English Course.
>
> *RCOA submission*

Transitions into employment and further study are valid objectives for the AMEP but somewhat in excess of the programme's focus on initial settlement and functional English. If the programme is to make significant advances in ensuring improved transitions into employment and further study, this would constitute an expansion of the programme and would therefore require an attendant increase in the level of programme funding.

In many respects, current levels of stakeholder dissatisfaction with the rate of and opportunities for such transitions may reflect a misunderstanding of the programme's intent and the resulting unmet expectations on the part of both providers and participants. Further analysis could lead to beneficial proposals for an expanded curriculum, improved pathways and additional resourcing.

In the first instance, however, it is important that the intent and objectives of the programme be clearly communicated to AMEP stakeholders. This should also include the range of post AMEP options that may be available from the broader VET sector, in particular other Australian Government and state and territory government subsidised training.

Recommendation 9

The intent and objectives of the programme should be clearly communicated to AMEP stakeholders, including details on the range of post AMEP options that may be available within the broader VET sector, including other Australian Government and state and territory government subsidised training pathways.

7.1.7 The adequacy of the training allocation

The allocation of up to 510 hours

Despite the wide range of language and literacy needs, the AMEP provides up to 510 hours to all participants. It does not allocate an entitlement of hours according to individual level of proficiency or learning ability except to the extent that clients entering with higher levels of proficiency are likely to stop being eligible for AMEP before they reach 510 hours if they achieve functional English. The fixed allocation of hours appears to underpin the primary criticism of the AMEP, namely that it is a 'one size fits all' approach.

AMEP is, however, able to take some account for different levels of language learning needs through additional allocations of hours, namely:

— SPP, which offers humanitarian entrants with limited education or difficult pre-migration experiences, such as torture or trauma:

  – up to an additional 400 hours of English tuition for those under 25 years of age

  – up to an additional 100 hours of English tuition clients 25 years of age and over.

⸺ SLPET, which provides eligible clients with an additional 200 hours of vocational-specific English language tuition which includes up to 80 hours of work experience to assist them to learn English while gaining familiarity with Australian workplace language, culture and practices.

Many stakeholders noted that the allocation of up to 510 hours is not based on either the literature regarding second language learning needs[22] or the nominal hours of the CSWE curriculum framework.

The adequacy of 510 hours

The allocation of a fixed number of hours under AMEP is also in contrast to more typical models of VET funding which are generally based on the achievement of competency and training outcomes. Many stakeholders observe that the fixed allocation often leads to situations where clients either:

⸺ do not have sufficient hours to get them to basic let alone functional proficiency

⸺ are only able to achieve either CSWE I or II before exhausting their allocated hours

⸺ are able to complete CSWE III without needing to use up their full entitlement.

The greatest emphasis is on the former, whereby 510 hours is considered to fall significantly short of what many migrants (in particular humanitarian migrants) require.

> Consistent feedback has been provided over many years surrounding the insufficiency of the allocated hours within the AMEP program. Members report the core 510 hours are insufficient for people with low levels of literacy to become functionally proficient in English, let alone proficient in English to a vocational level necessary for employment. Hours allocated are not currently aligned to progression through the certificate levels within the curriculum.
>
> *SCOA submission*

As set out in Section 5.3, only 7 per cent of clients that complete more than 500 AMEP hours reach a functional level of English as defined by AMEP and measured through the ISLPR.

Many stakeholders who support the need to increase the allocation of hours point to:

⸺ the fact that the CSWE nominal hours are approximately 600 per level

⸺ research that shows that about 2,000 hours are required for a person with no prior background to learn a new language.

Stakeholders identified a range of possible solutions to this issue including:

⸺ increasing the overall allocation of hours

⸺ adding further sub-programmes such as SPP to provide additional hours where required

⸺ allowing CSWE IV to be delivered as part of AMEP

⸺ allowing providers to retain and reallocate unused hours to clients with greater language learning needs

⸺ capping AMEP training on the basis of the achievement of competency rather than on the basis of hours.

---

[22] Research (Pillar I and McPherson P, 2007, How Long Does it Take to Learn English? unpublished) shows that the learning of another language requires on average 1800 hours.

