



 **AMES Australia**

# **SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2024**

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## Our vision:

Full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society

AMES Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands upon which we meet and work.

We extend our respects to the Elders who have walked and cared for this land for tens of thousands of years, and the descendants who maintain the spiritual connection to country, land, waters, sky, and cultures.

We are committed to our reconciliation journey because, at its heart, reconciliation is about bringing healing and flourishing relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations Peoples, for the benefit of all.

To the right: *‘The Journey’ by Brenda Mau*



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# Message from the CEO

In the past 12 months, AMES Australia's (AMES) work reached deeper levels of impact, amidst a global landscape characterised by unprecedented conflicts that have driven record numbers of displaced individuals to seek refuge and new beginnings. This seventh Social Impact Report reaffirms our organisational vision that extends beyond our clients acquiring skills or securing employment. We seek significant and measurable improvements to social connection, wellbeing, and resilience among our clients.

With over 70 years of dedicated service as a Victorian statutory authority, AMES Australia's unique position supports refugees, migrants, and multicultural communities from the initial stages of their settlement journey to their ultimate independence. Each journey is distinct, and our tailored approach ensures comprehensive support that empowers individuals to actively participate in a cohesive and diverse society. This strong vision directs our organisational priorities, strategies, and methodologies, ensuring we effectively deliver on our public value.

We have continued to align our measures with five of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), translating these global ambitions into tangible outcomes within our Social and Economic Participation Framework. This Framework guides our strategic operations, focusing on key domains of health and wellbeing, education, employment, and safety and security.

Innovation remains central to our approach to empower our clients to take active roles in their settlement journeys. One of our flagship innovations this year, the MyAMES Chat app, an AI-powered communication coaching tool, garnered recognition through a Victorian Premier's Award, exemplifying our commitment to cutting-edge service delivery. Initiatives like our 'Greenlight' project, integrate our refugee settlement services with employment programs, have demonstrated sustainable employment outcomes for refugees shortly after arrival.

These collective efforts underscore our mission, ensuring that every individual we support can lead a fulfilling and impactful life within Australia's multicultural society. This report highlights our ongoing collaboration with clients and their communities as the cornerstone of AMES Australia's continued positive impact.



Cath Scarth, CEO AMES Australia



# AMES approach to impact and SDG alignment

## AMES Social and Economic Participation Framework

AMES Australia's services, advocacy, and corporate operations are informed by our **Social and Economic Participation Framework** to achieve our goal of 'full participation for all'. The four domains of the Framework affirm our commitment to making an impact. Aligning to relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes defining statements of impact from our operational practice.

|                                                                                                             |                                                                                         |                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>Education            | <b>Delivering education focused on long-term, successful settlement and careers</b>     | Leads to a better skilled workforce, and a better educated Australian society                      |
| <br>Employment         | <b>Supporting people into sustainable, long-term employment in the right job</b>        | Leads to reduced unemployment, and increased economic productivity                                 |
| <br>Health & Wellbeing | <b>Fostering good health and wellbeing as foundations for thriving in the community</b> | Leads to better health and wellbeing outcomes, and greater health equity and individual resilience |
| <br>Safety & Security  | <b>Building safer, more socially cohesive communities</b>                               | Leads to community impacts including improved perception of personal and neighbourhood safety      |

# SDG alignment

AMES core services of settlement, education, employment, social participation, and disability and aged care services align most strongly to SDGs: **Goal 3 Health and Wellbeing**, **Goal 4 Quality Education**, **Goal 5 Gender Equality** and **Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth**. AMES way of working is underpinned and compellingly evidenced in alignment with **Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals**.



## SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing

AMES advocates for and connects clients to health-care services specialising in the unique needs of multicultural communities; builds clients' health literacy through health information and programs; and provides specialist services as a NDIS and My Aged Care provider.



