

# Vocational Training for New Migrants: A Pathway into Carework

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Employment experiences of clients  
in Certificate III at AMES Australia

## AMES Australia Vision

Full participation for all in  
a cohesive and diverse society

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## **AMES Australia provides a comprehensive range of settlement support, English language and literacy tuition, vocational training and employment services to migrants primarily resident in Victoria and employment services in Western Sydney.**

This research examines the employment experiences of new migrants undertaking vocational training at AMES Australia. It is based on interviews with former vocational training clients six months after completing their training.

AMES Australia offers Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing, Home and Community) and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care at sites across metropolitan Melbourne. These industry-specific vocational courses train and prepare clients for a job in aged care or childcare education in Australia. Both courses are delivered full time for approximately six months and include a minimum of 120 hours work placement.

Vocational training at AMES Australia is designed for clients from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Teachers in these programs hold relevant industry qualifications and are trained English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors. Clients are required to have an intermediate level of English proficiency to be eligible for these vocational courses. This level of language proficiency is required for work in a childcare centre or an aged care service in Australia.

Employment and education are two of the four domains in the AMES Australia *Framework for Social and Economic Participation*<sup>1</sup>. Having worked with migrants for more than 60 years, AMES Australia recognises that employment is an important component of successful settlement. AMES Australia therefore, has a strong research interest in the work trajectories of our clients.

Previous research by AMES Australia (2011) confirms that employment is a priority for most newly arrived people, either in the immediate or medium to longer term. Aside from employment outcomes, AMES Australia is interested in what further education and training activities clients engage in as an important step towards future employment.

The Research and Policy Unit at AMES Australia conducts research to provide evidence to inform policy makers and practitioners about strategies to support the positive settlement of new migrants. Knowledge about clients' employment outcomes and further education pathways can assist AMES in delivering services that facilitate successful settlement. The objective of this study was to understand the effectiveness of AMES Australia's vocational programs for transitioning new migrants into employment.

The study had the following research questions:

1. *What were clients' employment situations six months after completing vocational training at AMES Australia?*
2. *What further training have clients undertaken after completing their vocational training?*
3. *What feedback do clients have about the value of the course for preparing them for employment?*

This report provides an analysis of the employment outcomes and post-course activities including further education and training of 203 AMES Australia clients who participated in the Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care courses. The report also discusses the aspects of vocational training at AMES Australia that clients identified as being most effective to secure employment.

The objective of this study was to understand the effectiveness of AMES Australia's vocational programs for transitioning new migrants into employment.

## REPORT STRUCTURE

<b>Chapter 2</b>	Provides background information about migration and employment, the vocational training sector in Australia, and the care work industry.
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Discusses the research methodology used in this study.
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Analyses the demographic characteristics of respondents surveyed for this research.
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Examines the employment outcomes of respondents six months after completing their vocational training.
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Discusses post-course further training and education pathways of respondents.
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Analyses feedback from respondents about the effectiveness of the vocational courses for finding employment. This section provides insights from an employer's perspective.
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Provides recommendations to address the challenges that migrants training to work in aged care and childcare education may face during their transition to employment and settlement in Australia.

<sup>1</sup> The other two domains are health & wellbeing and safety & security.

## 2 MIGRANTS AND EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA

### Australia is a multicultural country and migrants play an important role in the country's economic development.

In 2015, 28.2% (6.7 million) of Australia's estimated resident population was born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). In recent Australian history, migration has been mainly driven by the demand for labour. In the mid-1970s and mid-1990s, migration fell to very low levels because of lack of labour demand (Kennedy, Stoney, & Vance, 2009). Today, it is high because of strong labour demand and this can be expected to continue for at least the next decade and beyond. There has been a strong shift towards skilled migration in Australia over the last decade. An important aim of the migration program is economic; to 'fill gaps in the labour market where they currently exist' (Phillips & Spinks, 2012, p.16).

A study in a Melbourne metropolitan region found that recently arrived migrants are a disadvantaged jobseeker group in Victoria (Department of Employment, 2014). The unemployment rate for migrants coming from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) is higher than migrants who are from English speaking countries and those who are Australian born. The study also revealed that the percentage of NESB migrants with tertiary qualifications working in low skilled occupations was substantially higher (22%) than those who were from English speaking countries (7%) and Australian born (8%) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). This is replicated in other areas of Melbourne with high populations of newly arrived migrants.

Limited English language skills are one contributing factor to the higher unemployment rates of NESB migrants in Australia. It can be challenging for migrants to have their overseas qualifications assessed in Australia, particularly if the qualifications are from developing countries.

Migrants from diverse backgrounds and with a range of skills can stimulate new ideas and generate new business, jobs and economic growth.

An Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011b) report *Perspectives on Migrants*, found that nearly two thirds of all recent migrants (465,400 or 65%) had a post-school qualification before arrival in Australia yet only one third (33%) of this group had their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia. The educational qualifications obtained by migrants before coming to Australia do not help them to get jobs to the same level as similar qualifications gained in Australia. Recent research by AMES Australia about clients in an employment stream within the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)<sup>2</sup> found that many experienced career loss after migrating to Australia. For example, clients who were professionals in their country of origin were often working as labourers or as care workers in Australia (Shamshad, Mulder, Onsando, & O'Dwyer, 2017).

Previous studies on Australian migration indicate that migrants make a substantial contribution to the Australian economy (e.g. Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012). Migrants from diverse backgrounds and with a range of skills can stimulate new ideas and generate new business, jobs and economic growth. (Office of Multicultural Interests Western Australia, 2012).

Apart from the economic benefits, successive Australian governments have also recognised the advantages of tapping the education, language and cultural skills and knowledge of migrants. There is evidence to suggest that cultural diversity can lead to higher levels of productivity and innovation because there are more resources in terms of skills and views to draw upon when problem solving. (Deloitte Australia & Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), 2012).

Settlement in a new country can be initially challenging for many. Settlement involves a two-way process whereby newly arrived people become part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of the receiving society through mutual adaptation and support (Valtonen, 2004).

Employment plays an important role in achieving better settlement outcomes and greater social inclusion for migrants. If people are given the opportunity to obtain decent employment, they are better able to settle successfully and contribute positively to society.

The concept of settlement directs attention to the societal and institutional context within which it is embedded. This includes the need for the wider community to make adaptations to accommodate new arrivals and facilitate their settlement. For example, through reducing or eliminating barriers to social and economic participation or providing basic support services to enable new arrivals to develop social connections and economic independence (Bennett & Adriel, 2014; Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), 2010).

Employment plays an important role in achieving better settlement outcomes and greater social inclusion for migrants. If people are given the opportunity to obtain decent employment, they are better able to settle successfully and contribute positively to society (Abur & Spaijji, 2016). Employment is not just a source of income to meet basic needs, but also contributes to psychological and social wellbeing. Being employed enhances self-esteem and provides a sense of independence and economic self-sufficiency.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND CARE WORK

Vocational Training and Education (VET) plays an important role in providing necessary skills for people to meet prevailing skill shortages in the care sector including the aged care and childcare industries. This sector has been a primary provider of new jobs in the Australian labour market since the 1990s (Department of Employment, 2016a).

The minimum requirement to work in aged care or as an educator assistant is a relevant Certificate III qualification. Australian qualifications are generally preferred by the employers in these industries. In 2015, 47% of employers in Victoria in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector used the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system to recruit their employees. Nationwide, 84% of employers said they were satisfied with training as a way of meeting their skill needs by type of training and employer characteristics (National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2015).

<sup>2</sup> The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is funded by the Australian Government: Department of Education and Training.

## 2 MIGRANTS AND EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, there has been an increase in childless couples, smaller family sizes, and divorce rates. These changes have contributed to a decline in the pool of informal caregivers. The Australian National Family Caregivers Association (2010) has estimated that the number of potential informal caregivers, for each person needing care will decrease from 11 in 1990 to 4 by 2050. This has created a demand in caring activities traditionally performed by women for both the young and elderly. Over the long term, care work is expected to grow substantially in the context of an ageing and a growing population.

The Department of Employment has projected employment in these industries to increase by 250,200 (16.4%) over the next five years. In fact, the projected growth rate in aged care and childcare is one of the highest in Australia; childcarers (26.1%), personal carers and assistants (22.1%) and aged and disabled carers (30.6%) (Department of Employment, 2016b). Factors contributing to this strong projected growth include the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Australia's ageing population and increasing demand for childcare and home based care services.

Childcare reforms under the National Quality Framework (NQF) are changing the childcare and early childhood development workforce. For example, the introduction of the requirement to maintain a specific ratio of Certificate III, diploma and degree qualified staff, has meant that most service providers have had to recruit more appropriately qualified workers and up-skill their existing workers (Social Research Centre, 2014).

The Department of Employment has also projected that employment growth in both industries is likely to favour part-time and female workers (Department of Employment, 2016b). In Victoria, these industries will have growth in the coming years in all Melbourne metropolitan regions and in regional Victoria. Skill shortages have also been projected in aged care in regional and remote areas in Australia (Mavromaras et al., 2017).

The aged care and childcare workforce are among the most gender-segregated occupations in Australia. In addition, care industries have a large number of women from non-English speaking and CALD backgrounds. In the childcare industry, 94% of those employed in 2013 were women (Social Research Centre, 2014). In the residential care services industry, women comprised 87% of workers in 2016. The largest group of residential care services workers are from 45-54 age-group (Mavromaras et al., 2017). In contrast, people working in the childcare industry tended to be younger at around 36 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a).

**The aged care and childcare workforce are among the most gender-segregated occupations in Australia. In addition, care industries have a large number of women from non-English speaking and CALD backgrounds**

The proportion of part-time workers in the childcare and aged care industries has increased in the last ten years. Over three-quarters (78%) of all residential aged care workers were employed in 2016 on permanent part-time contracts, with approximately 12% on full time permanent and 10% on a casual/contract arrangement (Mavromaras et al., 2017).

