
Chapter Eleven: The Adult Migrant English Program

Learning English is one of the most important steps that non-English speaking people can take towards full participation in Australian society. Participation in the AMEP should therefore be a priority for all new migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English. In this context, existing requirements in relation to registration and commencement in the AMEP provide an appropriate balance between providing an incentive for early participation and allowing flexibility to respond to individual circumstances.

Take-up rates by entrants in different visa categories of the current individual entitlement of 510 hours of English language tuition through the AMEP, together with the availability of other English language programs (including the Language, Literacy and Numeracy program funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training and State/Territory-funded English as a Second Language programs) suggest that the 510 hour limit is not the key barrier to achieving good English skills. A blanket increase in entitlement therefore seems unwarranted.

There would be benefit, however, in research to identify the characteristics of the relatively small number of clients who may not gain access to any options for further language tuition beyond the AMEP. For these clients, the report recommends extending the five-year timeframe for completion of tuition to accommodate the circumstances of particular clients, and/or to vary targeting of the Special Preparatory Program to provide increased tuition hours to some entrants.

Tuition options available under the AMEP provide a flexible and responsive approach to meeting the needs of participants, including those in rural and regional Australia. There is also scope to augment the considerable contribution made by volunteers under the Home Tutor Scheme.

Submissions to the review have strongly supported the general orientation function of the AMEP and the importance of close working relationships between AMEP providers and other settlement and mainstream service providers. A number of stakeholders identified scope to make better use of the AMEP's extensive client reach, significant geographic spread and service delivery infrastructure. It was recognised, however, that co-location would not be appropriate in all circumstances and, where it did occur, would require a clear delineation of the role of various services and providers.

Introduction

Learning English is one of the most important steps that non-English speaking people can take towards full participation in Australian society. In the modern world of industrial restructuring, acquisition of English language skills is increasingly important for employment

prospects as well as being necessary to avoid the social isolation that can arise from the migration experience. The AMEP provides basic English language tuition to newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants. It also provides an important orientation function, providing clients with practical information about life in Australia.

The history of the AMEP

The AMEP has been established for fifty-five years. The program evolved from the original Adult Migrant Education Scheme established in 1948 following the first wave of non-English speaking migrants after World War II. Free English lessons were provided by the Commonwealth to assist migrants to assimilate into Australian society. The Adult Migrant Education Program originally provided classes prior to embarkation, on board ships travelling to Australia and then at migrant hostels and community centres. The on-arrival classes were initially provided for a month and involved five hours of tuition each weekday and a further two hours on Saturdays. The Commonwealth Office of Education was responsible for the development of the program, including the training of teachers and the production of materials. The AMEP quickly expanded to include continuation classes for mothers while their children were at school, correspondence courses and radio broadcasts. From 1951, the program was funded and coordinated by the Commonwealth and delivered by the States/Territories.

The AMEP expanded as Australia accepted increasing numbers of migrants from countries where English was not the main language. From 1967, the ABC screened *Walter and Connie*, a BBC teaching television series purchased by DIMIA. DIMIA also co-produced *You Say the Word*, the first Australian-made television series for language instruction and community affairs. From 1969, the AMEP included full-time intensive courses aimed at equipping professional and semi-professional migrants with English for employment purposes. DIMIA promoted the AMEP to new arrivals, developing publications in community languages and appointing bilingual officers to provide information in the first languages of arrivals.

With the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1970s, English language tuition increasingly became a right for new arrivals. Provision for English language tuition was enacted in legislation with the introduction of the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*. This period saw the more widespread introduction of English courses in the workplace. The launch of the Home Tutor Scheme in 1974 gave a more formal structure to the English lessons previously offered by volunteers from church, community and social welfare groups.

Despite these improvements, the 1978 Galbally report commented on the limitations of the AMEP, emphasising inflexible aspects of the program and the ineligibility of specific categories of new arrivals.¹ Subsequent adoption of the Galbally report led to a substantial growth period for the AMEP. In particular, it led to the development of a more extensive on-arrival program targeted at new arrivals in a wide range of migrant hostels and suburban locations such as schools, community health centres, ethnic associations, hospitals and prisons. In 1982, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) found that the AMEP had improved significantly from the time of the Galbally report, but noted that there remained a substantial waiting list for full-time courses and a general backlog of migrants requiring English tuition.²

In 1983, the AMEP introduced free child care support to encourage attendance by migrants with family responsibilities. The program also began to develop a distance learning course for new arrivals unable to attend classes. Distance learning included audio and

¹ Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services to Migrants (Chairman F Galbally), *Migrant Services and Programs*, AGPS, Canberra, 1978, p. 42.

² Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (Chairman F Galbally), *Evaluation of Post-Arrival Programs and Services*, AIMA, Melbourne, 1982, pp. 70-71.

videotapes, exercise booklets and regular telephone contact with qualified teachers. After initial successful trials of the new distance learning course and its materials, the *It's Over to You* program was formally introduced in 1987 in most States/Territories.

In 1986, despite all of these enhancements, the Committee of Review of the Adult Migrant Education Program noted a number of concerns regarding the program. The report identified constraints in resources and administrative structures that meant the program did not reach significant sections of the migrant population. It also noted that retention rates were a concern, with many students dropping out before they achieved English proficiency. It found that the Home Tutor Scheme was more effective in providing new arrivals with connections within the community than in improving English proficiency. It also described distance education as 'an area of some potential but little substance.'³

In 1992, following a major review, the Adult Migrant Education Program was renamed the Adult Migrant English Program and designated specifically as a settlement program for new arrivals. New arrivals without functional English gained a legal entitlement to 510 hours of English tuition. User charging was introduced for migrants from some visa categories. Labour market English programs such as the then English in the Workplace Program, were transferred to the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). DEST also offered the Advanced English for Migrants Program, which was ultimately incorporated into the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) on 1 January 2003.

Since 1998, up to an additional 100 hours of tuition has been available to humanitarian entrants with special needs, through the Special Preparatory Program (SPP).

Since 1998, the AMEP has been delivered by service providers contracted through a competitive tendering process. The national AMEP curriculum now in use includes general orientation to life in Australia, citizenship education, and information on indigenous Australians and their cultures. The budget for the program in 2001-02 was \$103.9 million.

Current arrangements

Who is eligible for the AMEP?

Under the *Migration Act 1958* and the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*, the AMEP is available to those who are assessed in an approved testing regime as not having functional English and who are either:

- newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants from overseas;
- people already in Australia who have changed from temporary to permanent resident status;
- temporary residents who hold a gazetted visa class;⁴ or
- New Zealand citizens.

