

Review of the Adult Migrant English Program

PREPARED FOR:
The AMEP Review Team
Department of Immigration and Citizenship
PO Box 25
BELCONNEN ACT 2616
Email: AMEP.Review@immi.gov.au

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CONTACT: Dr Teresa Angelico
GM Education
AMES
Phone: (03) 9938 4621
Email: AngelicoT@ames.net.au

PREPARED BY
AMES
Research & Policy

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Section 1 – Overview

This response to the Review of the Adult Migrant English Program Discussion Paper has been prepared by the members of the AMES Consortia delivering AMEP contracts in three contract regions in Victoria. The paper represents the views of all consortia members responsible for program delivery in the AMEP. AMES is the lead agent. Program delivery partners in the AMES Consortia are Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, Swinburne University of Technology and Victoria University. In addition, the Free Kindergarten Association (FKA) and the YWCA provide child care support.

The AMES Consortia strongly supports the overall directions of the proposed changes to the AMEP. The AMES Consortia's experience confirms the government's view that employment is a critical factor in successful settlement and social inclusion. A large number of clients undertaking the AMEP with all AMES Consortia partners have employment aspirations. For some this will also include a further training or study pathway to achieve this goal. The proposed creation of a stronger employment focus in the AMEP is therefore welcome. AMES work with refugees and humanitarian entrants in the IHSS also confirms the urgency of earning income for these clients.

Balanced with this sharpened focus on employment, the significant role of the AMEP in contributing more broadly to settlement should not be diminished. The role of the AMEP in helping newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants to develop the English language skills and understanding of Australian systems they need to participate fully in the society contributes to their settlement and to a cohesive Australian society. Retaining this settlement focus is equally important for clients seeking employment and clients who require English for social participation.

The AMEP is required to cater for a very diverse group of clients with a range of expectations. The recognition that the AMEP can provide only part of English language, settlement and transition to employment support that is required for many clients is important as a strategy to manage client and community expectations and ensure other services complement the AMEP.

The response to the discussion questions confirms where the AMES Consortia supports the proposed future directions for the AMEP. Responses to discussion questions raise issues that require consideration as part of implementation. In broad terms these issues focus on:

- the need to ensure significant flexibility in program delivery so that the diverse and complex needs of clients, both within and across streams, can be most effectively met
- the need to retain settlement competencies in the employment participation and the social participation pathways
- the need to include capacity to deliver Training Package units and incorporate work experience
- the opportunities to expand the use of first language in most effectively assisting providers to understand clients' needs and aspirations and contribute to their English language skills, settlement and employment goals and
- the need to reflect this flexibility in contract requirements

As part of the client settlement pathway, the AMEP plays a significant role in preparing new arrivals with the English language skills required to participate in employment and in the wider community. The AMES Consortia is pleased to be able to provide input to the Discussion Paper to ensure that the AMEP can respond to changing needs and thereby make the best contribution possible to the settlement of newly arrived migrants and refugees.

Section 2 – Response to Discussion Questions

1. Creation of client pathways

Are the two proposed pathways suitable for meeting client needs and avoiding a one size fits all approach?

How can we best implement this proposal?

The AMES Consortia supports the concept of the two proposed pathways as a way to differentiate client needs. AMES conducted a verbal survey with all clients in day classes at one of our centres and confirmed that most students saw employment as their destination – whether in the short or medium term.¹

Input with respect to proposed pathways is outlined under six areas.

1. Understanding client needs and aspirations
2. The importance of early work
3. Settlement competencies across streams
4. Accommodating diversity within streams
5. English in an employment context
6. Challenges for small locations

1. Understanding client needs and aspirations

The AMES Consortia considers that the implementation of this framework requires two areas to be managed to ensure that the framework translates into an AMEP that is more responsive to the differing needs of learners within the program.

The first consideration – the need to establish the broad aspirations of individual clients – is self evident, but fundamental to the success of the approach, and therefore important to document. The second consideration is to ensure that there is sufficient differentiation within the Employment Participation Pathway stream to cater for the significantly diverse needs of learners to achieve their ultimate employment goal.

Clients in this group (as noted in the AMEP Discussion Paper) will include clients with high education and minimal formal education. The model for the employment stream must accommodate client needs as well as learning

styles and capabilities and make a distinction between short term employment goals and long term employment goals. The model will therefore require a range of approaches within the stream.

It is also likely that there will be clients with diverse education backgrounds in the Social Participation Pathway stream. Some clients will have low levels of education and low levels of English. Others may be highly educated.

The effectiveness of the two broad streams is premised on clients clearly understanding the choice at the outset and the distinction between short term and long term goals. This will require a more comprehensive assessment process than is possibly currently used by AMEP providers. It will also require more than a single interview as clients' understanding and identification of pathways will be a gradual process. Clients often have significant information gaps that can only be filled incrementally.

¹ The survey was conducted at Springvale AMES. 6% of clients said they did not want employment, 26% said they would take a job immediately if it were available and 61% said they wanted to find employment after completing additional training. This included further English language training and vocational training.

As part of a more client centred approach that drives AMES 2008–2010 Strategy and the 2008 operational priorities that have been set to progressively implement this strategy, AMES is piloting a new assessment process across all services. This places an increased emphasis on understanding needs and aspirations very early. Early indications are that this will be more resource intensive but also have benefits in the ability to deliver more targeted programs and services.

Given that this is fundamental to future services offered to individual clients in their AMEP pathway and will be more than just language assessment, the AMES Consortia recommends that a separate fee for initial assessment be considered and that the increased resources required be acknowledged in purchasing prices.

The importance of using the client's first language in this process is also fundamental to ensuring that clients are fully informed of options, can articulate what their needs and

aspirations are and make appropriate choices. There are a number of ways in which providers could manage this. The AMES Consortia recommends that tenderers be required to describe how they will address this requirement as part of the purchasing process.

It must be noted that there are never perfect solutions to manage all languages that are in a minority in the AMEP or where AMEP venues have small total numbers of clients. Notwithstanding these limitations, solutions that meet the requirements of all clients must be proposed.

Clients will not always have a clear understanding of what their options are. This applies to regulations in areas including Centrelink – for example managing part time work and social security benefits – and their own personal circumstances. Clients may also change their minds or have shorter and longer term aspirations. The flexibility in changing streams noted in the AMEP Discussion Paper, is strongly reinforced by the AMES Consortia.

2. *The importance of early work*

It is the AMES Consortia's experience that a significant number of AMEP clients need to find employment early in their settlement period. AMES analysis and experience through IHSS in settling refugees is that employment is critical to successful settlement and social inclusion. This early work is typically casual, part-time and may include evening shifts. AMEP providers have been progressively increasing the focus on employment but the recognition in named streams will be welcomed by clients as a clearer articulation for them of the pathway.

The number of AMEP clients who are working reinforces the importance of early employment. In 2007 AMES did a short survey to further

understand the AMEP client base of currently enrolled clients and found that 30% of clients were working.² These clients recognised that, although employed, they still wanted and needed more English to attain work that more closely matched their skills and previous work histories.

Understanding that newly arrived clients need and want to move quickly into work should not under estimate the challenges, resources and levels of program flexibility required in achieving this for clients who have very limited English, possibly low levels of formal education and, for refugee clients in particular, often a number of other significant barriers.

² In May 2007 AMES conducted a survey in a sample range of AMEP classes. The survey covered day, evening and Saturday classes across Metropolitan Melbourne and included students representative of the range of CALD communities in the AMEP. The data demonstrated that significant numbers of participants were either working or looking for work. It provided useful data to inform program structure to accommodate the diverse needs of learners.

Labour Market Grouping	Number	% of clients surveyed *
Total employed	297 *	34%
Total seeking employment		
▪ Registered job seekers	216 *	25%
▪ Not registered	146 *	17%
Not in the labour force	288	33%

As noted in the AMEP Discussion Paper, migrants and refugees who are recently arrived are at risk of social exclusion due to a range of complex issues including importantly, lack of English. The AMEP must support these clients as far as possible.

Opportunities for new arrivals to secure some work that will, in addition to financial support, provide a context and additional opportunity to use English should be encouraged. Such clients should continue to access learning through the AMEP as, without continued improvement of English, their capacity to participate in Australian society and have sustainable employment in the long term will be severely diminished.

