‘Opening the Door’

Provision for Refugee Youth with Minimal/No Schooling in the Adult Migrant English Program

Project 2.1: ‘Modes of Delivery for SPP Youth’

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACL</td>
<td>Australian Centre for Languages Pty Ltd, NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT AMEP</td>
<td>ACT AMEP, Canberra Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMES Tasmania</td>
<td>Adult Multicultural Education Services, Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMES Victoria</td>
<td>Adult Multicultural Education Services, Victoria</td>
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<td>ARMS</td>
<td>AMEP Reporting Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMEC</td>
<td>Brisbane Migrant English Centre (previously Hilton International College)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMYI</td>
<td>Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (Victoria). (As of June 2008, this name changed to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the Centre for Multicultural Youth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSWE</td>
<td>Certificates in Spoken and Written English</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIAC</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Citizenship</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIMA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIMIA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>IEC</td>
<td>Intensive English Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHSS</td>
<td>Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILC</td>
<td>Independent Learning Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISLPR</td>
<td>International Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale</td>
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<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
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<td>LLNP</td>
<td>Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program</td>
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<td>LMTR</td>
<td>LM Training Specialists Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>LOs</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>MIPS</td>
<td>Managed Individual Pathways Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>Northern AMEP Consortium</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMIT</td>
<td>Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW AMES</td>
<td>NSW Adult Migrant English Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT CAESL AMEP</td>
<td>Northern Territory Centre for Access and ESL, AMEP, Charles Darwin University (now called AMEP,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learnlink, Charles Darwin University)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRAC</td>
<td>Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council</td>
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<td>RYPT</td>
<td>Refugee Young People and Transitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA AITELS</td>
<td>Adelaide Institute of TAFE English Language Services (now called TAFE SA English Language Services)</td>
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<td>SELLLEN</td>
<td>South East Local Learning and Employment Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP16s</td>
<td>Humanitarian entrants aged 16–17 years with less than seven years’ formal schooling and who have</td>
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<td>registered for the SPP400</td>
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## Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<td>SP18s</td>
<td>Humanitarian entrants aged 18–24 years with less than seven years’ formal schooling and who have registered for the SPP400</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPP</td>
<td>Special Preparatory Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPP100</td>
<td>100-hour Special Preparatory Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPP400</td>
<td>400-hour Special Preparatory Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas TAFE</td>
<td>TAFE Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELLS</td>
<td>TAFE English Language and Literacy Services (Queensland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCAL</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic AMES</td>
<td>Adult Multicultural Education Services, Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>WELL</td>
<td>Workplace English Language and Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA AMES</td>
<td>AMES West Coast TAFE</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA CT</td>
<td>WA Central TAFE AMEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>YAMEC</td>
<td>Young Adult Migrant English Course</td>
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### Abbreviations used for other reports

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Transcription conventions

In presenting extracts from interviews, we have edited transcripts to include punctuation and, unless these seemed to be significant, to eliminate repetitions, redundancy, grammatical infelicities and pauses. The conventions used are as follows:

... speaker's word(s) not included

*italics* special emphasis by the speaker

– the speaker changes direction/breaks off sentence to begin another sentence/is interrupted

[ ] editorial comment/correction/contextual information

Int interviewer

M manager

P participant
Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the youth who have contributed to this report by their presence in Australia and through their conversations with us.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all our interviewees who gave generously of their insights and time for this project. For reasons of confidentiality, their names cannot be listed, although general details are provided in Appendix A. We hope this report does justice to what they gave us and that it will assist them in their work and advocacy.

Many of the teachers we interviewed made valuable suggestions for topics, content and teaching strategies for working with refugee youth. We especially thank Liz Connell at NMIT Preston for her list of suggested reading materials, Catherine Elder from the Language Testing Research Centre, The University of Melbourne, for her helpful comments and references on assessment issues, and Kevin Roach from Auckland University of Technology for generously sharing bibliographic sources.

Thank you to the DIAC officers, at both Commonwealth and State/Territory levels, who gave us important contextual information and contributed to our findings. We especially thank the National Management Information Unit for providing us with the statistics that are reported in Chapter 2 and 3. We are very grateful to Paula Kansky, John Muller and Constanze Voelkel-Hutchison for their assistance in helping us understand recent changes in DIAC organisational structures and the delivery of settlement services.

The report has also benefited substantially from comments by participants in AMEP National Conferences and Forums in 2005, 2006 and 2007. We thank these participants and hope that we have done justice to their views.

In a complex and rapidly changing area, errors are always possible and remain our responsibility.
Executive Summary

The study

This research project investigated feasible and/or desirable options for the effective delivery of the AMEP to humanitarian entrants to Australia, who were aged 16–24, had seven years’ or less schooling and, between June 2004 and July 2006, were registered for the 400-hour Special Preparatory Program (SPP400) in addition to their 510-hour AMEP tuition entitlements. Our data is based on the AMEP Reporting Management System (ARMS) records and interviews with managers, teachers and refugee youth from the seven major AMEP providers in the eastern States and the Australian Capital Territory, who volunteered to participate in the project.

Organisation of this report

This report consists of four parts. Part 1 (Chapter 1) describes the project’s aims and scope. Part 2 (Chapters 2 – 4) profiles the learners and their needs. Part 3 (Chapters 5 – 10) considers how various aspects of provision and different delivery options respond to those needs. Concluding sections in each chapter can be read independently as a summary and discussion of the chapter’s main findings. Part 4 (Chapter 11), which can also be read independently, reviews the project in relation to its aims, presents our recommendations and summarises the arguments supporting them.

Client profile

This client group was mainly from the African sub-continent. Almost all (94 per cent) were aged 18-24 and were located in capital cities, although numbers were reported to be growing in regional cities. Although incoming eligible males outnumbered females, female SPP400 registrations outnumbered those of males (females: 87 per cent; males: 67 per cent). Similarly, males discontinued at higher rates than females. Discontinuations were mostly in the first 99 hours of SPP400/AMEP tuition – after this point, both male and female learners tended to complete their 910 hours entitlement. (Chapters 2 and 3).

The ARMS database showed that the predominant entry level for this group was pre-CSWE/CSWE I (81 per cent; see Chapter 3). Exiting clients showed little movement beyond these same levels by exiting learners. At the time of our analysis, numbers in pre-CSWE and CSWE I classes could not be distinguished, so this finding should be interpreted with extreme caution. Further, CSWE Learning Outcomes do not adequately reflect what was described by teachers in our interviews and what is known from research about language learners with little/no prior literacy or schooling in any language (Chapter 4), a fact that leads to our recommendation 11 below.

Research in Australia and overseas also shows that this group’s very low education, literacy and their pre-embarkation experiences contribute to their seemingly slow progress. Our interview data indicate a distinctive English learning trajectory for this group, deriving from their previous literacy and educational experiences, and age-specific cognitive, socio-emotional, settlement and gender issues. Our interviews also revealed that despite – or because of – their past experiences and current challenges, most of these young people were highly motivated in seeking an education and worthwhile employment in their new country. (Chapter 4).

Program delivery

We identified the following broad on-arrival program options for those eligible for the SPP400 (Chapter 5):

- enrolment in a school (and generally placement in Year 10) either directly or via an Intensive English Language Centre
- enrolment in the SPP400/AMEP (and placement in either a regular mixed-age AMEP class or a special youth class/program)
- enrolment in a non-AMEP funded special refugee/migrant youth program in either a school or a TAFE institute.
Three key considerations emerged regarding desirable options for this group:

1. their own and their community’s perceptions of what constitutes ‘normal’ schooling (in particular, hours, class sizes, teaching content, classroom dynamics, pathways to worthwhile employment)
2. access to intensive, prolonged and specialist ESL, literacy and learning-how-to-learn tuition
3. provision of a supportive, non-stigmatising learning environment and adequate in- and out-of-class support.

Our interviews indicated that, within the SPP400/AMEP the last consideration was well recognised and generally well developed, although the demands on out-of-class support are challenging and not fully met (Chapter 6). The main difference between SPP400/AMEP delivery options related to the first two considerations. Both were well addressed in youth-specific classes but only the second was realised for young people in mixed-age classes (Chapters 7 – 10). In some centres, young people’s specific needs were further or partially acknowledged by out-of-class access to independent learning centres and other youth-specific activities (Chapters 7 and 9). Some youth-specific classes/programs also included supplementary ‘taster’ modules delivered offsite in conjunction with TAFE institutes (Chapters 8 and 10). These programs were reported to be particularly effective in opening up pathways into further training, education and employment, although such pathways were rare (Chapter 10).

Although our research indicates that youth-specific classes are overwhelmingly preferable, their feasibility rests on gaining sufficient numbers (Chapter 8). Gaining these numbers relates crucially to community perceptions of the SPP400/AMEP compared with mainstream schools (Chapter 5). The benefits of cross sector collaboration, which has attracted recommendations from numerous other reports, became increasingly evident during this research project. Our central recommendation 14 addresses this issue.
Recommendations

See Chapter 11, section 11.5, for a summary of arguments supporting each recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 1:
That a special per capita refugee youth loading be available to AMEP providers and that, in consultation with providers, DIAC refine criteria for its allocation and use to inform future tender specifications and accountability audits.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
That DIAC commissions a benchmarking exercise to ascertain realistic workloads – and therefore time allotments – for AMEP counsellors/advisors in centres.

RECOMMENDATION 3:
That DIAC consider a variety of out-of-class experiences as a routine part of AMEP delivery for refugee youth, whether or not they are in special youth classes. If such reporting requirements are not already in place, DIAC should require providers to report on this provision for refugee youth. DIAC should address barriers to out-of-class activities, especially for youth, with providers and other stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
That DIAC explores with AMEP contract holders existing and potential options for promoting interaction and cooperation between AMEP centres, TAFE institutes and/or other VET providers/Registered Training Organisations. If relevant indicators are not already in place, evidence of substantive cooperation should be considered for inclusion in evaluating performance on AMEP contracts.

RECOMMENDATION 5:
That DIAC, in consultation with the range of agencies involved in providing advice to humanitarian entrants including young people, facilitate and support ongoing improvements to the quality and consistency of this advice prior to embarkation and on a sustained basis after arrival.

RECOMMENDATION 6:
That DIAC initiates discussions with relevant authorities to produce or strengthen advice, guidelines and criteria for schools in regard to enrolling newly arrived humanitarian entrants aged 16 and older with seven years' schooling or less.

RECOMMENDATION 7:
That the AMEP Research Centre, in consultation with DIAC, initiates discussion and action on possible strategies to support the consolidation and distribution of teacher-made materials and teaching strategies, including for young people with minimal/no schooling.

RECOMMENDATION 8:
That planning for professional development within the AMEP include consideration of findings from this report in regard to professional development needs

RECOMMENDATION 9:
That eligibility requirements for the SPP400/AMEP be revised to allow those aged 16–24 with seven years’ or less schooling who have enrolled in an Intensive English Centre or school to transfer into the SPP400/AMEP (on the recommendation of their case workers or the Intensive English Centre/school principals) for up to the first term after enrolment in the school sector.
RECOMMENDATION 10:
That DIAC guidelines for special provision for humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with seven years’ or less schooling take account of the fact that shorter hours, smaller groups and informal classes are neither feasible nor desirable for most in this group.

RECOMMENDATION 11:
That the pre-CSWE and CSWE I Learning Outcomes be further developed and revised on the basis of relevant research findings into second/other language learning by those with minimal/no literacy in any language.

RECOMMENDATION 12:
That DIAC continue to record the details pertaining to those targeted by the SPP400 separately within the ARMS database, whether or not the additional 400 SPP hours for humanitarian entrants aged 16-24 with minimal/no schooling is described as a ‘program’.

RECOMMENDATION 13:
That DIAC initiates discussions within appropriate authorities to produce and gain comprehensive cross-sectoral data on the educational and employment pathways for the five-year period following entry to Australia of humanitarian entrants aged 16 and older who have seven years’ schooling or less.

RECOMMENDATION 14:
That, in addition to normal AMEP tenders, a separate set of tenders should be advertised for full- or small-scale programs for older adolescent and young adult humanitarian entrants who have seven years’ or less formal schooling. These tenders should seek submissions for programs and activities that constitute/are part of/complement all or part of an initial two- to three-year study pathway (full-time or equivalent) leading to mainstream education, vocational training and/or employment. Tenders should be open to providers already offering youth programs, as well as to those with demonstrated capacity to initiate them. They should also allow for partnerships and cooperation between providers in the AMEP, VET, school and community sectors.
Part 1

Background issues

This introductory chapter describes the project aims, our research methodology and how we defined our research task.
Opening the Door: Provision for Refugee Youth with Minimal/No Schooling in the Adult Migrant English Program
Chapter 1

Introduction: Aims, rationale, methodology, definitions and scope

The project documented in this report was approved in late 2004 by the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) as part of the Special Projects Research Program of the AMEP Research Centre. (In 2005, DIMIA became the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, DIMA, and subsequently in 2006 the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, DIAC. We use the names and acronyms that applied in the periods to which we refer.)

1.1 Project aims

The aims of this project were:

• to document feasible and/or desirable options (from the perspectives of students, teachers and administrators) for the effective delivery of the AMEP to older adolescents and young adults with minimal or no formal schooling
• to explore the consequences of delivering the AMEP using one or more of these modes of delivery (for students, teachers and administrators)
• to identify, where possible, urban, rural and regional parameters of difference
• to make recommendations as to the relative merits of different options in the contexts studied
• to theorise the above findings in such ways as to contribute to the broader academic debate in this area.

An overview of our findings and recommendations can be found in our conclusion (Chapter 11).

1.2 Background to the Special Preparatory Program

In 1992, the Immigration (Education) Act 1971 was amended to specify that newly arriving migrants aged 18 and older could receive up to 510 hours approved English tuition if they are assessed as having less than ‘functional English’ (Migration Laws Amendment Act, No. 2, 1992). This project’s sub-title refers to the Special Preparatory Program (SPP), which began in the 1996–97 financial year and, at that point, was directed at giving extra assistance to humanitarian entrants who had suffered torture or trauma prior to their arrival in Australia (DIMA 2001: 22). In July 2004 the SPP was extended to include those aged 16–24 with seven years’ schooling or less. Until the end of 2007, when this project was submitted, the SPP was described on the DIAC website as:

an English language tuition program specifically tailored to suit eligible humanitarian entrants who may have difficulty adapting to the more formal environment offered by the AMEP. The SPP is offered to eligible humanitarian entrants before they commence AMEP classes. SPP tuition is given by qualified teachers experienced in dealing with the special needs of humanitarian entrants … SPP English language tuition is offered in an informal environment, often in a community setting, where students who have had similar experiences can become familiar with the learning process before they go on to the more formal learning environment of the AMEP (DIMIA nd).

Eligibility criteria were described as:

• Up to 100 hours of English language tuition may be provided to humanitarian entrants aged 18 and older, who have had difficult pre-migration experiences, eg torture and trauma.
• Up to 400 hours of English language tuition may be provided to humanitarian entrants aged between 16 and 24 years who have had less than 7 years formal schooling, that is, between 0 and 7 years formal schooling.
• Access to the 400 hours of English language tuition for eligible clients between the ages of 16 and 18 years will be subject to confirmation that they are unable to be placed in an appropriate school program (our italics; DIMIA nd).

This project focused on program delivery for the latter two groups entitled to the 400 hours of SPP tuition (henceforth the SPP400). The total 910 SPP and AMEP hours constituted approximately one year’s full-time English as a Second Language (ESL) tuition (approximately 20 hours per week for 45 weeks).
1.3 Policy context

The project was planned in the context of concerns expressed by AMEP providers and, more widely, by a growing number of reports and publications on refugee youth issues. Particularly germane to AMEP provision is the Report of the Review of settlement services for migrants and humanitarian entrants (DIMIA 2003; henceforth the 2003 Review). Examples of other relevant reports are from the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC 2002, 2006), the Refugee Young People and Transitions Working Group of the Victorian Settlement Planning Committee (RYPT Working Group 2005), the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA 2005), and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI and Sellen 2004; CMYI, 2006, 2007). The AMEP Research Centre had also produced a report on programs and pathways for refugee youth and their relationship to reach and retention in the AMEP (Harding and Wigglesworth 2005).

Concern for young people with minimal/no schooling falls clearly within the 2003 Review’s emphasis on ‘early intervention and targeting of high needs groups among new arrivals in their early years of settlement’ (DIMIA 2003: 1) and, in this case, its emphasis (through recommendation 15) that there be ‘whole-of-government level’ recognition of the needs of young people ‘at risk of not making successful transitions due to their pre-migration experiences, low English language proficiency, and recency of arrival in Australia’ (DIMIA 2003: 11).

At the 2006 AMEP National Conference, the Honourable Andrew Robb, the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, reported on the work of a committee of Australian Government agency heads, which, since April 2006, had been discussing ‘ways to deal with the new challenges presented by those coming to Australia under the humanitarian program’ (Robb 2006: 11). He foreshadowed ‘a new education program for 15–24 year olds’ (Robb 2006: 12). We hope this Report offers a constructive contribution to ongoing deliberations on this issue.

1.4 Research methodology

As indicated in the brief described above, this project adopted a largely qualitative research methodology, supplemented by quantitative analysis.

Data for the project was collected from two main sources: semi-structured interviews/focus groups and the AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS) database. To gain some supplementary contextual understanding, we also observed one mixed-age class and three youth classes.

Interview data were triangulated, wherever possible, with published and unpublished material, including other AMEP Research Centre projects. Individually reported perceptions and interpretations were checked with AMEP providers in draft versions and at a number of AMEP conferences and forums.

The ARMS data for the financial years 2004–06 form the basis of our analysis in Chapters 2 and 3. The other chapters report mainly from our interviews and observations.

1.4.1 Ethical protocols

The project was approved in accordance with the ethical protocols at La Trobe University.

1.4.2 Interviews

Our interviews were conducted with the major AMEP Providers in the eastern States, namely New South Wales (2), Victoria (2), Queensland (1) and Tasmania (1), and the Australian Capital Territory (1), a total of seven providers. The three providers with the highest numbers of young people registered for the SPP400 (above 80 registrations) participated in the project, as well as some with lower numbers (see Chapter 2, section 2.6). However, we had no data from Western Australia, South Australia or the Northern Territory. These limitations follow from the AMEP Research Centre protocol, whereby AMEP providers volunteer to participate in projects in response to an invitation letter.

Our interview data on rural issues came from providers responsible for rural provision in three States. Since SPP400 registrations were very low in rural areas (only six per cent of the total number; see Chapter 2, section 2.5), we regard this limitation as minimal.
Interviews were conducted in various formats:

- individual face-to-face interviews
- individual telephone interviews
- one individual email interview
- focus group interviews.

A total of 106 interviewees were as follows. From the AMEP:

- 55 AMEP teachers and managers (some managers and teachers also had responsibilities as assessors and learning advisors)
- 45 AMEP learners.

Others:

- a youth worker from a Migrant Resource Centre, who participated in one of the teacher-manager focus groups
- a manager responsible for a non-AMEP Technical and Further Education (TAFE)-based youth program
- a group of three teachers from a high school that was collaborating with an AMEP provider
- a manager responsible for school ESL in a State education department.

Interviews were semi-structured and ranged in length from 30 minutes to two hours. All but two interviews were audio-recorded. Notes were taken from some interviews and returned to interviewees for checking, while others were transcribed. Further details of interviews are provided in Appendixes A and B.

1.4.3 Coding interview data

Data were coded using NVivo 7 software. Coding reflected the initial aims of the project, and the recurring and dominant themes in our interviews. An iterative process of revision and reorganisation generated 577 hierarchically arranged, overlapping thematic nodes, from which our chapter headings and the organisation of material within each chapter were derived.

1.4.4 Timeframe

Initial responses to our invitation to participate came from only Victoria and Queensland, which led to a round of face-to-face and telephone interviews in mid-2005. After the project’s preliminary results were presented at the AMEP National Conference in September 2005, more participants emerged and a second round of interviews and focus group sessions took place between January and February 2006. In mid-2006 we were told that student numbers had increased dramatically in Brisbane and that a special youth class was now running, which led to a site visit and two further interviews in July 2006.

A pre-publication draft of the report was submitted in December 2006. Following peer review in mid-2007, revisions were made in the latter half of 2007. Thus the data reported here came from the period 2004–06, with relevant information updated (as at October 2007) and noted. The report was re-submitted in December 2007; some further minor updates were made in June 2008.

1.4.5 Recommendations

Our recommendations result from three sets of consultations with research participants and six revisions. Preliminary recommendations were sent to manager and teacher interviewees for comment after the first interview round. Later interviews and our increasing familiarity with the issues led to extensive revision of these recommendations, although the general direction was similar. A draft version of the whole report was then circulated to all interviewees who could be located. At the AMEP National Conference in October 2006, recommendations were also discussed in an open workshop, following which further revisions were made. Support for our arguments in favour of youth-specific classes, if nothing else, lies in the fact that, partly as a result of the discussions stimulated by this project, eight further youth-specific classes had been created by the end of 2007, with more planned for 2008 (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).
1.5 Definition of terms

Key terms used in this report are as follows:

- ‘SPP400’ denotes the additional 400 tuition hours that SPP registration made possible
- ‘SPP400/AMEP’ denotes the total 910-hour on-arrival tuition entitlement – note that SPP400 registrations were distinguished in the ARMS database but, among the providers we interviewed, actual delivery of the SPP400 hours was not distinguished from the 510-hour AMEP, for reasons we report in Chapter 8 (sections 8.1 and 8.2)
- ‘modes of delivery’ refers to the ways in which the SPP400/AMEP was provided to humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with seven years’ schooling or less
- those registered for the SPP400 are referred to in a variety of ways (for example, ‘young people/refugee youth registered for the SPP400’, ‘young people with minimal/no schooling’) as appropriate to the discussion.

1.6 Project scope and report organisation

Documenting feasible and desirable options for any form of AMEP provision has two prerequisites. First, the AMEP’s longstanding client-centred mission means that determining what is desirable relates most closely to how programs meet learner needs. We use statistical and interview data to profile these needs. The statistical data relate to basic demographics, hours utilised in the program, and entry and exit levels (see Chapters 2 and 3). Interviews amplifying and help explain these data in regard to English literacy and educational backgrounds and needs, age-related characteristics, and settlement, gender and rural-related issues (Chapter 4).

Second, ‘options’ implies choice. It emerged from our interviews and other research that the SPP400/AMEP is one of several options for humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with minimal/no schooling, as discussed in Chapter 5. This fact impacts on how delivery options are developed for this group within the AMEP and also on the feasibility of these options. With this context in mind, separate chapters document various aspects of SPP400/AMEP delivery: pastoral support, placement procedures, contact hours, class groupings, what is taught and how, and post-AMEP pathways preparation (Chapters 6 to 10).

Rather than presenting a separate literature review, the report integrates relevant findings and commentary from the literature as appropriate to the discussion. McBrien’s (2005: 356) review of literature on refugee students’ educational needs and barriers in the United States concludes that research in this area is limited. Like her, we found that most of this research relates to the implications of migration patterns and acculturation for program delivery, as distinct from exploration of actual program options.

Aside from this and the concluding chapter, the body of this report consists of two main parts (Parts 2 and 3): Part 2 profiles learners and their needs, and Part 3 is a consideration of how various aspects of provision and different delivery options respond to those needs.

This report addresses policy-making, ESL practitioner and academic audiences. Because the brief included documenting stakeholder perspectives, interviewees’ comments are quoted at some length. An overview of the report can be gained from each chapter’s concluding section, which summarises and discusses the chapter’s main findings. Chapter 11, the conclusion, reviews our findings in relation to the project’s aims, presents our recommendations and summarises the arguments supporting these recommendations.
Part 2

Who are the learners?

Provision in the AMEP rests on building an understanding of the client group and the group’s learning needs.

The following three chapters profile the clients that the SPP400 seeks to serve. Chapters 2 and 3 report on demographics, participation, proficiency levels and progress of those registered for the SPP400, using data drawn mainly from the ARMS database. Chapter 4 presents interview data on learner needs, amplifying and offering explanations for the statistical data.

This profile of learners and their needs underpins Part 3, which documents the different ways in which provision responds to these needs.
Chapter 2

Accessing the SPP400 hours: Demographics, locations and eligibility

Profiling the group that the SPP400 is intended to serve is a necessary basis for determining whether delivery options are feasible and/or desirable and for recommending improvements. This chapter is the first of three that builds a profile of this group. It is directed to three questions. What is the potential pool of clients for the SPP400? Who accesses the SPP400 and where? What issues were reported regarding eligibility requirements?

Answers to the first two questions are drawn largely from statistical data from DIMA Settlement Reports (DIMA 2006a) and the ARMS database, while our discussion of eligibility uses information from interviews. The figures cited below are for the two financial years from July 2004 to June 2006. AMEP managers informed us that, although the SPP400 was legislated from July 2004, it did not come into effect until approximately November 2004. In effect, therefore, these data reflect approximately the first 18 months of this initiative.

2.1 16–24 year old humanitarian entrants with seven years’ or less schooling (2004–06)

Young people aged 16–24 with seven years’ or less schooling are one component of the humanitarian intake, which, in turn, is part of Australia’s overall migration program. Figure 1 shows that the 2004–06 humanitarian intake was approximately 10 per cent of total new arrivals. Approximately two per cent of new arrivals (5305 people) were humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 years.

![Figure 1: Humanitarian new arrivals aged 16–24 as a proportion of total new arrivals (2004–06)
Data derived from DIAC (2006a)](image)

Within the 16–24 year old group, a significant proportion (38 per cent) reported seven years’ or less schooling, as we see in Figure 2. It seems reasonable to assume that the group not reporting on their schooling also included a substantial number with seven years’ schooling or less, given the issues that we report in Chapter Seven (section 7.1). If this assumption is accepted, nearly half of all 16–24 year old humanitarian entrants (2590 or 49 per cent) may have had seven years’ or less schooling.

Nevertheless, as shown in Figure 2 below, within the 16–24 year old group, the proportion reporting seven
years’ or less schooling (1992) was significant: approximately 38 per cent. It seems reasonable to assume that the group not reporting on their schooling also includes a substantive number of young people with seven years’ schooling or less, given the issues that we report in Chapter 7 (section 7.1). If this assumption is accepted, it follows that up to nearly half of all 16–24 year old humanitarian entrants (2590/ 49 per cent) may have had seven years’ or less schooling.

In summary, these data show that the group on which this research is focused is small in relation to the overall humanitarian intake, and very small in relation to overall new arrivals. This fact may account for the initial low AMEP provider response to our invitation to participate in this project. Nevertheless, those with seven years’ or less schooling constituted a substantial proportion of young people admitted on humanitarian grounds and, as this report will demonstrate, their needs are distinctive, complex and urgent.

2.2 Registrations for the SPP400 (2004–06)

Table 1 below shows registrations for the SPP400 by 16–24 year olds reporting seven years’ or less schooling in the period considered in this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>No. reporting 7 or less years schooling (2004 – 06)</th>
<th>Registered SPP400</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.*</td>
<td>% reporting 7 years or less schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 and 17 year olds</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24 year olds</td>
<td>1317</td>
<td>1395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1499*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: SPP400 registrations as a proportion of those reporting less than seven years’ schooling (Data derived from ARMS)

* Includes 103 people who transferred from the SPP100 hours when the SPP400 began.

Table 1 shows that 15 per cent of eligible 16 and 17 year olds and more than 100 per cent of eligible 18–24 year olds registered for the SPP400. The most likely explanation for the low registration rate of 16 and 17 year olds is that most were catered for in schools. As outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), 16 and 17 year olds...
could register only if it was confirmed that they could not be placed in an appropriate school program. The number of 18-24 year olds registered for the SPP400 is larger than the number who reported on arrival that they had seven years’ schooling or less. This discrepancy is explained by managers’ and teachers’ reports that potential clients’ self-reporting on both age and years of schooling can be unreliable (see Chapter 7, section 7.1).

If those not reporting years of schooling are included as eligible for the SPP400, the total proportion of eligible young people accessing their entitlements would be in the order of 58 per cent, consisting of 11 per cent of eligible 16 and 17 year olds and 83 per cent of eligible 18–24 year olds. (Calculations are as follows: $1499/1992+598 = 58$ per cent; 16 and 17 year olds: $104/(675+237) = 11$ per cent; 18–24 year olds: $1395/1317+361 = 83$ per cent.)

Overall, these figures indicate that, from the pool of potential 18–24 year olds in 2004–06, the take-up rate for the SPP400 was high. These data do not reconcile with the perceptions of the managers and teachers we interviewed that potentially eligible young people were not accessing the SPP400/AMEP (see Chapter 5).

### 2.3 Countries of origin (2004–06)

In the period under consideration, the largest single group (49 per cent of the total) of those registered for the SPP400 was from Sudan, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Countries of birth of those registered for the SPP400 (2004–06). (Data derived from ARMS).

Since 2004–06 this pattern has altered, with increased numbers coming from other African countries and from Burma.
2.4 Gender

Gender-related issues emerged from both the ARMS and interview data (see Chapters 3 and 4). Table 2 shows a gender breakdown of the data above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intake category</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New arrivals</td>
<td>133 212 (52.8%)</td>
<td>118 970 (47.2%)</td>
<td>252 182 (100%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian entrants</td>
<td>12 231 (48.6%)</td>
<td>12 944 (51.4%)</td>
<td>25 175 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian new arrivals aged 16 – 24</td>
<td>2427 (45.7%)</td>
<td>2878 (54.3%)</td>
<td>5305 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total reporting 7 years’ schooling or less</td>
<td>964 (48%)</td>
<td>1028 (52%)</td>
<td>1992 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total not identifying years of education</td>
<td>338 (57%)</td>
<td>260 (43%)</td>
<td>598 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals registered for SPP400</td>
<td>837 (55.8%)</td>
<td>662 (44.2%)</td>
<td>1499 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Gender breakdown of intakes and SPP400 registrations (2004–06).
(Data derived from DIMA (2006a) and ARMS).
* The lesser number in this total and that in Figure 1 is because 24 new arrivals were ‘not stated’ re gender.

Table 2 shows that females outnumbered males as overall new arrivals in 2004–06. However, male humanitarian entrants outnumbered females, as was also the case for those aged 16–24 and those reporting seven years’ schooling or less. Despite this, more females than males registered for the SPP400. As shown in Table 3, 64 per cent of eligible males registered for the SPP400, compared to 87 per cent of eligible females. Males also discontinued at higher rates than females, as we shall see in Chapter 3. (Note: on-arrivals who did not report years of schooling are excluded from these figures.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Registered SPP400</th>
<th>Eligible SPP400</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>837 (87%)</td>
<td>964 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>662 (64%)</td>
<td>1028 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1499 (75%)</td>
<td>1992 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Proportion of eligible female/male SPP400 registrations (2004–06). (Data derived from ARMS)
2.5 Location of SPP400 registrations (2004–06)

During the period under consideration, most humanitarian entrants settled in either New South Wales or Victoria, with smaller but growing numbers in most other States/Territories. Table 4 shows numbers registered for the SPP400, broken down for the two financial years. A slight decrease occurred from the first to the second year in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. Queensland and South Australia experienced a small increase, while Western Australia remained relatively constant. Given the small numbers in the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory, the changes there were insignificant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>2004–05</th>
<th>2005–06</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1396*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: State/Territory locations of registrations for SPP400 (2004–06). (Data derived from ARMS).

* The total shown here is slightly lower than in Table 1 because it does not include the 103 people who transferred from the SPP100 when the SPP400 began.

Table 5 shows those registering for the SPP400 according to location in capital cities or in regional centres. A complete breakdown is provided in Appendix C. These figures indicate that SPP400 registrants overwhelmingly live in capital cities (94 per cent of the cohort).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory (In order of client numbers)</th>
<th>SPP400 Registrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capital City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CAPITAL CITY/REGIONAL</td>
<td>1429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Capital city/rural regional locations of SPP400 registrations (2004–06). (Data derived from ARMS).

* The numbers here are slightly larger than in other tables because they include clients who have changed providers and therefore registered twice.

Table 5 shows that Queensland and Tasmania had the highest proportions of regional registrations (19 and 16 per cent of State totals) but the actual numbers were small. Chapter 4 (section 4.6) discusses issues specially related to rural/regional areas.
2.6 Providers and programs

Table 6 shows total SPP400 registrations for each AMEP provider. These figures were reported by AMEP providers as insufficient in any one centre to create viable SPP400 classes (see Chapter 8, sections 8.1 and 8.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider*</th>
<th>SPP400 clients 2004–05</th>
<th>SPP400 clients 2005–06</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vic AMES</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACL (NSW)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELLS (Qld)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA AITELS</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW AMES</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC (Vic)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA AMES</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMTR (SA)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas TAFE</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA CT</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT CAESL AMEP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT AMEP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMEC (Qld)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>720</strong></td>
<td><strong>676</strong></td>
<td><strong>1396</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Number of clients granted SPP400 according to AMEP provider (2004–06). (Data derived from ARMS).

* See Acronyms List for full names of providers.

** This table provides figures for providers with which clients first registered. Some clients then moved to other providers. Also, the figures do not include the 103 people who transferred from the SPP100 hours when the SPP400 began.

Although no separate SPP400 classes existed in our data set, SPP400 hours were delivered in some centres in special youth classes. At the time of our interviews, the provider with the largest number of SPP400 registrations (422; Vic AMES), offered the greatest number of AMEP youth classes (in three centres). Other providers with smaller numbers also ran youth classes (NMIT, TELLS and AMES Tasmania). In 2007, following our interviews, youth classes increased in Brisbane and also began in ACL centres in Sydney. We discuss the youth class option further in Chapter 8 (sections 8.3 and 8.4).

2.7 Eligibility issues

2.7.1 Age at the time of registering for the SPP400/AMEP

The 2003 Review identified the following problem and its solution:

The relevant legislation restricts access to the AMEP to arrivals who are 18 years old or older at the time of visa application. Until recently, those who were younger than 18 years old at the time of visa application but turned 18 before arrival in Australia did not have access to the program. In January 2003, the Minister approved provisions to allow discretionary access to those affected in this way. It should be noted that 16–18 year olds who do not have access to school ESL programs may be eligible for the AMEP if they apply before their 18th birthday (DIMIA 2003: 260, our italics).

At the time of our interviews and at least until the end of 2006, this problem persisted: having made their visa applications overseas before turning 18, newly-arrived immigrants who had turned 18 were, in fact, ineligible for the SPP/AMEP. However, at the time of finalising this report (late 2007), a provider manager informed us that this problem had been resolved, at least in her region, and that a young person’s age at the time of registering at an AMEP centre was now the relevant eligibility criterion.
2.7.2 Ineligibility for the SPP400/AMEP

Newly arriving young people are faced with a choice in regard to registering with the AMEP or the school sector. If they opt for the school sector, they cannot transfer to the AMEP. This requirement maintains the boundary between resource streams and prevents double-dipping. Commonwealth ESL funding for new arrivals is directed to either the school sector or the adult sector. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funding supports Intensive English Centres (IECs), which aim to cater for school-aged new arrivals. DIAC funds the SPP/AMEP, which targets newly-arrived adults, namely those aged 18 and older. This rationale underpins the special notification needed for 16 and 17 year olds to enter the SPP400/AMEP (Chapter 1, section 1.2).

The managers, teachers and young people we interviewed had two concerns about these requirements. First, that the initial choice to enrol in the school sector cannot be reversed and, second, that certifications for 16 and 17 year olds to allow them to enrol in the AMEP are not forthcoming in some jurisdictions, even where school provision cannot meet these young people’s needs. We elaborate on these concerns in Chapter 5 (sections 5.3.1, 5.4 and 5.5).

2.8 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

In the period July 2004 to June 2006, the 1992 humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 reporting seven years’ or less schooling were less than one per cent of total new arrivals (1992/252 206). However, they constituted somewhere between 38 to 49 per cent of all 16 – 24-year-old humanitarian entrants, depending on how many did not report years of schooling. Of the 1992 reporting seven years’ or less schooling, 1499 (75 per cent) registered for the SPP400 (Table 1). This overall take-up rate appears relatively high. The majority of these SPP400 registrants were 18–24 year olds (93 per cent). The small proportion of 16 and 17 year olds reflected the requirement for special documentation supporting this younger group’s admission to the SPP400/AMEP (Chapter One, section 1.2).

