

Transitions to employment and education for new migrants in Australia

Clients in the Settlement Language
Pathways to Employment and Training
(SLPET) course at AMES Australia

AMES Australia Vision

Full participation for all in
a cohesive and diverse society.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This research examines the employment and further education outcomes and experiences of former AMES Australia clients who completed the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) program in 2014-15.

SLPET is an Australia-wide, government funded program targeted at recently arrived migrants¹ from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) with the aim of assisting them to improve their English proficiency whilst giving them exposure to Australian workplace cultures and practices.

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 Western Sydney. AMES Australia is the largest provider of the SLPET program in Victoria.

Employment and education are two of the four domains in AMES Australia's 'Framework for Social and Economic Participation'.² Having worked with migrants for 60 years, AMES recognises that employment is an important component of successful settlement. AMES has a strong research interest in understanding the work trajectories of our clients. The priority of gaining employment is confirmed by previous feedback from AMES clients that indicated employment is important for most newly arrived people, either in the immediate or medium to longer term (AMES Australia, 2011).

In addition to whether or not clients find work, AMES Australia is interested in the further education and training pathways that clients choose, as these can be important in securing future employment. Knowledge about clients' employment outcomes and further education pathways can assist AMES Australia in delivering services that facilitate successful settlement.

The Research and Policy Unit at AMES Australia conducts research to provide evidence to inform policy makers and practitioners about strategies for the positive settlement of new migrants.

The study we report on here posed the following questions:

- i. What is the clients' employment situation six months after completing SLPET at AMES Australia?
- ii. What further education and training have clients undertaken after completing SLPET?
- iii. What feedback do clients have about the value of the course for preparing them for employment and further study?

This report provides an analysis of the employment outcomes and post-course activities including further education and training of 460 AMES Australia clients who participated in the SLPET program.³ It identifies the program components that have been effective in securing employment or finding a pathway to further training through clients' feedback on the program.

MIGRANTS, SETTLEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Australia is a multicultural society 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 (ABS), 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.

Previous studies on Australian migration indicate that migrants make a substantial contribution to the Australian economy (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 benefits of tapping the education, language and cultural skills and knowledge of migrants.

Australia is a settlement destination for migrants for its perceived good quality of life and well developed professional sectors.

¹ In this report the term 'migrant' is used as an inclusive term referring to people coming to Australia for permanent settlement through any of the migration streams: Skilled, Family and Humanitarian.

² The other domains are settlement and social participation.

³ Concurrent with this research project, similar data about the employment, training and program experiences was collected from former clients who attended Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care vocational training at AMES Australia. Findings and feedback from these clients will be available in a separate report.

A total number of 207,325 people were granted permanent residency in Australia in 2015-16⁴ (Department of Social Services, 2016). The majority came through the Skilled (62%) and Family (28%) streams. A smaller proportion arrived through the Humanitarian stream (8%).

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). 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; Olliff, 2010; Refugee Council of Australia, 2012)

Employment plays an important role in achieving better settlement outcomes for migrants. Previous studies have found that if migrants are given the opportunity to obtain meaningful employment, they are better able to settle successfully and contribute positively to society by participating in work and education as well as supporting education for their children and young people (Abur & Spaiji, 2016).

Employment facilitates access to resources including food, housing and healthcare and plays an important role in becoming part of the new society. However, lack of exposure to the new country's workplace culture, limited proficiency in the local language and a lack of familiarity with overseas qualifications can act as barriers for migrants finding employment (or desired and meaningful employment) (Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 2014; van der Veen, Sardana, & Zhu, 2016). It can be challenging for migrants to have their overseas qualifications assessed as equivalent to similar degrees in Australia. An Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) report *Perspectives on Migrants*, found that nearly two thirds of all recent migrants⁵ (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.

Victoria receives a large number of migrants every year. In the last five years 269,382 migrants arrived and settled in this state. The main streams are: Family (30%), Skilled (25%) and Humanitarian (9%) (Department of Social Services, 2016).⁶ Of those, 82% are from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). The top five non-English speaking countries of birth of migrants to Victoria currently are India, China, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka⁷.

Skilled migrants from non-English speaking countries usually arrive with high level English as it is part of the eligibility criteria for the Skilled stream. However, a large number of people who come as Family and Humanitarian migrants do not have sufficient language proficiency. Acquiring an adequate level of English may take some migrants several years.

A study in a Melbourne metropolitan region found that the unemployment rate for migrants coming from 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, 2010b). Research by the Department of Employment and Training identified recently arrived migrants as a disadvantaged jobseeker group in Victoria (Department of Employment, 2014).

Previous studies have found that migrants' employment prospects depend on both their levels of education and technical skills as well as their ability to communicate as needed in the receiving country language. Proficiency in a country's main language is seen to be fundamental to achieving 'full participation' (Ager & Strang, 2008).

⁴ Settlement Reporting Facility: Date range 2015-16.

⁵ Arrived between 2001 and November 2010.

⁶ Arrival dates: 1/10/2011-1/10/2016. Includes Unknown (97,408) and Other (19).

⁷ Arrival dates: 1/10/2011-1/10/2016. Excluding North America, Europe, USSR, Oceania and Antarctica, total arrivals from other regions: 221,123.

1 INTRODUCTION

Language skills are essential for advancement in most industries. Recognising the importance of language and employment for migrants, McHugh and Challinor (2011) identify the following features as being among the most effective for migrants to find employment in receiving countries:

- providing workplace contextualised language instruction
- simultaneously providing language instruction with formal skills training
- improving partnerships amongst employers, unions and teachers
- encouraging workplace-based instruction
- taking into account the needs of non-traditional clients (such as part-time clients or parents)

Many migrant-receiving countries fund language learning programs as part of national immigration integration programs. One benefit of such programs is that they can combine work-focussed language training with other integration measures such as mentoring, job-search assistance and cultural orientation (McHugh & Challinor, 2011). The Australian Government provides support to its permanent residents to facilitate their settlement process through a number of programs. The Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) is one such program, developed specifically to assist NESB migrants to improve their English language and learn Australian workplace skills and culture through classroom participation and work placement experience.

THE SLPET PROGRAM AT AMES AUSTRALIA

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) was established in 1948 and legislated under the Immigration (Education) Act 1971. Currently funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, the program provides 510 hours of English language tuition to eligible migrants to help them learn foundation English language and settlement skills.

The AMEP is voluntary. Migrants are eligible to receive tuition for five years from the date of their visa commencement date or arrival in Australia. The program is available to migrants and humanitarian entrants over the age of 18, and, on a case-by-case basis, to those aged 15 to 17 who are not participating in mainstream schooling (Immigration (Education) Act 1971). Eligibility is based on language proficiency. It is most commonly accessed by permanent residents and humanitarian entrants but is also available to holders of certain temporary visa sub-classes.

The SLPET program commenced in 2011. It is the successor of the Department of Immigration and

Border Protection⁸ (DIBP)'s earlier pilot programs Employment Pathways Program (EPP) and Traineeships in English and Work Readiness Program (TEWR) in 2008-09. AMEP clients' feedback on these earlier programs strongly reinforced that the provision of work experience and vocational training combined with English language learning was a model that clients found valuable.⁹ Teachers and trainers in those pilot programs reported that all participants returned from work experience with increased confidence, enthusiasm and determination.

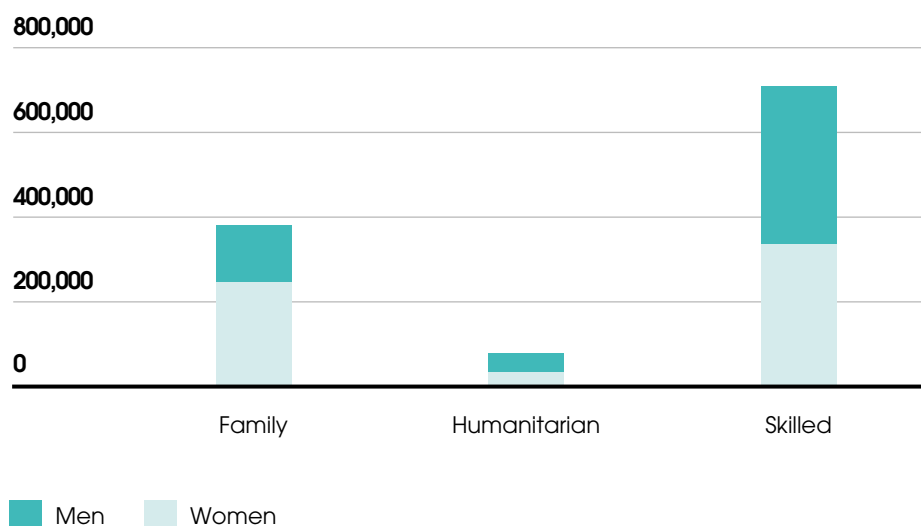
The main visa categories with large numbers of people with AMEP eligibility are Family (about 30% of permanent migration to Australia) and Humanitarian (less than 7% of permanent migration). Primary applicants on Skilled visas have higher English as a prerequisite for this visa and are generally not eligible, although in limited circumstances secondary skilled applicants can be eligible. Almost twice as many women than men migrate to Australia as Family migrants, most frequently on spouse visas. Chart 1 shows permanent migrants in Australia in the last five years under various visa categories and the proportion of male and female migrants.

The AMEP clients at AMES Australia are primarily Family, Humanitarian and Skilled migrants and, reflecting gendered migration pathways in Australia, more frequently women. In 2011-12, 9% of AMEP clients undertook the SLPET program. SLPET take up is highest in the Family visa stream.

⁸ Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) at that time.

⁹ The AMES Consortium delivered 68 Employment Pathways Program (EPP) and Traineeships in English and Work Readiness Program (TEWR) pilot programs to 1,050 AMEP clients across metropolitan Melbourne and in regional and rural centres from October 2008 to December 2009.

CHART 1: PERMANENT MIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA 2010 - 2015



Data sourced from Settlement Reporting Facility (Department of Social Services, 2015)

The SLPET program provides face-to-face English language tuition with workplace visits, simulated workplace environments and facilitated short-term work experience placements. SLPET aims to develop clients' workplace communication skills and build their knowledge about the types of jobs available in particular industry areas and the skills needed to work in those areas.

The SLPET program provides 200 contact hours including a minimum of 120 hours English language tuition. This is in addition to the clients' 510 AMEP hours entitlement. It includes a work placement component of 40 to 80 hours. SLPET performs an important role contributing to the employment objectives of the AMEP. The sub-program is highly valued by clients and has a high estimated completion rate based on clients' SLPET hours completed (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015).

Clients wishing to enrol in SLPET must meet the following criteria:

- have completed 75% or more of their AMEP tuition hours or be close to attaining functional¹⁰ English
- have largely resolved their settlement issues
- have the necessary communication skills to participate in the workplace
- have a genuine desire to be employed and be able to accept a job at the end of the course
- have the necessary motivation and commitment required for the course

AMES Australia has been delivering SLPET since its commencement in 2011. In 2013, the SLPET program expanded to enable clients with lower levels of English to participate.¹¹ These courses were offered in 2014 and semester 1, 2015. AMES Australia offers the SLPET program at various Melbourne metropolitan centres: Box Hill, Dandenong, Flagstaff, Footscray, Noble Park, Oakleigh, Springvale, St Albans and Werribee. AMES also offers the SLPET program in regional Victoria in collaboration with local partner organisations and TAFEs.

¹⁰ Functional English is defined in the Australian Government legislative instrument 'Procedures or Standards for Functional English' (associated with the Act) as 'basic social proficiency in English assessed at International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) 2 across all four macro skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)'. Migrant or humanitarian entrants who do not have an ISLPR score of 2 or more for each skill group are eligible for the AMEP.

¹¹ The AMEP General English has four levels of Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) courses. Pre-CSWE and CSWE level 1 (English for Living in Australia) are for clients with little or no English. The next level is CSWE 2 (English for Living and Working in Australia). The last and highest level is CSWE 3 (English for Living, Working and Studying in Australia).

1 INTRODUCTION

AMES Australia delivers a range of general and industry-specific courses within the SLPET program based on the local labour market, client needs and capacity. The current SLPET model is flexible with courses able to be adapted to the needs of clients and employers. For example, some employers may prefer work placements of two days a week over 10 weeks, rather than two week blocks. Some SLPET courses require a different approach to work orientation such as observation and site visits rather than work experience per se. The SLPET program is not an accredited course providing clients with technical skills or an industry specific certificate. Rather it prepares clients for non-technical entry level jobs in various industries such as retail, customer service and hospitality. AMES Australia considers local job markets when designing courses at various AMES Australia centres in Melbourne. Some of the regular SLPET courses offered at AMES Australia are:

- i. Employment Readiness: designed primarily to increase client skills for various non-technical entry level jobs to the workforce
- ii. Skills for Work: designed to increase client skills for entry into the healthcare and hospitality industries
- iii. Pathway to Retail: provides clients with the basic skills for work in the retail sector
- iv. Office Administration/Customer Service: designed to increase client skills in office administration and customer service

Since SLPET's inception in 2011, over 200 employers in community services (aged care, children's services, and disability services), education, logistics, office administration, manufacturing, hospitality, customer service and construction have provided work experience placements to SLPET clients at AMES Australia. Employers have included large corporations and small businesses within the private and public sectors. In 2016, AMES Australia established partnerships with a number of new industries and organisations to facilitate work placement for SLPET clients. These included agriculture, public transport, dairy, finance, steel manufacturing, trades and art and culture sectors. Many employers have offered employment to clients following their work placement. Some employers have also offered professional development for SLPET teachers and counsellors, enabling AMES Australia to strengthen its connections with a range of industries and build a greater understanding of the needs of employers and current recruitment processes (AMES Australia, 2016).

