



02 February 2017

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
E: [migration@aph.gov.au](mailto:migration@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary

**Re: Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes Submission**

Navitas English welcomes the opportunity to comment on the inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes that the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, The Hon Peter Dutton MP and the Minister for Social Services, The Hon Christian Porter MP, asked the Committee to inquire into and report on migrant settlement outcomes on 17th November 2016.

Navitas English works in Consortium with Not-for-Profit and Community based organisations and is the largest provider nationally of the AMEP.

Across the AMEP, SEE and HSS, Navitas English in consortia has provided settlement language, literacy and numeracy and employment services to over 23,000 people.

Please find attached Navitas English submission addressing the terms of reference.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Cox  
Executive General Manager, English and Foundation Skills  
Navitas English Pty Ltd  
Level 15, 255 Elizabeth Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Navitas English Pty Ltd

**English and Foundation Skills**

Level 15, 255 Elizabeth Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

T +61 2 8246 6822  
F +61 2 9025 4770  
E [info@navitas-english.com.au](mailto:info@navitas-english.com.au)  
W [navitas-english.com.au](http://navitas-english.com.au)



## Executive summary

---

Navitas English welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes.

Navitas English has delivered the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) for 18 years, the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE previously the LLNP) program for 11 years and the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) for over 10 years. In 2015-16 we provided services to over 25,000 migrants and refugees.

Navitas English strongly supports the provision of services that contribute to the social and economic participation of migrants and refugees and their contribution to building social and economic strength of communities and the nation.

The response is focused on the following Terms of Reference for the Enquiry:

- **the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants;**
- **national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects;**
- **the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome;**

With particular consideration to social engagement of youth migrants.

## Recommendations:

### **Recommendation No.1:**

*The broad framework of Commonwealth, State/Territory and local services based on the short and long term settlement needs of migrants and refugees should remain to ensure that local services are flexible and relevant to the needs and strengths of people settling in that local area and in Australia.*

### **Recommendation No.2:**

*That the Commonwealth actively promote the National Settlement Framework to enable Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government effectively plan and coordinate service delivery across the three levels of government.*

### **Recommendation No.3:**

*That the Commonwealth ensure policy and program alignment across Departments to reduce gaps, duplication, complication and complexity in the delivery of Commonwealth programs and services.*

**Recommendation No.4:**

*That eligibility for the AMEP is extended to young people aged 15 years on arrival and after the completion of compulsory secondary schooling within the current AMEP five year limit from date of arrival.*

**Recommendation No.5:**

*Resources need to be allocated to provide a comprehensive view of settlement policy and programs and to examine their alignment at all government levels in order to best inform the other two focus areas of the Framework – Planning and Delivery.*

**Recommendation No.6:**

*That research is conducted to track the availability and impact of settlement services over the lifetime of clients and hence determine the value of these services to the client and value for money invested.*

**Recommendation No.7:**

*That an outcomes based approach be applied to the DSS Settlement Services Program grants to build client capacity.*

**Recommendation No.8:**

*That Vocational Training and Work Experience be included in the SEE program business and funding model.*

**Recommendation No.9:**

*That migrants in the first two years after arrival be eligible for the SEE program.*

## Terms of Reference and Response

---

- **the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants;**

### Mix

Services catering to the needs of newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants are provided by the three levels of government – Commonwealth, State/Territory and local, either directly or by contractual or grant arrangements with a variety of organisations.

A new arrival's initial contact is with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) which issues their visa and provides some information on Australian Values and Principles.

Through the DIBP website entrants are referred to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for settlement information.

DSS provides support within the first five years of arrival through the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS), Complex Case Support (CCS) and the Settlement Services Program (SSP) grants. The HSS, delivered regionally under contract throughout Australia, provides support with accommodation, health, education and other settlement challenges for six to twelve months after arrival and ensures that early intervention maximises cultural knowledge and skills development leading to autonomy. For those humanitarian families that experience multiple complexities within the first five years the CCS program is available to provide intensive case-management services.

More generally available to migrants and refugees are programs delivered under the SSP Grants funding which provide core settlement support for humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants in their first five years of life in Australia.

Migrants and refugees can also make use of the DSS-funded Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) to communicate with government agencies, community groups, businesses and medical professionals.

The Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (DET) provides 510 hours of English tuition to eligible migrants and refugees to achieve functional English. DET also funds the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program which provides language, literacy and numeracy training within a vocational context to job-seekers. In urban regions with large CALD populations the majority of clients in this program are from refugee and migrant backgrounds – both short and long term arrivals.

The Commonwealth is also instrumental in assisting with the settlement process through the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) and the Department of Employment (Jobactive).

At the State level in NSW most departments which impact on the settlement of new arrivals provide some specialist services. The NSW Department of Education provides specialist English as a second language (ESL) teachers, and Intensive English Centres (IECs) in high schools in areas where significant numbers of migrants and refugees are settling.



In NSW the school leaving requirements is completion of Year 10 of secondary schooling or turn 17 years of age, whichever comes first.

The NSW Government has recently pledged \$92 million for educational programs for the Syrian refugee cohort. NSW Refugee Health is a funded, specialised service within NSW Health, but also within their general service provision the Ministry of Health is very involved in the settlement process. The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) employs CALD caseworkers to support migrant and refugee families, while other departments such as the Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Transport seek out opportunities to work with service providers (e.g. AMEP) to develop resources which will facilitate CALD client access to their services. The NSW Government Immigration Settlement Planning Committee coordinates the provision of settlement services for refugee and migrant arrivals and includes NSW agencies and Commonwealth representatives.

Local governments, particularly those representing a large number of migrant constituents, support their CALD communities by convening migrant interagency meetings, providing advocacy services for constituents and employing staff dedicated to the well-being of the multicultural communities.

Prominent in the sector are the not-for-profit and charitable organisations which source funding to assist migrants and refugees through tendering, grants or from their organisational donated funding. They are prominent in those areas where there is limited government funding available, the asylum seeker sector being one case in point.

**Recommendation No.1:**

*The broad framework of Commonwealth, State/Territory and local services based on the short and long term settlement needs of migrants and refugees should remain to ensure that local services are flexible and relevant to the needs and strengths of people settling in that local area and in Australia.*

**Coordination:**

While the range of services provided to assist settlement is extensive the limited coordination between agencies can result in ineffective service provision or even duplication of services. In acknowledgement of this the DSS has recently established the National Settlement Framework to enable Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government to work in partnership to effectively plan and deliver services that support the settlement of migrants and new arrivals in Australia. It is intended to be a “starting point for stronger, more effective collaboration across all these groups to address gaps or barriers in service delivery”. Currently though, there are areas where the coordination of program design and service delivery could be improved as exemplified below.

Both the HSS and CCS programs are based on a case management model which, by definition, should ensure that all services to any one family are well coordinated and managed. CCS is the higher risk program because there are usually a large number of different services involved with each client. CCS provides for case conferences so that all agencies are “on the same page” and so that there is complementarity rather than duplication. However it is our experience that case conferences and case updates are not considered the norm by some CCS providers. Lack of consultation means the HSS, or any other provider involved with the



client, is unable to optimise the delivery of services to mutual clients. It is understood that this issue will be addressed by embedding the CCS intensive case support services in the future humanitarian settlement contract (to be termed Humanitarian Settlement Program – HSP) commencing on 1 July 2017. This should streamline services to high-needs clients.

Potential service duplication may occur with current projects currently being proposed by DSS and NSW State Government. The, Career Pathways Pilot for Humanitarian Entrants, proposed by DSS, will provide targeted, early intervention assistance to help newly arrived humanitarian entrants who have skills and/or qualifications and vocational English language proficiency while the NSW government program will concurrently fund a similar case management based employment support program for refugee clients (Refugee Employment Support Program). Both stem from a recognition that a case-management approach that takes into account the skills, qualifications, educational background and barriers to employment is very effective for strengthening employment outcomes for refugee job-seekers and address the gaps in the Commonwealth jobactive service. Both pilot projects are for four year terms.

There are also examples where local and State/Territories fund individual initiatives in the areas, for example, health services, that are also provided under the HSS are confusing to clients, create complexity and waste, and lead to over-servicing.