3. *Settlement competencies across streams*

The AMES Consortia supports the AMEP Discussion Paper's observation that all clients need to learn English for social purposes while also placing a greater emphasis on English for employment purposes for those new arrivals who are seeking work. Settlement information and competencies need to be included in the Employment Participation Pathway stream as part of the broader settlement process. A number of what are commonly called employability skills are applicable to participation not only in employment but also more generally in social groups.

Cultural understandings and values such as punctuality, asking for clarification when unsure and making acquaintance through socially acceptable topics for 'small talk' conversation are essential for effective performance in a workplace

as well as participating in other social networks. While they may be dealt with slightly differently in the employment and social participation streams they are essential for both. It would be doing clients a disservice to narrowly focus either stream and exclude what are essential cultural understandings and competencies for effective settlement.

Civics and citizenship courses could be delivered as a separate elective for clients across both streams.

A number of cultural understandings are most effectively taught with a combination of explanations and information in first language and then practical demonstration and application in the operation of language programs.

4. *Accommodating diversity within streams*

A 'one size fits all' approach may still be evident in a streamed model. To ensure that this is avoided, it is important to retain maximum flexibility within streams. This will be particularly applicable in the Employment Participation Pathway stream which needs to accommodate a wide range of needs as well as learning styles and capabilities.

The proposed target groups for the Social Participation Pathway are also likely to include clients with diverse education backgrounds. The focus should be on programs that meet diverse client needs within the streams.

Offering different models within the streams as proposed in the AMEP Discussion Paper is supported. For example, within the employment stream the AMES Consortia recommends that different models should include (but not be limited to):

- A further study stream (as proposed) that would possibly include a separate stream for youth who, in the main, are seeking to undertake vocational or other tertiary qualifications to establish a career pathway in Australia
- A stream for professionals that may include a strong work experience and job search component for those needing to gain work experience in Australia as a requirement to obtain employment

- A transitional employment / training stream that can cater to learners with little or no formal education and/or low or no English. This stream could also accommodate those learners who already have a job that does not meet their aspirations. It could integrate vocational learning within the AMEP, contextualise the learning in an employment context and provide an early connection with future employment
- Programs for new arrivals with higher levels of education who may wish to defer looking for work or undertaking further study until their English levels are more advanced.

Flexibility would also be required in terms of modes and intensity of delivery such as:

- High intensity programs for the further study and higher education level clients
- Practical activity based methodologies for those with low educational levels
- A packaged combination of curricula to meet client needs eg integrating some vocational modules
- An allowance in delivery modes for self study, including use of online materials, funded as a component of formal delivery

- Expansion of the Home Tutor model of delivery to include working with clients in programs of more than 6 hours and working with clients in classroom settings
- Inclusion of a role for mentors for specific groups – youth, professionals and already employed are some possible groups

The AMES Consortia does not, therefore, recommend that all programs in the employment stream be 20 hours as proposed in the AMEP Discussion Paper. Running different intensity programs will accommodate the full range of AMEP client needs.

Within this increased flexibility, the AMEP would need to be mindful of ensuring that the program focus was primarily on English and that vocational modules were included as a way to contextualise language learning and to demonstrate direct links for clients to a planned employment pathway. The AMEP must retain its primary focus on English and settlement to remain secure as an independent program.

5. *English in an employment context*

For clients in the Employment Participation Pathway stream it is important to have a primary focus on clients learning English that will equip them to gain and retain employment. This is particularly important given the feedback in the AMEP Discussion Paper that material taught in class was perceived as irrelevant to clients' needs, particularly for those wanting to learn English to gain employment.

English for employment in the client's mind does not necessarily mean English for resumes and job skills but learning English sufficient to communicate and undertake required tasks in any given workplace.

The skill in delivering programs that take into account this feedback is to include elements that have a wide application – for example teaching grammar and the social language that is required

for effective workplace communication – but to make this relevant to an employment context. In some, but definitely not all cases, this will mean combining language programs with specific vocational content and integrating Training Package units. In some cases it will also mean including work experience.

Generic employability skills are highly valued by employers and must be included and explicitly taught in these programs. Skills such as problem solving, team work, taking initiative, asking for clarification are highly bound within the Australian cultural context and may not be considered as appropriate workplace behaviours in clients' countries of origin. Programs that teach and practise these skills increase the client's work readiness. These skills are equally relevant in the Social Participation Pathway stream.

6. *Challenges for small locations*

The increased differentiation of programs is an excellent way forward. However, in small locations there will inevitably be compromises as to how this can be implemented. The program would need to ensure that streams are not so rigidly defined that it is not financially viable to deliver at sites where numbers in any one stream were minimal, but overall client numbers are strong. This can be partly managed by not attempting to provide all streams in all locations and counselling clients to travel where they have sufficient settlement competence to make this feasible.

The intention of the proposed changes to the AMEP is to move away from a one size fits all approach. Care must be taken to ensure that in an attempt to address this by offering employment and settlement streams, the flexibility in retaining small locations that are geographically and culturally accessible appropriate is not lost.

This is particularly applicable in regional locations but will also apply in metropolitan locations that are have relatively small numbers of clients .

2. Development of Individual AMEP Learners' Passports

Is the development of an Individual AMEP Learner's Passport a helpful way to assist clients understand the steps towards their goals, starting with the AMEP?

It is critical to clearly establish the audience and clarify the primary purpose for the learner passport to ensure that the document is effective and useful. The AMES Consortia's view is that the document needs to be comprehensible to the client in terms of their pathway. It would also be useful to inform other service providers of this pathway. The more thorough discussions and documentation to provide a level of detail required by individuals will be undertaken in group or individual sessions.

Input with respect to Individual Learner' Passports is outlined under four areas

1. Providing information to make informed choices
2. The role of first language
3. Progressive development of a plan
4. Content and Format - Achieving the right amount of detail

1. *Providing information to make informed choices*

Understanding the steps towards goals, starting with the AMEP as the first step, will be an iterative process for some clients. As the AMEP Discussion Paper outlines, to make informed and realistic decisions many clients must have an understanding of systems in Australia and how their existing experience may be applied. This is not to assume that many clients do not have a clear idea of their broad directions – whether they need to get work early for example. A passport and other discussions will assist in progressively developing a plan.

Providers need to inform clients about the systems in Australia and government assistance available to them as well as the various forms of training and the differences between them. Many clients will have different understandings about particular fields of work or have no experience of some jobs that may be options for them in Australia.

It will be important to understand who the audience/s are for this document and what the purpose/s are. Possible audiences are Centrelink, Employment Service providers and other government agencies. Incorporating detailed information on individual pathways may not be the best use of the document. It would be useful for DIAC to consult with Centrelink and Employment Service providers in addition to AMEP providers in the development of a template.

Centrelink has already asked clients to bring their Individual Learning Plan to appointments at one Melbourne Centrelink, indicating that they consider this a useful document. In this case, it is a document used within the AMES Consortia. It has been formatted as a hard backed document to encourage students to retain and use it.

As the AMEP Discussion Paper outlines, options are often not well understood. It will be important to determine what is the most effective and cost efficient way to provide this information.

Some clients will need individual sessions and comprehensive discussions and counselling with a fully qualified vocational counsellor. Others may be better served by a skilled but not necessarily formally qualified staff member delivering information in first language. This will depend on what the needs of the client are and who is competent to provide information and advice. Having a fully qualified vocational counsellor may not be either the best option for all clients or the most cost effective for the government.

The essential component is that all clients have accurate and comprehensive information at the front end of the AMEP to make their first decision on which stream to enrol in and that there are clear options for what the provider can offer – and what they can reasonably expect from the AMEP.

If clients enter a Foundation Program / Interim class before beginning their chosen stream, there is an opportunity for providers to both fully explore the stream options with the client and also develop their independent learning strategies such as how to make best use of Individual

Learning facilities and resources, e-learning and other self-learning resources. An ability to make good use of these resources will increase providers' capacity to offer packaged tailored options further along their pathway – particularly for clients who gain employment.

2. *The role of first language*

As noted in response to 1. *Creation of Client Pathways* the role of first language is fundamental for some clients in ensuring they understand options. Effective AMEP providers will be able to determine where first language is most appropriately used and integrate service delivery that effectively combines English and first language (L1) to meet these needs within their AMEP delivery.

To ensure that sufficient flexibility can be incorporated into delivery arrangements, AMEP staffing requirements would need to accommodate flexibility while protecting the need to ensure appropriate staff with the required competence were used by providers.

Establishing what is best and most effectively delivered in L1 should be determined by providers. Providers should be required to outline how they will manage these requirements as part of a purchasing process.