## SDG4 Quality Education

AMES is a specialist provider of foundational and vocational programs which provide inclusive, place-based, accessible and affordable education for multicultural clients and build pathways to social participation, further education, and employment.



## SDG5 Gender Equality

AMES is committed to building a workplace that is grounded in respect, fosters inclusion, promotes diversity, and embraces the unique skills and qualities of all people. AMES approach is guided by our Diversity and Inclusion Framework and a Gender Equality Action Plan.



## SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

AMES as a specialist provider of employment services for multicultural, refugee and Indigenous jobseekers, advocates for sustainable work with fair pay and career opportunity for all jobseekers; prepares clients for work in Australia; works with employers to connect clients to jobs which match their skills and expertise; and supports entrepreneurial interests.



## SDG17 Partnerships for the Goals

AMES preferred way of working is in partnership with multicultural communities, service providers, and major corporate and public sector organisations to influence, broaden our reach, strengthen our delivery and build capability, to benefit our clients.



Photo: Luminous Parade 2024, Melbourne

# 2024 impact highlights

## Education for successful settlement and careers

- 5,529 enrolments in accredited and non-accredited courses
- 78% overall student satisfaction
- 92% of SEE students achieved 1,697 measurable improvements in language, literacy or numeracy skills
- Of VET graduate survey respondents:
  - 80% rated their course experience 4 or 5 out of 5
  - 92% reported the course helped achieve their employment goals
  - 87% said they were satisfied with their jobs

### myAMES Chat

1,565 students using MyAMES Chat

835 hours of interview practice undertaken

### Educating new arrivals

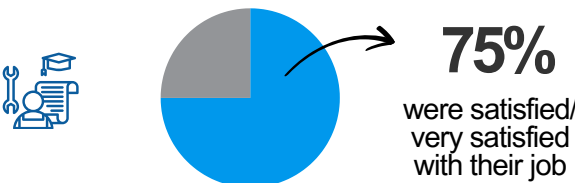
- 1,770 children supported to enrol in school
- 2,010 adults referred to and enrolled in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

## Satisfying, long-term employment

- 1,937 jobseekers found sustainable employment, and of these:
  - 1,688 were from multicultural backgrounds
  - 249 were First Nations people
- 235 business start-ups for 244 refugee clients supported in collaboration with Thrive Refugee Enterprise with 63% having arrived in Australia less than 5 years prior
- 84 Community Hub participants gained employment in AMES support regions of Dandenong, Casey, Wyndham, Brimbank, and Greater Geelong
- 29 skilled engineers referred from AMES social enterprise *Settling into Work* to the Victorian Government's Engineering Pathways Industry Cadetship (EPIC)

### Survey insights

44% of survey respondents from 2023 skilled migrant employability program were in work 3 months after the program; of those:



## Good health and resilience: foundations for thriving

- 13 podcasts on health topics, in 7 languages, accessed by more than 400 community members
- 42 newly arrived women attended a Womens' Retreat to support social connections
- 81,449 direct care hours delivered to Kare ONE clients
- 88 clients assisted through NDIS support coordination and My Aged Care
- 81 refugee women referred to breast screening for the first time

### Settlement outcomes

- 4,245 Healthcare
  - 3,981 Family and social support
  - 4,398 Transport
  - 3,544 Local laws and rights
  - 4,311 Managing money
- refugees gained the ability to apply their knowledge of

## Safe and cohesive communities

- 1,353 newly arrived families in leased, long-term housing with 18 properties on average per week secured
- 1,811 basic household goods deliveries to newly arrived families
- 46 members of the Afghan community graduated from the PVAW leadership program
- 320 volunteers assisted clients; 280 AMES volunteers and 50 corporate volunteers

### Representing diverse communities

\$3,923,100 relative value of media coverage on multicultural social and economic issues

