



Australian Council of TESOL Associations

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

*Inquiry into the Contract Management Frameworks Operated by Commonwealth Entities*

Public Hearing: Wednesday 4 December 2024, 10:30 – 11am

Response to Questions Asked by Mr Mitchell

from

Helen Moore, ACTA Vice-President

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## ATTACHMENTS

ACIL Allen 2015 *AMEP Evaluation Report*

ACTA 2021. *Towards a Payment Model to Incentivise Authentic Outcomes from the AMEP*

ACTA 2022. *Proposal for an AMEP Advisory Body*

ACTA 2024 *Standards-based Quality Assurance: the ACTA Proposal*

Home Affairs 2165 RTF for **AMEP Provision**.

*Attachment A: Statement of Requirement*

*Attachment C: Pricing Schedule*

Home Affairs 2166 RTF for **Quality Assurance Services**. *Attachment A: Statement of Requirement*

Home Affairs 2167 RTF for **AMEP Academy**. *Attachment A: Statement of Requirement*

Life Course Centre 2022. *Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Impact Evaluation Project*.

## 1. Mr Mitchell's Questions

Please accept the following response to the observations and questions by Mr Brian Mitchell in the 4<sup>th</sup> December Inquiry hearing, viz:

*Wherever there's government money at stake in a range of portfolios, somebody will try to 'game the system' in order to meet their KPIs so that the funding continues to flow. What we want to do, in this instance, of course, is **make sure people actually learn English or know more English at the end than they did when they started.***

*Dr Moore, you seem to be saying that we can assess for all that—that's terrific—but don't tie it to the KPIs because if you tie it to a KPI that gives an incentive to nudge up somebody who's not quite there just to try and massage the figures to meet the KPIs. **But I'm at a loss as to how else we can assess whether a contractor is meeting the requirements.** They've taken a cohort of people, and we want to make sure that they are funded to learn English and that, once their funding program is over, a number of people have learned appropriate levels of English. **What do you say is the most appropriate contract mechanism for that to occur?** (my emphasis; Hansard Wed. 4 December p. 3)*

As a preliminary, I'd like to emphasize that what is needed is **not** difficult. An essential starting point would be a relatively simple but fundamental change to how contracts are awarded and monitored (see section 6 below, ACTA Recommendation 18).

A draft of this response was circulated for feedback to the ACTA Adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Consultancy Group and has been approved by the ACTA Executive.

## 2. Re: *Making sure people actually learn English or know more English at the end than they did when they started.*

Ensuring that people increase their English proficiency in the AMEP rests fundamentally on the quality of tuition they receive.

### 2.1 The determinants of effective tuition

Effective quality tuition rests crucially on:

- (i) **Teacher quality.** Research is unequivocal that the key factor in teacher quality is the level of training in their field<sup>1</sup> supported and refreshed by on-going professional development.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on extensive research, including several international surveys, world authority Linda Darling-Hammond states: *Research consistently shows that teacher quality is one of the most important variables for student success and that teachers with stronger qualifications (academic ability, strong content knowledge, full preparation before entry, certification in the field taught, and experience) produce higher student achievement.* <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/addressing-inequitable-distribution-teachers-what-it-will-take-get-qualified-effective-teachers-all-1.pdf>

She also reports that student achievement is most harmed by casual teachers with provisional qualifications, and most helped by teachers with postgraduate qualifications in their subject area and more than two years' experience (p. 5). For other research, see, for example: Julian R. Betts, Kim S. Rueben, and Anne Danenberg, "Equal Resources, Equal Outcomes? The Distribution of School Resources and Student Achievement in California" (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2000); Donald Boyd and others, "How Changes in Entry Requirements Alter the Teacher Workforce and Affect Student Achievement," *Education Finance and Policy* 1 (2) (2006): 176–216; Charles Clotfelter, Helen Ladd, and Jacob Vigdor, "How and Why Do Teacher Credentials Matter for Student Achievement?" Working Paper 12828 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007); Linda Darling-Hammond, "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence," *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 8 (1) (2000), available at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1>; Linda Darling-Hammond and others, "Does Teacher Preparation Matter? Evidence About Teacher Certification, Teach for America, and Teacher Effectiveness," *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 13 (42) (2005), available at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n42/>; Ronald F. Ferguson, "Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters," *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 28 (2) (1991): 465–498; Mark Fetler, "High School Staff Characteristics and Mathematics Test Results," *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 7 (9) (1999), available at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n9.html>; Laura Goe, "Legislating Equity: The Distribution of Emergency Permit Teachers in