SLPET RECRUITMENT, STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY

The SLPET program at AMES Australia is delivered in an integrated way by a coordinated team including English language teachers, industry trainers and education counsellors with expertise in employment, bilingual support personnel and administration staff. The program is also supported by local volunteers.

AMEP staff recruit participants for SLPET courses among the AMEP clients at AMES Australia. Staff conduct information sessions at various AMES Australia centres for all planned SLPET courses, where they explain and promote the benefits of each course. Whilst most recruitment comes from existing AMEP clients, course flyers are also distributed to local libraries, community centres and shopping centres.

AMEP clients are selected for the SLPET program based on their eligibility, interest and suitability through an initial interview.

In addition to confirming that individual clients meet the English language skills requirements for the course, clients are asked to commit to completing the course and pursuing training or employment beyond the life of the program. On commencement of SLPET, clients meet individually with the SLPET counsellors to identify an appropriate work experience placement based on their personal needs and aspirations.

The SLPET program runs for 200 hours over 10 weeks, 4 to 5 days per week with a two week work placement towards the end of the program. Regular courses under the SLPET program integrate the delivery of English as a Second Language (ESL) and training based on Vocational Education and Training (VET) units, including a relevant Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) unit of competency. The English language classes underpin and complement the vocational training content and use workplace materials and contexts.

The employment counselling staff source suitable work placements with both national and local companies. Clients undertake a work placement of up to 40 hours with their employer, usually in the second and third last weeks of the course. The work placement is followed by the final week of the course. During this week students update their resumes and consolidate their learnings from their work placement. Clients also update their job search documents and online profiles to include relevant details of their placement. They are supported to refine the job search strategies they have learnt over the duration of the course. If resources are available, some AMES Australia centres organise mock interviews for the clients.

At the completion of the course, counsellors conduct an exit interview with each client. During this interview, they confirm their short and long term employment goals. They also support them to identify any skills gaps they may have. These may have only become evident to the client while he or she was undertaking their work experience placement. Counsellors then work with clients to develop an action plan which charts a path for the client to develop the skills they need to achieve their goals. Action plans include determination of:

- the most effective focus for any remaining AMEP hours
- further training options
- relevant volunteer work
- overseas qualification assessment and recognition (through the Overseas Qualifications Unit)
- registration with relevant industry or professional associations

Depending on the availability of volunteers, eligible clients may be offered a suitable volunteer tutor at the completion of their SLPET course. Volunteer tutors can help clients further develop their English language skills specific to their preferred field and receive assistance in their job search activities such as writing cover letters and practising interviews.

Six weeks following completion of the course, counsellors contact clients individually to track whether they are working or engaged in further study. They may provide further advice and encouragement to any client who is not participating in either activity.

Personal traits are critical for gaining employment (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010a). Some of the most desired personal traits or 'soft skills' employers seek in an employee are communication skills, motivation, enthusiasm and confidence. AMES Australia recognises and values the importance of such personal qualities in securing employment and supports its SLPET clients to enhance and present those skills to potential employers. In addition to teaching and organising work placement for clients, SLPET teachers and counsellors at AMES Australia take a proactive role in building client confidence by encouraging and motivating people regularly. They provide this support within classroom activities but also, significantly, outside these formalised hours.

CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

The report is divided into six sections: research design, respondent demographics, employment outcomes, further education and training outcomes, respondent feedback on SLPET and conclusion. The research design section discusses the methodology used in this study. The respondent demographics section analyses the study sample and characteristics of respondents surveyed for this research. The sections on employment and further education and training outcomes examine and discuss the work and study situations of respondents. The section on program feedback analyses the components of the SLPET program, which respondents found effective in finding employment or choosing further education pathways. This section also provides an insight into employer perspectives on SLPET based on interviews with three employers who regularly offer work placements to SLPET students from AMES Australia. The conclusion discusses overall findings from the study and provides further recommendations for the SLPET program.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This section describes the methodology of the *Transitions to Employment and Education* project.

The research was designed as a mixed methods study with both quantitative and qualitative data collected and analysed.

The objectives of the study were to find out:

- i. What is the clients' employment situation six months after completing SLPET at AMES Australia?
- ii. What further education and training have clients undertaken after completing SLPET?
- iii. What feedback do clients have about the value of the course for preparing them for employment and further study?

This research was approved under *AMES Australia's Research Ethics Policy* in May 2015.¹² Permission was obtained from the Department of Education and Training to contact AMEP students for the purpose of the study.

The core component of this study was telephone interviews with 460 former SLPET students. These interviews were based on a structured questionnaire that captured both quantitative data and respondent views on the value of their course at AMES Australia.

In addition to data from these interviews further qualitative data was collected through focus groups and interviews with SLPET students, teachers and employers.

SELECTING AND CONTACTING RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

Our aim was to contact all SLPET students enrolled within a 12 month period from term 4, 2014 up to and including term 3, 2015. The study was designed to contact students six months after they had completed their course at AMES Australia. This was considered a reasonable timeframe in terms of students having an opportunity to look for work and reflect on the value of the SLPET course to their job search.

We obtained AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS) records for all students enrolled in SLPET during this period.¹³ Former students 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

- appeared more than once in the ARMS database for the same study period
- had low level English and spoke a first language we were unable to offer through our Research Assistants
- participated in one of the two pilot phases we conducted before embarking on the actual study

With these exclusions, 630 former SLPET students were in scope for the study.

We chose telephone interviewing as our preferred method for data collection. As we wished 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 wished to interview could find participating in an interview on the phone difficult without first language support. This was particularly likely for those students who had enrolled in SLPET courses catering specifically to people with lower level English (CSWE 2 or lower). We therefore recruited multilingual Research Assistants to assist in conducting the interviews.

¹² The AMES Australia Research Ethics Policy is based on Australia's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007).

¹³ The AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS) database holds records of all students enrolled in the AMEP (and therefore SLPET) and is owned by the Department of Education and Training.

DATA COLLECTED

Former students 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 given the name, age, first language and country of background for each SLPET student they were allocated to interview. They were also provided with details of the course name, AMES Australia centre and dates for the SLPET course in which the person had enrolled.

The interview questionnaire covered the following areas:

- the person's formal education and work history before coming to Australia
- their work situation in Australia prior to SLPET and at the time of the interview
- methods used for finding work
- any further study the person had completed or was doing following SLPET
- feedback on the SLPET 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 call to enter this data.

Respondents 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 or English. Respondents were free to proceed in their first language, English or use both. We report on the outcomes of this approach in the next section. Students who were enrolled in a CSWE 3 course and for whom we could not offer first language support were invited to participate in English.

We collected data from four cohorts, six months after the courses in each term 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 the telephone interviews, we met with a number of the respondents in small focus groups to discuss their views and experiences in more detail. These focus groups gave a deeper understanding of the survey data.

We also met with a group of teachers and counsellors involved in the SLPET program. We were interested in their views on the strengths and limitations of the program and any suggestions they might have for how AMES Australia could improve the employment outcomes for SLPET students. Finally, we spoke with employers who have worked in partnership with AMES Australia for a number of years by offering work placements to SLPET students. We sought their views on the students and their readiness for the Australian workforce.

These activities generated very useful qualitative information for the research and were particularly helpful in contextualising the survey responses and developing recommendations from this research.

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

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

During the 12 months of data collection we employed 18 Research Assistants. Between them, this group spoke over 20 languages.¹⁴ We recruited people both from within AMES Australia and externally. Most of the Research Assistants were not accredited interpreters. However, they had the necessary skills to interview people in specific languages and record their responses accurately in English.

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

- the objectives of the research
- the role of the Research Assistant
- ethical approaches to seeking consent
- 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
- sources of 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, often relating to research design. Themes included, for example, principles for allocating respondents by language and practices for managing interviews conducted in both English and another language.

In addition to gaining feedback on the methodology of this research, the meetings with Research Assistants allowed us to seek their perspectives on specific topics relevant to the research objectives.

These included the relationship between employment and settlement for new migrants and strategies people had used to find a job. Research Assistants generously shared their views and conveyed much anecdotal feedback in relation to these topics.

There was great value in engaging with the Research Assistants as research informants in their own right. As the people making contact with former students, directly hearing their views and experiences and, in many cases, having a shared cultural background with respondents, the Research Assistants had specific insights and perspectives which were very helpful for the research. Their reflections provided a useful context for our interpretation of the data.¹⁵

The Research Assistants provided positive feedback on these regular 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.

¹⁴ 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).

¹⁵ We have previously discussed research design issues relating to research with bilingual research assistants in *The First Language Advantage: working with bilingual Research Assistants* (AMES, 2014).

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 wage 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.

We were aware that 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 information about other programs for which they might be eligible.

Some linguistic communities in Melbourne are smaller in number than others. 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 student group in our cohort. This was a resource issue and difficult to avoid given the very high number of languages spoken by the SLPET students in scope for the study (58 languages). Students who spoke a language we did not offer and had lower levels of English were excluded from the research as we felt the data collected from an interview in English would not be reliable; 25 former students were excluded for this reason. Students who spoke languages that we could not provide through our Research Assistant group were therefore underrepresented in the data.

Our findings may not be generalizable. For example, there are fewer SLPET participants at the Springvale or Oakleigh sites, and there are fewer people in lower level CSWE classes. It is possible that people who were working, particularly full time, were less likely to be available due to limited time and would therefore decline an interview.

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 (e.g. "When did you arrive in Australia?"), others had a greater potential for varied interpretation (e.g. "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 data collection process. Variability in practice is inevitable in any study employing multiple research assistants. However, when working in multiple languages there is a 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.

3 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

This section provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents interviewed in the *Transitions to Employment and Education* study.

It covers visa type, gender, age and education as well as duration of time in Australia at the beginning the SLPET course. This second section describes how representative our sample was relative to the characteristics of the

whole SLPET program and discusses the frequency with which interviews were completed in first language.

Visa on arrival in Australia

The main groups with eligibility for the AMEP and SLPET are Family and Humanitarian stream migrants and these were the main migration pathways for SLPET respondents as shown in chart 2 below.

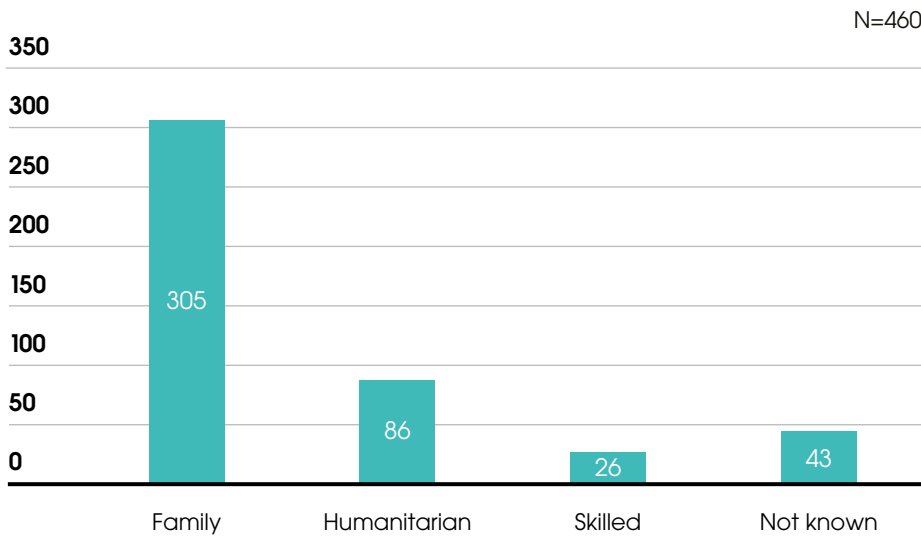
The largest group of respondents arrived in Australia on Family visas, most often on spouse visas.¹⁶ The countries of origin among Family stream migrants among our respondents were diverse, with the largest numbers coming from Vietnam, China, India and Afghanistan.

Humanitarian migration is a much smaller proportion of permanent migration into Australia and therefore there are fewer people from this stream in the AMEP and SLPET. The main countries of origin for Humanitarian entrants in this study were Myanmar, Afghanistan and Iraq.

As most Skilled visa holders require adequate English proficiency, there is little need for AMEP for the majority in this group. However, occasionally people who have arrived through the Skilled migration stream, especially family members of the primary applicant, have limited English and can enrol in the AMEP and SLPET.

Some respondents reported that they initially arrived as a student or a tourist, visas that are not associated with AMEP eligibility. They subsequently transitioned to an AMEP eligible visa prior to enrolment. Others did not specify a visa stream on arrival.

CHART 2: RESPONDENT VISA STREAM



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%.

¹⁶ 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).