2,502 broadcast and online coverage pieces

689 print items

### Social media reach

9,180 LinkedIn followers reached with 21,300 engagements

16,100 Facebook followers reached with 82,000 engagements

## AMES leadership and influence

- Employees from refugee backgrounds represented Australia at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in Geneva, Switzerland
- 14 submissions to government policy inquiries
- 26 responses to collaboration requests for research
- 37 Insights (6 Digests covering 12 settlement topics)

90% of employees rated AMES as a 'truly great place to work'

AMES iMPACT Magazine awarded the Media Award at the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2023

MyAMES Chat app in partnership with Getmee awarded the Digital Design Category in the Victorian Premier's Design Awards 2023



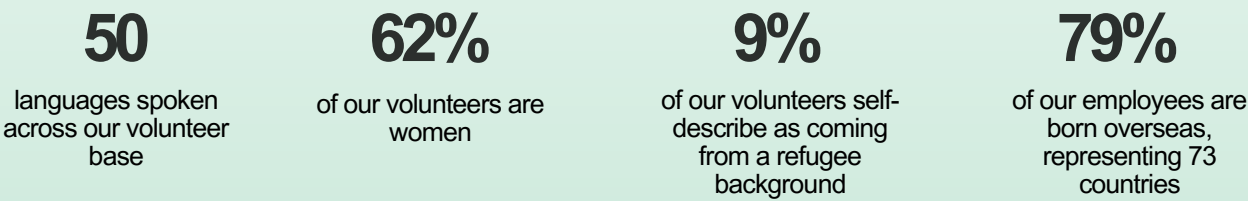
Photo: Settlement clients at camping trip, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Victoria



**Our impact aligned to SDG 3**

Our impact in support of SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing is achieved through directly empowering clients to participate and thrive in the community. Our work in disability support and facilitating community activities exemplify our broad focus on SDG 3 and closely related aspects of community cohesion, equality, and individual mental wellbeing.

**We are a part of the communities we work for**



**Wellbeing and community cohesion**

**Enhancing social cohesion through celebration**

Multicultural festivals and events, like AMES inaugural Luminous Festival and Lantern Parade, are vital for promoting understanding and acceptance between our diverse communities. This event involved a lantern parade through the iconic Queen Victoria Market and featured drummers, musicians, and lantern-holding community members. 400 people attended representing 30 migrant and refugee communities to celebrate Melbourne’s diversity of cultures, heritages and histories. In the weeks preceding the parade, lantern-making workshops were held. The parade created a spectacular evening of light, colour, and conversation.

Lanterns are a universal tool used by all communities and peoples for thousands of years, so they naturally are a unifying symbol” – Khalid, originally from Afghanistan

**Advocacy makes a difference for recently arrived clients**

With the increasing number of new arrivals with complex health issues arriving through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and long wait times for NDIS approval, AMES HSP team increased advocacy efforts for funding for these clients. The outcome was positive with extra funding for 129 HSP clients secured for NDIS care services support including transport costs for health appointments, hiring mobility aids, and supporting clients at risk of homelessness with emergency accommodation.

“Securing extra funding has enabled new arrivals that face additional challenges to be given the best chance to settle in Australia with strong health and wellbeing outcomes” – AMES Manager Operations and Practice, HSP

**Partnerships support refugee clients into long-term housing**

As a newly arrived refugee, securing long-term housing can be challenging, hindering positive settlement outcomes. In the past 12 months, AMES secured 1,353 long-term leases for recently arrived clients, with an average of 18 properties per week secured. In South Australia, through connections with a local building company, 15 brand-new, 2-bedroom properties were made available to refugee families, and 13 families have moved in. Each family was assisted throughout the application process, ensuring they were well-prepared and informed of their tenancy rights and responsibilities. This outcome has enabled the families to feel safe and secure in their new homes, and in turn, commence settling into their new community.



## Our impact aligned to SDG 4

Education success is important for settlement success. Our education activities, as well as much of our work through social participation programs is aligned to SDG 4 Quality Education for all. Extending the opportunity to access services, employment and social participation through education is at the centre of AMES work: all rely on foundational language, literacy, numeracy, employability, digital literacy, community orientation and more.