Functional English is defined as being able to use English well enough to deal with everyday social situations and some work situations. The entitlement is available in the first five years after arrival in Australia or acquisition of permanent residence.

The AMEP is available free of charge to most eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants. However, DIMIA recovers costs from some categories of visa holders, chiefly family

³ D Cox, *Understanding Australian Settlement Services*, AGPS, Canberra, 1996, p. 25.

⁴ Gazetted visa classes eligible under policy provisions are primarily temporary spouse, partner and other temporary visas that generally precede subsequent grant of permanent visa.

members of skilled stream migrants who are required to pay a charge before visa grant if they do not have functional English.

To assess the English language ability of prospective migrants who are subject to charging, DIMIA may ask applicants to sit an English test. The International English Language Testing System - known as the IELTS test - is the preferred test for migration purposes and is available world-wide.

For those not subject to charging, English language proficiency is measured by AMEP service providers using the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings. Clients are eligible for the AMEP if they score less than Level 2 in any of the four macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Progress in the AMEP is measured against the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE). CSWE is a competency-based curriculum accredited under the Australian Quality Training Framework. Clients are assessed as having achieved functional English when they have completed CSWE Level 3.

In the 2001 calendar year, the AMEP assisted 32,486 clients drawn from 100 language backgrounds. The number of eligible clients who took up their AMEP entitlement increased by 6.4%, from 68.8% in 2000 to 75.2% in 2001. This was largely due to an increase in all States/Territories in the number of clients under family visa categories enrolling in the program. The number of humanitarian entrants and skilled stream migrants enrolled in the AMEP also rose in some States/Territories.

The core functions of the AMEP

The AMEP's mission statement is: 'To maximise participation of migrants and refugees in the Australian community through the provision and management of a quality national English language program which meets the needs of its clients.'

As such, the AMEP has two core functions. The first is to assist new arrivals to develop English language skills and the second is to provide general orientation to new arrivals to help them participate in wider Australian society and access available services.

The AMEP provides English tuition in the context of settlement in Australia. Classes cover topics such as opening a bank account, enrolling children in school and shopping. AMEP classes also provide a place in which friendships develop between people from all over the world, affirming respect for differences in an encouraging and non-threatening environment. In this way, the AMEP facilitates participation in the Australian community.

The AMEP funding model

Competitive tendering

DIMIA delivers the AMEP through tendered contracts, funding organisations in each State/Territory to provide tuition. There are currently twenty-one service provider contracts delivering AMEP tuition in around 170 sites throughout Australia.

Current AMEP contracts are due to expire on 30 June 2003, and DIMIA is negotiating contracts with preferred tenderers after a competitive tendering process conducted in 2002. Through the Statement of Requirement in this tender round, DIMIA has sought to ensure a diverse range of delivery sites and encourage consortium arrangements that provide a range of opportunities for clients and close connections to local communities. This will build on links already in place.

DIMIA predicts potential AMEP client numbers from information about the intakes under the Migration and Humanitarian Programs and from historical participation patterns. Based on this information, DIMIA can agree on annual forecast business targets with service providers ahead of time.

AMEP contracts are for five years. Under the contracts commencing 1 July 2003, DIMIA pays for tuition based on the number of tuition hours delivered to clients. The contract prices are fixed for the five years of the contract, except for annual CPI adjustment. The Home Tutor Scheme is funded on the basis of the number of clients matched with a tutor. There is provision for differential prices for classroom tuition and distance learning as well as differential prices for rural and regional provision, acknowledging the extra costs of providing tuition in these areas.

These funding arrangements also provide incentives to service providers to increase the number of clients who enter the program and to maximise client use of their entitlements.

DIMIA and AMEP service providers share responsibility for promoting the AMEP. DIMIA has a communication strategy to inform potential clients about the AMEP and encourage them to take advantage of the English language tuition options available to them. The department requires service providers to promote the program to migrants in their contract regions. Their performance evaluation is linked to achievements in relation to the core program outcomes of Reach, Retention and Results. Reach refers to the extent to which eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants take up their AMEP entitlement. Retention is the extent to which clients who enter the program use their AMEP entitlement. Results refers to the English outcomes achieved by AMEP clients.

AMEP learning outcomes

In the 2001 calendar year, 13,618 clients exited the program. Accredited certificates were awarded to exiting clients as follows: CSWE Level 1, 39.2%; CSWE Level 2, 24.9%; and CSWE Level 3, 22.2%. A further 13.7 % of exiting clients received a record of achievement noting competencies achieved.

On average, clients stayed in the program for 362 hours, or 377 hours adjusted for inclusion of the SPP.⁵

Learning outcomes are very much influenced by client profiles, especially the ages of clients and their levels of formal education prior to arrival in Australia. The educational background of AMEP clients varies widely, from clients who speak a language with no formal script or who are not literate in their own language to highly qualified members of professions. Clients may include those both familiar and unfamiliar with Roman script. In addition, the differing demands on people settling in a new country impinge on the extent to which they can take advantage of the program. Participation of eligible migrants in the AMEP is voluntary and new settlers have many competing demands on their time as a result of employment or other settlement-related issues.

For these reasons, the AMEP funding formula does not incorporate any element relating to learning outcomes. The formula rewards reach and retention - attracting clients into the program and maximising their participation. However, DIMIA monitors service provider achievement in terms of client learning through a benchmarking process that takes account of different client profiles.

All AMEP service providers are required to be Registered Training Organisations. Service providers are also independently accredited and aspects of performance are monitored through the National ELT Accreditation Scheme. There are set standards that service providers must meet with respect to the quality of the teaching materials utilised, curriculum taught, and assessments undertaken, as well as the standards outlining

⁵ DIMIA AMEP National Management Information Unit Data, 2002.

the quality and professionalism of the teachers employed.

Client satisfaction with the program is measured through periodic National Client Satisfaction Surveys conducted independently. The National Client Survey published in 2001 showed high levels of client satisfaction with most aspects of the program. Around 80% of all clients indicated that the AMEP had been helpful or very helpful in making them feel more confident about living in Australia and taking part in activities like shopping, using public transport and making new friends. The full report is available on DIMIA's web site. The Australian National Audit Office audited management of the AMEP contracts in 2000-01 and all recommendations from this audit were subsequently implemented.