The largest single group of those registered for the SPP400 (49 per cent) came from Sudan, with smaller numbers from other African countries, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma, the former Yugoslavia, and other Asian and Middle Eastern areas.

Males slightly outnumbered females in reporting seven years’ or less schooling (52 per cent of males/48 per cent of females; Table 2) but females registered for the SPP400 in greater proportions than males (87 per cent of eligible females/64 per cent of eligible males; Table 3).

The States with substantial numbers of SPP400 registrations were Victoria (489), NSW (377), Queensland (183), South Australia (148) and Western Australia (111; Table 4). Most of these young people (94 per cent) were located in capital cities. Melbourne’s larger numbers of SPP400 registrations were matched by special youth classes for young people in three AMEP centres, while at the end of 2006 there were none in Sydney, a class in one Brisbane centre and two offsite classes in Hobart. (As explained in Chapter 1, section 1.4, we had no data for South Australia and Western Australia, where numbers of SPP400 registrations were also relatively high.) However, subsequent to June 2006, youth-specific classes increased in Brisbane and began in Sydney (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).

SPP400 registrations in rural cities and regions were low (6 per cent of total registrations; Table 5). These low numbers and the difficulty in interpreting eligibility from the available figures (cf. Figure 3 and Table 1) meant we were unable to estimate reach in these areas.

Overall, despite the high take-up data documented in this chapter, managers and teachers commonly reported that some eligibility issues were impacting on access to SPP400 entitlements, potentially lessening the feasibility of forming youth classes, as we discuss further in Chapter 5.
Chapter 3

Profiling the learners: Hours utilised, entry levels and progress

This chapter uses ARMS data to answer the following questions. How many hours of tuition were used by those initially registered for the SPP400 between July 2004 and June 2006? What were their entry and exit levels? How did entry levels, age and gender relate to their participation in the SPP400/AMEP? What movement occurred across levels?

In terms of AMEP performance indicators, our discussion relates to retention and results for this specific client group (DIMIA 2003: 299). For the purposes of this report, answers to these questions should inform program responses to this group’s learning needs.

We use the following terminology to distinguish between three main groups of clients:

1. Completing clients—those recorded in the ARMS as having completed their entitlements in the period 2004–06.
2. Continuing clients—those in SPP400/AMEP classes as recorded on 30 June 2006.
3. Discontinuing clients—those recorded on 30 June 2006 as absent from class for nine months or longer without completing their entitlements.

‘Exit’ will be used as a cover term referring to leaving the SPP400/AMEP, whether discontinuing or completing.

3.1 Utilising tuition hours

This section presents ARMS data on patterns of hours utilised as at 30 June 2006 by those registered for the SPP400/AMEP. In subsequent sections, we discuss these data further in relation to entry and exit English levels, and completions and discontinuations.

Figure 4 displays the tuition hours used by those who had left the SPP400/AMEP by 30 June 2006. The total number of these clients was 511 (229 females; 282 males) and constituted 34 per cent of the total 2004–06 cohort (234 completions/16 per cent; 277 discontinuations/18 per cent).

![Discontinuing and completing hours](image)

Figure 4: Total tuition hours – discontinuing and completing clients initially registered for the SPP400 (30 June 2006)
Figure 4 shows a distinct pattern among those who had exited the program. The high numbers of withdrawals in the first 99 hours of tuition entitlements and after 800 hours show that young people either withdrew early or stayed until they had exhausted – or were close to exhausting – their entitlements. Further, more males than females discontinued early in the program. Of the males exiting the program, 40 per cent discontinued in the first 200 hours (n = 113/282) and 52 per cent in the first 400 hours (n = 149/282). In comparison, only 17 per cent of exiting females withdrew in the first 200 hours (n = 41/229), and 28 per cent by the 400-hour mark (n = 63/229). The high rate of early male discontinuations accords with their lower rate of enrolment in the SPP400/AMEP, which, according to our interview data, reflects the pressures on males to find work (Chapter 4, section 4.5).

Figure 5 displays the hours used by clients continuing in the SPP400/AMEP as at 30 June 2006. Their total number was 988.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours used</th>
<th>continuing Male</th>
<th>continuing Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 99</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 199</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 - 299</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 - 399</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 - 499</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 - 599</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 - 699</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 - 799</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 - 899</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Tuition hours utilised – continuing clients (as of 30 June 2006) initially registered for the SPP400

Figure 5 shows that the bulk of continuing clients were approximately midway through their total 910 hour entitlements as at 30 June 2006, with numbers increasing up to this point. The patterns for males and females were closely parallel (with a slight difference at the 500–700-hour mark), with lower male numbers explained by lower enrolments (as shown in Chapter 2, Table 2) and higher discontinuations (as seen in Figure 4). Taken together, these figures are reflected in teachers’ and managers’ perceptions that enrolments by young people registered for the SPP400 were increasing.

3.2 English levels, the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) and the ARMS database

ARMS data on clients’ English levels offer a useful starting point in profiling their learning needs. Interpreting these data requires an understanding of how they are derived. This section provides a brief explanation.

3.2.1 English language levels and the CSWE

In the AMEP, English language levels are denoted mainly with reference to the curriculum and assessment framework that all AMEP providers use as a condition of their contracts – the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE). The Certificates were first developed in the late 1980s and have since undergone several revisions. In 2003 the CSWE framework was aligned with the Australian Quality Training Framework.

The CSWE framework has four Certificate levels (henceforth CSWE I – IV). A Preliminary course (henceforth pre-CSWE) was added in the 2003 version in response to learners with minimal/no previous schooling and literacy. CSWE levels are defined in terms of what is to be achieved in a specific program of tuition. These achievements are framed as ‘competencies’ or Learning Outcomes (LOs). For a learner to be awarded a Certificate at a given CSWE level, he/she must demonstrate achievement of the competencies specified for that level.
To give a brief non-technical description of CSWE levels: the pre-CSWE LOs include, for example, responding to simple instructions, providing basic personal information and being able to write the alphabet and numbers.

Going one level higher, CSWE I LOs require such things as responding to instructions in the classroom, locating information in an alphabetical index (e.g. a telephone book), providing personal information in answer to questions (e.g. ‘What’s your first name/surname?’, ‘Can you spell your surname?’, ‘What’s your address?’), and completing an application form.

Achieving CSWE II level requires being able, for example, to participate in a short conversation, read an informal letter, and understand and produce short explanations orally and in writing.

Achieving CSWE III level means a person has gained what is known in the AMEP as ‘functional English’, meaning that the learner has sufficient English to accomplish basic everyday tasks, such as shopping, banking and using public transport.

The CSWE IV prepares learners for entry to mainstream education and training and for job-seeking.

Although the CSWE levels refer to a specific program of tuition, they have also been mapped against a non-course-specific, general ESL assessment tool, namely, the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR; Wylie and Ingram 1995/1999). (In technical assessment terms, the ISLPR is a general proficiency scale, whereas the CSWE is an achievement-based assessment framework.) ISLPR levels are graded in steps from ‘zero proficiency’ to ‘native-like proficiency’ as follows: 0, 0+, 1–, 1, 1+, 2, 2+, 3, 3+, 4, 4+, 5. This mapping allows use of the ISLPR to determine clients’ entry levels to the SPP400/AMEP and their placement in a CSWE class (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). Having entered the program, learners are thereafter assessed on their demonstrated achievement of the CSWE competencies/LOs. These assessments are done in the classroom by teachers using a moderated CSWE task bank. At the time of this project, some providers also recorded ISLPR exit levels.

It is also important to understand that, although the CSWE is mapped against the ISLPR, the two assessment systems operate quite differently. (In technical terms, the two systems use different assessment constructs). The implications of this difference will emerge below and in Chapters 4 (section 4.8), 9 (section 9.2) and 11 (section 11.5.2, recommendation 11). Whereas the CSWE is structured in terms of competencies, the ISLPR is organised around the so-called ‘macro-skills’ of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Because ISLPR macro-skills are assessed separately, learners can be assessed at different levels in each skill, whereas all the required competencies/LOs for a given CSWE level must be demonstrated for a person to be recorded as having achieved that level.

CSWE levels are shown in relation to ISLPR levels in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSWE level</th>
<th>ISLPR entry level (in one or more macro-skills) for that Certificate level class</th>
<th>ISLPR exit level (in all macro-skills) from that Certificate level class</th>
<th>Common description of the ESL learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre-CSWE</td>
<td>0 (but see note* below)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>low literacy beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>0 ‘zero proficiency’</td>
<td>1– ‘minimum creative proficiency’</td>
<td>beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE II</td>
<td>1– ‘minimum “creative” proficiency’</td>
<td>1 ‘basic transactional proficiency’</td>
<td>post-beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE III</td>
<td>1 ‘basic transactional proficiency’</td>
<td>1 to 2 ‘transactional proficiency’ to ‘basic social proficiency’</td>
<td>intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE IV</td>
<td>2 ‘basic social proficiency’</td>
<td>3 ‘basic vocational proficiency’</td>
<td>advanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: CSWE levels mapped against the ISLPR

*Note: In order to distinguish learners in pre-CSWE classes from those in CSWE I classes, some AMEP providers describe them as ISLPR ‘zero minus’ (0–) students. However, 0– is not part of the ISLPR itself.
As originally developed, the CSWE framework assumed ESL tuition totalling approximately 1200 hours. However, AMEP clients are no longer AMEP-funded once they have used the hours to which they are entitled (in this case, 400 SPP hours plus 510 AMEP hours) or if they achieve CSWE III level, whichever comes first. AMEP tuition entitlements are not based on any estimate of the time needed to reach CSWE III level. According to government officials involved in determining the 510 hours AMEP entitlement in 1991, this figure was derived by averaging the hours that AMEP clients spent in the program, irrespective of entry level proficiency, exit levels, numbers of discontinuing clients and length of time spent in the program (Moore 2001).

### 3.2.2 Interpreting the ARMS database in relation to CSWE levels

The explanation above gives rise to the following cautions, which apply to any analysis of ARMS data on CSWE entry and exit levels, including in the remainder of this chapter.

First, providers record clients’ achievement on the ARMS database with reference to whether particular LOs for CSWE levels are ‘achieved’, ‘partially achieved’ or ‘not attempted’. However, the way these data are recorded makes it difficult to extract group-based reports. Consequently, our analysis is confined to client numbers in relation to overall CSWE levels, as distinct from LO achievements within levels.

A closely related second point is the requirement that all specified LOs for each CSWE level must be achieved for a person to exit with a Certificate at that level or proceed to a higher-level class. However, clients often enter the program with differential English skills; their development may also be quite uneven across these skills. Teachers informed us that most young people gain conversational English rapidly and well in advance of their literacy skills (Chapter 4, sections 4.3 and 4.7). It follows that the data presented below on client numbers in relation to CSWE levels obscures differential skill levels.

Third, it is important to understand what is denoted by CSWE levels in relation to whether clients are completing, continuing or discontinuing. Thus:

- **continuing** clients at a given CSWE level are clients who are in CSWE classes working towards achieving the required LOs for that level (eg continuing CSWE II clients are not at CSWE II level but in classes aiming to achieve CSWE II level)
- **completing** clients at a given CSWE level are clients who have exited the SPP400/AMEP having used their entitlements (either 910 hours tuition or achieving CSWE III LOs); they may have achieved some or all of the LOs for that level
- **discontinuing** clients at a given CSWE level are clients who entered classes working to achieve the LOs for that level but who withdrew prior to achieving part or all of these LOs.

In other words, the clients recorded in the ARMS database at a given CSWE level may or may not have achieved all the LOs for that level.

Finally, at the time of this project, the ARMS database did not distinguish pre-CSWE LOs from CSWE I LOs. (After 12 December 2007, ARMS records made this distinction.) The data analysis below shows most of those registering for the SPP400 in 2004–06 as entering and exiting at CSWE I level. Our interview data indicates strongly that, in fact, many of these clients were in pre-CSWE classes (see Chapter 4, sections 4.2 and 4.8). We had no way of distinguishing clients in pre-CSWE and CSWE I classes.

It follows from these cautions that the data on which the following analysis is based provide an inexact picture of clients' levels and achievements within the SPP400/AMEP. Nevertheless, it should also be borne in mind that, since the late 1980s the ARMS database has been superior in providing at least these nationally derived data and therefore also in going some way to meet the recommendations made in a variety of other reports for data collection on ESL learning in general and refugee youth in particular. These recommendations are not confined to Australia (eg Howard Research 2006: 12) and, in Australia, they go back at least as far as 1978 (Galbally 1978: 40). More recently, the Refugee Young People and Transitions (RYPT) Working Group (2005: 9) stated that education providers’ ‘inadequate client tracking and data collection practices’ prevent ‘comprehensive reports or statements regarding … service use or transition patterns of refugee young people’, despite the fact that this group is ‘a significant and particularly vulnerable population in schools and higher education settings’ (see also RRAC 2006: 21; REPP 2007: 5). As will become clear below, despite their limitations ARMS data allow some important conclusions to be drawn about those registered for the SPP400. They also provide a statistical underpinning for the interview data reported in the next chapter.
### 3.3  Continuations, completions and discontinuations in relation to CSWE (entry level, age and gender)

Table 8 shows entry levels of continuing, completing and discontinuing clients who had registered for the SPP400.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSWE entry level (as recorded in ARMS)</th>
<th>Continuing</th>
<th>Completing</th>
<th>Discontinuing</th>
<th>Total SPP400 registrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE II</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE III</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cont./ compl./discont.</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total SPP400 registrations</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: CSWE entry levels for clients initially registered for the SPP400 (30 June 2006)

From Table 8, we see that, as of 30 June 2006, 66 per cent of those who initially registered for the SPP400 were continuing in the SPP400/AMEP, while 16 per cent had completed their entitlements and 18 per cent had discontinued.

The predominant entry level was recorded as CSWE I: 81 per cent of all SPP400 registrants. (Note: CSWE I figures include those entering pre-CSWE classes). Given that minimal/no previous schooling is a key criterion for accessing the SPP400, this low entry level is to be expected.

Only limited comparisons can be made between continuing and completing/discontinuing clients because we have no way of knowing whether those continuing in June 2006 eventually completed or discontinued: continuations could have become discontinuations at any point prior to entitlements being exhausted. Confining our analysis to completions and discontinuations, Table 9 shows that the rate of completion differed according to entry level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completing and discontinuing clients</th>
<th>CSWE I entry</th>
<th>CSWE II + III entry</th>
<th>Total compl./discont. entrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontinuing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total compl. and discontin. at each level (as recorded in ARMS)</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Comparison of CSWE entry levels for completing and discontinuing clients initially registered for the SPP400 (30 June 2006)

In Table 9, we see that entrants recorded at CSWE I level were more likely to complete their entitlements (in this case, utilise their full 910 hours) than those entering at higher levels: 51 per cent of CSWE I entrants completed their entitlements, compared to only 30 per cent of CSWE II and CSWE III entrants. Age differences were also apparent in relation to completions and discontinuations, as shown in Table 10.
Table 10: Comparison of completions and discontinuations for exiting SP16 and SP18 age groups (30 June 2006)

The very small number of 16–18 year olds (SP16s) reflects the requirement for this group to gain special permission to enter the SPP400/AMEP (Chapter 1, section 1.2). Their small numbers make the implications of any comparison with the older group unclear. Table 10 shows them discontinuing at a higher rate (70 per cent) than 18–24 year olds (53 per cent). This younger group also discontinued (70 per cent) more than they completed (30 per cent). This group's numbers and retention rates should be monitored further in the light of the increased AMEP youth classes subsequent to June 2006, which we document and argue for in Part 3.

Gender differences play into these patterns. In Tables 11-14, we consider females first, then males, breaking out the data for the two age groups.

The small number of 16–18 year olds (SP16s) reflects the requirement for this group to gain special permission to enter the SPP400/AMEP (Chapter 1, section 1.2). Their small numbers make the implications of any comparison with the older group unclear. Table 10 shows them discontinuing at a higher rate than 18–24 year olds. This younger group also discontinued more than they completed. This group's numbers and retention rates should be monitored further in the light of the increased AMEP youth classes subsequent to June 2006, which we document and argue for in Part 3.

Gender differences play into these patterns. In Tables 11-14, we consider females first, then males, breaking out the data for the two age groups.

Table 10: Comparison of completions and discontinuations for exiting SP16 and SP18 age groups (30 June 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compl./discont.</th>
<th>SP16</th>
<th>SP18</th>
<th>Total compl. and discont.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>234 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontinuing</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>277 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SP16 and 18</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>511 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overwhelming majority of females (90 per cent) were recorded as CSWE I entrants. In the SP16 group, a miniscule proportion was placed in CSWE II classes (n = 2) and none in CSWE III. In the older (SP18) group, nine per cent of females (n = 72) entered CSWE II classes and approximately one per cent entered CSWE III classes (n = 10).

As at 30 June 2006, almost three-quarters of all females who registered for the SPP400 (73 per cent) were still in the program.

Comparing discontinuations and completions, a slightly larger proportion of the total female cohort (15 per cent; n = 128) had completed their entitlements than had discontinued (12 per cent; n = 101). More younger (SP16) females discontinued (n = 16) than completed (n = 10), and all except one were recorded as CSWE I...
Chapter 3 Profiling the learners

entrants – however, the very small number of SP16 females makes the comparison between discontinuations and completions statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, the discontinuations are worrying if they indicate the end of these young females’ learning pathway.

Table 12 compares female completions and discontinuations according to CSWE entry level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completing and discontinuing females</th>
<th>CSWE I entry</th>
<th>CSWE II + III entry</th>
<th>Total compl./discont. females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontinuing</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total compl. and discontin. at each level (as recorded in ARMS)</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Comparison of CSWE entry levels for completing and discontinuing females initially registered for the SPP400 (30 June 2006)

Because so few females entered CSWE II and III classes (n = 31), comparisons with those recorded as CSWE I entrants must be tentative. However, Table 12 shows that a higher proportion of CSWE I female entrants completed their entitlements (58 per cent) than did those who entered CSWE II and III classes (45 per cent). Further, a higher proportion of those recorded as CSWE I entrants used their full 910 hours (58 per cent) than did those who discontinued (42 per cent).

Table 13 displays parallel data for males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry-level (as recorded in ARMS)</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Continuing males</th>
<th>Completing males</th>
<th>Discontinuing males</th>
<th>Total each age group at each level</th>
<th>Total males at each level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% cont.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% compl.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>SP16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP18</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE II</td>
<td>SP16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP18</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE III</td>
<td>SP16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total male cont/compl/discont.</td>
<td></td>
<td>380</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total SPP400 males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total SPP400 registrations (n = 1499)</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: CSWE entry levels – males by age group (30 June 2006)

As with the females, the ARMS database recorded the majority of males (70 per cent) as CSWE I entrants. However, the spread of CSWE entry levels was greater than for females: 22 per cent of males were placed in CSWE II classes (compared to nine per cent of females) and 7 per cent in CSWE III (compared to 1 per cent of females). These data accord with teachers’ reports that males tend to have some oral English and may also
be acquainted with literacy in Arabic through their formal religious studies, while females are more likely to have no English or literacy in any language (see Chapter 4, sections 4.2 and 4.5).

As observed earlier (Chapter 2, Table 3), males registered for the SPP400 at lower rates than females. Correspondingly, the overall male rate of discontinuations was much higher than for females (27 per cent of males/12 per of females as shown in Table 11). As was also documented in Figure 5, early discontinuations occurred at much higher rates for males than females. Male discontinuations also outnumbered male completions (male discontinuations: 27 per cent; male completions: 16 per cent), whereas this was not the case for females (female discontinuations: 12 per cent; female completions: 15 per cent; Table 11). However, the overall proportions of males and females who completed their entitlements were similar (16 per cent of total males/15 per cent of females).

Like the females, males who were continuing in the program outnumbered those who had exited, although the proportion was significantly lower (57 per cent of males/73 per cent of females). Finally, like the females but in greater numbers, more SP16 males discontinued (n = 16/20) than completed (n = 4/20).

Table 14 displays male completions and discontinuations in relation to CSWE levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completing and discontinuing males</th>
<th>CSWE I entry</th>
<th>CSWE II + III entry</th>
<th>Total compl./discont. males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontinuing</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total compl. and discontin. at each level (as recorded in ARMS)</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Comparison of CSWE entry levels for completing and discontinuing males initially registered for the SPP400 (30 June 2006)

Like the females, male entrants at higher levels tended to discontinue more than those recorded as CSWE I entrants: 74 per cent of those entering CSWE II and III classes discontinued, compared to 56 per cent recorded as CSWE I entrants. Overall, the data presented in this section show the majority (66 per cent) of those registered for the SPP400 continuing in the program as of 30 June 2006, with females and clients aged 18–24 continuing in greater proportions than males and those aged 16 and 17. However, the overall proportion of males and females who had completed their entitlements was roughly equal. The majority of clients (81 per cent) were recorded as CSWE I entrants (that is, in either pre-CSWE or CSWE I classes) but a somewhat larger proportion of males than females was in higher CSWE classes. Clients recorded as CSWE I entrants completed their entitlements at higher rates (51 per cent) than those entering CSWE II and III classes (30 per cent).

### 3.4 Exits from the SPP400/AMEP – CSWE levels

The data on proficiency levels of clients exiting the SPP400/AMEP (as at 30 June 2006) provide a picture of the English available to these young people entering the wider Australian society. Because the SP16 numbers were insufficient to allow statistically significant comparisons within the cohort at each level, SP16 and SP18 figures are combined.

Table 15 shows exit levels for discontinuing (irrespective of hours taken) and completing clients. For obvious reasons, continuing clients’ exit levels do not exist.
Table 15: CSWE exit levels – discontinuing and completing SPP400 clients (30 June 2006)

Table 15 shows that over half (57 per cent) of the clients who exited the program by 30 June – whether completing or discontinuing their tuition hours – were either approaching or at CSWE I level, in ISLPR terms ‘basic transactional proficiency’ or, put simply, phrase-book English. Over a quarter (29 per cent) were approaching or at CSWE II, while 14 per cent were approaching or at CSWE III (‘basic social proficiency’).

Table 16 presents exit levels on a gender-differentiated basis.

Table 16: CSWE exit levels differentiated by gender (30 June 2006)

Table 16 shows a greater proportion of males exiting at higher levels than females: 34 per of males and 22 per cent of females were approaching or at CSWE II; and 17 per cent of males and 10 per cent of females were approaching or at CSWE III. As will become evident in the next section, these exit levels largely reflect entry levels rather than progress to a higher level.

3.5 Exits from the SPP400/AMEP – Movement across CSWE levels

The English levels of young people exiting the SPP400/AMEP must be considered in the context of their achievements within the program. In this section, we analyse movement across CSWE levels as an indicator of achievement. Data is for discontinuing and completing clients, combining data for both age groups. Continuing clients are not included because their final movements across levels could not be known until they had completed/discontinued their hours.

The caution noted earlier in this chapter regarding the impossibility of tracking movement from pre-CSWE to CSWE I classes (section 3.2.2) is particularly relevant here. Lack of movement from CSWE I level does not necessarily, therefore, imply lack of learning (see also Chapter 4, section 4.7, Chapter 8, section 8.3). Further, as discussed in section 3.1, discontinuations tended to occur either early or late in the utilisation of tuition hours, so we might expect late discontinuations to have made similar progress to completions in regard to English gains, and early discontinuations to have had little opportunity to make progress. Data on discontinuations would be more revealing if individuals’ movements across CSWE levels were correlated
with the number of hours utilised but this project was not resourced to attempt these calculations. Table 17 displays movement across CSWE levels for all discontinuing and completing clients as at 30 June 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of movement across CSWE-level classes</th>
<th>Discontinuing clients</th>
<th>Completing clients</th>
<th>Total movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero movement</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up one level</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up two levels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total discont./ compl. (excl. those entering at CSWE III)*</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all discont. and compl. (excl. those entering at CSWE III)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Movement across CSWE levels – discontinuing and completing SPP400 clients (30 June 2006)

* Note: Movement above CSWE III level is not recorded in the ARMS database, since clients are no longer eligible for the AMEP (see section 3.2.1). See also Tables 19 and 20.

Table 17 shows that just over three-quarters (76 per cent) of SPP400 registrants who had either completed their entitlements or withdrawn by 30 June 2006 remained at their initial CSWE level. Just over one-fifth (21 per cent) moved one level, while three per cent moved two levels.

However, despite the overall low rate of movement from one CSWE level to another, and despite the caution noted regarding whether discontinuations occur early or late, these data provide evidence that tuition in the SPP400/AMEP is associated with English gains. As might be expected (and hoped), more than one-third of completing clients (37 per cent) moved up one CSWE level compared with only seven per cent of those who withdrew.

Examining the records of those who completed their entitlements, we can also ask whether movement across levels varied according to recorded CSWE entry levels. Table 18 shows these data for completing clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of movement across CSWE levels</th>
<th>CSWE entry level</th>
<th>Total completing client movement across levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed at same level</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up one level</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up two levels</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total compl. clients entering at each level (excl. those entering CSWE III classes)</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of compl. clients entering at each level (excl. those entering CSWE III classes)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Movement across levels in relation to CSWE entry level – clients who completed their SPP400/AMEP entitlements (30 June 2006)
Table 18 shows that the proportion of those moving up one level was twice as large for CSWE II entrants (64 per cent) as CSWE I entrants (33 per cent). However, since the number entering CSWE II classes was very small, this comparison must be treated with caution.

Tables 19 and 20 break out these data according to gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of movement across CSWE-level classes</th>
<th>Entry-level class</th>
<th>Total completing female movement across levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>CSWE II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed at same level</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up one level</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up two levels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total compl. females entering at each level (excl. those entering CSWE III classes)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of compl. females entering at each level (excl. those entering CSWE III classes)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Movement across levels in relation to CSWE entry level – females who completed their SPP400/AMEP entitlements (30 June 2006)

Table 19 shows nearly two-thirds (66 per cent) of females recorded as CSWE I entrants remaining at that level by the end of their 910 hours. More than a quarter (29 per cent) of female CSWE I entrants moved to CSWE II classes, while a small number (four per cent) moved from CSWE I classes to CSWE III. Although the numbers are too small to make a statistically significant comparison, the pattern was reversed for females who were placed in CSWE II classes: Eight out of 11 (73 per cent) moved into CSWE III classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of movement across CSWE-level classes</th>
<th>Entry-level class</th>
<th>Total completing male movement across levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>CSWE II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed at same level</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up one level</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved up two levels</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total compl. males entering at each level (excl. those entering CSWE III classes)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of compl. males entering at each level (excl. those entering CSWE III classes)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Movement across CSWE levels in relation to entry level – males who completed their SPP400/AMEP entitlements (30 June 2006)

Table 20 shows that, of the males recorded as CSWE I entrants, just over half (54 per cent) were still recorded at that level by the end of their 910 hours: 38 per cent progressed to CSWE II classes, and seven per cent moved two levels to CSWE III classes. However, although males recorded as CSWE I entrants moved across
levels in larger proportions than females, this difference may simply reflect a greater proportion of males placed in CSWE I rather than pre-CSWE classes.

Overall, these data offer tentative indications that progress from CSWE II to CSWE III classes was more rapid than from pre-CSWE and/or CSWE I classes, and that males progressed beyond CSWE I at a greater rate than females.

3.6 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

Despite its limitations, the ARMS database is an invaluable resource for policy-makers, providers and researchers. These data provide a statistical underpinning for the interview data we discuss in the next chapter.

In regard to tuition hours used by those initially registered for the SPP400, the data for July 2004–June 2006 show they either withdrew in the first 90-400 hours of the program or settled down to persist with their ESL learning (Figure 5). The majority (66 per cent) remained in the SPP400/AMEP, with the bulk of these approximately midway through their 910 hours (Figure 6 and Table 8). Females continued at higher rates than males (73 per cent of females, 57 per cent of males; Tables 11 and 13).

Key findings regarding completions and discontinuations, entry levels, age and gender can be summarised as follows:

- 16 per cent of the total cohort had completed their entitlements (either 910 tuition hours or by achieving CSWE III LOs), while 18 per cent had discontinued (Table 8)
- males and females completed their entitlements at roughly similar rates (16 per cent of males; 15 per cent of females, Tables 11 and 13)
- 18 – 24 year olds completed at higher rates than 16 and 17 year olds (SP18s: 47 per cent; SP16s: 30 per cent; Table 10)
- the great majority of clients were recorded as entering at CSWE I level (81 per cent), with a larger proportion of females recorded at this level than males (90 per cent of total females, 70 per cent of total males; Tables 11 and 13)
- those recorded as entering at CSWE I level completed at higher rates (51 per cent) than those entering higher level CSWE classes (30 per cent. Table 9)

Given that this project took place in the early stages of the SPP400, the low rate of completions was unsurprising. The large proportion of continuations (66 per cent) versus discontinuations (18 per cent; Table 8) suggests that many learners perceived that the program was meeting their needs, especially as the bulk of these were well into their tuition hours (Figure 6) and had passed the point when discontinuations were likely (Figure 5).

The higher discontinuation rate of 16 and 17 year olds, compared with those over 18, could be interpreted as confirmation of the policy requiring this group to gain special permission to enter the SPP400/AMEP. However, any such conclusion must take account of what is known about refugee youth in the school system (Chapter 5). Further, retention rates for this younger age group require ongoing monitoring in the light of increased special AMEP classes for refugee youth after June 2006 and reports on their success (Chapter 8, sections 8.2.2 and 8.3).

Since the SPP400 was instituted to provide extra assistance for those with minimal/no schooling, the data on entry levels are unsurprising. The higher discontinuation rate of entrants at higher CSWE levels, coupled with the data on early discontinuations, especially by males, can be surmised to follow from the pressure to gain work (Chapter 10, section 10.1.1). Conversely, the higher completion rates of CSWE I entrants support our interview data on this group’s appreciation of the AMEP and their aspirations to succeed (Chapter 4, section 4.1). Gender differences in entry levels and intake and retention rates play out in many aspects of program delivery, as will become clear in Part 3.

ARMS data on CSWE levels as these young people exited the SPP400/AMEP provide an indication of their continuing learning needs. ‘Exit’ refers to those both completing and discontinuing their full on-arrival entitlements (constituting 34 per cent of the total 2004–06 cohort; Table 15). This group generally left the AMEP with extremely low English levels. The majority (57 per cent) were approaching or had gained ‘minimum “creative” proficiency’ (completion of CSWE I). Coupled with the fact that 51 per cent had fully utilised their 910-tuition hours (Table 9), this finding underlines reports of this group’s very slow progress (Chapter 4,
section 4.2) and their need for special post-AMEP pathways (Chapter Ten, section 10.1). Only 14 per cent were approaching or had gained ‘basic social proficiency’ (completion of CSWE III), while the remainder were approaching or had gained ‘basic transactional proficiency’ (completion of CSWE II). In other words, only a very small minority exited with the English necessary for entry to preparation English courses for mainstream vocational training and/or semi-skilled employment (CSWE IV) (section 3.2.1). These low exit levels have implications for pathways preparation as part of SPP400/AMEP provision (see Chapter 10).

Relating these exit levels to starting points, and bearing in mind that data were unavailable on entry into pre-CSWE as distinct from CSWE I classes (section 3.1.3), ARMS data showed:

- the majority (58 per cent) of those who completed their entitlements remained at the level at which they entered the program (Table 17)
- a higher proportion of completing females than completing males stayed at the same level (63 per cent of females; 52 per cent of males; Tables 19 and 20);
- those who completed their entitlements moved levels at higher rates (42 per cent) than those who discontinued (eight per cent; Table 17)
- those entering CSWE II classes and completing their entitlements moved to a higher level in greater proportions (64 per cent) than did CSWE I entrants (33 per cent moved one level; six per cent moved two; Table 18).

The most obvious finding regarding exit levels and rates of movement is the low rate of movement by those recorded at CSWE I level to higher-level classes (66 per cent of females and 54 per cent of males utilised their full 910 hours but did not proceed beyond CSWE I; Tables 17 and 18). The higher male rate of movement across levels may possibly reflect more male entrants being closer to achieving CSWE I LOs rather than more rapid progress. Our finding on the better rates of progress by those entering CSWE II classes and completing their entitlements is highly tentative because of the limited numbers of entrants at this level (n = 28; Table 18).

Despite the fact that these data obscure movement from pre-CSWE to CSWE I classes, they confirm widespread reports that learners with little or no literacy in any language make slow progress against standard forms of language assessment – we return to this issue in Chapter 4 (section 4.7). Nevertheless, the greater movement across levels for those completing their entitlements, compared with those who withdrew indicates that AMEP tuition accompanied improvements in English (Table 17), supporting managers’, teachers’ and young people’s claims in our interviews that the program was of benefit.
Chapter 4

Learner backgrounds and learning needs: Provider and client perspectives

In this chapter we use our interviewees’ perspectives to complement and help explain some of the statistical data in previous chapters. These perspectives are organised under the following thematic headings: past experiences and present aspirations; English and educational needs; age-related learning issues; settlement needs; and gender- and rural-related concerns. We conclude the learner profile presented in this and the previous two chapters, first, by considering both our statistical and interview data in the context of relevant research and what might be judged feasible SPP400/AMEP outcomes for these young people, and second, by relating teacher descriptions of learner levels to CSWE and ISLPR levels.

4.1 Past experiences and present aspirations

Humanitarian entrants have endured experiences that cannot be considered normal, much less in a young person’s life. Those registered for the SPP400 have left their homelands in the face of extreme danger, often suffering unspeakable violence or having witnessed it inflicted on others. One student focus group we interviewed included former child soldiers and those who have become known as the ‘Lost Boys’ (ABC Television 2007; Beah 2007). Many learners had spent much of their lives in refugee camps, where access to schooling was impossible or minimal, or in countries of first refuge where they were not permitted to attend school. These experiences have been elaborated in many other reports (for example, Coventry et al 2002; RRAC 2006; CMYI 2006).

While acknowledging and responding to past experiences, the SPP400/AMEP is fundamentally directed to looking forward. The 2003 Review cautions against a “deficit” model of humanitarian settlement that focuses only on entrants’ problems rather than on their potential to contribute', pointing out that these newcomers ‘have historically been an important source of intellectual, social and cultural capital in this country’ (DIMIA 2003: 320). The young people registered for the SPP400 are exemplary cases of the 2003 Review’s description of humanitarian entrants who come to Australia ‘with a strong determination to rebuild their lives, become productive members of the community and ‘give back’ to the country that has provided them with protection and refuge’ (DIMIA 2003: 320). The teachers, managers and other personnel we interviewed universally described these young people as highly motivated, a view confirmed in our focus groups with them and in numerous other reports (eg Coventry et al 2002; RRAC 2006; CMYI 2006). As one teacher summed up:

They’re great kids, who are determined young people, very determined young people, so that will stand them in good stead … They wouldn’t have survived if they weren’t determined.

All interviewees for this project, including the young people in our focus groups, said that the one thing they desire above all else is to fit in – not to be identified by what they’ve been through but rather by their aspirations to build a better future. They see education as a pathway to normality, intuitively recognising that ‘education is crucial for restoring social and emotional healing’ (McBrien 2005: 330). In the words of one teacher, ‘They are just hungry, hungry to learn English and get whatever certificate they can, and just get on’. Another said, ‘They feel “I’ve wasted five years of my life. I’ve got to get on”.’

Some teachers claimed that these young people offered the AMEP greater challenges than previous immigrant or refugee groups. However, previous AMEP experience and institutional history of working with other severely traumatised young people with disrupted or minimal schooling should not be forgotten and is a resource that can inform current teachers (Kalantzis 1987; Allender and Davison 1988; Anderton 1990; Hood 1990; Achren 1991; Stone 1995; Martin 1999).

4.2 English and educational needs

Here we relate the data on demographics and CSWE levels documented in previous chapters to teacher perceptions of these young people’s learning backgrounds and needs in order to probe the diversity of learning needs within the lower CSWE levels. The categories outlined below are not age-specific but, combined with age-related factors discussed in the next section, contribute to the distinctive characteristics of this group.