3. *Progressive development of a plan*

The acknowledgement in the AMEP Discussion Paper that plans may change and require review points is a realistic approach. There is not a body of documented evidence about what pathways AMEP clients actually take and therefore limited knowledge to inform this approach.

As part of a newly established research agenda, AMES has commenced a longitudinal study to track AMEP clients over an eighteen month period from entry to the AMEP. This will provide data over time on how individual clients' expectations and aspirations track in the period of early settlement and how the AMEP experience contributes.

AMES has conducted a retrospective survey of 60 clients as a trial for the longitudinal study. Preliminary results indicate that, of the active job seekers, 52% are looking for part time work and 29% are looking for any job, regardless of previous qualifications and experience. The reason these job seekers were looking for any job was that they thought it would help as a first step to get to their job goal i.e. any Australian experience would help them adapt to Australian workplace culture, language and behaviours. Of the total clients surveyed, 86% said that they expected to do an Australian vocational training course to achieve their ultimate job goal.

Using our capacity as a large employer, AMES is also implementing and thoroughly documenting an Intermediate Labour Market program that is employing approximately fifty migrants as a step to the mainstream labour market.

This is providing early indications that these participants have worked in a number of areas in short term work, undertaken a number of training courses and not had clearly defined goals early in their settlement. This is not to suggest that they did not have a clear goal to work but the nature of this and how they would achieve it has evolved over a period of time, allowing people to make informed choice based on options available to them and understanding of these options.

Indicative findings from these studies therefore suggest that for some clients the pathway will be iterative and unclear within the broad decision that they want to work. Work with some clients to develop a plan can reasonably be undertaken in a structured learning environment – particularly where clients are exploring options and understanding the system.

Other clients will require one to one counselling on specific issues that relate to achieving their employment or further study goal. These will include clients who require advice on skills recognition, upgrading qualifications and further study pathways or require some work placement experience to make choices.

4. *Content and Format: Achieving the right amount of detail*

Documents such as an ILP can suffer from being so generic that they become meaningless – or being so detailed that they are too confusing and attempt to document pathways too early. They are also resource intensive and, unless sufficient resources are allocated, run the risk of reverting to a tick box mentality that serves no meaningful purpose. It is therefore useful to consider who should be involved in completion of a Learner's Passport and in what role.

The content of a Learner's Passport should contain two broad areas for consideration: *1. Pathway mapping and plan* and *2. Training / learning content* in relation to the pathway plan. The passport should be an active document with regular referrals and amendments to it. There is more likelihood of this occurring if more than one agency values its content and input.

Learner Passports can play a very useful role in documenting and tracking plans for other

agencies that the client is engaging with. Achieving the right balance is important. Where clients are also working with an Employment Service Provider they may be documenting a separate Employment Pathway Plan with an Employment Consultant. It would be useful to consider these together or even as parts of the same document (although this may be too complicated and long term and therefore not achievable).

The AMES Consortia recommends that consideration also needs to be given to whether these plans would be appropriate for clients who elect to be in the Social Participation Pathway Stream. These clients will not have Centrelink obligations and will not be working with an Employment Service Provider and they may therefore not be relevant. Where these clients changed their plan, and moved into the Employment Participation, they could subsequently develop a Learner Passport.

3. AMEP counsellors

Do you consider the use of AMEP counsellors within the AMEP to be important in assisting clients not eligible for Australian Government Employment Services with vocational / employment guidance?

How can we best do this?

Input with respect to AMEP counsellors is outlined under three areas

1. Role for vocational counsellors
2. Importance of early and continued access
3. Access to Employment Services, state funded training and other services for non eligible migrants

1. Role for vocational counsellors

Vocational counsellors have an important role to play as part of a team that can not only assist clients to understand their options and develop a plan but inform the content and mode of delivery of service. This role is required at the front end and in an on going capacity.

To date the capacity for Employment Service providers to deliver thorough vocational counselling services has been limited. The work first model has mitigated against developing and implementing plans as the pressure has been to put all job seekers into any employment as soon as possible. This is also reflected in feedback from clients in the AMEP Discussion Paper.

The extent to which this role is undertaken in Employment Services is likely to change with the shift from this work first approach but will still be dependent on whether clients are assessed as requiring the services of Stream 1 or Streams 2-4 (which will provide higher levels of assistance). There will not be a capacity to provide any intensive guidance to Stream 1 job seekers.

Where AMEP clients are also registered with an Employment Service provider, ensuring that there are robust relationships to manage the development of client plans and pathways into employment will be both critical and challenging.

As discussed in relation to preparation of Individual Learner Passports, it will be important to view vocational counsellors roles as part of a team rather than as the only resource that can be used to provide information and advice. This will depend on the type of information and advice that is required. Determining what are the required outcomes for clients and then matching the appropriate resources to achieve these will provide a good indication of what resources are best employed.

It is important to retain access to vocational counsellors for all AMEP clients – regardless of whether they are registered with an Employment Service provider. It is also important to be clear about the distinction between short term and long term goals.

A vocational counsellor is likely to be better placed to provide advice on long term goals relating to education pathways and appropriate further study options where this is a client's preferred pathway. The vocational counsellor may also be better placed to assist the client with advice on their professional or trades recognition process. However an employment consultant will be better placed to advise clients on short term goals relating to immediate labour market opportunities where a client wants to gain early work. Ideally these staff would share information so they could advise and support the client in a coordinated way.

2. *Importance of early and continued access*

Access to vocational counselling early in clients' AMEP pathways is important to ensure that aspirations and needs are established and pathway plans that meet these are established. This will not be required for all clients but, where there is a need, it must be addressed at the front end rather than once AMEP hours have been used.

The preliminary results of the AMES Longitudinal Study trial indicate that only 56% of clients who are nearing the end of their AMEP have discussed their vocational training and work history to develop a pathway plan. This is because the current funding model only allows for vocational counselling at the end of clients' hours. Of those who have developed a plan, 91% of those surveyed said that the plan helped them.

In the current model, there is a danger that clients are withdrawing from the program without having a clear idea of their pathway options and

entering a training / unemployment cycle that is counterproductive.

It is likewise important to provide review points as proposed.

Information must be provided in different modes and at different times. Feedback in the AMEP Discussion Paper that clients have a lack of awareness of English and vocational training options upon exiting the AMEP suggests a need for some new and refreshed approaches. This does not have to rely only on one-to-one vocational counselling sessions. Design of relevant activities including group sessions, self access materials and first language information can all make useful contributions to ensuring clients are informed and supported.

3. *Access to Employment Services, state funded training and other services for non eligible migrants*

AMEP clients in the Family and Skilled categories are not eligible for Employment Services for the first 104 weeks after arrival in Australia. In a submission to the Review of Employment Services, AMES argued that early intervention minimises the chance of people falling into long term unemployment and welfare dependence and the resulting enduring disadvantages of social exclusion. AMES therefore proposed that these migrants be eligible for assistance to find employment through Employment Services. This could be limited to assistance in finding work and not be extended to the provision of any entitlements to social security benefits.

A second area that works against smooth transition of clients to the next stage of their pathway is the limitation on access to state funded training. While this does not come under the jurisdiction of DIAC, it is an area that requires attention as part of federal / state negotiations.

This is particularly problematic for clients on Spouse Visas who must pay full fees for state provided training. This effectively terminates their training pathway. The AMES Consortia recommends that these clients should be have the same eligibility as permanent residents.

4. Strengthening connections between AMEP and Australian Government employment services

What strategies would help the AMEP and Australian Government employment service providers to work together to ensure appropriate and timely vocational / employment guidance to eligible clients?

As noted in the response to the previous question, it is essential to have close and collaborative relationships between AMEP providers and Employment Service providers. This is a challenging goal. There are a number of areas that require improvement if this is to translate into local providers working effectively together.

Input with respect to the AMEP and Employment Service providers working together is outlined under four areas

1. Capacity to share information
2. Increased flexibility in accommodating non linear pathways to sustainable employment
3. Clear and consistently applied guidelines on Activity Test requirements for AMEP clients
4. Working with employers to better meet their needs

1. Capacity to share information

It is clearly important to know which AMEP clients are registered with an Employment Service Provider and contact details of the Employment Consultant working with the client. Under current arrangements there are no systemic ways of ensuring this. In the case of the AMES Consortia, where clients are registered with an AMEP Consortia provider and AMES Employment Services³, this coordination is possible but is nevertheless limited and impeded by government systems not being linked.