Canada and the United Kingdom do not cap the number of hours of English language training offered to eligible clients. New Zealand provides study grants to refugees and academic migrants of up to 12 months' duration.

Alignment of the allocation of hours with the programme objectives

The 2008 internal review of the AMEP recommended that an increase in the number of hours offered through the AMEP be considered in the future.

However, the key issue with respect to the allocation of hours under the AMEP is not whether the 510 hour entitlement is the 'right' number of hours; the important policy question is whether every participant should be expected to achieve functional English, and the implied level of resourcing that is required to achieve this outcome.

As the AMEP Services Contract spells out "there has been an expectation in the past that the programme should be able to equip AMEP clients with Functional English in 510 hours of tuition". It notes that this 'expectation is unattainable and unrealistic' considering the low level of English language skills of many AMEP clients.

At present, the cap on hours serves an important function, by placing a limit on both the individual and total level of resourcing allocated to the AMEP, in doing so, the government implicitly accepts that not all participants will achieve the AMEP benchmark for English language proficiency – functional English. A capped universal entitlement necessarily means that some clients receive more than what they require while others have access to less than what they need. Functional English is therefore the aspirational end point and therefore the prescribed exit point for those that do achieve it.

As discussed in Section 7.1.1, a more accurate description of what the programme aims to deliver is "preliminary English skills in a specifically settlement context" through English language tuition "while introducing newly arrived clients to Australian social norms and practices, services, and the rule of law" (AMEP Services Contract 2011-17).

One prospective improvement to the allocation of hours – a personalised entitlement based on need as determined by a third party assessor – is discussed as one potentially significant improvement to programme design and efficiency in Section 7.2. However, subject to such a significant change and the attendant increase in funding, the legislated allocation of up to 510 hours should be retained, and the objectives and resulting scope of the programme reaffirmed with AMEP service providers, participants and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 10

Subject to any significant change to the universal entitlement model, and the attendant increase in funding, the legislated allocation of up to 510 hours should be retained, and the objectives and resulting scope of the programme reaffirmed with AMEP service providers, participants and other stakeholders.

7.2 Improvements to programme design and efficiency

While the AMEP evaluation findings have not identified many areas where the AMEP delivery could be significantly improved, the experience of the SEE programme suggests the following areas where design and delivery could be potentially improved:

⎯ A personalised entitlement based on need

⎯ Increased competition through multiple competing providers in a given region

⎯ Independent validation of assessment.

A number of other ancillary improvements to better position the programme for the future are discussed below.

7.2.1 A personalised entitlement based on need

As discussed in Section 7.1.7, the current capped universal entitlement necessarily means that some clients receive more than they require while others have access to less than they need. Section 7.1.7 also outlined various proposals raised by stakeholders to ensure that AMEP participants have access to a more appropriate allocation of hours in the programme.

In considering the various solutions that have been proposed, one critical consideration is the extent to which an AMEP service provider is responsible for determining the allocation of hours. It is important to acknowledge that there is an inherent conflict of interest which may bias providers towards higher levels of allocation rather than less.

If the government were to consider a personalised entitlement based on need, the initial assessment and development of IPGs provides the ideal opportunity for determining the allocation of hours necessary to achieve functional English. The integrity of such an approach would be assured if the initial assessment and development of IPGs were undertaken by an independent third party.

To illustrate how such a model might operate, the following points outline the steps involved in arriving at a personalised entitlement:

1. A newly eligible migrant interested in participating in the AMEP would contact the nominated third party assessor in their state.

2. The third party assessor would first establish that the individual is indeed eligible for the AMEP, and then assess the individual's level of English language proficiency and ability to learn.

3. Based on this assessment the third party assessor would determine the number of hours available to the individual based on appropriate benchmarks

   – This would include determining the individual's eligibility for additional components of the AMEP such as SPP and SLPET.

4. On this basis the third party assessor would assist the individual in developing their IPG and discuss the likely outcomes of the programme for the individual (including the possibility that functional English might not be achieved).

5. The third party assessor may also recommend suitable cohort-specific classes, study modes and/or delivery locations.

6. Upon completion of their initial entitlement, the individual may request additional hours based on a subsequent assessment by the third party assessor.

