

Issues Paper

Inquiry into the sharing of government and community facilities

PREPARED FOR:

Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission

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Overview

AMES contribution to the issues paper on sharing of government and community facilities relates specifically to issues that relate to CALD communities. The contribution is based on AMES specialist experience providing settlement, education, training and employment assistance to CALD Victorians.

The response documents some experience in sharing AMES facilities and also provides some input on proposed opportunities for sharing existing infrastructure facilities in the state training system to meet particular training needs of newly arrived refugees and migrants.

It also draws on the experience of new settler communities. AMES regularly consults with members of newly arrived communities as part of a formal community consultation process and informal intelligence gained from AMES multicultural staff

AMES response is also informed by the policy position outlined in the discussion paper on skills reform *Securing our Future Economic Prosperity* (April 2008). This provides a broad policy direction that will impact on the use of major training infrastructure in TAFE Institutes.

AMES believes that there are significant opportunities for increased use of specialist training resources in TAFE Institutes to meet the diverse vocational training needs of CALD Victorians. The opportunities to increase community use would provide advantages to participants requiring access to specialist training facilities and to Institutes in their presence in their local community.

While the paper focuses on the needs of CALD Victorians, the issues are applicable to other groups who are marginalised in society and in the training system. These groups include disengaged youth who are early school leavers and people with low levels of education who are returning to formal learning after long periods out of the workforce.

The response provides input on two areas discussed in the Issues Paper:

1. Existing arrangements and what AMES has learned from these approaches (2.2)
2. Facilities that AMES sees opportunities for sharing and the benefits of such arrangements (2.3)

Areas canvassed in the response cover a number of questions listed in the Issues Paper. Information is provided under these two broad areas rather than each question being addressed separately.

In sharing most facilities, AMES has maintained very simple governance arrangements and therefore has limited experience to add in this regard. The ways in which AMES has managed this is outlined as part of the discussion on existing arrangements in the following section. AMES Multicultural Hub, a recent initiative has a more formal structure and provides a relevant additional approach.

1. Existing arrangements and what AMES has learned from these approaches

AMES leases a significant number of buildings to deliver settlement, education and employment services. While these are primarily used by AMES, a number are also shared with other users. Information is discussed under four areas.

1. An outline of arrangements and examples in sharing facilities
2. Benefits of these arrangements
3. Issues arising from these arrangements
4. An additional model: The Multicultural Hub

1. An outline of arrangements and examples in sharing facilities

AMES has thirteen locations in Melbourne. These sites are all leased and in a number of locations shared settlement, training and employment services are delivered at the one site. AMES also owns one CBD location where central functions are undertaken.

A third facilities arrangement has recently commenced where AMES is managing a Multicultural Hub in the CBD with the City of Melbourne. This will provide additional opportunities to share facilities using a more formal structure.

AMES has a strong commitment to working with settlers from newly arrived communities to support them in their settlement into the Victorian community. As part of this commitment AMES attempts to accommodate requests from communities to have access to AMES facilities for activities that have been identified from within the community. These activities take various forms and have differing shared facility impacts.

AMES also attempts to co-locate with other services where possible and enters leasing agreements to manage these arrangements. Outreach services are also provided in AMES locations for other services that AMES clients need to access – for example Centrelink.

Community use of AMES leased facilities

The following provide examples of current shared use, the kinds of activities that are undertaken and the parties involved. All of these facilities are provided free of charge.

Dandenong AMES

Dandenong AMES is located in central Dandenong, is easily accessible by public transport and is close to a range of other services. AMES education and employment services are located in this building. Two arrangements are in place – community use and leased accommodation.

A number of activities use the site.

Homework Club: A homework club operates from Dandenong AMES three afternoons per week from 3.00 to 6.00pm. The homework club is provided in direct response to the desire for newly arrived refugee parents to provide the best chances for their children in education. It assists in addressing the barriers these young people face by providing additional tutoring and a supportive environment and physical space to study after school hours.

Dandenong AMES provides classrooms, quiet study space and access to computers and internet that these students do not have in their homes. It also provides a regular and supported environment to study with other young people. Approximately 30 young people use this service each afternoon and are supported by around 5 tutors each afternoon who are students at Monash University.

The homework club is funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and organised by the South East Migrant Resource Centre. The MRC does not have suitable facilities to run the program and AMES has provided free use of facilities for approximately eight years.