The AMEP Research Centre carries out research and professional development activities which support teachers and administrators in the AMEP. The *Independent Review of the Job Network Inquiry Report* undertaken by the Productivity Commission, recently commended the AMEP for making specific provision for research funding and recommended a similar continuing research arrangement be established in the Job Network.⁶

This chapter now turns to the issues that have been raised in the public consultations and submissions to the review.

Many of the submissions to the review have acknowledged that the ability to speak English impacts greatly on the successful settlement of migrants and humanitarian entrants, affecting all aspects of life including their ability to find employment, undertake further education and more generally participate in the Australian community. It is worth noting that many stakeholders commented that the AMEP is performing well overall as a service that facilitates learning the English language.

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is the DIMIA-funded program that sees language training tendered out to a variety of agencies around the country. While there are differences depending on who the provider is in any given place, by and large the program is very well regarded and at its best, is seen as being world leading.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

While submissions to the review have raised some issues of concern and provided suggestions for improvements, the proposals have generally amounted to fine-tuning the service in its current format.

Eligibility

Public consultations and submissions to the review have raised a number of concerns regarding eligibility requirements for the AMEP. The most frequently raised issue with regard to eligibility has been the need for English language training among longer-resident migrant communities.

Current eligibility criteria for admission to the AMEP deny Italy-born free access to English language tuition. About 46% of Italians residing in Victoria are 45 to 64 years old, namely within the cohort whose employment opportunities are most at risk if, due to economic restructuring and/or downturns, they lose their unskilled or semiskilled jobs. As a matter of fact the number of unemployed among this age group is

⁶ Productivity Commission, *Independent Review of the Job Network - Inquiry Report*, report no. 21, AGPS, Canberra, 3 June 2002, pp.14, 26.

already large and increasing. In addition to the obstacle posed by their own age, they suffer the jeopardy of inadequate English fluency to take advantage of possible re-training and re-qualification schemes. To facilitate the employability and, whenever required or desirable, re-qualification of these workers access to free, intensive, purposely designed, English language courses is essential.

Submission from Co.As.It (the Italian Assistance Association),VIC

It should also be recognised that longer established communities may still have settlement needs particularly in relation to English language proficiency due to circumstances existing at the time of their arrival and may need access to English language programs.

Submission from the Hurstville City Council, NSW

The importance of targeting DIMIA-funded services towards new arrivals in their early years of settlement has been highlighted throughout this report. The AMEP has already established some flexibility around this principle in the form of the Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Program, which supports community agencies to provide language assistance to groups in the community who are no longer eligible for the AMEP (for example, because they have been living in Australia for a long time or because they have used up their entitlement). In addition, the content of the AMEP curriculum is structured around orientation to the Australian community and to available services which is of less relevance to longer-term residents.

More importantly, other English language training programs are available from non-

DIMIA sources, such as State/Territory governments. An important example of other sources of English language tuition provided by the Commonwealth is the LLNP funded by the DEST. The details of this program are more fully discussed later in this chapter.

Another issue that has been raised is the view that current eligibility requirements are too restrictive and that new arrivals assessed as having functional English could in fact benefit from additional language training.

[T]he fact that a person might speak English does not necessarily mean that he/she will be able to understand the version of English spoken in Australia. The accent here is quite different to US or British English with which more people are familiar and it takes time to attune one's ear to it. ...[T]he English spoken in those source regions where English is widely spoken (eg West Africa and India) is very different to the English spoken in Australia. Further, some people who have learnt English as a second language have accents that make them almost unintelligible to a native speaker. Such entrants need help to modify their intonation and stressing so that they can be easily understood. A person might be functionally fluent in English as a second language but not possess the vocabulary that would enable him/her to practice in their chosen profession. Exclusion of people from language programs on the basis of assessed competency therefore does not make sense. It should be up to the entrant to assess whether he/she could benefit from some additional language training, be it to help them to come to terms with Australian English or to enhance their professional English.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

As noted above, a client is eligible for the AMEP if they have less than functional English in any of the four macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as measured by the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings. This assessment is made by AMEP service providers who are well placed to make judgements about the language and literacy capabilities of individual migrants.

The AMEP is designed to give basic English instruction to new arrivals to cope with everyday situations and not for the development of the more sophisticated English skills which might be required for more complex social and vocational settings. Further opportunities for English tuition are targeted at other client groups and are available through a variety of programs, including the LLNP and State/Territory funded English as Second Language (ESL) programs.

Other eligibility issues raised by stakeholders include access to the AMEP for Australians by descent and adult migrants who were minors at the time of visa application. Australians by descent are not migrants and do not have access to the AMEP. They do, however, have access to all programs available to other Australians including English language programs administered through other Commonwealth departments and State/Territory governments.

The relevant legislation restricts access to the AMEP to arrivals who are 18 years old or older at the time of visa application. Until recently, those who were younger than 18 years old at the time of application but turned 18 before arrival in Australia did not have access to the program. In January 2003, the Minister approved provisions to allow discretionary access to most of those affected in this way. It should also be noted that 16-18 year olds who do not have access to school ESL programs may be eligible for the AMEP if they apply before their 18th birthday.

Registration and commencement

Given the crucial importance of English language learning in the settlement process and its correlation with economic and social well-being, the AMEP is structured to encourage new arrivals to register for and begin tuition as soon as possible. Under legislation, new arrivals are expected to register for the program within three months of arrival or grant of permanent residence, begin tuition within one year of registration, and complete tuition within three years. In 2001, 78% of AMEP participants registered in three months or less. A further 7% registered between three and six months, 6% between six and twelve months, 4% between one and two years, 2% between two and three years, and 3% after three years or more. Clients must be offered a place in the AMEP within one month of registration or within three months if child care is required. However, a number of stakeholders have expressed the view that these requirements are too restrictive.

One of the key areas where revision is seen as necessary is that of the policy framework. The rigidity of this leads to a number of problems including: the requirement that entrants must register within 3 months of arrival to be eligible means that some entrants (especially women) miss out eg because they are totally absorbed in making a home and ensuring the children are settling into schools; [and] the requirement that tuition entitlements must be taken up within the first year means that refugees who have other valid priorities, including assisting other family members or dealing with health issues, will miss out.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

Extend the time period within which prospective users must register to access AMEP services. Many refugees and humanitarian entrants who are suffering acute forms of trauma and depression caused by pre-settlement experiences may require more time to prepare for a course of study.

