

(Policy as endorsed by 2007 NTC AGM)

Adult Migrant English Services/Adult Migrant Education Program

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Australian Education Union represents teachers who provide adult migrant English education to migrants and refugees in the Adult Migrant English Service, and in TAFE institutes.
- 1.2 Conditions of AEU members who work in AMES or in TAFE providing the Adult Migrant English Program are included in a range of different industrial agreements which differ from state to state and territory to territory.
- 1.3 The Federal Government provides funding for English classes for adult migrants and refugees under the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) administered by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). The AMEP has existed for over 50 years, providing invaluable assistance to migrants and refugees in English language tuition for settlement purposes.
- 1.4 Until 1998, the AMEP was delivered either through the Adult Migrant English Service, or through TAFE in each state and territory. The administration of funding of AMES is a state responsibility. TAFE funding is a shared state and federal responsibility.
- 1.5 In 1998, the funding of the AMEP changed dramatically. Instead of direct funding to each state and territory, the Federal Government tendered out the program on a competitive basis, and awarded contracts to AMES and TAFE, but also to a large number of private providers. In NSW three out of five regional contracts went to a large private provider. In West Australia, the tenders were won by three providers, two TAFE colleges that provided classes and a third providing initial assessment of speaking and listening levels. In Victoria, AMES won the tender, but it nevertheless suffered significantly as a result of the imperative to reduce costs. In SA, a significant amount of business shifted from TAFE to a private provider.

2. Definitions

In this policy:

- AMES - Adult Migrant English Service - Up until 1998, the public provider, along with some TAFE institutes, of the Adult Migrant English Program.
- AMEP - Adult Migrant English Program - the federally-funded English language program for migrants and refugees
- DIMA - Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
- LLNP - Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program

3. Overarching principles

- 3.1 All adult migrants and refugees should have the right to high-quality, publicly-funded English language programs upon arrival in Australia, especially to assist with settlement.
- 3.2 Programs should be accessible, and appropriate to the cultural and linguistic needs of the migrants and refugees.
- 3.3 Programs should be well resourced.
- 3.4 Funding should be recurrent, and delivery should be by public sector providers.
- 3.5 Programs should be of sufficient duration and integrity to allow students to participate fully in society and their workplace on conclusion
- 3.6 Educational programs should provide links with the education and vocational education and training system in each state and territory, so that on completion of their initial course of study, students can continue with their education and training
- 3.7 Teachers working in English language programs should be both teacher and ESL qualified, with their professional status recognized and linked to teachers teaching in other education and training sectors
- 3.8 Students in AMEP programs have rights to:
 - A program which is comprehensive, and which meets their individual needs and aspirations
 - An appropriately resourced teaching facility including a library or resource and technology centre

- child care facilities
- Appropriate counseling, vocational and career advice services
- A program which provides a clear pathway into VET/university or employment
- Freedom from provider marketing pressure

3.9 Teachers in AMEP programs within AMES and TAFE have rights to:

- Be protected by industrial awards and agreements which ensure their conditions of work
- A safe and healthy working environment
- Be represented by a union, especially within their working environment
- Approved courses of teacher training and access to well resourced, on-going professional development
- Secure employment

3.10 The AMEP should be extended to include refugees on Temporary Protection Visas.

3.11 Students enrolled in the AMEP should be exempted from the two year wait for Centrelink benefits.

4. Competitive tendering

4.1 Competitive tendering of funds for the provision of English language programs is a de facto mechanism for privatizing these programs. Competitive tendering results in a number of negative impacts on the public providers, the students and teacher.

4.2 Competitive tendering impacts adversely on public providers. It:

- Emphasises cost cutting over quality of educational programs
- Emphasises monitoring, rather than meeting the many and varied needs of students

- Jeopardises the collective expertise of providers, including materials, teaching and management skills and experience and intangible assets like morale and loyalty when tenders are lost
- Prevents long term planning because of the uncertain nature of funding
- Forces providers to divert resources into administrative demands of tendering and increased bureaucratic requirements
- Creates an unlevel playing field as private providers do not pay award rates of pay or provide award conditions of work
- Hinders collegial teaching practice by discouraging or forbidding the sharing of expertise and resources between current providers

4.3 Competitive tendering impacts adversely on students. It:

- Threatens the quality of learning arrangements in respect of equipment, materials and class sizes
- Reduces student support services
- Threatens the creation of pathways with other agencies and educational providers
- Causes confusion as students are forced to choose between providers
- Creates instability for students as they are often forced to move to another provider at the end of the AMEP provision as Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program contracts have often gone to private providers

4.4 Competitive tendering impacts adversely on teachers. It:

- Threatens security of employment and other employment conditions such as sick and annual leave
- Undermines physical resources such as teaching materials, which are jeopardised by uncertain and insufficient funding
- Undermines morale and loyalty

- Results in pressure on teachers not to share ideas and materials
- Increases pressure on teachers to market themselves and their provider to attract new students
- Increases the administrative burden

5 Positions arising

- 5.1 Funding should be sufficient to provide all eligible migrants with their full entitlement of tuition.
- 5.2 Where some eligible migrants and refugees choose not to access their full entitlements, providers should be able to transfer the excess hours to students who require additional tuition to achieve the maximum level of English provided.
- 5.3 Whilst the tendering system continues, the tender specifications should nominate maximum class sizes and provide funding for specialised group activities, particularly pronunciation and literacy.
- 5.4 That the AEU seek to persuade political parties to support this policy in the lead up to the next Federal Election.