Teacher perceptions accord, to a large extent, with other research into similar types of learners. For example, Huntley (1992) identifies four types of ‘ESL literacy learner’: pre-literate (ie the learner comes from a non-literate
society); *non-literate or illiterate* (ie the learner comes from a literate society but has not acquired literacy); *semi-literate* (ie the learner has gained elementary literacy in a literate society); and *non-roman alphabetic* (ie the learner has literacy in another script). The teachers we interviewed identified five groupings of SPP400 learners, which largely mirror Huntley’s categories. They also emphasised a further set of learning needs – ‘learning how to learn’ – that spans the first three learner categories.

4.2.1 **Those with no English whatsoever, no literacy in any language and no previous schooling**

One teacher described this sub-group as having ‘no concept that what we say we can write down in one form or another’. These learners were reported to come from societies that do not use written language; for example, Dinka tribespeople and herders in the rural areas of southern Sudan, who fit Huntley’s pre-literate category. A common teacher description was that these learners don’t know how to hold a pen. They were also said to have no notion that writing is sequential or that pages are numbered. Examples of other educational needs less overtly related to literacy were learning to tell the time, acquiring spatial/temporal/numerical concepts, and gaining the basic cosmological, geographical, historical and scientific understandings that come with school learning.

This group is among those recorded in the ARMS database at the time of our research as CSWE I clients on entry (Chapter 3, section 3.1.2). Some teachers stated that they were best described as being ‘pre-pre-pre CSWE’ and that they generally completed their tuition entitlements still as CSWE I clients. A teacher’s explanation of their seemingly slow progress was that, ‘We’re basically taking [these] students from that visual and tactile world that they’ve learned so much to a much more abstract form of learning. And that takes time.’

4.2.2 **Those with no English and no schooling but who have been exposed to literacy in the wider society**

Although this group also lacks formal education, teachers distinguished them from the previous group on the grounds of their experience of others’ reading and writing, and use of it to convey information. This description accords with Huntley’s non-literate/illiterate category. These learners were described as coming from places such as northern Sudan, where Arabic is prevalent, or via literate societies such as those in Syria and Egypt, where they had lived as refugees but had not attended school. Their needs to acquire the fundamental concepts gained from schooling may be somewhat less acute than those in the first sub-group.

This sub-group is also reported in the ARMS database as being in CSWE I level. Teachers described them as pre-CSWE. They were said to gain basic literacy skills somewhat faster than the first group, although, like that sub-group, most remain in CSWE I classes at the end of their 910 hours.

4.2.3 **Those who may have a few English phrases, no English literacy, minimal schooling, and some literacy in a language other than English**

This sub-group was described as having very disrupted schooling in their home countries or in refugee camps, having come from war zones in the Middle East and Africa. Some males have some literacy in Arabic from studying the Koran. They may have picked up a few phrases in English along the way. These learners fit Huntley’s description of semi-literate learners.

This sub-group is also reported as CSWE 1 clients in the ARMS database. However, teachers saw them as very different from the first two sub-groups. They were said to form the bulk of those who progress to CSWE II classes by the end of their 910 hours, with a few exiting the AMEP having begun CSWE III classes (ISLPR1+ to 2).

4.2.4 **Those with some fluency in a variety of English as their second/other language, little or no English literacy, some schooling and some literacy in a language other than English**

Some of those registered for the SPP400 were described as having schooling considered normal in their own countries but inadequate for enrolment in age-equivalent classes in Australia. An interviewee who had taught in Africa for several years told how classes in some countries are taught by children from the grade above, with each class sharing the one book (see also RRAC 2006: 7). In other areas with no schools, she said, governments simply hand out the book for each grade and those who have read the Grade 12 book are liable to say they have done Grade 12. Huntley’s categories do not adequately cover this sub-group.
Some learners whose schooling is considered inadequate in Australia were described as having varying degrees of fluency in English varieties that Australian English speakers perceive as hard to understand; for example, Liberians and those who have spent long periods in Kenyan camps. A teacher described their use of English:

People who’ve grown up speaking African English, if not as their first at least their ongoing second language, find it really hard to accept that it’s not received [as] standard English, that they’re pretty well unintelligible and that their grammar has certain anomalies compared with Australian English … They come up with 18th century constructions. Linguistically, it’s fascinating. But it’s not going to help them in the workplace or in study.

This stylistic issue was discussed in the November 2006 AMEP National Forum. This relatively high oracy is commonly not matched by literacy skills, which teachers described as often very weak (see also Slikas Barber 2002).

Depending on their literacy, these clients may be placed in CSWE I, II or III classes. However, teachers (including some who also work as learning advisors) reported that, in this sub-group, some clients with high English oracy but minimal literacy are shocked when assessed as requiring English language tuition (Chapter 7, section 7.1).

4.2.5 Those in any of the above groupings who also have specific cognitive and learning disabilities

Although learning disabilities exist in any population, their incidence can be expected to be higher among those who have been exposed to the kinds of trauma many refugees have experienced. Some teachers mentioned their feelings of helplessness when they suspected these problems. They requested support in diagnosing and referring clients (see also African Think Tank Inc 2007).

4.2.6 Learning how to learn

Teachers reported that clients with minimal/no schooling also have to learn how to learn; as one teacher put it, ‘what it is to be a student and to learn in a school setting’. These needs were described in terms of learning classroom routines; for example, bringing a pen to class, keeping worksheets in a folder, not losing books and folders, following instructions and sitting in a seat for an extended period. Other more conceptually oriented learning needs were described when a teacher talked of students’ difficulties in following models and their inability to transfer models to other contexts.

4.3 Age-related learning needs

The ESL, literacy and educational learning needs just described interact with age-related factors to make this client group’s learning characteristics and needs different from both older and younger humanitarian entrants and from their Australian-born/educated age peers (see also CMYI 2006).

A key issue is that this group’s oral English was reported to take off much more quickly than older learners. As one teacher said, with many ‘you can soon have a fine conversation’ but when they are pushed beyond social conversation, ‘you see you’ve got nothing there’. This language learning trajectory plays into young people’s aspirations to gain an education and their literacy and learning–how-to-learn needs. For example, a teacher explained that she was only beginning to realise that:

because they have no history of schooling, they haven’t learned, for example, to work through things like problem-solving and analytical thought in the academic setting. So when they produce a piece of writing, even though it may be mechanically sound, that ability to discuss, to explain, all of that is missing.

In Chapter 8 (section 8.3), in the context of discussing the rationale for youth–specific classes, we consider other distinctive age-related learning issues (see also Williams and Nicholas 2005). In summary, refugee youth were said to:

- learn faster than their elders
- need teaching that extends their generally rapid but superficial acquisition of oral English and that focuses on written English
- need the basic knowledge, skills and discipline that come with formal schooling if they are to embark on educational and employment pathways that realise their potential
- have high energy levels and require more active teaching and activities than those acceptable to older learners
• have different emotional needs, including a generally intense need to interact with their peers (see also Cassity and Gow 2005: 52)
• benefit from sharing their problems with peers in and out of class
• need productive relations with adult mentors and thus relate differently to their teachers than do older adults
• generally require and are more responsive to a more interventionist approach to attendance and punctuality, and to more explicit socialisation into appropriate behaviours.

4.4 Settlement needs
A young man, interviewed for a related AMEP Research Centre project, summed up how settlement needs affect learning:

Unless we feel happy that we have our settlement issues addressed, you know, if I am thinking about my family, if I am thinking on how I am going to pay the rent, if I am thinking of looking for a house and so on, I am not in a position to concentrate on the studies (Lloyd 2006: 2).

This section outlines the following issues described as impacting especially on young people registered for the SPP400: aftermath from past experiences, living and family situations, adjusting to Australian life, coping with adult responsibilities, and depression. These problems were said to contribute to discontinuations and to disrupt attendance. They have implications for all aspects of program delivery but most obviously for the support offered by AMEP personnel in and out of the classroom (see Chapter 6).

The teachers, managers and others we interviewed reported that, despite these young people’s desire to be ‘normal’, they generally experience a traumatic aftermath in Australia. One teacher explained, ‘They’re very resilient. But when they get here, all those experiences start to bear down on them, because they’re now safe and they couldn’t think about it before.’ We were told that this aftermath can be complicated by worry and guilt about leaving loved ones behind who may be ill or almost certainly needing financial support (see also CMYI 2006: 14–15).

At the same time as dealing with what was left behind, these young people’s living situations can be difficult. An AMEP learning advisor explained that, despite being officially listed as with parents/guardians, a young person’s relationship with the family grouping may be tenuous:

Because of the extreme dislocation and the extreme violence that these kids and their families and communities have been through, often the families are not families as we know them or as they may know them. They’re much more extended families who are brought here. So the family unit can be made up of a whole range of different individuals. It’s very hard to estimate what we’re looking at.

These situations make it hard for teachers and advisors to gauge what kind of family support, if any, a young person is receiving. Family reunions place additional pressures on accommodation, finances and household interactions. The advisor continued:

Even if the young person has a family, even a close family, the family unit can be very large. Accommodation in Australia doesn’t cater for this very well. Sometimes the older children leave the family home because there really isn’t room for them.

We were also told that some young refugees who have been in AMEP centres live on the streets, having left or been turned out of home. Others have come without families and live alone. One teacher reported that many ‘just have incredible loneliness’. Many interviewees (including young people themselves) reported that participation in classes and related activities offer relief from these pressures and provides enjoyable social contact.

Adjusting to life in a new country, especially for young people and their families who have limited finances and are also assisting others overseas, has implications for program delivery, not only in supporting learners (Chapter 6) but also in regard to teaching content (Chapter 9). As one teacher said:

It’s not just the English that’s falling down for these people. It’s huge social problems, like not washing, or not turning on the light so they can save electricity. Their telephones are forever being disconnected.

Teachers reported that students often do not understand what a bill contains or why it has been sent, so bills pile up with inevitable consequences.

AMEP personnel gave examples of young people without family support or sufficient spoken or written English who are responsible for keeping appointments with doctors, counsellors and case workers; who do not know how to budget, look after their health, maintain appropriate hygiene, and eat a balanced diet; who fall for sales
pitches for mobile telephones and second-hand cars; who lose their ATM cards and have no money to buy food. Those living by themselves were reported to often spend their Centrelink allowances in one or two days. A manager reported:

Without that concept of time – that it’ll be two weeks before you get your next payment – they end up with no food or no money to buy food. Or the mates come to visit and there’s no mother to control the fridge. So they’ve bought the food but it doesn’t last the period of time because the other kids have come in and eaten it.

Resolving these escalating problems is difficult. As one teacher said:

Even if you’re a street kid, you can speak English. At least you can negotiate your way orally through a process. These kids can’t do that.

At the same time, some young people bear very adult responsibilities. For example, a manager told of two newly arrived Burmese sisters in their teens, who, between them, had five children aged less than five and were living in one room in a hotel waiting for accommodation (see also Wilkinson 2002: 175; McBrien 2005: 330; CMYI 2006: 14–15, 16–17).

Facing both past trauma and present difficulties, it is little wonder that, along with their elders, young refugees are prone to depression and sometimes mental illness (Porter and Haslam 2005; African Think Tank Inc 2007). Teachers told us that depression manifests itself in students’ descriptions of themselves as feeling ‘sad’ or having headaches. They stay home, watch television or sleep for long periods.

Effective program delivery requires AMEP personnel to recognise how these issues can play out in classes and AMEP centres and to know how to act in particular instances. It also requires appropriately responsive procedures, curriculum and teaching.

4.5 Gender-related issues

Gender-related issues cannot be separated from other issues. However, teachers and managers identified some matters as particularly impacting on programs. We consider females first, then males.

Managers, teachers and students made it clear that, despite low female proficiency levels, teachers, programs and policy-making should not underestimate these young women’s ambitions. One teacher said:

The African women we get, 18–24s, are so keen to get some education. They’ve never been in a class. They’re poor villagers but they zoom ahead [whistles].

In a centre with predominantly Iraqi students, a teacher reported that most of the girls who were aged 17–19, were engaged to be married but this did not deter them from wanting to pursue further education, training and employment – they all wanted to ‘be something’. Teachers reported that females (younger and older) generally accept being assessed as needing English tuition and are happy to cooperate with teachers, and work hard in and out of class.

Young women’s desires to succeed educationally does not exempt them from considerable home duties, both housework and caring for younger and older family members (see also RRAC 2006: 8; Dumenden 2007). According to teachers, these duties can affect participation and attendance and need to be handled sensitively. In some cases in which providers had become involved, home expectations were considered exploitative. Some of the family groupings described earlier were said particularly (but, by no means, inevitably) to be open to emotional and/or physical abuse.

As already indicated, some very young women have their own children. We were told that the shortage of childcare places is the main cause of women, including young women, not accessing their SPP400/AMEP hours or discontinuing. Their needs have implications for the types of classes offered, preferences for class groupings and teaching content (Chapters 7, 8 and 9).

Teachers’ and managers’ concerns about young women were directed, first, to meeting out-of-class needs that hinder their otherwise highly motivated participation in the SPP400/AMEP; second, to providing appropriate content; and, third, to accommodating young mothers. The first two concerns also apply to young men. However, whereas young women were described as diligent and compliant, young men’s problems were perceived as sometimes manifesting disruptive behaviours. Providers’ concerns about these behaviours figured prominently in our interviews and were described as impacting on program delivery in counselling and placement sessions and in classrooms.

Providers described an underlying factor in these behaviours as young males’ ambitious career expectations that combine with an urgent need to provide for others, including those overseas (see also CMYI 2006). A counsellor/advisor described a typical case:
He is the oldest son, and his mother and his two younger brothers and his three sisters are back in a camp in Guinea. He’s frantic because he’s been there keeping them safe and now there’s nobody to look after them. He’s got hardly any education but all he wants to do is get a job so he can sponsor his family out. The reason he was separated from them is that he’s 21 or 22. So he’s the adult, you go … The others are being processed. For some of these people who are arriving, they’re probably, especially if they’re over 21, they could be the only person of their household here but they’ve got lots that are back home.

These pressures were said to make young men impatient with learning English and eager to move quickly through the SPP400/AMEP. In contrast, according to one teacher, older men generally understood that extensive preparation is required to gain good employment. One teacher saw young men’s frustrations as particularly acute when they were assessed at lower CSWE levels:

> We have a constant problem with someone coming in with, say, two years education and wanting to be a brain surgeon. It’s not just them, it’s their families. They’ve got one family member out: ‘Now, you go to the new country, go to university, become a doctor, earn lots of money and get us all out.’ It’s a huge issue, yeah. So we have to work with that a lot. And in the lower levels, it’s harder.

Another teacher saw this impatience more in higher-level classes:

> The Cert. 3 teachers get a really hard time. They really do. They are constantly boxed over the ears by students saying, ‘We want our certificate because we’re going to university. It doesn’t matter that I can’t write a sentence. I’m going to university and I’m going to be a doctor.’ The majority of [the] ones that have unrealistic expectations are Sudanese men, occasionally the women.

Both young and older males were often reported to expect, based on previous educational experiences, that if they attend class regularly and try hard, they will automatically proceed to the next level. As one teacher said, men can be ‘a bit resentful’ if they are told of problems or that they can’t go on to CSWE III until they achieve the LOs in CSWE II: they see it as ‘an insulting thing to do to them – it’s an insult to their ego and they can become very upset’.

Some of these males were said to find the emotional and physical discipline of the classroom difficult. One teacher said, ‘The older males experience a loss of power. For the younger ones, it upsets their need to establish themselves as men.’ Young men can find sitting in class physically stressful. One teacher said, ‘They need to shake the hormones down a bit, get the fidgets out of their system, get both sides of their brain working together’. Another said that some ‘revert to Grade 9 behaviour’, a few by stirring the teacher but mostly by being ‘very physically fidgety’ or, as another teacher said, ‘swinging on their chairs and wearing their hats’ (see also CMYI 2006: 7).

Males’ immature behaviour can come as a shock to AMEP teachers. A teacher commented:

> Sometimes we get a problem with someone saying, ‘What’s going on?’ I go: ‘He’s a teenager.’ ‘Of course.’ I mean, you tend to forget. They are. And even when they’re 22, they’re really more like our 17 – I’ve got a 17 year old and I can relate him to the 22 and 23 year olds. That delayed emotional development is very well documented with our band of students, young people who have been through trauma. And that is very much part of it, that they are kids in other ways.

A manager in a rural city was particularly worried about the young men in the centre:

> I mean, with the best will in the world we’re having absolutely no success with [African] male youth. Just talking to [name of centre] today, and I know they try everything there, and they said the youth – I think it’s to do with torture and trauma, with what they’ve been through. So the psychological problems are massive for the males. I don’t know why it’s more for the men than for the women, whether they were involved in a lot more that was happening over there than the women, or whatever. But they’re incapable of sitting and concentrating. So you have that immediate problem of learning: how do you teach people who can’t sit down for longer than five minutes? And as [name] said today, even when they were interviewing, they’d sit there like this [banging noises]. They’ll stand up after five minutes and then they’ll sit down and their fingers will be tapping and they’ll be moving … So you’ve got to overcome all of those issues, because the dropout rate is just massive with these boys, very few of them complete. It’s a real issue, and it’s really knowing what those boys want. They don’t want what we’re offering, I don’t think. So how do we find that out? And that’s another whole research topic in itself – to do some real intensive work with them.

In contrast, young men in another centre were described as so highly motivated that, if permitted, they would come to class ‘seven days a week from six o’clock to six o’clock’.

We were frequently told that African males tend to see the AMEP as being for women, while school is for men. As one teacher said, ‘The young ones see the AMEP as for mum and the young women, rather than for us educated ones who are on a mission’. However, in other centres and locations, we were told that the preference for school was not gender-specific. Likewise, gaining a good education is not always seen as a male prerogative. One manager reported that a young Sudanese husband had said that if childcare was
unavailable, he’d prefer that his wife take an optional maths tutorial, because her maths was better and she was more likely to get work with the maths than he was. These varying reports lead us to conclude that gender-related perceptions of the AMEP as a female preserve are neither universal nor immutable.

However, the perception that school is for men and the AMEP for women was reinforced in several ways. On the one hand, some schools had admitted young men, including in some cases, we were told, those in their late 20s. On the other hand, as we have seen, women predominated in SPP400/AMEP classes, a trend supported by AMEP childcare provision.

Further, the predominance in AMEP classes of women who are ambitious to improve their educational standing can reinforce young men’s preferences for school. One teacher explained that women see learning through the AMEP as:

> a way of trying to be equal to the men or even better, to show that they can be better by coming to TAFE. It is to do with morale, with competition, with coming to this society and they see the women are equal. ‘We are going to TAFE, we are going to college,’ and they are very proud about coming to TAFE. They go to the library. They see that as a way of becoming equal to the men.

This teacher reported that women often ‘apply themselves very hard and they do well, and faster than the men’ (as also reported in Canada in Wilkinson 2002: 184). According to this teacher, men are uncomfortable in classes with women who are succeeding better than they are:

> It must have come as quite a shock to them [the men] to come to this country and discover that there is equality between men and women, and that women can sit in the same class as men and study with them. So that’s one of the reasons why they don’t want to come to the class where there are women.

Another teacher observed that young men’s bias against the AMEP may be supported by the predominance of female AMEP teachers. Talking of men’s sense of disempowerment in the settlement experience, one teacher observed, ‘The last thing they want is be bossed about by a little old woman like me’.

We were told that some female teachers complain about not being accepted by male students from Africa and the Middle East. In contrast, one young female teacher said of her class of young Sudanese men, ‘I haven’t had that attitude really at all. If anything they were just hungry, hungry to learn English and to get whatever certificate they could, and just get on.’ In another centre, the current group of young males from Africa was said to be working well: they were integrating with the rest of the class and not exhibiting what teachers had previously experienced – ‘not brushing female teachers aside and wanting to get on faster than light’.

Some young men’s disruptive behaviours were reported to extend beyond AMEP centres. A young man in a focus group told us that ‘sometimes the police are running after us’, an issue that has been documented elsewhere (see also CMYI 2006: 18–19; African Think Tank Inc 2007: 2–7). This group requested classes to assist them in understanding Australian law, particularly to help them gain drivers’ licences, the lack of which is one cause of encounters with the police (and is not confined to males). This need is now well recognised and is being met in some centres (eg Hemming and Sydorenko 2004; Swanton 2006).

If these young men become alienated or disaffected, especially if their ambition to succeed is met with failure and unemployment, they are vulnerable to being caught up in the more undesirable aspects of the wider youth culture and involved with ‘oppositional sub-cultures of marginalised peers’ (Gibson 2001: 21). Teachers and managers were concerned that young men in rural cities are particularly at risk. A manager observed:

> You’re talking about young men here. What we know about these young men generally in Australian country towns is the fast cars, the drag races – all those things I grew up with that were quite normal for Australian young men to be doing, going to clubs and so on, and so you’re complicating that by their [refugees’] past history, plus the language and the culture.

In some rural towns, African youth have set themselves against Aboriginal youth:

> The feedback we got from [name of town] was that the young Sudanese boys who were basically unaccompanied – well, they came out with somebody but … somebody they probably had never met in their lives, so as a result they’ve become unaccompanied. There was a lot of tension between the Sudanese and the Indigenous youth, and there was quite a lot of fighting happening and, you know, baseball bats, etcetera, that level of violence. A couple of Sudanese boys had been expelled from State schools. Now those schools were bending over backwards for those kids so they must’ve done something really wild to be expelled.

In another town, Sudanese youth have aligned themselves with alienated Aboriginal youth. A manager reported:

> When I was talking to one of the workers there, she said she thinks that they [some Sudanese youth] went into the local school but there was a lack of acceptance in the school. So then it was like they went towards the Indigenous group and there was acceptance there but the Indigenous group that they moved into were into
crime. So now they’ve moved out of an environment where they weren’t accepted into a group where they were accepted but it unfortunately happens to be a crime group.

These last concerns overlap with other rural issues, to which we now turn.

4.6 Rural-specific needs

As documented earlier, SPP400 registrants in regional AMEP centres comprise only six per cent of the cohort (Chapter 2, Table 5). However, those eligible or initially eligible for the SPP400 appear to be growing through sponsorships, family reunions and ‘secondary resettlement’.

Regarding sponsorships, a manager explained:

Refugee settlement has expanded. The main reason it’s really taken off is because of the sponsors. If you really wanted to do any sort of research to do with rural areas, the sponsors need to be looked at. That’s an area of concern.

Managers with responsibilities in rural areas pointed out that the community support available to refugee families in rural towns should not be discounted (see also Ebsworth 2006). One interviewee gave an example:

On the whole they’re incredibly welcoming. Inverell’s a perfect example of a really small New England town, and one family arrived, and just everybody got behind that family and provided the housing, even to the point where the travel agent gave them a free trip up to Brisbane because these people have relatives in Brisbane, so they flew them up to Brisbane for the weekend. ... So yeah, country towns have been very, very supportive I think, and if it wasn’t for lack of work, I think the people would be more than happy to stay in a country town.

However, post-compulsory school-age refugees with minimal/no schooling were reported as being placed in rural schools without ESL programs, which was also noted as a ‘key issue’ in the ACTA report (2005: 7). These interviewees believed that rural school authorities did not always appreciate refugee youth’s particular learning and settlement needs. Moreover, these students are often dispersed in different schools, thereby diminishing the feasibility of targeted ESL provision, including through the SPP400/AMEP. A rural manager said:

These people need to be funnelled. You can’t have services fragmented when already you’re in a rural area that’s fragmented by definition, so you have to look at the resources you’ve got and you’ve got to maximise them. Regardless of what you think, funding is always going to be limited. So you’ve got to funnel people to somewhere, so that one place can do things like youth classes, and specific classes for boys who want to be mechanics, or girls who want to do this or whatever. It’s got to be far more tailored to that and it isn’t at the moment.

AMEP personnel responsible for rural provision also described the secondary resettlement of young men who move to rural areas to work in the meat and poultry industries. One manager explained:

What we have now in rural areas is like a secondary sort of settlement. Some have come from Perth, some from Newcastle, some from different places. ... I don’t know whether they’ve come with their family or not, but even if they have come with their family, they’re still only quite young some of them. And then they’ve gone to make money, and they’ll go wherever it might be, to make this money. ... I’m finding that that’s a huge issue, because when they get that initial settlement there’s lots of support, and when they go off like that, they go into secondary settlement. I mean, who’s identifying them and who’s finding them, where’s the support for them?

Many of these young men need ESL because, as the manager explained, they ‘haven’t got a level of English, some of them, where they can do the proper [occupational health and safety] and Work Cover training, so they need their AMEP hours to get that support’.

Providers are willing to create programs to accommodate these young men’s work commitments but can encounter barriers. A rural manager explained:

There are a lot of AMEP clients within these workplaces that we’re not getting to. ... There are 40 Sudanese in the [name] meat works. I haven’t been able to get visas at this point to know what ages they are, but I’m sure quite a few of them are eligible.

The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program was not regarded as an option, because ‘WELL only works if the employer is willing to release them and put some money in’. The manager continued:

M: That’s why AMEP is great, if they could be released – but they won’t be released because there’s a shortage of labour.

Int: Until the company is sued for some horrible industrial injury.

M: Well, they won’t be sued, because if we set up some kind of class on a Sunday morning, he can say, ‘Well, I set up this English class for them,’ so he’s probably covering himself by doing that and if they are too tired to attend, he’s probably covered.
Long working hours combined with living conditions can further inhibit possibilities for after-hours classes. A rural manager described how some African refugee meatworkers had been housed in an abandoned slaughter house, where they said they could hear ‘screaming’ from the ghosts of slaughtered animals. In another case, workers were required to walk long distances to get to work or into town. These living and working conditions make attending classes largely out of the question.

However, in other rural situations, AMEP providers have successfully cooperated with employers. A manager described how she was ‘really pleased’ with the program developed with one employer:

You could tell that they [the workers] were quite happy there, and you could see with the relationship with the trainers and there was a good relationship, so I felt quite good when I came out of there. I mean it’s not perfect, but ...

Participants in the 2006 AMEP National Conference described some good working relationships between employers in rural Victoria and AMEP providers. New initiatives to support employers in providing English language training (Robb 2006) would be especially well directed to extending SPP400/AMEP provision in rural areas.

Overall, interviewees with responsibilities for rural areas agreed that most rural locations had difficulty meeting the needs of young people with minimal/no schooling. Their opinions are supported elsewhere (eg ACTA 2005; Ebsworth 2006). The consequences for these young people are indicated in Wilkinson’s (2002: 189) multivariate analysis of factors influencing the educational success of refugee youth in Canada, which found that ‘residence in a large urban setting … has a positive effect on the educational performance of refugees … probably linked to the availability of language instruction and culturally specific services for newcomers’.

4.7 Learning needs and challenges

The profile of those registered for the SPP400 presented above provides useful insights into their low rates of movement from pre-CSWE/CSWE I classes to higher-level classes, as documented in Chapter 3. In this section we consider local and overseas research that makes clear that this slow movement should not be equated with abnormally slow progress by these types of learners.

Extensive research into rates of learning English as a second/additional language has been undertaken in America and Canada. A Canadian study of 1387 adult immigrants found that learners with less than seven years’ schooling (average 4.2 years) changed less than 0.4 of a Canadian Language Benchmark in each skill area over any 250 hours of instruction (Watt and Lake 2004: 4; see also Spaventa 2006). In regard to school-age learners, Collier (1987: 618) found that:

Where all instruction is given through the second language (English), non-native speakers of English with no schooling in their first language take 7 – 10 years or more to reach age and grade-level norms of their native English-speaking peers.

Reviewing more than two decades of research, Thomas and Collier (2002: 9) concluded that, for those with prior literacy, ‘the minimum length of time it takes to reach grade level performance in second language (L2) is four years’. Their conclusions appear to extend to adult ESL learners (Spurling, Seymour and Chisman 2008). Further, the reports in our interviews of young people’s rapid acquisition of conversational English but inability to meet complex oral and written demands are well supported in the literature (eg Cummins 1984; Cummins and Swain 1990; Bigelow et al 2006; Howard Research 2006).

Lightbown (2006), a prize-winning L2 researcher, has pointed out that this seemingly long timeframe is perfectly credible if we consider that, by the time young children reach school age and begin formal literacy tuition in their mother tongue, they have already had over 10 000 hours of exposure to it. There is no reason to think that less time is required to reach age-appropriate proficiency in a second/other language.

On the impact of prior education, Thomas and Collier (2002: 9) state that ‘the strongest predictor of L2 student achievement is the amount of formal L1 schooling’ and that ‘the more L1 grade-level schooling, the higher the L2 achievement’. These findings are supported by research on adult ESL learning in Canada (Watt and Lake 2004), the United States (Chisman and Crandell 2007), the United Kingdom (Condelli et al 2003) and New Zealand (Strauss et al in press). In the AMEP, Ross (2000: 200) also found that ‘learning experiences prior to migration to Australia’ were the most important predictive factor of learner progress in English, if hours of exposure to the language are equal, and that ‘the tasks of literacy and adult second language acquisition are promoted by pre-migration literacy in the first language’. Conversely, those with minimal/no literacy in any language make the slowest progress in learning English (see also Wakeland 1989; Rado 1995; McPherson 1997; Wigglesworth 2003; Wigglesworth and Nicholas 2003).
While the time needed to develop competence in English as a second/other language is well established in the literature, the cognitive dimensions involved in learning literacy simultaneously with a new language is only now being investigated (Nicholas 2007). This process has been shown to include changing the way short term memory operates and reconfiguring how oral language is processed and understood (Jufts 2006; Tarone, Bigelow and Hansen 2007). Tarone and Bigelow (2005: 84) state that ‘clear evidence’ now exists that ‘learning the skill of decoding an alphabetic script’ requires ‘changes in cognitive processing’ for non-literate ESL learners. In regard to processing oral language, Geudens (2006: 25) concludes:

Research of more than two decades has documented that a crucial phonological skill for the beginning reader is the insight into how spoken words are structured and composed of individual sounds and combinations of sounds, i.e. phonological awareness (italics in the original).

Developing phonological awareness requires not just ‘the acquisition of grapheme-phoneme correspondence in learning to read an alphabetic script’ but the prior ‘acquisition of the abstract concept of “word”’, which relates as much to oral language processing as to written script (Tarone and Bigelow 2005: 84). For those who have passed early childhood and have learned to operate in the mother tongue without literacy, reconfiguring the way language is processed is a major cognitive shift (see Williams and Nicholas 2005).

In English, learning the written script is further complicated by the lack of a one-to-one relationship between English sounds and their alphabetic symbols. This complexity creates problems for literate ESL learners. For someone learning literacy simultaneously with a second/other language, these various tasks are very challenging.

Tarone and Bigelow (2005) argue that it is also necessary to attend to learners’ social and cultural environments. In the AMEP, Jackson (1994) investigated the impact on English learning of non-language outcomes, defined as confidence, social, psychological and emotional support in a new life and learning environment; knowledge of social institutions; cultural awareness; learning skills; goal clarification; and motivation. Teachers ‘stressed that non-language outcomes were most noticeable’ in lower-level CSWE classes and ‘tended to be the major outcomes and to precede language gain’ (Jackson 1994: 12).

These findings do not support arguments, one way or the other, regarding the appropriate number of tuition hours for an initiative such as the SPP400 or, for that matter, the AMEP, since these tuition entitlements are not based on L2 learning rates (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1). However, the evidence is overwhelming that 910 hours are insufficient to equip low literacy ESL learners with the English necessary to enter mainstream education, vocational training or anything but very low-skilled employment. The implications for pathways preparation are considered in Chapter 10.

4.8 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

The rich data from our interviews on learner backgrounds and learning needs complement the statistical data presented in previous chapters. Together, these data provide a profile of young people registered for the SPP400.

Teacher descriptions of this group allowed identification of five learner types in regard to English, literacy and educational needs. These needs combine with ESL-specific, educational and socio-emotional factors to distinguish refugee youth from both older and younger humanitarian entrants and their Australian-born or -educated age peers. Settlement issues are shared (often literally) with older humanitarian entrants but our interviews revealed how problems can impact on young people differently and may escalate in ways that reflect their more youthful approaches to life.

In rural areas the geographic and institutional dispersion of refugee youth can leave their particular learning and support needs unmet. Rural managers also reported difficulties in developing programs for those in rural occupations.

Specific gender-related expectations and situations also featured in descriptions of backgrounds, needs and behaviours. It would seem that responding to the needs of young men through the SPP400/AMEP offers particular challenges. Nevertheless, we also note the observation of Strauss et al (2007) in the New Zealand context that the predominance of women in English as an additional language/ESL classes is insufficiently acknowledged.

In regard to the language level data we have discussed, Table 20 maps four of the categories derived from teacher descriptions (section 4.2) against the CSWE and ISLPR levels described in Chapter 3 (section 3.1.2). We have no information on CSWE levels for the fifth category (namely, those with specific cognitive and learning disabilities).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher description of learner type</th>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Level of class in which learner is placed (numbers permitting)</th>
<th>CSWE level as shown in ARMS reports (prior to 12/12/07)</th>
<th>Exit level of those completing entitlements as shown in ARMS (prior to 12/12/07)</th>
<th>ISLPR level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No English, no previous schooling, no literacy, no experience of a literate culture.</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>pre-(pre) CSWE</td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No English, no previous schooling, no literacy, experience of a literate culture.</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>pre-CSWE</td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little/no spoken English, minimal schooling, some literacy in a language other than English, no English literacy.</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>pre-CSWE/CSWE I</td>
<td>CSWE I</td>
<td>CSWE I/II</td>
<td>0/0+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Some fluency in an African variety of English, some literacy in a language other than English, little/no English literacy, varying amounts of schooling. | Beginner–Intermediate | CSWE I/II | CSWE I-II | CSWEII/III | S 1–4  
L 1–4+  
R 0–2  
W 0–1 |

**Table 20: Teacher descriptions of learners registered for the SPP400 mapped against CSWE and ISLPR levels**

Table 20 shows that the four different learner categories described by teachers, and supported to a large extent by Huntley (1992), were combined in ARMS reports of clients at CSWE I level at the time when this research was concluded. The combination of these learners into one reporting group, and, further, the wide discrepancies between some learners in regard to differential oral and literacy skills, indicate the difficulties entailed in interpreting ARMS data on program outcomes for those registered for the SPP400. Distinguishing pre-CSWE and CSWE I entries and exits in the ARMS database (in place since 12 December 2007) will facilitate developing a clearer picture of program outcomes in the SPP400/AMEP.

The tensions between current reporting categories and teacher perceptions of differences in learner groups and levels also have implications for program delivery in regard to placing clients in classes, forming class groups, curriculum, teaching and assessment (Chapters 7, 8 and 9). An AMEP research project has developed a grid that aims to improve techniques in assessing low/pre-literacy learners (of all ages) against pre-CSWE LOs (Moore 2007). However, accommodating the teacher and research descriptions of levels and learning tasks documented in this chapter would require refinements to the outcome specifications themselves. Work for ESL learners in the Australian school system (McKay 2007) could contribute to developing these refinements in the SPP/AMEP, as could research on benchmarking for adult immigrants in Canada and the United States (Watt and Lake 2004; Spaventa 2006). Overall, what is now known from basic and applied research, similar situations overseas, learner profiling in the school sector, and also revealed in our interviews, indicates that both further research and revision of the pre-CSWE and CSWE I LOs are warranted. This research would...
appropriately involve collaboration between practising teachers and researchers in both L2 development and language assessment.

The slow rates of movement by this group above CSWE I level reflect the complexity of the learning challenges they face, the situations from which they have come and those they now face. These data do not indicate any lack of motivation or potential to succeed in Australian society. Nor do they indicate program failure. Rather, the data presented in these three chapters are a potential contribution to setting Australian benchmarks for what can (and cannot) be achieved by these kinds of learners in 910 hours of intensive and specialist ESL tuition (cf Watt and Lake 2004). In the context of discussing other options for these learners (Chapter 5, section 5.3.1), we cite research showing that intensive ESL tuition serves them best.

To sum up, the challenges that this group presents in regard to effectively meeting its program needs are, we suggest, best seen in the context of a teacher’s description of learners’ aspirations and potential:

> These kids have tremendous skills and knowledge in a whole range of areas. They’re not to be underestimated in terms of their intelligence or ability. It’s just that they haven’t had the opportunity to develop those areas that are required to participate fully here.
Part 3

Program delivery

This part considers how program delivery responds to the learners just described.