AMES runs other programs in the evenings for adult students and therefore makes the centre available using existing staff to open the facility. Students in the homework club operate on one floor and adult students undertake their programs on a separate floor.

Community meetings: AMES holds regular consultations with communities to seek their views on services and issues that effect their capacity to settle. These are frequently held at AMES centres and are usually held on weekends when community members are available to attend.

Dandenong AMES is also auspicing monthly meetings of an All Africans Consultation Group. This group was instigated by a local businessman and is supported by an African staff member from AMES Settlement Division. This group has just commenced and will meet on Saturdays. Membership includes people from professional, business and academic backgrounds from a range of African countries.

The centre also hosts a number of other meetings where groups require a venue to meet. These include groups such as Women's Health in the South East who hold quarterly meetings.

AMES does not charge any of these groups to use the facility. This does however require AMES to bear costs and cover these in centre running costs. Where groups meet regularly – such as the homework group – these costs are not insignificant and include additional cleaning, consumables such as printing toilet paper and increased electricity costs. There is also increased wear and tear on equipment – particularly computers.

Leased accommodation: AMES has leased part of the building to the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (VFST) for a number of years. This provides a more formal and cost recovery arrangement. VFST provide complementary services that a number of AMES clients access. This arrangement was in place for several years commencing when AMES leased this new accommodation in central Dandenong. VFST has recently moved to new premises as the space is no longer large enough to accommodate their needs.

St Albans AMES

A homework club for Sudanese secondary students also operated at St Albans. This was used by between 60 and 70 young people and was run by the Edmund Rice Centre as part of a church supported group. This is no longer operating out of the premises as there were a number of supervision issues that were not able to be resolved.

Other groups also use the centre for meetings – currently a Sudanese Islamic Women's Association and a Chinese Association. These groups use the centre when it is open for other activities (Monday to Friday / 3 evenings and Saturday mornings).

Oakleigh AMES

A homework group operates once a week. This group is run by the New Hope MRC and uses a classroom and a computer room.

The Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau also use an office to run an outreach service for young people.

Footscray AMES

A number of groups have used the centre on weekends for language classes for children, homework groups and community meetings. These activities no longer operate as supervision issues were too problematic.

Springvale AMES

Foundation House have used a classroom to run a Burmese Women's Group and an interview room to see individual clients, many of whom were also attending other programs at Springvale AMES.

Centrelink also uses the centre approximately once a month. In addition to providing talks to classes they use an interview room to see individuals.

Werribee AMES

Refugee Health Nurses use the centre on a weekly basis to provide on site consultations for the large number of refugees from Burma who attend this centre for English classes and employment assistance.

A number of local groups also use the site for meetings – the Wyndham Humanitarian network is one such example. Werribee AMES also co-locates with New Hope MRC in an additional location in Werribee. New Hope uses two AMES classrooms for a homework club with similar arrangements to other AMES centres.

2. Benefits of these arrangements

There are clear benefits in providing additional services in a location where newly arrived migrants and refugees are already attending. This clearly applies to co-location of services such as AMES services, VFST services and MRC services. The ease of access and, consequently, likelihood of using the services is increased. Centrelink providing services from AMES locations has similar benefits in short circuiting some client issues and saving time for Centrelink.

There are also benefits in providing a more integrated and seamless service where workers are in one place and can share information and resources.

From AMES perspective it is also seen as an advantage to provide access to facilities where possible. It demonstrates in actions rather than words that AMES is attempting to support communities and respond to their expressed needs within resources available to the organisation. Where use of facilities more creatively and effectively can increase relevance of services this is seen as an advantage by AMES.

In all cases where communities use AMES facilities the need is identified by the community – this confirms the key success factor of communities identifying and pursuing opportunities noted on page 13 of the Issues Paper.

3. Issues arising from these arrangements

While AMES works hard to share facilities it is not without some costs.

Sharing facilities between clients with different needs provides challenges. This is particularly so having young people and adults concurrently using premises. This is managed partly in some locations by using different floors but this is not always possible. Young people require appropriate supervision for their own safety and for care of buildings and equipment. Concerns about these issues can often be a deterrent to allowing use to young people.

