

Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES)

Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Improving the VET experience

AMES response to the *Creating a Future Direction for Australian Vocational Training and Education the Training Discussion Paper* is specifically in relation to CALD participants in the training system. AMES defines CALD participants as those who have arrived relatively recently and have one or a number of the following attributes.

- Limited or no Australian work experience and networks
- Limited or no knowledge/understanding of Australian workplace culture and systems
- Low English communication skills and some pre-literate in first language
- Overseas skills and experiences which are relevant but not necessarily easily translated and/or recognised in Australia
- Overseas professional skills and qualifications which translate to the Australian workplace. (This group has good skills that employers want, but may need a little Australian training and/or mentoring)

While this response focuses on impacts of potential training system reforms for relatively newly arrived migrant and refugee participants, the issues affecting this group are applicable to other groups who are marginalized in the training system. These groups include disengaged youth who are early school leavers and people with low levels of education who are returning to formal learning after long periods out of the workforce. The issues also apply to migrants who have been in Australia for a longer period, and may currently be in the workforce – usually in low skills occupations, but continue to face barriers in accessing and successfully completing training.

As the Skills Australia Discussion paper notes - people from non-English speaking homes make up a significant proportion of VET students – 12.1% (compared to 3.8% of students in Higher Education). Sources: NCVER (2009) *Students and courses 2008*; DEEWR (2009) *Students 2008*

Added to this 12.1% are an uncounted number of recently arrived migrants and refugees who have not managed to access VET programs or who have dropped out of courses.

These groups need to be recognised and taken into account in the way programs are offered. There have been many good examples of initiatives which attract, support and achieve outcomes for CALD learners. However, these are not yet systemic responses built into program structure or funding, but have always been one-off responses dependant on short term funding/innovative individuals

Improving learners' experiences of VET

"... VET's other core function is providing foundation and basic skills programs in areas like language, literacy and numeracy that are essential prerequisites for obtaining and retaining employment." p.11

The discussion paper acknowledges that part of VET's core function is to prepare people for employment – this includes the language, literacy and numeracy skills required to enter, undertake and complete vocational training as well as the skills needed for employment.

Recently arrived migrants and refugees are one of the diverse VET cohorts that need to be recognised and taken into account in the way programs are offered. Many in this cohort face challenges in successfully accessing the vocational training that can prepare them for employment. Low levels of English language, literacy and/or numeracy combined with a limited understanding of career pathways and associated training options in Australia act as barriers to access and successful completion of vocational training. In addition many in this cohort:

- are not in employment and have had little or no exposure to Australian workplaces
- may not have had much (or positive) experience of formal education

The VET system can engage recently arrived migrant and refugee and support their continued involvement in training by providing opportunities for this cohort to build or consolidate foundation skills in a vocational context – both during classroom delivery and workplace-based training.

The VET system can engage and support recently arrived migrants and refugees by providing 'cultural' foundation skills for this cohort – contextual information about education, training and employment in Australia.

Bridging Model for recently arrived migrants and refugees

"The artificial separation of Foundation Skills from mainstream VET has added to the marginalisation of people facing barriers to learning. Breaking down the 'silo' approaches of the past and giving greater attention to building and supporting Foundation Skills in all VET delivery will enable more equitable participation and significantly improve quality outcomes for all."¹

The Victorian Skills Reform provides a model that can support systemic interventions and scaffolded approaches which bridge the "artificial separation" of language and literacy programs (e.g. AMEP, LLNP) and mainstream vocational education.

Features of the Victorian model are:

- a category of Foundation Skills courses (language, literacy and numeracy) which can be delivered concurrently with any other vocational training under the funding model
- eligibility for government funded English language learning courses, regardless of what other qualifications are held
- low fees for Foundation Skills courses
- low fees for Certificates I and II; comparatively high fees for diplomas and advanced diplomas; income-contingent loans through the extension of FEE-HELP arrangements

¹ Roberts, A & Wignall, L (2010) *Briefing on Foundation Skills for the National VET Equity Advisory Council*

A Framework for a bridging model

A framework that would provide improved access for this group - and for other equity groups, for example those with low literacy and numeracy skills and/or limited formal learning experience - includes a number of bridging strategies/programs.

A program that incorporates all of the strategies described below will form a scaffolded pathway into and through VET training for many CALD learners. Others, and learners from other equity groups, will not require a pre-mainstream VET program, ie a course that integrates ESL and vocational units skills development but will benefit from built in LLN support in their mainstream VET courses to *“address their poor LLN skills in a meaningful and relevant context.”* AMES supports Skills Australia's position that this is *“... preferable to students feeling singled out and potentially stigmatised”*.

