

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0728) Program 5.1: AMEP / Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Cash (written) asked:

What strategies does the Department have in place to improve English language skills in new entrants?

Answer:

The Adult Migration English Program (AMEP) provides free settlement-focused English courses for eligible migrants from the humanitarian, family and skilled visa streams who do not have functional English. Functional English is defined as basic social proficiency in English assessed at International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) 2 across all four macro skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). AMEP clients may access up to 510 hours of English courses for five years from their visa commencement date.

The AMEP uses the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE), a competency based national curriculum and assessment framework, which is accredited within the Australian Quality Framework (AQF).

To address the special needs of humanitarian entrants with limited education or difficult pre-migration experiences such as torture and trauma, additional hours of tuition may be offered through the Special Preparatory Program (SPP). Bilingual support is provided in SPP classes, to assist with explaining teaching methodology and identifying learning and settlement issues. SPP classes are also required to have smaller numbers.

The new AMEP business model provides mechanisms to ensure stability in the classroom. Clients who do not attend class for two weeks are to be exited and referred to an alternative learning mode that best suits their individual needs. This has been designed not only to maximise the learning opportunities and experiences of all clients, but to minimise disruption to those clients who are in constant participation in class. Learning methods such as self paced e-modules delivered in combination with Distance Learning and the Home Tutor Scheme allow students who are unable to commit to classroom activities to pursue the AMEP flexibly, according to their personal circumstances.

The Home Tutor Scheme Enhancement Program (HTSEP) provides training and ongoing support to community organisations that provide English as a Second Language (ESL) assistance to people who are not AMEP eligible. These organisations include settlement service providers, church groups and libraries.

The delivery of the AMEP is contracted to service providers around Australia, including universities, TAFEs, state educational departments, community colleges and private educational institutions. The Service Provider and its staff must have the appropriate skills, professional qualifications, credentials and accreditation to deliver English language tuition.