Age group

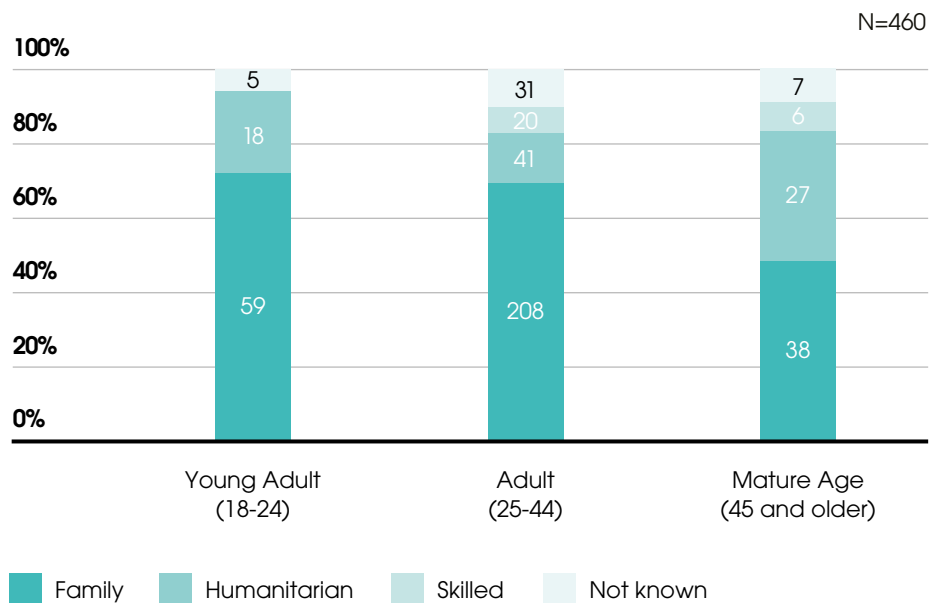
The majority of respondents surveyed for this study (65%), were aged between 25 and 44. Permanent migrants to Australia are most often people who are of working age (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2016). This is partly why the AMEP has a strong emphasis on English for employment including additional resources and programs such as SLPET.

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 younger people came on a Skilled visa. A higher proportion of young adults and mature aged people arrived through the Humanitarian program compared to the adults in our sample.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENT AGE GROUPS

	Count	Percent
Young Adult (18 - 24)	82	18%
Adult (25-44)	300	65%
Mature Age (45 and older)	78	17%
Total	460	100%

CHART 3: AGE GROUP AND VISA STREAM



3 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

The majority (76%) of respondents in our sample were women. This may be related to the fact that a high proportion of the SLPET client population is people on family visas and in Australia more spouse visas are granted to women (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2015).

For the men in our sample, equal numbers arrived through the Family and Humanitarian streams. However, proportionally more men than women in our sample arrived in the Humanitarian stream. See chart 4 opposite.

Education background

The majority (64%) of respondents had completed a post-school level qualification prior to enrolling in SLPET. See table 3.

Those with higher levels of education most frequently arrived in the Family and Skilled streams. Those with less education in our sample most often arrived in Australia in the Humanitarian visa stream. This reflects a lower level access to education in countries that have recently experienced humanitarian crisis. See chart 5 on page opposite.

TABLE 2: GENDER

	Count	Percent
Women	350	76%
Men	110	24%
Total	460	100%

CHART 4: GENDER AND VISA STREAM

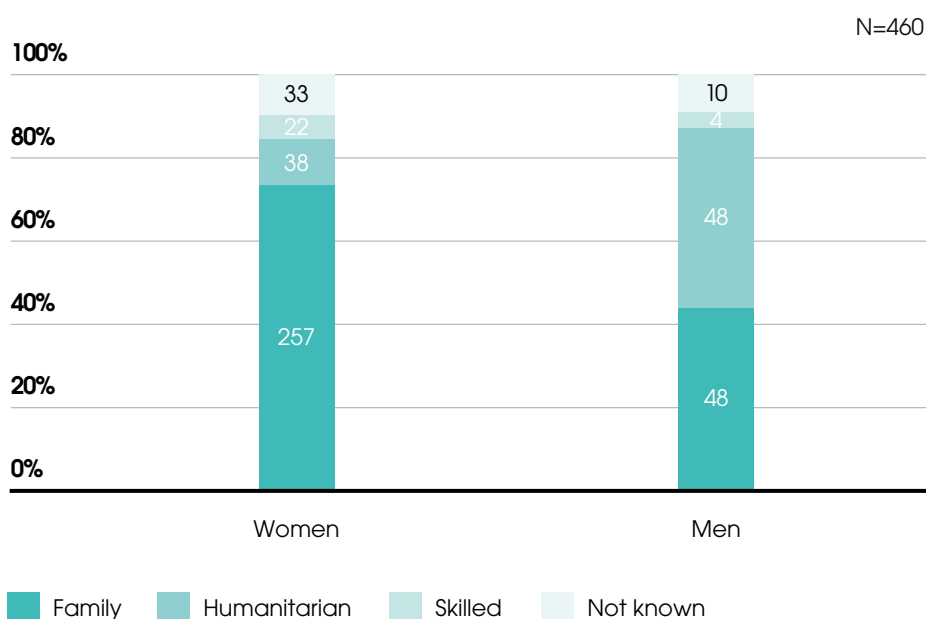


TABLE 3: RESPONDENT HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

	Count	Percent
None	13	3%
Primary	33	7%
Secondary	118	26%
Trade or Technical	92	20%
Bachelor	165	36%
Postgraduate	37	8%
No response	2	0%
Total	460	100%

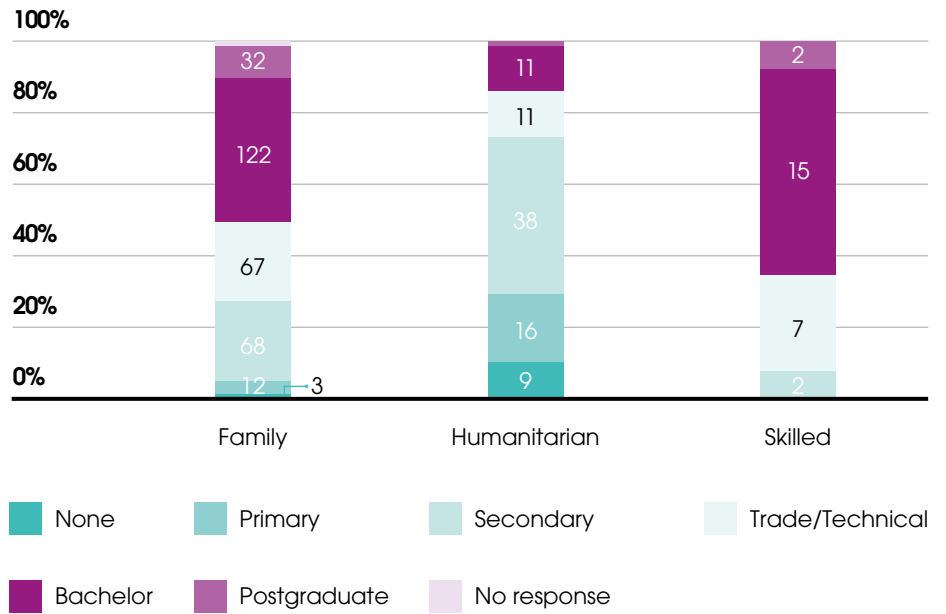
Gender and education

The women in our sample had higher levels of education compared to the men. Less than half the men in our sample had a post-secondary education compared to more than 70 % of the women. See chart 6 below.

The difference in education among the men and women in our sample and in SLPET more broadly may be related to a higher loss of occupational status for migrant women compared to men (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Men with higher qualifications are more likely to have these recognised, are more likely to find work and are more likely to find work in their preferred field. Well educated men from non-English speaking backgrounds may therefore have less need for a program such as SLPET (O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016).

CHART 5: VISA AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

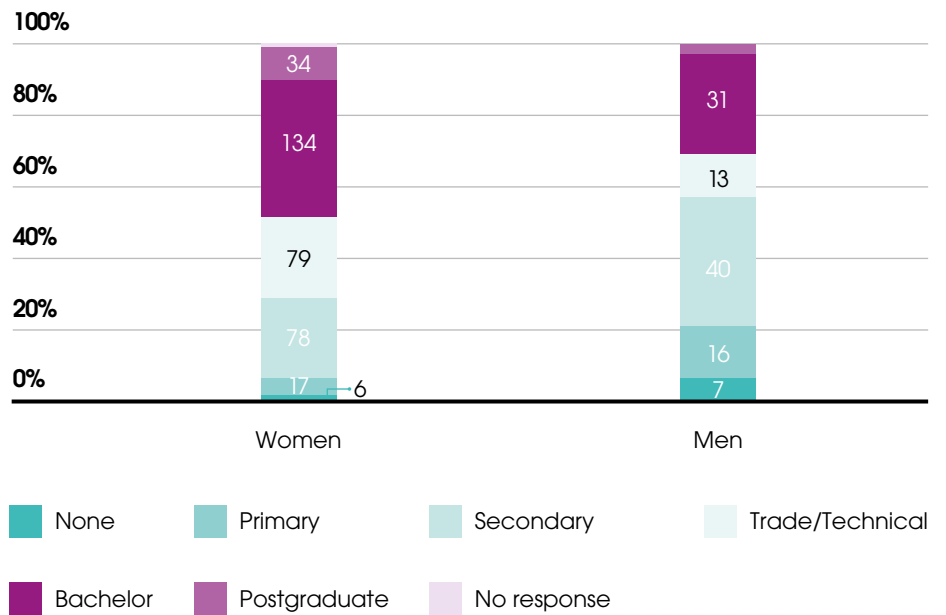
N=417*



* Excluding Visa unknown

CHART 6: GENDER AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

N=460



3 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

English language level

The majority of participants were in Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) level 3 classes. This is the highest level of English taught within the AMEP, designed as it is to increase people’s level of English to a functional level. Most SLPET classes target people who have a level of English suitable for job seeking and who are nearing the end of their AMEP entitlement. During the period of this research however, a small number of SLPET classes were run specifically for students with lower levels of English at the CSWE 1 or 2 level. These classes acknowledge the fact that new migrants at all language levels can face pressure to start working in Australia and many AMEP clients complete their entitlement before reaching CSWE 3 level English.

TABLE 4: ENGLISH LEVEL OF SLPET CLASS

	Count	Percent
CSWE 1 or 2	113	25%
CSWE 3	347	75%
Total	460	100%

Length of time in Australia

The majority of respondents (65%) had been in Australia for less than two years when they enrolled in SLPET. While learning English is likely to be a priority soon after arrival in Australia, the SLPET program is usually accessed towards the end of people’s AMEP

hours as length of time in Australia increases, confidence in English improves and finding work becomes more of a priority. Nonetheless there is considerable variation in the timing of enrolment in the AMEP and SLPET in relation to settlement.

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

	Count	Percent
Less than 1 year	188	41%
1 to less than 2 years	111	24%
2 to less than 5 years	102	22%
5 years and longer	59	13%
Total	460	100%

AMES Australia Centre

The respondents in this research represent enrolment in SLEPT across the AMES Australia centres in Melbourne. Different local areas cater to different client groups both in terms of clients

residing in particular suburbs and employment opportunities based on local industries. The highest proportion of respondents were from Dandenong, St Albans and Footscray.

TABLE 6: AMES AUSTRALIA CENTRE

	Count	Percent
Dandenong	84	18%
St Albans	74	16%
Footscray	66	14%
Werribee	63	14%
Flagstaff	62	13%
Noble Park	47	10%
Box Hill	37	8%
Springvale	15	3%
Oakleigh	12	3%
Total	460	100%

SURVEY REPRESENTATIVENESS

We surveyed 460 out of 630 (73%) clients who enrolled in a SLPET course at AMES Australia between term 4, 2014 and term 3, 2015. There were no major differences based on AMES Australia centre, class level, gender or age between those who did and did not participate in our survey.

The most common reason for the 170 people (27%) who did not complete a survey was that the interviewer was not able to make contact with them (11%) or that the phone number provided was disconnected (7%). Six percent of the people in scope did not consent to participate and three percent were not available during the survey period.

RESPONDENT USE OF FIRST LANGUAGE

Among the SLPET client group, there were 58 languages spoken. The top 12 languages and the countries of birth as recorded in the ARMS database for the SLPET client population for this period are shown opposite.

TABLE 7: SURVEY OUTCOME

	Count	Percent
Surveyed	460	73%
No contact made	70	11%
Disconnected/wrong number	42	7%
No consent	37	6%
Not available	19	3%
Survey not recorded	2	0%
Total SLPET population	630	100%

TABLE 8: TOP 12 LANGUAGES AND COUNTRIES OF BIRTH

Language	Country of birth	No. of speakers
Mandarin	China	78
	Taiwan	7
	Malaysia	1
	Timor-Leste	1
Vietnamese	Vietnam	78
	Unspecified nationality	1
Dari	Afghanistan	38
	Pakistan	2
	Iran	3
	Iraq	13
Arabic	Egypt	11
	Sudan	6
	Syrian Arab Republic	4
	Lebanon	3
	Jordan	2
	Tunisia	2
	Morocco	1
	India	25
Hindi	Bangladesh	1
	United Arab Emirates	1
Farsi/Persian	Iran	17
	Afghanistan	5
Amharic	Ethiopia	20
Karen	Myanmar	15
	Thailand	3
Thai	Thailand	18
Punjabi	India	18
Urdu	Pakistan	16
	India	1
Tigrinya	Eritrea	9
	Ethiopia	5

3 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

We allocated SLPET clients to Research Assistants according to language, taking into account country of birth and potential additional languages that may be spoken. 74% of clients within the SLPET population were allocated to a Research Assistant who spoke their language.

Slightly more of those who were allocated a first language Research Assistant (76%) were interviewed compared to those who were not (64%). Three quarters of SLPET respondents interviewed by a Research Assistant who spoke their language used only their first language and eight percent a combination of their first language and English, while 17% were interviewed in English only. People who were allocated a first language Research Assistant and chose to be interviewed in English only most often spoke Hindi or other Indian languages.