Using a building at a time when the regular activities of the organisation managing the building are not in operation can be a significant hurdle. For example, for groups to use AMES premises out of hours requires an AMES staff member to be present. This adds an additional cost and inconvenience that is not always easy to manage. In the case of regular community meetings on Saturdays at Dandenong AMES a staff member will work on Saturdays. This is not a long term sustainable solution but is used to facilitate access and meet immediate needs. It requires consideration where buildings are regularly shared and the hosting organisation gains no recompense.

At one location where activities by a number of different groups were held on Saturdays these have now been discontinued as the wear and tear on the buildings and security issues became quite problematic. Without resources to have AMES staff present, proper building supervision and sufficient supervision of young people using the building it became untenable.

In AMES experience where groups are relatively small and well supervised sharing facilities works reasonably well. Where groups are larger and are run primarily by volunteers there have been issues of attracting other young people to the site who are not involved in the homework club, unsupervised activity that disturbs other adjoining businesses and concern with duty of care where young people are unsupervised.

There is inevitably wear and tear on buildings with additional use and this can often be magnified where additional users are not the principal tenant. This frequently acts as a disincentive to allowing community access to buildings.

To successfully share facilities for larger activities it is essential to have paid staff to properly manage, supervise and administer the programs. This is important for activities that are running concurrently with programs in the centre but absolutely essential where programs are run outside normal operating hours. Where programs are delivered out of normal hours a building supervisor is required who can be accountable for issues such as cleaning and care of facilities. This requires a more formal arrangement than AMES currently has in place - and additional funding to support use of building by 3rd parties.

AMES currently covers the additional costs incurred for community use and while AMES seeks to manage this within available resources this approach is not widely applied by other organisations. Put together with the fact that community organisations seeking to use facilities

have limited resources it reinforces the need for some additional resources to encourage increased sharing so that hosting organisations have some incentive to share their facilities and are not financially disadvantaged.

4. An additional model: The Multicultural Hub

Background

The Multicultural Hub grew out of a partnership between the Melbourne City Council and AMES. The facility has been operating since October 2008. The establishment of a Multicultural Resource Centre (now known as the Multicultural Hub) is one of the key strategies identified in Melbourne City Council's (MCC) *Multicultural Strategy document 2005-2009*.

The need for a multicultural hub in the City of Melbourne emerged as a result of extensive and broad based community consultations during the development of this multicultural strategy for the City of Melbourne. Community groups identified the need to have access to community space within the central business district that would support opportunities for them to meet, share information and resources and promote valuable mentoring opportunities.

The centre operates out of 506 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. The building is being provided by Melbourne City Council (MCC) on condition that it operates as an activity centre servicing multicultural communities.

Specifically MCC has identified the following target groups:

- established migrant groups residing in the City of Melbourne, particularly senior residents;
- new and emerging humanitarian and migrant communities;
- Indigenous communities
- international students; and
- multi-faith networks.

Management

MCC provides the venue at a peppercorn rental rate to AMES as lead tenant who is required to consult on a regular basis with users as part of a management structure for the centre. AMES has a lease arrangement with a service agreement which details the management arrangement.

AMES provides a small staff to ensure efficient operation of the HUB. In addition AMES facilitates a number of programs to support and encourage users of the HUB. AMES will identify interested partners to deliver and develop these programs

Hub Users

The Hub has two categories of users – regular and casual. It is anticipated that a broad range of community groups and agencies will use the Hub on a regular or casual basis.

Regular Users: This includes community organisations and clubs who would like to use the Hub as their primary base. Users in this category will access the hub on a regular basis over the year: this may be weekly, fortnightly or monthly. All users will be expected to share space and facilities.

Priority is given to the following groups

- established migrant groups residing in the City of Melbourne;
- new and emerging humanitarian and migrant communities;
- international students; and
- multi-faith networks.

Regular users have:

- access to business equipment including: photocopier, scanner, fax during office hours (non-profit cost recovery only fees may apply)
- free access to computer/internet during office hours (shared facilities)
- access to a locker for storage
- low or no cost access to meeting/function rooms
- use of hub as postal address
- Hub newsletter alerting users to relevant grant and training opportunities
- advance notice of development programs/information sessions to be offered at the hub which might include computer skills governance training, grant writing and mentoring

- opportunity to participate in broader activities of the centre
- assistance/advice from AMES staff

Casual Users: All casual users need to abide by the terms and conditions of use of the Multicultural Hub and pay fees in accordance with the fee schedule. The following groups are considered.