### Volunteering to enhance education impact

25%

of volunteers assisted clients to learn English

17%

of volunteers assisted newly arrived refugees to learn about daily life in Australia

41%

of volunteers were professional mentors

16%

of volunteers supported jobseekers to prepare for work, and supported other functions across AMES such as office administration and IT

## Purposeful education pathways

### Fostering a sense of belonging through photography

Young people from multicultural and refugee backgrounds report they often struggle to connect with community organisations and the broader community. Through the Victorian Government's Engage! Program, AMES facilitated a Photography Interest Group, offering free workshops led by a professional photographer to young people aged 17-25. Over three years 223 participants have not only built photography skills, they have reported a greater sense of belonging, and connected with peers, enhancing social cohesion. In the last year, interest soared with 156 young people participating.

*"It was an amazing experience to share my knowledge and experience with young people who are passionate about learning and are looking towards careers in photography"* – Workshop facilitator

### Digital literacy builds connection and confidence

Digital literacy skills are life and work skills. To bridge the barrier to social and economic participation AMES, supported by volunteers, assisted clients to build their skills and confidence through attending digital drop-in centre sessions. 65 participants attended 172 sessions over 10 weeks. Topics covered computer basics, internet usage, emailing, online services, safety, and mobile phone features. Participants were supported in hands-on practice, such as accessing apps like Myki on their phones, reading online maps, and navigating online services.

*"As I am learning more things about my phone and computer, I am more confident and able to learn other things as well"* – Digital drop-in centre participant

### Broadening access to community-based education

Formal classroom settings are often unsuitable for new arrivals with limited English skills. In 2024 AMES became a Hub Support Agency under the Community Hubs Australia program, supporting 25 Hubs embedded in primary schools across metropolitan Melbourne and Greater Geelong. The aim of Community Hubs is to connect culturally diverse families, many with school and pre-school aged children, with education and support services, offering informal English learning through activities like cooking, gardening, and child-focused activities. The Hubs create a welcoming environment for learning, and foster greater community integration while supporting English language skills in a flexible setting.