The proportion of part-time workers in childcare was 59% in 2010-11. In 2014, 90% of the childcare workforce was engaged in a contract role.

Aged care workers in Australia work in residential care facilities and for community care providers supporting the elderly people living at home. The largest component of the aged care workforce is Personal Care Assistants (PCAs). In 2010-11, they constituted 44.5% of the total residential care services (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). PCAs provide the day-to-day care giving activities such as bathing, dressing and feeding the elderly. This is a low status and low paid occupation, nevertheless workers are trusted with the intimate contact with vulnerable people in often challenging states of health.

About 75% of workers in the childcare services industry are childcare educator assistants which is one of the lowest paid occupations in this industry. They may work in long day care centres or in their own home as Family Day Care educators. The job of a childcare worker is demanding. It typically involves creating a supportive and educational environment for children, preparing food, administration, cleaning and supervision.

The aged care workforce is both stable and committed. Workers reported relatively high levels of job satisfaction and a large majority reported wanting to stay in the

sector in the 2016 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey (Mavromaras et al., 2017). Job satisfaction is also high in childcare. In the 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census, 87% of respondents said they were satisfied with their current job. However, half of the respondents said they were not satisfied with the current pay and conditions (Social Research Centre, 2014).

It can be difficult to find people willing to work in the part-time shift based arrangements of these occupations. For these reasons, it is especially difficult to attract young people from the local labour force into these vocations.

In 2012, the aged care workforce was 366,027. The Productivity Commission has estimated that by 2050 the aged care workforce will need to have grown to around 980,000 workers. This suggests there will be strong demand for aged care workers in to the future.

It has been projected by Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (2014) that to meet the new requirements and increased demand for services the number of childcare workers employed in Australia will need to increase by 15,500 (13%) between 2012 and 2017.

Despite the increasing demand, aged care and childcare work remain occupations of low pay and low status.

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### MIGRANTS IN CARE WORK

The over-representation of some groups of migrants and non-English speakers in the community services industry is a growing trend in most wealthy industrialised countries (Zimmerman, Litt, & Bose, 2006).

The 2016 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey indicates that migrants are an increasing proportion of the aged care workforce, most often employed in hands-on care positions. In 2016, around 72.1% of residential facilities employed Personal Care Assistants and Community Care Workers who spoke a language other than English; 70% of Personal Care Assistant, had migrated to Australia (Mavromaras et al., 2017). There is a higher proportion of newly arrived migrants (in Australia for 5 years or less) among aged care workers in residential facilities than in community aged care outlets. A recent Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (2014) submission to government estimated that 20% of childcare workers speak a language other than English and the Productivity Commission (2011) notes that a third of Family Day Care educators are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The population from CALD communities in Australia has increased over the last decades and this has increased the demand for carers from similar cultural backgrounds.

The number of Australians aged over 85 is projected to be at least 1.8 million over the next 40 years with a growing number of elderly from migrant and refugee communities who will require aged care residential facilities with specific cultural and linguistic capacity (SBS, 2014). The number of people from CALD backgrounds with dementia will be more than triple by 2050 to 120,000 and this will increase the demand for suitably qualified care providers and culturally appropriate services (Southern Cross Care Victoria, 2016). However there is a potential cultural and linguistic mismatch between the elderly population and caregivers. Currently most caregivers are from India, China and other Asian countries; whereas the growing elderly population are mainly Anglo, Greek and from other European backgrounds.

According to the Department of Social Services (2017) figures, 262,170 people migrated and settled in Australia in 2016 as permanent residents under the Family, Skilled and Humanitarian visa schemes; 54% of them were women. Of those who came on Family visas, 66% are women. Under the Skilled and Humanitarian visa schemes almost half of the migrants were women. The majority came from non-English speaking countries. Research indicates that women who are skilled and family migrants, often on partner visas are finding employment in childcare and aged care (Webb, Beale, & Faine, 2013). This appears to be a growing trend in these industries.

## 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

**This section describes the design and methodology of this research. It was designed as a mixed methods study, employing both quantitative and qualitative strategies for data collection and analysis.**

The objective of this study was to understand the effectiveness of AMES Australia's vocational programs for transitioning new migrants into employment. The study had the following research questions.

- What were clients' employment situations six months after completing vocational training at AMES Australia?
- What further training have clients undertaken after completing their vocational training?
- What feedback do clients have about the value of the course for preparing them for employment?

This research was approved under AMES Australia's *Research Ethics Policy* in May 2015.<sup>3</sup>

This study is based on telephone interviews with 203 former AMES Australia clients who completed Certificate III in Individual Support or Early Childhood Education and Care. These interviews were based on a structured questionnaire that captured both quantitative data and respondent feedback on the value of their course at AMES Australia. In addition to data from these interviews we conducted face to face interviews with two vocational teachers (one each from aged care and childcare) and one employer who regularly provides work placements to childcare clients from AMES Australia.

The study was designed to contact clients six months after they had completed their course at AMES Australia. This is a reasonable timeframe for clients to have an opportunity to look for work and reflect on the value of the Certificate III course.

### SELECTION OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

Our aim was to contact all vocational clients enrolled within an 18 month period covering semester 2, 2014 and semesters 1 and 2, 2015. The study was designed to contact clients six months after they had completed their course at AMES Australia. This is a reasonable timeframe for clients to have an opportunity to look for work and reflect on the value of the Certificate III course.

We obtained client management records for all clients enrolled in Certificate III during this period.<sup>4</sup> Former clients were excluded from the research if they:

- did not have minimum data recorded (phone or email contact details, language spoken or country of birth)
- withdrew in the first month of the course
- participated in one of the two pilot phases we conducted at the beginning of the study.

With these exclusions, 290 former Certificate III clients were in scope for the study.

### MAKING CONTACT WITH FORMER CLIENTS

We chose telephone interviewing as our preferred method for data collection. As we wanted to speak with a large number of people in geographically diverse locations, this was a practicable and affordable method.

We were aware that many of the people we planned to interview could find participating in an interview on the phone difficult without first language support. We therefore recruited multilingual Research Assistants to assist in conducting the interviews.

### DATA COLLECTION

Former clients were contacted by phone or email and invited to participate in the research. They were advised that the interview was voluntary and that all data collected would be kept confidential. We did not offer financial compensation for participation.

Research Assistants were provided with the name, age, first language and country of background for each client they were allocated to interview. They were also provided with details of the course name, AMES Australia site and dates for the Certificate III course in which the person had enrolled.

The interview questionnaire covered the following areas:

- the person's educational background and work history before coming to Australia
- their work situation in Australia prior to enrolling in the Certificate course and at the time of the interview
- methods used for finding work
- any further study the person had completed or was doing following their Certificate III
- feedback on the course, including whether it was useful for finding work or preparing for further education.

The research design required Research Assistants to interview the respondent on the phone and record their responses online using Survey Monkey data collection software. The intention was that these activities happen simultaneously. However, given that completing information online can be time consuming in some instances, Research Assistants were permitted to take notes in hard copy and return to the online questionnaire after they had finished their conversation to enter this data.

Where possible, clients were allocated to Research Assistants based on their language background. When introducing themselves and the research, Research Assistants offered to conduct the interview in the person's first language if relevant or English.

Respondents could proceed in their first language, English or use both. We report on the outcomes of this approach in the next section.

We collected data from three cohorts, six months after the courses in each semester were completed. Surveys were submitted to and monitored by the AMES Australia Research and Policy Unit on a daily basis during the interviewing phases. Errors or ambiguities in the data received were followed up as soon as they were noted through this daily monitoring. Research Assistants were able to contact a Research and Policy staff member on a mobile number, including after hours, for any support they required in relation to the interviews.

In addition to these telephone interviews, we interviewed two vocational teachers at AMES Australia. We were interested in their views on the strengths and limitations of the vocational program and suggestions they might have for improving the employment outcomes of former clients. We also spoke with one employer in the childcare industry who, along with numbers of other employers, has worked in partnership with AMES Australia to offer work placements to clients. We sought this employer's views on how well prepared clients are for working in the childcare industry in Australia.

Data analysis in this study was managed using SPSS for quantitative data and NVivo for qualitative data.

<sup>3</sup> The AMES Australia *Research Ethics Policy* is based on the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Personal details of clients enrolled in vocational courses at AMES are held in a client management system known as STRATA. Client activity is stored and recorded on this database owned by AMES Australia.

## 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

During the 12 months of data collection we employed 18 Research Assistants. Between them, this group spoke over 20 languages.<sup>5</sup> We recruited people both from within AMES Australia and externally. Most of the Research Assistants were not accredited interpreters. However, they were fluent in the languages we required and had the necessary skills to interview people and record their responses accurately in English.

The Research Assistants participated in training specific to this study before commencing interviews. Training covered the following:

- the objectives of the research
- the role of the Research Assistant
- ethical approaches to seeking consent (avoiding pressure)
- respondent data provided to Research Assistants
- confidentiality

- the components of the questionnaire
- use of Survey Monkey data collection software including question logic
- protocols for referring people expressing distress
- how to obtain support for technical, methodological and other issues whilst doing this work.

The Research Assistants worked from home, arranging telephone interviews at times convenient to the respondents. The Research and Policy team met with the Research Assistants following each period of data collection. One purpose of these meetings was to gain feedback from Research Assistants on the work they were doing, both as a form of debriefing and as a way of seeking their views on the research process. Each meeting had a specific focus. Themes included principles for allocating respondents by language and practices for managing interviews conducted in both English and another language.

There was great value in engaging with the Research Assistants as research informants in their own right. They made contact with former clients, directly heard their views and experiences and, in many cases, had a shared cultural background.