Submission from the Ethnic Communities Council Queensland

[N]ot all new arrivals are able to access AMEP tuition [within the AMEP time constraints] because of other, more pressing needs or personal health needs, particularly in the case of humanitarian entrants. A more flexible system should be adopted to English tuition so that new arrivals, particularly humanitarian entrants with intensive support needs and skilled migrants, are able to access tuition at a later stage of settlement, once other pressing settlement issues are overcome.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centres Forum of New South Wales

The present restrictions on registration and commencement are intended to emphasise the priority that new arrivals should accord to English tuition in the settlement process. Relaxing these restrictions would be counter-productive to the goal of early participation.

In addition, current arrangements include deferral provisions to enable individuals to register for and begin tuition outside the prescribed timeframes. There is a range of acceptable reasons for deferral of AMEP tuition under the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*, for example, long-term illness, family commitments, employment commitments and absence from Australia. Deferral is at the discretion of DIMIA after a client has made a request through an AMEP service provider. DIMIA does not deny these requests as long

as clients are able to complete a course of study within the five-year time limit. In 2001, DIMIA granted 1,059 requests for deferral at the three-month stage, 387 requests at the twelve-month stage and 1,549 requests at the thirty-six month stage. A further 1,282 clients were granted deferrals at more than one stage.⁷

Existing provisions provide an appropriate balance between providing an incentive for early participation and allowing flexibility to respond to individual circumstances. There may be scope for better dissemination of information regarding the process for requesting a deferral.

The duration of tuition

510 hours

AMEP clients are entitled to 510 hours of tuition or the number of hours it takes to reach functional English, whichever comes first. Humanitarian entrants who have special needs arising from pre-migration experiences may take part in the SPP, which provides up to 100 additional hours of tuition.

In both public consultations and submissions to the review, stakeholders have argued that the current entitlement to 510 hours of English language tuition is insufficient. Some suggested

⁷ DIMIA AMEP National Management Information Unit Data, 2002.

The 510 hours of English tuition allocated to migrants and 610 hours for Humanitarian Entrants is often not enough for them to gain functional ability in the language. The number of hours of tuition allocated per client needs to reflect the learning pace of that client, eg. clients illiterate in their first language will need more hours than clients who are already literate in the Roman script.

Submission from the Adult Migrant English Program, Northern Territory University

The Galbally Report recognised that migrants most in need of government support are ‘those that arrive here with little or no understanding of the English language’. The linguistic barrier is perhaps the greatest, yet most readily surmountable, obstacle faced by migrant and humanitarian entrants to full participation in Australian society. An effective program of English language tuition is critically important if migrants are to attain a successful settlement outcome. ... Rather than prescribing a specified maximum number of hours, the attainment standard should be set at an individually assessed level of good English communicative ability instead of ‘functional English’ (an imprecisely defined term).

Submission from the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia

Increase the number of basic hours of tuition from 510 where this is reasonably assessed as necessary to satisfy good English communicative ability.

Submission from the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

that the entitlement should relate to achievement of functional English rather than to a maximum number of hours.

The adequacy of the provision of the 510 hours entitlement has been questioned since its introduction. The need for additional assistance for some AMEP clients has been recognised in the establishment of the SPP for humanitarian entrants. In 2001, 3,703 humanitarian entrants commenced in the SPP while only 827 went directly into the AMEP. Of those entering the SPP, 90% then went on to participate in AMEP classes. On average,

humanitarian entrants completed seventy-three hours of SPP in 2001.

*My observation, based on the experience of dealing with these adult migrants, is that the process of their integration into mainstream jobs, education and training takes much longer than the assumptions behind policy and resources intended to support them. Nowhere is this more apparent, in my view, than the current “allowance” of hours for most adult migrants to achieve a **functional** usage of the English language that is beyond mere survival usage. Both in Outreach and in other parts of TAFE, there is a constant stream of AMEP graduates who need and desire more English language teaching. This is **not** a criticism of the AMEP, but rather an observation on how long it takes for migrants to master the English language.*

Submission from Randwick TAFE, NSW (emphasis in submission)

The language barrier is certainly one of the main causes for frustration to many migrants/refugees during the initial settlement period. A few migrants find it difficult and/or embarrassing to become students again: particularly if they are beginners. They may learn quicker in practical situations. They may feel a sense of shame/disgrace and begin to lose faith in their abilities.

Submission from Migrant Settlement Services, Centacare Cairns, QLD

The difficulties that many adult migrants face in learning English have been acknowledged by some stakeholders in their submissions to the review.

The core function of the AMEP, as outlined above, is to help new arrivals to develop

English language skills to assist their initial settlement in Australia. The program is available to those who do not have a functional level of English, for up to a maximum of 510 hours. The age of clients and their levels of formal education prior to arrival in Australia, among other influencing factors, affect individuals' learning outcomes. Even if there was a significant increase in the number of learning hours available to clients, it would be unrealistic to expect that all clients would achieve functional English.

It is important to note that there are further English language learning options available to many clients exiting the AMEP. As discussed in chapter six of this report - Mainstream Services, the LLNP is a program providing language, literacy and numeracy assistance to job seekers to help remove a major barrier to employment and improve the daily lives of participants. The program includes up to 400 hours of language, literacy and numeracy training across a range of competency levels and operates between six and twenty hours per week over a period of twenty to fifty-two weeks. The program targets people registered with Centrelink as unemployed and looking for work who are not full-time students; job seekers whose first language is not English and who are citizens; permanent residents; and holders of some provisional visas.

To be eligible for entry into lower level courses of the LLNP, clients from non-English speaking backgrounds need to have completed at least 460 hours of their AMEP entitlement or no longer have entitlement to the AMEP. The program is also available to clients from non-English speaking backgrounds who have functional English skills but require further English language training. The LLNP, therefore, should be regarded as a worthwhile option for job-seeking migrants in need of further language tuition. DIMIA has established referral protocols with DEST in order to facilitate access to the LLNP.

DIMIA commissioned AMES Victoria to undertake indicative research into the pathways into other English language tuition from AMEP. AMES Victoria provides both AMEP tuition and a Job Network service and refers clients to the LLNP from both of these services. The research indicated that in 2001, AMES Victoria enrolled a total of 2,495 trainees in the Literacy and Numeracy Program, which was the forerunner to the LLNP. Of these, 36% had previously been enrolled in the AMEP. In 2002, AMES enrolled a total of 2,347 trainees in LLNP of whom 1,002 or 43% had previously been enrolled in the AMEP. These figures suggest that ex-AMEP clients are making good use of the LLNP as a pathway to further English language tuition. In both years, these ex-AMEP clients had a relatively high use of AMEP entitlements at an average of 486 hours in 2001 and 456 hours in 2002.