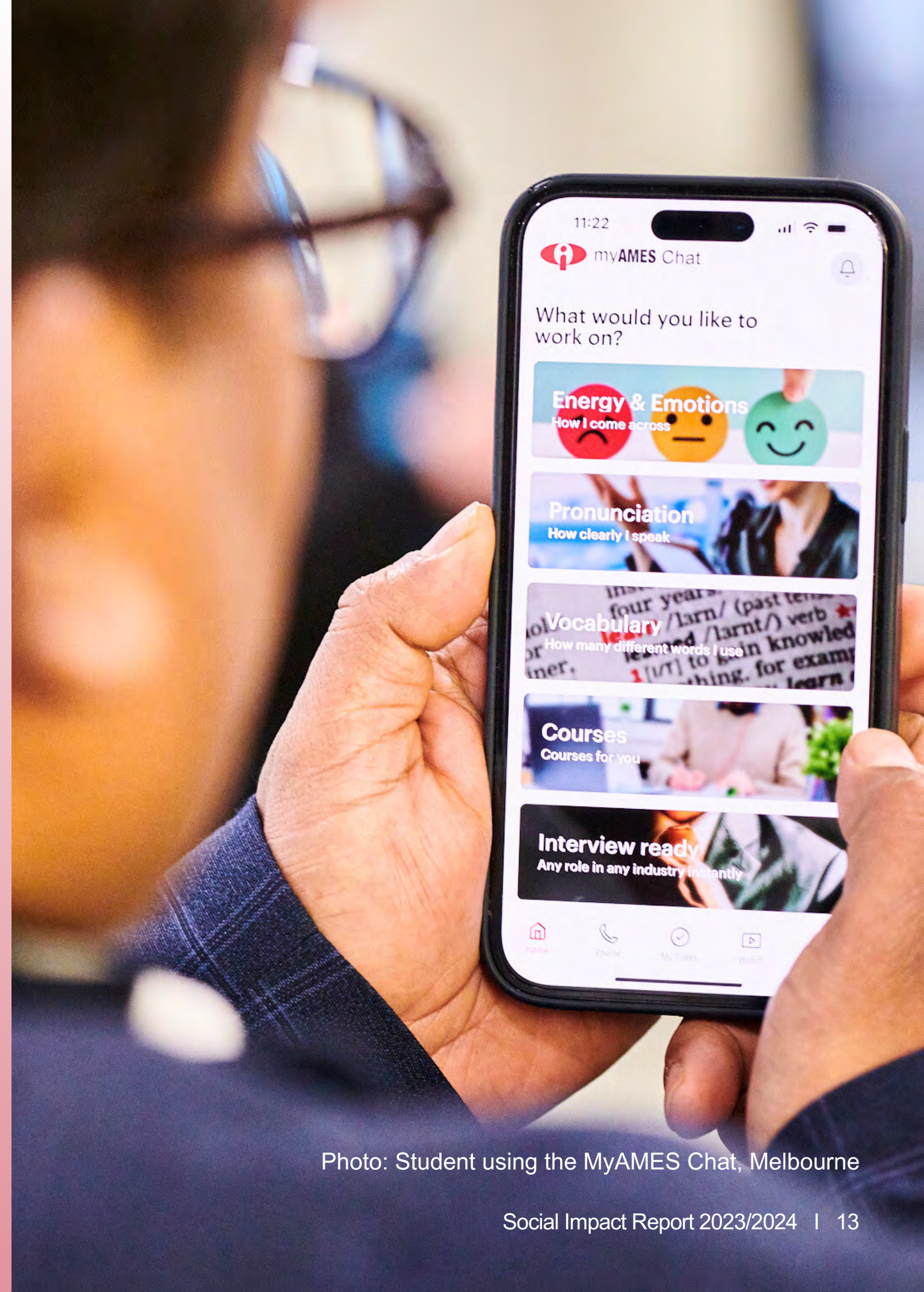


Photo: Student using the MyAMES Chat, Melbourne



### Our impact aligned to SDG 5

Gender equality is essential to successful settlement outcomes, with societies that are more equitable showing widespread economic and social benefits. AMES is committed to creating an environment in which all genders can flourish, aligning our ambition to the Sustainable Development Goal 5. AMES commitment to gender equality is supported by initiatives such as AMES Gender Equality Action Plan, and our Prevention of Violence against Women leadership and bystander programs, providing essential and culturally tailored training to multicultural communities.

### Prevention of Violence against Women (PVAW) leadership program leads community change

43

women and men graduated from the Afghan leadership and bystander program in 2023/2024

76%

reported the course changed their opinion about domestic and family violence

81%

of participants said they had planned PVAW projects to deliver in their community

80%

ranked the course 8 out of 10 or higher

## Promoting gender equality and safety

### Making a difference in Melbourne's Afghan community

Gendered violence continues to challenge the safety of women from all backgrounds. AMES Prevention of Violence Against Women unit delivered two programs tailored for the Afghan refugee and migrant community living in Melbourne's southeast. This included a 7-session leadership program, 'Safe Families, Safe Communities', for 26 participants with a follow-up 6-session Bystander training with 17 participants. The leadership program focused on the root causes of gendered violence, and how community-led responses can be developed. The Bystander training course built on this knowledge by explaining how being an active bystander can prevent the occurrence of family and domestic violence, and how it plays an important role in reducing the prevalence of violence against women.