In addition to gaining feedback on the research design, the meetings with Research Assistants allowed us to seek their expertise and perspective on specific topics relevant to the research. These included the relationship between employment and settlement for new migrants and strategies people had used to find a job. Research Assistants shared their views and conveyed anecdotal feedback in relation to these topics.

There was great value in engaging with the Research Assistants as research informants in their own right. They made contact with former clients, directly heard their views and experiences and, in many cases, had a shared cultural background. The Research Assistants had specific insights and perspectives, which provided a useful context for our interpretation of the data.<sup>6</sup>

The Research Assistants provided positive feedback on these meetings, reporting that they were helpful for them in terms of developing their research skills, maintaining high motivation for the work and having a sense of collaboration with others.

### ETHICS

Research Assistants were trained in the range of ethical issues relating to gaining consent for participation in the research. We strongly emphasised the voluntary nature not only of the interview as a whole but of specific questions within the questionnaire. Certain questions sought information that some people would regard as private, for example the person's wages and the type of visa they arrived on. Research Assistants were trained to be cognisant of the sensitive nature of these questions and the importance of the confidentiality of the data collected.

Some people might have an expectation that a person calling them from AMES Australia would be in a position to help them find employment. Research Assistants were briefed to clearly explain the purpose of the interview as a research and data collection process. They were trained to listen with empathy to the respondent but to reiterate their role as a research assistant and not an employment consultant. Research Assistants were required to offer referral to respondents who were distressed about their employment situation or said they needed help. Respondents who agreed to this were referred to the Research and Policy Unit in the first instance and from there to the appropriate area within AMES Australia, for example for information about other programs for which they might be eligible.

Some linguistic communities in Melbourne are relatively small. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, Research Assistants were not permitted to interview anyone known to them.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are a number of possible limitations to this research.

We were unable to offer every language spoken by the client group in our cohort. This was a resource issue and difficult to avoid given that vocational clients in scope for this study spoke at least 49 different languages between them.

It is possible that people who were working, particularly full time, were less likely to be available for an interview due to limited time.

It is also possible that people who did not find their course helpful or who had had a negative experience of AMES Australia as an organisation could be underrepresented. Whilst we had no evidence of this as a reason for not giving consent, the Research Assistants were contacting people on behalf of AMES Australia. It is reasonable that a person whose experience of learning at AMES Australia was not positive would consider the option of not participating in the research.

A risk to the reliability of the data in this research relates to the collection of data in one language and the recording of it in another (i.e. English). While many of the questions in the interview were reasonably straightforward ("When did you arrive in Australia?"), others had a greater potential for varied interpretation ("What do you think AMES could do to improve the course?"). We did not systematically control the quality of the translation activities required by our research design. Variability in practice is inevitable in any study employing multiple research assistants. However, when working in multiple languages there is an even greater potential for varied interpretation of questions and responses. Our approach to achieving good data quality was to emphasise training and the collection of regular feedback from Research Assistants. This is an area for further development.

<sup>5</sup> We employed multiple Research Assistants for certain languages for whom we had high numbers of respondents (e.g. Mandarin, Dari) and some Research Assistants were multilingual (e.g. those from India who spoke several languages).

<sup>6</sup> For more detail about research with bilingual research assistants see: *The First Language Advantage: working with bilingual Research Assistants* (Mulder and O'Dwyer, 2014).

## 4 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

This section provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the 203 respondents interviewed. It covers visa type, gender, age and education as well as duration of time in Australia at the beginning of the vocational course.

It describes how representative our sample was relative to the characteristics of the whole vocational training program at AMES Australia and discusses the frequency with which interviews were completed in first language.

### Country of birth

AMES Australia's clients are mainly from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is substantial diversity among the clients in vocational training. Surveyed respondents came from 37 countries, with almost half coming from three countries; China, India and Vietnam. Reflecting the reputation and expertise at AMES Australia for teaching English, almost all clients came from non-English speaking backgrounds. However, very occasionally people born in Australia choose to study at AMES Australia. The top countries of origin are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Country of birth	Count	Percent
China	47	23%
India	34	17%
Vietnam	17	8%
Sri Lanka	10	5%
Pakistan	9	4%
Myanmar	7	3%
Thailand	7	3%
Iran	7	3%
Ethiopia	6	3%
Bangladesh	6	3%
Afghanistan	4	2%
Japan	4	2%
Cambodia	4	2%
Australia	4	2%
Other	37	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** All percentages quoted in tables and charts throughout the report are rounded to the nearest whole number, therefore the sum of component items may not always total exactly 100%.

### Visa Stream

The main migration pathways for vocational training respondents are shown in Chart 1 opposite.

The largest group of respondents arrived in Australia on Family visas, most often spouse visas.<sup>7</sup> The countries of origin among Family stream migrants were diverse, with the largest numbers coming from China, India and Vietnam. Those who came on Skilled visas were most often from China and Sri Lanka.

Humanitarian compared to Family and Skilled visa holders are a much smaller proportion of permanent migrants to Australia and this is also reflected in the numbers completing vocational training at AMES Australia. The main countries of birth for Humanitarian entrants in this study were Myanmar, Iran, China and India. Those born in China and India were from minority ethnic backgrounds e.g. Tibetans.

In more than 15% of cases, respondents did not specify which visa stream gave them residency in Australia. For example some reported that they had 'permanent residency' or that they had first come to Australia as a student or tourist.

CHART 1: RESPONDENT VISA STREAM

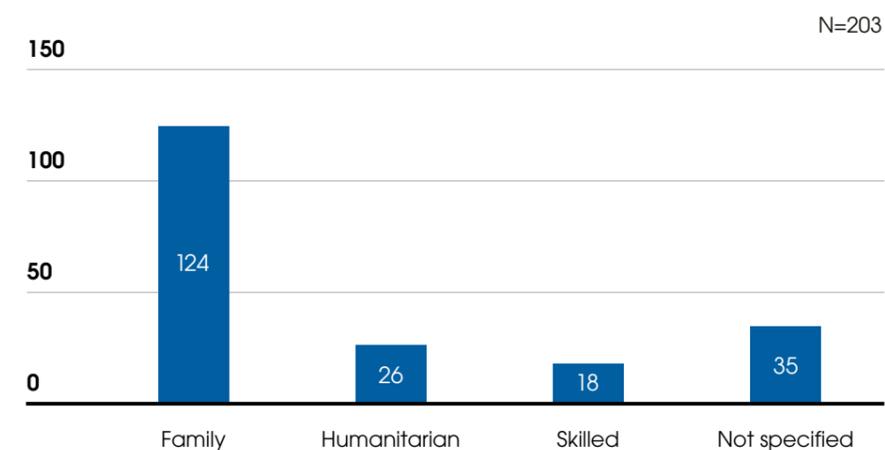


TABLE 2: RESPONDENT AGE GROUPS

	Count	Percent
Young Adult (18-24 years)	22	11%
Adult (25-44 years)	152	75%
Mature Age (45 years and older)	29	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Age group

The majority of respondents surveyed for this study (75%), were adults aged between 25 and 44. This is in line with the overall trend in Australian migration where this group comprises the largest proportion (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2016).

In each age group, similar proportions of people migrated through each visa stream, with the largest proportion in each age group arriving on Family visas. None of the young adults aged 18 - 24 came on a Skilled visa, which generally requires migrants to have established careers.

<sup>7</sup> Of Family visas granted in 2015, 83% were partner visas allowing people to live with their Australian citizen or permanent resident spouse (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016).

# 4 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender

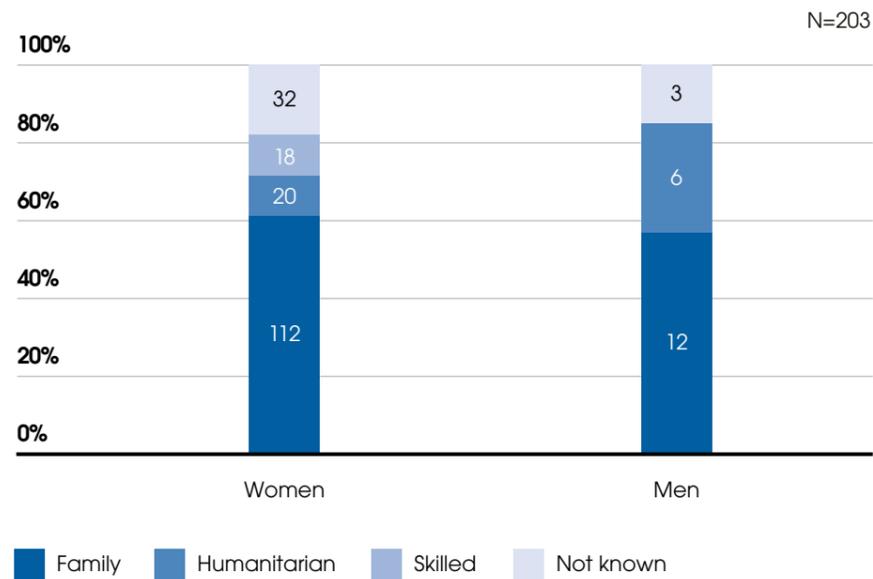
The majority (90%) of respondents in our sample were women. The vocational training offered by AMES Australia prepares people for early childcare education and aged care work, occupations mostly held by women. A high proportion of respondents arrived on Family visas reflecting the fact that women more often than men come to Australia as spouses or partners.

Proportionally more men than women in our sample arrived in the Humanitarian stream. None of the men studying vocational training at AMES Australia came on Skilled visas. See Chart 2.

**TABLE 3: GENDER**

	Count	Percent
Women	182	90%
Men	21	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

**CHART 2: GENDER AND VISA STREAM**



A high proportion of respondents arrived on Family visas reflecting the fact that women more often than men come to Australia as spouses or partners.