In AMES case where both the AMEP and Employment Services are provided, it is also possible to share information on the labour market and employment opportunities for AMEP clients who are also seeking work in the short term, and to attempt to coordinate work with flexible delivery of the AMEP. The skills of Employment Services staff are also used to provide information to clients in class and work with them on job search skills. All of this however, relies on close working relationships within an organisation.

However where clients are registered with another Employment Service provider contact is limited at the very best, and usually does not occur. Because AMEP clients are likely to be registered with a number of different Employment Service providers who are competing with each other wider scale cooperation is unlikely to occur.

Ideally systems need to be linked so that it is possible to identify the Employment Service provider who a client is registered with. This however is a longer term project which would require significant resources from government. On a smaller scale, AMES is developing a Client Management System to ensure that client information is shared across all AMES services. This will improve connections within the organisation but cannot address cross provider issues.

It may also be possible to add the Employment Service provider to the Learner Passport. This would be a local solution that may encourage greater coordination and communication.

It is likewise important to strengthen relationships with Centrelink, particularly when a client's entitlement to AMEP is ending and clients will be transitioning to other programs. While in some cases relationships are very effective, this relies to some extent on individual local relationships and would benefit from a more systemic approach. Centrelink is the central point of connection for services and is therefore very important as a conduit for information between services.

³ Holmesglen is also a sub contract provider in AMES Employment Services

2. *Increased flexibility in accommodating non linear pathways to sustainable employment*

It is important to recognise the ways in which new arrivals transition into work. First work opportunities are often casual, erratic and often at a skill level which does not fully utilise previous overseas experience – or at times does not use this at all. Preliminary data from the Intermediate Labour Market project that AMES is implementing in 2008 indicates that clients may move through a range of different work and training before establishing a longer term employment pathway.

Taking early work opportunities is a way to develop local work experience, an appropriate work ethic and assist with successful settlement. It is however, equally important to ensure that new arrivals are provided with the tools to achieve pathways to more sustainable work that can support them but also provide models for their communities and their families. Continuing to build their English language capacity is an important part of this ability to progress in employment.

This has important implications for both the AMEP and for Employment Service providers (where AMEP clients are also registered with them). Where clients are taking up early transitional work it is a challenge to continue to provide flexibly delivered AMEP programs. The AMES Consortia has experimented with different ways of registering clients in Learning Activities so that they will not be disadvantaged in losing hours when they do not attend because of sessional / casual work. Classes have also been established to work around clients needs – for example on a Saturday afternoon for one group who are working during the week and Saturday morning. Employment Service providers and AMEP providers can work together to reinforce that clients will be supported to start some work and continue to learn English if they are both aware of what the client is wanting to do with respect to their pathway to employment.

3. *Clear and consistently applied guidelines on Activity Test requirements for AMEP clients*

The new Employment Services model should assist significantly in allowing clients to elect to remain in the AMEP before seeking work. It is hoped that clients will no longer report pressure from their Employment Service provider to get a job before completing their AMEP if this is their preferred pathway to employment. However, where clients elect to look for work concurrent with enrolling in the AMEP, they should receive active job search support from their Employment Service provider and continue to attend the AMEP.

The new Employment Participation Pathway stream should also facilitate and assist Employment Service providers in their role of preparing clients for employment. This will be particularly applicable where vocational training can be integrated with English language to make direct links with future employment.

The way Employment Service providers approach this at the moment is inconsistent. It is also important for clients to understand their options. This is best communicated in first language.

4. *Working with employers*

AMES Employment Services Job Network has developed close working relationships with local employers and industries. Recruitment officers have a good understanding of the areas of skill shortage and areas most likely to produce job outcomes for clients with limited English. The expertise and knowledge of Employment Service providers can be shared with AMEP providers to develop tailored courses which package language learning and some employment skills relevant to the skill shortage industries of any given area.

For example, AMES piloted a program in Noble Park which combined language training with basic welding skills using the facilities of Chisholm TAFE

nearby for the practical welding experience. Because the educational levels and English levels of the participants was low, the welding modules focussed on the language and communication components as well as generic employability skills such as punctuality, OH&S and reporting incidents. There were seven job outcomes from this course in manufacturing industries.

Employment Service providers would also have the capacity to negotiate AMEP provision in a workplace using a model of delivery such as the Regional and Rural Intensive Program that has a different price structure to account for delivery to small groups. .

5. Improve continuous enrolment

Should interim classes for those arriving midterm be considered?

If yes, would the Settlement and Social Participation pathway provide an appropriate initial pathway?

Would trained bilingual aides be suitable for teaching the interim classes?

The AMES Consortia considers that one solution will not be applicable to all clients with respect to continuous enrolment. There are a number of approaches that need to be considered. As the AMEP Discussion Paper notes, continuous enrolment provides difficulties for some clients but on the other hand, recent arrivals need to be exposed to English learning activity as soon as possible given their need to acquire language skills for daily living. These two competing demands may be better addressed by reviewing some areas where the issues are most evident and retaining existing arrangements where they are not seen as problematic by clients.

Input with respect to continuous enrolment is outlined under four areas

1. Purpose and content of an Interim Program
2. Intensity and frequency of Interim Programs
3. Business imperatives
4. Staffing Interim Programs

1. Purpose and content of an Interim Program

It is very important to have a well targeted program with a clearly defined client group and purpose. This will help determine program content. The AMES Consortia does not consider that the Settlement for Social Participation Pathway stream will be an appropriate option for all clients as an Interim Program.

An interim program could offer providers the first opportunity for a thorough up front assessment of needs, establishing short and medium term goals and providing information about possible pathways. The purpose could be to orient clients to learning programs, establish an awareness of self access resources that clients can use outside of the classroom, provide some skills and support to use these resources and begin to develop some independence – for example, when clients gain employment they will have some tools to continue their learning. It may also increase the take up of a combination of different learning modes and options if clients were more aware of these from the outset.

Some content would be applicable to all clients and other program components would be more applicable to clients with varying degrees of

capacity to work independently and take advantage of self access materials immediately. Clients could be supported by a combination of teachers and other staff working in first language to assist them in becoming familiar with resources they will be strongly encouraged to use as part of their AMEP program. The level of support would be determined by the capacity of clients to work independently.

The program could also incorporate settlement information and, for clients who will be entering the Employment Participation Pathway stream, some orientation to finding employment – either in the short term if that is their need or in the longer term.

This would be contingent on providers having well organised and resourced Independent Learning Centres that have resources that can cater for clients with varying levels of independent learning skills and for clients who are not literate in first language. Tender specifications should address these issues. Tenderers could be required to detail how they would manage such a program in the purchasing process.

2. *Intensity and frequency of Interim Programs*

For some clients low intensity programs will be suitable. For example, recent pilots of five week orientation programs for low level learners in the AMES Consortia have proved highly successful.

Shorter program modules for lower levels combined with a comprehensive orientation may prepare clients better for their classes and provide them with some more tools for independent learning. There will be exceptions where the professional judgement of the provider is that a client can integrate into an existing program without disrupting the learning of others already in the class.

Higher level clients can generally be more easily integrated into existing classes. AMES previous

experience in running interim programs across all levels has resulted in high level clients being dissatisfied and withdrawing.

The waiting time may also partly be addressed by delivering a range of shorter and longer programs – for example a further study program needs to be an intensive longer program while specific skill focus classes such as Learning to Drive programs may be appropriate in smaller blocks. In ELICOS programs the practice is often to run shorter blocks. This allows for regular intakes but one disadvantage is that clients prefer a longer period with one teacher. Whatever system is adopted there will be some advantages and disadvantages. Providers need to be flexible and expectations of clients need to be managed.

3. *Business imperatives*

The issue of continuous enrolment cannot be considered totally in the absence of business imperatives for providers to run programs with economically sustainable numbers. While this is the 'problem' of the provider, DIAC must recognise that delivering programs for new arrivals that need to be as flexible as possible does present business challenges for providers. Providers must deliver programs within fixed resources and balance the need to deliver client centred programs with the need to deliver programs that are economically sustainable and within a competitive tender cost.

It would also be important to review the contract requirements with respect to independent learning and how providers are funded to provide this service. The AMES Consortia considers that a stronger emphasis on independent learning,

beginning with orientation programs on entry, are fundamental to clients' ability to demonstrate highly valued workplace skills such as taking initiative and problem-solving. They are also essential skills for clients to continue their learning outside of classes – particularly where they exit for employment but need to continue to improve their English. The AMES Consortia has piloted orientation classes that incorporate a number of these aspects and has found them to be a successful model.