Recommended elements in a scaffolded vocational pathway are:

1. Integrated Foundation Skills (ESL) and Vocational Units – pre-mainstream VET
 2. Foundation Skills (LLN) support in mainstream VET programs (CAVSS model)
 3. Foundation Skills support at every qualification level
 4. Career pathway advice, mentoring and work experience
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1. Integrated Foundation Skills (ESL) and Vocational Units

Bridging courses: AMES has worked with a number of TAFE Institutes to pilot bridging courses that articulate into TAFE vocational courses. These programs integrate Foundation Skills (ESL) with Vocational Skills and are designed to bridge migrant and refugee learners into mainstream study and/or employment. (The Traineeships in English and Work Readiness Program pilot funded by DIAC for learners in the AMEP, is a strong example of a bridging program that make explicit links between Foundation (ESL) courses and VET.)

The balance of Foundation Skills (ESL) and Vocational Skills vary from course to course. Bridging courses can be customised to the strengths and needs of the learner group (prior experience in the vocational area, levels of English, literacy and numeracy skills, prior experience of formal education) and can provide varying degrees of English language tuition to support vocational learning in conjunction with accredited vocational training.

Taster courses: One successful model of courses that provide foundation skills in both ESL/LLN and VET are “Taster Courses”. These Taster Courses combine a number of basic units in, for example, plumbing, electrical, refrigeration, engineering, welding and fabrication along with language, literacy and numeracy modules.

The courses include workplace visits and exposure to workplace conditions in the TAFE workshops and are an ideal way for recently arrive migrants and refugees to experience the realities of different occupations in an industry area which improve their language skills.

Taster Courses are already offered at a number of TAFEs in Victoria, and possible in other jurisdictions. A national training agenda needs to advocate for similar preparatory courses that give learners the chance to experience some of the different career options in an industry before they commit to an apprenticeship or other training at or above Certificate III level.

TAFE, and other large public training providers, need to provide integrated Foundation Skills (ESL) and Vocational Skills bridging courses where there is demand for mainstream vocational training from the migrant and refugee cohort.

A national training agenda needs to advocate for preparatory "Taster Courses" that give learners the chance to experience a range of different career options in an industry, combined with Foundation Skills (ESL).

2. Foundation Skills (LLN) support in mainstream VET programs (CAVSS model)

Although some demographic groups are more likely than others to experience low levels of literacy and numeracy, the problem is not confined to identifiable groups. The notion that only some equity groups need support in the development of Foundation Skills is out-dated.

Individuals continue to build Foundation Skills over a lifetime. Foundation Skills need to be continually built and updated in response to changing contexts – new workplaces, new technologies, and new responsibilities. For this reason, all education and training programs need to support the development of associated and underpinning Foundation Skills (which was the original intent of built in, not bolted on).²

AMES experience strongly supports the value of providing LLN support during training and in the context of vocational skills acquisition.

The non-completion rate for all learners in VET is very high. Many learners who have gained access to mainstream courses:

- (i) still need language, literacy and/or numeracy support to complete their training
- (ii) significantly improve their LLN skills when learning in a vocational context

This is true both for CALD learners and for the almost 50% of adult Australians who have poor literacy skills.³

There are a range of strategies which can support the delivery of Foundation Skills embedded in mainstream vocational training. A team teaching approach such as that used by the Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS) is gaining increasing credibility as a means of effectively delivering foundation skills including language, literacy and numeracy within a vocational context.

CAVSS can be used in conjunction with any accredited VET course or Training Package qualification at any AQF level to provide LLN support. The LLN support is provided to the entire learner group, not individuals, using a team teaching approach with a LLN specialist working with the vocational practitioner in a face-to-face classroom environment.

The CAVSS model has been designed specifically to:

- avoid assessing individual's LLN skills levels and identifying individual learners for support, acknowledging that many learners need LLN support, but may resent being singled out for assistance
- provide LLN support across all AQF levels in recognition of the need to continually update and build Foundation Skills for new contexts
- enable a literacy/numeracy specialist to deliver training in partnership with a vocational specialist

² Roberts, A & Wignall, L (2010) *Briefing on Foundation Skills for the National VET Equity Advisory Council*

³ ABS (2007), *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey: User Guide 2006*, p8

Capacity to fund the delivery of CAVSS varies in the different jurisdictions across the nation. Western Australia, where the course was developed, has state funding arrangements to cover delivery and the Victorian Skills Reform provides a funding framework that supports concurrent delivery of Foundation Skills and vocational training.

Government in all jurisdictions has a responsibility to ensure the Australian population is proficient in the basic (foundation) skills of language, literacy and numeracy, and to provide a workable funding model that enables training providers to build Foundation Skills in tandem with vocational delivery.