- (ii) **Teaching resources**, that is, the curriculum and resources from which teachers develop their lessons.
- (iii) **Stability of provision**. *This is the necessary pre-requisite for the other two.* Lack of stability undermines:
- incentives for teachers to gain and maintain professional training
  - planning, developing, consolidating and improving programs and resources<sup>2</sup>
  - providers' ability to employ quality teachers and respond flexibly to diverse learner cohorts (e.g. women; youth with minimal/no previous schooling, victims of trauma)
  - the development of a professional culture and institutional memory
  - the free flow of information up and down the line within providers, and between providers and the Department.

***The instability created by the current contracting model was the root cause of the defective 2017 contract.*** The contract's deficiencies resulted from the absence of institutional memory (re item (ii) above) and the lack of job security that inhibited teachers and Centre managers from reporting the gross dysfunction that the contract had created (see ACTA submission section 5).

The Inquiry's inability to access a broad range information and advice on the AMEP also stems from the constraints inherent in the current contractual model, central to which is the insecure employment that supports secrecy.

## **2.2 Standards (not KPIs) address the key ingredients in ensuring English learning**

Prior to 2017, the quality and effectiveness of teachers and resources (and other important contributors to quality provision) were monitored using the 2009 NEAS *AMEP Standards* (tabled in the 4 December hearing).<sup>3</sup> Maintaining these Standards underpinned provider performance on the various measures used to evaluate the AMEP, including student English gains. They were an essential tool in holding provider managements/institutions to account.<sup>4</sup> ***It is an illusion that, under previous contracts, KPIs kept the AMEP on track.***

Standards along the lines of the 2009 NEAS specifications allow for a rigorous, detailed but holistic assessments of program quality made by those with the relevant expertise and necessary independence.<sup>5</sup>

ACTA Recommendation 18 (see section 6 below) goes further than simply using Standards. We have long advocated for a **grading system** based on Standards. That would definitively resolve the issue raised by Mr Mitchel in the hearing on 13 November:

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California," Educational Policy Analysis Archives 10 (42) (2002), available at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n42/>; Dan Goldhaber and Dominic Brewer, "Does Teacher Certification Matter? High School Certification Status and Student Achievement," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 22 (2000): 129–145; Parmalee Hawk, Charles R. Coble, and Melvin Swanson, "Certification: It Does Matter," Journal of Teacher Education 36 (3) (1985): 13–15; David H. Monk, "Subject Area Preparation of Secondary Mathematics and Science Teachers and Student Achievement," Economics of Education Review 13 (2) (1994): 125–145; Robert P. Strauss and Elizabeth A. Sawyer, "Some New Evidence on Teacher and Student Competencies," Economics of Education Review 5 (1) (1986): 41–48.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the instability inherent in the current contractual system has led to the vast trove of resources and research produced by the AMEP Research (1991-2007) being no longer accessible. Likewise, the exemplary AMES Australia "Bright Futures" Refugee Youth Program and accompanying resources no longer exist: see ACTA Submission Exhibit 8.

<sup>3</sup> NEAS = National ELT (English Language Teaching) Accreditation Scheme.

<sup>4</sup> By "senior" I mean those at highest levels in provider institutions – their interest lies in the contribution of AMEP contracts to their bottom line and not in provision for adult migrants.

<sup>5</sup> The NEAS specifications are grouped under the following headings: Premises, Professional & Administrative Staff, Educational Resources, Program Delivery, Support Services, Program Evaluation, Program Promotion.