Chapter 5 reviews the on-arrival options for post-compulsory school-age refugee youth, which have implications for what can be and is delivered to this group within the SPP400/AMEP. Subsequent chapters deal with specific aspects of SPP400/AMEP delivery: pastoral support (Chapter 6); procedures for assessing eligibility, tuition hours and class placements and size (Chapter 7); class groupings, locations and staffing (Chapter 8); program content and teaching (Chapter 9); and post-AMEP pathways preparation (Chapter 10).
Program delivery: School or the AMEP?

The SPP400/AMEP is only one of several available pathways for refugee youth. Some in this group, particularly young men from Africa, do not consider this to be their best option, as we saw in the previous chapter.

The crucial distinction between on-arrival entry points to the Australian education system for this group is between enrolment in the school sector or the AMEP. As indicated in Chapter 2, once enrolled in either a school or an IEC, a young person is ineligible for the AMEP. The reverse also applies in some States. ‘School or the AMEP?’ – this choice has implications for all aspects of SPP400/AMEP delivery, as will become evident in subsequent chapters.

In this chapter we first review the statistical data available to us in relation to school enrolments of potentially eligible SPP400/AMEP registrants in the light of our interviewees’ and others’ reports. We then consider what newly arriving refugee youth seek from education, the main entry points open to them, the rationale for choosing each option and the problems entailed, and the advice they receive about these options. Finally, we discuss the effect of structural separation between the AMEP and the school sector on options for this group. The concluding section uses our findings to propose three key considerations that inform our subsequent documentation of feasible and desirable SPP400/AMEP delivery.

5.1 Data on post-compulsory school-aged refugee youth in schools

In Chapter 2 we reported that, between July 2004 and June 2006, the statistical data to which we had access show SPP400 registrations as exceeding the numbers of those initially recorded as eligible (see Table 1). This would indicate, at least, that most 18 – 24-year-old humanitarian entrants who reported seven years’ or less schooling registered for the SPP400. These data also show a relatively small proportion (15 per cent) of 16 and 17 year olds registered for the SPP400. As noted in Chapter 1, the majority of this younger age group may be assumed to have enrolled in the school sector, especially since a prerequisite to their accessing the AMEP is documentation (usually, we understand, from the local school principal) that an appropriate school program is unavailable.

However, other reports indicate a substantial presence of refugee youth in the school sector, including those aged 18 and over. For example, in the context of discussing school provision, the RRAC report (2006: 7) states, ‘Of particular concern are humanitarian entrants aged 16 years and older who have educational levels of much younger students. In 2004–05, there were 1 714 people assisted under the IHSS [Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy] aged 16 to 20 years.’ (See also CMYI and SELLIN 2004: 27; ACTA 2005; Miller and Brown 2007; REPP 2007: 36).

Various explanations can be advanced for the discrepancy between the data presented in Chapter 2 and these reports. One plausible explanation is that the reports relate mainly to 16 and 17 year olds and those turning 18 who were ruled ineligible for the SPP400/AMEP (Chapter 2, section 2.7). A likely contributing factor is that DIAC data on arriving humanitarian entrants is an imprecise estimate of new arrivals’ ages, which only emerges when young people are enrolled in school (see Chapter 7, section 7.1; CMYI, 2006: 19–20). Concerns about older refugee youth in schools may also reflect their impact at a time prior to the introduction of the SPP400 in the second half of 2004.

Investigating the actual numbers of those eligible for the SPP400/AMEP in the school sector fell outside this project’s brief. However, these numbers have clear implications for the feasibility of special youth provision within the SPP400/AMEP. Further, irrespective of how many eligible youth are in schools, AMEP providers’ perceptions of young people’s reasons for opting for the school sector shape aspects of their program delivery.

5.2 What refugee youth want: Educational aspirations and perceptions

Young people’s expectations are a key consideration in evaluating the program options available to them. The following data come from the AMEP managers, teachers and refugee youth we interviewed, supplemented by other reports. The young people we interviewed were already enrolled in AMEP youth classes and so had the benefit of hindsight. These data are therefore both limited and filtered.

Irrespective of the differences in how young men and women express and act on their educational aspirations...
(Chapter 4, section 4.5), their shared desire to make up for lost schooling is documented in all the reports we have consulted. As one teacher said, ‘These young people have often been unable to access school all their lives. It becomes very precious.’ Fulfilling this desire is often understood literally. Another teacher explained:

A lot of them have a very fixed idea of what education means for their future. It’s either school or a lifetime of poverty. So there have been some come in, and say ‘I want school, I want school, I want school.’ These are 23 and 24 year olds.

Included in this ‘fixed idea’ of school, according to our interviews, are 9am–3pm tuition hours, ‘normal’ class sizes, school subjects and pathways into university (see also CMYI 2006: 12). According to the teachers and managers we interviewed, refugee youth perceive schools to be superior to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, within which the AMEP is located (see also RYPT Working Group 2005: 7; CMYI 2006). One teacher suggested that these perceptions derive from the economies and workforces they have previously experienced:

There are people who drive trucks, people who do traditional work, people who own large stores and then there are doctors and teachers. They don’t understand the kind of industry and technology that we have here, the whole system of hospitality, skilled industries and things like that.

Attending an AMEP Centre within a TAFE institute can be seen as second-best, as an AMEP teacher reported:

TAFE has no status in the community. A lot of our students say, especially when they’re just starting with us, ‘Oh, all my friends say what are you doing going there? It’s for dummies, going to TAFE.’

These perceptions can be reflected in the advice young people receive, which itself plays a key role in the on-arrival pathways taken, as section 5.4 examines.

It is unclear how opportunities for specialist and intensive ESL tuition affect young people’s views of desirable educational pathways. The AMEP teachers and managers in our data set believed that young people underestimated the English learning that their educational and vocational aspirations actually entail, as elaborated in section 5.3.1.

5.3 Educational entry points: What refugee youth get

The following four on-arrival options were reported in our interviews as open to, and most frequently taken by, newly-arrived post-compulsory school-age refugee youth with seven years’ or less schooling:

1. direct entry to a high school/college
2. entry to an IEC, followed by admission to a high school/college
3. registration for the SPP400 and entry to the AMEP
4. entry to non-AMEP programs for immigrant and refugee youth (documented only in Melbourne in our research).

Direct entry to the post-school sector (TAFE or university) was also mentioned as being attempted by some in this group but was reported as being non-viable (Chapter 7, section 7.1).

5.3.1 Option 1: Direct entry to a school/college

Most reports on refugee youth appear to assume that school enrolment is preceded by intensive ESL tuition in an IEC (eg Coventry et al 2002; RRAC 2006; REPP 2007). However, according to the teachers, managers and young people we interviewed, it is not uncommon for refugee youth aged 16–24 with minimal/no schooling to enrol directly in a school. Their reasons for so doing are several.

First, as already indicated, young people’s eagerness to access a mainstream educational pathway may lead them to seek immediate enrolment in their local school, because they fail to appreciate the extent to which academic success depends on English and literacy. As one manager said:

Because they’ve never experienced school before, they don’t understand that they need to prepare by learning the language first. They assume if you sit in a school it will just happen. So they sometimes try to avoid learning the language prior to starting school.

Second, this eagerness may not be checked when school principals are willing to accept such enrolments, including from those over 18. In some States and regions the policy is that school principals do not provide the documentation permitting those aged 16 and 17 to register in the SPP400/AMEP (see section 5.5 below).
A third reason for direct enrolment in a local school is that, in some locations, IECs can be inaccessible. Almost all IECs are in capital cities but in some capitals the numbers are limited (see Appendix D). Teachers reported that because new arrivals are afraid to travel far to attend IECs, they enrol directly in their local schools.

According to the teachers and managers we interviewed and the reports we consulted, direct entry to school without prior long-term intensive ESL is a poor option for refugee youth with minimal/no schooling. Although schools may appear to offer what these young people want, they are liable to find themselves excluded. As one teacher described, ‘most schools are not really set up for people who’ve had no formal education and whose English is almost non-existent’. There are four main ways in which schools are not ‘set up’ for this group.

First, class levels in schools assume a link between age and previous schooling. Placing older students with minimal/no previous schooling is therefore problematic, as the RRAC report (2006: 7) describes:

Some schools refuse entry to students 18 years and older, whereas schools which enrol these students have difficulty placing them in an appropriate class as they do not have the necessary skills to cope with a senior year level. However, placing them with significantly younger children impacts negatively on their socialisation and self-esteem. Too often the result in both cases is that these young people drop out of school, frustrated by their lack of progress or desire to be wage earners.

A centre manager described community perceptions of this situation:

I had two of the elders of the Sudanese community come to me at different times – they’re the spokespersons for some of the Sudanese community – and they said, ‘We don’t like what’s happening to our young people in the schools. The schools are putting them into classes according to their age, and they can’t cope, and they’re leaving the schools, and they’re out in the street, they’re not going to school, they can’t get jobs because they don’t have an education or they get labouring jobs for a while and then there’s no job left or the work slows down or whatever, and we’re worried, and we want them to go into classes according to their ability.’

Second, some aspects of school culture can be isolating and inappropriate for these new arrivals, especially those whose experiences have forced them to mature early; some also experience racism (RRAC 2006: 6–7). We were given examples of disciplinary routines that are difficult for those aged 18 and over (eg lining up for classes), and exemptions from these rules are disruptive for the rest of the school (see also Coventry et al 2002: 46; RRAC 2006: 7). An AMEP teacher, who had worked in a school, reported that those over 18 were excluded from sports because they were too physically mature. Some parents had also objected to the presence of older men alongside their sons and daughters in class. Participation in some activities may also require payments that strain refugee families’ resources (RRAC 2006: 7).

Third, schools are generally not equipped to deal with problems resulting from refugees’ previous traumatic experiences, which may also be misunderstood. Apout (2003: 4) reports from his survey:

Schools were seen as being generally inadequate in responding to students with mental health issues. Many participants feel that sufferers may be labelled as troublemakers and may even be asked to leave school, rather than being assisted to get the help they need (see also ACTA 2005:8; CMYI 2006: 15–16).

Finally, direct entry to school can mean that refugee youth have limited specialist ESL tuition or none at all. Research has documented unambiguously that inadequate initial ESL tuition results in poor outcomes for all ESL learners, not least this group. For example, from their study of predictors of ESL student outcomes in Alberta, Canada, Howard Research (2006: 7) concluded that ‘the longer the delay in identification of ESL status, the less likely students will remain in the Alberta Education system, the less likely students will complete PATs [Provincial Achievement Tests] and the lower the students’ achievement levels’. A further conclusion was that specialist ESL teaching had measurable effects: ‘ESL teachers with more training, credentials and specialisation are more effective in supporting ESL student achievement’ (Howard Research 2006: 9; see also Thomas and Collier 2002; Condelli et al 2003; McBrien 2005).

Ultimately, if a school cannot provide long-term, intensive ESL tuition, a positive environment, and appropriate and specialist in- and out-of-class support, the most frequent outcome for refugee youth, as described in both our interviews and other reports, is accelerating failure, depression, loneliness, social alienation and high dropout rates (Coventry et al 2002: 47; Miller 2005). To solve these problems, some schools have turned to AMEP providers for assistance, as discussed in Chapter 8 (section 8.5).

5.3.2 Option 2: Entry to school via an IEC

IECs provide new arrivals with specialist and intensive ESL prior to entry to school. The AMEP teachers and managers we interviewed, and other teachers and managers outside the AMEP, informed us that some IECs take refugee youth over the age of 18.
In addition to vital ESL tuition, IECs meet young people’s requirements in regard to school hours, learning alongside peers, content related to school subjects, and pathways to school.

However, as an on-arrival entry point for refugee youth with minimal/no schooling, some problems remain.

First, at the time of submitting this report, Commonwealth funding for the ESL New Arrivals Program allowed for 20 weeks’ intensive tuition delivered through IECs and ‘outposting services’ (REPP 2007: 2, 17). This was approximately half the tuition hours allowed if a young person registered for the SPP400/AMEP. State Government funding in some States extended IEC tuition for up to a year. However, we were told that some IECs were over-stretched and were exiting these students after less than six months. In May 2007 the Commonwealth doubled the funding for those eligible for the ESL New Arrivals Program (DEST 2007). When these funds flow to the States/Territories in the 2008–09 financial year, the current differences in entitlements for those in IECs and the SPP400/AMEP will presumably disappear.

Second, tuition in IECs assumes a pathway into school, to the teachers and managers we interviewed and other reports, where, like those entering school directly, refugee youth are normally placed in Year 10. All the reports we have consulted state that, even if extended to 12 months, intensive ESL tuition hours in IECs are insufficient to prepare those with minimal/no schooling for entry to this level (eg Thomas and Collier 2002; Apout 2003: 4; ACTA 2005: 6, 8; Howard Research 2006; RRAC 2006: 27; REPP 2007).

An example of the kinds of demands faced by those exiting IECs emerged when one of the research team visited a homework program for refugee youth. The researcher tutored a young woman aged about 17 who had recently exited an IEC and been placed in Year 10 in a school with more than 30 years’ experience in teaching students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The homework assignment was to discuss an historian’s stance (ie not the actual content but the approach to it) in two closely printed pages describing the currency lads and lasses in Australia’s early history. The young woman did not know that Australia had been a British convict colony and struggled with what this meant when it was explained to her. After working on the first paragraph (approximately six lines) for about 20 minutes, she was asked to describe the main idea. She indicated no comprehension of the question, much less the answer.

A number of reports recommend additional professional development for mainstream teachers on the needs of refugee youth (eg REPP 2007: 21; RRAC 2006: 11, 24). Although professional development is required, research shows that, no matter what information and how much expert support are provided to non-ESL subject teachers, they resist adjusting their teaching to assist non-fluent users of English; nor do these teachers consider making these adjustments part of their professional role, and their resistance increases in senior year levels (Arkoudis 2003; Miller and Brown 2007). Further, the adjustments attempted by non-ESL teachers are generally ineffective (Leung 2001; Creese 2002; Langman 2003). Davison’s (2006: 472) analysis of forms of collaboration between ESL and subject teachers concluded that ‘partnership between ESL and classroom teachers is neither easy nor unproblematic, even in a well-resourced elementary school in which ESL student needs are seen as paramount and teachers appear to have a relatively loose identification with their teaching areas’. How a Year 10 history teacher might accommodate the learning needs described in the previous paragraph is hard to imagine.

The RRAC report (2006: 11) summarises the difficulties faced by schools in accommodating young humanitarian entrants, whether or not they have previously attended an IEC, as follows:

- insufficient knowledge and cultural awareness of the refugee experience, the impact of trauma and what these mean for classroom behaviour and learning capacity
- inappropriate curricula and/or teaching methods for these students
- limited resources to respond to the high needs of refugee students and provide specialist education support, particularly in rural and regional areas
- issues around where to place older students, in particular those aged 16 and above, whose education levels are similar to those of much younger students
- poorly planned transitions from intensive English language centres to mainstream schools.

Some schools with large populations of refugee and immigrant students are exceptions for example, Holroyd High School in Sydney, Debney Park and Chandler Secondary Colleges in Melbourne, and Milpera State High School in Brisbane; Hoddinot 2006; RRAC 2006; REPP 2007. Holroyd High School has created bridging classes, while the Melbourne schools offer the Foundation Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), which is the first part of a Year 11–12 alternative (see section 5.3.4). The RRAC report (2006: 27) describes Milpera State High School as:

... recognised as one of the leading schools in preparing humanitarian entrants for mainstream education.
In 2006, refugee students comprised 76 per cent of the school population with only 5 percent of these students having an appropriate education for their chronological age. Milpera treats the whole student and not only provides for their education and English language needs, but also their broader settlement needs.

However, this report also concluded that:

Even Milpera is struggling to meet the more complex needs of recent humanitarian entrants and maintain the morale of staff and students in the face of educational and settlement challenges (RRAC 2006: 27).

Post-compulsory school-age youth with minimal/no schooling present major issues for schools, even those with ESL funding. According to the ACTA report (2005: 6), ESL budgets in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory have:

... been spread more thinly, thus pushing other ESL students out of the spectrum of ESL support. In NSW it is estimated that this has resulted in up to 40,000 students, identified as requiring ESL, not receiving any teaching support (see also Apout 2003: 5; CMYI 2006:11; REPP 2007: 25).

Our conclusion is that, although entry to a mainstream school via an IEC is preferable to direct entry, the preparation offered is insufficient to meet these learners’ needs in most school settings.

5.3.3 Option 3: Enrolment in the SPP400/AMEP

Like IECs, the SPP400/AMEP offers specialist and intensive ESL tuition. However, its disadvantages for refugee youth were reported by teachers and managers to be shorter daily contact hours, no school subjects, inferior academic status and younger students being in classes with older people. Lloyd (2006) documents the same concerns, together with teaching pace and style, no outside space for recreation and sport, and no provision for work experience. Further, our interviewees from the school sector believed that AMEP centres offered less support and supervision than schools. These aspects of SPP400/AMEP delivery are examined in the chapters that follow. Here we briefly note how these perceptions may or may not apply.

Within the AMEP, a crucial distinction exists between those centres running youth-specific classes and those where young people are placed in mixed-age generalist classes (see Chapter 8, section 8.2). Aside from insufficient opportunities for exercise, the AMEP youth classes we visited had overcome, in varying degrees, many of the disadvantages just listed. However, AMEP mixed-age classes are much more problematic in regard to tuition hours, class dynamics, content and pace, as the CMYI report (2006: 12) also notes: ‘Adult models such as generalist AMEP classes have been found to be less successful at engaging newly arrived young people, who need to learn among peers.’

Nevertheless, no matter whether the SPP400/AMEP is delivered through youth-specific or mixed-age classes, the program has important advantages for this group in comparison to direct entry to mainstream schools (Option 1), since it provides both intensive ESL and a supportive transition environment.

The SPP400/AMEP may also have some advantages in comparison to IECs (Option 2). In some locations, AMEP centres can be more accessible than IECs, although the converse also occurs. As already noted, at the time of finalising this report (late 2007), SPP400/AMEP tuition entitlements were double those offered in some IECs.

Finally, contrary to school sector interviewees’ perceptions, AMEP provision is committed to extensive in- and out-of-class support, at least as described to us (Chapter 6, section 6.1).

In common with IECs, the maximum ESL entitlement in the SPP400/AMEP is insufficient to equip most of these young people for subsequent entry to mainstream education and training, as we documented in Chapter 3. However, AMEP pathways preparation does not assume entry to school (although it does not preclude it) and assists clients in investigating a variety of post-AMEP options (see Chapter 10).

5.3.4 Option 4: Entry to a non-AMEP-funded youth program

In Melbourne we encountered two further programs for newly arriving refugee youth with limited/no schooling.

In the TAFE sector, NMIT offers the Young Adult Migrant English Course (YAMEC) on several campuses. In NMIT AMEP centres, youth-specific on-arrival AMEP tuition is combined with the YAMEC (see Chapters 8 and 10, sections 8.2 and the ‘YAMEC’ example box in 10.2.3). However, in another area where NMIT does not hold an AMEP contract, we were told that newly arrived refugee youth routinely forgo their AMEP entitlements and pay TAFE fees to attend this course.

At least two Melbourne schools offer a specially tailored Foundation VCAL for refugee youth. AMES Victoria
teaches an ESL component in these schools on a fee-for-service basis. Describing these arrangements, an AMEP manager explained:

Students can’t be enrolled in VCAL and an AMEP centre at the same time. So students have to give up their AMEP entitlement in order to enter the VCAL program, because the VCAL is school-based. Instead of one, in effect, cancelling out the other, if there was a way of going step by step from one to the other, then I think we’d be looking at much better outcomes for these young people.

The extra financial cost incurred by either students or schools for these program options appears undesirable to us. We also note that, in regard to the Foundation VCAL, the tuition hours delivered by ESL specialists are less than in a full-time on-arrival ESL course because ESL is just one component.

5.4 Advising newly arrived refugee youth on educational entry points

The on-arrival options taken up by newly arriving refugee youth are significantly influenced by the advice they receive and how they understand it. This section discusses these two issues in turn.

Aside from information from educational providers, the following advice sources were described to us:

- pre-embarkation advice from immigration officials and others
- community-based advisors, relatives, elders, friends and sponsors
- IHSS workers
- Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) workers, including youth workers.

The AMEP managers and teachers we interviewed reported that, from their perspectives, advice from these sources required ongoing improvement and better coordination. Their reports accord with provider and community reports and discussion at the November 2005 and November 2006 AMEP National Forums (AMEP RC 2005, 2006).

Community-based advice plays a key role in young people’s decision making, according to these reports and the teachers and managers we interviewed, but can reflect misperceptions. Regarding church groups and other community sponsors, an AMEP advisor/counsellor said, ‘They bring people into the country with the best intentions but they don’t really understand our system’. Regarding community advisors, another counsellor explained:

Often the support workers themselves are recent arrivals who also don’t know what the pathways are. So we need to get the support workers working with the young person, so they can help them make the best choice. I think that’s probably critical, because at the moment some of the support workers think it’s either school or nothing. They’re saying they must go to school.

Along these lines, one AMEP manager reported that a community-based advisor who had interpreted for her over a long period had subsequently confessed to her that, in his early days, he deliberately did not translate her advice regarding the AMEP but instead told young people to go to school.

In contrast, well-briefed community-based advisors can direct young people to options that are appropriate for their needs. Thus, for example, cooperation between Sudanese liaison officers employed by TELLS and in schools led to the creation of five further AMEP youth classes in Brisbane in 2007, with another planned for the beginning of 2008 (Chapter 8, section 8.2).

Managers and teachers identified inadequacies in advice from IHSS and MRC workers. An experienced youth worker explained that the complexities of SPP400/AMEP eligibility – ‘how all of this 16–18 year old stuff works and all that sort of stuff’ (see Chapter 2, section 2.7) – inclined him and his colleagues to recommend the school system simply because it was easier.

Even well-informed advice may not be understood. Several speakers from African communities at the November 2006 AMEP National Forum stressed that the trauma preceding and accompanying a refugee’s arrival in Australia can make absorbing information difficult. Exemplifying this, the youth worker mentioned above said:

I go to an IEC, and I speak to them very slowly and I have the interpreter there with me. Now at the end of the class I say, ‘Has anyone here not understood what I’ve said?’ I say, ‘If you don’t understand, I’d like you to ask me now. Or if you’re scared to ask me, please don’t be, ring me up, come and drop in the centre, whatever you want or I’ll come back.’ Then they come into the centre and say, ‘Oh look, you said this and we thought you were providing an employment options program.’ One girl came to me and said, ‘I thought you could give me a job.’ I said I never said that but her interpretation of that was that, and even with an interpreter translating it, it came across that way, but I didn’t realise that.
A focus group of teachers and managers elaborated on how young people are ill-equipped to understand the significance of the choice between the AMEP and school:

P1: Young people need options, but these options may be too difficult for them to deal with at this point in time. So you might say to them, ‘Go to an IEC.’ ‘Well, what is that?’ or ‘What does that mean to me?’ ... They may think, ‘Hold on a minute, I’m a fish out of water as it is, and now I’m even more of a fish out of water’ ... And they’re like, ‘How do I get to where I need to be if I’ve been in the wrong program?’

P2: It’s overload.

P3: It is total overload, they **cannot** take that information in.

P4: Not within the first three months, if that’s the cut-off point [for getting into the AMEP].

P2: It’s too much.

P3: There’s too much and the whole kind of structuring of it is they’re expecting far more than can be given by any provider to any person coming from a war-torn, dreadful situation, who is also a youth.

P4: In some cases, it’s the least of their worries.

As is common among many people indicating that advice has not been understood is difficult – especially when they feel vulnerable and even more so when they are young. The youth worker illustrated this point:

I say to them, ‘What did you do with your IHSS caseworker?’ ‘Oh, they took us to get a Medicare card, blah blah blah, all this sort of stuff.’ But for them the easy response was to say, ‘Yes, I understand’, when really they didn’t, because they were scared to say no. So when they come to me and I say, ‘Don’t you understand what that means?’ ‘Well, not really because I felt that I had to say yes.’

Speakers from African community groups at the November 2006 AMEP National Forum particularly stressed the importance of pre-embarkation advice. The strengthening of the Australian Cultural Orientation Program is an important step towards improving this information (DIMA 2006b). It appeared to us that scope exists for closer collaboration and exchanges of ideas between AMEP providers and those involved in pre-embarkation advice. Some teachers we interviewed suggested providing them with routine access to pre-embarkation material to facilitate continuity in lesson content. The conference speakers and teacher interviewees recommended that all advice should be carefully staged, frequently repeated, and should not rely predominantly on written material but should be conveyed verbally, visually and, even better, dramatically through stories, plays and different media, especially the radio. Advice on pathways should include specific examples of pay rates in different occupations. Mentor schemes for refugee youth were also strongly recommended by participants in our workshop at the 2006 AMEP National Conference; such schemes provide effective guidance, including in choosing an initial pathway.

The teachers and managers we interviewed were confident that good advice, coupled with actual experience, paid dividends. As one teacher said:

Explaining to people in their community that TAFE is valid, when it has no credibility, is hard. But they soon see once they’re here, that the pathways that are offered with the programs that you’ve got access to, of course it’s valid.

In later chapters, we describe the provision of advice within the SPP400/AMEP (Chapters 7 and 10, sections 7.1 and 10.2.1).

### 5.5 The division between the AMEP and the school sector

The structural and funding division between the AMEP and the school sector emerged in this project as a factor impeding optimal utilisation of on-arrival options by refugee youth. While this division is not open to change, documenting its effects offers a basis for countering some undesirable effects.

An AMEP manager described this division and its accompanying assumptions as generating a ‘huge blind spot’:

There’s a lack of knowledge of the overall system, there’s a lack of knowledge of what TAFE or ACE [Adult and Community Education] actually do provide, also a reluctance to go outside what’s perceived as mainstream – in this case, school is seen as a mainstream post-Language Centre and TAFE is not. There’s still a huge debate going on around the issue of refugee youth pathways ... [in] groups like the Settlement Planning Committee and the numerous groups that work on a regional basis, who grapple purely with what schools can do – what can schools do with refugee young people with disrupted education? The debate is confined to those parameters. It doesn’t go into what is available through the different sectors, mapping what’s available and what would be very productive positive pathways for these young people. There’s a huge blind spot.

Reports on refugee youth issues can themselves manifest the ‘blind spot’ that this interviewee described.
Obviously, reports commissioned from within the school sector focus on the problems faced by schools. However, their discussion and recommendations can also assume that these problems must be solved more or less exclusively within schools. Some other reports and research generated from outside the school sector contain similar assumptions (for example, Wilkinson 2002; Apout 2003; CMYI and SELLEN 2004; Cassity and Gow 2005; McBrien 2005; Howard Research 2006; African Think Tank Inc 2007). These reports also assume that those aged 18 and over belong in the adult/VET system, while younger ones belong in schools.

Other reports (no matter what sector is their focus) imply that this assumption may not yield optimal outcomes for either refugee youth or schools (eg CMYI 2006; RRAC 2006: 9). The ACTA report (2005: 8) notes that ‘in the 16–24 age group, it is not always clear which agency is the best equipped to serve the needs of refugees, particularly those with disrupted schooling’.

Given this lack of clarity, it seems particularly undesirable that the division between the AMEP and the school sector should lock newly arriving refugee youth into decisions about their education soon after their arrival in Australia. The following point made by an AMEP teacher encapsulates this argument:

It’s the age thing. That’s absolutely critical. I think it’s got to be very, very flexible, so that they can move in and out of that school–AMEP system. Because they often go to school thinking that’d be great, and then they realise they’re three feet taller than anybody else in the school and they’re ten years older than a lot of the kids in the school, and they think, ‘What am I doing here? I feel ridiculous.’ And they want to get out. Or the opposite – they’ll go to an [AMEP] class which is full of old people, and their mother might be in the class, and their father might be in the class, and they go, ‘Whoa, I don’t want to be part of this. I want to get into the school system.’ So there’s got to be all of that flexibility where they can move in and out. They’ve got to be allowed to make mistakes, and learn from them. [And not be held to a] five minute interview: ‘Do you want to go into this class or do you want to go into the school?’

This call for flexibility is echoed in other reports on refugee youth (eg CMYI 2006; RYPT Working Group 2005).

The failure, as described by the earlier interviewee, ‘to go into what is available through the different sectors, mapping what's available and what would be very productive positive pathways for these young people’, can also be seen in other policy decisions. Thus, as we have indicated, AMEP managers reported that school principals in several State and regional jurisdictions will not provide the documentation that would allow 16 and 17 year olds to register in the SPP400/AMEP, irrespective of a school’s ability to provide specialist support.

System-based inflexibilities also appear to be preventing collaborative projects between AMEP providers and the school sector. In one example described to us, a centre attempted to develop a homework program with local schools that lacked ESL support but could not proceed. Local and international research has testified to the benefits of such programs (REPP 2007: 27–30). According to the manager:

We tried to have our teachers use AMEP hours to do tutorial [namely, homework] support to help these young girls. They’re struggling but we can’t. So we would definitely recommend that AMEP hours be used to support these young kids in isolated areas.

Another manager described how funding streams had disallowed work with a local IEC on pathways:

If there had been the opportunity to work with English Language Centres while students were still in the Language Centres, there would have been an increased capacity to do settlement-focused work around planning their future pathways. As things are at the moment, they’re oriented towards secondary school. And it’s very difficult for them to make a choice other than to go into a senior secondary college. The curriculum there [in the senior secondary college] is not really an appropriate pathway immediately after the Language Centre. So working together, there would have been opportunities to broaden the awareness of educational options.

In a focus group of teachers and managers, the barrier to cooperation with the school sector was identified as follows:

P1: I think it’s the funding, I think everybody’s fighting for survival.

P2: More user choice, more scramble for funding.

P3: The way I see it is that if there are turf wars which make communication and dialogue difficult, then it will be a huge difficulty for these young people who are within the system to even be able to know what to do.

An example of ‘turf wars’ was described to a research team member at an AMEP conference by an AMEP manager from a rural area. She described how she had approached the local high school, which had no ESL provision, to join in bidding for special funding for after-class activities for refugee youth but was rebuffed on the grounds that the State’s education department claimed responsibility for all refugee youth up to the age of
25. At the same conference, an AMEP manager from another State recounted that the education department there was requesting reallocation of SPP400 funds to the school system.

Several AMEP managers described refusals by schools and IECs to share information about visa details, student numbers and ages, and English language assessments. Similarly, another manager described how some church groups direct those they sponsor to their own schools rather than considering how these students’ needs might best be met:

One group will bring in a certain number, and another group will bring in a certain number. The way the system works is, the more migrant students that you have in one school the more money that school will get, so they’ll ultimately get a full-time employee as an ESL teacher. However, the first people will be inclined to send their refugees to their school, and the other people will be inclined to send them to their school. So then it becomes totally fragmented and no student is really benefiting.

We also learned that some AMEP providers are seen in the school sector as overly entrepreneurial in recruiting younger clients yet failing to provide them with sporting activities, counselling, or effective assistance in moving to further education and training.

In contrast, cooperation can benefit young people and providers in both sectors. A manager in one location told us that the local DEST (now DEEWR) office was crucial to this cooperation. As indicated in the previous section, community advisors can also play a key role in building bridges between sectors. Asked what this project should recommend, several managers and teachers stated that facilitating cooperation between education sectors and among providers would be their top priority (see also Coventry et al 2002; ACTA 2005; RYPT Working Group 2005; CMYI 2006; REPP 2007). One manager said that achieving this cooperation takes ‘a great deal of head-banging’. Another manager summed up the issue:

When we’ve got extraordinary circumstances in the backgrounds of the refugees that we’re bringing in, we need to look at the needs of young people. No one sector, as most sectors are finding out, can adequately provide for them. It is that combination of sectors that works well. So the school, TAFE and language centre sectors work well when they’re allowed to work in combination and in partnership.

Numerous reports support our interviewees’ pleas for policy-making to encourage and support collaborative work across different sectors in meeting refugee youth needs. In 2002, a report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme proposed ‘a cross portfolio perspective’ within the context of current strategies to encourage ‘the different tiers of government and community sectors to work together in the interests of people with refugee experiences’ (Coventry et al 2002: 2, 3). The first recommendation was:

That a national young refugee support policy be developed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with other stakeholder State and Federal departments.

Five years later, the RRAC report (2006: 10) stated that:

Many of the needs of young humanitarian entrants cut across the responsibilities of portfolios and jurisdictions and a whole-of-government approach to address these needs would be invaluable.

In the interim, the ACTA report (2005: 4) recommended:

The establishment, in the first instance, of a national strategic response that would allow those working in the field of refugee education and resettlement, across all sectors, to meet, identify their common challenges and share the resources, programs and policies that individuals, institutions and departments around the country have already begun developing to meet those challenges (emphasis in the original).

The RYPT Working Group report (2005: 7) called for:

collaborative approaches to service delivery to ensure that young people make successful transitions between providers and do not fall out of pathways altogether.

The CMYI (2006: 9) also concluded:

Given the complexity of settlement and support needs, and the interactions between developmental, social and education age, it is vital that youth services maintain more flexibility to provide support for 18 to 24 year olds. This will require an understanding from funding bodies that a number of young people who are newly arrived still require youth-specific supports due to their complex needs.

These recommendations are in accord with longstanding government policy for cross-sectoral approaches to settlement (and other) issues. Thus, the 2006 National framework for settlement planning (DIMA 2006c) aims to:

provide a more coordinated approach to settlement planning at a national level, thus improving the ability of governments, service providers, community organisations and other settlement stakeholders to plan for the arrival and settlement of new entrants.
Our recommendation 14 (Chapter 11, section 11.5.4) offers a practical means of implementing these now well-recognised goals of promoting cross-sectoral collaboration.

5.6 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

The crucial consideration in on-arrival program options for post-compulsory school-age refugee youth is the choice between enrolling in the school sector or the SPP400/AMEP. This choice determines the nature and extent of access to intensive on-arrival ESL tuition and helps set the course for ongoing pathways. Improving the content, mode and staging of advice to humanitarian entrants, including these young people and their parents/guardians, is clearly an ongoing project.

The statistical data to which this project had access indicates that almost all eligible humanitarian entrants over 18 and a small proportion of 16 and 17 year olds register for the SPP400. However, our interviews and other reports suggest that these data may underestimate the numbers of those aged 18 and over in schools. Whatever the case, the 2004 CMYI and SELLEN report (2004: 27) captures the situation that was uniformly reported in our interviews and the research cited in this chapter:

The consensus seems to be that the system is not set up to adequately cater for certain groups of new arrivals [namely, refugee youth with minimal/no previous schooling] and the outcome of this failure is largely being played out in secondary schools in terms of low retention rates and the future prospects of young refugees finding meaningful employment.

Likewise, the RRAC report (2006: 9) states that:

In particular, humanitarian entrants aged 16 and above with significantly disrupted learning are at risk of falling through the gaps and cannot easily be accommodated within the school system. More appropriate educational pathways could be developed that meet the needs of this vulnerable client group.

The description of young people registered for the SPP400 presented in Part 2 of this report and the material documented in this chapter indicate these pathways must take account of at least the following:

- refugee youth and their communities’ perceptions of what constitutes ‘normal’ schooling (notably, hours, class sizes, teaching content, classroom dynamics, pathways to worthwhile employment)
- ensuring access to intensive, prolonged and specialist ESL, literacy and learning-how-to-learn tuition
- providing a supportive, non-stigmatising learning environment and adequate in- and out-of-class support.

The SPP400/AMEP is one educational entry point for this group. Its mission is to target the needs described in this and previous chapters, a mission that allows considerable flexibility in developing specifically targeted program options. In the following chapters, we report on these options and how they take account of these concerns.
Chapter 6

Program delivery: Pastoral support

Appropriate and adequate pastoral support is critical to the effective delivery of the SPP400/AMEP to refugee youth with minimal/no schooling, as a manager's comment makes clear:

It's exhausting working in this area. As educators, you expect your group to be in front of you. But for these young kids, there's a whole lot of pitfalls just getting them in front of you and keeping them there ... The process is not just one where you see them in the daytime and then say goodbye. It's very full.