3. Foundation Skills support at every qualification level

LLN are deeply embedded as part of quality training delivery and assessment within the National Training Framework. Delivery of these skills within the VET sector cannot be defined as occurring only in specific work competencies delivered in Training Packages or as only a set of particular programs for groups with low-level skills. LLN are recognised as key underpinning skills for generic, employability and learning to learn skills that are required of learners at all levels of the AQF and constitute a part of all delivery, whether this is through Training Packages or through Adult Basic and General Education.⁴

The Australian national strategy for VET 2004-10, recognised that the population needs language, literacy and numeracy skills to be able to fully participate in work, training and the broader community. The concept of 'built in, not bolted on' acknowledged that

- Foundation Skills need to support every level of education and training
- these underpinning skills need to be built and updated in response to changing contexts

Front-end Foundation Skills

Many recently arrived migrants and refugees initially access Foundation Skills (ESL) as 'front-end' courses. Most commonly this will be through Commonwealth funded Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) and Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP). Depending on an individual's prior educational background and level of English when they commence ESL tuition this may equip some for entry to further training or employment.

On-going, concurrent Foundation Skills

However Foundation Skills are not only a 'front-end' requirement for accessing and succeeding in vocation training. Once CALD learners, and Australian-born students, gain entry to mainstream training many will continue to need language, literacy and/or numeracy support to complete their training.

Foundations Skills should not be viewed as merely a set of basic, low-level skills needed to access entry-level mainstream training. Demands on learners' LLN and generic learning skills are relative to the level, content and context of the training they are engaged in. Therefore these underpinning skills need to be built and updated in response to changing contexts, different courses and the increased levels of skills/knowledge required of higher level qualifications.

⁴ Roberts, A & Wignall, L (2010) *Briefing on Foundation Skills for the National VET Equity Advisory Council*

AMES supports Skills Australia's position that "*Understanding and defining literacy is complex ... It is a moving target, often contingent on context or changing environments*" and recommends that:

Funded Foundation Skills training, modelled, for example, on the CAVSS course:

- Is available to learners at all levels of the AQTF
 - Does not restrict the number of Foundation Skills courses an individual may do
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4. Career pathway advice, mentoring and work experience

"... finding your way through the Victorian training system's offerings is the crucial first step in using its services." *Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria*

Many newly arrived CALD learners lack a clear understanding of the types of career pathways and associated training options that are available in Australia. This makes it difficult for them to make fully informed choices about what they want to do in Australia and to work out the best pathways to get there.

To assist people navigate the training system in Victoria the Victorian Skills Reform has funded two key initiatives⁵ to provide users with information about current skill levels, development needs and the training and recognition services available.

However, many newly arrived CALD learners lack the language skills and confidence to negotiate these sources of information by themselves.

Vocational and Pathway Planning: Pathway planning for migrant and refugee learners is built into the Foundation Skills courses delivered under the AMEP. This service helps inform learners' choices by providing information about immediate and longer term skills shortages and employment opportunities. The Pathway Planning services also assist learners to understand and negotiate study and training options and, where possible, are delivered or supported by a counsellor/advisor who comes from and understands the cultural background of the CALD learner. For learners from countries where systems vary markedly from those in Australia, this can be key to their understanding of training and employment pathways.

It is critical for this learner group that support and guidance in career planning and study pathways continue post-AMEP as they progress through vocational training to employment. Career planning needs to be an iterative process which continues to track completions towards qualifications and to clarify and refine pathways and study choices. VET providers whose Pathway Planning services include counsellors/advisors from the cultural backgrounds of recently arrived groups amongst their student cohort will gain better outcomes for these learners.

Volunteer Mentor/Tutor Program: AMES Volunteer Program includes Volunteer Mentors who help migrants who are newly arrived in Australia and skills gained overseas to pursue their study/careers. Volunteers are recruited from a range of professions and industries to match

⁵ (i) an enhanced online *State Register* of accredited courses and qualifications and (ii) the *Qualifications Navigator* – information about the wide variety of qualifications available in the training system and how they compare to other qualifications

skills with their Australian equivalent. These mentors provide invaluable career role models and link learners to real experiences of work in Australia.

VET providers can provide a similar system of mentoring and role modelling through their industry/employer links. Peer-tutoring, again on a volunteer basis, has also proven to be an effective way of supporting migrant/refugee learners who might otherwise drop out of the training system.

A further stumbling point for many newly-arrived migrants and refugees when choosing career pathways is a lack of experience with and therefore understanding of Australian jobs and workplaces. For example industries such as manufacturing or engineering cover many different skill areas and a range of extremely different occupations.

Work experience: A national training agenda needs a system that encourages employers to provide work experience and opportunities (other than traineeships and apprenticeships) for some learning to take place in the workplace. For some newly arrived migrants and refugees workplace orientation is a critical component in their learning and in making informed training and career choices.