   – Depending on the individual's ability and personal circumstances, the assessor may allocate additional hours or recommend other training programmes.

For some high needs learners, a cap on the hours may still mean that a proportion of participants continue to exit the programme with less than functional English.

The introduction of such a model would constitute a significant change to the AMEP and would therefore warrant further research into the detailed design and approach to implementation. The range of issues that require further investigation include:

⸺ What are the skill, qualification and capability requirements of the independent third party assessors?

⸺ How many third party assessors will need to be appointed nationally, taking into account economies of scale and other factors?

⸺ To what extent will allocations be rules-based versus according to the discretion of the assessor?

⸺ What are the appropriate minimum and maximum limits under this model?

⸺ How will third party assessors maintain consistency of assessment and individual allocations?

⸺ What is an appropriate performance monitoring framework for the third party assessors?

The introduction of such a model has the potential to more accurately provide AMEP participants with the hours required to achieve functional English. This will increase the level of resourcing required for some clients and the Department will need to employ a third party assessor. Some savings offsets could be achieved through third party determination of when clients have reached the benchmark level of proficiency, mitigating the potential, inadvertent or otherwise, for AMEP service providers to retain clients for longer than necessary as it is in financial interest to do so.

Resourcing will also better match the level of need of the migrant cohort as Australia's intake changes from year-to-year. In addition to the issues outlined above, modelling of the potential allocations could provide the government with an assessment of the likely net fiscal implications for the AMEP.

Recommendation 11

The Australian Government should consider introducing a personalised AMEP entitlement based on need. Consideration may be given to the use of third party assessors to determine client entitlement, taking into account the benefits, costs and implementation issues of such a personalised entitlement.

7.2.2   The phased introduction of increased client choice

The introduction of competitive tendering

Following the release of the Hilmer's National Competition Policy Review (1993) and the subsequent adoption of competitive principles adopted by Council of Australian Governments in the mid-1990s, the Allen Consulting Group produced a number of reports on competitive purchasing arrangements in the VET market,[23] including a discussion paper specifically on the purchasing arrangements and performance outcome measures for the AMEP for the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Allen Consulting Group, 1995).

---

[23]   See for example Allen Consulting Group 1994a and 1994b.

The discussion paper canvassed a range issues related to possible competitive purchasing arrangements, including the current model of competitive tendering.

Following two years of consultation and continuing discussion with AMEP service providers and state education departments, the government proceeded to develop detailed specifications and commenced the tendering of the AMEP in 1997 (Martin 1998). According to Martin (1998), the Department of Immigration recognised that the move to competitive tendering would:

⎯ optimise learning outcomes for clients
⎯ attract the highest quality service providers
⎯ allow clients to choose the service providers most likely to meet their needs
⎯ provide greater flexibility for the AMEP to respond to changing conditions
⎯ ensure value for money.

By 1998–99 contracts had been signed in all states for the delivery of the AMEP under the new arrangements.

The potential benefits of increased client choice

In 2014, the model of competitive tendering under the AMEP will continue to deliver the benefits of competition from one contract period to the next.[24] However, while it remained at the forefront of competition policy in the 1990s, the AMEP's one-provider-per-region approach is now at risk of falling behind other government policies and programmes which aim to encourage efficiency, innovative and client outcomes through client choice (discussed further in the AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report).

Some focus group clients reported that being limited to one provider meant they were unable to provide meaningful feedback to enact change regarding the quality of teaching and course content, particularly due to the lack of alternative options available other than travelling some distance to another campus/AMEP service provider.

Consultations also indicated that there are instances of AMEP service providers being unable to meet the demand for the AMEP in their contract region leading to clients facing considerable delays in commencing the AMEP and negatively impacting settlement outcomes.

The introduction of User Choice for apprenticeships and traineeships from 1997 through to the current state-based interpretations of the 2012 National Partnership Agreement for Skills Reform is part of a significant and ongoing transition for Australia's tertiary sector away from competitive tendering towards funding models premised on increased competition and client choice. Likewise, in its latest contracting round, the SEE programme has adopted a multi-provider model where two or more providers are appointed to deliver training in a given region.