*Given the 13 providers of this service, does the department have a metric by which providers are providing the best practice? Does it have scalability, where it has been assessed that some providers are providing a better service than others, and what's required to get there?* (Hansard Wed. 13 November p. 23)

The new AMEP RTF includes:

- (i) **provision for re-development of AMEP Standards.**<sup>6</sup> ACTA hopes that this exercise will result in something similar to the 2009 NEAS Standards in allowing both detailed and a holistic evaluation of provider performance
- (ii) **a separate RTF for an AMEP Academy.**<sup>7</sup> This should assist in upgrading teacher quality. However, ACTA is concerned that the pool of expertise needed to deliver this Academy is now severely depleted.<sup>8</sup>

ACTA supports these developments but believes our Recommendation 18 would provide the assurance Mr Mitchell seeks and that we endorse.

### 2.3 Why KPIs don't work

After 2017, QA rested solely on file audits of compliance with KPIs (see ACTA submission section 4.4.2).<sup>9</sup> The footnotes in the ACTA submission to this Inquiry and other submissions provide clear evidence that this approach to evaluating AMEP outcomes not only failed to ensure people actually learned English but was also seriously dysfunctional.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to being easily gamed, KPIs incentivise providers to focus on meeting discrete and fragmented performance measures.

For example, the focus on English gains inhibits teaching to meet the AMEP's broader settlement goals (e.g. safety at the beach; content on Australian society and political system).<sup>11</sup> The "Learning Outcomes" KPI (in a rigid assessment-oriented curriculum) incentivises "teaching to the test," which:

- restricts how and what is taught
- over-simplifies and under-estimates what constitutes learner progress
- disallows consolidating learning (because the incentive is to achieve another "outcome").

The new RFT includes a KPI for "Individual Pathway Guidance".<sup>12</sup> Recent research shows this KPI may have similar reductive effects.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See paragraph 3.2 in Home Affairs 2166 RTF *Statement of Requirement* for the QA provider (attached).

<sup>7</sup> See Home Affairs 2167 RTF *Statement of Requirement* (attached).

<sup>8</sup> The number of experts in teaching English *specifically to adult migrants in Australia* is now miniscule (probably less than 8). This has resulted from the secrecy inherent in contracting competitively for the AMEP, combined with the decimation of specialist teacher training in English for non-native speakers that has followed from global school budgets and principals' employment priorities. The few remaining programs cater for international students.

<sup>9</sup> The 2019 Social Compass Evaluation of the AMEP (2017-2021 contract) reports on KPI indicators and problems reported by providers (see Chapter 7 in [Evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program New Business Model](#)). Despite these problems (including "manipulating" results), Social Compass did not overtly question the value of using KPIs in this way, although reservations were implied: see p. 32, last paragraph.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 7 of the Social Compass Evaluation reports on 2017-21 results on KPI indicators and problems reported by providers. Given the chaos that was occurring in the AMEP and the subsequent Auditor's report, the generally optimistic reporting provides further evidence for the ineffectiveness of KPIs in monitoring the AMEP's performance.

<sup>11</sup> Prior to the 2017 contract, the program included a unit on preparing for a Citizenship test. The resources (now lost) were highly valued by teachers and students. Another unit (also lost) was for mothers preparing to give birth (-- as a teacher commented to me: "There's a big difference between 'push' and 'breathe'"). See also footnote 28.

<sup>12</sup> See para. 4.2.08 (p. 60); also para. 3.7 (p. 23) Home Affairs 2165 RTF for AMEP Provision. Attachment A: *Statement of Requirement*. The critical requirement is in para. 3.7.6 but I can't find it.

<sup>13</sup> In response to circulating a draft of this response, I was sent the following summary of Playsted, S., Thomas, D., & Wilkinson, J., which is forthcoming in the *Language Teaching Research Journal*:

It is well known in the field that some providers are performing poorly but continue delivering the AMEP. An examination of AMEP history since the introduction of competitive contracting in 1998 is likely to show that poor performance against KPIs has *never* been used to exit a provider from the AMEP.<sup>14</sup> A Standards-based grading system provides a far more rigorous and exact evaluation tool and metric (see 2.2 above and Recommendation 18 in section 6 below).

### ***3. Re: How, other than using KPIs, can we assess whether a contractor is meeting the requirements?***

As just argued, Standards-based assessment along the lines of the 2009 NEAS AMEP Standards is demonstrably more effective in assessing whether a contractor is meeting requirements.