Current arrangements in Victoria, where employers are required to pay work experience students \$5 a day, act as a disincentive for many employers to 'buy-in' to the work experience component of training. The purpose of this requirement needs to be reviewed, with a view to encouraging greater employer engagement.

The Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) has also proposed incentives for business who hire and train 'untested' employees in the form of, for example, payroll tax breaks for small businesses.⁶ There could be other similar incentives for businesses to provide workplace experience for students.

Support for all learners, but especially for relatively newly arrived migrants and refugees, needs to include access to:

- Pathway Counsellors: individual support throughout learners' training experience to assist them manage Australian systems and transition to productive employment - includes counsellors/advisors from the cultural backgrounds of recently arrived groups
- Mentors/tutors: a volunteer system which provides industry mentors and tutors for out-of-class support in areas of study where students may be experiencing difficulties
- Australian workplace orientation and work experience

Support for employers needs to include incentives to provide access to their workplaces for workplace orientation and experience.

⁶ Wayne Kayler-Thompson, CEO VECCI; The Age, 26 October, 2010

Professional Development for VET Teachers

... the capability of vocational practitioners is critical for the effective delivery of training that integrates Foundation Skills. If Foundation Skills are to become a regular component of all training and skill development, more people need to understand how to develop Foundation Skills.

More specialist LLN practitioners will be needed who are able to work in a range of environments and in partnership with other training providers. Vocational training providers will need greater awareness of Foundation Skills and an increased ability to support the development of Foundation Skills. VET managers and policy makers will need a greater understanding of the centrality of Foundation Skills to all skill development and effective approaches for integrated delivery.⁷

Under Training Package development policy all units of competency and qualifications must include LLN skills and Employability Skills relevant to workplace performance. This concept of 'built in, not bolted on' assumed that literacy/numeracy experts would deliver parts of the vocational program in partnership with vocational practitioners.

However, most vocational programs are not delivered by teams of LLN experts and vocational content specialists and the majority of VET trainers are not LLN specialists. This has led some critics to claim that "LLN is 'not built in or bolted on, but buried'".⁸

If, as is argued in this paper, Foundation Skills are an essential component of vocational training and skill development, more practitioners need to be skilled in methodologies that assist learners to develop Foundation Skills. It is not feasible that all Foundation Skills training and support will be delivered by specialist ESL/LLN teachers. Therefore the capability of vocational practitioners to deliver training that integrates Foundation Skills is critical.

NCVER research⁹ has found that with appropriate training, enhanced by professional development opportunities, a vocational teacher could integrate language, literacy and numeracy skills within Training Package units and assessment.

AMES, and other specialist ESL providers with considerable experience in delivering integrated ESL and vocational training, are in a position to provide professional development and guidance to TAFE and other mainstream providers wanting to deliver bridging programs that integrate Foundation and Vocational Skills.

AMES supports Skills Australia's view that capability of VET trainers in identifying and delivering integrated LLN and skills programs related to workplace contexts needs to be developed as a priority.

AMES also supports the recommendation that, as the minimum requirements for VET practice, the new Certificate IV in Training and Education should include the development of expertise in LLN delivery as a core, not an elective, component.

⁷ Roberts, A & Wignall, L (2010) *Briefing on Foundation Skills for the National VET Equity Advisory Council*

⁸ Roberts, A & Wignall, L (2010) *Briefing on Foundation Skills for the National VET Equity Advisory Council*

⁹ McKenna, R & Fitzpatrick, L (2004) *Building sustainable adult literacy provision: A review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs*, NCVER, Adelaide

Skill Sets

... non-completion of a course may not necessarily indicate waste or failure as students may have acquired the skills they need. Also, for some learners who come to VET with very low sets of skills, small transitions and improvements are important outcomes...¹⁰

An employer needs people skilled to do the job and this may not necessarily mean a full qualification; thus skills sets and pre-employment programs are important. Employers can require employees who are job-ready now to fulfil skills demands.¹¹

Non-linear pathways

Training programs need to accommodate the non-linear pathways many people take to gaining skills. Non-linear pathways are particularly applicable to recently arrived migrants and refugees many of whom need to explore how their previous life experience, training and/or employment translate to study and employment in Australia. Many in this cohort take some time to settle and to find out what they really want to do.

Short courses delivering skill sets allow the learners to 'try out' their aptitude for a certain skill area and to gain a clearer understanding of what is involved in this industry. This might happen at any qualification level.

Initial employment

Many recently arrived migrants and refugees are under pressure to find employment and start earning an income. A number also "... come to VET with very low sets of skills" and "small transitions and improvements are important outcomes" which can lead to entry-level employment. Skill sets can equip them to seek immediate employment while they plan, or commence, other training as part of a long term employment goal.