Where clients are undertaking a part time orientation program access to child care may pose an issue. This would need to be managed within the constraints of available child care, bearing in mind that part time child care places are scarce or costly.

4. *Staffing Interim Programs*

The AMES Consortia recommends that a combination of qualified teaching staff and bilingual staff be used. Providers should be required to develop and deliver a model that is appropriate to the clients who will be using the local service. Providers will also need to ensure that staff working in first language are appropriately skilled to undertake their specified roles and provide details in the purchasing process of how they will manage this.

The advantages of using first language for delivery is that it will ensure that learners are provided with information in L1 at a time when it is critical for the provider to understand their needs and aspirations. It is also a time when it is equally critical for the client to understand how they can best use the resources of the AMEP and also what are reasonable expectations of how the AMEP can contribute to achieving their long term goals.

It will not always be possible to provide bilingual or first language support for all clients – either because there are very small numbers or because programs are being delivered in small community settings or in regional areas. Flexibility in services required by DIAC will be required to

accommodate these circumstances. However, in larger settings, where the majority of AMEP clients attend programs this should be considered best practice and the model to which the AMEP aspires.

6. More bilingual support in mixed level classes

How can we best meet client needs for more structured, personal and progressive class tuition, with participants of differing educational levels?

How would you envisage bilingual support being used in AMEP classes?

What would be the maximum number of bilingual aides per mixed (first language) class?

Should bilingual aides work alongside teachers or independently?

As a principle in delivering services to new arrivals, the use of first language is strongly endorsed. The AMES Consortia places a strong emphasis on bilingual and first language provision for clients with very limited or no English.

The more wide ranging advantages for social inclusion and provision of opportunities for migrants to use their language and cultural skills are also of significant value. The model sends a clear and immediate message about Australia's commitment to contributing to successful settlement when others who are also recently arrived are providing services to the next group of migrants. AMES experience in the delivery of settlement services using Community Guides through the IHSS is that the model also provides opportunities to demonstrate skills, gain experience and provide pathways to other work.⁴

AMES and our consortia partners use this model on a large scale in the delivery of the IHSS. Likewise AMES Employment Services use first language staff to support job seekers with low levels of English into employment. This includes roles in assisting both the employee and the employer to broker communication and integration of new employees into productive roles in the workplace.

The AMES Consortia has also used bilingual staff in a range of roles. Input with respect to use of bilingual staff in the AMEP is outlined under three areas

1. Models for using bilingual staff
2. Number of bilingual staff
3. Working with teachers or independently

1. Models for using bilingual staff

There are a number of models for using bilingual staff. The AMES Consortia would therefore recommend that a focus on bilingual aides in classrooms should be considered as only one of a number of approaches that may be used by providers to meet the needs of low level learners who require first language support and the issue of mixed level classes.

In considering bilingual support in the AMEP, a clear distinction needs to be made between delivering and receiving accurate information and teaching the culturally appropriate language for a range of contexts. The principle that concepts and information are most effectively delivered in first language and the English to support this information is best taught and delivered in English is a useful approach.

⁴ AMES employs a large number of Community Guides on a casual basis. These Guides work in first language with newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants supporting them in initial settlement as part of the delivery of IHSS services. AMES also employs a number of Settlement Information Officers on a part-time contract basis. These workers are frequently recently arrived refugees themselves. Results to date with this group of workers have shown that the experience gained in AMES, and the reputation they establish with other service providers, leads to on-going work. Other service providers include health services, other not-for-profit agencies and government agencies including Centrelink. Settlement support work uses their skills and provides a valuable workforce to other agencies.

Since the start of the 'first work opportunity' initiative in 2005 a total number of 110 Community Guides have obtained employment outside of AMES or have become AMES employees on a part-time or full-time basis.

While clients with varying levels of education can benefit from concepts and information in first language and areas such as identifying needs and aspirations (as discussed earlier) those who benefit most from first language support in teaching English have been identified in an AMES study⁵ as one of three groups: clients with low levels of education, elderly clients, clients who have suffered some degree of trauma.

The AMES Consortia recommends that the following range of models should be considered for use in the AMEP. These include:

- Bilingual staff working in a classroom to support a teacher
- Bilingual staff working independently with groups of learners to reinforce learning and provide explanations in first language of concepts behind areas that are covered in class

- Bilingual staff working independently to deliver settlement information
- Clients working independently using materials in first language (for information concepts) and bilingual materials for language learning. Clients may need to be trained and encouraged to use these resources by bilingual staff.

In developing the most appropriate model for use with particular clients, providers, as the Discussion Paper notes, would need to ensure that staff are appropriately skilled and appropriate first language and bilingual resources were available. Providers should be required to demonstrate how they will manage this as part of the purchasing process.

2. *Number of bilingual staff*

There is no single answer to the appropriate number of bilingual staff that should be used at any one time. Settlement information sessions could cope with a number of different language groups concurrently. However, in a teaching support role, any more than three additional staff

in a classroom would be confusing, time consuming and not an effective way to use resources. It is more useful to consider the use of bilingual staff across a range of models as listed above. Diversifying the models will limit the use of a number of staff concurrently in a classroom.

3. *Working with teachers or independently*

Flexibility needs to be maintained in working with teachers or working independently. There are limitations on bilingual staff working independently with clients in the current contract and increased flexibility will be required in the next contract to make more effective use of this valuable resource. Providers should be required to demonstrate how they will manage this as part of the purchasing process.

⁵ Taylor, E 2000 First Language as a Resource: Bilingual Support in AMES Victoria

7. Increased options for youth

How can 15 to 18 year olds, with low levels of literacy, best be provided with the English language and assistance they need to transition successfully into further education, training and employment?

The AMES Consortia strongly supports the move to consider including 15–18 year olds as AMEP eligible. While many young people want to return to a school environment with young peers, this is not always possible or appropriate, and for this group access to the AMEP is essential. There are already significant numbers of clients in the AMEP who have the attributes of young learners. The inclusion of 15–18 year olds needs to be considered in the context of a number of successful models operating across the AMEP.

Input with respect to inclusion of 15–18 year olds is outlined under four areas

1. Partnerships with the school sector
2. Adopting the successful elements of existing AMEP Youth Programs
3. Providing a full year program
4. Providing adequate vocational guidance to make informed and realistic choice

1. Partnerships with the school sector

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) provides a very useful model for newly arrived young people to bridge into mainstream education. This program allows young people to learn English in an intensive program at the same time as undertaking a vocational program in a school or TAFE Institute. The AMES Consortia uses this model very successfully and recommends that this also apply to 15–18 year olds. The AMES Consortia also has some links with Language Schools.

There may be ways to more effectively incorporate the AMEP and Language Schools in a partnership to support young people. This would be particularly useful for young people who would prefer to be in a school but do not have the language and possibly other learning skills and educational level to succeed in this environment without intensive support

2. Adopting the successful elements of existing AMEP Youth Programs

Earlier in this response, the AMES Consortia has recommended that a separate stream be considered in the Employment Participation Pathway stream for this group. It is very important to have separate programs for youth within the AMEP.

There are a number of elements in existing youth programs that would be highly appropriate for 15–18 year olds. Programs for this group must be oriented to the needs and interests of young people and include sufficient social support and practical assistance with areas such as Centrelink benefits. They must replicate as far as possible the programs that young people would be engaged with in other education settings and provide connections to other young people.

There are significant levels of pastoral care in the current youth programs and these may need to be reviewed for younger learners, depending on their circumstances – for example whether they are unattached youth or have family support.

The AMES Consortia's experience is that additional resources are required to deliver successful programs for young people. Additional resources relate mainly to the need to deliver programs that include more links with the wider community, travel costs of excursions, equipment for involvement in sports activities and additional levels of social support required – particularly for unattached youth or where there are family tensions.

3. Providing a full year program

New arrivals who attend Language Centres prior to entry to primary and secondary school have a full year program. It is recommended that this also be applied to this group. For new arrivals entering with low levels of literacy, achieving the requisite skills to succeed in mainstream in less than a full year is unrealistic.

4. Providing adequate vocational guidance to make informed and realistic choice

The AMEP Discussion Paper notes that many parents are unaware of the options available and pressure their children to pursue professional careers regardless of whether this is the most appropriate pathway. The AMES Consortia's experience concurs with this.