KPIs should be reserved for evaluating performance where perverse incentives cannot operate, for example, re submitting data and information in a timely way.

### ***4. Re: What is the most appropriate contract mechanism to ensure that AMEP students have learned appropriate levels of English?***

Three contractual mechanisms are crucial:

- 1) **incentivising high provider performance**
- 2) provider payments that **support coherent class formation**
- 3) **ending the closed system** that blocks communication about problems.

#### **4.1 Incentivising high performance**

The contractual element essential to ensuring high quality teaching and effective English language learning in the AMEP would be to give providers reasonable assurance that ***high quality performance will be rewarded by the continuation of their contract***, and conversely that ***marginal or below standard providers would face contract termination*** within, say, six months (including the opportunity to re-tender if desired). Please see ACTA Recommendation 18 and our proposed grading system based on Standards (section 6 below).

This system would also cut the cost of preparing and assessing AMEP tenders, and the waste when contracts are lost (– none of which has been documented, at least in the public domain; see ACTA submission 5.2.3).

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Recent research findings confirm those of the Social Compass report (2019, p. 105) that mandatory Individual Pathway Guidance interviews (IPGs) tracking each student's vocational and educational progress have been a "negative development" in the AMEP. The reason for this was the shift in focus away from funding counselling that supported a student at a holistic level and towards "tracking progress" at a superficial level through the completion of mandatory questions about vocational and employment goals.

Further to Social Compass' (2019) findings, Playsted et al.'s (2024) study found that IPGs placed a particular burden on teachers of students who are at pre-levels in the AMEP. Pre-level students are preliterate adults, often from refugee backgrounds, who may have experienced trauma and few to no opportunities for formal education. Their teachers reported that conducting mandatory IPGs placed a significant constraint on their capacity to effectively support their students to develop English language skills. This is because teachers needed to focus on teaching students how to answer set questions for an upcoming IPG interview, instead of oral language activities that were at an appropriate level and relevant to the educational and settlement needs of their students. It is recommended that the structure, questions and delivery of IPG interviews be reviewed to better reflect the English language, educational and settlement needs of students in specific cohorts, specifically pre-level students in the AMEP.

<sup>14</sup> In the two instances of contracts prematurely terminated of which we are aware, both providers handed in their contracts, one (Mission Australia) because they discovered (after several months) that they lacked capability to deliver the AMEP and the other (CIT) because of a financial disagreement with the Department.

## 4.2 Provider payments

A crucial contractual element, which has not been discussed in the Inquiry's public hearings, is **how providers are paid**. As in the 2017 contract, the new RTF specifies provider payments based, for the most part, on hourly student attendance. Up to 20 students per face-to-face class are permitted.<sup>15</sup>

The payment system means that providers' financial viability rests on maximising class sizes. It is therefore *the* crucial factor in creating classes.

Because AMEP student attendance is highly irregular,<sup>16</sup> providers:

- over-enrol classes, often by 10 or more students
- admit students on a continuous basis
- form classes with vastly different English language levels
- recombine classes when numbers fall below the maximum permitted size.<sup>17</sup>

None of the above support quality teaching and effective learning. Unstable class groups induce one-off lessons in preference to sequenced teaching that targets English levels and systematically builds learner competence. Students also resent disparate English levels in their classes. If all or most enrolled students come on the same day, the provider is in breach of class size requirements.<sup>18</sup>

Payment for hourly (or even daily) attendance in the school system would be unthinkable. Its use in the AMEP intensifies the pressure to employ casual teachers.

Please find attached a proposal for an alternative payment system, which ACTA submitted in the 2021 consultation process on reforming the AMEP: *Towards a Payment Model to Incentivise Authentic Outcomes from the AMEP*.

## 4.3 Facilitating more open communication flows

Three contractual elements would facilitate more open communication than is current.

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<sup>15</sup> See paras. 2 & 3 (pp. 4-5) in Home Affairs 2165 RTF for AMEP Provision. *Attachment C: Pricing Schedule* (attached).