Responding to industry needs

Skill sets can help address the immediate needs of an industry. Training of this type needs to be delivered in response to employers in the industry to ensure that there are real jobs available for those taking up the short course training. The involvement of employers and peak bodies representing employers in designing short courses/skill sets is critical.

This aspect of vocational training could be linked more closely with Employment Services to (i) facilitate access to employers in industries where there are current and future job opportunities and (ii) ensure up-to-date local information on skill shortage occupations.

AMES recommends that skill sets training be available at all AQF levels. Through skill sets training the VET sector has the opportunity to:

- engage with those recently arrived migrants and refugees who do not yet have a clear view of what their long term employment prospects might be
- provide direct and non-linear pathways to training outcomes – including both employment and qualifications
- respond to the immediate needs of employers/industry

Career/pathway advisors should be familiar with the non-linear pathways some learners will take and of the alternative pathway skill sets training can provide.

¹⁰ Mitchell, J and Ward, J (2010) *VET stakeholder views about completions—a paper for the Service Skills Australia project 'Evaluation frameworks for VET'*, draft paper

¹¹ National Vet Equity Advisory Council, *Consolidated Feedback from Consultations*, June – August 2010

Re-engineering apprenticeships

The bulk of apprentice and trainee attrition occurs in the first year of the contract. Approximately 32 per cent of all apprentices and trainees who commenced in 2008 withdrew within their first year, representing about three-quarters of all withdrawals.¹²

Apprenticeships and traineeships are very attractive training and employment options for many newly arrived refugees and migrants. The question relates more to how apprenticeships and traineeships can be made more accessible for these clients.

Feedback from client groups AMES works with provide some insight into how some newly arrived communities view these modes of training and employment.

A recent AMES consultation with the Chin community identified a group of recently arrived clients who are extremely interested in apprenticeships. Members of the Chin community from Burma have spent a number of years in Malaysia as refugees. During this time many of them worked on construction sites. This experience equipped them with practical skills and some understanding of the industry. This group have a strong motivation to gain work in building and construction in Australia and a willingness to learn new skills that will equip them for this work. They view apprenticeships as an excellent training model for their group as the focus is on hands-on learning, reflecting the way they have previously acquired skills.

Some restructure of apprenticeships that provided support for learners with low levels of English language skills would increase the possibility of some of these clients taking up and succeeding in apprenticeships.

A second consultation with members of the Afghan community reflected similar views and identified additional industry areas. A number of recent refugees from Afghanistan have experience in mechanics and driving trucks and forklifts. However they have little success in gaining a forklift licence in Australia using current instruction and testing models and cannot access VET training in mechanics where courses assume fluent English. Like the Chin community, a number also have overseas experience in building and construction but no formal qualifications.

Generally these clients have low levels of English language and literacy. They, and other clients whose English is not yet fluent, need to develop (i) language skills for communication in the workplace and (ii) vocational language for study in their chosen field.

A framework that provides a scaffolded pathway into mainstream training and integrates Foundation Skills (ESL & LLN) and Vocations Skills is described in a previous section of this response - "*Improving learners' experience of VET*". This framework could equally be applied to apprenticeships/traineeships.

The proposed apprenticeship structure detailed in *Figure 9* of the Discussion Paper could integrate the type of pre-apprenticeship Foundation Skills training that would support these learners.

¹² NCVER (2010) *Apprentices and trainees 2009 annual*, tables 12 and 13

To bridge the gap in knowledge and English communication skills that currently precludes direct entry to an apprenticeship in its current form for most newly arrived refugees and migrants AMES recommends that:

- the *Pre-employment stream* includes Foundation Skills training to adequately prepare clients with English language for the *Employment and training contract*
 - language skill development is integrated with vocational preparation using a “built in” model and includes communication skills in the context of vocational and technical skills and industry specific language
 - some of the more conceptual and technical skill development be through limited use of bilingual training
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Shifting from a regulatory to a learner-centred culture

Shifting a regulatory culture

The Discussion Paper notes that there are a range of layers of and administrative relationships in the current apprenticeship model that are not transparent or easily navigated by users of the system and that these arguably weight the apprenticeship system towards a regulatory and bureaucratic culture.

While this system can be difficult to manage for potential apprentices and trainees who are familiar with Australian systems, for many newly arrived CALD learners who have no experience of the rules, regulations and requirements of this type of system and, often, limited English, it can present an insurmountable barrier.

Regulatory processes need to be simplified significantly for apprenticeships to offer:

- realistic and accessible pathways for recently arrived migrants and refugees and
- employment/training options for potential employers from newly arrived communities

Mentoring and individual support

Skills Australia observes that “... the hallmark of successful programs appears to be their focus on more intensive support and direct mentoring of individual apprentices and trainees.” AMES strongly supports this position - the value of mentors and career role models for CALD learners has been noted earlier in this response – and advocates for a restructured apprenticeship system that shifts the focus from a regulatory culture to a learner-centered approach.