There is an important role for vocational counselling for this group most of whom will require advice on vocational training and further study pathways before joining the workforce.

The AMES Consortia recommends that working with parents as well as the young people is very important. There is an important role for staff from newly arrived communities in providing information as well as professional advice and information from vocational counsellors.

It is also important for young people to undertake workplace visits to understand what different jobs and workplaces may look like in Australia and have industry experts provide information on options.

8. Increased allocation of hours

What is the best option for making more hours available to clients, particularly those with greater need?

There are two broad areas that require consideration in the area of increased allocation of hours: the total number of hours available and the exit level.

Input with respect to allocation of hours is therefore outlined under these two areas

1. Adjustment in use of AMEP Resources
2. Extension of language exit levels

1. Adjustment in use of AMEP Resources

For any clients who commence with no English, but categorically for those who have the added barrier of low formal education and no or low literacy in first language, it is clear that 510 hours is not adequate to acquire sufficient English to participate in employment and Australian society. This group of clients are frequently exiting the program at a level well below required levels to undertake vocational training in the mainstream and many do not have sufficient English for social communication and any reasonable level of interaction in the community. They are also at a profound disadvantage in gaining employment.

The number of hours required for some clients with very low levels of education and no English language on entry will exceed any reasonable expectation of increased budget allocation to the AMEP. It is therefore very important to ensure that the resources that are allocated are used to their maximum. Increasing the hours allocated to an individual to 800 to align with LLNP entitlements is a reasonable option.

There will be a significant number of clients who will not fully use this entitlement. A re-allocation of unused hours, where clients required in excess of 800 hours and were not eligible for further English language tuition through LLNP, would provide increased access for this group. It is important to note that this group frequently have no options at the end of their AMEP entitlement. A system such as the Employment Pathway Fund in the new Employment Services model, where funds can be drawn down by providers, would be a good approach. In the case of the AMEP this would convert to hours drawn down.

The proposed new delivery streams in the AMEP and possible Interim Program alternatives for providing initial orientation may mean that the existing role of the Special Preparatory Program (SPP) could be incorporated into this new model and allow some resources to be redirected for alternative use within the program.

2. Extension of language exit levels

The second area with respect to allocation of hours relates to the level at which clients are required to exit the AMEP.

Those clients with high levels of education and professional or para professional experience overseas need English levels in excess of the basic English level at which they are required to exit the AMEP. Consideration needs to be given to this group in decisions relating to allocation of hours.

The AMES Consortia, and a number of other providers, deliver very effective programs for migrants and refugees with professional qualifications. While a small number of AMEP eligible clients can access this program within current exit language requirements, it is not accessible to many. It is however an extremely effective program and represents an opportunity both to provide a very targeted service to transition newly arrived clients into employment and demonstrate excellent outcomes to government from a funding perspective.

A case study of an AMES client illustrates the issues for this group of clients. GK came to Australia from India in March 2007. Despite holding two post graduate qualifications, experience working in research before arriving in Australia, and high levels of English, when he first arrived in Australia he was not successful in gaining any job interviews. He was assessed under level 2 in writing and placed in the Skilled Professional Migrant Program (SPMP) at the Flagstaff site. The SPMP helped to improve his resume and job application writing skills, his telephone manner and his ability to talk about his work history with confidence. This helped him get some job interviews, but still no job. The next step was to enrol in a Practical Placement course, which offered an opportunity to gain some local experience and learn about Australian workplace culture and laboratory practices. He gained a six week placement with a pharmaceutical laboratory. During the six week placement he was able to demonstrate his skills and knowledge and the employer offered him a full time job.

The completion of Certificate III in Spoken and Written English or achievement of ISLPR 2 has long been acknowledged as insufficient to transition to mainstream higher education courses or enter the professional workforce. Inclusion of more advanced language levels would bridge this gap for clients needing to do further study in order to obtain employment or wishing to enter professional jobs. To ensure that there was a clear focus on employment for higher level language courses, it would be reasonable to require integrated vocational training as part of these courses. If the CSWE were to be used for this program it would be essential to include practical placement – currently not possible within the curriculum.

It is recommended that ISLPR 2+ be considered the exit level for the AMEP. This level would enable clients to more effectively access and successfully complete mainstream vocational training or move directly into employment with sufficient language to access pathways in their employment. ISLPR 2 is not sufficient to transition effectively to mainstream vocational training.

9. Increased delivery settings

How can clients in employment be best supported to continue learning English through the AMEP?

The AMEP Discussion Paper identifies two groups for whom increased delivery settings are important. The AMES Consortia supports the requirement to provide a range of delivery settings for clients who live a long way from formal class settings and have added complexities of child care and other family responsibilities. Others may not wish to attend formal settings even though these are geographically accessible. Within this context there must be sufficient flexibility in the contract to deliver programs in non standard learning environments. This needs to be balanced against an equally important requirement that contracted providers can guarantee a sufficient level of quality in facilities and programs and provide a comprehensive range of large well equipped formal settings as well as informal settings.

The AMEP Discussion Paper also proposes more classes be delivered in the workplace to ensure that English language learning needs of clients who take advantage of early employment are met. The AMES Consortia considers there are a number of issues that need to be considered with respect to access for employed new arrivals.

These are considered under four areas.

1. Catering for clients in casual employment
2. Ensuring clients understand options to continue learning English
3. Working with employers
4. Working with Employment Service providers

1. Catering for clients in casual employment

As noted earlier in this response, transitional unpredictable work is often the entry point to first employment. This means that while clients are employed, it is not sufficiently established and regular for an employer to consider providing English in the workplace.

AMEP clients need to be encouraged to continue to attend classes when they are not working but cannot be discouraged from taking up these casual opportunities as they arise. Clients often express concern that they will waste their AMEP entitlement if they are not able to attend regularly and so are inclined to withdraw. The

AMES Consortia attempts to be as flexible as possible in accommodating these learners and has established separate Learning Activities on ARMS with a number of hours per week that the client estimates they will be able to attend. This is one way to address this issue but also provides added complexities and disadvantages providers financially.

These increasingly flexible options must also be balanced against the need to deliver economically sustainable models and practicalities of clients moving in and out of programs regularly.

2. Ensuring clients understand options to continue learning English

The use of a Foundation Program / Interim class as proposed to address issues related to continuous enrolment may also assist in preparing clients to learn more independently once they find employment. Clients often associate learning English with a teacher and a classroom. If clients start to practise independent learning early and are made aware of the large range of

excellent resources available both on paper and on-line that they can use, it may provide them with more tools to continue their learning. Likewise an increased awareness of other AMEP delivery modes including Distance Learning and Home Tutors may be able to be introduced in these sessions.

The fact that clients report that they are not aware of learning options suggests that more effort needs to be placed on communicating this to clients in new ways. As previously noted there is a role for first language communication to

reinforce this. In the AMES Consortia, clients who withdraw are often followed up by a staff member who speaks their first language to offer other alternatives.

3. Working with employers

As stated previously in this paper, increasing the number of classes delivered in workplaces would appear to be a logical extension of more clients being in employment and retaining an entitlement to the AMEP. While this is the best option for employees, especially where a number of AMEP eligible clients are working in the same workplace, it is not practical for many employers. However, severe labour shortages in some industries may provide new opportunities to work with large employers.

The reality is many new arrivals work in small to medium enterprise (SME) workplaces as their first employment. AMES Employment places most job

seekers in these workplaces and there is a similar pattern across many Employment Service providers. These employers are frequently not well disposed to providing English on the job as it is not seen as worth the costs for a small number of employees.

It requires a different delivery and funding model to accommodate small numbers of clients. As suggested previously, a rural intensive study group model with a combination of limited on site delivery and Distance Learning teaching may be one option where employers were willing to consider having classes in the workplace.

4. Working with Employment Service providers

Working closely with Employment Service providers offers an opportunity to track client withdrawals due to employment more closely. When this occurs, AMEP providers can work with Employment Service providers to ensure that

clients transfer to another learning mode or change to evening or weekend programs. However, as noted close links with Employment Service providers are not well developed.

10. Childcare arrangements

The AMES Consortia strongly endorses the issues raised with respect to child care. Using existing child care providers who require full day places is expensive and inflexible where clients are not in full time programs. The cost of child care has been raised by providers across Australia, highlighting that this is an issue for providers and clients alike.