<sup>16</sup> Providers have little control over student attendance. Many students, especially if newly arrived, do not have settled routines that fit regular class attendance. Other claims include house- and job-hunting, on-demand work shifts, finding schools for their children, dealing with their own and other family members' illness and the effects of torture, trauma and tragedies afflicting those left behind. Compulsory mutual obligation meetings take no account of English classes.

<sup>17</sup> Casual teachers are also laid off or given irregular shifts.

<sup>18</sup> See ACTA submission section 4.4.4; also [Maximising AMEP and English Language Learning Consultation Report - Settlement Council of Australia \(scoa.org.au\)](https://www.scoa.org.au), p. 3.

Here is one teacher's account of the effects on her and her class:

*My Level II/III class of 14 students (deemed too small), more than doubled overnight to a multi-level class of 30 on the roll (and, so far, between 24-27 students in actual attendance). This was brought about because of small numbers in the two highest level classes and then the resignation of one of the teachers of the other class. The co-teacher of that class immediately lost two days of work a week.*

*Of course, all the students were extremely upset about the change (as were the teachers), and I spent a couple of days just trying to manage the fallout as best as I could (with a great deal of help from my manager). Added to our woes was the fact the internet was barely functional - not even the Navitas phones were working, as they are connected to the internet. We were simultaneously being put under a lot of pressure to get our TAE updates sorted, or potentially lose our jobs on April 1. I hadn't even started on that. ...*

*I ended up having a minor panic attack one evening over the current state of affairs and, as a result, have finally decided to quit AMEP altogether. Next week will be my last. I am very upset about this, as teaching in AMEP was once my dream career. However, as it is now, there is no future in it, and as I absolutely despise Navitas, I can't continue to support them as an organisation. I've consoled myself with the thought that I can always do volunteer teaching for MARRS or the ASRC at some point later. In the meantime, I've applied for a few non-teaching jobs, and have an interview for one next week.*

This teacher had extensive experience in the field, including overseas, and held a Masters' degree TESOL

- (i) **Stability.** The most significant contribution that an AMEP contract could make to improving trust and open communication would be providing stability of employment for those delivering the Program. See 4.1 and 4.2 above, also the comments on “continuity” in Submission 5 (Corbel) to the Inquiry.
- (ii) **Input from teachers.** A second mechanism would be providing scope for those actually delivering the AMEP, i.e. teachers, to contribute their perspectives, for example, through an annual anonymous survey. Currently, all lines of communication are between provider managers and the Department. There is no mechanism by which teachers can provide input into the management of the AMEP without jeopardy or violation of their employment contract. The available options are highly formalised and, in effect, impossible for teachers to access.<sup>19</sup>
- (iii) **Independent Advisory Body.** A third mechanism would be an independent advisory body whose membership included teacher representatives (say, two), AMEP managers (say, two), representation from the relevant unions (AEU and IEU), professional associations (ACTA and ACAL<sup>20</sup>), and ethnic associations (Settlement Council of Australia), independent external TESOL experts (say, two) and Home Affairs.<sup>21</sup> The most recent AMEP Evaluation recommended creation of an Advisory body.<sup>22</sup> ACTA has also made a submission to this effect: see *Proposal for an AMEP Advisory Body* (attached).

The new RTF includes a potential for opening up communication through QA provision, which “may include ... (e) stakeholder feedback and discussions with Contractor Personnel, past or present AMEP Clients (or both), and others involved with the AMEP.”<sup>23</sup> However, this is hardly a robust assurance that the current closed communication circuit will be broken.

## 5. A further related and necessary question: *How can it be determined if AMEP students are actually learning English?*

Gaining valid and reliable data on whether students in the AMEP are actually learning English must not be corrupted/corruptible by gaming, incentives or fear of failing a KPI.

A further requirement is that these data should be *interpretable in relation to what might reasonably be expected*. So, for example, the 2015 ACIL Allen *AMEP Evaluation* (attached) provides extensive data on English gains but little insight into whether these outcomes are good/bad/indifferent.

Interpreting information on English gains requires the development of **benchmarks** for different learner cohorts. Please see the document *Standards-based Quality Assurance: the ACTA Proposal* (tabled at the 4 December hearing; attached for your convenience).