"I learned a lot, and afterwards I gained self-confidence and started studying again. After I finish my studies, I will come to AMES and thank them from my heart" – Program participant

### Creating social connections for women

Women from multicultural backgrounds can face challenges integrating and exploring their new country in a safe and inclusive environment. AMES Multicultural Women's Retreat responds to this issue. Held annually in regional Victoria, 42 women from 8 countries attended this year's retreat. Safety and health information was delivered by Vic Pol and specialist health services. There were also social activities - art and craft, candle making - and cultural workshops such as Bollywood dance and African drumming. The retreat enabled women to connect over the 3 days, fostered a sense of inclusion, and provided valuable information and joyful cultural experiences.

"It was great to see the women taking part in the activities and making new friends" – AMES Program Coordinator

### AMES influencing family violence response internationally

Domestic violence is a global issue - effective strategies for preventing family violence require collaboration and sharing of best practices. AMES facilitated a 20-strong delegation of South Korean police, bureaucrats, and social workers as part of the 'Advancing Collaborative Conversations in Gender Equality in Australia and Korea' project. This event strengthened international partnerships, showcased AMES Preventing Violence Against Women program, and fostered bilateral collaboration and advancement of gender equality initiatives between Australia and South Korea.



Photo: The Mildura Cup 2024, Mildura



Photo: Hamed, Iranian entrepreneur at his cafe Salamatea, Melbourne



## Our impact aligned to SDG 8

Employment is both an AMES impact domain and one of the core SDGs with which we align. Finding a sustainable job is a critical turning point for migrants and refugees. Employment is captured in SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth which articulates a vision of decent work for all people, particularly for marginalised groups who should have access to good jobs and fair pay.

## Creating opportunities for better employment

### AMES initiative to support Gig workers

Gig workers in Melbourne, primarily migrants and students, lack dedicated spaces to rest and access support, despite their significant contribution to the city's economy. AMES Multicultural Hub, supported by the City of Melbourne and volunteers, established the "Gig Workers Hub," offering a space for riders and drivers to rest, connect, and access free food, drinks, phone chargers, and working rights-related information. This initiative, operating Wednesday to Sunday, provides a vital support network for gig workers, enhancing their well-being and ensuring they feel welcome and valued in the community.

*These workers are doing difficult and at times dangerous work serving the people of Melbourne. They don't have the same amenities as normal workplaces. Here they can find some space to rest, use amenities, and access information on their work rights" – Manager of the Multicultural Hub*

### Success in connecting jobseekers with employers

New arrivals often experience a mismatch of their skills and experiences to available job opportunities. To bridge this gap, AMES hosted two major job expositions. In Parramatta, over 200 clients engaged with 30 employers and training providers, resulting in 394 client/employer connections. In Victoria, a refugee jobs expo at Broadmeadows Town Hall saw 24 employers and 6 service providers offering advice and opportunities to more than 170 refugee job seekers. Attended by local federal MP Maria Vamvakinou and the then Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Andrew Giles, the Minister noted that it was important that refugees be supported: *"to take up the jobs they want to do and not the first job that comes along"*

### Specialist employment program for migrants fleeing crisis

In responding to the arrival of Ukrainian migrants on special visas, and their ineligibility for employment services, a tailored jobseeker program attended by 90 Ukrainian migrants provided in-language information on employment and education pathways, empowering participants to seek work fitting for their skills.

### Empowering service providers and employers to create inclusive services

Multicultural jobseekers often face barriers to employment due to a lack of inclusive workplaces and community settings. Through the Victorian government's Multicultural Learning Partnership (MLP) initiative, AMES developed a toolkit with guidelines, fact sheets, and training resources to create inclusive services, informed by consultations with 70 individuals and 50 organisations. The information was shared widely via 5 webinars attended by 400 participants. The initiative aims to equip service providers and employers with tools and knowledge to foster inclusive environments and promote sustainable employment outcomes for multicultural jobseekers. A member of the MLP Reference Group supporting the project noted that the program:

*"demonstrated a smart and valuable investment by government to build capacity to shift the barrier that multicultural jobseekers and workers currently face"*



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