Pastoral support in the SPP400/AMEP attempts, in one way or another, as appropriate and feasible, to find ways around or out of the 'pitfalls' that can prevent learners from utilising their learning entitlements, realising their educational potential and, failing all else, to sustain and encourage them in enduring the difficulties they face. This support can encompass administrative, material, financial, legal, emotional, psychological, health, hygiene, inter-personal, aspirational, pathway and other issues. It occurs formally and informally in and beyond the classroom, and can involve anyone in a centre from frontline office staff to teachers, counsellors and managers. As examples in this chapter indicate, pastoral support may be given directly by AMEP personnel but they also play a key role in locating appropriate assistance elsewhere and assisting young people to access it.

Using material drawn mainly from our interviews, this chapter outlines how pastoral support forms part of the SPP400/AMEP and how this program connects to a wider network of support. A concurrent AMEP Research Centre project has specifically investigated the role of counsellors/learning advisors (McPherson 2006).

6.1 In-house pastoral support: AMEP managers, counsellors/advisors and teachers

AMEP centre personnel are most often the first point of contact, and therefore a key referring-on point for clients in difficulty, including young people. Counsellors/advisors play a specialist role but managers and teachers also contribute in different and important ways. A manager explained:

Other organisations are not seeing them on a day-to-day basis but that doesn't help a young person who has an immediate problem that needs resolving there and then. These problems can become quite crushing in a young person's life ... If we didn't look after those young people in all those extended situations, I really don't know what would happen to them.

This comment reflects not simply the demand for pastoral support but, equally significantly, the psychological and emotional pressure that impels AMEP staff in these situations. These demands also take their toll on AMEP personnel.

Young people's difficulties tend to present as crises. A manager explained:

If the young person is falling asleep during class, once you start to question why, you find out that the young person has nowhere to live once they leave the classroom. Then of course because they're with you, you can't send them away to nothing. You try to get something for them. You put them on a list in a whole variety of places and try to get something for them and agitate for them and be more proactive.

Participants in a manager and teacher focus group gave other examples:

P1: We had a young man whose uncle abandoned him and our manager went and literally picked him off the street and brought him in.

P2: And I've had a call from somebody at [name] with the same problem as well.

Another manager reported ‘instances when we’ve had to find baby clothes and all the rest of it’ for young girls who had given birth during their time at the centre. Domestic violence was reported as a concern, which requires skill and time in assisting people to gain appropriate help. We were also told of traumatic or violent incidents that occasionally erupt in centres.

Through daily classroom interaction, a teacher may become the only or most trusted adult mentor for these young people, according to several managers and teachers. One teacher explained that those who’ve experienced trauma ‘don’t trust very easily’. Once established, this trust can be drawn upon long after the student has left the centre. Describing a particularly sensitive family and legal problem about which a student contacted her six years after leaving her class, a teacher observed, ‘It can take a couple of years for them to
get the courage and the trust to tell you some of these things’.

This knowledge and trust result in teachers being routinely called on to assist young people in dealing with various authorities, including Centrelink and the justice system. One teacher interviewed had been asked to help a young man and woman, who were unrelated and had not met previously but who had been placed in a townhouse together on the basis of having the same surname. Other recent or current examples reported to us in interviews entailed teachers appearing as character witnesses in court cases involving assault, accumulated fines (some as large as $3000) for travelling on public transport without a ticket (frequent in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane) and driving without a licence (see also CMYI 2006: 18).

Teachers and managers made two main recommendations regarding the pastoral component of programs to assist humanitarian entrants, including those registered for the SPP400. First, on the grounds that counsellors’ workloads are excessive, it was argued that benchmarks based on actual demands for pastoral support are required. Second, more debriefing sessions and professional development would assist AMEP personnel in dealing with referrals and complex cross-cultural issues, sensitive issues that arise in the classroom, occasional violence and aggression, and students’ and AMEP personnel’s own reactions to trauma. One provider, TELLS in Queensland, reported that they had already implemented a program to help staff deal with ‘vicarious trauma’.

The following manager’s comment sums up a frequently expressed view:

The learning in the classroom is one thing but all of those surrounding issues that you need to support young people are very difficult for an organisation that’s only funded really for educational provision. We have to put in a whole range of other supports. The pastoral care issues with this group are immense.

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<th>Example – Demands for pastoral care</th>
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An AMEP centre manager gave the following example, which, she said, was one of many ‘repeated over and over again in a variety of scenarios’.

An 18-year-old female had ‘been caught in an ongoing refugee situation, transiting from one country to another’. She had no English, no previous education, and no family in Australia. She had had a guardian at one stage but was on her own when she came to the centre. She had nowhere to live and no friends. The centre found a unit for her. Now living ‘completely isolated’, she needed a hospital procedure. The centre manager arranged it with the hospital, which required the young woman to be there at 7.30 am. She had no means of getting there, so the manager arranged a taxi voucher for her.

The hospital had also requested that someone collect the young woman after the procedure. The manager had contacted the young woman’s social worker but, since the latter was already fully committed, the manager agreed to collect her. As they left the hospital, the young woman fainted. She had been required to fast from the previous night; after the procedure she’d been offered a ham sandwich, which she refused because she was a Muslim.

Having finally arrived home, the manager found that the young woman had no food. So the manager went out and shopped for her.

The hospital had also said that the young woman should not be left alone on the night following the procedure. The manager had asked the hospital if they would keep the young woman in if she couldn’t find anyone to look after her but:

they refused to take any responsibility whatsoever and just said ‘No, it’s your responsibility’. I said ‘No, we’re an English language organisation, not a hospital’. They just washed their hands of it.

Consequently, the manager arranged for someone to stay overnight. The manager concluded, ‘It’s easy to wash your hands if someone’s not sitting next to you. But I could hardly leave her stranded.’
6.2 Infrastructure and networks

Effective provision for those registered for the SPP400 requires that AMEP providers work closely with others who make up the overall infrastructure and support networks for refugee youth. Other agencies’ effectiveness in carrying out their particular roles also has direct implications for the way in which AMEP providers can and do deliver their own programs.

The centrepiece of support for newly arriving refugees in DIAC’s Settlement Services program is the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) (DIAC 2007b). Our interviews revealed three main ways in which the work of IHSS providers impacts on the delivery of the SPP400/AMEP.

First, IHSS providers are the main stepping stone for newly arrived refugee youth in accessing on-arrival ESL tuition. They advise new arrivals on accessing ESL tuition and education, and accompany them when they register in an AMEP centre, IEC or a school. Their advice is therefore critical in regard to the issues raised in Chapter 5.

Second, IHSS providers are the designated source of overall settlement support for new arrivals. The IHSS mission is to facilitate access to mainstream services rather than to insulate new arrivals from the wider community but, in the initial stages, clients should ‘perceive the IHSS to be one system, even if services are provided by different agencies and in different locations’ (DIMIA 2003: 174). IHSS assistance is normally available in the first six months after arrival but can be extended ‘for particularly vulnerable clients with special needs’ (DIMIA 2003: 169). The ability of AMEP centres to access IHSS support for clients has a direct bearing on the extent to which centre personnel must take on pastoral issues.

At the time of finalising this report (late 2007), providers were still reporting to us that they were continuing, at least partly, to organise or provide settlement-related support for clients. The reasons given in our interviews for involvement in such matters as health, housing and domestic violence were that IHSS case loads were overstretched, IHSS workers could not be accessed at short notice, clients’ entitlements had run out or sponsors had not accessed the IHSS. A major issue for both centre personnel and young people was continuity. One centre manager stated that problems ‘don’t appear to be dealt with consistently by anyone at all’. Managers and teachers stated that refugee youth with limited/no schooling probably required a minimum of two years of continuous and individualised professional counselling from specialist youth workers. The October 2006 DIMA discussion paper, Measures to improve settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants (DIMA 2006b), described a proposed hotline and Youth Support Counsellors. The 2007 Budget increased funding for more extended IHSS casework for those in special need, including young people (DIAC 2007a). These initiatives should assist in addressing providers’ concerns.

Third, IHSS workers can provide new arrivals with invaluable hands-on assistance that both complements and lessens the need for AMEP teaching of ‘survival’ topics (Chapter 9, section 9.1). A manager gave the following example:

Some of the young ones live by themselves and some share a house. If they’re new arrivals, often there’s a day when [name of IHSS contract holder] will take them shopping. They have to learn how to shop, they have to learn how to budget, they have to learn how to cook, how to prepare food. And they’ll often have another day where they’ll do their Centrelink type things, their banking. Or they’ve got to learn how to clean a house. One of the things that’s going to come, if they’re in this new support contract, they’re going to manage the rental and they will lead them through house inspections. A lot of the families fail on their house inspections, and they’re always losing their accommodation. There’s this huge turnover of their accommodation. So I think under the new contract, if they have intensive support, they’ll have enough to keep them occupied in learning to manage a house – how to change a light bulb, how to turn on an oven, remembering to turn it off … They’re going to cluster the houses too; they’re going to get three or four near each other in townhouses or flats or something.

Managers and teachers in some centres described good cooperation between themselves and IHSS providers. However, others felt that greater efficiencies for both themselves and other agencies would result if their experiences in providing pastoral support were better acknowledged and drawn upon. Cooperation was reported as minimal in some locations, particularly (but not only) where another AMEP provider held the IHSS contract. The 2003 Review also reported that some stakeholders argued that competitive tendering ‘inhibits cooperation and information sharing between providers’ (DIMIA 2003: 174).

Managers and teachers named a plethora of groups and organisations, aside from the IHSS, on whom they called for assistance and with whom they collaborated in activities and support for clients, including young people: MRCs, torture and trauma counselling agencies, State-funded social workers, Citizens’ Advice Bureaus, Local Learning and Employment Networks, State Settlement Planning Committees, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) in Victoria, some city councils (notably Dandenong and Broadmeadows
in Victoria), the Sudanese Community Association of Australia, local church groups, La Mama Theatre (Melbourne), the University of Western Sydney and, in one case, the local IEC. In Tasmania individual volunteers play a crucial role. These organisational and individual supports vary greatly from one place to another. They depend on different State and local council initiatives, whether specific organisations exist or are active in their locality, and, most importantly, individual initiative, energy and commitment.

Utilising networks is not a one-way street. It requires AMEP personnel to participate and initiate activities that go beyond supposedly ‘normal’ provision. For example, one centre manager had facilitated talks between Sudanese elders and the Victoria Police Multicultural Advisory Unit towards establishing community education links.

The need for liaison and coordination in pastoral support for refugee youth has been consistently advocated in reports on this group (ACTA 2005; RYPT Working Group 2005; REPP 2007). Teachers and managers described how discovering, creating, negotiating and maintaining networks, especially those that can assist young people, takes time. A manager commented that this work took ‘time away from our program and our funding doesn’t cover this time’.

6.3 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

Effective SPP400/AMEP delivery depends on in-centre support, appropriate referrals, and work to locate and cultivate outside youth support networks. Other reports state that the key to preventing problems from becoming entrenched or escalating into crises is early intervention (eg DIMIA 2003: 321; CMYI 2006: 9–10). No matter what other agencies exist, our interviews make clear that AMEP providers are inevitably involved in pastoral support for those registered for the SPP400/AMEP because of teachers’ daily contact with this group and the trust this builds.

Our interviews revealed the tension between the AMEP’s teaching role and the pastoral demands that must be met in order to carry out this role. In our view, this tension is inevitable, since pastoral demands are ultimately open-ended in most situations. Our interviewees felt that this aspect of their work required greater acknowledgement and more substantive support.
Chapter 7

Program delivery: Placement procedures, class hours and size

Crucial elements in the delivery of any educational program are its procedures for accepting students into programs and allocating them to classes, timetabling and class sizes. These elements of SPP400/AMEP delivery are the focus of this chapter.

7.1 Determining eligibility and placement in classes

When prospective clients come to an AMEP centre, their eligibility for tuition is first determined and, if eligible, their English proficiency is assessed in order to place them in classes (Chapter 3, section 3.1.2). Advice is also usually provided on post-AMEP educational, training and employment pathways.

Procedures for assessing eligibility and English proficiency varied slightly in our data set. In some centres, front office receptionists (using interpreters as necessary) determined eligibility, based on a routine check of visa category, recorded age and years of schooling. In other centres, centre-based learning advisors/counsellors or centre managers combined both eligibility and English assessment in the one interview. One provider seconded experienced staff from their various local centres, who then specialised for a term or longer in interviewing prospective clients at a central metropolitan centre or at key outer suburban and rural centres. In some centres with special youth classes, the class teacher had responsibility for interviewing those aged 16–24. All the AMEP providers we interviewed had training programs for assessors. Those we interviewed who were involved in eligibility and English assessments had considerable expertise in this area.

In regard to SPP400 eligibility, more than routine checks are essential. As already indicated (Chapter 2, section 2.2), teachers and managers reported that self-reporting on both age and years of schooling cannot be taken at face value (see also CMYI 2006: 19–20; RRAC 2006:7), although in one location AMEP personnel appeared unaware of this issue. Providers gave the following reasons for this unreliability: young people’s lack of knowledge of their age, overseas officers’ routine assignments of birth dates as 1 January in any one year, newcomers’ differing perceptions regarding the advantages of overstating or understating age and years of schooling, and different perceptions of educational standards. Teachers in two different metropolitan centres we visited reported that they believed there were students in classes who had inflated their years of schooling and consequently had not been given the extra 400 tuition hours.

Misreported ages can have serious ramifications for young people, which AMEP personnel need to understand, not least because they may become involved. The CMYI report (2006:19) states:

Many families do not realise the impact of this decision [in regard to stating age] on a young person in terms of the disruption to their settlement, their confusion in relating to peers, the pressure to maintain the secret, and the degree to which it affects harmonious family relations ... Workers are often in the difficult position of seeking to advocate for the young person to have their official age changed while minimising the potential impact on the family. Others have reported serious conflicts in relation to a young person’s access to support and services based on age discrepancy issues.

At the November 2005 AMEP National Forum and in later interviews, it emerged that at least some AMEP staff in rural centres would welcome guidance in assessing years of schooling. However, in response to a suggestion that best practice guidelines for interviews could be shared, some managers stated that interview techniques were ‘commercial in-confidence’. A manager we interviewed said:

We could do this if we are resourced to do it properly. Currently we’re being asked to share a range of techniques from our programs which are not resourced – we can’t keep doing this.

As indicated in Chapter 4 (section 4.5), some young people are unhappy with their assessments. Some then attempt to enrol directly in mainstream courses in TAFE institutes or universities. One manager reported receiving telephone calls from a neighbouring tertiary institution where administrative staff were being overwhelmed by African applicants with insufficient literacy to complete the application forms. According to one teacher, these people are ‘better going out into the big bad world of uni or TAFE and discovering they can’t cope and then coming back’. Others described rejection by other institutions, or being accepted into a course and then failing, as causes of alienation and depression. One teacher described women’s concerns about husbands and sons who then ‘sit at home, doing nothing except creating problems for the rest of the family’. One manager reported that a common professional development request is for ways of handling aggression in interviews.
Examples – Issues in assessment and placement interviews

The following examples were reported in our interviews.

Case 1
A young Sudanese male came to an AMEP centre for assessment and placement in a class. He was with his family and was the only male. The interviewer sensed that he was the head of the family. She assessed him as requiring a CSWE I class, which was the same level as his sister. He was ‘absolutely devastated’. He left the room, then returned and contested the assessment, claiming that his English was far better than his sister’s. The interviewer agreed but explained that she’d put him in CSWE I, Phase 2, whereas his sister was in CSWE I, Phase 1, but he didn’t understand and was focused on being assessed at this low level. He came back a second time. He proposed that he should not start class for a couple of weeks and would do everything that the interviewer had recommended (eg listening to television, reading), ‘as long as you put me in CSWE II’. So the interviewer agreed that he could go into a CSWE II class if, when classes started, he could do certain things, which she explained. So ‘he went away happy’.

Case 2
Two Liberian students, a mother and daughter, were new arrivals. The interviewer assessed their English as generally good but needing ‘some brushing up’. They couldn’t understand why they weren’t placed in a CSWE IV class. However, they accepted their placement and progressed to the third phase of CSWE III. One stayed on longer for a fourth class. By this time, they were telling others in the community and their class that initially they’d thought that their English was good and the teachers were just trying to hold them back. However, they now recognised the difference between their variety of English and Australian English, and if they wanted to pursue their goals, they had to learn another way of doing it. Pursuing this goal took about a year. The teacher commented, ‘And this was women who, by and large, are used to stepping down and admitting failure, in contrast to men from that society where a man can’t admit a mistake publicly’.

7.2 Timetabling class hours

This section reports the data from our interviews regarding DIAC guidelines on tuition hours, young people’s preferences, current provider practices and attendance issues.

As described in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), the SPP400 extended the tuition hours offered through the SPP100 but retained existing guidelines, which were supported by a prior evaluation (Frain 1998). The guidelines specified no more than 15 hours of tuition per week in order to allow clients time for various health, counselling and settlement support appointments, and to accommodate concentration problems resulting from a lack of educational experience and pre-migration trauma.

Managers informed us that, following provider feedback to DIMA, the limit on hours for SPP400 registrants had been relaxed to allow for the normal AMEP 20 contact hours per week. With one exception, managers and teachers welcomed this move. They stated that, although fewer hours might suit older adult refugees, limited hours were inappropriate for young people, even those with no previous education. As one teacher said, ‘Some youth are so keen. They don’t want to be here [just] from 9 till 1, better from 9 till 4.’ Another teacher said of her pre-CSWE class, ‘I think if you said to them “Do you want more?”, they’d always go “Yes!”’ Teachers reported that maintaining concentration was best handled by pacing and varying activities (Chapter 9, section 9.1). The majority of young people in our focus groups bore out these reports, stating that they would prefer five days per week with some also asking for hours from 9am to 3pm.

Teachers explained this preference in terms of young people’s perceptions of what constitutes ‘proper’ schooling (Chapter 5, section 5.2). For example, one teacher said:

A lot of these kids want to feel like they’re in school. And they know school hours are from 9 till 3. They want to be able to say to their friends that they go to school. And that’s their expectation of school – that they go from 9 till 3.

Another teacher said:

A lot of these young people want something that resembles a secondary school structure, just as a way of connecting with peers not just in the AMEP but in the wider community. They’re looking for something that occupies most of their day. They’re happy to put that time in.
Attending classes is central to avoiding depression, according to the teachers we interviewed. One teacher explained:

They love school, they love the interaction. Even if they’re struggling with depression and trauma, somehow it helps them to survive to be interacting with other people. For a lot of them, it’s the isolation that’s really hard, so to come to school is a connection and just some stimulation as well. Because they’re young they do have more energy, even though of course you have less energy if you’re traumatised, but they do have more energy and need some sort of outlet for it. They hate holidays. They ask what other classes they can do during the holidays. They say ‘It’s so boring at home and lonely at home.’ There’s just that hunger to be involved in something. I think coming to classes is part of hope because they’re going about their new life and equipping themselves for their new life.

Nevertheless, it was also pointed out that not all young people want a full school day. One manager explained that those with families, especially young mothers, may opt for fewer hours. Several teachers pointed out that classes starting at 9am were also said to disadvantage mothers (including young ones), who generally bear the responsibility for taking children to school and collecting them afterwards (see also Dumenden 2007).

Fewer hours were also said to assist those in employment. One manager said some young men prefer to have four morning classes of four hours per week, which allows them to hold down a part-time job. Part-time classes are also important for this group, and some rural meatworkers attend class on Sunday mornings.

In one centre we visited, clients could choose the number of weekly tuition hours for which they enrol, although this flexibility was said to impact negatively on lesson continuity. Aside from some youth classes, equivalent weekly contact hours to those available in schools appear to be rare in AMEP centres. Some providers supplement classes with after-class options, such as special units (eg in maths, computers or job search), supervised access to the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) and occasionally other activities (Chapter 9, section 9.3). One manager reported that young people stayed in the centre’s ILC until it closed at 5 pm and wanted it open longer.

Some centres do not offer these options. The reasons were a lack of rooms, multiple shifts and/or, for some in TAFE institutes, the host institute’s procedures regarding library/computer access. In some centres at the time of our interviews, attendance was restricted to three days per week (five hours per day), which, we were told, followed from increasing childcare costs, which providers bear. (Some childcare providers charge for a full day, no matter what hours are utilised, making it more cost effective for AMEP providers to run classes for longer hours over fewer days.) In response to what were said to be SPP guidelines, one institution had cut back class hours for students registered for both the SPP100 and 400 to two days per week (five hours per day), which had resulted in a student protest. A teacher reported:

A lot of [SPP] students don’t want just ten hours per week. They like coming here. It’s a good routine for them. The SPP students were pretty shocked that they were only getting ten hours.

Another option regarding tuition hours at an AMEP centre in Hobart was described at the November 2006 AMEP National Forum and 2007 AMEP National Conference (Ebsworth 2006, 2007). A special program (open to younger and older clients) consists of AMEP class hours on Mondays and Thursdays, with work experience on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (for further details see the ‘Incorporating work experience’ example box in Chapter 10, section 10.2.3).

In regard to attendance, reports varied. Although young people’s motivation is high, regular attendance does not always follow. One teacher said that about a quarter of her younger students had difficulties with attendance but the rest came every day without fail. Another said, ‘They’re not good attendees and they won’t come every day. If you’ve got 20 [young people] enrolled, you might get 12.’ Another said, ‘With youth, you have to do a lot of work on attendance. You can never let up.’ Other teachers reported no major difficulties with attendance.

The reasons given for attendance problems also varied. Young women can be absent because of their responsibilities in caring for sick children (their own or siblings) or in getting children to and from childcare. One teacher gave an example of a young woman aged 18 who headed a family of three school-aged siblings who successively caught the measles, leading to an absence of more than six weeks. However, another manager reported that males were more likely to be absent:

There’s a lot of coming and going, but if I can just speak in general, they’re very motivated, they want to learn. Just the fact that they’re coming to holiday classes shows their motivation. But we do have a lot of the younger people, especially the young men, who come for a few days and then wander off and maybe go and work and then come back and come for another few days. So there’s a lot of that disengagement, if you like, especially with the younger men, between 17 or 18 and 25.
Irregular attendance can result from previous trauma, which, according to several teachers, manifests itself in disrupted sleeping patterns – either insomnia or excessive sleeping or a combination of the two – making morning classes particularly problematic. For example, one teacher said: ‘A lot of them have nightmares. They don’t sleep well. They have headaches’. Another teacher said:

They sleep a lot. A lot have problems sleeping at night so they stay up watching TV. So they have headaches. They sleep in the morning because they’ve been up all night unable to sleep. That is a real issue for them.

Poor attendance can itself lessen young people’s motivation or their ability to keep up with lessons. One teacher stated, ‘They don’t understand the importance of it – that whole effect of cumulative absenteeism, when they slip behind and miss bits’.

The original reason for limiting class hours for those registered for the SPP also plays a role in poor attendance; namely, leaving time for appointments and dealing with settlement issues. Teachers reported that absences were frequently caused by compulsory Centrelink appointments. Young people lacked the English and confidence to negotiate changes and, in the larger cities, could lose half a day in travelling to the Centrelink office. However, one teacher stated:

They can get very clever. Like they’ll arrive late, they’ll leave a bit early, they’ll say ‘Oh, I’ve got an appointment with Centrelink.’ They always have Centrelink on a day they’ve got classes. So they do become a bit slack.

Managers, teachers and young people agreed that managing and motivating younger learners’ attendance is integral to program effectiveness. Teachers are responsible for contacting absentees after more than about two days without an explanation. It was reported that young people greatly appreciate this follow-up as a sign that their teachers care for them. A manager in one youth-specific program said that special activities are used to encourage attendance:

So if someone hasn’t attended for a couple of days, the teachers get on the phone and tell them there is something good for that day and they have to come – of course they want to come to that sort of stuff.

In another youth-specific program, a teacher described her family visits, where she explained to parents/guardians the importance of regular attendance. In one centre, teachers were developing an attendance contract for younger students.

Although teachers and managers agreed that flexibility regarding attendance is necessary, they also stated that discipline is especially important for younger learners. One teacher said, ‘it’s important not to adopt a sort of “poor them” attitude. They have to learn to discipline their time’. To manage their time, so they do things at the appropriate time. Another teacher explained that, unlike mature adults, if younger students miss class ‘we have to discuss those things with them, about the implications of it. It might affect, say, providing a character reference in court for some of these students.’

Not least, as a manager of a youth program stated, the key to good attendance with young people was ensuring that the program itself was seen as reliable:

Our students come five days a week. We believe that young students should have a regular pattern in what they do here. Their classes are at the same time every day, they study four hours a day: two in the morning, two in the afternoon, five days a week. They have an optional extra homework hour in the morning [9 am – 10 am]. And they like it, provided we don’t change things around too much. You always get people missing for days. It takes days to get back on track. We believe it’s due to their very disruptive lives. They want something regular, they want to know it’s the same teacher going to turn up on the day she should turn up. They want that regular element in their lives they haven’t had. If we do something different – if we have a curriculum day and we have to go off and do something – and the students get a day off, it’ll take us over a week, maybe two weeks to get our attendance back to where it was.

7.3 Class size

At the time of our interviews, SPP400 guidelines specified no more than 12 students per class group on the assumption that smaller groups allow for more concentrated teacher attention. However, our interviewees reported that it was impossible to abide by this requirement for two reasons. First, managers reported that staffing classes of 12 students was financially unviable. Second, managers and teachers stated that younger students disliked smaller classes, which was confirmed by the youth in our focus groups. As with class hours, all agreed that young people, no matter what their educational background, wanted to be in a ‘normal’ program.

One teacher described class size and attendance as closely related:
There’s a thing about youth that they have to have a critical mass. If the critical mass drops too much, they won’t come to class because it’s no fun. They have to have a bit of fun. They’ve had terribly difficult lives. They’ve got to enjoy school. It’s really hard if you have a class of 12 and it drops to 7 … If they’re in a large group, it helps attendance enormously.

Rather than smaller classes for young people with minimal/no schooling, teachers and managers preferred extra classroom assistance from teachers’ aides. They endorsed class sizes of 15 to 20 students, conditional on support from a teacher’s aide. We observed these kinds of classes, which seemed to function well. Important contributing factors were the group’s relatively homogeneous learning levels and the teacher’s skill in creating activities that were appropriate to the level and that encouraged group and pair cooperation, allowing time for the teacher and the aide to circulate.

### 7.4 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

Assessment and placement interviews are important initial elements in program delivery, both procedurally and in providing refugee youth with information about the SPP400/AMEP and its connection to pathways. Although AMEP providers are experienced in carrying out these interviews, it would seem that some assessors would welcome guidance in regard to determining years of schooling of those potentially eligible for the SPP400. AMEP staff also need to be aware of issues in determining these young people’s ages and have guidance in how to respond.

In regard to weekly contact hours, our interviews suggest that DIAC guidelines should take account of many young people’s desire for normal school hours. Where classes do not run from 9 am to 3 pm (approximately), after-class options should be offered; for example, focused and supervised ILC work, short courses and other activities (Chapter 9, section 9.3). Whatever arrangements are trialled or offered, providers should be supported in encouraging young people’s attendance as an integral dimension of the pastoral support discussed in the previous chapter.

In summary, the options shown in Table 22 appear to be possible, and in varying degrees desirable, for weekly contact hours for young people registered for the SPP400.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desirability</th>
<th>Delivery of hours</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly desirable</td>
<td>Regular school day (approx. 9am to 3pm), five days per week.</td>
<td>(1) Different arrangements may be preferred by those with childcare responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) A slightly later starting time may assist those taking children to childcare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four – five hours per day for two to three days’ per week, plus two to three days’ guided work or community experience.</td>
<td>Requires:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Approx. four hours per day, five days per week, plus supervised after-class options, eg ILC, short courses, activities, sport.</td>
<td>• ESL tailored to placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>Approx. four hours per day, four to five days per week.</td>
<td>Different options should be available for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable</td>
<td>Four – six hours per day, three or less days per week.</td>
<td>• young mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• those in employment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Options for weekly contact hours for those registered for the SPP400
Regarding class sizes, the teachers, managers and young people we interviewed argued that small classes are undesirable, which may seem unusual, since it counters the common endorsement of smaller classes for students with special needs. However, these young people appear to enjoy and benefit from interaction in larger class groups. The preferred option was to support teachers with one or more teachers’ aides.
Chapter 8

Program delivery: Class groupings

This chapter has been divided into two main sections. The first addresses the following questions. What is the basis for forming class groups in the AMEP? In what kinds of class groupings are those registered for the SPP400 located? What were our interviewees’ views on the two main options we discovered; namely, placement in regular mixed-age classes or youth-specific classes? The second section outlines various considerations regarding the favoured option of youth-specific classes. We conclude by discussing the relative desirability of different options.

8.1 Forming class groups in the AMEP

Class groupings are pivotal for program delivery. Around them, syllabuses and lessons are planned and taught, daily routines are set in place, records are kept, staffing determined and accommodation allocated. Several criteria inform decision making on class groupings in the AMEP. Our interviews suggest that applying these criteria to provision for refugee youth is not straightforward.

As with other educational institutions, the central criterion in forming AMEP class groups is student ‘levels’, which are judged with reference to the institution’s pedagogic mission, in this case, English language teaching as specified in the CSWE curriculum and assessment framework (Chapter 3, section 3.1.2). Accordingly, providers’ first priority is generally to form class groups with students at roughly comparable CSWE levels. Resources to pay teachers and rent classrooms are also critical in forming classes. In the AMEP, as in many other educational institutions, resources follow to a large extent from student numbers. A third criterion relates to class dynamics. A variety of factors affect class dynamics, the most notable being previous education, class size, gender balance, individual aspirations, cultural/linguistic backgrounds and age.

AMEP class groups are normally formed as a trade-off between CSWE levels and resource constraints, with other factors playing a subsidiary role. If student numbers are sufficient, classes may be formed based on the CSWE ‘bands’ (‘slower pace’, ‘standard pace’ and ‘fast pace’), which refine each CSWE level, essentially with reference to clients’ previous education. Pre-CSWE classes are notable examples (see Chapters 3 and 4, sections 3.1.2 and 4.2).

8.2 Classes containing those registered for the SPP400

In our data set we found no class groups that conformed to the description of the SPP400 on the DIAC website at the time of our interviews (Chapter 1, section 1.2). The reasons given were that there were insufficient numbers in any one centre to form viable pre-AMEP classes for this group of learners. In other words, forming separate classes on the basis of age and separation from AMEP classes, while also considering proficiency levels, previous schooling, class dynamics, and teacher salary and accommodation costs was not seen as feasible.

In one centre in our data set, a pre-AMEP class had been formed by combining those registered for the SPP100 hours and 400 hours. This grouping was abandoned because differences in age, learning pace and students’ aspirations were found to make the class unworkable.

In our data set, three main types of class groupings containing young people registered for the SPP400 were in operation.

8.2.1 Mixed-age regular AMEP classes

The most common provision in our data set for young people registered for the SPP400 at the time of our interviews was placement in regular AMEP classes containing adults of all ages and formed according to English levels, predominantly at pre-CSWE or ‘pre-pre-CSWE’ levels (see Chapter 4, section 4.2). Other class members may have been using the SPP100 hours and/or the AMEP 510 hours, and may or may not have been registered initially for the SPP100 or SPP400.

Two providers (AMES Victoria and NMIT) supplemented these classes with youth-specific adjunct activities, notably sports days (Chapter 9, section 9.3). Some centres offered after-class ILC access for all clients, including youth. In 2007 ACL introduced supplementary youth-specific options in the job search and technology areas for use in centres where youth classes had not been formed.
8.2.2 Youth classes in AMEP centres

The second type of class grouping combined young people using SPP400 and AMEP hours, and some also included young people funded from other sources. English levels were not always as homogeneous as in regular AMEP classes and mostly began with quite diverse levels, as elaborated below (section 8.4).

At the time of our interviews, the majority of AMEP youth classes in our data set were run by providers in Melbourne: by AMES Victoria at its Noble Park, Footscray and St Albans centres, and by NMIT at its Broadmeadows and Preston centres. In 2006 TELLS began a class at Logan TAFE in Brisbane. Estimating numbers in all these classes was impossible (not least because they were expanding) but, in the youth classes we visited (in three centres), they totalled approximately 90 students.

During 2006, following our interviews, the number of NMIT youth classes increased. In 2007 TELLS youth classes also rose (totalling four at Logan and two at Mount Gravatt), and in 2008 another began (Brisbane North). Encouraged by the interaction facilitated through this project, ACL also began youth classes and in late 2007 was running four youth classes across day and evening programs in three centres.

In some Melbourne centres a strategy for gaining sufficient numbers to form youth classes was to combine students funded from both SPP400/AMEP and non-AMEP sources. In these classes teaching and reporting accorded with the CSWE. For example, AMES Victoria used State funding sources to allow students to continue to the end of the year/term after their AMEP hours had run out. NMIT classes combined refugee youth funded through the SPP400/AMEP with others supported through the institute’s recurrently funded YAMEC program (see the ‘YAMEC’ example box in Chapter 10, section 10.2.3) – the latter included young people who had completed six months in IECs, been exited from IECs before completing six months’ tuition, or who had tried school and found it unsatisfactory.

8.2.3 Youth classes in locations other than AMEP centres

Shared delivery arrangements between AMEP providers and other institutions have allowed youth classes to be formed in locations other than AMEP centres. Like the youth classes in AMEP centres, they may consist of those registered for the SPP400 who are undertaking any part of their total 910 hours and may also include young people funded from other sources, many of whom would initially have been eligible for the SPP400.

Two different models of shared delivery classes operated in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania at the time of our interviews.

1. Supplementary classes offering ‘taster’ courses: these classes supplemented youth classes taught in AMEP centres and were run in either TAFE institutes, the AMEP host college or a partner college. They aimed to allow learners to explore post-AMEP pathways (see Chapter 10, section 10.2.3).

2. ‘Core’ ESL classes: these classes were taught by AMEP teachers on high school/senior secondary college sites. One delivery model was for the AMEP provider to teach ESL classes using the CSWE framework at a school/college site to those registered for the SPP400/AMEP. For example, the Hobart office of AMES Tasmania was cooperating with Elizabeth College and teaching the CSWE as a component of a bridging program that led to TAFE vocational and university preparation courses (Ebsworth 2005). At the time of our interviews, other providers were trialling similar arrangements.

8.3 Youth classes versus mixed-age classes?

Almost all the teachers and managers we interviewed favoured youth-specific classes for those registered for the SPP400/AMEP because these classes could more effectively target the distinctive characteristics and needs outlined in Chapters 3 and 4.

Although life experiences and lack of formal schooling distinguish these refugee youth from other adolescents and young adults in Australia, we were told – and observed in student focus groups – that many have all the energy, confidence, humour, and cultural, social and physical issues that are associated with their age peers. As one teacher said, they have ‘a different energy and different perspective on life. They have so much ahead of them.’ Another teacher explained how motivation, energy levels and peer interaction affect classes:

They are not like adults, who will come in and are happy to spend a few hours learning English. It just doesn’t work with those students. They need to be totally engaged. They need to be with other young people.

Several teachers described how vigorous and ‘fun’ activities can be used to advantage in youth classes; for
example, ‘You can use a soccer ball, [and] get them to run around the room and shout’. Youth classes can also target relevant ongoing educational, training and employment pathways (see Chapter 10).

In one focus group a young female student who had experienced both mixed-age and youth AMEP classes described the effect of young people’s rapidly attained (albeit limited) oral English on motivation and classroom dynamics:

They [older students] tried to learn speaking English but some of them are just sitting and listening without [understanding] things sometimes, yeah … I thought it was boring. Not like here, they are all younger, work together in group and we talk. When someone sits between you and is older, then you, like, slowly you start to learn, but when you talk to them, you can’t talk to them in English, you understand, you have to talk to them in Arabic. That’s why it’s a problem.

A teacher of a mixed-age class described how older learners’ slowness and more irregular attendance forced a slower pace that held the younger ones back. Comparing youth classes to her own class that mixed older and young learners, one teacher said if she had her younger students in their own group, ‘the energy would be quite different’, they would achieve more LOs and the content could be more appropriate (‘topics that are not about housework’ or the other things the ‘older ladies’ want) (see Chapter Nine). The possibility for excursions was said to be limited in classes with older people, especially women, some of whom could not walk far, were reported to find getting on and off buses difficult, and were described as more sensitive to inclement weather. Classes with older learners can leave young people feeling isolated, as a young woman in a focus group described:

Thing is you can’t talk to your friends. You can’t make friends like they are from your age. Older people, you can’t talk to them, you can’t tell them, ‘Let’s go to here, come here.’ Now we talk to them [our friends in a youth class] like this but because they are in the same age.

