

Submission re Inquiry into Contract management frameworks operated by Commonwealth entities :Administration of the Adult Migrant English Program contract (report no 37 )

As a former teacher, co-ordinator, Vocational Counsellor on the Adult Migrant English Program from 2002-2018, at Swinburne University, Melbourne, I would like to make several comments on your report and on my experience of the AMEP program from July 2018, as well as the reasons I resigned in December 2018, after nearly 38 years of teaching EFL, ESL and EAL in different countries.

Like many of my colleagues, I was passionate about my job and dedicated to improving the English level of my students in order for them to gain employment and settle well in Australia.

However, in my opinion, the changes to the AMEP from July 2017, which created volumes of extra paperwork and administration for teachers, degraded the quality of teaching and delivery of English language teaching, thus contributing to lower levels of English among migrants and also reducing participation of learners. As a result of the increased administrative duties, the time teachers could devote to solid class preparation and creation of valuable material, including organising excursions and incursions, was considerably reduced, although many of us worked many hours of unpaid overtime per week to keep standards of classroom teaching up and enjoy some element of job satisfaction.

Several negative features of the new contract contributed to the increase in administration for teaching staff. These were as follows:-

- The vastly increased length of student entry interviews, some lasting more than 2 hours, depending on the level of the student, and the completion and filing of the related paperwork post interview.
- Attending Professional Development sessions run by Linda Wyse mostly on assessing, creating assessments and the ACSF- but rarely on how to actually deliver an engaging lesson or deal with a very diverse range of students in one's class. These were draining, time-wasting and pedantic! (Real Professional Development often took place on our day off especially if part-time)
- Staff meetings which focussed mainly on paperwork and the ACSF
- The obsession with individual assessment was also extremely time-consuming and often not relevant to what the student was learning at the time. The student would be removed from the class often with a volunteer to conduct the assessment (depending on the type of assessment), missing out on valuable class activities which to me seemed totally counter-productive. Sometimes it was possible to deliver the assessment to the whole class if relevant but this was not often the case. Teachers were also encouraged to "pass" the student and "assist" them in the assessment in order to move them up the scale on the ACSF simply to achieve KPIs, even although the student was not yet competent. The result was that sometimes students were elevated to the next level which was far too difficult for them. This is totally counter-productive to the learning of a language. It is also demoralising and frustrating for students if they are placed in a level that is far too high. It is also hard for the teacher and unfair on the rest of the class. As an experienced teacher I was able to manage diversity and a wide range of skills in my classes but it was clear that many students were not able to cope with Certificate 3 when they should have stayed

in Certificate 2 for a longer period of time to consolidate their skills. I advocated for this to happen many times but it fell on deaf ears.

Politicians, auditors and verifiers, it seems to me, do not listen to experts - the teachers. This is why time after time we fail to educate and settle our migrants.

In your report you refer to "Value for Money" in the AMEP program. Allowing teachers to prepare, create relevant materials for their classes which will in turn engage students, is value for money - not the Kafkaesque regime which was enforced in 2017. Furthermore it has sadly not retained top quality, experienced teachers. Like myself, they have resigned in disgust at the path AMEP has taken and the lack of respect given to their teaching skills, experience and prior qualifications.

Finally, changes made to the AMEP in July 2017 have sadly destroyed the goodwill, collaborative approach among teachers and managers which existed before this date. These changes caused division and unnecessary stress for everyone due to the obsessive tick-box routine. New teachers were not properly mentored and less competent teachers were praised, awarded a contract or promoted for their tick box skills, not for their competence in teaching or contribution to materials development. AMEP always required paperwork and flexibility in the classroom (new migrants could arrive every week!) which teachers accepted but changes in 2017 were totally unnecessary and uneconomical in the end.

I would encourage auditors, politicians and educators to come together to repair the damage to the system in order to give our migrants the best educational experience leading to more study and employment opportunities in Australia. This ultimately means removing pointless paperwork and bureaucracy from educators. KPIs should not be related to English language gains! AMEP and any Migrant education should be inclusive not alienating. This also means taking into account the backgrounds of students, their level of literacy and numeracy in their own language which has a huge impact on their learning ability. Recognition that trauma can also impact learning especially with new arrivals. These factors must be taken into account when trying to impose a regime that simply does not fit this cohort of learners.

It is over 5 years since I resigned but I believe conditions have not changed much despite many teachers around the country calling for change - one of the reasons I would not return to such a toxic workplace. I trust my submission will assist in highlighting the most serious flaws in the delivery of AMEP.