

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGETS HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(203) Output 2.1: Settlement Services

Senator Hurley asked:

Page 126 of DIMIA annual report 2003-2004 states that, the five year limit on English language tuition under AMEP has been abolished.

- What alternative method has been put in place to ensure that migrants do their courses in order to enhance their communication skills?

Answer:

The requirements for clients with a legislative entitlement to AMEP tuition to register within 3 months and to commence tuition within 12 months still apply (although deferrals can be granted for certain circumstances). In addition, client information reinforces the importance of learning English soon after arrival.

The *Immigration (Education) Act 1971* (the Act) provides that the obligation to provide English language tuition ceases after 36 months, and also provides for the Secretary of DIMIA to extend this period. Longstanding policy was that the period should not be extended beyond five years.

The five year limit was removed to make access to the program more equitable and to assist clients, particularly women, who were unable to take up or complete their AMEP entitlement within the five year period for personal and family reasons. Proposed amendments to the Act to remove the cessation of obligation at 36 months were recently introduced into Parliament for consideration.

The change reinforced the priority the Australian Government places on new migrants and humanitarian entrants attaining a functional level of English in order to assist them to fully participate in Australian society.