## Education background

Nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents had completed a post-school level qualification prior to enrolling in vocational training. Post-school qualifications include trade or technical study, bachelor or postgraduate degrees. See Table 4.

More than 80% of those who arrived on Family visas and all of those on Skilled visas had post-school education. Those with lower level education qualifications most often arrived on Humanitarian visas. This may reflect a lower level access to post-school education in countries that have recently experienced humanitarian crises.

## Gender and education

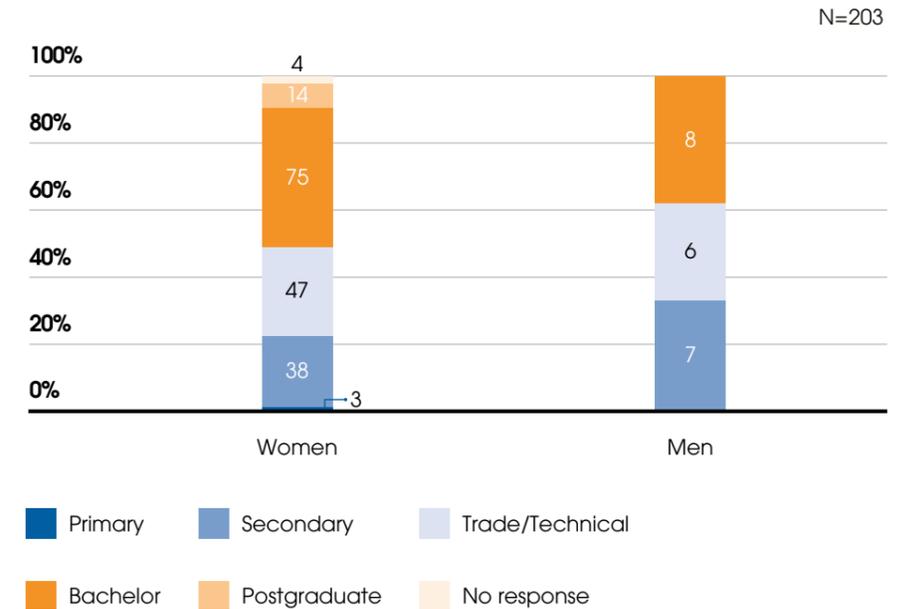
Women respondents had higher levels of education compared to the men. See Chart 3. Proportionally more women than men came to Australia on Family and Skilled visas associated with higher levels of education.

More than 80% of those who arrived on Family visas and all of those on Skilled visas had post-school education.

**TABLE 4: RESPONDENT HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

	Count	Percent
Postgraduate	14	7%
Bachelor	83	41%
Trade/Technical	53	26%
Secondary	45	22%
Primary	3	1%
None	1	0%
No response	4	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

**CHART 3: GENDER AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION**



## 4 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

### Length of time in Australia

Most respondents (75%) had been in Australia for more than one year when they enrolled in vocational training at AMES Australia. Vocational training requires competency in English and some respondents may have spent time learning English or looking for work related to their former occupation beforehand. Those on temporary spouse visas cannot generally access subsidised training in Australia and this may have been a factor in delaying enrolment in vocational training. Nevertheless, almost 70% had been in Australia for less than 5 years when they enrolled.

**TABLE 5: LENGTH OF TIME IN AUSTRALIA (AT COMMENCEMENT OF COURSE)**

	Count	Percent
Less than 1 year	50	25%
1 to less than 2 years	32	16%
2 to less than 5 years	54	27%
5 years and longer	67	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

### AMES Australia Centre

The respondents in this research were representative of enrolment in vocational training across the AMES Australia centres in Melbourne. Overall we surveyed clients from eight Individual Support courses

and fourteen Early Childhood Education courses for this research. The spread of clients across courses at each centre is illustrated in Table 6. Both courses are not offered at every AMES Australia site.

**TABLE 6: AMES AUSTRALIA CENTRE**

	Cert III in Early Childhood Education		Cert III in Individual Support		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Noble Park	30	23%	32	45%	62	31%
Box Hill	33	25%	17	24%	50	25%
Werribee	24	18%	-	-	24	12%
Flagstaff	23	17%	-	-	23	11%
St Albans	22	17%	-	-	22	11%
Footscray	-	-	22	31%	22	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

### SURVEY REPRESENTATIVENESS

We surveyed 203 (70%) out of 290 clients who enrolled in a vocational training course at AMES Australia during the three semesters between July 2014 and December 2015. There were no major differences between the proportions of people who did and did not participate in our survey relating to AMES Australia centre, class type, gender or age.

There were 87 people (30%) who did not complete a survey. This was usually because the interviewer was not make contact with them (17% of cases). In other cases, the person did not consent to participate (13%). One interview was not recorded correctly and could not be included in the study.

### INTERVIEWS IN FIRST LANGUAGE

There were 43 different languages, including English, reported as the first or preferred language spoken by those surveyed. The main languages are shown in Table 8.

**TABLE 7: VOCATIONAL TRAINING SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

	Count	Percent	
<b>Surveyed</b>	203	70%	
<b>Not Surveyed</b>	No contact made	50	17%
	No consent	36	12%
	Survey not recorded	1	<1%
<b>Total vocational training population</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**TABLE 8: FIRST LANGUAGE SPOKEN BY RESPONDENTS**

Language	Count	Percent
Mandarin	45	22%
Hindi	18	9%
Vietnamese	16	8%
Tamil	10	5%
Urdu	8	4%
Farsi/Persian	8	4%
Punjabi	6	3%
Bengali	6	3%
English	6	3%
Thai	5	2%
Sinhalese	5	2%
Arabic	4	2%
Cantonese	4	2%
Spanish	4	2%
Burmese	4	2%
Khmer	4	2%
Tibetan	4	2%
Other	46	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

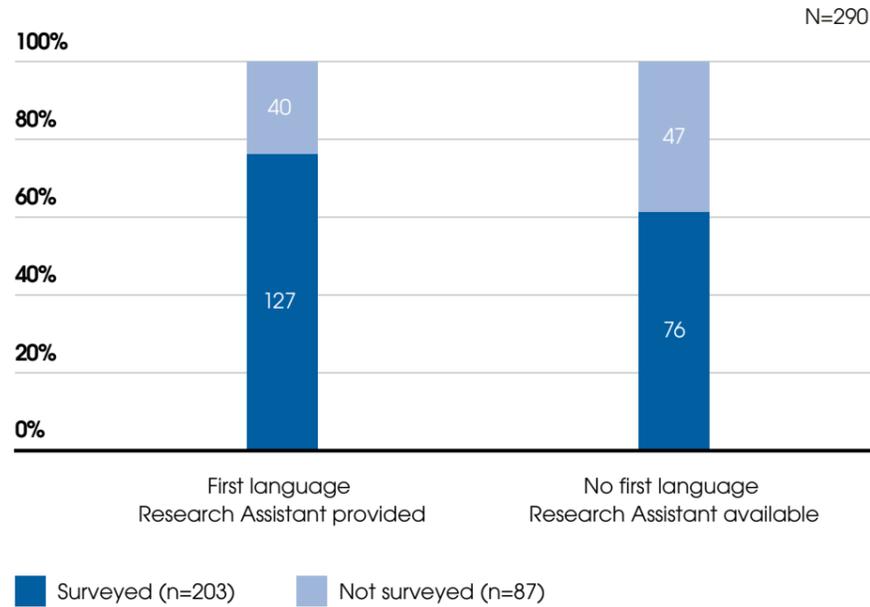
## 4 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

We allocated vocational training clients to Research Assistants according to language compatibility, taking into account country of birth and potential additional languages that may be spoken. We were able to allocate more than half (58%) of the vocational training population to a Research Assistant who spoke their language. Respondents who we could not offer a Research Assistant with their language were interviewed in English.

Slightly more of those who were allocated a first language Research Assistant (76%) were interviewed compared to those who were not (62%). Two thirds of those interviewed by a Research Assistant with their language spoke in mainly first language, 13% used a combination of first language and English, while 24% were interviewed in English only. People who were allocated a first language Research Assistant but chose to be interviewed in English mostly spoke Hindi and other Indian subcontinent languages. Clients completing vocational training at AMES Australia require sufficient English to participate in the interview. Nonetheless having a chance to speak with someone who spoke their language and from a similar cultural background may have made the experience more comfortable for participants.

Overall 96 interviews occurred using languages other than English.

**CHART 4: SURVEY RESPONSE BY WHETHER CONTACTED BY A FIRST LANGUAGE RESEARCH ASSISTANT**



**TABLE 9: LANGUAGE USE WHEN SURVEYED BY A RESEARCH ASSISTANT WITH FIRST LANGUAGE**

	Count	Percent
First language	79	62%
First language plus English	17	13%
English only	31	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>

The survey respondents were representative of the whole population of vocational training clients during the period of this study.

A high proportion of respondents participated using their first language and this appeared to boost the participation rate.

## 5 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

### Employment plays a key role in achieving better settlement outcomes for migrants.

One of the key research questions of this study was to establish how many former vocational clients from AMES Australia had found employment six months after course completion. This section examines the employment outcomes and working conditions of respondents.

The outcomes discussed in this section include respondents' availability for work, overall employment and work arrangements as well as methods used for finding employment. These outcomes are further explored against respondents' specific course, age, visa category, education background, and length of time in Australia.

### AVAILABILITY FOR WORK

Respondents were considered to be available for work if they had found employment, were actively looking or were planning to look for work within the year of completing their course. Six months after course completion 82% of the 203 respondents were available for work. This was similar for respondents studying Individual Support (86%) and Early Childhood Education and Care (80%).

Among those who were available for work, the employment rate was two thirds (67%).