- **CALD organisations:** Organisations who do not meet the 'regular user' criteria or who would like to use the HUB for meetings, activities or social gatherings on a semi regular or occasional basis
- **Service providers:** Government departments and agencies or not for profit organisations that provide advice in a range of areas of interest to users of the Multicultural Hub. Service providers may wish to book a consulting room to meet their clients on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Services might include advice or consultation in the areas of: health, welfare, financial, legal, housing etc.
- **Program/project providers:** Government departments and agencies or not for profit organisations who would like to run a specific program or project that is aligned to or of benefit to the users of the hub. Programs/projects will typically be of a limited duration, a week, a term, half year or year and would be linked to a specific funding from Government or philanthropic organisation. Examples might include an awareness program (e.g. domestic violence awareness week), education project, arts project, youth project, healthy eating project etc
- **Individuals:** Individuals may wish to enrol in courses and workshops that run at the Hub. Individuals may also want to volunteer (conditions will apply) in a range of roles available at the Multicultural Hub

Since the Hub opened in October 2008 over 2,000 participants in 30 events have used the Hub. These have included:

- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Bosnia-Hertzsogovenia National Congress
- International Students Federation
- International Gospel fellowship
- AMES – Community Guide Evaluation
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Ethnic Community Council of Victoria
- Mother Goose Play Group

Fees and Charges

The fee structure for room and equipment hire and use is scaled. Different rates apply for community groups, not for profit organisations and agencies and Government/Tertiary bodies.

Rates are set with consideration to the peppercorn rental arrangement and AMES financial support and thus are below the rate of operational cost recovery.

All users must abide by the terms and conditions outlined in their agreement.

Success Factors

The strong partnership with both parties determined to do the right thing and meet the needs of the community is a very important factor in the likely success of this venture. The clear vision and careful planning has resulted in a very strong community focus. The location is also excellent - good public transport and central/easy to access for a number of groups. There is a very flexible attitude to support working out how things can be done if they have been identified by communities as a need. The resources available to manage this large facility are also essential to success.

A vision of what might be a typical busy day in the life of the hub may evolve into the following types of use.

A day in the life of the Multicultural Hub

Ground floor foyer: Diabetes Week Display of posters and materials in a variety of languages	Ground floor Shop front: Exhibition by the East Timorese traditions weaving group staffed by weavers and volunteers from Multicultural Arts Victoria. The exhibition is on for 4 weeks and includes live demonstrations. Sign up sheets are available for people wanting to sign up to classes being held next month at the Hub
Function Room/ Kitchen Lunch today for the Italian Senior Citizens group 3pm: Healthy eating cooking demonstration provided by diabetes Australia 7pm: Cooking in a Microwave: International students cooking class	
Multifunction Meeting room 1 10am: Bosnian women's collective 1pm: Sudanese women's group monthly meeting 3pm: Multi Faith Network 6pm: CMYI city youth group 8pm: Karen Association monthly meeting	Multifunction room 2 10am: Grandparents Chinese Playgroup 1pm: Lunchtime meditation- mixed group 3pm: U3A Greek learners sub group 6pm: Multicultural Hub Junior choir practice 8pm: Tai Chi- mixed group
Craft Room 11am: Somali Women's Sewing group 2pm: Learning to knit – mixed group 6pm: Traditional Afghan carpet weaving. Afghani craftspeople teach this class	Computer/Training Room 11am: Surfing the net- an introduction for over 60's 3.30: Homework club 6.30: Accessing the media: workshop for regular users of the Hub
Consulting room 1 Community legal service	Consulting room 2 Tax office: free tax help
Conference room Regular bookings	Resource/lounge area 11am: What is my child reading: parents learn about the books being read by children at school
Small meeting room 1 Regular bookings	Small meeting room 2 Regular bookings

2. Facilities that AMES sees opportunities for sharing and the benefits of such arrangements (2.3)

The opportunities that AMES sees for sharing of resources are driven by a need to increase access to appropriate training for newly arrived migrants and refugees. As noted earlier these are also applicable to other groups disadvantaged in training. They are also applicable to organisations other than AMES – for example Adult Community Education (ACE) providers. The issues are outlined under four areas.

1. Establishing the need for different training approaches
2. The impact on use of existing facilities
3. Development of new facilities
4. Existing examples of AMES using other facilities

1. Establishing the need for different training approaches

Relationship to education & training policy

The proposed reforms of the VET system outlined in Securing our future economic prosperity – Discussion Paper on Skills Reform (April 2008)¹ are based on four objectives.