As in the broader tertiary sector, it would appear that the next step in the evolution of the AMEP purchasing model could be the phased introduction of contractual arrangements that enable where practical two or more AMEP service providers in a given region. Having multiple providers in a given region could foreseeably lead to:

---

24 It is important to acknowledge that competitive tendering and other purchasing models intended to harness the benefits of competition are not without costs and challenges; the submission from ACTA to the evaluation was staunchly opposed to competitive tendering generally, and in the AMEP in particular.

⎯ improved marketing and engagement with prospective eligible migrants

⎯ increased partnerships that better enable providers to meet client needs

⎯ improved regional access and delivery

⎯ specialist providers and models that cater to specific client cohorts

⎯ unpredictable client-focused innovation

⎯ reduced contract management requirements and contractual specificity (thereby increasing flexibility).

As discussed in Section 7.2.2, increasing the number of AMEP service providers nationally is also likely to mean an increased number of dual-providers delivering both AMEP and SEE, and thereby improved pathways between the two programmes.

The need for informed consumers

However, these benefits can only be realised if AMEP participants are able to make sufficiently *informed* choices with respect to which providers are likely to be the most suitable for them. Given that AMEP clients by definition suffer from a language barrier, the ability of eligible migrants to select from two or more possible AMEP service providers cannot be assumed. It is likely that for at least some participants, the choice between two or more providers will be at best inconsequential, and at worst daunting.

It is not necessary for all clients to be highly discerning for the benefits of choice to be realised. Even if only a small proportion of customers are capable of identifying positive traits and are able to switch providers accordingly, this is often sufficient to deliver broader benefits and drive improvements across the system. It is conceivable that notwithstanding the language barrier, some (possibly many) AMEP participants will be able to identify the types of courses that meet their needs, seek advice from others in their community who have previously had experiences with prospective providers, consult other relevant AMEP service providers such as HSS and SGP providers on their options, and choose or change AMEP service providers as appropriate.

That being said, a key feature of the AMEP that should not be lost is the presence of high quality providers contracted to deliver the programme; the introduction of increased client choice should not allow compromise in the standard of the quality of providers.

The introduction of multiple providers should only be undertaken in regions where there are viable numbers of participants to support sustainable competition. In remote and regional areas for example, the fragmentation of delivery, duplication of infrastructure, and loss of economies of scale may outweigh the benefits of completion. In extreme cases, a given region with one viable provider may be unsustainable with two providers (in part, this would depend on the bids submitted in the tender process).

It should also be introduced in a phased manner, for example beginning with pilots in large capital cities that are already divided into two or more regions. The large cities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth, already comprise contiguous metropolitan areas comprising two or more regions serviced by two or more AMEP service providers; merging these regions and overlapping provider footprints would make for an immediately competitive market with few attendant risks.

The move to a competitive multi-provider model would constitute a significant change in programme design and therefore – following the approach taken in the introduction of competitive tendering to the AMEP in the late 1990s – this transition should only be

introduced following an extended period and process of consultation, analysis, design, and implementation.

Recommendation 12

The Australian Government should consider the introduction of contractual arrangements that include two or more AMEP service providers competing in a single region. Such an arrangement should be considered where there is sufficient demand to support multiple providers, and should be phased, commencing with pilots in the large capital cities where two or more providers already operate in adjacent regions.

References

Adkins, A., & Sample, B. (1999). *Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher.*

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: A Conceptual. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 21*(2).

Allen Consulting Group. (1995). *AMEP New Purchasing Arrangements – Performance Outcome Measures and Infrastructure Issues: Underlying Principles and Approaches, Discussion Paper.* Commissioned By The Department Of Immigration And Ethnic Affairs.

AMEP Research Centre. (2007). *Fact sheet – Course Design: Competency or proficiency, Teaching Issues.*

Australian Government ComLaw. (n.d.). Immigration (Education) Act 1971. *C2011C00051.* Retrieved from http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2011C00051

Benseman, J. (2014). Adult Refugee Learners with Limited Literacy: Needs and Effective Responses. *Refuge, 30*(1).