TABLE 9: ALLOCATION OF FIRST LANGUAGE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

	Count	Percent
First language Research Assistant	468	74%
No first language Research Assistant	162	26%
Total	630	100%

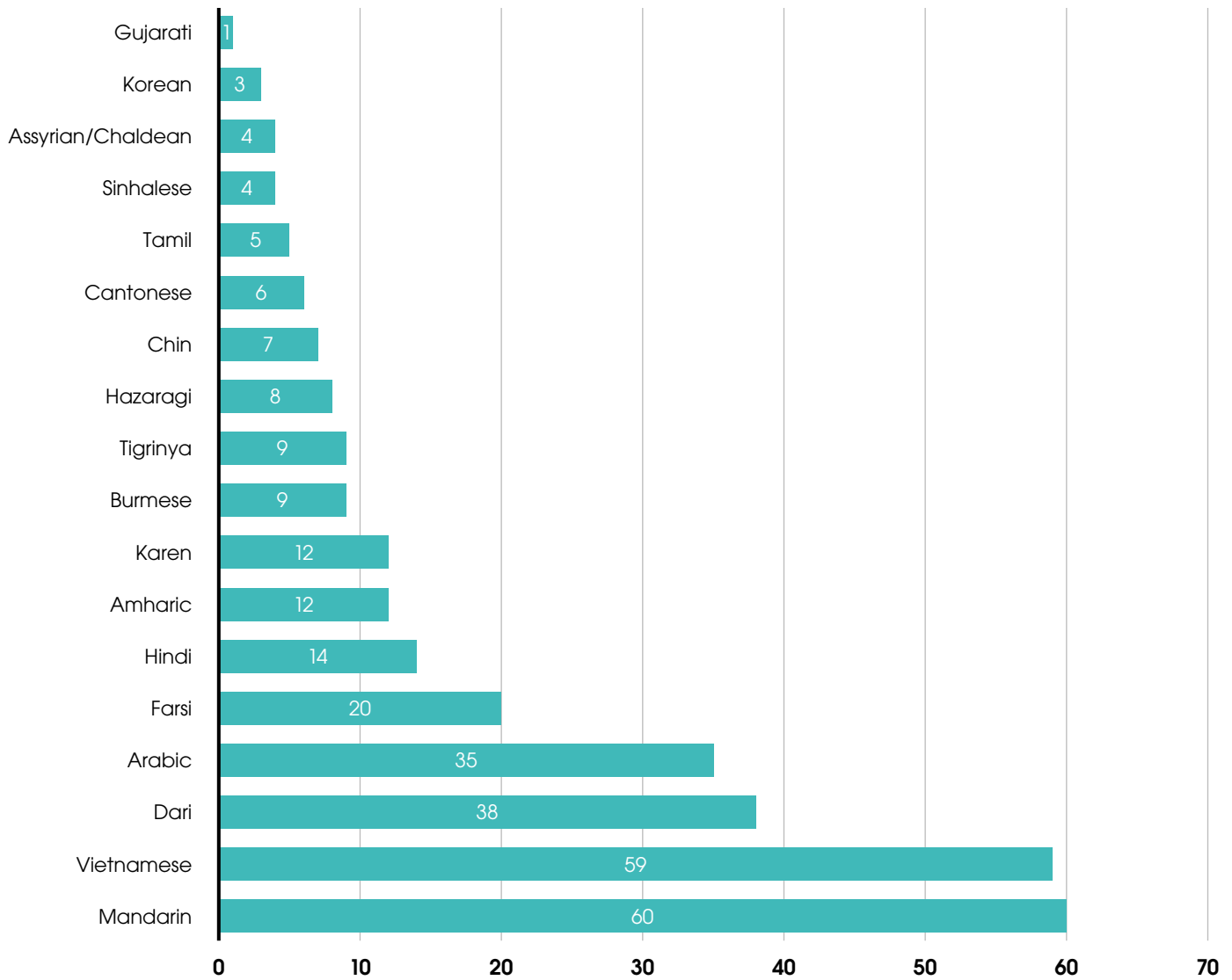
TABLE 10: USE OF FIRST LANGUAGE AT INTERVIEW

	Count	Percent
First language only	266	75%
First language plus English	29	8%
English only	61	17%
Total	356	100%

The following chart 7 shows the number of interviews that occurred in languages other than English in this survey.

CHART 7: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED USING A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH*

N=295



*More than one response was allowed.

The respondents to our survey were similar to the whole population of SLPET clients during the one-year period of this study. The majority of respondents participated using their first language and this appeared to

boost the participation rate. There are significant differences between respondents, especially between men and women, and between people arriving through different migration streams.

4 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Employment plays a key role in achieving better settlement outcomes for migrants. One objective of this study was to find out how many former SLPET clients had found employment and in what fields.

This section describes the employment outcomes and experiences of respondents six months after completing their SLPET program.

Although three quarters (75%) of the 460 respondents were employed before migrating to Australia, slightly less than one quarter (24%) were engaged in employment at the point of enrolment in the SLPET program. After completion of the program, slightly more than one third (35%) of the respondents found employment. The employment rate was more than half (56%) when we accounted for their availability for work.

The employment outcomes discussed in this section include respondents' availability for work, employment and unemployment situations and employment arrangements. These outcomes are further explored against age, visa category, education background, English language proficiency, length of time in Australia and gender.

AVAILABILITY FOR WORK

In this study, respondents were considered to be available for work if they either found employment, were actively looking or were planning to look for work within a year of completing their course. Table 11 summarises respondents' availability for work six months after completing their SLPET course. Of the 460 respondents, 61% were available for work. The remaining group were unavailable because of further study (27%), family responsibilities or other personal reasons such as health issues (12%).

TABLE 11: AVAILABILITY TO WORK

	Total
Available for work	282 (61%)
Not available for work, further study	124 (27%)
Not available for work, other reasons	54 (12%)
Total	460 (100%)

In the following sections, we report on respondents' availability for work six months after course completion in relation to their education, English language proficiency and arrival visa.

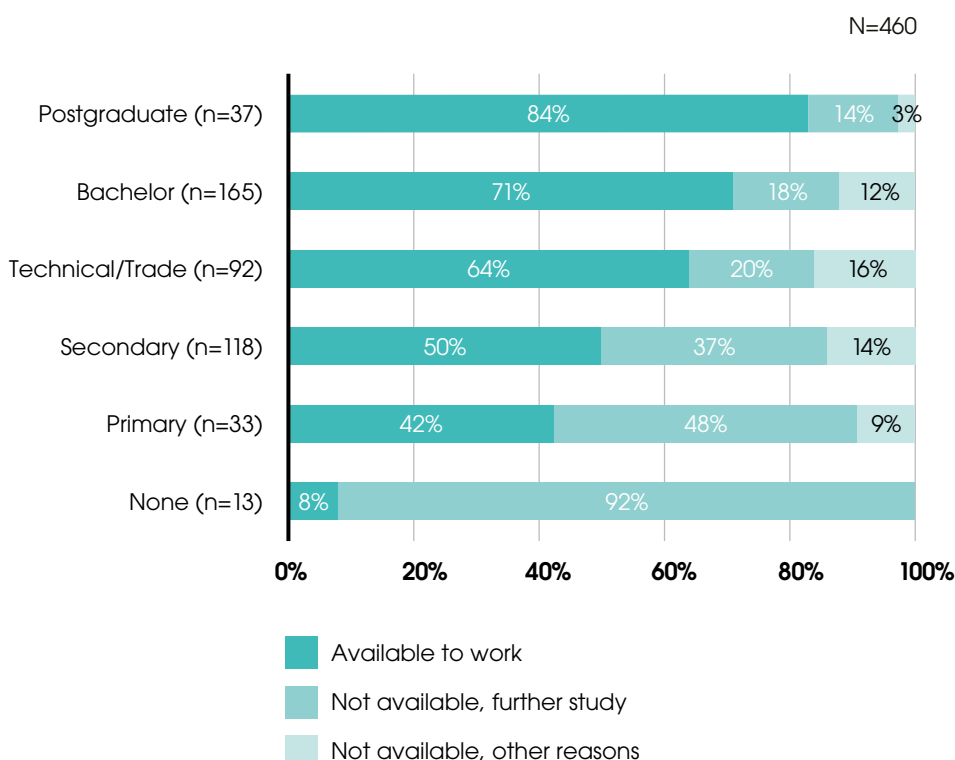
Education and availability to work

The education backgrounds of SLPET respondents before joining the program varied, ranging from no prior schooling to university post-graduate qualifications. Formal education is an important pathway to employment (Department of Education,

Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008) and individuals with higher educational qualifications are more likely to be available for work compared to those with lower or no formal education.

Chart 8 shows that a higher proportion of respondents with post-secondary qualifications (Technical Certificate or Diploma, Bachelor degree and university post-graduate) were available for work compared to those with secondary schooling or lower as their highest level of education.

CHART 8: EDUCATIONAL AND AVAILABILITY FOR WORK



Most SLPET respondents with no prior schooling were not available for work because they were engaged in further study in preparation for employment, suggesting that education prior to migration can influence how soon a person can enter the labour force in Australia.

English language proficiency and availability for work

The importance of adequate English language proficiency for greater employment opportunities in Australia cannot be overstated (Leith, 2012). As shown in Chart 9, a greater proportion of SLPET respondents with higher levels of English language proficiency (Certificate in Spoken and Written English level 3, 69% of this group) were available for work compared to people with lower levels (CSWE 2 or lower, 40% of this group).

These findings indicate that migrants with better English language proficiency are more likely to be available for work than people with lower level English. Furthermore, SLPET respondents with better English language competency were found to be more confident in their communication capabilities and hence more ready and available for work.

Visa of arrival category and availability for work

SLPET respondents arrived in Australia on various types of permanent and temporary visas. As shown in Chart 10, compared to other visa categories, a greater proportion of respondents on Family (67%) and Skilled (65%) visas were available for work compared to those on Humanitarian visas (44%).

CHART 9: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND AVAILABILITY FOR WORK

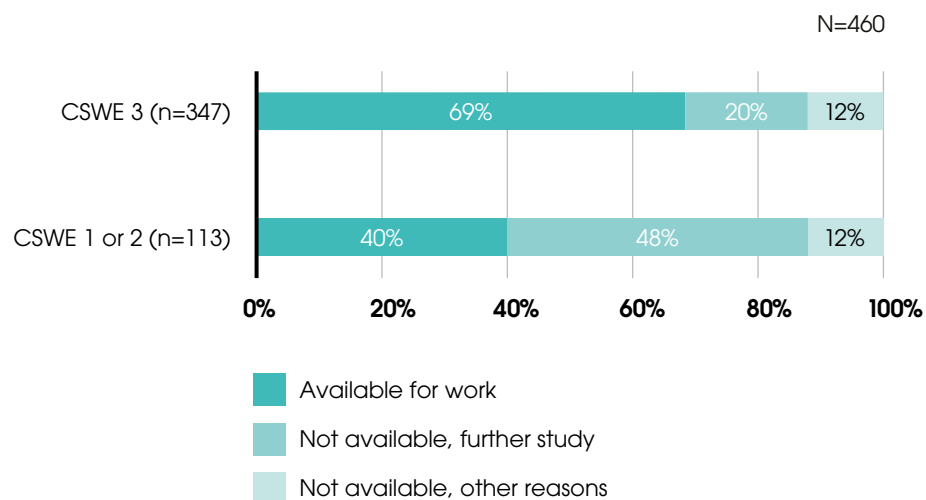
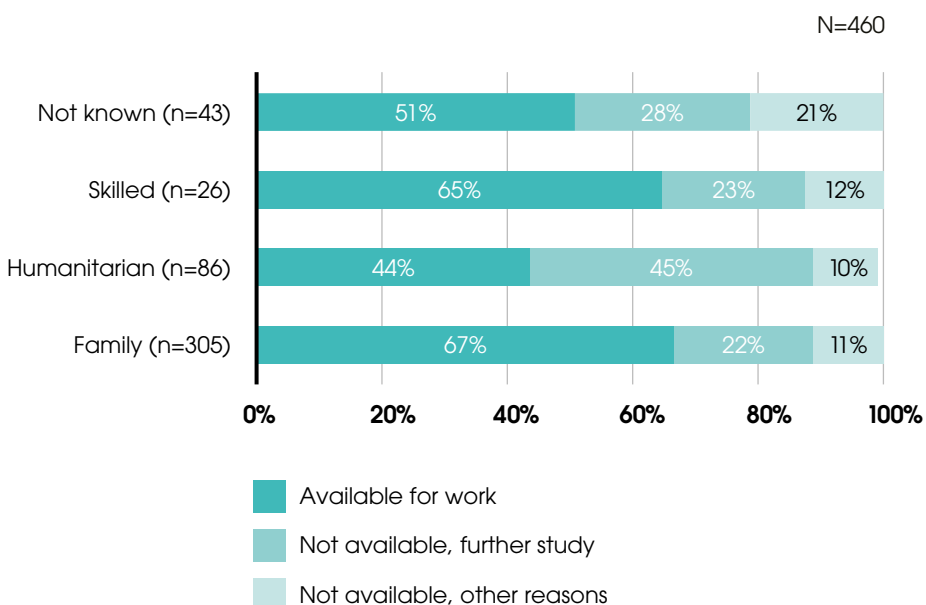


CHART 10: ARRIVAL VISA CATEGORY AND AVAILABILITY FOR WORK



4 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Even though 65% of Skilled migrants were available for work, they only represented 6% of the total respondents. This was because most Skilled visa applicants require English proficiency in order to be eligible for this visa category. Slightly over two-thirds (67%) of respondents on Family visas were available for work six months after completing their course. Previous AMES Australia research (Thomson, O’Dwyer, & Chan, 2016) reported that women migrants arriving on Skilled and Family visas were often ‘fully apprised’ by family and friends in Australia about the challenges of accessing the job market before arrival and that it would take some time to find work in Australia.