1. Boosting numbers of individuals and businesses accessing training, which will increase the skills of Victoria's workforce
2. Developing a VET system that engages more effectively with individuals and businesses and is easier to navigate
3. Ensuring the system is more responsive and flexible to the changing skills needs of businesses and individuals
4. Creating a stronger culture of lifelong learning.

AMES works with over 40,000 clients from migrant and refugee backgrounds annually. A significant number of these require access to VET training to gain first employment in Australia or do training to re-enter employment after losing a job. This has implications for access to infrastructure to undertake relevant and appropriate training – an issue noted in AMES response to this paper.

The training needs of learners within these groups are quite diverse. Some have low levels of English

language and literacy and limited vocational skills but a strong desire to gain employment. Others come to Australia with skills and experience that can be used within a short time frame if the appropriate bridging training is available.

To achieve the objectives outlined in the Skills Reform Paper requires programs to be delivered in modes that are accessible to the different needs of learners. There is no incentive for public providers to actively share resources that will result in more flexible and responsive programs for learners and limited flexibility to work across providers in current models.

Clients requiring new approaches

Secure employment is an essential building block to effective settlement. Employment is fundamental for many new arrivals to gain the sense of well being and confidence that are the precursors to broader social and civic participation. The importance of access to employment cannot be overstated. AMES as a provider of services, and newly arrived communities themselves, articulate this as a fundamental element.

A component of this pathway to employment is frequently additional training to either develop new skills for employment and to recognise and build on the skills and capabilities gained prior to coming to Australia.

¹ This discussion paper outlines a set of reforms for the VET system. The paper proposes a partnership approach to reform across different levels of government, industry and individuals. It notes significant investment since 1999 of an additional \$1.1 billion in vocational education and training. Relevant objectives include increasing access to training for eligible Victorians and improving choice and contestability.

Ensuring that the education system for young people is set up to support and provide every opportunity for success is very important to set young new arrivals on a secure path. Likewise, Victoria's training system must provide appropriate access for adults who require some training as a pathway to work.

Approaches to training must be sufficiently flexible to include those learners who commence with low levels of social and learning capital.

Refugees and migrants who arrive with low levels of formal education and little or no English face multiple barriers in successfully accessing vocational training. There is however a need to provide training for these clients using new approaches and requiring increased access to existing resources in the training system. To provide high quality training that develops the hard skills required to gain employment, requires access to specialist training facilities – often only available in TAFE Institutes.²

Table 1 provides data on a sample of the highest concentrations of CALD residents in metropolitan LGAs. The need for resource sharing must have built in mechanisms to meet these needs which can be applied to a greater or lesser degree depending on local populations.

Table 1 - CALD Residents in Metropolitan LGAs

2006 CENSUS	WHITTLESEA		DANDENONG		BRIMBANK		DAREBIN	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Overseas-born	40,759	68.2%	64,584	51.5%	72,873	43.3%	40,988	32.0%
Overseas-born, NMESC	36,862	61.7%	58,348	46.5%	67,756	40.3%	35,902	28.0%
OSB arrived since 2001 from NMESC	3,684	6.2%	11,587	9.2%	7,895	4.7%	6,606	5.2%
Language other than English	53,610	89.7%	69,327	55.2%	90,356	53.7%	49,901	39.0%
Unemployed	3,442	5.9%	5,004	9.4%	6,665	8.9%	3,917	6.5%

Source: ABS - 2006 Census. NMESC - Non Main-English Speaking Countries

Table 2 provides data on education levels of job seekers on Refugee and Humanitarian Visas in AMES Job Network in April 2008, highlighting the need to accommodate learners with low levels of education in the training system.

Table 2 - Education Levels of RHV Entrants in AMES Job Network

Education Level	Refugee & Humanitarian Visa (RHV)	% of Total RHV Caseload
Did not go to school	164	6.30%
Primary School	1,122	42.90%
Year 10	360	13.80%
Secondary Schooling Completed	475	18.20%
Others	494	18.90%
Total	2,617	100 %

Source: Job Network Database - EA 3000 Active Case Load at 4 April 2008

Table 3 provides data on all CALD job seekers indicating that while education levels are higher than for those on refugee visas, there are still significant numbers with low levels of education. Approximately 70% of clients in AMES Generalist contracts are CALD.