In addition, State/Territory governments fund ESL courses that are available to clients exiting the AMEP who are not job seekers. For example, the Victorian State Government provides funding for:

- ESL access programs within TAFE institutes;
- ESL courses at neighbourhood houses and community centres;
- ESL courses at the Centre for Adult Education; and
- ESL courses offered by Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES).

The research highlighted aspects of the LLNP that assist former AMEP clients to make the transition to the LLNP. These include:

- 'continuous provision' of the service, which means that clients exiting the AMEP who are eligible for the LLNP do not need to wait for a course start date in order to continue their language training;
- individual learning plans to meet individual client's needs;

- an allowance to assist eligible clients meet the costs associated with attending LLNP classes (introduced in September 2002); and
- in the case of AMES Victoria, provider familiarity, with AMEP teachers promoting the LLNP and students from both programs interacting outside the classroom.

The research also indicated that clients exiting the AMEP who are prospective job seekers have considerably fewer obstacles in accessing additional language tuition than their non-job seeking counterparts. AMES identified the lack of provision within the LLNP framework for child care as the only barrier experienced by former AMEP clients in accessing the LLNP. Apart from paying for child care out of their own pocket, the only option available for clients with child care requirements is the distance learning provision within the LLNP.

With respect to State/Territory-funded ESL programs, the research highlighted the following factors as barriers to former AMEP clients who are only eligible for ESL courses:

- the lack of a centralised referral and information point;
- the limited capacity of ESL providers to plan for recently-arrived populations;
- course start dates are inflexible and preclude immediate commencement;
- more limited and less flexible learning options than are available in the AMEP; and
- child care provision is limited and requires fees.⁸

This indicative research indicates that there are significant disadvantages for AMEP exiting clients who are non-job seekers. It would be useful for DIMIA to profile the characteristics of clients who are not eligible for the LLNP and who do not take up the options presented

by State/Territory-specific ESL programs. A greater understanding of the different ESL programs funded by State/Territory governments would also be of use. The outcomes of such research could provide DIMIA with a firmer basis from which to assess whether the AMEP or some other program should provide additional hours of tuition for those who have completed their AMEP entitlement, require further English language tuition, and cannot gain access to the LLNP.

Recommendation 46

That DIMIA undertake research to identify the availability, eligibility requirements and use of English as a Second Language courses provided by State/Territory governments.

Recommendation 47

That DIMIA commission further research to profile the characteristics of clients who are not eligible for the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program and who do not take up the options presented by State/Territory-specific English as a Second Language programs following completion of their AMEP entitlement.

The requirement to complete tuition within five years

Commentary from public consultations and submissions to the review has suggested that the five-year cut off point for participation in AMEP tuition is too restrictive, especially for women.

⁸ This research is specific to Victoria only. While the LLNP is a national program, ESL programs are funded separately by individual State/Territory governments.

Learning English is an important component in the successful settlement of new arrivals. However, it is often deferred, as the higher priorities of employment, accommodation and health are prolonged. Families will often assume that children will learn English at school and that the adults in the family can concentrate on English skills once the family is economically stable. This is particularly the case if the main breadwinner already speaks some English. As a result, we find that for many women in new arrival families learning English gets placed on the back burner - especially if they are caring for young children. Their ability to access classes is often restricted by lack of childcare or transport issues. By the time they are ready to start a formal process of learning English, the period of eligibility for AMEP free English classes has expired and their sense of confidence has been diminished by prolonged reliance on others with better English language skills.

Submission from Community Information Whittlesea, VIC

The five-year time frame in which entrants must commence and complete their 510 hours, whilst legislated, also provides a critical issue for new arrivals who are impelled for financial reasons either to leave the course before completing it in order to gain employment, or to defer starting the course for considerable periods of time and commence working shortly after arriving in Australia. There are a number of issues here for both new arrivals and English language providers: the former appear often to take low-paid employment in order to earn some income, and then experience difficulty in moving on from this level of employment; and the AMEP-funded providers who are often confronted by

settlers who, having deferred starting their English language course for some years, come to AMES to pick up the course when they have less than six months to complete the whole course. This proves harrowing for both the settler and the AMES staff members who work with them.

Submission from Migrant Network Services (Northern Sydney), NSW

DIMIA established the five-year time frame in order to provide an incentive for early completion of English language training. AMEP providers have outreach arrangements that seek to contact potential clients and encourage those at risk of losing their tuition entitlement to enrol in AMEP classes. The provision of free child care for those with children under school age is also intended to facilitate access to the AMEP for those with family responsibilities. However, depending on the outcomes of the research to be undertaken in recommendations 46 and 47, there may be a case for extending the timeframe for completion of tuition to accommodate the circumstances of particular clients.

Recommendation 48

That DIMIA be given discretion to extend beyond five years the timeframe for completion of English language tuition under the AMEP to those with no access to the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program or other English language programs.

A credit bank of unused AMEP hours

A number of submissions to the review have proposed a form of credit bank of unused AMEP hours that could be allocated for those requiring further tuition.

It is recommended that an appropriate system be introduced where hours of tuition which are not used by students who enrol with higher levels of English skills can be used by students requiring additional tuition.

Submission from the City of Ryde, NSW

[There is] imbalance in terms of the 510 hours allocated per entrant: some new arrivals require only a portion of the time; others require at least double the hours... Some flexibility in utilising the hours would be very beneficial, perhaps through creating a credit bank of hours into which AMEP-contracted providers could input hours not required by some students and from which they could withdraw extra hours required by others. An annual reconciliation of the total hours used could be undertaken as part of the reporting process.

Submission from Migrant Network Services (Northern Sydney), NSW

Current funding provisions for the AMEP do not allow for the creation of a credit bank of hours from which tuition hours could be borrowed according to need. Eligible clients have a legislated individual entitlement of up to 510 hours of tuition but only hours that are used by eligible clients in the program are funded. There is no bank of 510 funded hours for every client which could be drawn on to allocate further tuition hours to clients in need as has been suggested. Additionally, legislation provides the AMEP entitlement to a particular individual and there is no legislative basis for the transfer of the entitlement to others. While there may be scope to change these legislative requirements, such a change would be complex and resource intensive to administer and might not be warranted in light of post-AMEP options available.