People arriving through the Humanitarian program however may have settlement challenges that are different from those for people who enter on Family or Skilled visas. Issues relating to health and wellbeing can be of a very high priority and require resolution before people can be available for work.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

One of the key objectives of this study was to assess the proportion of former SLPET students who were in employment six months following their course. As shown in Table 12, of the 282 respondents available for work, 56% had found employment.

TABLE 12: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Employment and unemployment	Total
Employed	159 (56%)
Unemployed, looking for work	123 (44%)
Total	282 (100%)

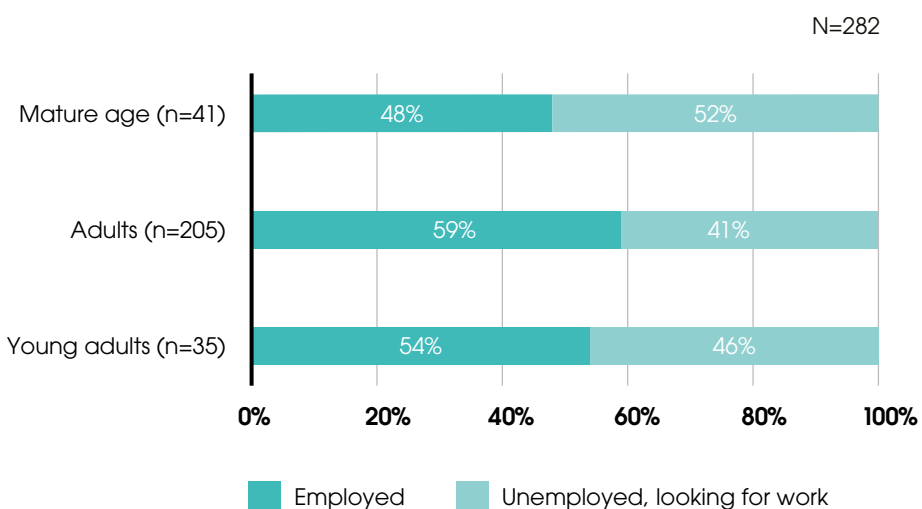
In the following section, we report on respondents’ employment and unemployment situations in relation to their age, gender and length of time in Australia.

Age and employment

For SLPET respondents who were available for work, adults aged between 25 and 44 years were more

likely to be employed while mature age people were slightly more likely to be unemployed and looking for work. Over half of the young adult (54%) and adult (59%) respondents were employed, while less than half (46%) of the mature-aged respondents were in employment.

CHART 11: EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND AGE

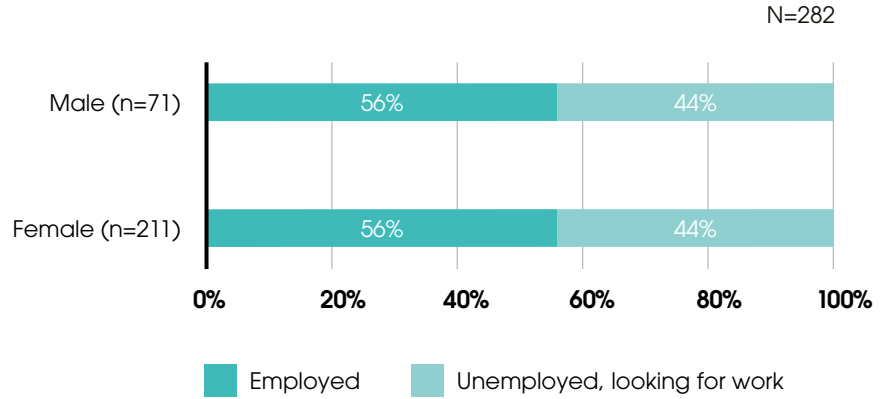


Gender and employment

The majority (76%) of SLPET respondents were women. However, equal proportions of men (56%) and women (56%) had found employment six months after the course completion.

While women respondents had proportionally higher educational qualifications than men, this 'advantage' did not translate to their employment situation. Equal proportions of men and women had found employment after their course completion. This was possibly due to the gendered nature of the jobs mostly available to SLPET students, namely low-skilled non-professional occupations.

CHART 12: GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT

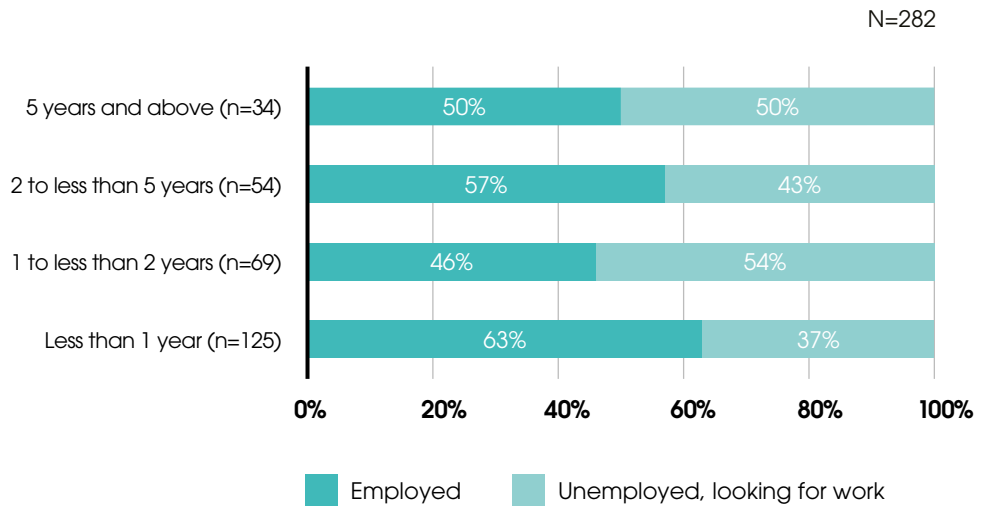


Length of time in Australia and employment

After their arrival in Australia, SLPET respondents spent different amounts of time before enrolling in the program. As shown in Chart 13, a higher proportion (63%) of respondents who joined SLPET within one year after their arrival in Australia were employed compared to those who took more than a year to enrol in the program.

Paradoxically, the longer it took for respondents to enrol in the SLPET program, the less likely they were to have gained employment six months after their course. This could be due to unemployed respondents losing hope of finding work after a prolonged period of unemployment. However, studies (e.g. Leith, 2012) also indicate that some migrants have 'unrealistic' post-English course employment aspirations where their initial high employment expectations are replaced by more realistic expectations – after some time.

CHART 13: EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND LENGTH OF TIME IN AUSTRALIA



4 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

RESPONDENTS WHO WERE EMPLOYED

The study explored strategies to find work used by respondents and the occupations they were working in.

Strategies for finding employment

Six months after completing their SLPET course, respondents who were employed found work through:

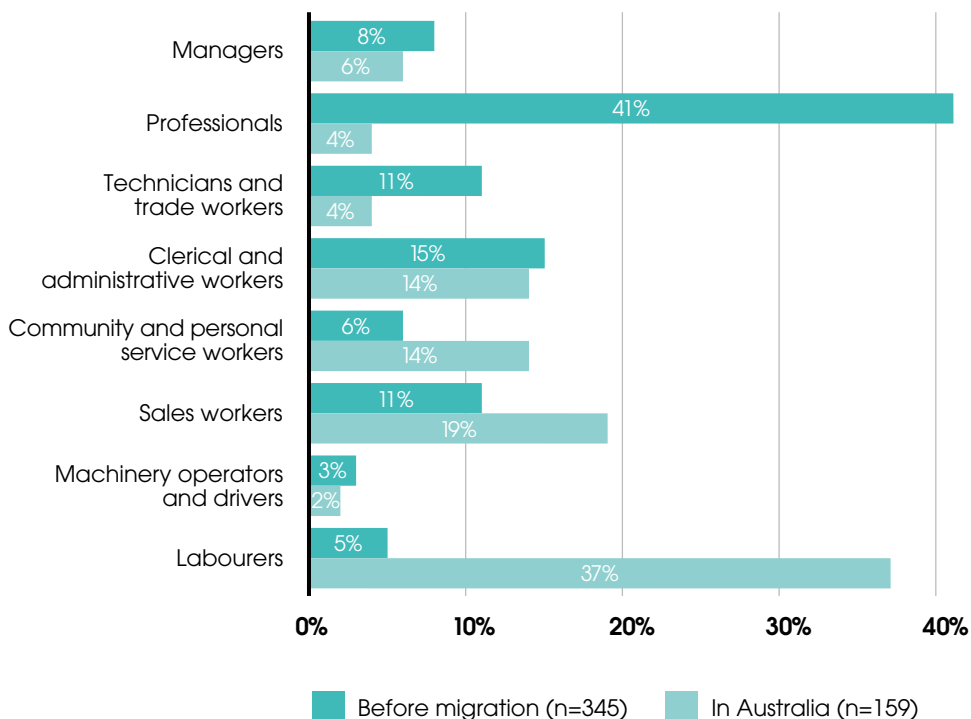
- personal and social connections e.g. family, friends, professional networks (42%)
- Internet and newspaper searches e.g. job or employer websites, newspaper adverts (20%)
- SLPET work placement or volunteering (16%)
- employment agencies or AMES Australia staff (13%)
- cold calling/canvassing or self-employment (9%)

The most successful way of securing employment was to engage with personal, social and professional connections. This includes the SLEPT program that offers participants the opportunity to broaden their social and professional networks through classroom and work placement connections.

Occupations before and after migration

Respondents of the study experienced a loss of occupational status after migrating to Australia. Three hundred and forty-five people in this study had worked prior to migration. Chart 14 shows that the main occupations¹⁷ held by SLPET respondents before coming to Australia were managers or professionals (49%), clerical and administrative workers (15%) and technicians and trade workers (11%).

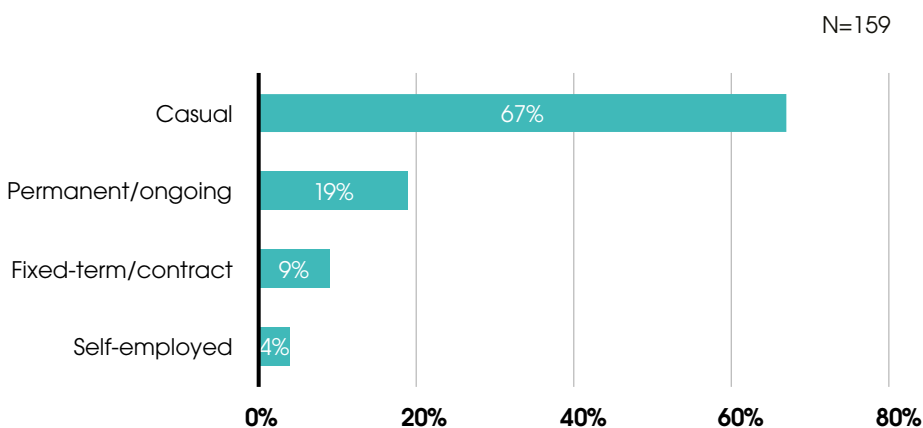
CHART 14: OCCUPATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATION



In contrast, the 159 people who had found employment in Australia following the SLPET course were working as labourers (37%), sales workers (19%), community and personal service workers (14%) and clerical and administrative workers (14%).

As reported in a number of studies (e.g., Liebig, 2007; Reid, 2012), migrants from NESB can face a strong loss of occupational status during their initial settlement because of limited English, a lack of local experience, a lack of local familiarity with overseas qualifications and discrimination.

CHART 15: EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS



¹⁷ Occupation categories based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations V1.2 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2013).

Employment arrangements

SLPET respondents were employed as casuals, permanent/ongoing, fixed-term/contract employees, or self-employed. Chart 15 shows the employment arrangements of the 159 respondents who were working.

A majority of the employed respondents (67%) were working as casual employees. As a possible consequence of the loss in occupational status and having casual work arrangements, many employed SLPET respondents received relatively low remuneration for their work. Wages reported in some cases were less than the national minimum wage recommended by the Fair Work Commission. Furthermore, many of the SLPET respondents who were employed as casuals (61%) expressed the wish to work more hours.

A recent study by WEstjustice (Western Community Legal Centre) (2016) reported that newly arrived migrants experience high levels of exploitation in the workplace, especially in the form of underpayment and irregular payments. For these reasons, AMES Australia should continue to promote access to information and support for SLPET clients who experience different forms of workplace exploitation.

RESPONDENTS WHO WERE UNEMPLOYED

Six months after completing the SLPET program, 44% of the 282 respondents available for work were unemployed and looking for work. The study explored the strategies these unemployed respondents were using to look for work.

The majority of SLPET respondents were focussed on online job searching (69%) with less than half of people (46%) relying on personal connections to look for work. Other ways the unemployed group were looking for work included cold calling (13%) and volunteering (7%).

Challenges to finding employment

Half of the respondents looking for work (51%) did not have any support in their job searching activities, either from friends or family or from more formal sources of support such as the Government's jobactive service. Few respondents were connected to jobactive.

A number of SLPET respondents described the challenges of finding work:

I am really keen to find a job because I want mentally to feel I am useful and I'm not a useless person, I hate feeling I am not a useful person. And I am really keen to find a job and work because in my country also I was working so I still want to find a good job and work.

Another SLPET respondent said:

I think finding a job is the biggest challenge in this country. It is more important than doing any classes or courses. We need work. Even on a basic entry level. It helps us to improve our confidence, even emotionally and mentally we have lots of struggle in this country with having no job and having the stress of finding a job.