One teacher described how a younger student, promoted to a mixed-age CSWE III class, had recently begged to return to the lower-level youth class because, although she could do CSWE III work, she couldn’t cope with the class dynamics in the older group.

As with other youth, education plays a socialising, disciplinary role. Like their age peers, refugee youth were said to be generally more adaptable and flexible than their elders, and more open to learning new cultural and social norms. Teachers described how the benefits and drawbacks of this openness can be targeted in youth classes. A teacher in an AMEP youth class described how these classes included a focus on:

General soft skills like being on time and being respectful. Perhaps dressing properly. Learning that you’re expected to put in a proper day’s work and when you’re here, you turn off your mobile phone. And that you ring up if you’re going to be away.

Teachers also described problems relating to cultural norms in mixed-age classes. They had been told by both young people and community elders that young people were embarrassed in classes with those regarded as older and wiser than them and where it was disrespectful to know more or do better. A teacher interpreted how these cultural issues relate to class groupings:

There’s a certain pride [among older people in a community]. And I think that in their communities possibly their positions are threatened. And I think that their positions need to be preserved. They have to be an authority figure for young people. So my feeling is that young people should be in their own classes. It’s much, much better for them. And the concerns they have are quite different. I think the whole thing of trying to keep communities intact is really important. It’s not good to put the elders in a position where they feel humiliated. And there’s no doubt that young people learn faster. They do. And even if the reading and writing is still bad, the oral language increases faster. They understand more. And suddenly the balance in the classroom is changed. And they [the younger ones] become very impatient. That’s a big problem for the elders in the community.

In contrast to the view that mixed-age classes were problematic, several other teachers who taught mixed-age classes saw no difficulties with them. A few saw no particular need for youth-specific classes. For example, one teacher stated that age concerns were irrelevant in a program that met defined settlement needs and said that her mixed-age class ‘works fine’. Another teacher believed mixed-age classes averted discipline problems with young men. We were also told that young women with children may (but also may not) prefer a class with older women who have parenting experience.

However, managers, teachers and young people all agreed that a young person should never be placed in a class with parents or older relatives. A learning advisor told of how a mother and father requested that their 16-year-old son join their own pre-CSWE class but, once alone with the advisor, the young man begged her not to agree, saying, ‘Please, teacher, no. Please, teacher, no.’ A student in a youth class described the problem:

I can’t speak like very free [in a mixed-age class]. Like if I talk there [in class], my mum she gonna say ‘shhh’ all the time [everyone laughs].
Nevertheless, according to one teacher, having parents in the same centre (but not in the same class) had advantages, because the family could travel there together. A parent or older relative close at hand also assisted with occasional discipline problems.

Aside from the question of gaining viable numbers, teachers’ main reservation regarding youth classes concerned the difficulties in combining students across English and educational levels; for example, as one teacher said, ‘if you mixed the levels up, that would be a disaster’. A manager gave the following example of young people’s different expectations:

We had a Dari speaker … a 19 year old. He was incredibly focused … He wanted to move right ahead, thank you very much. He didn’t want to go to high school, he didn’t want a special youth group. And he was zooming up – he started really low and he’d already moved a level … You’re [not] going to put him in the same class, just because he falls into the generic category of youth, with a Sudanese guy who’s got less literacy and has got a totally different cultural background, and maybe has got other focuses in his life, for example bringing up his family.

Even so, while most teachers did not favour combining levels in the one class, a first step in establishing youth classes has been teachers’ preparedness to do just this, as we now report.

### 8.4 Establishing youth classes

Establishing AMEP youth classes for those with minimal/no schooling is not straightforward. Here we consider the necessary pre-conditions reported in our interviews. As already indicated, creating these classes is greatly facilitated by cooperative relationships between AMEP providers and the school sector (Chapter 5, sections 5.4 and 5.5).

NMIT managers described their involvement in a major project that had addressed educational provision for refugee youth across several institutions in Melbourne (Changing Cultures Project 2003). This project developed three basic aims for refugee youth classes, based on actual practice and teachers’ recommendations:

1. social connectedness
2. economic participation
3. freedom from discrimination (Changing Cultures Project 2003: 38).

The project’s checklist of ‘critical factors’ in successful programs is:

1. a secure, ongoing funding basis
2. a basic education curriculum
3. specialist careers and pathway planning delivered by qualified practitioners
4. appropriate resourcing to support pastoral work in regard to settlement, health and individual welfare needs (Changing Cultures Project 2003:13–16).

Other crucial elements were found to be appropriate staffing; timetabling; home rooms; opportunities for further education and training; innovative, flexible, holistic and sustainable curriculum; health and settlement issues addressed through integrated curriculum; peer support and interaction in a supportive environment; a range of accessible pathways; collaboration with community agencies and health services; and partnerships with other educational institutions (Changing Cultures Project 2003: 16–20). We have already dealt with pastoral issues and timetabling (Chapters 6 and 7), and will consider curriculum and pathways in subsequent chapters (Chapters 9 and 10).

An issue raised in our interviews was that sufficient time is needed initially for young people and their communities to learn about these classes and gain confidence that they are both relevant and will continue. Managing this initial period can be difficult. Starting with small numbers is problematic, as already noted (section 8.1). To gain sufficient numbers, some providers start with a class of mixed proficiency levels. We interviewed two teachers in different centres whose first youth classes spanned CSWE I to CSWE II, and pre-CSWE to CSWE III, respectively. The teachers described these early arrangements as ‘ridiculous’ and totally exhausting. Nevertheless, they saw their efforts as ultimately worthwhile because, within one or two terms, student demand had allowed the formation of classes at relatively homogeneous proficiency levels. In the centres we visited where youth classes had been established, the number of classes had subsequently increased.

A key to creating critical mass in some of the youth classes we described earlier was the inclusion of students funded from non-AMEP sources. However, seeking special funding to establish youth classes was described as difficult and time consuming, requiring ‘huge discussions’, as one manager said. Another explained:
There are pockets of funding out there but they’re very specific and they’re limited. It’s a nightmare. And you think about the energy that goes into writing that stuff.

In contrast, youth classes/programs with secure core funding had attracted other agencies’ support in running complementary activities (see Chapter 9, section 9.3) because working with established classes is an effective use of these agencies’ time and effort. For example, a teacher described the YAMEC program, including its AMEP youth classes:

We were very project oriented, so heaps of projects come up, maybe with funding attached or something like that, or just special opportunities like the SYN [Student Youth Network] FM radio or health projects, or music, CD or film-making.

In turn, these activities/projects build the program’s reputation among young people and increase demand and therefore the feasibility of forming new classes.

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**Example – Problems in setting up youth classes**

The Sudanese community met with AMEP providers, which led to a proposal to start youth classes. A group in a centre on a TAFE campus close to where Sudanese families lived started applying for external funding – the numbers of those registered for the SPP400 were too few to run AMEP youth classes. Initially, it was planned that the classes would target ‘disengaged’ refugee youth (i.e., those not currently in any educational setting). However, because guidelines for the only available funding specified those at risk in schools, the project focus shifted to match these guidelines. The bid was unsuccessful. Another funding source became available through a local high school. These funds could be used for refugee youth but were linked to a university music department. The bid therefore included a music therapy component and employment of a music therapist. This bid also failed.

The group then looked to a State-based initiative designed to promote education and training. This initiative had funded a number of programs for disengaged youth, not just refugees. An AMEP teacher was given a time allowance (paid for by the TAFE institute) to prepare the grant application and design the course, which she planned as a mix of language and communication classes, taster trade courses (in cabinet-making, plumbing, plastering and electrical work), work experience and utilisation of the institute’s new sports centre.

The following dilemma emerged: should the proposers wait to see if the grant application was successful and then recruit students or vice versa? If they waited, there would be difficulties in finding students quickly and using the grant within the required timeframe. However, if the students were recruited first, by the time the funding arrived and the program was prepared, the young people would have gone. As the teacher said, ‘They won’t tread water while you organise the funding’.

In this case, the TAFE institute not only paid for the course preparation before the funding came through, which it did, but was also prepared to start a class with a small group, since the institute has always run programs for disengaged youth and initial small numbers ‘go with the turf’. Even so, there were not enough students. Potential students came forward who were very keen to join the course but they fell outside the funding criteria and had to be turned away. After about a week, there was only one person in the class and it was terminated.

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**8.5 Challenges and pitfalls in forming AMEP classes in schools**

Prior to our interviews, some schools had approached AMEP providers for assistance with a view to the latter delivering ESL classes on school/college sites. These requests resulted from the combined effects of SPP400/AMEP eligibility restrictions, refugee youth enrolling directly in schools, and the schools’ lack of ESL and other support (Chapters 2 and 5, sections 2.7 and 5.3.1). The managers and teachers we interviewed included some who were trialling AMEP-funded CSWE classes on school sites.

Reports from these trials made clear that they required detailed, careful, prolonged and ongoing negotiation. In two locations, insufficient attention to negotiating arrangements resulted in the termination of classes. Elsewhere, an AMEP manager told us that, in her experience, attempts to cooperate with schools were simply too time consuming to be worth the effort.

One problem described to us follows from eligibility requirements (Chapters 1 and 2, sections 1.2 and 2.7). In three schools, some students were seen to need ESL tuition but were ineligible for the SPP400/AMEP.
The fact that they were excluded from these classes had proved difficult to explain to them, their parents/guardians and other teachers. In contrast, some eligible students were reported to resist attending these classes because it marked them as different. In one school, authorities decided to enforce attendance and were also asked to ‘organise some counselling for the disruptive students’ in the class.

Timetabling can also create problems. In one school the AMEP class ran on the school’s sports afternoon, which students wanted to attend. In another class that ran partly after school hours (2 pm to 5 pm), students saw it as optional, came late and would not stay after 3 pm. The teacher said:

All brain work ceases at 3. I’ve given up. For crying out loud, what am I supposed to do? It’s impossible to plan when you don’t know how many students will turn up.

Teachers also reported that the classes they offered were insufficiently intensive, since they were only one component of the overall school curriculum and therefore ran for only about three hours per week.

Overall, the problems documented in Chapter 5 in relation to placement in Year 10 and appropriately targeted settlement and pastoral support were not solved by offering AMEP classes in schools, at least in our data set. Some teachers we interviewed agreed with this assessment but saw such classes as necessary interim or stop-gap measures. Some believed they provided a professional development role in the school. One teacher described the goal as opening students’ eyes to pathways from the AMEP to TAFE:

Part of the sub-plot for me being in the schools is for me to convince my students that another pathway exists to achieve their dreams other than through a high school education. And I vigorously pursue that.

This teacher provided the class with information about AMEP classes within TAFE (into which they could move because they were already enrolled as AMEP clients) and about other TAFE programs, and also arranged visits to the institute.

8.6 Staffing

An essential prerequisite in setting up youth classes is appropriate staffing. Not all AMEP teachers are suited to working with these young people. A manager attributed the failure of a youth class in one centre precisely to the teachers’ lack of enthusiasm for teaching this age group. One experienced youth class teacher said, ‘It’s extremely difficult to get staff to work with youth because of their challenging behaviour, lack of study skills and conceptual difficulties’. Another said, ‘The teacher has got to be prepared to put in the extra time that you wouldn’t do for an adult class’. Another saw the key issue as youth needing teachers who are constantly and closely considering how the student is developing and what is needed next.

Nevertheless, the youth class teachers we interviewed spoke of their love for this kind of teaching. Managers also praised these teachers’ outstanding professionalism. For example, in regard to two teachers who had worked for several years in a centre’s youth program, the manager described how they had:

... developed and evolved the whole program so beautifully. They keep on being creative to the point where it never gets boring. They are so good at finding new ways to make their program respond better to youth needs.

As this report documents, delivering effective programs for refugee youth entails much more than regular teaching: extra pastoral work, linking into youth-related networks, responding to complex issues in and out of the classroom, following up attendances, finding and devising appropriate content, and arranging adjunct activities and accompanying students to them. These demands raise issues for both continuity and equitable workloads.

Staffing continuity – for students and in maintaining networks – is critical in refugee youth programs. While some managers and teachers said that rotating youth class teachers was necessary to prevent burn-out, others disagreed. Those who disagreed argued that a better strategy was to give teachers more realistic time allotments. Although this impacts on budgets, allowing teachers to burn out was said to be a false economy because knowledge and networks are lost. As one teacher explained, ‘It means you build your knowledge of the services etcetera and then teachers move on and sometimes a lot of that knowledge can go with the teacher’. Time allotments that allow youth teachers to engage more fully with their students were also seen to have long-term benefits. As this teacher said, ‘Getting kids sorted at this stage pays off in the long run’ (see also CMYI 2006: 7).

In the interests of continuity, managers and teachers generally agreed that a combination of permanent and contract teachers should form the mainstay of youth classes and programs. At least one provider uses only contract or permanent staff as the main teacher in youth classes and, if possible, also as the support teacher. However, another manager reported, ‘We have had some excellent casual teachers working successfully in...’
the youth program’. In that centre, interested sessional teachers who are looking for contract positions are offered a chance to trial themselves with youth classes.

**8.7 Conclusion: Summary and discussion**

In centres run by the seven main AMEP providers in the eastern States and the Australian Capital Territory, the numbers registered for the SPP400 at the time of our interviews were insufficient to form viable class groups prior to the 510 AMEP hours. Viability of classes is determined by balancing various considerations against each other, most notably student numbers at different CSWE levels, resources to pay for teachers and rooms, and potential group dynamics.

Attempts had been made in one centre to form classes consisting solely of SPP100 and SPP400 students. Differences in proficiency levels, socio-emotional needs, and learning styles and trajectories made these classes unworkable.

Those registered for the SPP400 in our data set were located in three types of classes.

1. **regular mixed-age AMEP classes** organised according to CSWE levels and, if possible, bands
2. **youth classes located in AMEP centres** and combining learners using SPP400 hours with others using AMEP hours and/or funded from other sources
3. **offsite, shared delivery youth classes**, which either:
   - provide vocationally-oriented tuition that supplements ESL classes taught in AMEP centres, or
   - provide core ESL tuition through the AMEP/CSWE in high schools/senior colleges.

Evaluating the relative merits of different class groupings for those registered for the SPP400 is not straightforward. In the conclusion to Chapter 5, we indicated three key issues derived from our discussion of options across the total spectrum of on-arrival pathways for these young people. These issues were refugee youths’ perceptions of ‘normal’ schooling; sufficient specialised ESL and literacy tuition, basic education and support for learning how to learn; and an inclusive and supportive environment. In this chapter we have identified additional issues relating to the management of programs and staff. Taking these issues into account, we propose the following criteria against which the desirability of different SPP400/AMEP class groupings can be considered (Table 23). These criteria draw from this and previous chapters; some anticipate later chapters. We summarise them here because all relate to how class groups are formed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion type</th>
<th>Specific criteria</th>
<th>Cross-reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad program features</td>
<td>Content meets refugee youth needs, aspirations and interests, including school subject content and ‘learning-how-to-learn’.</td>
<td>Chapters 4, 5 and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate out-of-class activities are included.</td>
<td>Chapter 9, section 9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth-appropriate post-AMEP pathways are investigated and evaluated.</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuition hours approximate a school day.</td>
<td>Chapters 5 and 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Criteria against which the desirability of different SPP400/AMEP class groupings can be considered

Cont....
Cont ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion type</th>
<th>Specific criteria</th>
<th>Cross-reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESL-specific requirements</strong></td>
<td>Class groups are at relatively homogeneous English levels.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes are taught by specialist ESL teachers.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.6; Chapter 5, section 5.3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students receive intensive and prolonged ESL tuition and support.</td>
<td>Chapter 5, sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progression and pace is geared to refugee youth ESL and literacy learning trajectories.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.3; Chapter 4, sections 4.2 and 4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-emotional requirements</strong></td>
<td>Peer interaction in class motivates youth.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class size is large enough to attract and hold youth.</td>
<td>Chapter 7, section 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline and socialisation target specific youth needs.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class groupings do not undermine elders’ authority.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are not stigmatised as different from their peers.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.5; also Chapter 5, section 5.3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are given appropriate pastoral support.</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management and resources</strong></td>
<td>Classes are easy to establish.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, sections 8.1 and 8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes are easy to support administratively.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, sections 8.1, 8.4 and 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes do not over-tax staffing resources.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes can include non-AMEP students.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes/program can attract additional outside support and youth projects.</td>
<td>Chapter 8, section 8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Criteria against which the desirability of different SPP400/AMEP class groupings can be considered
Table 24 describes each type of existing AMEP class grouping in relation to these criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion type</th>
<th>Specific criteria</th>
<th>Class type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criterion type and specific criteria</td>
<td>Mixed-age AMEP regular classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad program features</td>
<td>Content meets youth-specific needs</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate out-of-class activities (including physical exercise)</td>
<td>Possible after hours but don’t appear to happen often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth-appropriate post-AMEP pathways preparation</td>
<td>Pathways preparation but not youth-specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuition hours approximate a school day</td>
<td>Requires out-of-class access to ILC and other activities. Shorter hours may suit those in part-time employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL-specific requirements</td>
<td>Class groups at relatively homogeneous English levels</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes taught by specialist ESL teachers</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensive and prolonged ESL tuition and support</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progression and pace geared to refugee youth</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Types of classes containing young people registered for the SPP400 in relation to the criteria in Table 23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion type</th>
<th>Specific criteria</th>
<th>Class type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-emotional requirements</strong></td>
<td>Motivating class dynamics</td>
<td>Youth may be alienated. May suit young mothers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size is attractive to youth</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline and socialisation</td>
<td>Although youth needs are not targeted, some teachers</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>target specific youth needs</td>
<td>said that older classmates can assist discipline.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders’ authority preserved</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students seen as 'normal' (ie</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not stigmatised as different from</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their peers)</td>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate pastoral support</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management and resources</strong></td>
<td>Classes are easy to establish</td>
<td>Requires special institutional and teacher commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes are easy to support</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Requires special institutional and teacher commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administratively</td>
<td>Once established, yes.</td>
<td>Requires ongoing institutional and teacher commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Types of classes containing young people registered for the SPP400 in relation to the criteria in Table 23
### Table 24: Types of classes containing young people registered for the SPP400 in relation to the criteria in Table 23

This summary shows that no one type of class grouping definitively meets or fails all criteria – each has advantages and disadvantages. Evaluating class groupings against the criteria above also indicates the nature of problems to be solved in forming classes to meet refugee youth learning needs.

The most common option at the time of our interviews (namely, placing students in **regular mixed-age AMEP classes** organised according to proficiency levels) is administratively simple and can deliver high-quality, specialist and intensive ESL tuition. However, these classes are deficient in regard to young people’s educational aspirations and their specific learning, experiential and emotional needs. Some deficiencies can be mitigated by after-class access to the ILC and other activities. Without these out-of-class extras, mixed-age AMEP classes are particularly problematic for 16 and 17 year olds. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 5, we would argue that mixed-age generalist AMEP classes are preferable for all in the 16 – 24-year-old age group in comparison to situations where specialist and intensive ESL is otherwise unavailable or where ESL classes stigmatise these young people.

Assessing **AMEP youth classes** against the criteria above makes clear their desirability, from an ESL and educational perspective, for humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with minimal/no schooling. **Shared-delivery youth classes that supplement core ESL tuition in AMEP centres** are also highly desirable in introducing pathways (see Chapter 10, section 10.2.3). However, it is also clear that these options are demanding in regard to administration and resources.

**Shared-delivery classes in which AMEP providers teach the CSWE in high schools/senior colleges** meet several important criteria: refugee youth receive specialist ESL tuition, their needs are targeted, and they have regular school hours and are in classes with their peers. However, administrative and resource demands, and demands on teacher time, are much higher than for classes in AMEP centres. Other problems are that ESL tuition is insufficiently intensive and students may feel stigmatised by attending these classes. We suggest that it would be preferable to address the situation that initiated these arrangements and to find less difficult ways for AMEP providers to collaborate with the school sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion type</th>
<th>Specific criteria</th>
<th>Class type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management and resources</td>
<td>Normal staffing resources sufficient</td>
<td>Mixed-age AMEP regular classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can attract additional outside support/youth projects</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9

Program delivery: Educational content

The core of program delivery for young people registered for the SPP400 is its educational content. This chapter considers how educational content is delivered in the classroom, the resources available to support that delivery, and out-of-class activities.

9.1 Content and teaching

Since the early 1980s, the AMEP has been committed to teaching English in use, as distinct from organising curriculum around the formal features of language. In this approach, language forms (pronunciation, morphology, vocabulary, grammar, discourse and text features) and skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are taught in the context of real life purposes for communication.

One way of describing these purposes is with reference to the English of various topics and themes (Williams, 2008). The themes nominated in our interviews as important for those registered for the SPP400 can be listed as:

1 Living in Australia
   - everyday ‘survival’ topics such as shopping, housing, banking, consumer goods (for example, mobile telephones, cars)
   - accessing relevant support services
   - health, hygiene, wellbeing and safety (including road safety and driver education)
   - budgeting and money management
   - cultural expectations and practices, including youth culture

2 School-related knowledge and skills
   - learning about Australia – society, geography, history
   - literacy, numeracy and basic science
   - technology, computers and using the Internet

3 Pathways
   - the Australian education and training system
   - employment options.

The need for English in relation to the first theme (living in Australia) is common to all new arrivals. However, as described in Chapter 4, teachers reported that many recent humanitarian entrants, including young people, may have never dealt with these particular issues before; for example, budgeting, shopping in supermarkets, and cooking and other domestic tasks in Western-style houses. Teaching the English related to these tasks alongside how to do them was described as having implications for presentation, pacing and out-of-class activities such as excursions.

Some topics were seen to require special treatment for youth; for example, health, sexuality, socialising, popular culture, consumer issues and other sensitive topics such as emotional and physical abuse. Teachers also described the special needs of young mothers; for example, how to talk to health workers and teachers, and to understand information from agencies and schools regarding their children. Some mothers in our mixed-age focus group (in Melbourne) said they wanted to learn about ‘footy’ because their children were playing it at school.

The second theme (school-related knowledge and skills) relates to these young people’s desire and need to make up for lost schooling and gain new skills (Chapter 5, section 5.2). The students in our focus groups, especially young men, nominated computer skills as a high priority.

The third theme (pathways) was seen as particularly crucial for these young people, so we deal with it separately in Chapter 10.

Effective program delivery for these learners also entails a distinctive way of teaching (CMYI 2006: 12). Teachers emphasised that teaching both older and younger learners with minimal/no literacy requires small,
manageable chunks of material that are constantly recycled and practised. However, the ways of harnessing young people's concentration, interest and energies were said to be different. Teachers described their constant search for techniques that maintain pace, interest and variety while appropriately staging content; for example, as one teacher said:

For the young people, I think very much it's the way you present things, as much as what you're presenting. With the younger ones, you tend to find they need more stimulation. Their attention span is very short, very often, so you need to be able to keep them interested in things. So I guess a variety in the way that the materials are presented – even if it's the same material presented in half a dozen different ways. They tend not to be able to sit and slowly work through things. They need stuff to be happening, change in some way.

9.2 Teaching resources: Issues and gaps

The CSWE framework is the foundational curriculum resource for the AMEP (Chapter 3, section 3.1). Teachers were divided over its appropriateness for these young people.

On one side, the CSWE was described as precluding the topics just listed. For example, one teacher stated that she was unable to deal with matters such as food, diet and basic hygiene. Rather, she was required to teach tasks that ‘must have three conjunctions; must have this kind of paragraph’. One teacher said, ‘We don’t have a choice; there’s just no choice … We’ve got this curriculum and it’s very inflexible.’

In contrast, teachers in other centres were teaching these topics. One teacher described the CSWE as ‘very, very flexible’, explaining that:

... because it has no content as such; it has outcomes you need to achieve. Because it’s content-free, you can put in any content you like as long as you meet the outcomes.

Some teachers claimed that school subjects could be taught using the CSWE framework. For example, one teacher stated that ‘a whole broad curriculum’, including numeracy, maths, science, civics, history and ‘all sorts of things’, can be used to meet CSWE LOs.

One important issue raised in our interviews centred on whether or not students enrolled in the CSWE can also take units from other vocational qualifications, which teachers argued was highly desirable. Some teachers told us that this option was not permitted (see also ACTA 2005: 8). However, the shared delivery ‘taster’ modules described in the previous chapter would seem to contradict this claim. We suspect that the CSWE itself is not the issue here (despite its presentation in our interviews as such) but rather clarification and possibly changes regarding concurrent enrolments.

Teachers’ (correct or incorrect) perceptions of what the CSWE disallows raise the issue known in the assessment literature as negative ‘washback’, that is, assessment requirements’ undesirable (sometimes unforeseen) effects or pressures on teaching (Brindley 1998; McKay 2006). Our discussion of the adequacy of pre-CSWE and CSWE LOs in the conclusion to Chapter 4 (section 4.8) also relates to this issue, as illustrated in this comment by a teacher:

I'm concerned that DIMA's going to look and say, 'Oh, look at that group at [name of Centre]. How slack are they? What are they teaching? They've only achieved two LOs in the whole year.' And there is that pressure. If we don't perform, boy, we lose the contract and we don't have a job.

Similarly, another teacher stated that teachers in her centre who report their classes' achievement on very few LOs, even at pre-CSWE level, were often asked, ‘Why haven’t you achieved X and Y and Z?’ Moore (2007: 28) also reports that ‘unrealistic expectations’ were a major concern in his study of low literacy assessment in the AMEP (see also Moore, 2008).

More positive washback would be facilitated by ongoing professional development around the CSWE. More fundamentally, as we concluded in Chapter 4, if pre-CSWE and CSWE I LOs were reworked to reflect more authentic learning trajectories for these learners, teachers’ attention would be better directed to planning, staging and recycling tasks that actually accord with these trajectories.

This issue relates closely to a gap in teaching resources that some teachers described explicitly and about which others seemed unsure; namely, teaching sound–symbol relationships. Teaching those with no previous literacy in any language is a new experience for many AMEP teachers. Others are familiar, through previous primary school experience, with teaching initial English mother tongue literacy but are unsure about how to address the complicating factors of maturity and second/other language learning (for an exception see Ribecco 2005).

Teachers are not helped by some simplistic approaches to mother tongue literacy teaching that have permeated ESL pedagogy. On the one hand, we encountered some teachers who appeared to assume that learners can
master sound–symbol relationships ‘naturally’ through activities focused on meaning (see also Davison 2005). On the other hand, evidence exists that AMEP teachers can be narrowly focused on naming and forming letters and meaningless phonics exercises (Dumenden, 2007). Clearly, ongoing professional development in this area is required, as requested by the teachers we interviewed, a request also routinely responded to by the AMEP Research Centre.

Promoting literacy development also requires reading materials. A recurring theme in our interviews was the scarcity of appropriate readers for this group. Existing materials were reported either to assume established literacy or to be babyish. Although older adults, especially those with children, were said to be less resistant to readers for young English mother tongue speakers and may welcome them for use with their own children, young people were described as rejecting anything that appears childish.

Another reported gap is materials at appropriate English and literacy levels that are directed to basic school-based knowledge, including ‘learning how to learn’. At the time of our interviews, AMES Victoria teachers were working on developing this content within the CSWE framework.

Individual teacher-made materials for these learners were the main – and sometimes the sole – resource in the centres we visited. On this point, one teacher stated:

If you really want to deliver a quality program with these students, you can’t just walk in and teach. You can’t grab something off the shelf and teach. You won’t have the students there for a start in a few weeks’ time if you keep doing that.

Another commented:

The time teachers spend on this type of stuff is huge, and it’s real burn-out stuff because it is not adequately resourced.

A third reported:

[Name] and I have got a whole lot of stuff, but we never have time to finish it. We’ve got filing cabinets and there’s some great stuff that she and I have worked together on for a few years … We get to the point of delivering it a couple of times and changing it but never getting it together as a publishable piece of work … We don’t have time … We have [developed] a lot of readers. We’ve got little comprehension readers.

High-quality, innovative teacher-made materials, such as those mentioned earlier, are also regularly demonstrated at AMEP conferences. However, a constant question from audience members, which is rarely answered satisfactorily, is ‘how can we get hold of this?’ The Internet is one obvious vehicle for sharing resources and approaches. One reason that it is not fully exploited is that AMEP teachers in some centres lack consistent Internet access. Another is finding the time and professional expertise to produce sufficiently ‘finished’ products for others to use.

In response to requests for more appropriate materials for refugee youth, the AMEP Research Centre, in collaboration with a group of AMEP teachers, has produced a series of six self-contained curriculum modules (AMEP RC: 2008 Get Wise) based on the CSWE and specifically designed to meet this group’s needs and interests. A detailed listing of teaching resources suggested by teacher interviewees can be found in a AMEP Research Centre fact sheet Nicholas, Moore and Deblaquiere (2008a & b).

9.3 Out-of-class activities

Reports have drawn attention to the special benefits for refugee youth of activities beyond the classroom (eg CMYI 2007; ACTA 2005: 3). Here we consider program delivery in regard to opportunities for physical exercise and other experiences, and one obstacle – travel – that several of the teachers and managers we interviewed specifically requested be documented.

9.3.1 Physical exercise and sport

Managers and teachers pointed out that sport offers great opportunities for refugee youth to demonstrate and extend abilities and confidence. Regarding team sports, one teacher observed:

Sport can make such a difference to their lives, especially involvement with a group in a club. They learn punctuality, team work, a lot of those things they haven’t had the opportunity to be part of. They actually have to learn the consequences of letting your team down because you came 45 minutes late and the game was over.

Young men most commonly wanted to play soccer, as did some young women. Other sports were basketball, netball, table tennis and swimming. Although some young women in our focus groups rejected swimming as an option, others were keen to learn; for some, a segregated environment was required.
However, the young people in our focus groups stated that access to these opportunities was either limited or non-existent. Even AMEP centres involved in youth programs had little or no space for physical exercise, and host TAFE institutes also offered little or nothing. In Melbourne both major providers had occasional cross-centre sports days. The 2006 CMYI report (CMYI 2006: 12) notes that few AMEP courses ‘are funded to provide recreation’.

In regard to facilities outside AMEP centres, participants in one youth focus group said that they were afraid to use public parks and recreation spaces because they did not know what the regulations allowed and were afraid of attracting criticism from the general public. Mainstream sports clubs are generally inaccessible to refugee youth, according to the managers we interviewed, because of the cost of membership, uniforms and travel. Club subsidies appear to be out of the question. As a centre manager reported, local sporting clubs were already ‘bursting at the seams … They say that our students have to go through what everybody else goes through’. Joining local sporting clubs also raises social and cultural issues. As one manager said:

It’s not just a simple thing about money. It’s about kids feeling that they’re part of this network. They can’t just necessarily join a club with middle-class kids and feel part of it. If they don’t feel part of it, they won’t come. They’ve got to have kids they relate to and want to be with.

Another manager said that clubs were unprepared to make necessary cross-cultural adjustments:

We’ve got concerns about nurture if the students are just there by themselves. And we’ve been told that a lot of the clubs wouldn’t see that as their responsibility.

As a result of these issues, some managers saw it as preferable for AMEP students to form centre-based teams to play friendly games with local clubs. At the time of our interviews, no centres in our data set had pursued this possibility.

After our interviews, considerable progress occurred in Victoria. AMES Victoria completed a partnership agreement with the Australian Football League’s Western Bulldogs club. The CMYI began a comprehensive DIAC-funded initiative, which seeks to develop ‘diversity and inclusion policies and strategies’ promoting access to sport and recreation for newly-arrived refugee and immigrant young people (CMYI 2007: ii). This initiative is directed to State sporting associations, regional sports assemblies, leisure centres and local government, and can also support AMEP providers. It includes a special youth worker, a website, regular newsletters and a major report (CMYI 2007). A series of collaborative activities with various bodies, such as the Australian Football League, are now part of its calendar. We have no knowledge of parallel developments in other States/Territories.

9.3.2 Other activities

For refugee youth, out-of-class experiences play a potentially invaluable role, not only in promoting learning, but also in opening up vocational, recreational and social possibilities. Teachers involved in youth programs were particularly attuned to these opportunities, both within and beyond their centres.

The most common activity is the one-off excursion, which teachers saw as an important anchor for classroom teaching. The TAFE institutes that host many AMEP centres are another potential source of out-of-class activities, although in some settings we were told that AMEP students had little or no access to mainstream facilities. Some local councils and community groups were also described as invaluable in supporting youth activities.

Drama, art and music provide excellent opportunities for students to gain confidence in expressing themselves verbally and physically, and to give shape to their experiences (Heath 2005, Heath nd). Mounting a drama or music production can develop skills in speaking, writing, memorising, sound and light production, set building and painting, photography and making videos/DVDs/films, developing publicity material, selling tickets and dealing with the public.

One manager proposed that camps for young refugees could assist in addressing social and civic issues, providing physical exercise and extending skills as follows:

We know that if we ask people to come to an information session, they won’t come. But they will come to an activities camp. A camp would be the ideal place for the police to come and pass on all sorts of information, while the young people are having fun and doing all sorts of activities.
9.3.3 Travel

Managers and teachers reported travel costs to be a major barrier to activities beyond AMEP centres. In the capital cities, travel allowances were said to be insufficient even for essentials such as attending classes and appointments with Centrelink, counsellors and health workers. Where public transport is limited and shopping malls are out of walking distance from AMEP centres (eg in outer Melbourne and Brisbane suburbs), visits to supermarkets to teach shopping and other basic skills are virtually impossible. Insufficient travel resources also restrict sporting and other out-of-class activities, including shared-delivery supplementary classes (Chapter 8, section 8.2) and pathways preparation (Chapter 10, sections 10.2.2 and 10.2.3). Activities outside centres were said to depend on centres paying for travel or on money-raising ventures such as the coffee shop described in the example box above.

9.4 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

This age, experiences and aspirations of refugee youth were described as requiring distinctive content in regard to living in Australia, school-related knowledge skills and pathways preparation. Similarly, teachers described these youth as requiring a distinctive style of teaching, which carefully stages and constantly recycles content but simultaneously is briskly paced, high energy and involves diverse activities.

A division emerged in teacher perceptions of the appropriateness of the CSWE framework for this group. Realising and extending the CSWE’s potential will require ongoing professional and materials development, incentives to support and promote resource sharing across the AMEP, a greater sensitivity in performance audits to learners with minimal/no previous schooling, and further development of pre-CSWE and CSWE I outcomes specifications. Ongoing professional development is required in regard to teaching basic literacy skills.

Resources to support the teaching of refugee youth are slowly accumulating in the AMEP and through other organisations. However, materials that teachers make or adapt for themselves generally remain the basis for lessons for refugee youth. This process could be accelerated if ways could be found, first, to bring teacher-made materials for this group to a distributable standard and, second, to facilitate their exchange. Increasing teacher access to the Internet would assist teacher exchanges, and sponsoring materials development fellowships would be another means of enabling teachers who are skilled material writers to share their work.

Young people in both youth-specific and mixed-age classes require and benefit from out-of-class activities and concrete experiences that complement, consolidate, extend or are the actual basis for classroom
learning. These experiences are also the most effective and efficient means of orienting learners to Australian society. However, if adjunct activities are to be a regular feature of program delivery for this group, providers need support in seeking them out and developing them. Finding ways to cover the costs associated with travel would remove a major barrier. Likewise, barriers to cooperation between AMEP centres and host TAFE institutes in allowing AMEP clients, particularly young people, to access mainstream activities and facilities could be identified and addressed. The CMYI Multicultural Sport and Recreation Project in Melbourne offers a model that might be explored in other States/Territories.
Chapter 10

Program delivery: Opening the door to post-AMEP pathways

As a settlement and on-arrival English language program, the AMEP is a first step towards participation in Australia's social and economic life (DIMIA 2003: 256). This chapter focuses on those aspects of program delivery specifically directed to assisting young people initially registered for the SPP400 in their next step along this pathway.