Cheung, S. Y., & Phillimore, J. (2013). *Social networks, social capital and refugee integration.* University of Bermingham. Iris.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2010). *Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program.* Evaluation Division.

Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Immigration and Citizenship. (2012). *The Settlement Journey: Strengthening Australia through migration.*

Davis, Z. (2009). *First Language (Dinka) Literacy as a Foundation for English Language, Literacy and Numeracy.* Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Department of Immigration and Border Control. (2014). *The Outlook for Net Overseas Migration.* Canberra: Department of Immigration and Border Control.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship. (2008). *Adult Migrant English Program: Annual Report 2008-09.* Retrieved from http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2008-09/html/outcome2/administered2-1.htm

Department of Immigration and Citizenship. (2008). *Review of the Adult Migrant English Program Discussion Paper July 2008.*

Department of Immigration and Citizenship. (2011). *Economic Social and Civic Contributions - AMEP.* Canberra: Department of Immigration.

Department of Industry. (2014). *AMEP Funding/Payment Model Fact Sheet.*

Department of Industry. (2014). *Deed of Variation No 2.* Commonwealth of Australia.

Department of Industry. (2014). General Services and Distance/ E-Learning Annual Report Templates. *AMEP.*

Department of Industry. (2014). General Services and Distance/ E-Learning Half Yearly Report Templates. *AMEP.*

Department of Industry. (2014). General Services and Distance/ E-Learning Quarterly Report Templates. *AMEP.*

Department of Industry and Science. (2014). *Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Business Model Overview - Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from Department of Industry and Science: http://www.industry.gov.au/skills/ProgrammesandAssistance/AdultMigrantEnglishProgr am/Pages/default.aspx

DIAC. (2009). *Review of the Adult Migrant English Program, Final Report February 2009.*

DIAC. (2012). *Contract Between the Commonwealth of Australia and in relation to Services for the provision of the Adult Migrant English Program and related services in Region.* Australian Government.

Horsman, J. (1998). "But I'm Not a Therapist" The Challenge of Creating Effective Literacy Learning for Survivors of Trauma. (S. Shore, Ed.) *Australian Council for Adult Literacy 21st National Conference: Literacy on the Line. Conference Proceedings.*

House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee on Migration. (2013). *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia.*

Hugo. (2011). *Economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants.* Adelaide: National Centre for Social Applications of Geographical Information Systems, University of Adelaide.

I, P., & P, M. (2007). How Long Does it Take to Learn English? *unpublished*.

ISLPR. (2014). *Summary of ISLPR.* Retrieved from ISLPR Language Services: http://islpr.org/why-use-islpr/summary-of-islpr/

Leith, M. (2012). *How Learning English Facilitates Integration for Adult Migrants: the Jarrah Language Centre Experience.* Participant in the NCVER Building Research Capacity Community of Practice Academic Program 2009, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

M, M., & E, C. A. (2011). Improving Immigrant's Employment Prospects Through Work-Focussed Language Instruction. *Migration Policy Institute.*

Margo, K. (2007). Overcoming the Trauma of War: Literacy Challenges of Adults Learners. *Education Canada*, 70-74.

Martin, S. (1998). The history of the Adult Migrant English Program. *National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.*

McDonald, B., Gifford, S., Webster, K., Wiseman, J., & Casey, S. (2008). *Refugee Resetllement in Regional and Rurul Victoria: Impacts and Policy Issues.* Victorian Health Promotion Foundation .

NEAS. (2011). *NEAS AMEP Manual, Version 2011 11.*

NEAS. (2015, January). *NEAS.* Retrieved from AMEP Assessment Task Bank: http://www.neas.org.au/amep-pages/atb/

Schaetzel, & Young. (2010). *Education for Adult English Language Learners in the United States.* Centre for Applied Linguistics.

Taylor-Leech, K., & Yates, L. (2010). *STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTION THROUGH ENGLISH: CHALLENGES FOR IMMIGRANTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE.*

The Social Research Centre (SRC). (2014). *Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants, Cohort 1 Report – August 2014.*

Victorian Settlement Planning Committee. (2005). *Good Practice Principles: GUIDE FOR WORKING WITH REFUGEE YOUNG PEOPLE.* Department for Victorian Communities.