Table 10 summarises respondents' availability for work six months after completing their vocational courses. Those unavailable for work were in further study (11%) or had family responsibilities or had other personal reasons such as health issues (7%).

**TABLE 10: AVAILABILITY FOR WORK**

	Count	Percent
Available for work	167	82%
Not available for work, further study	23	11%
Not available for work, other reasons	13	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

Six months after course completion 82% of the 203 respondents were available for work. This was similar for respondents studying Individual Support (86%) and Early Childhood Education and Care (80%).

# 5 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

## Visa category and availability for work

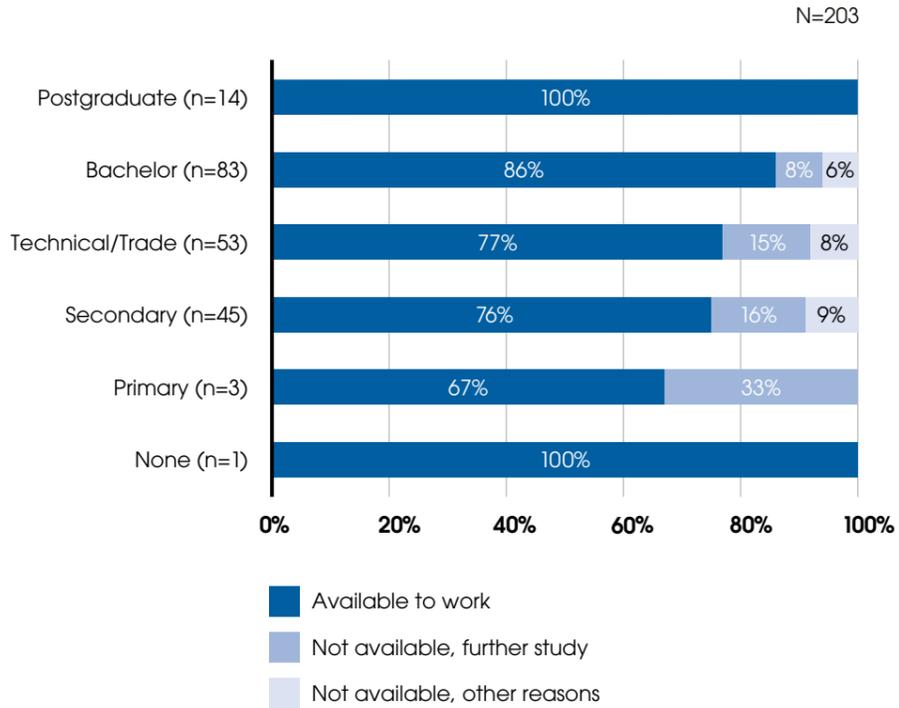
Respondents on all visa categories had relatively high availability for work: Family visas (81%), Humanitarian visas (81%), and Skilled visas (78%).

## Education qualifications and availability for work

The majority of respondents (74%) already had post-secondary school education such as Bachelor degrees or technical and trade qualifications.

Those with higher educational qualifications were more often available for work at six months post course compared to those with lower or no formal education. As shown in Chart 5, a higher proportion of respondents with a technical certificate or diploma (77%), a Bachelor degree (86%), and a university post-graduate qualification (100%) were available for work compared to those with secondary (76%) or lower schooling (67%) as their highest level of education.

**CHART 5: EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND AVAILABILITY FOR WORK**



## EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Of the 167 respondents available for work, 74% had been employed before migrating to Australia. One third (34%) had worked in Australia prior to vocational training. Six months after completing vocational training 67% had found employment. See Table 11.

Respondents available for work from both aged care and childcare education vocational courses had the same employment rate at 67%.

### Age and employment

For respondents who were available for work, adults aged 25 to 44 years were more often employed (70%) compared to young adults 18 to 24 years (53%). 58% of mature aged clients were employed.

**TABLE 11: EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES**

	Count	Percent
Employed	112	67%
Unemployed, looking for work	55	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Length of time in Australia and employment

A higher proportion of respondents who started vocational training within one year after their arrival in Australia were employed (75%) compared to those who took more than a year to enrol in the program (64%). It is possible that those who enrolled sooner, arrived in Australia with the competency in English required for vocational training. Others may have spent time learning English or looking for work more closely aligned to their former occupation. This longer period of unemployment following settlement may reduce confidence and have other adverse effects on job searching.

## OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

The study assesses the occupations of those working and the strategies people used to transition to employment post course. We explore their working arrangements and consider their current occupation compared to their work before migrating to Australia.

Six months after completing vocational training 67% had found employment.

# 5 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

## Occupation

For those in work, occupation was strongly matched to vocational training. See Chart 6. 90% of those in work following completion of Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care were working as Community and Personal Service Workers as childcare educators or assistants.<sup>8</sup> More than three-quarters (76%) of those who completed Certificate III in the Individual Support were working as Personal Care Assistant and in other support roles in aged care. About one quarter of those who had completed Certificate III in Individual Support went on to work in other areas including managing a small business and most frequently as labourers in factory or cleaning work.

## Strategies for finding employment

Vocational training clients reported using a number of methods to find work. Twenty-seven percent said that they found work through the work placement organised by AMES Australia as part of their course.

In all, the main strategies that assisted vocational respondents to find employment were:

- work placement (27%)
- personal connections (19%)
- job search website e.g. Seek, Gumtree, Indeed (14%)
- someone at AMES e.g. employment consultant, teacher (12%)

- approaching employers directly e.g. handing out resumes (7%).

Six percent of the respondents were self-employed and owned businesses. Other strategies for finding work were visiting employers' websites (5%), registering with a *jobactive* provider (4%), volunteering (2%), and engaging a recruitment agency (2%).

Work placement was a significant avenue into employment. Work placement enabled respondents to make professional contacts and gain practical industry experience as well as providing exposure to workplace culture and practices.

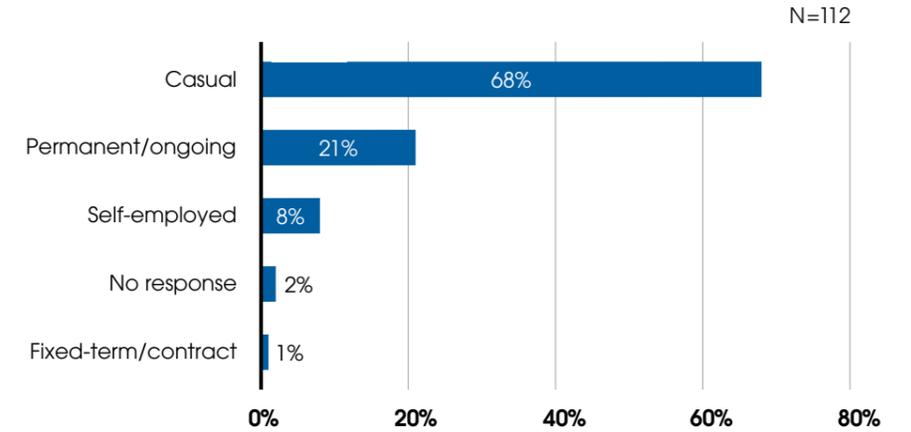
## Employment arrangements

Respondents were employed as casuals, permanent/ongoing, fixed-term/contract, or were self-employed. Chart 7 shows the employment arrangements of the 112 respondents who were working.

The majority of employed respondents (68%) were working as casual employees. Over half of this group (61%) said they would prefer to work more hours. One third (33%) of respondents were working 11-20 hours per week, another 33% were working between 21 and 34 hours per week. A small number of respondents (11%) were working less than 10 hours per week.

Not all respondents answered questions relating to their remuneration. However, among those working 60% reported earning between \$21 and \$30 per hour. Occasionally wages reported appeared to be less than recommended by the relevant industry awards. Overall wages in these occupations are low and there can be limited opportunities for promotion and advancement.

CHART 7: EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS



## Culture and employment

We asked the respondents who were employed whether they spoke any language other than English at their workplace. More than half of respondents (51%) said they spoke a language other than English at work mainly to speak with their boss or with clients. This indicates that migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds bring additional linguistic and cultural competencies which could be beneficial for their workplace.

Having bilingual staff can be useful for elderly clients, children, parents and employers in childcare and aged care industries. Some childcare centres use the bilingual skills of their staff to speak with children in their parents' first languages.<sup>9</sup> Yet care workers rarely receive any additional payment for their language skills. Chart 8 shows the reasons why respondents used other languages at their workplace apart from English.