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<sup>19</sup> For example, a teacher reported to me her (and others’) concerns regarding various apparent irregularities by her manager, including working a second job additional to his full-time position as Centre manager, which necessitated his regular absence during Centre working hours. The reply in response to my request for advice from the relevant Home Affairs official was: “From your description it sounds like an unpleasant working environment not conducive to optimum outcomes, but the specific matters you have raised appear to be staffing and management issues that are internal matters for ... [provider name]. The department would only be in a position to raise these matters with ... [provider name] if there was credible evidence that AMEP clients are adversely affected, or that ... [provider name] is in some way in breach of their contractual obligations. If ... [provider name & location] staff have this evidence, they could raise a complaint either through the department’s formal complaints mechanism [Compliments, complaints and suggestions \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](http://Compliments.complaints.and.suggestions.homeaffairs.gov.au) or to the Director, AMEP Operations, via the [AMEPInfo@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:AMEPInfo@homeaffairs.gov.au) mailbox.” The feedback form states that it is “to collect feedback from clients about their interaction with the Department”, that is, it is not for those delivering services to clients. There is no way that casual teachers would put their name to a letter to the Director of AMEP operations. Similar complaints about unhealthy and unsafe working conditions have met with similar advice.

<sup>20</sup> ACAL = Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

<sup>21</sup> TESOL = Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

<sup>22</sup> [Evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program New Business Model](#), Recommendation 7 (pp. xv, 22).

<sup>23</sup> Home Affairs 2166 RTF *Statement of Requirement* for the QA provider (attached), paragraph 3.11.6.



Research is clear that various factors (most notably, age and previous education) significantly impact learning rates and gains in a second language. Other factors affect participation, retention and learning gains.<sup>24</sup> Benchmarks should be established for both *learning gains* and *participation* in the AMEP. Some (maybe much) of this research was done by the AMEP Research Centre (1991-2007).<sup>25</sup> The AMEP Team in Home Affairs may have access to that research; if not, it is lost.

Different measures of English gains have been used in the past and in other educational sectors.

- (i) As will be seen in the ACIL Allen AMEP Evaluation (attached), the most directly interpretable data are in Figures 40 and 41, which are drawn from assessments using the *International Second Language Proficiency Rating scale (ISLPR)*.<sup>26</sup> It is no longer practicable to reinstate this measure (for reasons that can be explicated if required).
- (ii) International students are routinely assessed using the *International English Language Testing Scheme (IELTS)*. This scheme is unsuitable for use in the AMEP because it is designed to assess suitability of overseas applicants for tertiary studies or employment.<sup>27</sup>
- (iii) The most practical and available method of assessing English gains in the AMEP is according to reports on learner gains in the common curriculum, now the *Victorian EAL (English as an Additional Language) Framework*, as required in the new RFT.<sup>28</sup> As already argued, setting benchmarks based on these reports must be entirely disconnected from any (dis/)incentives, including KPI data.

Please see the independent **ACIL Allen 2015 AMEP Evaluation** (attached) Chapters 4 and 5 for the various measures and outcomes reports from the earlier 2011-2017 contract.<sup>29</sup> See Figures 39-44 for reporting on English language gains prior to the disastrous 2017 contract. This report demonstrates

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<sup>24</sup> From an email that arrived in response to a draft of this response:

We have a high % of clients from the Humanitarian visa stream, with the second biggest group from the family stream. How do you set reasonable KPI's when teaching a client group where a large proportion are suffering PTSD, depression, ill health – to the extent that ambulances have to be called every few weeks – with a reasonable number living in DV situations - and with many who are from non-Roman script backgrounds, illiterate in their own language, and with no or little English language proficiency? Where in all this is developing some knowledge of settlement in Australia to make their lives a little easier?

<sup>25</sup> An AMEP Research Centre project focussed on refugee youth: Moore, H., Nicholas, H., and Deblaquiere, J. 2008. *Opening the Door: Provision for Refugee Youth with Minimal/No Schooling in the Adult Migrant English Program*.