The word ‘pathways’ conjures up an image of a clearly marked route from one place to another. However, managers and teachers depicted these young people's post-AMEP experiences as falling down ‘cracks’ or disappearing into ‘black holes’. These perceptions are supported by the CMYI report (2006: 12), which describes ‘an area of growing concern’ about the ‘few established education pathways’ to meet the specific needs of older refugee youth (see also Dodd 1996; RYPT Working Group 2005: 8; RRAC 2006: 9).

The lack of clearly established pathways is paralleled by the lack of systematic data on the pathways actually taken by this group. The RYPT Working Group (2005: 9) points out that this lack ‘hinders the effective planning of educational pathways for refugee young people’ (see also REPP 2007: 6). Similarly, AMEP providers have little hard evidence to guide this aspect of their programs.

This chapter first outlines post-AMEP pathways options for young people in the SPP400/AMEP, as described by our interviewees and in other research. In the light of this information, we document the different ways in which pathways assistance is delivered.

10.1 Current pathway options

The main post-AMEP options available to those registered for the SPP400 are:

1. entry to the work force
2. entry to mainstream education or vocational training
3. further English and literacy training in the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP)
4. bridging studies that combine ESL with other educational or vocational content.

We consider each of these options in regard to their feasibility and desirability for this group.

10.1.1 Entry to the work force

Newly arrived refugees of working age, especially young men, are highly motivated to enter the workforce in order to support their families both locally and overseas (Chapter 4, section 4.5). In regard to those from Africa, the conference report *African resettlement in Australia* (African Think Tank Inc 2007: 30) states:

In African culture, it is critical for a man to have a job. Without work, he is deemed to have failed. The same does not apply to women, who are free to work or be homemakers.

The teachers, managers we interviewed and participants in AMEP National Forums pointed out that some young single mothers with children also want to work, some from necessity.

At the time of finalising this report (late 2007), government policy favoured refugee new arrivals’ rapid entry to the workforce. This emphasis was made clear to participants at the October 2006 AMEP National Conference by the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, who criticised ‘the growing sense of “time your time, take your time”’ and foreshadowed exploring new ‘ways in which early entry to the workforce becomes a priority’ (Robb 2006: 11, 15). Similarly, at the April 2007 *African Resettlement in Australia* conference the then-Minister for Workforce Participation spoke of the need to encourage refugees to engage with Job Network agencies ‘shortly after their arrival in Australia’ (Stone 2007: 23). Participants at the November 2006 AMEP National Forum reported in discussions that SPP400/AMEP clients were being refused Centrelink exemptions from job-searching (and therefore a living allowance) after 13 weeks in their courses, although their entitlement is for approximately a year’s ESL tuition. At this Forum and the October 2006 AMEP Conference, AMEP managers and teachers reported to us that they had been told that the current 510 hours of intensive English language tuition was too prolonged and that clients should be encouraged to exit into employment as quickly as possible.

The teachers and managers we interviewed gave examples of employment obtained by former SPP400/AMEP...

Even low-skilled jobs can be closed to those with English and literacy at pre-CSWE/CSWE I level. For example, a presentation at the 2006 AMEP National Conference that investigated actual on-the-job literacy tasks reported that commercial cleaning required understanding labels, instructions and cautions on cleaning agent containers, notes and instructions for the shift, and information on confidentiality, security and emergency procedures such as a power failure (McKay & Martin 2006). The CMYI and SELLEN report (2004: 24) points out that:

Success rates for refugee young people appear to be low, particularly in finding jobs in the service industry where most Australian youth tend to work (for example, in supermarkets, restaurants etc). Some of the recurring reasons given for this lack of success included: poor English language skills, different interaction styles working against young people from certain cultural backgrounds during interviews, lack of understanding of the employment system, limited networks, and racism.

Nevertheless, evidence from AMEP providers suggests that employment in some low-skill areas is possible where those with minimal literacy and English are supported through work experience programs (see section 10.2.3).

Irrespective of current labour shortages, and even without the handicaps of minimal education and English, young adults/adolescents are vulnerable to unemployment. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show 15–25 year olds with double the unemployment rate of those over 25 (cited in Mission Australia 2006: 1–3). These figures indicate that in 2005, 14.3 per cent of 15–19 year olds and 6.7 per cent of 20–24 year olds were unemployed, compared to 3.6 per cent of those 25 or older. Further, youth unemployment is likely to be long-term:

37 per cent of teenagers and 32 per cent of young adults who were unemployed at August, 2005, had been so for more than six months. Of this group, 8 300 young adults had been unemployed for more than two years.

An AMEP manager summed up the issue:

The younger ones need training if they’re going to get any kind of a job – they need training and qualifications to get into jobs, and they need the language skills to do the training.

Research shows that the most productive time for learning English is shortly after arrival (Condelli et al 2003). Experienced Australian ESL teachers, including the researchers in this project, remember the difficulties they experienced in teaching long-resident, retrenched immigrant workers during the recession in the early 1990s: these learners made minimal progress because their English had fossilised and they lacked motivation.

As shown in Chapter 3, once settled in AMEP classes, refugee youth persist with them. Teachers’ reports confirm that they are generally ‘committed to their education and grateful for the opportunities Australia has to offer’ (Coventry et al 2002: 45). Their persistence itself marks the belief that education is a more valuable pathway than immediate work. One teacher described her students’ reaction to Centrelink letters:

The students are bamboozled after they get these letters from the Job Network providers and Centrelink. It’s like, ‘What do they want me to do? I don’t know how to do a job here.’ They get these letters from the Job Network provider saying you must come in for an interview and you must get a job by this date. And they’re like, ‘A what?!’ And you can understand that. They’re told that they must get a job and they don’t have the means of getting a job. It would be good if somehow that bridge could be crossed a bit more.

In the economic climate at the time of finalising this report, entering the workforce soon after arrival was feasible to a limited extent for these young people. However, we conclude that this pathway is contrary to their best interests and fails to capitalise on their aspirations and potential. Equally, it does not support an economy in need of skilled workers, and, in creating a group that is vulnerable to unemployment, undermines social cohesion. Nevertheless, our data in Chapter 3 suggest that either low-skilled work or unemployment is the most likely option for those with minimal/no schooling on exiting the AMEP.

10.1.2 Entry to mainstream education or vocational training

Direct entry from on-arrival ESL programs into mainstream education and training appears to be out of the question for young people with the levels of literacy and English documented in Chapters 3, 4 (section 4.2) and 5 (section 5.3). Regarding post-AMEP entry to TAFE courses, one manager said:
You can’t just let them loose in mainstream TAFE because they fail and drop out. I’m sure if you looked at the retention rates, they would be dismal. It can take two years of customised programs before setting them loose in the mainstream.

The RYPT Working Group report (2005: 5) states:

Refugee young people who have been learning English for one or two years may not have sufficient English literacy skills to successfully access appropriate post-compulsory programs directly and would require special ESL access courses at secondary or tertiary level to develop their literacy skills.

Other reports support this statement (eg CMYI and SELLEN 2004, CMYI 2006).

10.1.3 Further English and literacy learning in the LLNP

The LLNP, which is funded through DEEWR (formerly DEST), is open to those registered as job seekers with Centrelink. In some centres where providers had both AMEP and LLNP contracts, managers and teachers told us that LLNP eligibility was not a problem for those previously registered for the SPP400. Elsewhere, most in this group were deemed ineligible because, as one manager said, ‘they are nowhere near ready for work’.

Women with childcare needs can find accessing the LLNP difficult. Managers told us that, because the program does not fully fund childcare, it creates a situation where those who cannot afford childcare cannot seek work and are therefore ineligible for LLNP tuition. An AMEP advisor described the reaction of women needing childcare, including young mothers, when they complete their tuition entitlements:

They are extremely keen to continue on the pathway of learning, very upset when their hours are finished, especially the ones who have young children. I have a lot to do with them because I organise the childcare. So then when their hours are coming up, I have to tell them, ‘Sorry, the childcare’s not available any more, your hours are finished now’. And the majority, they’re very upset: ‘Oh, but I want to keep studying’.

The ease of transition between the SPP400/AMEP and LLNP appears to vary. Where different providers hold AMEP and LLNP contracts, managers and teachers said that the procedures, disruption and sometimes waiting periods discouraged some young people. An AMEP manager in a TAFE institute where AMEP and LLNP contracts were separately administered reported this same problem. In contrast, in a centre that ran both AMEP and LLNP classes the manager said that students hardly noticed the transition and sometimes even remained in the same class with the same teacher.

Whether or not individuals are deemed eligible for the LLNP, some teachers and managers described LLNP courses as unsuitable for these young people. In one location LLNP courses were described as assuming that clients were job-ready but simply needing help with:

How to do your CV and a little bit about how to use a computer. The LLNP is about how to get a job – that's really what Centrelink is about, it's not for further education.

Similarly, the host TAFE institute for another LLNP course did not see actually teaching work skills as relevant:

In the LLNP, teachers would love to teach them work skills; take them to a workshop, learn about cleaning/sewing jobs. Is the TAFE utilised for this? We can’t. There’s just so many rules and regulations.

We are not aware of any youth-specific LLNP classes. Rather, since LLNP classes are also open to English mother tongue speakers, classes may have an even more diverse mix of ages and learning needs than in the AMEP. The deficiencies refugee youth perceive in regular AMEP classes also apply to their perceptions of the LLNP in regard to shorter hours, mixed age groups, classroom dynamics and limited content (Chapter 8, section 8.7).

In practice, although our data indicate that the LLNP is an unsatisfactory option for this group, in places other than Melbourne and Hobart it was said to be the only way that completing low literacy clients, including young people, could continue literacy and English tuition.

10.1.4 Bridging studies

All interviewees agreed that the most appropriate post-AMEP pathways for young people are programs that target their distinctive English, literacy and other educational needs, and lead into mainstream education and/or vocational training. This view is supported by other reports. For example, the CMYI report (2006: 22) recommends funding for ‘bridging courses in mainstream school and TAFE environments to provide additional assistance towards literacy in between intensive assistance and mainstream education … for refugee young people with lower level literacy’ (see also ACTA 2005: 8; REPP 2007: 6, 25). The fact that the most desirable option is generally the least available does not assist AMEP providers in delivering pathways preparation.
Melbourne providers described several bridging options that have been developed for refugee youth:

- the Foundation VCAL, which is offered in some high schools and TAFE institutes, and is a recognised end-of-school credential (see also REPP 2007: 25)
- the YAMEC at NMIT (see the ‘YAMEC’ example box in section 10.2.3)
- accredited TAFE courses run by AMES Victoria and some TAFE institutes, which meet the required outcomes for various certificates (eg in Children’s Services) and are customised to provide extra ESL support.

We also learned that:

- some school programs offer a special Year 10 with additional English and maths and a more practical Year 11 subject (REPP 2007: 25)
- the Victorian University of Technology offers a three-year program in the Year 12 Victorian Certificate in Education, which prepares students for university entry.

In other locations where we conducted interviews, AMEP managers and teachers were unaware of similar programs.

10.2 Opening up post-AMEP pathways

In our data set, we identified three ways in which AMEP providers deliver pathways preparation:

- individualised advice, counselling and transition support
- teaching resources and activities directed to pathways
- programs that incorporate pathways.

10.2.1 Advice, counselling and transition support

Individualised advice to young people on potential pathways from the AMEP comes most directly from AMEP learning advisors/counsellors. Others may also contribute: individual teachers, MRC youth workers, youth mentors within and beyond ethnic communities, and the proposed youth support coordinators (DIMA 2006b).

This advice occurs both in placement interviews (Chapter 7, section 7.1) and appointments near the end of tuition hours. Managers explained that learning advisors part-time employment and heavy case loads limited these appointments. Some focus group students stated that the advice they were receiving was both minimal and too general to be helpful. Information overload is likely if clients only have access to one or two appointments (Chapter 5, section 5.4).

At the time of our interviews, TELLS in Queensland, in conjunction with mainstream TAFE personnel, was preparing hard copy and online pathways materials to support initial placement and counselling exit sessions. The information was locally specific and included simplified materials on the kinds of jobs and salaries that follow from TAFE courses.

Face-to-face networking can crucially assist providers in advising on and finding pathways for young people. In Victoria we were told of the invaluable role played by Local Learning and Employment Networks, which the RYPT Working Group report (2005: 7) describes as ‘an example of an important coordination point for local education pathways for vulnerable learners, such as refugee young people’.

Overall, however, the lack of viable pathways for these young people is frustrating for AMEP counsellors. One explained:

The only thing we can do is tell them about the Job Network. But we can’t actually even do that formally. Because if they’re not genuine jobseekers, we shouldn’t be sending them there to register as genuine jobseekers, in order to get a course ... Obviously you want to find a place for them. Where are they going to go with these still low-level skills they’ve got? You’ve got your community classes. In [name of place] there’s an evening college or something like that. Not ideal. But they’re out in the big wide world with everybody else and with some advice that it’s a good idea to register with Centrelink. And hopefully Centrelink will refer them on to an LLNP if that’s what they need.
Example – ‘Don’t just tell us – show us the way’

An African community group representative made this blunt request at the Hobart 2006 AMEP National Forum. An example of a scheme that shows the way is Victoria’s State-funded Managed Individual Pathways Scheme (MIPS). A teacher we interviewed described the MIPS as supporting students and helping them break down the barriers to education and employment. The scheme began in high schools for Years 10, 11 and 12 students (not specifically immigrants) and, following NMIT advocacy, was extended to TAFE students aged 18–21. However, because the MIPS is State-funded, those outside the TAFE system cannot access it.

A MIPS worker visits NMIT youth classes weekly and also assists individuals to plan pathways, get part-time work and find (and pay for) childcare. The worker also negotiates places in post-AMEP programs for individuals. A teacher we interviewed described the MIPS worker supporting her class as follows:

She's actually a qualified counsellor. She's extremely caring and takes on a lot of extra work. So she does a lot of hand holding and taking them to places. As well as doing the pathway stuff, she'd do anything relating to any problem they were having basically.

The national Job Placement Employment and Training program is described in similar terms to the MIPS but we have no information on whether and how it applies to those in the SPP400/AMEP. The recommendation for youth support coordinators (DIMA 2006b) appears to envisage a similar form of assistance. Information on support strategies and frameworks for potentially disengaged youth across Australia can be found at http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/stepping/recommendations/about.htm#footprints and http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/JPET.

10.2.2 Teaching resources and activities directed to pathways

The significance of post-AMEP pathways for the AMEP is evident in presentations at AMEP National Conferences, where innovative and diverse quality initiatives are routinely demonstrated (see AMEP National Conference 2005, 2006, 2007). These approaches are generally pitched at higher CSWE levels in accordance with the English and literacy demands of most pathways, although, in line with the policies just mentioned (section 10.1.1), providers are also developing resources for lower levels (for example, McKay & Martin 2006).

In some centres, teaching includes activities in which all students list their pathway goals and regularly review the steps taken towards them. Where resources permit, some youth programs include excursions to education, training and work venues (Chapter 9, section 9.3.2). Some adjunct activities have also introduced students to people who can assist with or offer pathways. Along similar lines, AMES Victoria (Noble Park) has run training and employment ‘expos’ that are attended by a variety of organisations, including local TAFE institutes, the CMYI and various employment agencies.

An advantage of youth classes is that they can make pathways a central and coherently tackled concern. In some classes we visited, teaching content is integrated with briefing sessions from outside advisors, educators, employers and youth mentors. We observed one class using Internet searches to investigate education and previous employment experience requirements for particular occupations, and to evaluate their advantages and disadvantages.

10.2.3 Programs that incorporate pathways

In addition to preparing for an essentially undefined and uncertain future after the AMEP, some youth programs proactively open up viable and worthwhile pathways for their students. We encountered two different ways in which this occurred:

- programs incorporating elements that can lead, more or less directly, into education pathways (see the ‘Incorporating work experience’ example box below)
- on-arrival ESL classes that are themselves components of an integrated ongoing pathway (see the ‘YAMEC’ example box below).

Both these program types require collaboration between AMEP providers and other bodies, particularly in the shared delivery arrangements described earlier (Chapter 8, section 8.2).

AMEP centres located in TAFE institutes have post-AMEP pathways at their doorstep. As one teacher said, ‘The beauty of doing your English in a TAFE is that then you’ve got assistance and often connections to be able to get
into other courses’. If not on TAFE campuses, AMEP providers can still collaborate with TAFE institutes and other VET providers. We discovered considerable variation in the degree to which these possibilities were realised. Some AMEP centres we visited were on TAFE campuses where AMEP students had access to the host institute’s computer and library facilities, through which they gained their first experiences in negotiating a large educational institution and its requirements. Visits to workshops and other parts of the institute were also part of the SPP400/AMEP in some of these programs. On other TAFE campuses, we were told that AMEP students had no access to these facilities. Some centres had attempted to develop contacts between AMEP students and the wider institute but had been unsuccessful. Through other research projects, we know that AMEP centres can be located off-campus, which can also minimise interaction with the host institute.

In addition to this kind of ad hoc contact, some AMEP centres (on and off TAFE campuses) have more substantive collaborative arrangements with TAFE institutes. Together with Kangan Batman TAFE (Broadmeadows), AMES Victoria had developed ‘taster’ modules in carpentry, electronics and desktop publishing. Classes were prepared jointly by AMES personnel and specialist TAFE teachers, and taught in institute workshops. Teaching was pitched at CSWE I level and above, and, as a manager explained, allowed students to:

Study something at a more practical level and do some limited theory, which eventually they’ll be able to get through, and then move through to the higher academic level, once they’ve had time to develop that ability to think more analytically and to understand processes etc.

Although we have argued that direct entry to the workforce is undesirable for these young people (section 10.1.1), tailored work experience programs can support both English learning and entry to employment pathways (see also CMYI 2006: 23, recommendations 14, 15, 16 and 17), making the pathway one of mutual benefit. However, one teacher offered a caution regarding work experience, having encountered some resistance from the local community who did not accept the idea of working without pay. According to her, community members had said that ‘if you’re studying you should be in school’. Close collaboration with community-based advisors is therefore clearly important (Chapter 5, section 5.4).

AMEP provision can itself be part of an ongoing educational pathway. An example is the program we have described at Elizabeth College in Hobart, where, at the time of preparing this report, AMES Tasmania taught the CSWE as part of a wider program that led to vocational and university preparation courses in the TAFE sector (Chapter 8, section 8.2). This kind of integration offers young people an uninterrupted pathway from the SPP400/AMEP and obviates the problem of finding, and starting, a new program (REPP 2007: 25).

### Example – Incorporating work experience within the SPP400/AMEP

AMES Tasmania’s ‘Crossover’ and ‘Break the cycle’ courses integrate the CSWE with work experience, including CSWE I classes (Ebsworth 2006, 2007). Work sites have included a nursery, a childcare centre, a garden centre, a hospital and nursing homes. Students work on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, while AMEP classes on Mondays and Thursdays target these experiences. Employers reported high levels of satisfaction with trainees and, in 2006, employed two of them. Other students realised the need to pursue their English and education further.

This program’s success was reported to rest crucially on close collaboration between AMEP personnel, the institute’s work placement officers, a Job Network agency and the work placement site. Teamwork included finding suitable work experience sites, undertaking selection interviews with students, employer agreement to offer genuine entry-level training, site visits by AMEP teachers and all parties’ willingness to negotiate when problems occur.
Example – YAMEC: Integrating SPP400/AMEP provision within an ongoing pathway

The YAMEC at NMIT is a recurrently funded program that has three levels. The first level, which includes the CSWE for SPP400/AMEP students, focuses on ESL and literacy. The second level combines ESL and literacy with what a manager described as a ‘general subject-based curriculum’. The third level prepares students for entry to mainstream TAFE programs. The course also includes workshop visits and opportunities to take mini-courses that award basic VET certificates (e.g., in First Aid, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Occupational Health and Safety).

A manager explained that ‘no one is sent away once their AMEP entitlements are used’. Students can remain in the YAMEC for approximately two years. They may also withdraw and return. She continued, ‘After going for [job] interviews, they often come back because they realise the problems they face and how much more English they need’.

Another manager stated that ‘the outcomes from the YAMEC show it to be highly successful – very few kids just leave it and go home and sit’. The course opens up a full range of vocational and academic possibilities, while allowing students to test out and modify their aspirations in a supportive, guided learning environment.

Managers and teachers gave the following examples of pathways through the YAMEC.

A young Somali woman ‘literally couldn’t hold a pen’ when she entered the AMEP but ‘was very, very focused on learning’. She spent two years in the AMEP/YAMEC, another year at the next YAMEC level, gained a basic certificate in aged care, and then employment as an aged care attendant.

Computer classes in the AMEP/YAMEC (two hours per week) were described by a manager as allowing entry to ‘Certificate 2 in Computer Studies here which leads on to the Certificate 4 which will then go on to a Diploma’.

Successful completion of the YAMEC allows entry to the VCAL and the Academic ESL Program for Young Adults, both offered at NMIT. In 2006 two young people who had begun in the AMEP were in the Academic ESL Program, which leads to university entry.

A manager reported that YAMEC teachers were currently working on including traineeships:

What we’re trying to get our students into at the moment – we haven’t had much luck but we’re determined to crack it – is traineeships. Because they’d earn decent money, because often they’ve got other family members over in this country or at home, to support. So, they’ve got to earn reasonable money. A traineeship means that they will work and get paid at the same time. And it will be on-the-job training and perhaps one or two days at TAFE a week. It can be in trades, it can be administration, community work, hospital work, lots of things. At the end of the traineeship, you end up with a qualification, as a qualified person. Traineeships usually take three years.

Asked how this kind of integration was possible, another manager replied, ‘It’s something about the language department being integrated with all the mainstream courses. The other pathways, the other programs, are right there. It’s so important.’

10.3 Conclusion: Summary and discussion

Because the AMEP must ultimately be judged with reference to its success in assisting new arrivals towards participation in Australia’s social and economic life, preparation for pathways beyond the AMEP is a key element of program delivery. However, pathways preparation for those registered for the SPP400/AMEP is difficult for reasons that lie beyond providers’ control: feasible and desirable pathways for this group are limited and data are lacking on the pathways they actually take.

In regard to pathways options, transient, low-skilled employment was possible in some cases. However, we argue that it is undesirable because it fails to realise these young people’s potential and leaves them vulnerable to later unemployment. Entry to mainstream education and training following just one year’s ESL tuition is not feasible for those with the English levels described in Chapter 3, as our own and other research has documented (Chapter 4). Access to continuing language and literacy tuition in the LLNP depends on local interpretations of eligibility criteria, does not cater adequately for young mothers, and does not meet most young people’s requirements in regard to content, class dynamics and tuition hours. The most desirable post-AMEP pathways – namely, bridging courses that combine ESL, basic education, and pathways into mainstream employment, education and training – appeared to be the least available.
In our data set, preparation for post-AMEP pathways for young people registered for the SPP400 consisted of:

1. individualised advice, counselling and transition support
2. teaching resources and activities directed to pathways
3. youth-specific AMEP courses that either:
   • incorporate pathways to a greater or lesser extent, or
   • are themselves a first step in an integrated pathway.

The lack of well-defined pathways was reported to make individualised counselling difficult and time consuming, and similarly limited possibilities for targeted teaching resources and activities. Among the providers we interviewed, preparation that incorporated pathways could consist of:

- experience of TAFE institute facilities (e.g., computer labs and library); workshop and other visits
- ‘taster’ courses or modules in TAFE institutes, including some basic vocational certificates
- AMEP classes combined with work experience, developed in collaboration with a host TAFE institute, work experience officers and a Job Network provider.

In two cases, SPP400/AMEP provision was itself part of a pathway whereby:

- the CSWE was delivered concurrently as one component of another program
- the CSWE was the first step in an ongoing program.

All these options require shared delivery arrangements between AMEP providers and other educational/VET bodies (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).

Teachers and managers reported that refugee youth with minimal/no schooling do well in bridging courses tailored to meet their needs. If such courses became more widely accessible, the SPP400/AMEP is well-positioned to deliver tailor-made pathways preparation and thus become an effective gateway for this group into further education, training and worthwhile employment.
Part 4

Conclusion and recommendations

This final part sums up our findings in relation to the project aims and presents our recommendations.
Chapter 11

Conclusion and Recommendations

This project investigated how the SPP400/AMEP is delivered to humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with seven years’ or less schooling. In line with the project aims, we have documented delivery options from provider and client perspectives, evaluated these different options, examined urban, rural and regional differences where possible, and, throughout the report, have related our findings to other research in this area. Our data came from the ARMS database and interviews with the seven main AMEP providers in the eastern States and the Australian Capital Territory, who volunteered as participants. This chapter reviews our findings as they relate to each aim and presents our recommendations.

11.1 Documenting feasible and desirable program options

We defined ‘modes of delivery’ as referring to the ways in which the SPP400/AMEP is provided to humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with seven years’ schooling or less. Delivery occurs mainly through class groups, although pastoral support and pathways advice also occur individually. Different delivery options were identified in regard to types and locations of classes, class sizes, weekly tuition and supplementary hours, program content, adjunct activities and pathways preparation. Pastoral support and placement procedures were roughly similar across providers.

The most significant difference that emerged in SPP400/AMEP delivery options for this group is between placing young people in specially targeted youth programs or in regular mixed-age classes. Youth-specific programs allow contact hours, content and pathways preparation to be tailored to meet ESL, educational and socio-emotional needs, which our interviews and ARMS data show to be distinctive for this group of learners (Chapters 3 and 4). Where mixed-age classes are the only option, after-class activities, special modules and ILC access can, to a limited extent, target youth needs. A further option for youth classes developed by one provider supplements the CSWE with ‘taster’ units that are taught in a mainstream TAFE setting. These units introduce students to vocational training and are jointly devised by AMEP and TAFE teachers.

None of these options conforms to the DIAC website description of the SPP400 in late 2007 when this report was being finalised – in our data set we found no separate pre-AMEP programs for humanitarian entrants aged 16-24 years with seven years’ or less formal school, offered in ‘an informal environment’ (often ‘a community setting’), and taught by teachers specially trained to work with humanitarian entrants (Chapter 1, section 1.2). The reason given by the AMEP managers and teachers we interviewed was that forming pre-AMEP SPP400 classes was not feasible, because of insufficient numbers in any one centre at any one time. Further, according to both these interviewees and other studies that we consulted, informal teaching and the small groups and limited hours initially required by DIMA guidelines were considered undesirable (see Chapter 7, sections 7.2 and 7.3), because most refugee youth want an on-arrival program that ostensibly approximates mainstream schooling (Chapter 5). Exceptions to this pattern of preferences were some young mothers and those in employment.

Our interviews and evidence from other research indicate that the desire for mainstream schooling has led unspecified numbers in the 16 – 24-year-old age group to enrol in schools, either directly or via an IEC (Chapter 5). Our own and other research provide grounds for concluding that, in most cases and unless schools make major adjustments, attending school is neither feasible nor desirable for post-compulsory school-age refugees with minimal/no schooling, because school structures and age-based educational and social assumptions lead to this group being placed in Year 10 classes, not coping with lesson content and dropping out. This same research also reports that even schools with long histories of provision for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds are under stress in attempting to support this group (Chapter 5, section 5.3).

These difficulties have led some schools to request AMEP providers to deliver the CSWE on school sites. However, in our data set only one example had proved feasible in a school/senior college.

In contrast to the situation in schools, AMEP centre programs that are tailored to meet the needs of post-compulsory school-age refugee youth with minimal/no schooling appear to be both feasible and desirable from both young people’s and providers’ perspectives. At the time of our interviews in 2005–06, these classes were relatively rare and, with one exception, were all in Melbourne because, as with SPP400 classes, numbers in other locations were insufficient to form separate classes. Subsequently, special youth classes in the centres we visited have increased (from approximately five to eleven) in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. In the latter
two locations, managers told us that the discussions and interactions in and around this research project had assisted these developments. In Brisbane the desirability of these classes was reported to have become apparent to young people – and therefore increased their feasibility – following the appointment of AMEP community liaison officers, who work closely with their school counterparts. Support from school authorities was also described as crucial.

11.2 Evaluating different options: Consequences for students and providers

Table 25 summarises the consequences of different program delivery options within the AMEP for students, teachers and centre managers in our data set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program option</th>
<th>Refugee youth</th>
<th>Consequences for:</th>
<th>Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Youth-specific programs including supplementary activities</td>
<td>(i) targets youth learning trajectories, learning needs, aspirations and interests</td>
<td>Requires: (i) teaching mixed proficiency levels, at least initially</td>
<td>Requires: (i) suitable teacher(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) optimises class dynamics</td>
<td>(ii) developing almost one’s own teaching resources</td>
<td>(ii) staffing consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) promotes rounded physical, social and emotional development</td>
<td>(iii) high-energy teaching</td>
<td>(iii) resourcing small classes until program gains credibility with refugee youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iv) allows pathway options to be more readily explored and evaluated</td>
<td>(iv) organising and participating in out-of-class activities</td>
<td>(iv) separate timetabling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(v) can provide full school days</td>
<td>(v) assuming above normal out-of-class pastoral responsibilities</td>
<td>(v) sufficient classrooms to allow after-hours ILC access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(vi) may be integrated within ongoing pathways.</td>
<td>(vi) enjoying this type of teaching.</td>
<td>(vi) resources to fund travel for excursions and sport etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Offers: (vii) considerable professional fulfilment</td>
<td>(vii) in some centres, separate budgets for differently funded students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(viii) opportunities to target teaching to youth needs.</td>
<td>Offers: (viii) scope to attract extra assistance and resources for special activities and projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Youth-specific programs without supplementary activities

As for Option 1 re (i) and (ii)
- (iii), (iv) and (vi) more limited
- (v) not available.

As for Option 1, except for (iv).

As for Option 1 except for (v) and (vi).

Table 25: Consequences of different modes of SPP400/AMEP delivery for students, teachers and centre managers.

Cont ....
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program option</th>
<th>Refugee youth</th>
<th>Consequences for:</th>
<th>Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Mixed-age classes with supplementary ILC hours and other activities</td>
<td>(i) provides intensive ESL (ii) reported to slow down learning; does not target youth needs and potential (iii) provides full school day (iv) does not provide targeted pathway preparation.</td>
<td>(i) allows relatively homogeneous English levels in the classroom (ii) can complicate lesson pacing and class dynamics (iii) less professionally satisfying because of consciousness of unmet needs.</td>
<td>(i) sufficient classrooms to allow after-hours access to ILC (ii) resources to fund travel for excursions and sport etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mixed-age classes without supplementary ILC hours and other activities</td>
<td>As for Option 3, except for (iii).</td>
<td>As for Option 3</td>
<td>No special administrative demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shared delivery supplementary/‘taster’ classes in TAFE institutes</td>
<td>Provides: (i) hands-on experience in preparation for educational and vocational pathways (ii) specialist content with ESL support.</td>
<td>Requires: (i) extra organisation and coordination with mainstream TAFE teachers.</td>
<td>Requires: (i) staffing for non-core ESL teaching (ii) complex negotiations with another institution re funding and organisation (iii) willingness by TAFE institute to enter into these negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Delivery of the CSWE in high schools/senior colleges</td>
<td>(i) meets preference to attend school (ii) allows specialist ESL tuition (iii) may be seen as stigmatising.</td>
<td>Requires: (i) planning with school (ii) travel to school site (iii) ongoing involvement in school meetings and activities to avoid marginalisation.</td>
<td>Requires: (i) complex negotiations with another institution re funding and organisation (ii) ensuring that AMEP contract requirements are met re eligibility and reporting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: Consequences of different modes of SPP400/AMEP delivery for students, teachers and centre managers

Table 25 shows that, to the extent that different options have favourable consequences for young people, in that they target distinctive youth needs, they also make the most administrative demands. The option that most advantages young people (Option 1) also offers its teachers considerable professional satisfaction, albeit at some administrative cost. The cheapest and most administratively simple option (Option 4) takes the least account of youth needs.
11.3 Urban, rural and regional differences

A key difference between urban and rural settings in 2004–06 was in the numbers of learners registered for the SPP400: the majority was concentrated in the capital cities, with only six per cent of registrations in rural areas (Chapter 2, section 2.5). Nevertheless, AMEP personnel with responsibilities in rural areas reported growing numbers of post-compulsory school-age refugee youth in rural towns, stemming from sponsorships and young men seeking work in rural industries (Chapter 4, section 4.6). In particular, Toowoomba was notable for its significant and relatively well-established Sudanese population.

This difference in SPP400 registrations relates directly to the underlying issue regarding provision for refugee youth described in section 11.1 above, namely, gaining the necessary ‘critical mass’. In rural areas and towns, small and scattered populations of refugee youth lessen the potential for special youth provision, whether in the form of full scale youth classes or less demanding special options and activities. Our interviewees with responsibilities in rural areas believed that this potential was further diminished because those arriving through sponsorships were often poorly advised and were dispersed across schools that lacked appropriate programs and support (see also ACTA 2005). These interviewees were also concerned about young rural workers having, at best, one or two hours’ AMEP tuition per week and more often none, due to long working hours, unconducive living conditions and employers’ unwillingness to participate in the WELL program.

In large urban centres, the potential for special youth provision is much greater but is variously realised. Hence the main regional differences in our data set were between State capitals.

Melbourne appeared to offer a wider range of options for refugee youth within and beyond the AMEP. Youth-specific AMEP programs in five different centres included out-of-class activities and post-AMEP pathways options based on collaboration with TAFE institutes, schools and other organisations.

In Brisbane, TELLS was also actively developing and expanding classes for refugee youth. At the time of our earlier interviews, our impression was that the environment in which TELLS operated was less responsive and contained fewer active support agencies and networks than in Melbourne. However, cooperation with the school sector in 2007 facilitated a notable growth in AMEP youth classes.

In Hobart, AMES Tasmania was also vigorously exploring various innovative program options that included refugee youth. A shared-delivery arrangement with a local senior college attracted increasing numbers in 2006. An AMEP work experience program run in conjunction with TAFE also included young people.

In Sydney, as a result of participation in this research project, ACL moved to create four youth classes in day and evening programs at three centres. In addition, support classes for youth clients began, using modules for job search and technology.

11.4 Contributing to broader academic debates

The findings from this project contribute to scholarly research on refugee youth, second/other language learning by those with minimal/no previous schooling, and general immigration issues. Our findings also complement research on refugee youths’ experiences in the school system and the particular body of work within the AMEP on refugee youth and low literacy learners.

This report is the first occasion on which recent insights into the inherent complexities of acquiring literacy in a second language have been explored from a variety of perspectives with a large Australian-based data set. Our findings of extremely slow movement across CSWE levels by those entering at the lowest level accord with other studies on school-age and adult learners in America, Canada, Britain and New Zealand and their conclusions that minimal/no prior education and literacy are key factors in determining the time needed to gain proficiency in a second/other language (Chapter 4, section 4.7). The teacher descriptions of different learner backgrounds illuminate published descriptions (eg Huntley 1992) and refine them in regard to different experiences of schooling.

This project has also indicated areas that may be worthy of further investigation; for example, gender-related issues in accessing ESL entitlements, and factors that facilitate or prevent cooperation between AMEP providers and the school sector, VET providers, employment agencies and employers. The separate tracking of those registered for the SPP400 in the ARMS database is an important and unique statistical resource for research and policy-making. Further research and development to underpin CSWE LOs would enhance this database, making it a leading-edge resource for establishing benchmarks and tracking progress in ways that have been derived from and are observable in actual ESL classrooms.
11.5 Recommendations

Our recommendations fall under the following thematic headings:

1. supporting, broadening and enhancing existing program delivery
2. improving procedures that support program delivery
3. planning for program options
4. a new initiative to meet the needs of post-compulsory school-age refugee youth with minimal/no schooling.

Prior to presenting each recommendation, we briefly summarise the evidence and arguments supporting it.

11.5.1 Supporting, broadening and enhancing existing program delivery

This report and other research we have cited establish beyond doubt that post-compulsory school-age refugee youth with minimal/no schooling make unique demands on educational provision because of their distinctive learning and settlement needs. Programs such as the SPP400/AMEP are widely acknowledged as the most effective way of preventing problems from becoming entrenched (DIMIA 2003: 321). In particular, the SPP400/AMEP plays a unique front-line role in assisting settlement by virtue of teachers’ daily contact with their students and the trust that is built from this contact.