CHART 6: OCCUPATION 6 MONTHS POST COURSE COMPLETION

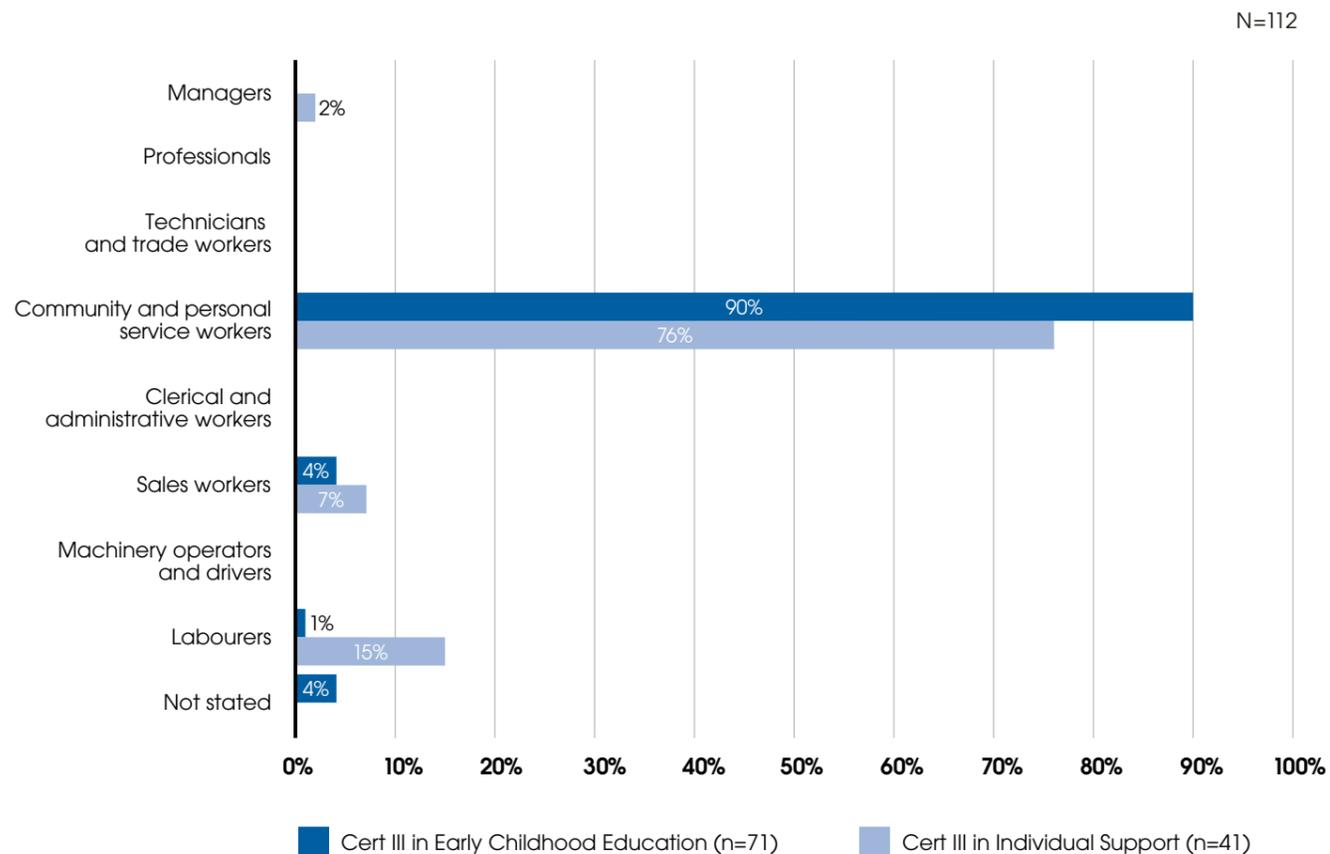
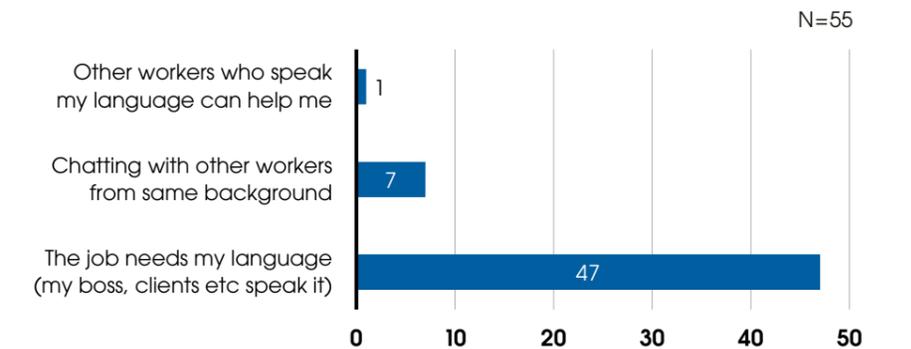


CHART 8: REASONS FOR USING OTHER LANGUAGES AT WORKPLACE



<sup>8</sup> The ABS categorises Community and Personal Service Workers as those who assist Health Professionals in the provision of patient care, provide information and support on a range of social welfare matters, and provide other services in the areas of aged care and childcare, education support, hospitality, defence, policing and emergency services, security, travel and tourism, fitness, sports and personal services.

<sup>9</sup> In 2013, the proportion of children attending of childcare services, whose parents or guardian spoke a language other than English at home, was between 18% and 36% depending on the type of service accessed. See (Social Research Centre, 2014).

## 5 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

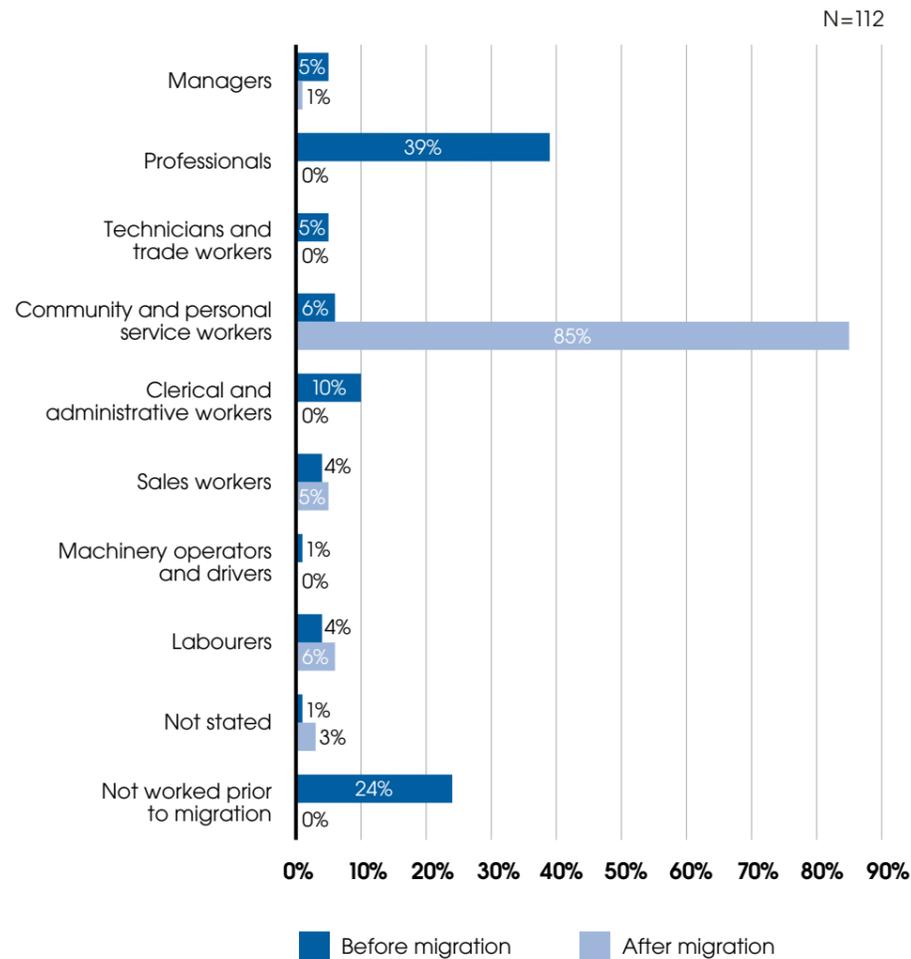
### Change in occupational status

To assess the broad change in occupational status for those working, we compared their job classification in Australia with their job classification prior to migration. See Chart 9. Many experienced considerable loss of occupational status. This is a well reported trajectory due to limited English, a lack of local experience, a lack of local familiarity with overseas qualifications and sometimes discriminatory recruitment practices (Liebig, 2007; Reid, 2012).

Prior to migration, 44% of the respondents had worked as professionals or managers (e.g. accountants, teachers, and doctors) before coming to Australia but very few (3%) worked in a professional field after arriving in Australia.

Only one in ten of the respondents completing vocational education at AMES Australia had worked in the care sector prior to migration. After training, most respondents (84%) had found related work in Community and Personal Service Workers occupations that were relevant to their industry certificate qualifications.

CHART 9: OCCUPATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATION



### UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS

Six months after completing the vocational programs, 33% of the 167 respondents available for work were unemployed and still looking for work. Online job searching was the main strategy (51%) that unemployed respondents used to look for work. This was followed by the use of personal connection

(e.g. family, friends, professional) (24%), newspaper advertisements (22%), and visits to a recruitment agency (13%). One-third (36%) were registered with *jobactive* services.

Slightly more than half of the respondents who were unemployed and looking for work (51%) said they

did not have any support in their job searching activities; not from friends or family or from more formal sources such as the Government's *jobactive* service. This is an indication that some respondents who were looking for work may benefit from post-program support to find employment.

## 6 POST COURSE TRAINING AND EDUCATION

### Sixty-two respondents (31%) participated in further training and education after completing their Certificate III course at AMES Australia.

In addition to those who were not available for work because they were studying, this includes those who had part-time or casual employment and those who were looking for work whilst studying part-time. Of those who completed a Certificate III in Individual Support, 18% participated in further study. The proportion was higher for the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care cohort (37%).

82% of respondents who were studying were enrolled in a Certificate or a Diploma course, 13% were studying English; only one respondent was enrolled in a Bachelor degree at a university. Among the eight respondents who were studying further English, five were doing their course at AMES Australia.