Table 3 - Education Levels of CALD Job seekers

Education Level	Generalist Contract		NESB Specialist Contract		Total	
Did not go to school	63	1.3%	255	3.5%	318	2.6%
Primary School	904	18.0%	2,114	28.8%	3,018	24.4%
Years 8-11	1,168	23.2%	1,309	17.8%	2,477	20.0%
Secondary Schooling Completed	974	19.4%	1,463	19.9%	2,437	19.7%
Trade or TAFE qualification	343	6.8%	303	4.1%	646	5.2%
Degree / Diploma / Other	766	15.2%	949	12.9%	1,715	13.9%
Unknown	812	16.1%	955	13.0%	1,767	14.3%
Total	5,030	100 %	7,348	100 %	12,378	100 %

Source: Job Network Database - EA 3000 Active Case Load at 23 May 2008

² AMES and other training providers (e.g. Adult Community Education providers) can deliver the soft skills such as communication and other employability skills, however technical skills (e.g. simulated training in a warehouse/ kitchen hand and food preparation skills requiring industrial kitchens/ automotive or welding in specialist workshops) require technical facilities

Examples of sharing resources

AMES works in formal consortia arrangements with a number of TAFE Institutes and ACE providers and has extremely productive and positive working relationships. AMES has established these partnerships to deliver Federal Government contracts. Both AMES and our TAFE partners see opportunities to develop pathways for learners that provide transitions from language to VET training. Increased sharing of TAFE Institute specialist training facilities would assist in engaging learners more effectively and contribute to successful outcomes for students.

AMES and our TAFE partners have actively worked to share resources and provide appropriate

learning pathways. These are described in the AMES response to the Skills Reform paper. ^{Error!} ~~Bookmark not defined.~~

These innovations are, however, often constrained by the need for TAFE Institutes to meet performance targets by delivering whole courses and enrolling students who are proficient enough in English to succeed without any additional support.

Current policy does not encourage more innovative use of infrastructure to meet the needs of diverse groups. The increased competition that will result from more contestable funds in the proposed new model is likely to further detract from sharing resources with providers who will be viewed as competitors for limited resources.

2. The impact on use of existing facilities

The Discussion Paper on Skills Reform April 2008 notes that there has been record investment in the TAFE system since 1999. Further, it is noted that the proposed reforms focus on strengthening the TAFE and Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) sectors. Ensuring that these resources are accessible to all clients requiring these facilities to undertake the most appropriate training will make the best use of the government's investment.

Training that relies on specialist facilities cannot be delivered by all providers. Therefore it is necessary to develop resource sharing models that facilitate pathways and access across sectors – both sequentially and concurrently. This would facilitate learners doing modules of courses across two providers – for example where they enrol with a smaller ACFE provider because they lack skills or confidence but wish to transition to a vocational course in a trade area that only TAFE Institutes have the infrastructure to deliver.

Examples of where access to the most appropriate training is limited by access to training resources includes the following.

AMES delivers vocational training through its social enterprises.⁴ Training in hospitality, asset

maintenance (cleaning) and warehousing enterprises is limited to Certificate II level as AMES does not have access to the required facilities to deliver Certificate III training.

A group of Chin refugees from Burma have approached AMES to work out some solutions to finding employment that uses the skills in electrical work acquired by Chin refugees on building sites in Malaysia. Refugees have learned and practised some skills but have no formal qualifications and limited English to undertake these in conventional trade training. While these complex issues will never be solved only by access to a training facility, this is one component. Training in first language for this group and those in AMES Social Enterprises using industry standard training facilities is an approach that requires testing.

TAFE Institutes are government funded and the current approach to develop specialist facilities at Institutes has resulted in the development of excellent training facilities. To increase access to a wider range of learners than currently exists would make more effective use of resources and provide more responsive training.

³ AMES can provide a copy of this response on request

⁴ AMES Social Enterprises provide employment opportunities and accredited training in a vocational context. In 2007 13 Social Enterprises operated in businesses as diverse as catering, cleaning, horticulture, and woodwork. The Enterprises provide unique opportunities for job seekers needing a staged transition to work. AMES provides infrastructure and support through Victorian Government and community agency partnerships.

Increased access to facilities that provide training in industry areas where people can work with relatively low English communication skills are the areas that provide most opportunities for alternative approaches to training. Where employees require high level communication skills, undertaking training in English that matches these skills is appropriate to ensure ability to perform at required levels in a workplace.