This response has put a case for AMES, and other specialist ESL providers, taking a role in providing professional development in LLN for VET teachers (*Improving learners’ experience of VET – Professional development for teachers*).

Similarly, specialist providers such as AMES can work with group training companies and AACs “to ensure that they are more directly focused on support, mentoring, retention and completions of apprenticeships and traineeships” for CALD clients.

Engaging with employers

In AMES experience employers often have a preference for apprentices who are under 21 as wage rates are lower for this group. Many new arrivals who are highly motivated to undertake an apprenticeship pathway to qualifications and employment are over 21.

The Apprenticeship system needs to provide incentives for employers to take on older apprentices. A system where employers pay one training wage to all apprentices (regardless of age) would provide this incentive. The difference to cover the higher wages for adult apprentices could be made up by a part payment from Centrelink. As difference in the pay scale lessens over the period of the apprenticeships this would represent a diminishing government contribution.

An approach to supplementing apprentice wages is also supported by an NCVET report¹³ that recommends encouraging adults into apprenticeships/traineeships by offering financial incentives to make up the balance of lower training wages and reduce the duration of the traineeships through competency based assessments and Recognition of Prior Learning. It also notes the need to provide appropriate support to migrants during the settlement period.

AMES recommends that:

- Regulatory processes for apprenticeships are simplified significantly
 - Individual apprentices and trainees are given intensive support and direct mentoring
 - Group Training Companies and AACs are trained to work with and support recently arrived migrants and refugees in apprenticeships/traineeships
 - Adult CALD clients taking up an apprenticeship remain eligible for a limited Centrelink payment that supplements the gap between the youth and the adult apprentice wages.
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¹³ The development of employability skills in novice workers NCVET ANTA 2003

Lifting performance

Shifting the quality focus

Aspects of Australia's future economic prosperity are closely linked to a successful migration program. It is therefore important to ensure that the training system provides appropriate opportunities that can support use of the skills and potential labour force capacity of these new arrivals - including those who arrive in Australia with low levels of education but with a desire to learn new skills and to work.

Measurement is equally important to track effectiveness of these opportunities.

ABS data ¹⁴ confirms the significant contribution of migrants from non main English speaking countries (MESC) to the labour force. Just over one quarter of the employed people in the labour force at the time of the survey (November 2008) were migrants. 28% of these employed migrants were from non MESC and had arrived since 2001.

From AMES perspective as an organisation working with clients in their early settlement phase, it is important to track and measure outcomes that contribute to effective settlement. Long term settlement outcomes are only achievable through new arrivals progressively and effectively accessing mainstream services. Education and training is one of these key services. Tracking transitions for new arrivals to mainstream services is therefore important.

There is currently no requirement to record data on length of time in Australia, country of birth or visa category (apart from establishing permanent residence) as part of VET data collection. Collection of this additional data would not increase administrative workloads unduly and would improve tracking of outcomes for newly arrived migrants and refugees. Other equity groups could also be identified and data relevant to these groups collected. Situating provider performance in the context of the groups being serviced by particular providers would be a way of more reasonably assessing performance.

Placing too strong a focus on qualification completions to assess provider performance as a funding mechanism may unduly influence training providers in their selection of potential students.

AMES recommends that measuring provider performance should include performance for specific equity groups. This would allow more effective tracking of the level of access for specific groups and success of these groups in undertaking and completing the training.

¹⁴ ABS 3416.0 – Perspectives on Migrants, 2010 Forms of Employment – A Comparison of Australian and Overseas Born Persons

Better connections across sectors

Multi-sector delivery

Training that relies on specialist facilities/trade skills cannot be delivered by all providers. It is necessary to develop models that provide both sequential and concurrent pathways across sectors. Establishing and building on existing models that facilitate TAFE, ACE and schools working together in the interests of learner pathways will make the best use of the government's investment.

This means that to deliver the types of courses described earlier (courses that integrate Foundations Skills (ESL and LLN) and Vocational Skills), most RTOs in the ACE sector, and many schools, would need access to TAFE workshops and trade training expertise. Where funding supports (and encourages) providers to work in partnership and allows learners to enrol in modules of courses at multiple providers concurrently, each party can bring their strengths and specialist resources to a program.

AMES works in partnership to deliver VCAL courses for young recently arrived migrants and refugees. These VCAL programs provide a model for how providers across three sectors can work together in the interests of the learners.

