

## **QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012**

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

**(AE12/0468) Program 5.1 Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees**

Senator Cash asked:

With reference to the ministerial press release on a new virtual AMEP program it was stated: "The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen MP, and Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, said the \$5.1 million trial would initially involve up to 200 new migrants and would complement the Australian Government's existing Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP): In which regional will the Program be rolled out? How were these areas selected? How will participants be selected? Once a participant is selected – what is the process from there? Who will pay for the computer equipment and the broadband service provided to the participant? What happens to the computer etc if the person drops out of the course? What happens if there are technical problems who does the client call to get help? Will interpreters be provided? Are participants eligible for the free child minding service?"

*Answer:*

The regions that will be selected for the trial are from those accessing the high-speed broadband connectivity available through the national broadband network (NBN).

Participation in the trial is voluntary and open to all Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) eligible clients located in NBN ready sites across Australia. In order to participate, clients involved in the trial must either be connected to the NBN or have access to community-based NBN sites.

As with all AMEP distance learning clients, the cost of the computer is either borne by the client or, alternatively, the client accesses the services through free community-based sites. Clients who participate in the trial will be expected to provide their own hardware and internet connection (to the NBN), as is the case under existing online learning arrangements. It is not intended that clients need additional tools to access virtual tuition, although they will require a microphone and earphones to participate in certain interactions, as well as an appropriate webcam or other form of technology for engaging in virtual classrooms.

The online resources will include educational technology support to help clients navigate their way through the materials. In the event of any technical difficulties, trial participants will have access to a web support and maintenance service provided by the AMEP distance/e-learning provider.

Support will be provided bilingually to assist trial participants who have insufficient English language skills, as is also the case under existing online learning arrangements. Access to alternative learning options (e.g. traditional, paper-based

teacher-assisted distance learning) will continue to be available where this is appropriate and preferred.

As with all AMEP distance learning clients, trial participants are not eligible for childcare.