Respondents with higher educational qualifications and good English language proficiency appeared to be more ready and confident to venture out and find work than those without these assets. Women respondents had proportionally higher qualifications than men. However, as noted, this did not correlate with their availability for work. This may be due to the low-skilled non-professional roles that were available to this group.

While English language proficiency and educational qualifications are key to migrants finding employment, the largest proportion of SLPET respondents who were working were in jobs that did not in fact require high level English or tertiary education.

Personal and social connections, e.g. family, friends and professional networks, played an important role in respondents' success in finding work. Part of the SLPET curriculum emphasises the importance of students forming and maintaining personal and social connections, for example through workplace exposure during their placement, as an effective strategy for finding employment.

5 FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING OUTCOMES

One of the objectives of the SLPET program is to provide clients with a pathway to further education and training.

It is not unusual for migrants from NESB with limited English to continue learning more English or enrol in further study such as vocational training after completing their AMEP entitlement. A previous study found that many students continued to learn English or participate in vocational training after completing their AMEP hours (Leith, 2012).

This section has two parts. The first part discusses respondents' further education and training participation after completing SLPET: the type of study they were doing and study arrangements (part time or full time). The second part analyses respondents' further study in the backdrop of their various demographic characteristics such as gender, age, level of English, duration in Australia, pre-SLPET education level and visa category.

Of the 460 respondents surveyed for this research, 39% (179) had participated in further study after completing the SLPET program. 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.

Respondents were asked what type of study they engaged in after completing SLPET. Half of the respondents were studying English to improve their language and communication skills; 46% were undertaking vocational training at either certificate or diploma level.

The AMEP is provided to people with relatively low levels of English and is not designed to prepare people to enrol in a higher education course

at an Australian university. Therefore, it was not surprising that none of the respondents were enrolled in a higher education course at university.

TABLE 13: TYPE OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Course Type	Count
English	89 (50%)
Certificate/Diploma vocational course	84 (47%)
Other	1 (1%)
No response	5 (3%)
Total	179 (100%)

Of those who were studying further English, most were studying full time. Of the respondents who were attending vocational courses about half (51%) were studying part-time and half (49%) full-time.

Respondents provided additional comments for choosing the course they were enrolled in:

I am doing the course to improve my writing skills in English.

I hope by doing this English course, I will improve my English in speaking and writing so that I can do further study and get a better job in the future.

One respondent who was doing a vocational course in accounting said:

At the interviews, a lot of employers had asked me about MYOB experience. That is why I did the MYOB¹⁸ course.

Another respondent mentioned avoiding social isolation as a reason for participating in further study:

I do not want to stay at home, being at home made me depressed.

A number of participants were attending vocational training in Early Childhood Education and Care and in Individual Support (aged care). One respondent who was doing a certificate course in child care stated:

Now I want to become a child care worker and get a job in this industry because it is much easier to get a job in this field rather than in other areas.

Another respondent who was also doing Certificate III in Early Childhood reported that she would like to start her own Family Day Care business.

The following section analyses respondents' demographic characteristics and further study activities and discusses whether there are any co-relations between these components.

¹⁸ Mind Your Own Business (MYOB) accounting software.

RESPONDENT PROFILE AND FURTHER STUDY

Pre-SLPET education

Respondents with less formal education were mainly attending English language courses. By contrast respondents with a university degree (bachelor or post-graduate) were mainly attending vocational courses. Chart 16 shows respondents' highest level of education prior to the SLPET program and further study engagement.

As mentioned in the introduction, it can be challenging for migrants to have their overseas qualifications assessed as equivalent to similar degrees in Australia. Of those who pursued further training, 47% had a post-secondary qualification, a large number of them with a Bachelor degree. The majority of the respondents with a Bachelor or a Post-graduate degree were attending vocational training that was below their prior education qualifications. It is possible that the earlier university degrees of these respondents were not assessed in Australia allowing them to work in their area of qualification. This may suggest an undervaluation of higher qualifications of migrants coming from non-English speaking countries.

English level

A greater number of CSWE 3 respondents were engaged in further study than lower level CSWE students (pre-CSWE, CSWE 1 and CSWE 2). Former CSWE III students were mainly enrolled in vocational courses. Former lower level CSWE students were mainly enrolled in further English language courses.

CHART 16: PRE-SLPET HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND TYPE OF FURTHER STUDY

N=179

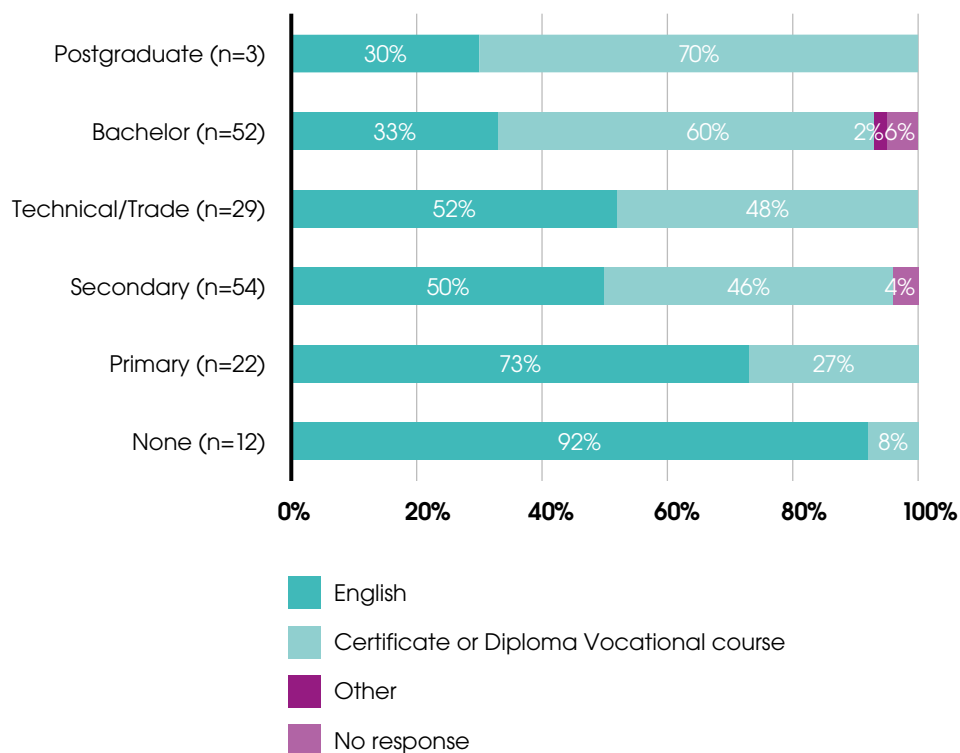
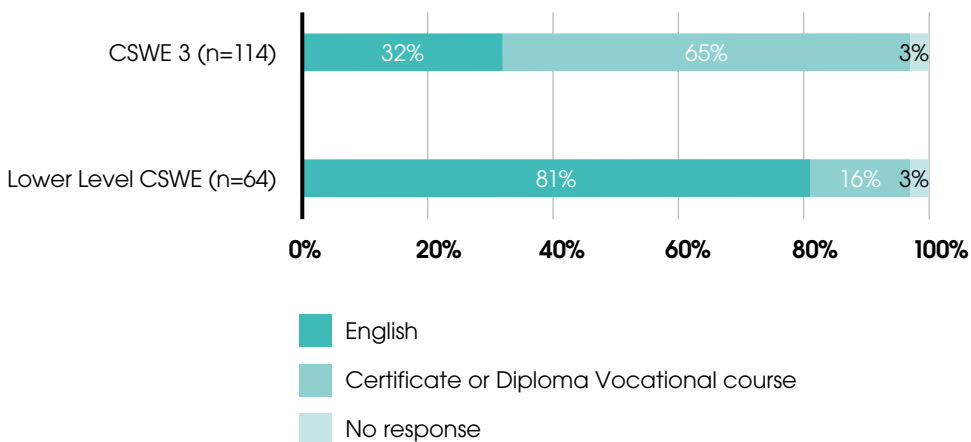


CHART 17: CSWE LEVEL AND TYPE OF FURTHER STUDY

N=179



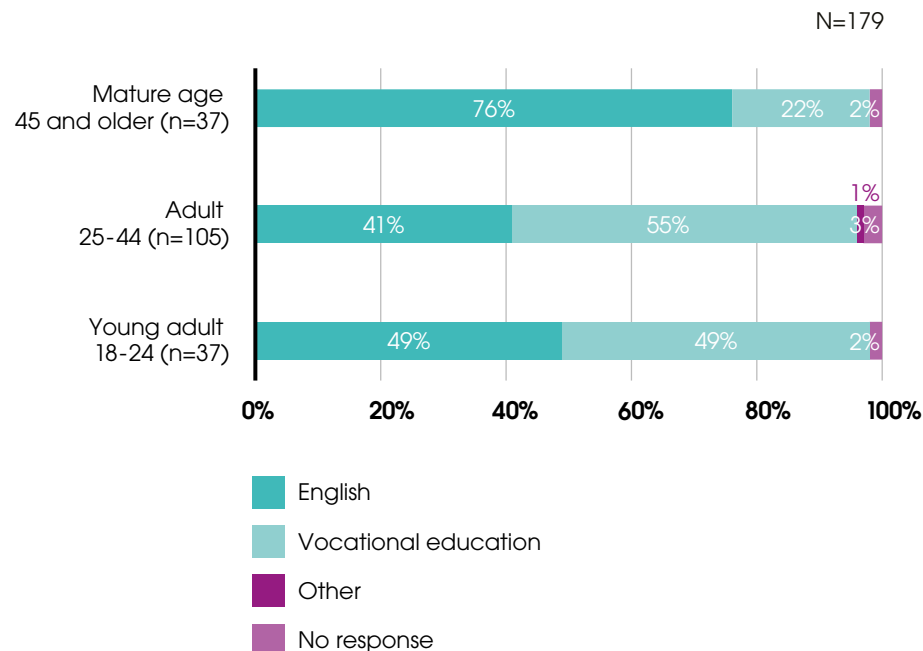
5 FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING OUTCOMES

Age group

The proportion of all respondents who pursued further study was highest in the mature-age group (47%) followed by the young adult group (45%). Within the adult group, the percentage of those who participated in further study was lower than either of the other groups (35%).

The majority of respondents within the mature age group who were studying were enrolled in a further English course. In the adult group, respondents were more likely to have attended a vocational course (59%). For young adults, similar proportions of respondents were enrolled in English and vocational study. Most young adults (68%) were studying full time whereas mature and adult groups were equally likely to be studying full-time and part-time. See Chart 18.

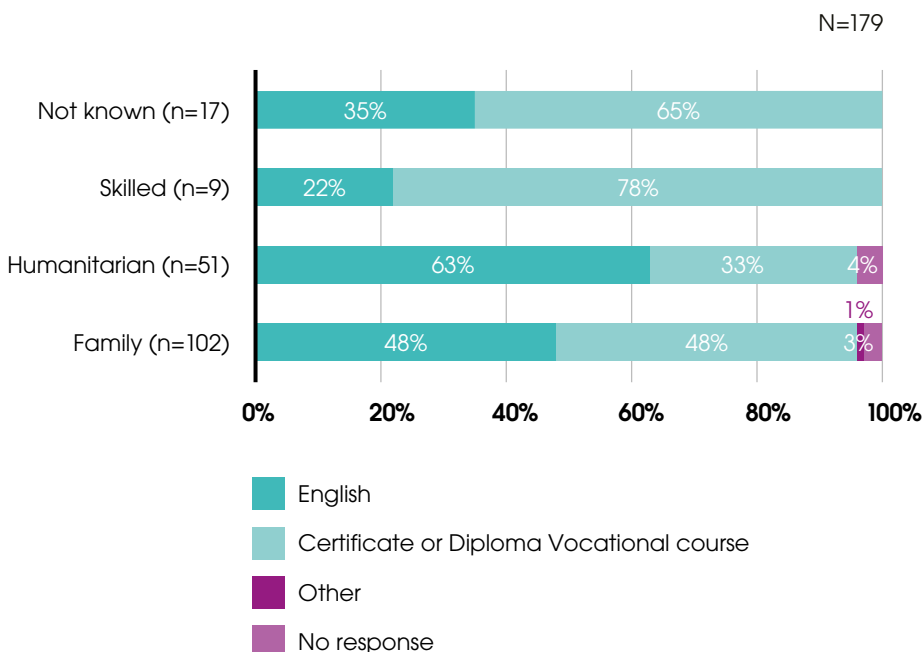
CHART 18: AGE AND TYPE OF FURTHER STUDY



Visa category

The proportion of all respondents who enrolled in further study was highest in the Humanitarian migrant group (59%), followed by Skilled (35%) and Family (33%) visa categories. Humanitarian respondents were mainly enrolled in English courses (63%); one third had chosen vocational study (33%). By contrast, most Skilled migrants were attending vocational courses (78%). Earlier in the demographics section we reported that the majority of Humanitarian entrants enrolled in SLPET had an education level only up to secondary level (approximately 70%). Due to lower formal education and NESB background, they needed to learn more English before enrolling in a vocational course in Australia. However, there is much variation and there were people with post graduate level of education among the respondents who arrived as Humanitarian entrants in Australia.