An efficient and simple method of acknowledging the time and expertise required to program effectively for refugee youth would be to attach a ‘refugee youth loading’ to enrolments by those currently eligible for the SPP400, together with appropriate reporting and auditing procedures (cf CMYI 2006: 22). Accordingly we offer the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That a special per capita refugee youth loading be available to AMEP providers and that, in consultation with providers, DIAC refine criteria for its allocation and use to inform future tender specifications and accountability audits.

The costs attached to most other recommendations in this report, if accepted, could be included in this loading. The amounts allocated could be in proportion to the range of services a provider delivered; for example, from simply providing additional ILC hours to mounting a full youth program.

DIAC may wish to consider replacing the SPP400 with this special loading, and thereby accommodate our finding that the 400-hour Special Preparatory Program does not, in fact, exist as a ‘program’. However, such a move could lead to eliminating SPP400 registrations from the ARMS database, which would obscure crucial data on refugee youth with minimal/no schooling and run counter to numerous recommendations on this matter. Recommendation 1 should therefore be considered in conjunction with Recommendation 12 below.

Reports from providers and young people regarding fractional appointments for AMEP counsellors indicate that insufficient time is available for individualised counselling and post-AMEP pathways advice, both of which are essential elements if SPP400/AMEP delivery is to be effective. The extended provision for IHSS case workers following the 2007 Budget may have alleviated this situation but, given the front-line role of AMEP centres, we make the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That DIAC commissions a benchmarking exercise to ascertain realistic workloads – and therefore time allotments – for AMEP counsellors/advisors in centres.

As an on-arrival program for refugee youth, the mission of the SPP400/AMEP is to provide ESL learning that orients learners to Australian education, society and employment. Managers, teachers, refugee youth and other researchers see out-of-class activities (eg excursions, visits to training and educational sites, sport and physical exercise, community-based experiences and activities) as enhancing provision, effective in underpinning classroom teaching, and essential in introducing these young people to their new environment (Chapter 9, section 9.3). Such activities are easily incorporated within youth programs and can also supplement regular mixed-age classes containing young people. At minimum, out-of-class supervised ILC access should be available to meet many young people’s desire for a full school day (Chapter 7, section 7.2). Current barriers to these activities are centres’ lack of space and facilities for physical exercise, the cost of travel, and class shifts that do not permit individuals to access ILCs. We therefore offer the following recommendation:
RECOMMENDATION 3:
That DIAC consider a variety of out-of-class experiences as a routine part of AMEP delivery for refugee youth, whether or not they are in special youth classes. If such reporting requirements are not already in place, DIAC should require providers to report on this provision for refugee youth. DIAC should address barriers to out-of-class activities, especially for youth, with providers and other stakeholders.

Central to effective program delivery for these young people is preparation for post-AMEP pathways. Our interviews indicate that scope exists for improved cooperation between some AMEP and TAFE/VET providers in delivering pathways experiences, whether or not AMEP centres are located on TAFE institute campuses (Chapter 10, section 10.2.3). Our interviews also indicate that encouragement should be directed as much to TAFE institutes and other VET providers as to AMEP providers. Accordingly, we offer the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 4:
That DIAC explores with AMEP contract holders existing and potential options for promoting interaction and cooperation between AMEP centres, TAFE institutes and/or other VET providers/Registered Training Organisations. If relevant indicators are not already in place, evidence of substantive cooperation should be considered for inclusion in evaluating performance on AMEP contracts.

An issue impacting directly on the feasibility of youth programs in the AMEP – one that was identified as crucial in our interviews and at AMEP national conferences and forums – is the provision of credible, comprehensible, strategically timed and repeated advice regarding educational pathways to refugee youth, their families and communities (Chapter 5, section 5.4). Improving the quality of advice given to humanitarian entrants, including young people, before they embark for Australia and on an ongoing basis after arrival, should include:

- preparing and disseminating information that is accessible and comprehensible to people with low literacy, including using different forms and media (eg video, radio, cartoons, story-telling, drama)
- involving community advisors/elders, and using mentors (ie refugees who have succeeded in finding various pathways into education, training and employment), and ensuring that their advice is well informed
- ongoing training for IHSS, AMEP, Job Network and community advisors
- assisting private sponsors’ access to reliable advice on a continuing basis
- addressing process and staging issues; that is, the limits to which information can be digested at any one time, especially in the early stages of settlement, and especially by young people
- coordinating the advice given prior to embarkation with that after arrival (eg through improved contact between those involved at both stages; exchanging and sharing ideas; and assisting AMEP providers to improve continuity by using materials used off-shore as a basis for some of their teaching)
- ensuring that continuing quality advice on pathways in all sectors is available to young people in IECs, schools and AMEP centres.

Accordingly, we offer the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 5:
That DIAC, in consultation with the range of agencies involved in providing advice to humanitarian entrants including young people, facilitate and support ongoing improvements to the quality and consistency of this advice prior to embarkation and on a sustained basis after arrival.

A collaborative approach between schools and the AMEP to the provision of advice to newly arriving refugee youth is also required (Chapter 5). We therefore offer the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 6:
That DIAC initiates discussions with relevant authorities to produce or strengthen advice, guidelines and criteria for schools in regard to enrolling newly arrived humanitarian entrants aged 16 and older with seven years' schooling or less.
Resources for teaching refugee youth and for developing their literacy and learning-how-to-learn skills are limited (Chapter 9). Teachers reported particularly on the scarcity of suitable readers. Teachers depend largely on making their own materials and are frustrated by their lack of time to develop these to distributable standards and by the lack of opportunity to benefit from others’ work. Alleviating these problems will include:

- more effective use of online modes of distributing and exchanging resources
- facilitating AMEP teachers’ better access to the Internet
- improving ways of assisting teachers to consolidate and circulate resources they have developed with their own learners
- providing teachers who have promising, high-quality draft material with time and support to bring this material to publishable standard.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:**

That the AMEP Research Centre, in consultation with DIAC, initiates discussion and action on possible strategies to support the consolidation and distribution of teacher-made materials and teaching strategies, including for young people with minimal/no schooling.

The quality of AMEP provision and its ability to respond to particular and changing needs, such as those of refugee youth with minimal/no schooling, requires ongoing professional development for all AMEP personnel. The following issues identified in our research form a potential professional development agenda to improve teaching, pastoral support and pathways preparation for this group, whether or not they are in special youth classes. We recognise that existing professional development within the AMEP already addresses many of these issues. The listing is offered to confirm their importance in ongoing professional development offerings.

**In regard to teaching:**

- utilising and extending the CSWE framework for learners in the initial stages of literacy development
- soundly based, systematic and dynamic strategies for teaching sound–symbol relationships in English as a second/other language
- developing content (history, geography, numeracy, science and learning-how-to learn) that reflects core understandings from school curriculums for those with minimal/no previous schooling and literacy
- youth-specific settlement, welfare, health, social and consumer issues
- locating and developing reading material that targets adolescents’ and young adults’ needs, interests and aspirations
- documenting and evaluating pathways into education, vocational training and employment.

**To assist counsellors/learning advisors:**

- determining the extent of clients’ previous education
- advising prospective clients on locally available pathways from the AMEP.

**To assist all AMEP personnel:**

- responding appropriately to African varieties of English
- dealing with aggressive and other problematic behaviours
- handling situations where it is apparent that a young person’s age has been misrepresented.

Given the centrality of suggestions and recommendations for professional development in much of this report, we make the following recommendation:

**RECOMMENDATION 8:**

That planning for professional development within the AMEP include consideration of findings from this report in regard to professional development needs.
11.5.2 Improving procedures that support program delivery

Some newly arrived post-compulsory school-age refugee youth with minimal/no schooling opt to enter mainstream schools on the assumption that school is the only way to meet their aspirations. The evidence documented in Chapter 5 indicates strongly that most schools are not set up to meet this group’s distinctive English, educational, pastoral and pathway needs. However, having enrolled in the school sector, a young person is ineligible for the AMEP. The teachers, managers and young people we interviewed argued that new arrivals should not be held to initial choices with such far-reaching consequences. Further, the main constraint on AMEP centres’ ability to mount specially tailored programs to meet these young people’s needs is a lack of numbers. Accordingly, we offer the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

That eligibility requirements for the SPP400/AMEP be revised to allow those aged 16–24 with seven years’ or less schooling who have enrolled in an Intensive English Centre or school to transfer into the SPP400/AMEP (on the recommendation of their case workers or the Intensive English Centre/school principals) for up to the first term after enrolment in the school sector.

Our interviews and actual practice in AMEP centres make clear that the guidelines initially formulated for the SPP100 are inappropriate for the clients targeted by the SPP400. Pre-AMEP classes, shorter hours, smaller classes and informal teaching were reported to be neither feasible nor desirable from both young people’s and providers’ perspectives (Chapters 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, sections 4.3, 5.2, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 9.1). The following recommendation addresses these guidelines:

RECOMMENDATION 10:

That DIAC guidelines for special provision for humanitarian entrants aged 16–24 with seven years’ or less schooling take account of the fact that shorter hours, smaller groups and informal classes are neither feasible nor desirable for most in this group.

Rather than separate pre-AMEP classes, special provision for these young people would more appropriately include teachers’ aides to support class teachers; class sizes of approximately 15 students and no more than 20 students; providing a full school day and/or out-of-class activities and/or supervised access to an ILC; and, wherever possible, AMEP youth-specific class groups.

Research has shown that assessment and reporting procedures can have positive and negative washback effects on programs and teaching (Chapter 9, section 9.2; Brindley 1998; McKay 2006). Refinements are required to enable reporting that is more sensitive to actual progress by low literacy learners, including those in the SPP400/AMEP (Chapter 4, sections 4.7 and 4.8). Since 12 December 2007, the ARMS database has been amended to make it possible to trace the progression of clients from pre-CSWE to CSWE I classes. An urgent but longer-term task is to refine the pre-CSWE and CSWE I LOs to reflect what is known from research and can be observed in classrooms regarding progress for low-literacy learners, including refugee youth. A starting point and possible model exists in McKay (2007). Accordingly, we make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 11:

That the pre-CSWE and CSWE I Learning Outcomes be further developed and revised on the basis of relevant research findings into second/other language learning by those with minimal/no literacy in any language.

11.5.3 Planning and data collection

Despite their limitations, ARMS records on those registered for the SPP400 are unique in meeting the recommendations of a variety of other reports both in Australia and overseas regarding proficiency levels and gains in ESL programs (Galbally 1978: 40; RYPT Working Group 2005: 9; Howard Research 2006: 12; RRAC 2006: 21; REPP 2007: 5). This resource provides invaluable data for setting benchmarks, comprehensive tracking and formulating policy directions for ESL learners, including refugee youth and others with minimal/no previous schooling. It is imperative that the refugee youth for whom the SPP400 was instituted continue to be tracked within the AMEP. Accordingly, we make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 12:

That DIAC continue to record the details pertaining to those targeted by the SPP400 separately within
the ARMS database, whether or not the additional 400 SPP hours for humanitarian entrants aged 16-24 with minimal/no schooling is described as a ‘program’.

In Chapter 10, we noted that pathways preparation is constrained by a lack of information on post-AMEP pathways for refugee youth. This lack is also documented in other reports (for example, RYPT Working Group 2005: 9; REPP 2007: 16). We therefore offer the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 13:
That DIAC initiates discussions within appropriate authorities to produce and gain comprehensive cross-sectoral data on the educational and employment pathways for the five-year period following entry to Australia of humanitarian entrants aged 16 and older who have seven years’ schooling or less.

11.5.4 A new initiative to meet the needs of post-compulsory school-age refugee youth with minimal/no schooling

We have concluded that, within the AMEP, the learning needs of refugee youth with minimal/no schooling are best met by youth-specific programs. During the course of our interviews and subsequently, AMEP providers have demonstrated that AMEP youth classes are both feasible and highly desirable, although demanding of teachers and administrators.

This conclusion is not grounds for dismissing developments in other sectors and by other groups. Rather, given the problems that all sectors face in meeting this group’s needs and, further, given what has been achieved in different contexts within and beyond the AMEP, we believe that program delivery should attempt to consolidate and build on existing commitments and hard-won experience and achievements, no matter where they exist. Our research indicates strongly that improving program delivery for this group requires a cross-sector approach, for which AMEP providers are not alone in arguing (Chapter 5, section 5.5).

If our conclusions are accepted that classes and programs directed specifically to refugee youth needs are the best option and that other options are either problematic or undesirable, assisting providers to overcome the problems we have documented (Chapter 8, sections 8.4 and 8.5) and creating the conditions that allow these classes and programs to be extended should be a policy priority. Long-standing ‘whole-of-government’ initiatives and policies, and DIAC’s ongoing commitment to improving coordination across agencies (DIMA 2006b), provide the basis on which a simple but effective cross-sector initiative could be designed to build on existing achievements – large and small – and to encourage new initiatives. Small-scale initiatives could consist of such things as sporting and other adjunct activities, homework support, and work or community experience. They could include supplements to existing programs. More ambitious initiatives would consist of integrated programs that span any period from one to three years. They could encompass, in part or whole, an on-arrival ESL component, staged bridging courses (eg on the YAMEC model), and/or units leading into mainstream education, vocational training, apprenticeships, employment and/or higher education. The following recommendation is a central proposal arising from this research project:

RECOMMENDATION 14:
That, in addition to normal AMEP tenders, a separate set of tenders should be advertised for full- or small-scale programs for older adolescent and young adult humanitarian entrants who have seven years’ or less formal schooling. These tenders should seek submissions for programs and activities that constitute/are part of/complement all or part of an initial two- to three-year study pathway (full-time or equivalent) leading to mainstream education, vocational training and/or employment. Tenders should be open to providers already offering youth programs, as well as to those with demonstrated capacity to initiate them. They should also allow for partnerships and cooperation between providers in the AMEP, VET, school and community sectors.

We suggest that criteria for awarding these contracts should address at least the following:

- targeted pastoral support and community liaison
- targeted content and adjunct activities (including physical exercise and sport)
- concrete options and experiences that facilitate pathways into mainstream education, training and employment
• appropriate and qualified ESL staffing
• appropriate infrastructure and staffing already in place
• the demonstrated and potential capacity of providers to forge substantive linkages with existing VET providers and other infrastructure
• student travel allowances
• adequate childcare, preferably on the same site as the youth program and using bilingual childcare workers.

The tendering process should allow those tendering sufficient time and possibly modest funding for consultation with stakeholders and visits to other refugee youth programs within and between States/Territories.

11.6 Final remarks

Developing programs to meet the complex learning needs and aspirations of 16 – 24-year-old humanitarian entrants with seven years’ or less schooling is a work in progress. Australia can be proud of its long history of innovative responses to the needs of incoming settlers through programs to assist their transition into the host society. The initiative represented by the SPP400 is no exception.

Recommending effective program delivery for these young people, as for other groups, requires ongoing evaluation, taking into account the wider context and continually exploring ways in which new doors can be opened and barriers broken down. The vitality of the AMEP rests on the commitment of all involved to this constant process of renewal. The commissioning of this report was part of this process. We hope it is seen as a useful contribution.
Reference list


CMYI (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues). (2007). *Playing for the future: The role of sport and recreation in supporting refugee youth to 'settle well' in Australia*. Melbourne: CMYI.


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APPENDIX A

Details of interviews

Participating providers

State/Territory Provider

Australian Capital Territory AMEP ACT, Canberra Institute of Technology
New South Wales ACL
NSW AMES
Queensland TELLS
Tasmania TAFE Tasmania
Victoria AMES Victoria
NAC

Participating centres and groups

Canberra Institute of Technology.
ACL Auburn: Managers, assessors and other senior personnel.
AMES NSW Bankstown: Regional Course Planning Group; rural managers.
Hunter Institute of TAFE, Newcastle Campus.
TELLS, Central Office, Southbank Institute of TAFE.
Logan Institute of TAFE.
Yeronga Institute of TAFE.
Toowoomba Institute of TAFE.
Institute of TAFE Tasmania (Hobart).
AMES Noble Park.
AMES Victoria: Youth Program Managers.
NAC: Managers.
NMIT Broadmeadows.
NMIT Preston.
NMIT Collingwood.
Debney Park High School.
Department of Education and Training (Victoria), Multicultural Programs Unit.

Interview types and participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interview</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>No. of People</th>
</tr>
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<td>Individual face-to-face</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual telephone</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Manager–teacher groups</td>
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<td>Email contact</td>
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<td>Student focus groups/classes</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Focus questions for interviews

Managers and teachers

1. Do you have young people who are using or have used the 400 extra SPP hours in your centre?

2. How does the centre determine whether a young person should be given SPP hours? Are current procedures satisfactory?

3. What happens with 16-18 year olds? Is this satisfactory?

4. What do you see as these young people's learning needs?

5. Do you encounter different program needs within this group? For example, between males and females, those who are unmarried/married, those with/without children. What do you think are the really significant differences in regard to their learning needs and participation in classes?

6. Has your centre offered/are you offering any special-purpose youth classes for young people with minimal/no schooling?

If yes:
- how many hours per day and per week do classes run? (and is this satisfactory?)
- what CSWE levels are the classes at?
- what makes these classes different from regular AMEP classes?
- what factors assist in their success?
- what problems attach to them?
- what kinds of content do you teach?
- what interests these learners?
- what are priority areas?
- are there gaps in resources for this group? if so, what are priority areas for development?
- do you offer anything especially for young people in the way of content or activities?

If these students are accommodated within regular AMEP classes:
- what considerations have led to these arrangements?
- how many hours per day and per week? (and is this satisfactory?)
- what factors assist in the success of these classes?
- what problems attach to them?
- do you think special youth classes would be preferable if you had the numbers at reasonably homogeneous proficiency levels?
- do you offer anything especially for young people?

7. What is your impression of these young people's motivation, and attendance and completion rates?

8. What pathways are open to these young people once they complete their AMEP hours? What is done to assist them along these pathways? How could this be improved?

9. Do you have any cooperative arrangements with other organisations in regard to these young people? (For example, welfare/sporting/community groups/IHSS provider).

10. What out-of-class issues impact on young people's participation in AMEP classes?

11. What relationships, if any, do you have with Language Centres and/or local schools in regard to these young people?

12. How could offerings for young people be improved within the AMEP? What would you nominate as urgent priorities, as highly desirable? What could your centre do to improve provision? How could you and your centre be better supported?
13 What recommendations would you like to see made in this research report? What are your top priorities?

_Client focus groups_

1 Are you/have you been in a youth class or some other kind of class? What do you like/not like about this kind of class?
2 What sorts of things are you learning? What do you like? Is there anything you haven’t found interesting/useful? What would you like to learn? What are the places where you find it difficult to use English? What do you think is most important?
3 How many days a week are your classes? What do you think about this? How many hours per day? What time do classes start and finish? What do you think about this?
4 How could classes for people like you be improved in the AMEP?
5 Is there anything else you would like to say about your classes in the AMEP?
6 What kind of help do you need to support your learning in the AMEP?
APPENDIX C

SPP400 registrations – capital city/rural/regional locations (2004–06)

Data derived from ARMS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/town and postcode</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. clients per rural region</th>
<th>No. clients accessing SPP400 hrs</th>
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</thead>
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APPENDIX D

Numbers and locations of Intensive English Centres

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<th>State/Territory</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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(data derived from RRAC 2006: 15–21)

APPENDIX E

References and resources for people working with refugee youth

We use the term refugee youth to refer to older adolescents and young adults with interrupted formal education who have been forced to leave their countries of nationality under traumatic circumstances. For a formal definition of ‘refugee’, see http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm.

This web resource site includes links to Australian Government departments and agencies, together with international, national, and State/Territory-based databases and resources for young refugees, service providers, researchers and members of the general public who are interested in refugee youth.

The reference list combines a wide variety of perspectives and topics of concern to researchers, teachers and providers working with refugee youth, and to others interested in this area.

While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the references and resources following, the publisher apologises for any inaccuracies. At the time of publication all references and resources were up-to-date.
List of web-based resources and organisations relevant to those working with refugee youth

At the time of finalising this list (September 2008) all websites were up-to-date.

**AMEP Research Centre**

AMEP Research Centre

http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/home
A DIAC-funded centre that provides research, professional development, publications and information services to the AMEP nationally.

AMEP Research Centre:

http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/classroom_resources
http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/professional_development_resources
The AMEP Research Centre publishes and distributes a wide range of teaching, learning and research materials for professionals involved in English language education and applied linguistics.

AMEP Research Centre: Fact sheets

http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/amep_fact_sheets
Developed by the AMEP Research Centre to provide information to AMEP teachers, including country profiles and fact sheets dealing with teaching issues, such as youth in the AMEP, and strategies, such as dealing with students from different backgrounds and different cultures of learning.

AMEP Research Centre: Events

http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/events
Twice yearly AMEP forums are held at different locations throughout Australia. Each focuses around a particular issue/area in the AMEP and is normally summarised in a forum report available at this site. A number of Specialist Skills Courses are also offered via this site.

**Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and other Australian federal government departments**

Australian Development Gateway

Australian government-supported portal for sharing development information in the Asia Pacific region.

DEEWR (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations)

DEEWR homepage
DEEWR: Language, Numeracy & Literacy Programme (LLNP)

This program provides language, literacy and numeracy assistance to jobseekers at the national level.

DIAC (Department of Immigration and Citizenship)

DIAC home page.

DIAC: Annual reports

DIAC annual reports: the 2006–07 annual report is the most recent currently available.

DIAC: Building pathways: Resources to support transitions for young people from refugee backgrounds (2007)

A project of the Victorian Settlement Planning Committee, this webpage includes a good practice framework and training materials, all downloadable and aimed at improving support to young people from refugee backgrounds as they move through education, training and employment.

DIAC: Beginning a life in Australia booklets

Information on settlement services and where to go for assistance. Translated into 24 community languages.

DIAC: Fact sheets

Information fact sheets covering a wide range of immigration and settlement issues.

DIAC: Citizenship & living in Australia

Gateway to information on settling in Australia, Australian citizenship and multicultural Australia.

DIAC: Learning English with the AMEP

Entry point for the AMEP section of the DIAC website.

DIAC: Links to websites: Delivering the AMEP

Contacts for AMEP providers in each State/Territory are listed.

DIAC: Settlement planning

Information regarding the national framework underpinning settlement planning in Australia, which was implemented in 2006.

DIAC: The resource gateway (Introduction),

This web page lists key resources for teachers and organisations working with refugee youth in Victoria, developed by the Refugee Young People and Transitions Working Group of the Victorian Settlement Planning Committee.
DIAC: Resource gateway – for teachers working with refugee young people in Victoria

Links to research and education strategies for working with refugee youth.

DIAC: Settlement publications

Index site for DIAC settlement publications.

DIAC: Settlement reports

Statistics on settlement in Australia are available here on DIAC’s settlement database.

DIAC: Statistics

More statistical information.

Job Placement Employment & Training (JPET)

National network of services assisting young people who face significant barriers to education, employment and community participation.

Living in Harmony

Guide to current government-community partnerships programs.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)

http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/
A forum of State, Territory, federal and New Zealand ministers (in the areas of employment, education, training and youth affairs) with responsibility for policy development and coordination at the national level.

**Databases and resources – International**

ArtShow: Youth and Community Development

http://shirleybriceheath.com/Artshow/artshow.htm
ArtShow, to be understood as ‘arts show how’, is a resource guide and documentary video summarising results from a seven-year research study of learning in arts-based youth organisations in the United States (US). Also includes links to further relevant information.

Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) (US)

http://www.cal.org/caela/
National centre in the US assisting teachers and administrators in the adult English as a second language (ESL) sector.

Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) (US)

http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/crede/
US federally funded research and development program focused on improving the education of students from diverse backgrounds.
Development Gateway Foundation (US)

http://www.developmentgateway.org/
This Washington, DC-based website is the hub of a world-wide network of more than 50 country gateways focused on development issues initially set up by the World Bank.

Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA) (US)

http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/
US-based journal of education policy with full article access from 1993 to the present.

Journal of Refugee Studies

http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/
World-wide journal published by Oxford University Press in association with The Refugee Study Centre.

Library of Congress: Country studies

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html
Searchable database describing and analysing the history, social, political and economic systems of countries.

National Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Learning (NSCALL) (US)

http://www.ncsall.net/
US federally funded research and development centre focused on improving adult learning.

NCELA (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Education Programs) (US)

http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/
NCELA publishes a wide variety of reports covering education of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

NCELA: Directions in language and education

http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/directions/
Series of critical reflections on issues relating to education of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Ontario Metropolis Centre (previously Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement) (CERIS) (Canada)

http://ceris.metropolis.net/
A research centre on immigration and settlement composed of Toronto-area universities and community partners.

Oxford Refugee Studies Centre

http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/
Multidisciplinary centre at the University of Oxford (United Kingdom) for research and teaching on the causes and consequences of forced migration.

Refugee Survey Quarterly

http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/
A UNHCR-associated journal.
TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)

http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/index.asp
US-based TESOL professional association with global membership.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home
Gateway to United Nations information and resources on refugee issues and the UNHCR’s worldwide role in resolving refugee issues.

UNHCR: Archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/research?id=43e32a7a2
Repository for a wide range of UNHCR documentary material.

Resources and networks – Australia

National

African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)

Academic association promoting research and teaching of African studies in Australia.

Asylum Seeker News & Issues

http://asylumseekernews.blogspot.com/
Australian-based blog.

Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies

http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/
Resources website servicing youth studies in Australia.

Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA)

National TESOL body that brings State-based associations together.

community.gov.au

A federal government website to help community groups find relevant information on refugee policy, services and programs.

Community Languages Australia

This umbrella body represents ethnic schools of Australia and provides language maintenance and teaching for 69 community languages to over 100 000 school-age children in Australia.

Federation of African Communities Council

Australia-wide community advocacy organisation providing employment, health and education programs for people of African background.
Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia

Australia-wide body with an agency in every State and Territory.

Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT)

Australia-wide body with an agency in every State and Territory.

Mission Australia

Australia-wide non-denominational Christian organisation running community support programs, including initiatives focused on issues affecting disadvantaged youth.

My Future

A website maintained by State/Territory governments that contains information to assist young people in making career choices and selecting vocational pathways.

Ogaden Online

http://www.ogaden.com/aboutus.HTM
Comprehensive news and information site for the Ogaden region specifically and the Horn of Africa generally.

Refugee Council of Australia

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/
Peak independent organisation providing information and advocacy for refugee and humanitarian entrants in Australia.

Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE)

A multidisciplinary research centre, regionally based in Victoria and NSW, which conducts research into professional practice.

Sudan.Net

http://www.sudan.net/news/news.html
A current affairs and news website focusing on Sudan.

Sudanese Lost Boys Association of Australia

A non-profit organisation that provides recreational and supportive programs for Sudanese young people living in Australia.

Sudanese Online Research Association (SORA)

http://sora.akm.net.au/
Website with issues, stories and images of the Sudanese diaspora.

Sugarbag on Damper Publishing

http://www.sugarbagondamper.com/
This website publishes educational materials including those designed to help teachers working with newly arrived refugee students.
the Source

A gateway to information, programs, services, resources and entertainment for young people between the ages of 12 and 25.

Triumphant International


VOCED

http://www.voced.edu.au/
An UNESCO/National Centre for Vocational Education Research international database of research abstracts focusing on technical and vocational education and training in Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

**Australian Capital Territory**

AMEP ACT, Canberra Institute of Technology


Belconnen Community Service

Not-for-profit organisation offering settlement support to newly arrived immigrants and refugees in the Canberra area.

Companion House

http://www.companionhouse.org.au/
Not-for-profit organisation offering holistic support services to survivors of torture and trauma in Canberra.

Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan

http://www.mrccanberra.org.au
Community organisation providing settlement and related services for immigrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants in the ACT.

**New South Wales**

Australian Centre for Languages (ACL) Pty Ltd

http://www.acl.edu.au/
AMEP provider.

Australian Development Gateway: Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, NSW (STARTTS)

Not-for-profit organisation offering holistic support services in NSW to survivors of torture and trauma.
Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre
Community organisation providing settlement services to immigrants and refugees in NSW.

Community Relations Commission
NSW State Government website promoting multiculturalism.

Diversity Health Institute Clearing House
http://203.32.142.106/clearinghouse/
NSW website providing information on multicultural health issues.

NSW AMES
http://www.ames.edu.au
AMEP provider.

NSW AMES: Publications catalogue
http://www.ames.edu.au/content/publications.aspx
NSW AMES publications catalogue.

Nexus Refugee Youth Space
http://www.nexusproject.net.au/
A blog for refugee youth, sponsored by NSW AMES, which incorporates an interactive forum, as well as films, short articles, sound recordings and links to other sites.

University of New South Wales: Centre for Refugee Research
http://www.crr.unsw.edu.au/
An interdisciplinary research centre focusing on resettlement issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Website includes information on refugee rights, law and policy.

Youth Action and Policy Association NSW (YAPA)
An organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW.

**Northern Territory**

Charles Darwin University: LearnLink: AMEP
AMEP provider.

Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory
Peak community advocacy body in the Northern Territory representing the interests of people of non-English-speaking background.
Queensland

Brisbane Migrant English Centre (Hilton International College)

AMEP provider.

Queensland Multicultural Resource Directory

Queensland government resources directory with more than 1500 links.

Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT)

Not-for-profit organisation in Queensland offering holistic support services to survivors of torture and trauma.

Refugees Online

A Brisbane City Council project to enable refugees to access the Internet.

TAFE Queensland English Language and Literacy Services (TELLS)

AMEP provider.

South Australia

Australian Refugee Association

http://www.ausref.net/
Not-for-profit organisation helping refugees settle in Australia.

Government of South Australia: Office for Youth

State agency responsible for developing youth policy in South Australia.

LM Training Specialists

AMEP provider

Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia

www.users.bigpond.com/mrcsa
Community organisation providing settlement services to immigrants and refugees in South Australia.

Multicultural Communities Council of SA

http://www.multiwebsa.org.au
Peak advocacy body representing culturally and linguistically diverse people in South Australia.

STTARS: Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service

http://www.sttars.org.au/
Not-for-profit organisation in South Australia offering holistic support services to survivors of torture and trauma.
TAFESA: English Language Services (previously AITELS)
AMEP provider.

TAFESA: ELS products
TAFESA ELS publications catalogue.

Thebarton Senior College: AMEP and New Arrivals Program
http://www.thebartonsc.sa.edu.au/
AMEP provider.

Tasmania

Archdiocese of Hobart: Centacare Tasmania
Community organisation providing support and services to refugees in Tasmania.

Colony 47
http://www.colony47.com.au/
Community organisation in southern Tasmania working with refugee youth.

Department of Premier and Cabinet: Multicultural Tasmania
State government website listing of multicultural services available in Tasmania.

Migrant Resource Centre (northern Tasmania)
http://www.mrcltn.org.au
Community organisation providing settlement services to immigrants and refugees in Tasmania.

Office of Children and Youth Affairs, Tasmanian State Government
State agency responsible for developing youth (12–25 years of age) policy in Tasmania.

Phoenix Centre
Community organisation offering support to newly arrived immigrants and refugees who have survived torture and trauma.

TAFE Tasmania: AMEP
http://www.tafe.tas.edu.au/courses/languages/amep.htm
AMEP provider.
Victoria

AMES Victoria: Learning English

http://www.ames.net.au/learn_english
AMES Victoria: Learning English

AMES Victoria: Living in Australia

http://www.ames.net.au/Australia
AMES Victoria: Living in Australia

AMES Victoria: Settle in Australia

http://www.ames.net.au/settlement
AMES Victoria: Settle in Australia

AMES Victoria: Publications

http://www.ames.net.au/shop
AMES Victoria: Publications

Brotherhood of St Laurence: Ecumenical Migration Centre

Brotherhood of St Laurence: Ecumenical Migration Centre

CEH (Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health)

CEH (Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health)

CEH: Resources produced by CEH

CEH: Resources produced by CEH

Changing Cultures

Changing Cultures

CMY (Centre for Multicultural Youth)

http://www.cmy.net.au
CMY (Centre for Multicultural Youth)

Although CMY is a Victorian-based organisation, a considerable amount of information and material on this site is useful for AMEP teachers and providers in other States and Territories. As well as information about CMY’s activities and programs, there are useful resources including translations of parental consents; materials designed as information for young refugees and immigrants; and a comprehensive listing of relevant web links and CMY publications.
CMY: Multicultural sports and recreation

http://www.cmy.net.au/MulticulturalSport/MulticulturalSportHome
Innovative multicultural sport and recreation initiative with information outlining and addressing issues relating to refugee youth’s access to recreational facilities. Also includes examples of best practice and resources kits.

CMY: Publications and resources

http://www.cmy.net.au/UsefulLinks
Comprehensive listing of websites relevant to refugee youth.

Department of Justice: Multicultural Directory

This web page contains links to a wide range of programs, services and information relating to multicultural communities in Victoria.

Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria

Peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria.

Foundation House: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST)

Not-for-profit organisation in Victoria offering holistic support services to survivors of torture and trauma.

Foundation House: Publications and resources

List of publications in the area of refugees and youth; for example, HealthWize is a health literacy teaching resource for refugee youth and other ESL students.

Geelong Ethnic Communities Council (Diversitat)

http://www.diversitat.org.au/
Community organisation providing settlement services to immigrants and refugees in Geelong.

Hotham Mission: Asylum Seeker Project

Community organisation providing free housing, casework and volunteer support to asylum seekers.

Infoxchange Service Seeker

An electronic directory of community support services across Victoria.

La Mama Theatre

Community theatre in Melbourne with an outreach program to support refugee young people’s development by working with them to develop and stage theatre performances.

La Trobe University: Refugee Health Research Centre

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rrhc/
This centre in Melbourne provides a range of activities and resources and is currently undertaking a longitudinal study of the experiences of refugee youth in Australia.
Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs)

LLENs are State Government initiatives that bring stakeholders together to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people throughout Victoria.

Melbourne Citymission

Community organisation running many youth programs.

Newly Arrived Youth Support Service (NAYSS)

http://www.cmy.net.au/NAYSS/NAYSSHome
Gateway to resources relating to the NAYSS initiative.

NMIT (Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE): AMEP

AMEP provider.

NMIT: Youth unit

NMIT youth courses, including the Young Adult Migrant English Course and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning.

SCRAYP –Youth Arts with an Edge

This strategic partnerships program works with schools in western Melbourne to support young people’s development by running performance art workshops and projects to provide opportunities and pathways for youth who may otherwise not have the chance to be involved in the arts.

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre

Community organisation providing settlement services to immigrants and refugees in Melbourne.

Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB)

http://home.vicnet.net.au/~scaab/Settlement.htm
Community organisation providing settlement services to refugee youth.

Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program

http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sail/
A community organisation that provides support and community services to the Sudanese refugee community in Melbourne.

University of Melbourne: Centre for International Mental Health

http://www.cimh.unimelb.edu.au/links/psychologists/refugee
Directory of web links to refugee support and health services Australia-wide.

Victorian Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education (VATME)

Professional TESOL association in Victoria.

Victorian Multicultural Commission: Multicultural resources directory

Online directory of local community associations and organisations in Victoria.
Opening the Door: Provision for Refugee Youth with Minimal/No Schooling in the Adult Migrant English Program

Victorian Multicultural Commission: Publications

Extensive and downloadable Victorian multicultural resources directory (in two parts).

Youth Central

A Victorian Government website for young people aged 12–25 offering information on a wide variety of issues in their areas, for example, jobs, study, travel, health, housing, legal issues, entertainment and events. It also features a web-based magazine, Youth Central eZINE.

Western Australia

Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASETTS)

Community organisation in Western Australia offering holistic services to survivors of torture and trauma.

Central TAFE

http://central.tafe.wa.edu.au/default.asp
AMEP provider.

Online WA Multicultural Communities Gateway

Directory to community service organisations in Western Australia.

West Coast TAFE

http://www.wcc.wa.edu.au/
AMEP provider.

West Coast TAFE: AMES publications

http://www.westcoasttafe.wa.edu.au/MigrantEducation/Pages/AMESPublications.aspx
AMES West Coast publications catalogue.
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Appendix E: References for Refugee Youth


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Opening the Door: Provision for Refugee Youth with Minimal/No Schooling in the Adult Migrant English Program


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