

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-000946

Senator Collins, Jacinta provided in writing

Adult Migrant English Program - The Immigration (Education) Act 1971

Question

The Immigration (Education) Act 1971 entitles new arrivals assessed as having less than “functional English” to 510 hours English tuition. In what sense can large “conversation” classes taught by unqualified teachers be said to be tuition in English? Is creation of the social English stream a surreptitious way of eroding this legal requirement in order to cut costs?

Answer

- The Social English Stream has been introduced for clients who do not need to find employment nor wish to further their education in Australia. The introduction of this stream recognises that there is a substantial cohort within the migrant community that because of age, health or family circumstances do not need or want formal English language tuition purely for employment outcomes. This stream has been introduced to encourage greater participation in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) from a cohort where many are currently not accessing or making full use of the program, thus providing an opportunity for those who otherwise would not have access.
- This stream will have a greater focus, but not entirely reliant on, conversational English and oral communication skills. This allows for slightly larger class sizes of 25 students; current AMEP classes have 22.
- Teachers of the Social English Stream must be highly qualified. It is incorrect to class them as unqualified. These teachers must meet the qualification standards set by the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015 legislative instrument. Social English Stream teachers must also meet the qualification standards set by the licensing agreement of the VET course or unit being delivered to AMEP clients. In addition to this, the department has also mandated that AMEP Social Stream teachers have an Australian three year undergraduate degree and have, or be enrolled in, a post graduate Teacher of English as a Second Language qualification.