A key issue in relation to the 510 hours entitlement is that many clients do not fully use the current provisions of the program. As shown in table 11.1, in 2001, 75% of those estimated to have a need for AMEP English tuition registered with the program. Of this figure, 58.3% of all clients exiting the AMEP had completed their entitlement, either because they achieved functional English or they had completed their 510 hours or their five years had expired. The remaining 41.7% were clients who had not participated for at least six months and had not completed their entitlement. Of this group, around 20% of clients had between 200 and 299 hours remaining, around 23% had 300-399 hours remaining, and 32% had unused entitlements of 400 hours or more.⁹

For a high proportion of clients, therefore, the limit of 510 hours entitlement is not the key barrier to achieving good English skills. In this context, a blanket increase in the entitlement seems unwarranted. A strong focus on the retention of clients would seem to be an important first step towards improving the learning outcomes of AMEP clients.

Public consultations and submissions to the review have suggested that arrivals do not complete their entitlement for a number of reasons, including:

- giving a higher priority to employment or other settlement issues;
- difficulties in gaining access to classes, stemming from incompatible timetables, prohibitive distances or lack of appropriate child care; or
- frustration with the learning environment (for example, some participants have difficulty adjusting to a classroom setting).

⁹ DIMIA AMEP National Management Information Unit Data, 2002.

Table 11.1: AMEP outcomes by visa category, 2001

	Skilled	Family	Humanitarian	National
Registration Rate (%) (a)	64.7	72.7	88.4	75.20%
Exiting Clients (b):				
a) % Clients exiting with completed entitlement ie functional English, completion of 510 hours or 5 years expired	58.3	54.3	68.2	58.30%
b) Non-continuing clients (% Exiting clients who had not participated for at least 6 months and had not fully utilised hours and remain eligible)	41.7	45.7	31.8	41.70%
c) Average Hours Used (Hours)	362	347	401	362
d) Average Hours Used including SPP (Adjusted Hours for clients continuing to mainstream AMEP)	N/A	N/A	452	377

(a) Percentage of those estimated to have a need for AMEP English tuition registered with the AMEP; (b) Percentage of those registered with the AMEP. Source: DIMIA AMEP National Management Information Unit Data, 2002 (Table out 2001a)

Recent research by the AMEP Research Centre examining retention patterns for language groups with lower than average retention rates essentially confirms these observations.¹⁰ Given the importance of learning English as part of the settlement process, every effort should be made to overcome these difficulties.

Some of the factors in new contracts which will promote retention include the funding formula which pays for every hour of tuition provided, new requirements for flexibility of delivery, and a new requirement for individual client learning plans.

There are, however, more flexible approaches that would better cater to the particular needs of SPP clients by making better use of existing arrangements.

One avenue for providing additional tuition hours to those most in need may be to vary the targeting of the SPP. The additional hours of preparatory tuition available through the SPP to humanitarian entrants could be directed more specifically to a number of clearly defined target groups (in accordance with the outcome of the research to be undertaken in recommendation 47).

Recommendation 49

That DIMIA vary the targeting of the Special Preparatory Program where necessary in order to provide increased hours of preparatory tuition for some specifically targeted humanitarian entrant clients of the AMEP.

Flexible tuition options

In public consultations and submissions to the review, a number of stakeholders have raised the need for greater flexibility in the size, timing and delivery of English language classes. Suggestions have included the provision of both part-time and full-time classes, a reduction of ceiling numbers to accommodate smaller populations in rural and regional areas, the establishment of women-only classes, and a shift away from school-based timetables.

¹⁰ S Noy, *Competing Priorities: Retention Patterns in the Adult Migrant English Program*, National Centre for English Language Teaching, Sydney, 2001.

*If we consider however how the AMEP could work better, doing what it best knows, in regional and rural areas, we would urge that there is a greater flexibility in class sizes - that is, the reduction of ceiling numbers to accommodate the smaller population. **This flexibility should be made a part of the AMEP tender condition.** We also believe there should be greater flexibility in the **timing of classes.** Following school based time tables is very disadvantageous, especially for eligible students who arrive in an area towards the end of the year. The new teaching year will not begin for 3 months or more and frustration at this waste of time is high.*

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region, NSW (emphasis in submission)

We commend educational initiatives such as the program in Springvale where AMES and ELC have partnered to develop educational programs for young people geared at the learning needs of this target group. This initiative demonstrates that young people learn differently to adults and that educational programs require modifications, appropriate teaching resources and specific planning goals. ...[We recommend] [t]hat DIMIA support the continuation of this current initiative and resource AMEP to adapt future programs for young learners across Victoria.

Submission from the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, VIC

The AMEP already incorporates considerable flexibility in service delivery to meet the needs

of its clients. AMEP clients can choose from a range of learning options, including:

- full or part-time classroom tuition in formal or community-based settings designed to meet diverse needs, educational backgrounds and learning abilities;
- a distance-learning course, available throughout Australia and comprising work books and audio and video tapes, backed by regular contact with a qualified teacher;
- the Home Tutor Scheme, which provides language assistance by a trained volunteer usually on a one-to-one basis in a client's home; and
- individual learning through self-paced learning in Individual Learning Centres.

The AMEP curriculum structure also has the flexibility to accommodate different learning needs. AMEP service providers and teachers have worked closely with the existing curriculum development team to develop a flexible curriculum responsive to the differing needs of language learners. In many circumstances, service providers are able to accommodate particular requirements such as single-sex classes if the need is expressed to them, however, sufficient clients need to be available to justify the establishment of such arrangements.

AMEP in regional Australia

DIMIA has sought to ensure client reach in non-metropolitan regions is also adequate. As table 11.2 highlights, 6,248 clients participated in the AMEP in non-metropolitan regions in the five years between 1997 and 2002. Of these clients, 11.6% of students used distance learning and a further 11.2% used a combination of face-to-face classes and distance learning. The remaining clients attended classroom tuition only.

Table 11.2: Non-metropolitan AMEP participants, 1997-2002

	AMEP Participants			
	Distance Learning	Classroom	Combined	Total
New South Wales	251	1,403	164	1,818
Victoria	86	808	177	1,071
Queensland	197	2,264	197	2,658
Western Australia	133	80	67	280
South Australia	30	58	59	147
Tasmania	11	160	18	189
Northern Territory	14	54	17	85
Australia	722	4,827	699	6,248

Source: DIMIA AMEP National Management Information Unit Data, 2002. The Australian Capital Territory is classified as a metropolitan area.

hours in metropolitan locations and 39% in rural locations. The exit rate before completing entitlement hours is also similar at 42% for metropolitan and 43% for rural locations. Around 15% of metropolitan and 17% of rural clients achieved functional English.