In the new AMEP business model commencing on 1 July 2017 participants are streamed into Social English and Pre-employment English. At the same time the new Humanitarian Services Program (HSP) due to commence on 1 July 2017 is intended to get further education or employment outcomes. “All HSP Service Providers would have a service coordination role. This would involve coordinating the case management and sharing of information between HSP, the AMEP and jobactive providers”. As a result at a point in time refugee arrival might have a HSP Case Manager, a jobactive Case Manager and in the AMEP there will receive pathway guidance and develop an Individual Pathway Guide. There is no mechanism to coordinate and align the case management and client outcomes across the three programs and there is a risk of increased complexity, confusion and competing outcomes.

**Recommendation No.2:**

*That the Commonwealth actively promote the National Settlement Framework to enable Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government effectively plan and coordinate service delivery across the three levels of government.*

**Recommendation No.3:**

*That the Commonwealth ensure policy and program alignment across Departments to reduce gaps, duplication, complication and complexity in the delivery of Commonwealth programs and services.*

**Extent**

In general the current five year funding window for settlement services is considered to be sufficient time to provide specialist support to new arrivals particularly as service agencies are charged with creating client autonomy and effective access to mainstream services. However there are areas where improvements are needed in order to facilitate this.





Primarily State and Commonwealth level settlement planning needs to be in place to ensure effective mainstream services are available so that clients can manage their own issues over time and access appropriate services.

One of the critical elements currently lacking in many mainstream services is cultural competency, particularly when dealing with refugee issues. As reported in the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Migrant Intake into Australia, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) called for specialised employment services for refugees, noting that the “limited skills and experience of some [Job Services Australia, now jobactive providers] providers in cross-cultural communication and working with people from refugee backgrounds ..... hampers their capacity to provide tailored and effective support to this group.”

It has been the experience of the Navitas HSS program that training on humanitarian entrant issues that they have given to jobactive provider staff and staff from the Department of Family and Community Services has been well received and contributed to better service and outcomes for HSS clients. However all government services would benefit from compulsory cultural awareness training, including awareness of refugee issues in relevant regions, and incorporated into staff on-boarding. For example, the Department of Employment could have a greater role in encouraging jobactive providers to source and attend such training where the provider has a high proportion of refugee arrivals.

More flexibility in funding models would also lead to better outcomes. Currently the HSS funding model is premised on the notion that the humanitarian entrant cohort continue to have similar or standardised profiles in terms of education, health, age and employment background. Hence it is sometimes difficult to fund the needs of a particular entrant group that don't fit the standardised funding model. A funding model based on a baseline funding for services such as the HSS with an project/innovation fund as a value-add component for service delivery to address the needs of specific refugee groups. This would enable services providers to respond in a more effective way to the backgrounds, strengths and needs of different humanitarian cohorts who arrive over the lifetime of the contract.

Project based funding could achieve outcomes such as that achieved by the Navitas HSS in 2015 in the Hunter region for Afghan Locally Engaged Employees (Afghan LEEs) arrivals. These men had been interpreters for Australian Armed Forces in Afghanistan and spoke good English, although their literacy skills were not always strong. They had high, but somewhat unrealistic, expectations for skilled employment in a short time frame. Navitas funded an Employment Pathways Officer who worked closely with the Job Services Australia agencies in the Hunter, providing employees at all JSA sites with training and brokering training opportunities for the clients that resulted in improved education and employment outcomes for the arrivals. DSS was approached in the development of the project for a contribution to the cost however did not contribute. Navitas funded the project outside the HSS funding model.

Of particular relevance to young people is the extent and flexibility of English language services that are available to them. Currently eligibility to the AMEP is generally available to young people 18 years and older but can be offered to clients aged between 15 and 17 years whose needs cannot be met by mainstream schooling. In NSW the school leaving age is completion of Year 10 or turning 17 years of age, whichever comes first. However there are strict requirements governing eligibility for the AMEP for those young people who commence schooling but are not suited to learning within a school environment.