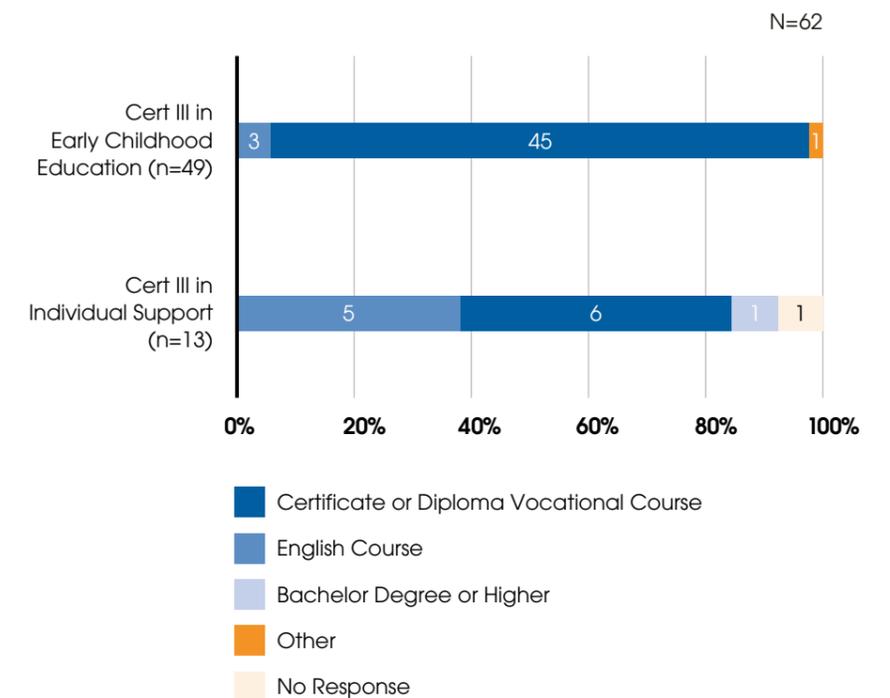
The majority who completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care were enrolled in a Certificate IV or a Diploma in childcare education. Among the respondents who completed Certificate III in Individual Support, a higher proportion of people were studying English. See Chart 10.

Around two-thirds (61%) were studying part-time and one-third (37%) of respondent were studying full-time. Although the majority of respondents were enrolled in the same field as their original Certificate III, a few people changed directions. They were enrolled in other vocational courses such as in hair and beauty, accounting or for other occupations within the health and community care sector such as nursing.

TABLE 12: TYPES OF POST-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COURSE

	Count	Percent
Certificate or Diploma Vocational course	51	82%
English course	8	13%
Bachelor degree or higher	1	2%
Other	1	2%
No response	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

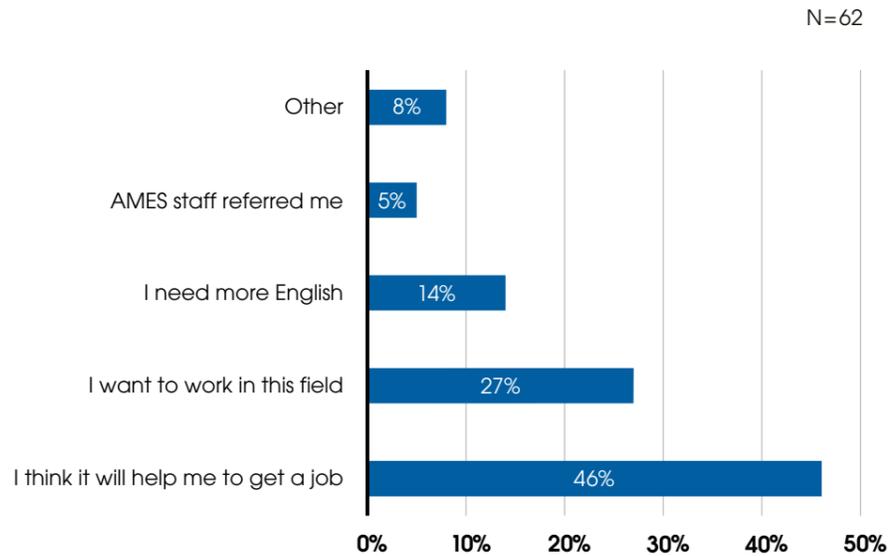
CHART 10: FURTHER STUDY PARTICIPATION FOR INDIVIDUAL COURSES



## 6 POST COURSE TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Respondents mentioned a number of reasons for enrolling in other courses after completing their vocational training at AMES Australia. The primary reason was to get a higher qualification in the same field. 46% of respondents who were studying said that they thought the new course would help them to get a job. There was a perception among many respondents from Certificate III in childcare education that a Certificate III is not sufficient to work as an early childhood educator assistant. Chart 11 shows respondents' reasons for participating in further training and education after completing their Certificate III course at AMES Australia.

**CHART 11: REASONS FOR FURTHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION**



\*More than one response was allowed

Respondents provided additional comments on why they went onto complete higher level vocational training. For example, one respondent said:

*I need to get more information and it is good to have a higher degree in the field if you want to work long term.*

Another respondent said:

*I can develop my knowledge in this field further through my diploma course, in more details with policy etc. It will help me for my future to own a business in childcare. Certificate III provides basic knowledge only.*

Although the Certificate III courses offered at AMES Australia require an intermediate level of English, some respondents were enrolled in English language courses to further improve their English or to gain confidence. For example, one respondent said:

*I have to improve my English. English language is important to get any kind of job in Australia.*

Some respondents mentioned both gaining a higher qualification and improving their English proficiency as the reasons for pursuing further study.

Nearly one quarter of the respondents had completed a post-school qualification prior to migrating to Australia. This indicates that their previous qualifications were not useful in finding employment in Australia.

It is possible that their previous qualifications were not recognised in Australia. Most respondents who had a post-school qualification were enrolled in further vocational training. Respondents with secondary and primary school education were mainly enrolled in English language courses to improve their English.

Representative of the client group, the majority of the respondents studying were female, on Family visas and aged between 25 and 44. Among the young adults who were studying, most were doing vocational training. All the mature age respondents who pursued further training were enrolled in a Certificate IV or a Diploma course.

## 7 PROGRAM FEEDBACK

### To assess how useful respondents found their Certificate III course at AMES Australia, we asked respondents why they decided to do the course and whether it was helpful for finding work.

In addition, we asked them for their suggestions about how the Certificate III courses at AMES Australia could be improved.

### WHY DID RESPONDENTS CHOOSE TO DO CERTIFICATE III?

Certificate III is the minimum qualification required in order to work in age care or childcare education roles in Australia. When asked why they decided to enrol in the Certificate III course, the majority of respondents (74%) chose "to get a qualification to work in this area."

There has been steady growth in demand for workers across these industries and therefore investment in the minimum training was perceived as a good strategy for finding work for many participants.

*Aged care is one of fastest growing industries. I thought if I learn this course I can easily find a job.*

Respondents were able to nominate more than one reason why they chose to do the course. The second most common reason was to improve their English. Given that English is one of the most significant barriers to finding work for people from non-English speaking backgrounds this is not surprising. Clients enrolling in the vocational courses at AMES Australia are almost exclusively from non-English speaking backgrounds and AMES Australia has a reputation for catering to this population.

The third most frequently chosen reason for doing a Certificate III course was "it was something useful to do."

This accords with other research by AMES Australia which suggests that for some people part of their motivation for studying is to avoid spending time at home without purpose (Thomson, O'Dwyer, & Chan, 2016).

Aged care and childcare occupations have become widely recognised in Australia, including by communities of newly arrived migrants, as industries that are seeking to recruit staff. Many respondents made comments such as:

*My friend who works in this field recommended it.*

Among the respondents in this study 19 had previously completed English language study programs for employment at AMES Australia during the research period. We estimate that 25% - 35% of vocational clients may have had previous experience studying English at AMES Australia, some prior to the timing of this study. Table 13 summarises respondents' reasons for enrolling in Certificate III.

TABLE 13: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO DO THE COURSE AT AMES AUSTRALIA?

	Count	Percent*
To get a qualification to work in this area	139	74%
More English	76	41%
Something useful to do	34	18%
My friend recommended it	28	15%
My counsellor advised it	19	10%
To help me prepare for further study	17	9%
Centrelink ( <i>jobactive</i> ) obligation	5	3%
General job-seeking advice	5	3%
Not sure	3	2%
Other	42	22%

\*187 respondents, more than one response allowed

Some respondents identified that the interpersonal aspect of work in aged care or childcare was an important part of their decision to train and find work in this field.

*I like to work with children.*

*I chose the course because I love to help people, especially elderly people.*

### THE VALUE OF THE CERTIFICATE III COURSE

88% of respondents found the course helpful for finding employment. Respondents were asked to nominate the aspects of the course that had been most useful. This question was asked both of those who had found a job and those who had not. See Table 14.

As noted, the majority of respondents said they chose to do a Certificate III course because they knew they needed this qualification to work in the aged care or childcare industry. This was therefore also what made the course useful in their eyes.

*I got a related qualification through this course and that is the most important thing for me, to find a job here in Australia.*

60% of respondents said that undertaking vocational training at AMES Australia improved their English language skills. Along with the practical skills necessary for work, confidence in English is essential for finding employment. Some respondents felt that this was a primary barrier for finding work.

*I feel that I have difficulties with the English language here, otherwise I am quite confident as I have lots work experience overseas. Language is the hardest barrier for me to find a job.*

Studying vocational training at AMES Australia was a step towards increased confidence in English. Respondents valued that at AMES Australia staff have a combination of both English as a Second Language teaching expertise and relevant industry knowledge.

*AMES Australia has quite a good reputation in this course, including experienced teachers, so there is enough time to learn a lot in classroom and work placement.*

TABLE 14: WHAT WERE THE THINGS IN THE COURSE THAT WERE HELPFUL FOR LOOKING FOR A JOB?

	Count	Percent
Work experience	121	68%
Improving my English	106	60%
Interview practice	217	51%
Improved confidence	88	49%
Encouragement from teachers and classmates	71	40%
Industry related information	63	35%
Interview practice	62	35%
Getting a qualification required for this work	62	35%
Learning about Australian workplace culture	61	34%
Job search activities (resume writing, interview skills)	59	33%
Networking (meeting others in the same situation)	24	13%
Planning the next step (e.g. counselling)	16	9%
Employer presentations	5	3%
Other	21	12%

\*178 respondents, more than one response allowed

## 7 PROGRAM FEEDBACK

Respondents spoke strongly about the value of work experience. Previous research has shown that the absence of relevant local work experience is a major barrier for new migrants looking for work. Almost three quarters of respondents nominated work experience as helpful in looking for work.