The next round of contracts will provide even greater flexibility addressing issues highlighted in the public consultations and submissions for rural and regional clients. A new Rural and Regional Intensive Tuition program will be available under the new contracts. This program is designed for situations where classroom tuition is not available and clients have low literacy skills or other disadvantages such that distance learning is not an appropriate solution. Under the program, a qualified teacher can provide tuition to groups of one to three people in their homes or other suitable venues. Another new initiative is that the new contracts will commit AMEP providers to operate for a defined number of weeks per year. This will provide greater continuity in tuition for clients and minimise disruptions in learning caused by school and university holidays. Service

providers will also be given additional funding for delivery of tuition in rural and regional Australia to enable them to provide more flexible services.

The Home Tutor Scheme

The Home Tutor Scheme was launched in 1974 and helps eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants who cannot attend AMEP English classes. The Home Tutor Scheme is staffed by trained volunteers and tutoring usually takes place once a week in the informal atmosphere of the client's own home. The scheme assists people with young children, people whose working hours make it difficult to attend classes, people who are seriously isolated, and people who lack the confidence to use other forms of tuition. Tutors initially help for a period of six months, however, this period of time can be extended depending on the client's need for English language tuition and the availability of the tutor.

Service providers and community groups alike have suggested that the Home Tutor Scheme be augmented, including the recruitment of tutors from different ethnic backgrounds.

We believe that the extension and expansion of the Home Tutor Scheme would greatly benefit those many areas of the state poorly served by any other ESL provider and favourable consideration be given by DIMIA to any tender which addresses this provision.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region, NSW

AMEP service providers have financial incentives to recruit and train home tutors and make significant efforts to recruit tutors from different ethnic backgrounds. There are, however, difficulties with recruitment in some areas. There is scope for expansion of this program. Strategies for recruitment can be more fully explored and DIMIA may need to provide targeted assistance to service providers where progress in the recruitment of tutors has been limited.

Recommendation 50

That DIMIA, through the AMEP Research Centre, undertake a project to identify effective strategies for service providers to recruit volunteer tutors to assist AMEP delivery.

Child care

A related issue raised by stakeholders has been the impact of shortages of child care places on the ability of some clients to attend AMEP classes.

...STARTTS clients have expressed concerns over the insufficient numbers of childcare places. This particularly impacts on women and reduces their

chances of settling well and participating in their new society to the best of their abilities. Furthermore, this issue is even more acute for arrivals under Visa classes 200 & 204, who might not have any family networks in Australia to assist with child minding.

Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, NSW

In the first instance, childcare is necessary to enable adults to be able to attend classes, as few refugees have extended families or networks with whom they can leave the child. But the service provided must be more than a regular childcare service. The service needs to be highly specialised, recognising that for many refugees, this is the first time they have left their children with strangers and it can be a deeply stressful experience for them. It is vital that the service understands and is responsive to refugees' concerns about leaving their children with strangers/people from another background.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

DIMIA has long recognised the need to provide child care to allow the participation particularly of mothers of young children in the AMEP. Child care to assist AMEP participants was first supported by the department in 1971 and, by the 1986-87 financial year, funding was available to provide child care at or near sixty AMEP locations. Provision of suitable child care was an essential requirement in the AMEP tender process of 1997-98 and has since remained so.

Under the service delivery arrangements established in 1998, child care became the responsibility of contracted service providers. AMEP contracts require service providers to

arrange access to child care for children under school age during AMEP class times. Child care for eligible clients must:

- meet State/Territory regulations;
- meet the needs of AMEP clients and recognise the cultural sensitivities of clients;
- where possible be located so that travel time between the child care facility and the location of tuition or the client's home does not exceed thirty minutes each way; and
- be provided without cost to the client.

AMEP providers must arrange suitable child care within three months of registration for tuition. Providers usually negotiate with local child care providers to secure places. Some child care is available on-site. In 2001, the AMEP used 3,501 child care places.

However, as a result of current high demand in the child care sector, child care services may be some distance from AMEP centres and sufficient spaces are not always available to meet demand. In the new AMEP contracts, tenderers must provide a five-year plan indicating how they intend to meet the above standards for provision of this service.

While the AMEP is addressing the issue of unmet demand for child care in its contracts with service providers, it should also be noted that there is evidence of unmet demand in a number of areas nation-wide, and that this affects all parents of young children who are seeking child care, not just AMEP clients.

The orientation function of the AMEP

Public consultations and submissions to the review have reflected strong recognition of the orientation function of the AMEP. In particular, stakeholders recognised that AMEP classes are often a source of information about available services and about Australian values and institutions. The social context of the classes enables students to overcome some

of the isolation experienced by many new arrivals, and the longer-term isolation that arises from being unable to communicate with members of the broader community.

At all stages of the settlement process, the AMEP service provider has a role in ensuring maximisation of settlement outcomes and facilitating the client's interactions with the structures of Australian society. Due to its size, geographic spread and infrastructure the AMEP serves a major focal point and unifying link for newly arrived migrants and refugees in their settlement journey.

Submission from the Australian Centre for Languages, NSW

A number of stakeholders have suggested that the AMEP could build on the second of its two core functions. In particular, they have recommended enhancing the connections between the English tuition and general life skills and everyday living within the AMEP curriculum. Suggestions for additional course content included: teaching a vocabulary for job seeking and joining the workplace; basic occupational safety terms; orientation to the role of law enforcement in the Australian community; information on nutrition and health services, and training in gaining access to the multilingual web sites of mainstream organisations. Stakeholders also argued that AMEP classes could promote available services more explicitly and assist arrivals to develop the skills required to gain access to services.

...we felt strongly that the AMEP tutors could utilize services and service literature to educate clients as to the range of services available locally which offer support for basic needs issues e.g. housing, tenancy issues, and in

particular navigating the employment support agencies better. For example, classes structured around tenancy could involve speakers from the Tenants Union, working through leases and the Residential Tenancy Act (or relevant bits of it), a different class or cluster of classes could involve speakers from JobNet and look at mutual obligations etc. ... [A]gencies in general would be glad of the opportunity for service presentations to a group of potential service users...

Submission from Colony 47 Inc, TAS

There is provision within the existing curriculum framework for all of these matters to be addressed according to the needs of the clients in classes. Individual service providers use a range of resources in relation to these issues. AMEP contracts already require service providers to make the kinds of linkages suggested and most are already very active in fostering cooperation with both community organisations and government agencies.