Members of this younger group, who have struggled to engage and achieve English language competency at school are generally ineligible for the AMEP, and are then marginalised from potential training and employment opportunities and social engagement. The Western Sydney Youth (15-24 year olds) Workforce Participation Rate of 61.0% is lower compared to the NSW average of 66.4% and the Employment to Population ratio 54.2% is lower compared to the NSW average of 58.6% (Source ABS Cat No. 6291.0.55.001). The AMEP would meet the needs of these young people if there was greater flexibility for eligibility and the opportunity to deliver curricula that aligns with the school curricula. The AMEP would also provide opportunities for community engagement and create a pathway for future training and employment through the English, vocational training and work experience. Currently under the AMEP Special Preparatory Program young refugees who have had limited or interrupted education are entitled to an extra 400 hours of English language training. However extending access to these hours to all young people within the AMEP would greatly improve their employment and further training outcomes.

**Recommendation No.4:**

*That eligibility for the AMEP is extended to young people aged 15 years on arrival and after the completion of compulsory secondary schooling within the current AMEP five year limit from date of arrival.*

## Effectiveness

Based on our experience delivering a range of settlement programs we believe that the effectiveness of services can be improved.

With so many government departments working to assist migrants and refugees in their settlement process there is inevitably due to timing and policy development some disconnection and crossover in the development and implementation of policy and programs. It is noted that the National Settlement Framework developed in consultation with all State and Territory Governments has included 'Evaluation and Review' as one of its three focus areas. This Framework is a 'high level structural blueprint for the three tiers of government, Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government, to work in partnership to effectively plan and deliver services that support the settlement of migrants and new arrivals in Australia'. However, with an expectation that the three tiers of government undertake evaluation as part of business as usual, any analysis done through the mechanism of the Framework may be limited in its findings.

**Recommendation No.5:**

*Resources need to be allocated to provide a comprehensive view of settlement policy and programs and to examine their alignment at all government levels in order to best inform the other two focus areas of the Framework – Planning and Delivery.*

As well as a high level evaluation of the alignment of settlement services a review is needed to examine where there is duplication or are gaps in services provided across all government departments and agencies involved.



**Recommendation No.6:**

*That research is conducted to track the availability and impact of settlement services over the lifetime of clients and hence determine the value of these services to the client and value for money invested.*

Programs such as those delivered under the SSP grants aim to build self-reliance both for individual clients and communities and ultimately minimise longer-term reliance on social services. While the mix and coverage of services delivered under settlement grants is adequate the approach favoured by some providers can tend to be one of solving problems on behalf of the client rather than providing them with the skills to address issues themselves. Agencies delivering services would be better motivated to create greater client autonomy if grants programs were outcomes-based. Providers would be held accountable for the client outcomes that have been proposed as the basis for the awarding of the grant funding. Currently some programs have a non-compulsory outcomes based reporting system so a transition to a compulsory system of qualitative and quantitative reporting would be a minor shift.

**Recommendation No.7:**

*That an outcomes based approach be applied to the DSS Settlement Services Program grants to build client capacity.*

Any aspects of pilot programs, such as the DSS and NSW Government career pathways pilots mentioned earlier, which have strong outcomes for clients should be considered for integration into mainstream services to ensure that their effectiveness is enhanced. For example, evaluation of the employment pathways projects could result in the strengthening of case management for humanitarian clients in jobactive services to cover skills recognition, qualifications recognition and skills gap training.

Employment is a key settlement outcome that achieves both social and economic benefits for migrants and refugees, the community and the nation. The 2011 Census data showed that 30% of people in the Greater Western Sydney Region came from countries where English was not their first language and were 16.7% over overseas born arrived in the five years from 2006 to 2011. In light of the refugee program profile since 2011 it is reasonable to expect that the overall number of people from countries where English is not their first language and the number of recent arrivals as a proportion have increased.

In the jobactive program, the Job Seeker Classification Index (JSCI) is used to place jobseekers based on their needs and barriers into Stream A, B and C. It has been generally observed that the JSCI standardised model does not effectively identify refugee needs (or strengths) and as a result refugee arrivals often received the lowest level of support i.e. Stream A, in the jobactive program. This compounds the issues for refugee arrivals where the two key barriers to employment are English language and Work Experience. Under the jobactive program, referral to the SEE program for language, literacy and numeracy training is not an “outcome” for jobactive providers and there is no incentive to refer to the SEE program. We also note that the SEE program from 1 July 2017 removes work experience from the program. Our experience has been that the SEE classes focused on local industry and employment and supported work experience improves employment outcomes over and above the jobactive



program however there is no mechanism across the contracts to effectively and efficiently align the work experience and funding.