Issues with respect to childcare arrangements are outlined under two areas

1. Increased flexibility in provision of child care
2. Increased program flexibility

1. Increased flexibility in provision of child care

The capacity to use on site child care is welcomed. AMES is establishing an on site child care facility at one site to alleviate some of the issues relating to child care availability. In Victoria, child care regulations require that children can be in care for a maximum of 15 hours per week and therefore programs will need to be managed around this requirement. (This would, for example, preclude 20 hour programs in the Employment Participation Pathway stream for clients with children in child care).

Another alternative that is being piloted is working with children and parents in the same

community based location with a child care worker taking care of the children for part of the session and children and parents being together for part of the session. This requires the support of the FaHCSIA Communities for Children program but is a very successful model for the Social Participation Pathway stream. The model relies on having small numbers given there are children and parents involved and would require a different funding model in the longer term – for example a small study group model.

This model is particularly appropriate for program delivery in the Social Participation Pathway.

2. Increased program flexibility

Providing increased access to Home Tutors is, as proposed in the AMEP Discussion Paper, another option. The concern with this model is that in some geographical regions, there is a limit to the number of people who can and would volunteer more than once a week. It is however, an excellent concept in principle and should be tested.

A different pricing structure would also support delivery of the AMEP in community settings where clients already attend for other purposes – for example primary schools and child health centres. Funding for a child care worker, rather than individually funded child care places, would provide more flexibility in provision and make the model more viable. AMES often gets requests to deliver English programs in such venues and

attempts to meet these. However delivery is often at AMES own cost as the funding model does not support what are usually small groups. There are benefits for schools or health centres to have these programs on site as they provide increased opportunity to develop a relationship with AMEP client communities that represent a large proportion of their general community / client support base. A model that allowed children to be cared for as part of the class or provided a child care worker combined with class would increase access for some parents.

As noted above, this model is particularly appropriate for program delivery in the Social Participation Pathway.

11. More effective learning

What resources need to be developed or made more accessible to students wishing to learn at home?

Is there value in having a central repository of resources, including Distance Learning materials that all AMEP service providers can use?

The AMES Consortia supports the view that relying on a single option such as classroom learning is insufficient. Likewise the AMES Consortia supports the view that clients need an overview of the program they will be doing at the start of each term and a way of organising learning materials systematically.

With respect to the management of resources, the AMES Consortia considers that two areas must be taken into consideration.

1. Availability and organisation of resources
2. Knowledge of and capacity to make use of resources for independent learning

1. Availability and organisation of resources

The AMES Consortia considers that there are a large number of excellent resources available for use within the AMEP. The AMES Consortia recommends that it be a requirement in the tender to demonstrate capacity to manage provision of relevant resources for clients and a strategy for delivering this.

The AMES Consortia would suggest that providers that have the capacity to combine internal resource development with procurement through commercial purchasing provides the most effective, timely and targeted resources to meet the needs of the diverse groups requiring English in the AMEP. The AMES Consortia does not consider that there should be an expectation by providers that DIAC will be responsible for providing resources.

The exceptions to this are the provision of Distance Learning materials that are a useful central resource to form the core of a Distance Learning program. Translated information provided by DIAC is also very useful and a cost effective way to provide information where this is of a standard nature and information that DIAC considers useful for clients to access as part of information on government services. Recent examples of such material are the multilingual fact sheets accompanying the *Let's Participate* course and the *Australia A New Home* DVD for newly arrived clients from Africa.

Learning materials, on the other hand, are usually best developed by providers who can respond in a timely way where they see the need for a new resource to support a particular client group. Where providers choose to invest significant resources in this activity this will be a commercial decision on their part. Where providers do not have the internal capacity to undertake resource development, they can purchase commercially available resources.

The AMES Consortia notes the feedback of clients with respect to organisation of course learning materials and recommends that providers be required to provide detailed responses as part of purchasing arrangements as to how they will manage this. There is no one solution but it is clearly an area that requires additional focus in future purchasing arrangements.

The AMES Consortia also recommends that an allocation be provided to clients to purchase resources – similar to arrangements in previous Special Intervention Program language and literacy programs purchased by the former DEST. This allows all clients to have a standard grammar text, for example, that can be used as part of a set of course and self study materials. This amount could be drawn down by providers to ensure consistency of resources purchased.

2. Knowledge of and capacity to make use of resources for independent learning

The AMES Consortia considers that increased effort needs to be placed on making clients aware of available resources and training clients to use these independently. This could commence as part of the interim classes where clients could be advised of resources and assisted with skills to begin accessing these (where they are not already computer literate for example). Clients must also be made more aware of different learning options. As previously noted, there is a role for first language information to facilitate this effectively.

Skills and practice time for self access learning needs to be integrated into formal classroom learning programs. This would require changes to the contract to allow for some flexible time to be counted as part of a client's program. This is particularly important where clients may leave the AMEP to take up employment before they have used all of their hours and need to continue to learn more independently. As noted in the response to 9. *Increased Delivery Settings*, many AMEP clients who gain employment will do so with

small employers or may transition to work through casual employment and it will not be realistic to provide English on the job.

As noted in the AMEP Discussion Paper, to ensure that clients can use a range of learning resources, increased access to computers and internet is also required. The AMES Consortia agrees that AMEP providers must be able to demonstrate as part of the tender process that they have adequate computer facilities and that these are available in non standard hours.

However, demonstration of strategies to ensure that clients take up these additional learning opportunities and are equipped with the skills to do this where they are unfamiliar with independent learning are also essential. For some clients this will require very structured and guided approaches. Approaches to effectively manage these issues should also be required as part of the tender process.

12. Better promotion of the AMEP

How can the AMEP better market the program to reach as many eligible clients as possible?

The AMES Consortia agrees with the strategies proposed in the AMEP Discussion Paper to promote the AMEP. One additional way to promote the program is using increased word of mouth in communities. For many clients the most effective way to disseminate information and also advocate for the benefits of the AMEP is for clients from the community to promote that the program assists clients with their settlement.

Ensuring that other service providers are also fully aware of the AMEP and the flexibility available within the program should assist. The more flexible approach proposed in the next contract must therefore be publicised to other service providers. The increased focus on employment and the labelling of programs with a clear employment pathway focus may also support this

perception of the usefulness of the program for a number of clients.

The use of a separate AMEP logo to brand the program was useful to create an identity for the AMEP.

The preliminary results of the AMES Longitudinal Study indicate that most clients are aware of the AMEP before they arrive in Australia and the information they are given is accurate. The major sources of information about the AMEP are either friends / family or DIAC. The AMES Consortia therefore considers that information provided by DIAC contributes to the AMEP being widely promoted and known about.

13. Changes to the curriculum

How can work preparation modules be best incorporated into the CSWE?

What alternatives to the CSWE could be used in the Settlement for Social Participation pathway?

The AMES Consortia considers that it is essential to situate some English language learning in a vocational context where clients want to gain employment. Curricula used in the AMEP need to be both expansive enough to accommodate a range of purposes and provide the opportunity to focus on particular vocational skills across different waves of migration. The AMES Consortia considers that the CSWE has limitations as the sole curriculum for Employment Participation Pathway stream.

The AMES Consortia welcomes the move to provide alternatives to the CSWE in the Settlement for Social Participation Pathway stream.

Input with respect to curricula is outlined under four areas

1. Integration of work preparation modules into curricula
2. Integration of work experience into curricula
3. Issues relating to a mandated curricula
4. Settlement pathway alternatives

1. Integration of work preparation modules into curricula

The inability to integrate units from Training Packages into the mandated CSWE curriculum presents issues in delivering the most relevant program for higher level clients who have identified employment as their pathway. While there is increased flexibility in the new CSWE and employment related curricula can be included (the curricula specifies learning outcomes not content) it would be preferable to be able to provide clients with units from Training Packages.

Some providers may argue that the content of Training Packages can be included within the curriculum. However, this requires mapping Training Package outcomes across to CSWE module outcomes and is an unwieldy duplicated process. It would be preferable to be able to deliver these units as stand alone units nested within the course.

The AMES Consortia proposes that there may be a number of ways to provide the flexibility for the inclusion of new work preparation skills. DIAC could require the owners of the curriculum to include a capacity to deliver units from Training Packages as part of the curriculum as a condition of use as the AMEP curricula. This is common in other ESL curricula. Alternatively DIAC could

mandate that a percentage of delivery could be delivered using curricula other than the CSWE. For example, where a course was targeting clients who wanted to gain entry to a certain industry, 20-30% of the delivery may be using units from that industry training package. This would form the language content and would not compromise the AMEP as a language program. Rather, it would increase relevance of the AMEP for clients.