Full time VCAL Foundation - Curriculum: CSWE 2, ESL Frameworks

AMES delivers the literacy component from the CSWE, Work Related Skills from the CGEA, Personal Development Skills from the Cert II in ESL Access, provides bilingual support in classes and specialist teaching and learning materials.

Debney Park Secondary College delivers customised modules from the VCAL Foundation Program - Numeracy Skills, Personal Development and Work Related Skills Units and arranges work placements for the students.

Kangan Batman TAFE delivers the Industry Specific Skills Strand as part of the Options for Work and Education (OWE) Program.

A national training agenda can provide funding models that support partnerships across sectors by facilitating concurrent enrolment in modules at multiple providers.

Funding needs to include incentives for providers to share specialist resources and skills.

Visible pathways to Higher Education

One of the key challenges for VET is not just to provide opportunities for low SES students to engage with VET, but to put in place strategies so a much higher proportion can readily progress into higher-level courses. p67

Some newly arrived communities (possibly like many parents with high aspirations for their young people) often have particular perceptions of vocational training. For example parents of young people in these communities often have high expectations and see TAFE training as a second best option, preferring that their children study at university.

As a specialist CALD provider AMES employs members of client communities to educate parents/guardians in client communities of the value of VET as (i) vocational training leading to employment and (ii) a pathway to higher education for learners who will not gain direct entry to university. These staff understand the perceptions of the communities and how best to approach and address misconceptions about education in Australia.

However, AMES does not have the resources to reach all communities or all individuals. A national strategy to educate the population, especially those from CALD or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, about the pathways from VET to University needs to be well promoted and disseminated in the languages of major migrant and refugee communities as well as in English. A strategy that involves members of the relevant communities to mediate, communicate and engage in dialogue will support published information and enhance understanding and uptake.

AMES supports Skills Australia's position that VET needs to put in place strategies so that a higher proportion of students can progress to higher level courses. Such strategies, for the CALD population, would include:

- individual career counselling, mentors and peer tutors, as discussed earlier in this response
 - clearly articulated pathways that demonstrate options (in some cases) to articulate to university
 - programs, in community languages and involving members of CALD communities, to educate parents/guardians about the value of vocational training and the pathways to higher education it can provide
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Establishing strong foundations for growth

Funding sources for growth

AMES agrees with the concerns raised in the Discussion Paper with respect to the adoption of the principle of “firstness”¹⁵. Data included in the Discussion Paper notes that 26% of VET students already have a qualification at or above the level at which they are studying. The further insight provided by the ABS data that gaining a second or third qualification was associated with a new job or career change but also with performing the same job at a higher level confirms the issues arising from the adoption of the principle of “firstness”. Issues relating to the principle of “firstness” are particularly pertinent to VET clients who are newly arrived in Australia. There are varying issues for different client groups within this cohort. These issues relate to:

- New arrivals with qualifications gained overseas
- New arrivals with limited formal education and no previous vocational qualification

Eligibility of Temporary Spouse Visa Holders for training is an additional area requiring consideration.

New arrivals with qualifications gained overseas

New arrivals with a qualification gained overseas will be potentially affected by this requirement to pay full fees for qualifications at the same level or below the level of existing qualifications. ABS data¹⁶ indicates that there are significant percentages of both men and women who were born in non-main English speaking countries (non MESC) who already have Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor Degrees or above. Refer *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*. While some of these will have been attained in Australia, many will also have arrived with existing qualifications from overseas.

Fig 1 – Educational attainment of men

Fig 2 – Educational attainment of women

Graphs can only be viewed in PDF version of submission

Note: MESC = Main English Speaking Countries. **Source:** ABS, *Census TableBuilder, 2006 data*

While some newly arrived migrants and refugees with qualifications gained overseas are able to use these to gain work in Australia, others with qualifications may need to change career directions if their overseas experience is not relevant to or recognised in the Australian context. A further group may be required to enter their profession at a level lower than their occupation in their country of origin and therefore need to obtain an Australian qualification at that lower level – for example a Certificate IV or a Diploma when they already hold a degree from overseas.

For these clients, any qualifications gained overseas should not preclude eligibility to undertake a qualification at the same or lower level at a publicly subsidised rate. AMES has also advocated this position in a response to the Victorian Government as part of the consultation on skills reform in Victoria.

¹⁵ Creating a future direction for Australian VET: a discussion paper

¹⁶ Calling Australia Home The characteristics and contributions of Australian migrants AMP:NATSEM Income and Wealth Report Issue 27 – November 2010 pp 9-10

A Longitudinal Study¹⁷ undertaken by AMES of clients in the AMEP provides some insight into perceptions of the need to gain Australian qualifications and into the initial employment pathways of new arrivals. Survey participants were all clients who arrived in Australia with no English or low levels of English proficiency.