***Recommendation No.8:***

*That Vocational Training and Work Experience be included in the SEE program business and funding model.*

Our research on the settlement profile of CALD SEE students is that they fall into two general groups: Recent refugee arrivals post AMEP and longer term migrants. The long term migrants are usually those who went into work during the two year wait for benefits, often in a workplace where they only needed to use their first language. However as a result of economic change they become unemployed and lack the language, literacy and numeracy and vocational skills necessary to find work. Referral to the SEE program through Centrelink in the first two years after arrival to provide language, literacy, numeracy and vocational skills would assist to minimise the long term social and long term economic costs for this group.

***Recommendation No.9:***

*That migrants in the first two years after arrival be eligible for the SEE program.*



- **national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects;**

Several programs in Australia lead the world in assisting migrants and humanitarian entrants to settle in quickly and effectively.

**Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS):** This program offers early practical support to new humanitarian entrants to help them settle into the community. It operates through “an integrated case management approach, assessing individual settlement needs and providing support to build the independence of clients in the first six to 12 months of their arrival”. The evaluation of the program conducted by Ernst and Young found that the program was working well and achieving its objectives but recommended enhancing client settlement pathways, supporting effective service delivery, encouraging collaboration and innovation as well as reducing administrative burden and realising efficiencies. The design of the HSP, due to commence 1 July 2017, has taken into account these recommendations, as evidenced by the Scope of Services (Section 3) of the Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI) for the Humanitarian Settlement Program, released by DSS on 16 August 2015.

**Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP):** This program has been instrumental in contributing to social harmony since 1949. Eligible new arrivals who do not have functional English are offered 510 hours of English tuition which has both a social engagement and an employment focus. The ACIL Allen Consulting review found that overall the AMEP is a “valued programme that is providing substantial assistance to eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants in promoting and supporting the acquisition of English language skills necessary for successful settlement in Australia”.

However the review reported that the “expectation of attaining functional English after 510 hours of tuition was ‘unattainable and unrealistic’ given the low-level of English that some immigrants possessed.” It is heartening to see some recognition of this in the proposed AMEP contract for 2017-2023 in which 490 extra hours will be offered to clients with good progress and attendance records through the AMEP Extend program. This will assist clients who have not reached a sufficient level of proficiency to achieve their settlement ambitions.

As a program for new arrivals faced with a myriad of settlement issues the value of the AMEP extends beyond the acquisition of English language. In independent market research, conducted on behalf of Navitas, AMEP clients reported that the AMEP provided them with strengthened motivation, broader social networks and a greater appreciation of the value of a multicultural environment.

**AMEP Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET):** This program provides an additional 200 hours of training under the AMEP. It is a targeted pre-employment program that combines employment-focused English with limited VET training, individual pathways counselling and approximately 80 hours of work experience. The Navitas experience of this program has been very positive with 4,210 clients completing SLPET courses between 2009 and 2016, and of these 26% have attained employment within eight weeks of finishing their course while 35% have moved on to further education within eight weeks of completing the course. Navitas has engaged with Employers and Employer networks since 2007 in the AMEP and SEE to create work experience and employment opportunities for participants and ensure that the programs are current and relevant to employer/industry needs. We currently have a database of over 2000 employers in the Sydney area, including 779 in Western Sydney, for work experience placements and we participate



actively in employment networks at a regional and local level. In FY16 employers provided over 800 work experience placements and additional workplace visits to clients in the AMEP SLPET program and the NE SEE program in FY16. Links with the employers have also resulted in up to 75% employment outcomes when linked to specific industry needs.

Currently entry to the SLPET program is limited to AMEP clients who have completed 75 per cent of their AMEP entitlement or are close to attaining functional English, and meet other criteria such as having the necessary communication skills to participate in the workplace and a genuine desire to be employed and be able to accept a job at the end of the course.

**AMEP Special Preparatory Program (SPP):** This highly contextualised program recognises the specific educational needs of some humanitarian entrants by providing additional training hours for eligible Humanitarian Entrants who have had difficult pre-migration experiences such as torture and trauma. It provides up to 400 additional tuition hours for AMEP clients who are under 25 and have seven years or less of schooling, and up to 100 hours for those aged 25 years and over.