Identifying Training Package units as separate to the CSWE would allow DIAC to report additional outcomes to government in terms of clients' achievements and pathways to employment. The alternative is that providers manage around this in an attempt to make programs as relevant as possible for clients wanting employment and use other funding sources. These cannot then be counted as AMEP outcomes. This also requires providers to have access to other funding sources.

Where providers use this option it also presents issues for child care as clients cannot use AMEP child care for the course component that is funded from another source. This represents a significant access barrier to including some AMEP clients in these programs under the current model where other funding sources must be used.

2. *Integration of work experience into curricula*

The issues outlined above with respect to Training Package units also apply for integration of work experience into the AMEP. The AMES Consortia recommends that possible solutions proposed above also be considered to make work experience possible as part of AMEP courses.

Work experience can be a highly significant factor in assisting newly arrived migrants and refugees

with no Australian work experience to get their first work opportunity and therefore needs to be considered as part of a more employment focussed AMEP.

ESL Frameworks⁶, a curriculum widely used in Victoria, includes an 80 hour practical placement unit that provides a very suitable curriculum option for this program.

3. *Issues relating to a mandated curricula*

Expansion of curricula options would simplify the capacity to create classes from a variety of funding sources. This is particularly relevant where small numbers of AMEP and LLNP learners are combined with learners funded through other sources to deliver programs in small community venues. The ability to do this increases accessibility for learners.

Community providers would not usually use the CSWE in other ESL programs as they must pay a CSWE licence fee and can access other equally suitable curricula free of charge. Care needs to be taken that the requirement for a mandated curriculum does not limit flexibility for clients in other respects.

While the use of a national curriculum has advantages, it is unusual for licence fees to be charged. This provides a particular burden for

small providers who are part of a consortia constructed to provide maximum flexibility for clients.

An additional area that requires some consideration is dissatisfaction reported by clients with the CSWE. A significant number of clients in the Employment Participation Pathway stream will be learners with low English and low education backgrounds. Consideration may need to be given to whether clients in this stream should be required to use the CSWE or whether more flexibility as is proposed in the Social Participation Pathway stream would be more appropriate.

Having a single mandated curriculum in the Employment Participation Pathway stream is at odds with the principle of moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach.

4. *Settlement pathway alternatives*

The Settlement for Social Participation Pathway stream requires maximum flexibility to cater most effectively for the clients who will be in this stream. The AMES Consortia recommends that the requirements for this stream be left open to allow for different learning arrangements to be implemented.

Clients in this stream will need to have a clear outline of the content of their program and what outcomes they can expect from participation. This will need to be monitored and checked with clients to ensure that they can see the improvements that result from participating in the AMEP. This is best developed at the local

level and can be achieved without using any accredited curriculum. It may be best described in very functional terms.

AMES has previously provided some input on possible settlement competencies that may be useful course components. These have been developed for use in delivering services in the IHSS. As they cover the core settlement competencies required early in settlement they are applicable also to the Settlement for Social Participation Pathway Stream. Ideally, the work of IHSS providers, Settlement Grants Program providers and AMEP providers would all contribute to these outcomes for clients.

⁶ ESL Frameworks is a curriculum accredited under the Victorian Qualifications Authority Act 2000. It has Entry, Access, Further Study and Employment Streams.

AMES has identified core settlement competencies for refugee entrants as follows:

- Life skills: personal safety, safety in the home, transport / orientation, nutrition, parenting
- Health literacy / Health management
- Financial literacy
- Tenancy
- Legal: road safety, consumer rights, family law (child protection / domestic violence)
- Civics and citizenship

Language outcomes would be best measured only in terms of language gains on the ISLPR. The achievement of settlement competencies could be measured in addition to language gains. This would provide a measure of progress for clients and a useful additional measure to report to government.

14. Improved reporting arrangements

The AMES Consortia supports the need for improved reporting outcomes to better capture gains made in the AMEP. The move away from the term 'functional English' is very sensible in this regard.

The AMEP Discussion Paper notes a number of additional areas that the AMEP could report on. Reporting on areas including training, further study and employment destinations would require additional tracking. They would however, provide excellent additional data to support achievements of the AMEP. As noted earlier in this paper, AMES has commenced a longitudinal study in 2008.

This will provide data over time on how individual clients' expectations and aspirations track in the period of early settlement and how the AMEP experience contributes. It will also provide data on destinations of clients over the 18 month study period.

In addition to undertaking some tracking of destinations for clients on exiting the AMEP (and tracking those who gain employment and continue in the AMEP), a longitudinal survey conducted by DIAC or the AMEP Research Centre may be an additional way to collect sample data.

With respect to additional reporting on settlement competencies, AMES has provided some input based on our work in IHSS earlier in this review process. A summary of these competencies is included below. These have been specifically designed to meet the needs of IHSS clients and therefore will not all be applicable to migrants who come with family and community support. They are however, indicative.

Is the entrant capable of		
• Accessing money through ATM	Yes	No
• Negotiating Centrelink issues	Yes	No
• Managing basic tenancy issues	Yes	No
• Accessing health services when needed	Yes	No
• Using public transport	Yes	No
• Maintaining relationship with the school	Yes	No
• Shopping independently	Yes	No
• Finding employment	Yes	No
• Budgeting: income vs expenditure	Yes	No
• Using translating and interpreter services	Yes	No
Has the Entrant developed		
• Understanding of basic legal issues	Yes	No
• local community networks	Yes	No
• Knowledge about neighbourhood issues/ relations	Yes	No
• Understanding of relationships within Australian society	Yes	No
Has the Entrant been connected		
• To the local ethnic community	Yes	No
• To the local church/ religious body	Yes	No
• To the local Settlement Grants Program	Yes	No
• Neighbourhood issues	Yes	No
Has the Entrant been referred to the Foundation House	Yes	No
Has the Entrant received help with/assistance on		
• Safety, security and well-being	Yes	No
• Mental health issues	Yes	No
• Information on Health issues	Yes	No
• Emergency relief and support	Yes	No
• Education / schooling: AMEP etc	Yes	No
• Parenting issues	Yes	No

15. Better targeted professional development of teachers

Is there a need for more training of teachers in the development of programs that cater to the interests and needs of the client group?

Taking into account that overall professional development of teachers is the responsibility of employing agencies, are there emerging training needs for teachers?

The AMES Consortia recommends that it be a requirement in the tender to demonstrate capacity to manage provision of professional development for teachers and other staff and a strategy for delivering this. While there are specific roles that the AMEP Research Centre can undertake, the responsibility for staff training, as noted in the AMEP Discussion Paper, should primarily rest with providers.

Input with respect to professional development is outlined under one area.

1. Training of teachers and emerging needs

1. Training of teachers and emerging needs

To date there has been a strong focus on the AMEP as a settlement program and teachers are skilled and experienced in managing this program needs. The creation of two streams for client pathways will place an increased focus on preparing the majority of AMEP clients for employment. Some teachers will have skills and experience in this area through existing work in delivering employment focussed programs. Others will require some additional skills and competencies to deliver effective programs in this area. An additional emphasis on vocationally focussed courses will also require some new and different skills.

The AMES Consortia's recommendations with respect to increasing the use of first language in the AMEP would also require staff to develop skills in working in a number of new ways with staff working in the clients' first language. To ensure that the most effective use is made of these skills, and they are well integrated into the AMEP, requires a new skill set.

An effective AMEP will also require providers to increasingly work with other providers – most particularly Employment Service and Settlement Grants Program providers. This will require a broadened role for some staff but can only be effectively managed at provider level as each provider will need to work out how they will manage this.

One area that DIAC has usefully contributed is in the area of information about new client groups in the AMEP. As this information is common across the AMEP, it is recommended that these facts sheets and information booklets continue to be produced. An advantage of this information is that it is also more widely applicable to other agencies who work with these groups.

While providers should be required to manage their own professional development, there is a role for the AMEP Research Centre to organise and manage forums to share good practice within the AMEP. There is also a useful role in undertaking research nationally that can document areas such as outcomes for AMEP learners and evaluate the impacts for clients of the new directions that will be implemented in the next AMEP contract.

While it is straightforward to collect and analyse data on areas such as language gains, other outcomes – such as employment and other client pathways – are not tracked. Additional research in this area would be valuable to improve programs and to promote the value of the AMEP to government and to communities.

Of broader concern for the industry is the shortage of trained ESL teachers and the ability to attract young teachers into the profession.