*I learned lots of job related knowledge and skills. And also the work placement can give an opportunity to get a job there.*

*Understanding about team work, the relationship between workers and supervisors or managers and the work environment as whole picture in Australia through this particular workplace experience - I couldn't have learnt about this from my previous casual job. This workplace is quite formal.*

Half of all respondents said that the course was helpful because they developed greater self-confidence as a result. Some people identified support from AMES Australia teachers as a particular aspect of this.

*My teacher gave me sample interview questions which was very helpful. During my interview I was able to answer the employer's questions confidently.*

Four per cent of former vocational clients (nine people) gave reasons for why the course did not help them to find work.

These respondents included people who were and were not working. The reasons they gave included that the class was not the right level of English, that there was not enough support to find work and there was a perception that Certificate III was not a sufficiently high qualification for jobs in these industries.

*After finishing the course, I applied for so many jobs but I didn't get any replies. I think the qualification of Certificate III is not enough to get a job in this area.*

*There are people who have more qualifications and experience and are still looking for jobs. With my visa I'm not able to afford more qualifications. Certificate III in aged care is not enough to find a job.*

### SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE CERTIFICATE III COURSE

Towards the end of the interview Research Assistants asked each respondent: "Do you have any suggestions for how AMES Australia can improve the course?"

Almost one third of all former clients responded to this question by saying the course they did at AMES Australia was excellent and that it helped them very much.

*The course was very good. It helped me to know how to work and educate children. I learned how to communicate with children and try to meet their needs and learned how playing can help the children's development. The teachers were very supportive and helpful. Thank you for providing these kind of courses.*

*I am very happy with everything we did in the course. The teachers were really helpful, it was very useful; that's why I found a job straight after I finished the course.*

*At the beginning I felt that the study load was too much but gradually I realised that all the content was relevant and clients should learn those things to get the qualification. So I am very satisfied what I have learnt.*

Research Assistants were trained to prompt for further feedback in situations where a respondent gave positive feedback initially. They reminded the respondent that the interview was confidential and that AMES Australia was very interested in any suggestions for improvement to the courses. In almost half of all interviews, however, the respondent expressed their appreciation or said they had no specific suggestions. See Table 15.

**TABLE 15: COURSE FEEDBACK**

	Count
The course is excellent, it helped me a lot	60
AMES should help clients find a job after they have completed their course	9
AMES should offer a Diploma course in childcare education	8
The course schedule should be more flexible (not as intense)	8
Offer more English language / first language support within the course	5
Increase the duration of the work placement	5
Increase the duration of the course (too much to learn in the time available, need more time to improve English)	5
Employ teachers with excellent skills only/seek client feedback on teachers	5
Improve specialist available materials/texts/equipment, make better use of available texts	4
Reduce the duration of the work placement	4
Practical components of course should be more realistic	3
AMES should put less pressure on clients	2
Increase range of vocational training courses at AMES	2
Incorporate medication management in aged care course	2
Other (e.g. improve AMES industry networks, refer best clients to employers etc.)	15

\*114 respondents, more than one response allowed

## 7 PROGRAM FEEDBACK

Where respondents did have suggestions for improving the course, there were some clear themes. Some people suggested that AMES Australia should provide job search support to clients after they have completed their Certificate III program:

*I wish you could arrange a transition to work program at the end of the course so that eligible clients would not face so many barriers at job market.*

Others suggested that AMES Australia should consider offering a higher level course for clients who had completed Certificate III, for example the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care.

There was a perception amongst respondents who had completed the childcare course, that many employers will favour a prospective employee with this level of qualification even if the job does not require it.

Some respondents expressed that the course delivery did not suit their personal commitments (for example with care of young children) and suggested AMES Australia consider running the course of a more flexible timetable.

There were a range of suggestions in relation to the work placement component of the Certificate III programs. Respondents overwhelmingly liked the work placement aspect of their course and in many cases specifically reported that they had found their job through this experience.

Respondents overwhelmingly liked the work placement aspect of their course and in many cases specifically reported that they had found their job through this experience.

### VOCATIONAL CLIENTS AT AMES AUSTRALIA: AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

We spoke with a director of a childcare centre that regularly offers work placement to AMES Australia's Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care clients. We were interested in her feedback about AMES Australia clients and any suggestions she might have for enhancing their employability. The centre has a long-term and ongoing relationship with AMES Australia as well as with TAFEs and other providers. The director appreciated the work placement component in the course as this gives clients an opportunity to learn about the real world and workplace industry culture.

She stated:

*If you do the placement, and if it's done properly, then you know the right ways.*

For the employer, one of the benefits of having work placement is giving her the scope to know the students better.

*One of the benefits is that we get to know the students better. If we have a vacancy, we can employ them. The students already know the ins and outs of the centre and they know the children.*

Another benefit is getting new information and updated knowledge about the industry through work placement clients. This helps the existing educators to keep abreast of with recent developments in the sector.

In the director's opinion, the main challenge in hiring childcare educators from a non-English speaking background is their English proficiency. She mentioned that on some occasions clients did not have enough confidence in English and that this was challenging for both clients and supervisors.

The director explained that when recruiting staff they look for both the required qualification and certain personality traits. She stressed 'adaptability' as an important personal quality. Suggesting that at a childcare centre, educators often need to do a number of tasks that may not be in their job description. During the work placement she looks for people who have a 'can do' attitude and are proactive.

*We had a recent educator. She is more adaptable to all the situations and she's willing to do things, showing her initiative. For example, when our cook was sick, we were all wondering "Who's going to cook?" And she just initiated and said, "Oh, what is going to be cooked? Can I try?" So that's the initiative we need in this industry.*

The director was satisfied with the AMES Australia clients. She noted that it was evident from her observations that they were given good training and education by their teachers and instructors. The clients were observant and showed interest in their jobs. In addition, most clients from AMES Australia were confident about their skills.

*Even though many people come out with a Certificate III or a Diploma, some of them are not able to take the initiative. They can't say "Okay, I have a Diploma, I'll take charge if the lead educator's not there." They are still scared. But AMES students are not like that. They have the skills and they are able to take initiatives. I am really happy with them.*

In 2016 this director employed two former AMES Australia clients following their work placement at the centre.

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Vocational training combined with English language support at AMES Australia is an effective strategy for migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to find work in aged care and childcare industries. Our research found that 67% of clients who were available for work after their course were employed, most often in these industries.**

For those who have recently acquired English, gaining the confidence to transition to the workplace can be challenging. Recruitment practices and workplaces cultures can be very different in Australia and difficult to navigate successfully. Vocational courses delivered by staff who are both trained English language teachers and have the qualification to deliver vocational training provides the basis for effective preparation for work for this client group. Respondents in this research valued the opportunity to undertake vocational training in this context.

In this study, the sooner people completed vocational training after arrival the more likely they were to find employment following their course. Prolonged periods of unemployment can increase social isolation and reduce confidence in job searching. Early intervention through access to a range of education and training opportunities are an essential tool to reduce time out of the workforce as well as potential welfare dependency in the future.

There is a general perception among the respondents that it is easy to find employment in the childcare and aged care industries in Australia. Although most people surveyed felt confident that their new vocational qualifications would help them to get a job, the transition to employment post course was difficult for about one third of respondents. They were not often connected with formal employment programs and had fewer networks to help with their job searching. Respondents commonly spoke about needing further support following completion of their course.

Finding employment can be challenging for many migrants in Australia, especially for those with limited English, a lack of local work experience and little exposure to local workplace culture. The successful settlement of migrants is strongly related to finding secure and meaningful employment. Many respondents in this research had overseas tertiary qualifications and significant work experience. Despite this, their overseas skills and qualifications were not necessarily recognised or highly valued in Australia. They had undertaken vocational training as a means of entering the labour force. However training for a new career at entry level jobs in childcare and aged care may not be the most effective use of their prior skills.

Those working were mainly employed on a casual and part time basis. Most in this group expressed their desire to work more hours. This indicates the underemployment of workers in these two industries. Employment in aged care and childcare is relatively low paid. Yet this is a high growth industry with strong increase in demand for workers predicted into the near future. Attracting and retaining an increasingly skilled and diverse workforce is critical to these industries and the overall economy.

Although many people transitioned into lower pay and lower status jobs compared to their work prior to migration, they were pragmatic about changing their career paths. Through their new qualifications they were contributing to Australia's economy. The industries were also benefitting from migrants' cultures and languages.

### Recommendation 1:

Provide vocational training with embedded English language support for migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to enter the labour force including aged care and childcare education industries in Australia.

### Recommendation 2:

As soon as people from non-English speaking backgrounds have developed a sufficient level of English, pathways into vocational training should be readily accessible for this group.

### Recommendation 3:

Job search support for clients who have not found work soon after completing their vocational course could increase the rate of employment outcomes for this group.

### Recommendation 4:

Connecting new migrants to employment that utilises their skills is advantageous for the Australian economy. This can be achieved through ongoing efforts to reduce discrimination in the labour market as well as developing innovative ways to increase employer recognition of overseas qualifications, other language skills and transferable skills.

### Recommendation 5:

The provision of quality aged care and childcare education is crucial for Australia's economy and society. To support attracting and retaining staff, ongoing efforts to improve how these services are valued and remunerated is essential.

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**AMES Australia**  
ABN 49 056 993 913

**Head Office**

Level 4  
1 Little Collins Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

GPO Box 4381  
Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel 13AMES (2637)  
Email [communications@ames.net.au](mailto:communications@ames.net.au)

[www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)