The longitudinal study that investigated language learning and early settlement of migrants as they studied in the AMEP and then moved on to living in the community, working and further study (Yates et al 2015) found that there was also a need for new programs in addition to the AMEP and SLPET that would specifically assist migrants with low levels of education and skill, such as pre-literate humanitarian migrants to gain meaningful and sustained employment. These programs would include training in both English language and workplace skills.

**Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program:** This program provides language, literacy and numeracy training to eligible job seekers, to help them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force. Clients can receive up to 800 hours of training after being referred through Centrelink or a jobactive provider. In regions with large numbers of CALD residents constituents of the program tend to be mainly migrants and refugees, many of whom have lost employment due to the reduction in unskilled jobs. The SEE Program Evaluation by ACIL Allen Consulting recognised the value of this program, but recommended some improvements be made to facilitate communication and referral to the program and to reduce the burdensome administrative requirements of providers.

**National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF):** This framework has been developed by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia) (MYAN) to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of young people in the settlement context. It is intended to guide youth settlement policy and service delivery across a range of sectors including settlement, health, education, training and employment, housing, justice and sport and recreation. To ensure effective implementation of the Framework MYAN have produced a range of support documents, including assessment tools, and have been providing training to government, service providers and the NGO sector throughout Australia.



- **the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome;**

English language skills are critical to accessing employment and government services and a significant factor in reducing social isolation and creating community cohesiveness. Market research on AMEP clients conducted for Navitas in 2015 indicated that all clients interviewed believed they need to be able to speak English if they are going to live confidently and effectively in the community. English competency is key to the life they aspire to. Importantly, English competency is seen as vital to getting work or better work. This appeared to be particularly the case for women seeking employment.

The Productivity Commission noted the value placed by the Department of Social Services on English language tuition, better pathways to employment and improved education outcomes are critical. 'A focus on the three areas of English language, education and employment ... early in the settlement journey can lead to enhanced social cohesion; reduced risk of long-term and inter-generational unemployment; and increased productivity, new ideas and access to potential new markets.'

The social significance of English language has been backed up by data to date from Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants (2015) which indicated a strong relationship between lack of English language and knowledge of how to access Government services. 64% of participants in the study who did not speak English reported that they did not know how to access government services. Over half of the men and women surveyed reported that they found it hard to make friends and talk to Australian neighbours.

The Migration Council of Australia's analysis of recent census data on permanent migrants found that "English language proficiency is the primary determinant for migrants in the labour market, more important than both work experience and formal qualifications. .... Importantly, the percentage of permanent migrants with poor English language proficiency declines over time periods."

They found that increasing exposure to English is an important part of learning English and that "improving English language proficiency is likely the single most effective method to increase the economic benefit of migration to Australia." They recommended that policy-makers be conscious of expanding opportunities for learning English for non-native English speakers. This becomes increasingly important as employment options for those with lower levels of English language are reduced with growing technology and reduction in manufacturing sector.

The 2011 Census data reported in the Productivity Commission inquiry into the Migrant Intake into Australia indicated that 14% of youth (15-19 years) who did not speak English well were not in employment, education and training compared with the overall rate for this cohort in Australia of 5%. As mentioned earlier in addressing the Extent of programs many migrants and refugees from this age group are not having their language needs met by the school system and yet are ineligible for the AMEP.

While there is clear recognition of the role of English language skills in participation in training and employment there are pockets of service delivery where English needs to be considered as only one of the barriers to employment. Clients entering jobactive services are assessed using the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) to determine their relative difficulty in





gaining and maintaining employment. Those who have complex or multiple barriers to employment may undertake a further assessment. The 18 factors on the JSCI include English proficiency and disability/medical conditions, both factors which could be significant barriers for refugees in finding employment. Refugees presenting for the JSCI assessment tend not to reveal issues relating to their refugee experience or settlement issues (including physical and mental health issues) and consequently they score well on most points. Jobactive providers have percentage quota of caseload to add to each stream so even though English proficiency may not be good they tend to allocate what they see as non-problematic cases to Stream A and Stream B, Stream A being the least amount of assistance given. Data from the Department of Employment on Refugee Employment (2016) shows that only 54% of refugees in Stream A had good English proficiency compared to 94% in the overall population in this stream. This indicates that because this group presented with 'good' English skills they will be given very little support in their job search despite barriers related to their refugee experience. More concerning is that 37% of refugees in Stream A had poor English, compared to 3% of the total in this group. It could be surmised this particular refugee group in Stream A will have poor employment outcomes. In order to ensure that humanitarian jobseekers are placed in an appropriate Stream and hence maximise their employment outcomes jobactive providers need to ensure that the clients fully understand that the purpose of the interview is to review any and all potential barriers to employment to ensure that they get adequate support. HSS providers can support their clients by advising them to disclose any relevant information that would assist the jobactive interviewer in their assessment.