Similarly, links between English learning and life outside the classroom are already pursued in the AMEP. For example, providers actively promote computer literacy skills and commonly provide work experience to clients who are reaching functional English. Excursions for everyday activities such as shopping are commonplace within courses.

Nevertheless, a number of these suggestions also have merit and there may be scope for further development of these ideas. DIMIA could encourage other service providers and community organisations to offer their assistance to AMEP service providers for incorporation of speakers and activities into the AMEP curriculum. However, this needs to be balanced with what can reasonably be delivered without detracting from the AMEP's

core objective of providing English language tuition.

In addition, public consultations have also raised the issue of eligibility for the AMEP in the context of the AMEP's orientation functions. Some commentators considered that new arrivals with functional English are disadvantaged by not having the opportunity to receive the information and orientation services that the AMEP provides. It should be noted that DIMIA provides settlement information kits translated into twenty-one different community languages which cover settlement information such as language tuition, how to contact emergency services, where to seek help, housing, employment, transport, education, the health system and local government. These kits are available at both Australian diplomatic posts overseas and on DIMIA's web site. Migrants who arrive with good English skills are better equipped than other arrivals to seek out information and learn about their new environment independently. In addition, other services such as MRCs/MSAs provide information to assist with orientation and settlement.

Integration with other services

Public consultations and submissions to the review have emphasised the importance of close working relationships between AMEP providers and other settlement and mainstream service providers. They have placed particular emphasis on relationships with torture and trauma specialists, other English language providers and income support and employment services.

...the delivery of AMEP tuition involves AMEP providers working with other settlement services, structuring learning content around migrants' settlement needs, and establishing links and pathways for clients.

Submission from the Australian Centre for Languages, NSW

As one of the main problems for migrants and refugees is finding employment there needs to be closer cooperation between the AMEP, DEST, Centrelink and employers to identify areas where migrants could be best employed and then training given in language and skills areas.

Submission from the Adult Migrant English Program, NT

DIMIA expects AMEP service providers to have strong community links within their contract regions. It is a tender requirement that there be liaison with providers of other DIMIA-funded settlement services, other Commonwealth, State/Territory and local government agencies, contracted service providers, and relevant community groups providing services to migrants.

AMEP service providers are expected to maintain links with providers of mainstream services where they share a client base. For example, AMEP service providers have established links with Centrelink. DIMIA has also established protocols with relevant agencies to create more effective pathways between language tuition and vocational training and labour market programs. For example, AMEP providers give exiting clients information about the Job Network, Centrelink and other language tuition options. They also provide documentation on the level of English proficiency reached by exiting clients to assist agencies such as Centrelink and the Job Network. These services are written into all AMEP contracts and are monitored regularly by DIMIA contract managers.

More efficient use of AMEP infrastructure

As noted earlier in this report, a number of stakeholders have identified scope for structuring the delivery of other DIMIA-

funded services around AMEP delivery sites. Not only does the AMEP have a much wider reach than other settlement services, but it also has a significant geographic spread and service delivery infrastructure.

At the same time, they considered that this approach would not be appropriate in all circumstances. In general, they regarded options such as co-location of settlement services and attracting workers funded under the CSSS to AMEP centres as preferable to AMEP providers becoming providers of other settlement services. They emphasised the need for a clear delineation of the role of the various services and providers.

In terms of AMEP and its infrastructure a number of issues have to be considered: Co-location is an option only if services have their own identity clearly recognised because clients would be concerned about confidentiality issues. Essentially a class activity is very different to the disclosing of personal issues to a specific worker. ... AMEP services have expertise in education, but not in community development or one-on-one client work.

Submission from St George Migrant Resource Centre, NSW

While it is acknowledged that AMEP professional as well as physical infrastructure could be utilised beyond its current levels, it would not be an effective use of AMEP service providers' expertise if they were asked to provide the full range of settlement services. ... However, there are other options for better utilisation of AMEP structures including but not limited to: co-location of settlement services with AMEP service providers; use of rooms when there are no classes for initiatives such as Homework Help for refugee students; introduction of the Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) - type program in the AMEP curriculum on top of the existing

510 (+ 100) classes; [and] development of classes and teaching strategies catering specifically for torture and trauma survivors facing learning difficulties - in collaboration with Torture and Trauma Services.

Submission from the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, NSW

This report recommends that DIMIA develop a strategy for delivery of CSSS services in rural and regional areas through existing infrastructure, including AMEP centres. There would also be merit in making better use of AMEP infrastructure in other locations, perhaps in partnership with Neighbourhood Centres, local government and other agencies. In particular, DIMIA could include opportunities for respondents to demonstrate how they might make use of AMEP infrastructure and develop partnerships with other local agencies in future CSSS advertising rounds. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter nine of this report - The Community Settlement Services Scheme.

Complementary community-based provision of tuition

Some of the submissions to the review have recommended that community-based provision of English language tuition should be developed to complement AMEP services. Grants to community-based organisations and MRCs/MSAs could provide informal classes targeted towards particular groups whose needs are not being met by the AMEP.

In order to assist new arrivals to find work quickly, more accessible English language programs must be available amongst community-based organisations

- for example at the Migrant Resource Centres.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan, ACT

Under contracts, AMEP providers are required to have effective working relationships with community groups to ensure that service delivery meets client needs. When community agencies identify issues regarding the delivery of AMEP tuition, DIMIA will continue to work with them and local AMEP providers to facilitate improved service provision. Agencies such as MRCs/MSAs may wish to have an expanded role in facilitating English language assistance to clients by, for example, providing venues for AMEP community-based tuition or working with AMEP providers in the provision of informal conversation groups. The development of such links by MRCs/MSAs with the AMEP should be more clearly articulated in MRC/MSA funded work programs as noted in recommendation 41.

For those not eligible for the AMEP, complementary community-based language assistance already exists and is supported through the Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Program previously described in the *Eligibility* section of this chapter. DIMIA will continue to support the provision of language assistance by community agencies through the Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Program.

Recommendation 51

That DIMIA continue to support the development and maintenance of community language assistance programs through the Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Program.

Conclusion

In general, the AMEP provides an effective and flexible service, assisting new arrivals to develop English language skills and serving a significant orientation function. Needs for additional English tuition can in many cases be met by available Commonwealth or State/Territory programs. A number of the issues raised in public consultations and submissions to the review will be addressed under new contracts in the current tendering round. Others require further research or more detailed consideration to provide a firmer basis for policy change.