Other references on factors influencing language learning rates and gains are:

Levine, G.S., Mallows, D. (2021). Introduction: Language Learning of Adult Migrants in Europe. In: Levine, G.S., Mallows, D. (eds) *Language Learning of Adult Migrants in Europe*. Educational Linguistics, vol 53. Springer, Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79237-4>

Yekrang, Aryan (n.d.) *Immigrants: Language Acquisition and Education* [Immigrants: Language Acquisition and Education](#)

Smart, D, De Maio, J., Rioseco, P., & Edwards, B. (2017). English skills, engagement in education, and entrance into employment of recently arrived humanitarian migrants (Building a New Life in Australia Research Summary). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. ISBN 978-1-76016-134-7 (online) ISBN 978-1-76016-133-0 (PDF) [Living alone and personal wellbeing English skills, engagement in education, and entrance into employment of recently arrived humanitarian migrants](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Home - islpr](#)

<sup>27</sup> Put simply, its gradations are too broad and its content is inappropriate for use in the AMEP. [IELTS – The most trusted English test for work, study and visa | IELTS Australia](#)

<sup>28</sup> The ACTA Inquiry submission recommends a further (and different kind of) review of the AMEP. One reason is because of problems with this curriculum that stem from accreditation requirements, which are clearly beyond this Inquiry's scope.

<sup>29</sup> Three key conditions operating in that contract no longer apply: (1) the 510 hours tuition limit, (2) tuition restriction to those with less than "Functional English", and (3) use of the ISLPR.

what was (and should be) entailed in assessing AMEP outcomes. It barely reports on KPIs (see para. 6.2.4).<sup>30</sup> See also the 2022 ARC Life Course Centre report (attached).<sup>31</sup>

## 6. Relevant Recommendations from the ACTA submission to this Inquiry

**Recommendation 11.** The Committee should recommend that an independent, expert inquiry that includes co-design processes be established to investigate how Commonwealth contracting for the AMEP can be made fit-for-purpose, efficient and effective in resourcing, supporting, enhancing, regulating and evaluating the performance of this Program.

**Recommendation 16.** Evaluations of the AMEP should routinely include data on student retention from one contract to the next.

**Recommendation 17.** The performance of the AMEP overall from one contract to the next should be regularly and systematically evaluated through independent research commissioned under the auspices of the Immigration portfolio and conducted by appropriate experts to investigate:

- i. participation and retention
- ii. English language attainment
- iii. program quality (from data based on relevant Standards)
- iv. student satisfaction
- v. settlement outcomes, not only but including employment
- vi. the quality of the evidence base relating to the AMEP.

**Recommendation 18.** The award and monitoring of contracts for the AMEP should be streamlined and modernised on risk-based principles as follows:

- i. Individual provider performance should be Standards-based along the lines of the 2009 NEAS *AMEP Standards Manual*.
- ii. Individual provider performance should be evaluated annually and rigorously by independent assessors with recognised TESOL expertise on a 5-point performance ranking scale, viz.:
  - A = outstanding performance
  - B = good performance
  - C = satisfactory performance
  - D = somewhat unsatisfactory performance
  - E = unsatisfactory performance.
- iii. Providers scoring C or below more than once in any 3-year period should be asked to show cause as to why their contract should not be re-opened for tendering.
- iv. Providers who consistently score A or B should not be required to compete for new contracts until a new 10-12 year cycle.
- v. New tenders for all provision should be called every 10-12 years.
- vi. Provider assessments should be undertaken by an independent, expert body with no other role in AMEP provision. The assessment team should include experts in TESOL and one in public administration. Assessments should include classroom observations and interviews with students, teachers and front-line managers.

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<sup>30</sup> In fact, the subsequent Social Compass Evaluation of the 2017-2021 contract provided more detail than ACIL Allen on KPI performance on the previous contract. See Chapter 7, section 7.1.1 for a brief comparison of KPIs under both contracts and Appendix B for 2011-17 indicators [Evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program New Business Model](#).

<sup>31</sup> See also [AMEP Impact Evaluation Project - Paper A - Profile of AMEP clients - 2022](#) (attached). Re English gains, see Figure 12, p. 9.