The AMEP and SEE programs contribute greatly to employment and settlement. However many skilled migrants and refugees with "functional English", and therefore ineligible for the AMEP, and secondary Skilled Migrant arrivals, have difficulty finding work or are underemployed. The principal barriers to them securing employment are in the areas of language, communication and interpersonal skills and lack of Australian work experience. But absence of social networks, problems with qualification and skills recognition and cultural differences are also significant factors.

The AMEP longitudinal research group recommended the provision of English language training and mentoring programs in addition to the AMEP for professional migrants wanting to re-enter the workforce. These programs would include "more advanced English language instruction, information on vocationally specific practices, professional work placements and self-access online material designed to guide professionals through the specific English language demands of their profession."

The Productivity Commission found that spouses of skilled migrant applicants make a significant contribution to the economy and the community even though their labour market outcomes are not as high as the primary applicant (employment rate after 18 months of 68.4% compared with 93.2 for the primary applicant). They also noted that even when such secondary applicants are in the labour force a significant share are unable to secure employment, and of those that do, the minority obtain high-skill jobs. While family responsibilities can account partly for this lack of English language skills can also prove a barrier.

Research conducted for Navitas in 2016 on spouses of skilled migrants who were students within the AMEP found that none of the students in the small sample interviewed was aware that the visa fee they paid for Permanent Residency entitled them to English classes and had



generally found out through chance meetings or internet searches. Communication regarding the AMEP may need to be more effective at the point of issuing Permanent Residency and followed up with migrants when they enter Australia.

It must be acknowledged though that even though migrants and refugees demonstrate a strong desire for English language competency, many factors can inhibit their progress in achieving this. When committing themselves to language programs such as the AMEP immediate rather than long term needs often dominate, i.e. work and related financial imperatives, care for family or health issues. The inhibiting effect of personal problems or depression, particularly amongst humanitarian migrants cannot be underestimated. External pressures to take up employment can lead to anxiety and stress and further inhibit language acquisition.

## REFERENCES

---

ACIL Allen Consulting (2015) *AMEP Evaluation*, for the Department of Education and Training, Melbourne.

ACIL Allen Consulting (2015), *SEE Programme Evaluation*, for the Department of Education and Training, Melbourne.

Australian Government Productivity Commission (2016) *Report on Migrant Intake into Australia*, 264, 279, 454.

Willoughby, H. 2016 *jobactive assistance for refugees*, Presentation given on behalf of Department of Employment.

Department of Social Services 2016, *The National Settlement Framework*  
<https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/national-settlement-framework>.

Ernst and Young (2015) *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes* for the Department of Social Services 5, 8.

Migration Council Australia (2015), *Migration in Focus: Analysis of Recent Census Data on Permanent Migrants* <http://migrationcouncil.org.au/policy/#the-economic-impact-of-migration-2015>.

MYAN (Australia), 2016, *National Youth Settlement Framework*.

National Centre for Longitudinal Data, (2015). *Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants*, Data highlight: No.2/2015, Department Social Services.

Settlement Services Advisory Council, <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/related-agencies-sites/the-settlement-services-advisory-council>.

The Key Response (2016): *Navitas: Skilled Migrant Visa Research*, Melbourne.

The Key Responses, (2015). *Navitas: Client and Stakeholder Research Phase One: AMEP*.

Yates, L. Terraschke, A. Zielinski, B. Pryor, E. Wang, J; Major, G. Radhakrishnan, M; Middleton, H. Chisari, M. Williams Tetteh, V. (2015), *Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Longitudinal Study 2011 – 2014: Final Report*.