Areas that provide opportunities for alternative training and therefore shared use of facilities include service industries including hospitality, aged care, asset maintenance and hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are also opportunities in areas including building trades – industries where young refugees and migrants find it challenging to get even entry level training in pre apprenticeships as a result of low English and other skills.

Current requirements for TAFE Institutes in Performance Agreements constrain increasing access and flexibility. AMES is therefore not providing a criticism of TAFE Institutes but sees

opportunities for increased use of resources to expand access.

The shift to additional contestable funding proposed in the Skills Reform paper may have an unintended consequence of organisations protecting their own resources to gain competitive advantage and decrease motivation to consider ways of opening up facilities to a larger group of users. In this contestable environment TAFE Institutes would need to be provided with the appropriate resources required to extend use of facilities.

AMES envisages that issues arising in some of our facility sharing arrangements would not arise. For example issues resulting from activities being mainly run by volunteers and supervision at times therefore being problematic should not arise. Use of training facilities would require skilled and qualified staff and well structured and organised programs. There would however still be costs in building use and supervision that would need to be accounted for in a way that did not disadvantage the TAFE Institute.

3. Development of new facilities

A selection of documents and approaches to facilitate sharing facilities are set out in 2.4 (Experience from sharing facilities). With respect to these approaches AMES notes a number of observations.

AMES delivers the contract to provide settlement services for new refugees under the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) funded Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Service (IHSS). As a result of housing shortages and high rents, refugees are frequently housed in outer suburbs or settle with family members already in Australia who, due to the same housing pressures, have settled in these areas.

Where numbers are small and it is not viable to establish AMES facilities it is very important to

provide some locally based services. Delivering services in other providers' facilities is the most effective solution. Where child care is also available, services – particularly English classes – become much more accessible. The plan to include long day care centres in some new facilities is therefore strongly supported.

The use of 'community liaison managers' (p 19) is also noted and provides opportunities to work closely with newly arrived communities to bring them in to these facilities and understand their needs. AMES employs a large number of staff from newly arrived communities in the IHSS as Community Guides⁵ and recommends using the skills and insights of similar staff in engaging with new communities.

⁵ AMES Community Guides are employed in the delivery of settlement services with newly arrived refugees. Community Guides are from refugee backgrounds and work with recently arrived communities in their early settlement. AMES employs over 100 Community Guides and regularly seeks their views on issues confronting newly arrived refugees and ways to address these issues. AMES would be pleased to provide further information on this model if required.

4. Existing examples of AMES using other facilities

AMES experience in sharing facilities with other organisations has demonstrated to us that, where there is a shared need identified, the imperative for a partnership to be successful and continue is significantly strengthened.

AMES has developed a number of arrangements with primary schools as part of our Social Enterprise development. Small enterprises have been set up to provide healthy school lunches and have expanded, in some cases, to commercial catering.

An enterprise (Sorghum Sisters) was set up at Carlton Primary School to establish a catering enterprise that could provide employment and also provide training for participants whose learning style is best suited to practically based training. An existing kitchen was refurbished with a grant from the Department of Planning and Community Development and support from AMES and the enterprise provides school lunches and does external catering. The enterprise also provides lunches at a neighbouring primary school.

Participants are selected from residents of the Ministry of Housing estate in which the school is located. This has many positive flow on effects for the school and community.

AMES has an MOU with the school and pays for expenses within the kitchen. AMES also pays a small utilities cost to the school.

There are many positive impacts from this arrangement. The participants have increased confidence through regular involvement with a group of other women in training, doing catering work and serving food at events. This has resulted in increased confidence to talk to children's teachers, be involved in school activities and advocate for their children. The enterprise provides excellent role models for children of the women -- seeing their mothers participating successfully in training and work has provided very positive images. The women have had quite a lot of publicity and have catered for a lot of mainstream events.

Having women from the community running an enterprise based in the school has brought other community members into the school and made the school a less intimidating place. This has been a very important aspect for the Principal and teachers who are very supportive. The school has a very strong community focus so the project fits very well with considering different ways to bring parents into the school.

Enterprises at other primary schools have had similar benefits and have had support from local councils as well as the school. The enterprise established at Kensington Primary School has built on an Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) funded partnership that includes Urban Communities and Kensington Neighbourhood House.