CHART 19: VISA CATEGORY AND TYPE OF FURTHER STUDY



Gender

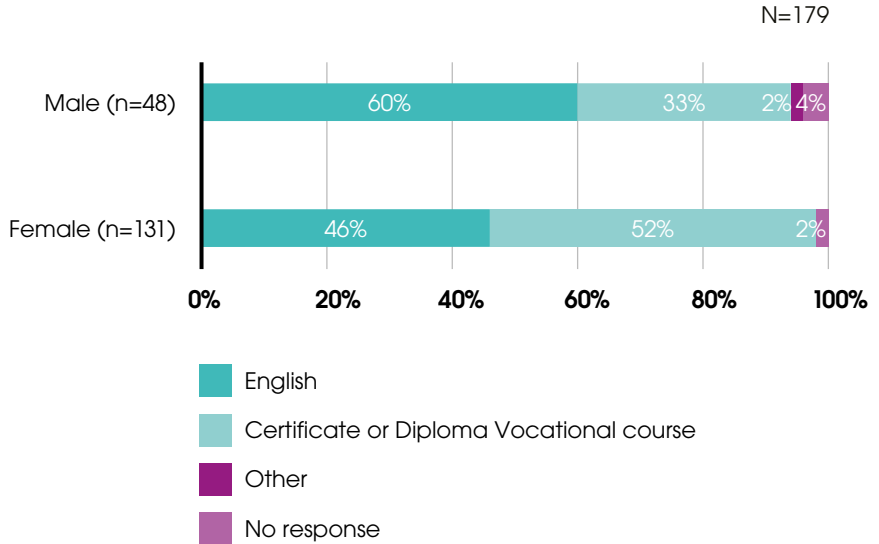
The proportion of men (44%) enrolled in further study was higher than women (37%). As mentioned earlier in the respondents' demographics section, the men who participated in this study had much lower levels of education. Therefore, it is not surprising that those with less formal education will participate more in further study compared to those with post-secondary study.

The majority of the men were studying further English language courses. The proportion of women studying vocational courses (54%) was slightly higher than those who were studying English (46%).

Length of time in Australia

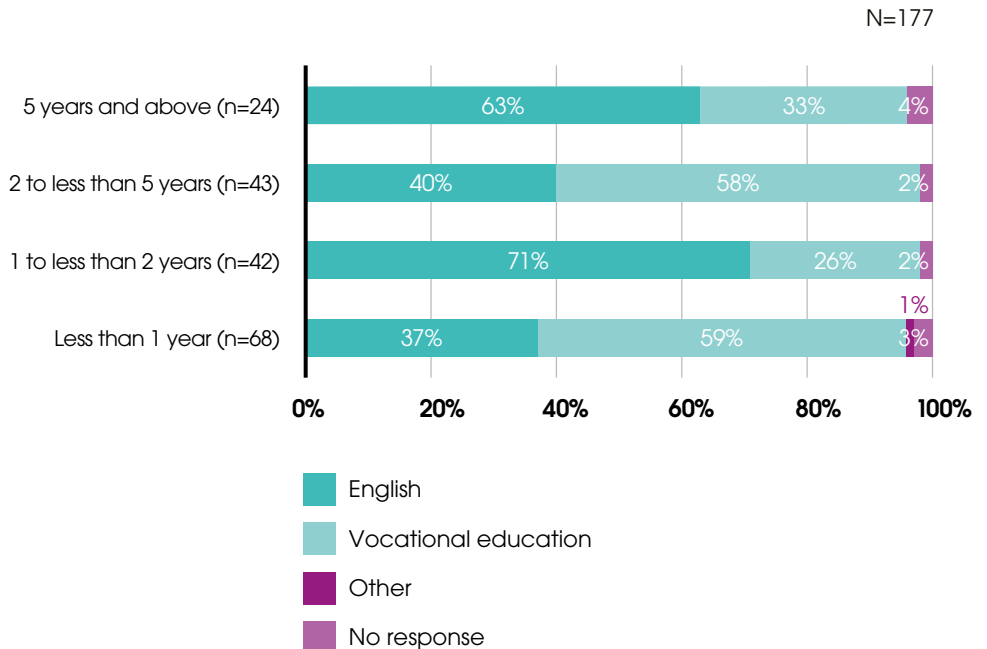
Among those who had been in Australia for less than one year, a higher proportion were attending vocational courses. Among those who had been in Australia for between one and two years, the highest proportion of respondents were studying English. Of those who had been in Australia for five years or longer, a higher proportion were learning English. Chart 21 shows the duration of respondents in Australia and the courses they were attending for further study.

CHART 20: GENDER AND TYPE OF FURTHER STUDY



The majority of men were studying full-time whereas women were enrolled in part-time and full-time study in similar proportions.

CHART 21: LENGTH OF TIME IN AUSTRALIA AND TYPE OF FURTHER STUDY



Respondents' study arrangement (part-time and full-time) was not influenced by their length of time in Australia.

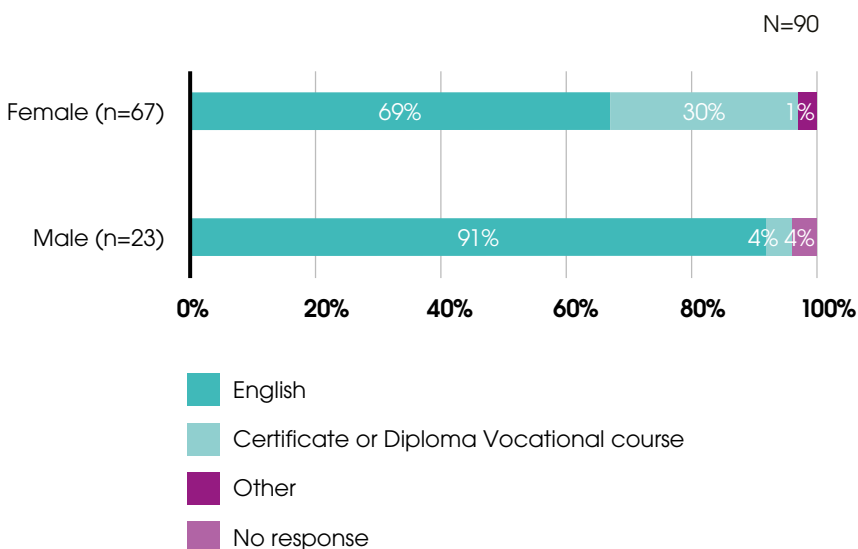
5 FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING OUTCOMES

FURTHER STUDY AT AMES AUSTRALIA

Of the respondents who participated in further study following SLPET, 50% were studying at AMES Australia; 74% of this group were in English courses and 23% were in vocational courses. AMES Australia Offers Certificate III courses in Individual Support and in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Most respondents who were studying at AMES Australia were women (74%). Among the men studying at AMES Australia, only one person was attending a vocational course with all other men studying English. In the female cohort, one third of respondents were studying vocational courses and two thirds were studying English. Chart 22 shows the types of courses men and women were studying at AMES Australia. The vocational courses offered at AMES Australia are in industries with a high proportion of women in the workforce and this may be relevant.

CHART 22: GENDER AND FURTHER STUDY AT AMES AUSTRALIA



One of the aims of the SLPET program is to provide guidance and a pathway to further education to its clients. Further education and training prepares clients for their future employment. Participation in further study can assist them to overcome the barriers to employment identified in the previous section by improving their language proficiency,

getting a local qualification and work experience. While the main reasons for pursuing further study for respondents were to improve language proficiency and to get a recognised qualification, there were other reasons as well such as avoiding social isolation.

6 RESPONDENT FEEDBACK ON SLPET

One of the objectives of this research was to gather feedback from former students about the value of SLPET for preparing them for employment and further study in Australia. In addition to gathering information about respondents' work and study situation we also sought their views on how useful SLPET had been and how the course could be improved.

Further, we interviewed three employers who regularly provide work placement to SLPET students from AMES Australia to find out their perspectives on the SLPET program and their experience with the students.

WHY DID RESPONDENTS DO SLPET?

People enrolled in SLPET for a range of reasons. The most common reason given (64% of respondents) was to improve their English.¹⁹ Since SLPET is part of the AMEP and specifically designed for new migrants with low levels of English, this makes sense. Many migrants experience pressure to find work immediately after their arrival and possibly before they have developed a high level of confidence and proficiency in English. Low level English is a major barrier for finding work in Australia. Although the AMEP provides a starting point for learning English, the program only provides 510 hours of language learning. For most people, particularly those with limited English or formal schooling prior to arrival, this is not sufficient for covering all the language required for working or studying in Australia. When asked why she enrolled in SLPET, one respondent answered:

I just wanted to continue to improve my English as I used all my AMEP hours, and I had a chance to use 200 hours. Also wanted to find a local job, better salary, but found it was quite hard.

The second most common reason given by respondents for deciding to do a SLPET course was the expectation that doing so would assist them in finding a job. About 40% of all respondents said this was a reason for choosing SLPET. The fact that the course includes a work placement component was highly valued by respondents:

I want to get some work experience and this course provides work placement.

A lack of Australian work experience can present as an initial, obvious barrier to finding employment. Respondents had high expectations about the value of the work placement.

After improving English and hoping to be in a better position to find a job, the third most common reason given by respondents for enrolling in SLPET was a generalised comment that it would be "something useful to do". For many respondents it was difficult to identify from a multiple of reasons, precisely why they had enrolled in SLPET. Respondents made comments like:

My friends also did that course and I joined them too.

To do something useful and improve my English and feel more confident.

12% of respondents said they enrolled in SLPET because a friend or an AMES Australia counsellor had recommended the program to them. 10% of respondents said they enrolled because they thought it would help them to prepare for further study in Australia:

I have got the right pathway for further study which helps me to plan my future goal.

I did a placement at childcare and as I am really interested in this area, I am currently studying a childcare course at AMES.

¹⁹ Respondents were able to provide multiple reasons for why they had chosen to do SLPET.

6 RESPONDENT FEEDBACK ON SLPET

Table 14 summarises respondents' reasons for participating in SLPET.

TABLE 14: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO DO THE COURSE AT AMES AUSTRALIA?

	Count	% of 459 respondents*
More English	293	64%
To find work in Australia	193	42%
Something useful to do	96	21%
My AMES counsellor advised it	56	12%
My friend recommended it	56	12%
To help me prepare for further study	46	10%
Centrelink (<i>jobactive</i>) obligation	14	3%

*More than one response allowed.

THE VALUE OF SLPET

The majority of respondents (93%) said they found the course useful for finding work in Australia. This includes most of the respondents who had not found work since completing

the course (91% of this group). Most people identified more than one aspect about the course that was helpful. In line with reasons for doing the course, almost three quarters of

respondents were of the opinion that SLPET had assisted them in improving their English. Table 15 summarises respondents' feedback on which SLPET components, they found effective in finding employment.

TABLE 15: WHAT WERE THE THINGS IN THE COURSE THAT HELPED YOU FIND WORK?

	Count	% of 429 respondents*
Improving my English	313	73%
Improved confidence	254	59%
Interview practice	217	51%
Job search activities (e.g. resume writing, interview skills)	198	46%
Work experience / work placement	168	39%
Learning about Australian workplace cultures	168	39%
Encouragement from teachers and classmates	126	29%
Industry-related information	94	22%
Networking (meeting others in the same situation)	75	17%
Planning next step (e.g. counselling)	39	9%
Employer talks and presentations	26	6%

*More than one response allowed.

Looking for work in a new country can be a daunting task for people arriving from a different cultural background. SLPET is designed to give students an exposure to Australian workplace culture, which many students found helpful in increasing their confidence. More than half of respondents (59%) said that the course had improved their confidence in looking for work in Australia. This was similar for those who had found work and those who had yet to start working. One respondent said:

AMES is presently doing this course very well. The teachers are very supportive and encourage migrants like myself to improve our confidence to get a job in our desired field.

Half of the people we spoke with stated that the interview practice or other job searching skills helped them. 39% of respondents said that work experience helped and the same number said that learning about Australian workplace culture was helpful. Respondents suggested that they gained good insight and assistance for finding work in the Australian context:

I volunteered in child care for ten days which is good, I got to know about a real workplace in Australia, what it's like in Australia, it's really different from my country.

I am very happy with the course, my English and confidence were improved after this course.

I'm very happy with everything and with the course I did at AMES.

Responses to this question were similar for those who had found work compared to those who had not with few exceptions; e.g. slightly more of those who had started working (46%) thought that work placement was a helpful component of the course compared to those who had yet to start work (36%).

For those that said the course did not help them find work at all (33 respondents), the most common reason given was that there was not enough work experience (47%):

Two weeks work experience is not enough to learn about Australian work culture and gain knowledge in the field.

The right level of English was an area of concern for 34% of this group both because the level was too low, for example:

They are doing this course for people who are at the basic level of English knowledge. AMES is teaching English very well, however it is not helpful for students like myself who are qualified and have overseas work experience.

And equally often because the level of English was too high, for example:

My English level was not enough to do that course.

Other respondents said they would have preferred a course that was more targeted to their industry.

6 RESPONDENT FEEDBACK ON SLPET

RESPONDENT SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE COURSE

We asked all respondents to provide feedback on the SLPET program and what AMES Australia could do to improve the program. Seventy-one percent of people had something to say about this.

The most common suggestion was for AMES Australia to provide job search support to students after their course had ended. Eleven percent of people nominated this:

I tried many ways to get a job, but still did not succeed. I definitely need more help to find a job. I don't have any work experiences and social network in Australia, and like most migrants, it seems very difficult to get a job. Therefore, it would be great if AMES can guide us, even help us to find a job after we finish the course.

I definitely need more help in finding a job, but I have no idea what kind of help I need now. Even though the course is good, I feel that finding a job in Australia is still too hard as we don't have the required English level and enough work experience.

If AMES organization could support us more after we finish the course, it would be bit easier and we could have a better chance to find a job. We don't really get a job from work experience, we need more support from AMES.