With respect to the need to undertake Australian qualifications 73% of the 243 participants in Wave 1 (i.e. soon after arrival in Australia) expected to do vocational training in Australia and 42% said they expected to do a VET qualification. This is despite the fact that 57% of the participants had done some vocational training or study overseas and 82% of these had received a qualification. Participants observed that they thought it would be easier to gain employment in Australia with an Australian credential.

A summary of responses from all survey participants who intended to look for work in the future (n=217) also indicated a level of flexibility in the kinds of work (and therefore training) newly arrived migrants and refugees are expecting to do in Australia.¹⁸

Table 1 - Responses to 'What is your long term job goal on arrival in Australia?'

Similar to previous job but adapted for Australia	26%
Same as previous job overseas	13%
Totally different to previous job/s	10%
Don't know	20%
Any job	19%
Other	12%
Total	100%

New arrivals with limited formal education and no previous vocational qualification

New arrivals who have not undertaken formal training before coming to Australia may require a different approach in terms of access to training. AMES experience with new arrivals who come with no English language skills and limited formal education is that they are often unclear as to what employment, and what training they may wish to undertake. This may be because they lack knowledge of what jobs are available in Australia and what these jobs entail. It may also be that they need to commence work in a low skill area that has immediate employment potential as a way of gaining entry to first employment in Australia.

This may result in the need to do more than one Certificate at the same level where there is a desire to change employment to a new area or where opportunities in the existing area of employment contract. These workers frequently must remain in a relatively low skilled industry area and access vocational training at a level that can accommodate lower levels of English language. This same scenario may well apply to those who have English as their first language but have low literacy skills.

¹⁷ The AMES Longitudinal Study surveyed a representative sample of clients enrolled in the AMEP. The objectives were to investigate (1) how the AMEP impacts on the settlement of the people who undertake it and (2) what vocational and employment pathways AMES clients take during and following their participation in the AMEP. Wave 1 was undertaken in 2008, Wave 2 in 2009 and Wave 3 in 2010.

¹⁸ AMES Longitudinal Study 2008 – 2010 Wave 1 Report Page 35

ABS data¹⁹ supports the proposition that there is a high concentration of newly arrived migrants in low skilled industries and that these workers move to other industries over time. The retail trade and the Accommodation and food services industries both had high proportions of recent non MESC migrants (11% and 18% respectively), but in the longer term, the proportions were much lower. Recent is defined in this data as arrival from 2001 to 2009 and longer term as arrival prior to 2001.

Eligibility for clients on Temporary Spouse Visa Holder

Current policy requires Temporary Spouse Visa Holders to pay full fees in VET programs. There are significant and increasing numbers of these clients in the AMEP programs delivered by AMES. Refer Table 2.

Table 2 – Temporary Spouse Visa Holders in AMES AMEP programs

MIGRATION CATEGORY	2009		2008		2007		2006		2005		2004	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Temporary	2,216	16%	2,835	23%	3,023	25%	1,561	14%	663	6%	740	7%
Family	4,752	34%	3,643	30%	3,511	29%	4,448	40%	5,389	50%	5,115	51%
Humanitarian	3,632	26%	3,305	27%	3,643	30%	3,417	31%	3,299	30%	2,862	29%
Skilled	2,811	20%	2,374	19%	1,981	16%	1,572	14%	1,328	12%	1,118	11%
Inactive Visa / other / NS	691	5%	98	1%	92	1%	103	1%	159	1%	170	2%
Total	14,102	100%	12,255	100%	12,250	100%	11,101	100%	10,838	100%	10,005	100%

Source: ARMS data base (DIAC)

Given that this group does gain access to VET training once their visas are made permanent, there is an argument for them being deemed eligible for fully subsidised training places.

Table 3 (below) provides data on the numbers of Temporary Visas that convert to Permanent Visas. This data demonstrates that the risk to the Commonwealth in allowing early access to government funded training for this group is extremely small. The vast majority of Temporary Visas Holders will become eligible for government funded courses and allowing access to training earlier would assist in facilitating earlier entry to employment.

Table 3 – Non Migration Partner (Onshore): Applications Finalised 01 July 2006 to 30 June 2008

Graph can only be viewed in PDF version of document

Source: DIAC, 2008

AMES recommends that:

- qualifications gained overseas do not preclude eligibility to undertake a qualification at the same or lower level at a publicly subsidised rate
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¹⁹ ABS 3416.0 – Perspectives on Migrants, 2010 Forms of Employment – A Comparison of Australian and Overseas Born Persons

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- new arrivals with limited formal education and no previous vocational qualification be eligible to complete more than one course at Certificate Levels I, II and III at a publicly subsidised rate
 - Temporary Spouse Visa Holders are made eligible for fully subsidised training places
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