The second most common suggestion for improving SLPET was to increase the duration of the work placement component. Ten percent of all respondents raised this suggestion:

A longer work experience time would be great. Two weeks only is not sufficient to know about a position.

Two weeks' experience is not sufficient. I recommend extending it to couple of months for better understanding the workplace and networking with industry related people.

Another suggestion in relation to the work placement component of the course was to better match work placement opportunities to respondents' preferred field of employment:

I wish there were more professional companies for work placement, then maybe I would have had a higher chance to get a professional job. The work placement was not really related to my industry.

Improving English was a critical expectation for many of the respondents in this study. When asked for feedback about the SLPET course, more than 50 people made a comment, for example that English was still a major barrier for finding work:

Even though I finished the SLPET course as well as the 510 hours English course, my English level is still quite low. That's why the SLPET course was little help with my job finding. I want to continue studying English at AMES, but haven't found a suitable course.

Other suggestions for improvement included creating SLPET programs more targeted to specific industries or professions and creating stronger networks with employer groups or industries.

Thirty-five people had feedback about the SLPET staff at AMES Australia. The feedback about teachers was overwhelmingly positive, with many students commenting on how supportive their teachers were and attributing much of their increased self-confidence to encouragement from teachers:

The course is good. There is nothing as such to improve in the course, the teachers were really good and supportive. They gave total support and helped with placement. The teacher also gave her name as a referee.

The course is perfect, the teachers were really nice and good. They guided and explained each and every thing twice as my level of English was not up to that level. So there is nothing to improve in the course.

Where respondents had negative feedback about the teaching staff in the SLPET program, this was for a variety of reasons, including teachers not attending to the varying English levels within a class group and being replaced frequently.

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES

We wanted to find out about employers' experiences with SLPET clients at AMES Australia. This is to understand their views on the employability of our clients and any feedback they might have in relation to improving clients' workplace skills. We interviewed three employers who regularly offer work placements to SLPET students from AMES Australia. The work placement arrangement with the employers is coordinated by staff within the SLPET team.

Work placement is a critical component of the SLPET program. AMES Australia organises a two-week long work placement for SLPET clients in a range of industries such as retail, hospitality, office administration, customer service and so on. Work placement gives clients the opportunity to have a first-hand experience in the relevant industries, make professional contacts and learn about Australian workplace culture. Clients do not receive any remuneration during the work placement.

The employers we interviewed were from three different industries: retail, aged care and hospitality. All three employers have an ongoing relationship with AMES Australia and have been providing work placement opportunities to SLPET clients since the inception of the program. The employers provided their views on various aspects of the work placement and their organisation's experiences with the clients. All three employers viewed the work placement component of SLPET as an opportunity from which both clients and employers benefit.

Workplace diversity

SLPET clients at AMES Australia come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The employers we spoke with said that their involvement in the program increased their workplace diversity, which was highly valued. The employer from the retail industry reported that the skills in languages other than English of SLPET clients on work placement is an advantage for her business and her customers. She spoke about the value of having Mandarin speaking SLPET clients on placement. The employer from the aged-care industry similarly mentioned the importance of workplace diversity in his organisation:

The students from AMES Australia add to our culture and diversity in the workplace. We have a clear policy of working in diversity and with people from diverse backgrounds and diverse religions. (Southern Cross Aged Care, Victoria)

6 RESPONDENT FEEDBACK ON SLPET

Monetary cost and benefit

The employers viewed participating in the SLPET program as a win-win situation for the SLPET clients and themselves. Often the work placement component gives the employers a chance to hire their future employees. During the work placement period the employers can see the potential and competency of the SLPET clients and invite them to apply a position after completing the work placement. Therefore, offering work placement can save the organisations' advertising and recruitment cost. In the words of one employer:

Our cost for offering work placement to students is quite minimal. We usually have 2-4 students at a time from AMES. If there are two students we use our in-house room attendant trainer for two weeks. We usually do not have any cost for this training in this case. But when we have more than 3-4 students, I usually allocate a supervisor who would train the students for two weeks. In this case the cost is that I can't use him for any other work at that period of time. But I have other supervisors who would offset his tasks. So again there is no real cost to us.

The training cost for students is less than if we had employed students or others off the street, so there are some benefits there. Second it saves our advertising cost for hiring room attendants. Time and effort for our HR department because when we hire someone, we assess them, our trainers assess them. With AMES students by the end of two weeks we know whether they will fit us or not fit us. (Accor Group, Australia)

He also commented how the work placement benefits the clients:

Benefits for students is they get an actual workplace experience which earlier they may have heard of or read about the actual physical job. Until they actually do the job, they do not know what it's actually like and if they want to do housekeeping.

The employer from the retail industry viewed having students on board as a long-term opportunity for her organisation to recruit people in the future. She talked about the personal qualities of the students:

The loyalty that we get back (from students), I think as an organisation. You can't put a price on that. (CUBE,²⁰ Victoria)

Similarly, the employer from the aged care industry viewed offering work placement to SLPET students as an opportunity to recruit future staff for his company:

We have a learning organisation ethos. We see this placement as a long interview for taking the next lot of workers. (Southern Cross Aged Care, Victoria)

Employment readiness

The employers provided insights on the employment readiness of SLPET clients. They were of the opinion that the employability skills of clients varies from person to person but were generally good. One employer said:

The quality of the AMES students for all these years has been very good, that is why we are taking so many and we also recommend them for other hotels within our group. Whatever you are doing in the classroom seems to be working. (Accor Group, Australia)

Another employer stated:

I think overall, I've got nothing but praise to say. (CUBE, Victoria)

²⁰ We have used a pseudonym for this organisation for confidentiality.

The manager from Southern Cross Care said that although he did not see the SLPET students during their work placement on a day-to-day basis, he would hear positive comments from the supervisors:

I do not see them but I would hear that from the managers and supervisors that AMES students are competent especially in hospitality. (Southern Cross Aged Care, Victoria)

Skills sought by employers

Employers were asked about the skills they look for when they recruit staff in their organisations. The employers from the retail and aged care industries mentioned having similar values to the organisation as a key factor. The employers also mentioned other factors and skills they look for while recruiting people. The skills were quite different in each industry perhaps because the industries were quite different from each other. For example, the employer stated:

Qualification, a willingness to learn and understand the value of working with elderly people. We seek both technical skills and personality traits. We want someone who can be compassionate, innovative, empathetic, ability to sit and talk with elderly persons and provide care to them. (Southern Cross Aged Care, Victoria)

The employer from the retail industry looked for different skills in their employee to thrive and sustain in her organisation:

The values is the first thing that we look for. That can be really difficult when you're recruiting is - how do you align somebody's personal values to your organisation's values? So that's probably the first thing that we really look for. And then the second thing would be customer service. So it doesn't matter where you are, that customer first mentality and really going above and beyond to, I guess, set us apart is number one. (CUBE, Victoria)

The third employer from the hospitality industry emphasised the importance of friendliness and people skills in the industry:

They have to be a little bit of a people's person because we are in a hospitality business, they have direct contact with guests, directly one to one. If you are a person with a big smile, and by having that big smile, you immediately break the barrier, then you can spark up a conversation. (Accor Group, Australia)

Further improvement

While the employers were positive about the job readiness of the clients and praised their overall enthusiasm and performance during work placements, they also had useful feedback in relation to their expectations of SLPET students. The employers from the retail and aged care industry emphasised improving the English level of the clients. One employer stated:

It is all very good. Just make sure that the students have competency in English. (Southern Cross Aged Care, Victoria)

The employer from the hospitality industry stated availability as an important factor for hiring people. For his industry he preferred to recruit people who are available on weekends, particularly in the beginning of recruitment.

All the employers have an ongoing relationship with AMES Australia and expressed interest in continuing their connection with the SLPET program:

The relationship has evolved. I think where we've started, and where we are today, are two different places. And that probably comes back to open, honest communication. (CUBE, Victoria)

Another employer said:

We are very happy with AMES and the arrangement. We just want to continue working with you guys. As I said in the beginning that it is a win-win situation for both of us. (Accor Group, Australia)

7 CONCLUSION

This research investigated the employment and further study outcomes of 460 former SLPET clients at AMES Australia six months after they had completed their course. The study further examined which aspects of the course were most valuable in assisting clients to transition into employment and study.

SLPET is a highly effective program for newly arrived migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Six months after completing SLPET, the majority of people who were available to work were in employment.

SLPET clients arrive in Australia on Family, Skilled and Humanitarian visas. In our study the majority arrived on Family visas (66%), usually as partners. The most common countries of origin for the Family and Skilled migrants in our sample were Vietnam, China, and India. The main countries of origin for Humanitarian entrants were Myanmar, Afghanistan and Iraq. The majority (76%) of respondents in the study were women and most were aged between 25 and 44 years. The respondents were highly educated with two thirds (64%) having arrived in Australia with a post-school level qualification.

At six months post-course, 61% of respondents were available for work. Those not looking for work were mostly studying full time (27%). The remaining group (12%) were full time carers for children and other family members or had other issues preventing them from being available for work.

The proportion of respondents in employment declined as the amount of time they had been in Australia before doing SLPET increased. 63% of people who started SLPET within 6 months of arrival were working compared to 50% of those who had been in Australia for 5 years or longer.

Our research suggests that SLPET clients have a higher chance of employment if they enrol in the course soon after arrival in Australia.

Respondents had been employed in a range of occupations prior to migration with 41% working in professional roles. At the time of our research only 4% of respondents were working as professionals in Australia. The majority were working as labourers, in sales and as community service workers. There was a loss of career status for most people with many university graduates and professionals employed in occupations below their overseas qualifications and skills.

Respondents in the study with lower levels of English were as likely to be working as those with higher level English. People from both groups were employed in low status professions such as labourers and cleaners. Although English language proficiency is essential for finding employment in Australia, our findings suggest that higher level English is not necessarily an advantage when it comes to low status occupations.

The majority of respondents who were working were doing so on a casual basis with relatively few people in permanent positions. Nearly one third of respondents (32%) earned less than \$20 per hour. Employment in low status sections of the labour market, combined with high casualisation and low wages, can make these workers more vulnerable to workplace discrimination and exploitation. This is exacerbated for migrants who may have fewer options for finding work in other industries.

The most successful way of securing employment for respondents in this study was to engage with personal, social and professional connections.

This included the SLEPT program as it offered students the opportunity to broaden their professional networks through classroom participation and work experience.

Six months after the program, the people who were still looking for work reported needing more support to find employment. This group had smaller networks and were at risk of social isolation. Staying unemployed for a longer period also affected their confidence level. Few people were connected to formal employment assistance.

39% of respondents participated in some kind of further study after completing SLPET. Most of this group were studying full time and therefore not available to work. The majority of those studying vocational courses had a university level qualification and were therefore studying a course below their prior education level. There was a loss in the value of their higher education qualification in Australia.

Half of the respondents who pursued further study were studying at AMES Australia. One third of the women were doing Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care or Certificate III in Individual Support (aged care) at AMES Australia. Only one male student in our study was enrolled in a vocational course at AMES Australia. This is likely because the vocational courses offered at AMES Australia offer employment opportunities in industries that are highly feminised.

While the main reasons given for pursuing further study were to improve language proficiency and to get a recognised qualification, many people also spoke about studying in order to avoid social isolation.

This research sought feedback from former students on the SLPET course. Respondents reported that the SLPET program had helped them transition to work and further study in Australia. For many this transition to work is underpinned by improving their English, being exposed to Australian workplace culture and increasing self-confidence. The respondents noted the strong benefits of learning English that was relevant for job searching activities. Work experience was highly valued as were the opportunities for social and professional networking over the course of the program. Respondents commented positively on the additional support offered by the teaching and counselling staff such as reviewing resumes, acting as referee and circulating job opportunities. Many people suggested this additional help was very valuable for finding their first job in Australia.

The employers who regularly offer work placement to SLPET clients at AMES Australia endorsed the high value of the program. From their perspective, the relationship with the SLPET program was beneficial. It provided opportunities to employ people from a range of backgrounds they might otherwise not have seen and enriched the cultural diversity of their companies.

POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: SLPET is highly effective in assisting migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds in finding work in Australia. It plays an important role in facilitating the entry of skilled migrants with low level English into the labour market. AMES Australia recommends that the Federal Government continues to invest in this program.

Recommendation 2: Work placement is an extremely valuable part of the SLPET program. It gives clients local work experience and can connect them with local employers. Participation in the SLPET program by employers from a broad range of industries and for longer periods of time could increase opportunities for clients to gain Australian workplace skills in areas of work related to their pre-migration experience.

Recommendation 3: Post program support for those who do not find work in the first months after completing SLPET, such as a job club, would be very helpful in increasing employment outcomes. Respondents in this research spoke of needing further support following completion of the SLPET program. Such support could be offered in different formats to suit different job seekers including those with professional backgrounds.

Recommendation 4: New migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, where eligible, should be informed and encouraged to participate in the AMEP and SLPET as soon as they arrive in Australia. This can help improve clients' confidence level for finding work in Australia and reduce the likelihood of social isolation.

Recommendation 5: Providing reliable information about employment to communities who support newly arrived migrants could enhance the effectiveness of this major channel for finding work in Australia. This requires resources for distributing accurate information in appropriate formats through community networks.

Recommendation 6: Structural changes need to be considered by relevant government departments so that migrants' overseas qualifications and skills are better understood and recognised by employers in Australia.

Recommendation 7: AMES Australia should continue to promote access to information and avenues of support for migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to reduce the possibility of workplace discrimination and exploitation.

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