



Social Impact Report 2023



Our vision

Full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society

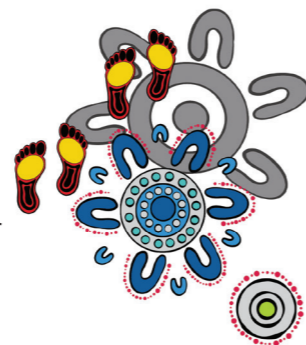


Photo above: Young people participating in community engagement program, Box Hill, Melbourne

Photo cover page: Karen-Burmese refugee Kaw Doh and his family, Nhill, Victoria

AMES Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands on which we work. We pay respects to their Elders past and present and recognise their continuing connection to country, land, waters, sky, and cultures past and present.

To the right: 'The Journey' by Brenda Mau

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Message from the CEO

AMES Australia (AMES) defines social impact as more than acquiring skills or getting a job. Social impact is what our clients tell us about significant and positive changes that improve their social connection and wellbeing. Our sixth Social Impact Report evidences that the work we do, and the way we do it, makes a positive difference to the lives of our clients.

As a Victorian statutory authority with over 70 years of serving and supporting multicultural communities, our vision – ‘full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society’ – remains at the forefront of our priorities and way of working. AMES place-based public value is realised through our commitment to local connections, local partnerships, and local communities. We continue to purposefully share the stories and achievements of our clients; align our measures with five of the United Nations Social Development Goals (SDGs) and describe specific examples of what alignment looks like in practice. SDG alignment is grounded in the context of AMES Social and Economic Participation Framework, and our strategic priorities. These continue to inform our grant and tender submissions and underpin evaluation and evidence gathering across our programs and services with examples documented in this report.

Over the past twelve months, AMES support to newly arrived people from refugee and migrant backgrounds has returned to a more familiar footing and will continue to inform our planning for the future. AMES has consolidated lessons from the disruptive years of COVID-19, and in that environment, response to the crisis influx of refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Our approach to meeting client needs is focused on emphasising their strengths and skills, and to find creative ways to empower and enable our clients to develop their assets and take an active role in their own settlement. Learning from our clients informs our service development and practice, and drives responses to government and key stakeholders on policies and practices that impact settlement outcomes.

This report advances the message that listening to, and collaborating with, our clients and their communities is key to ensuring that AMES continues to make a positive impact.

Cath Scarth, CEO AMES Australia
October 2023



AMES approach to impact and SDG alignment

AMES Social and Economic Participation Framework

AMES services, advocacy, and corporate operations are informed by our **Social and Economic Participation Framework** to achieve our goal of ‘full participation for all’. The four domains of the Framework affirm our commitment to making an impact. Aligning to relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes defining statements of impact from our operational practice.



Education

Delivering education focused on long-term, successful settlement and careers

Leads to a better skilled workforce, and a better educated Australian society.



Employment

Supporting people into sustainable, long-term employment in the right job

Leads to reduced unemployment, increased productivity and is strongly linked to success within other domains of our framework.



Health & Wellbeing

Fostering good health and wellbeing as foundations for thriving in the community

Leads to better health and wellbeing outcomes lead to greater health equity and individual resilience.



Safety & Security

Building safer, more socially cohesive communities

Leads to community impacts that include improved perception of neighbourhood safety, intercultural social cohesion and is strongly linked to improved health and wellbeing.

SDG alignment

AMES core services of settlement, education, employment, social participation, disability, and aged care services align most strongly to SDGs: **Goal 3 Health and Well-being**, **Goal 4 Quality Education** and **Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth**. AMES way of working is underpinned and compellingly evidenced in alignment with **Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals**. In this report SDG alignment has been developed for **Goal 5 Gender Equality**.

The AMES 'in practice' descriptions for each of the SDGs below provide a statement that reflects client accounts of the impact that the programs and services delivered by AMES and our partners have had on them. These are regularly reported in publications that demonstrate progress towards achieving outcomes from the AMES Social and Economic Participation Framework, strategic priorities, and professional development for staff including bystander training to raise awareness and address issues of gender inequality, and promote strategies to mitigate violence.



SDG3 – Good Health and Well-being

AMES advocates for and connects clients to health-care services specialising in the unique needs of multicultural communities; builds clients' health literacy through health information and programs; and provides specialist services as an NDIS and My Aged Care provider.



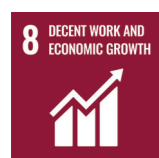
SDG4 – Quality Education

AMES is a specialist provider of foundational and vocational programs which provide inclusive, place-based, accessible and affordable education for multicultural clients and open pathways to social participation, employment, and further education.



SDG5 – Gender Equality

AMES is committed to building a workplace that is grounded in respect, fosters inclusion, promotes diversity, and embraces the unique skills and qualities of all people, particularly for women who tend to experience the greatest inequalities. AMES approach is guided by a Diversity and Inclusion Framework and a Gender Equality Action Plan.



SDG8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

AMES is a specialist provider of employment services for culturally and linguistically diverse clients, and Indigenous jobseekers in NSW. AMES advocates for sustainable work with fair pay and career opportunity for all job seekers; prepares clients for work in Australia including work-readiness through interventions and training; works with employers to connect clients to jobs which match their skills and expertise; and supports entrepreneurial aspirations.



SDG17 – Partnerships for the Goals

AMES preferred way of working is in partnership with CALD communities, service providers, and major corporate and public sector organisations to influence, broaden our reach, strengthen our delivery, and build capability.

From this broad perspective of impact the following provides a summary of AMES year of impact.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Photo above: Syrian refugees Akram and his wife Joumana in their sweets shop, Carlton, Melbourne



Education for successful settlement and careers

5,699 enrolments in accredited and non-accredited courses

1,059 of SEE students (87%) made measurable improvements in language, literacy or numeracy skills

78% overall student satisfaction

73% of VET graduates surveyed are satisfied with their job

599 young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds engaged in youth-specific activities

778 learners using MyAMES chat

87 hours of interview practice undertaken

230 AI-based personalised learning tasks completed

Educating new arrivals

1,429 children enrolled in school

3,169 adults referred to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

213,165 unique sessions accessed through AMEP online

16,500 delivery hours of AMEP online to external audiences

Mildura-based teacher received the national AMEP 'Award for Excellence' for delivering Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training through the AMEP



Satisfying, long-term employment

3,190 primarily long-term unemployed jobseekers supported into work of which:

- 1,915** transitioning jobseekers, including refugees, from previous employment service in work
- 2,048** were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 536** were from refugee backgrounds
- 606** were First Nations people, including **247** women
- 250** were women with disability

1,132 jobseekers were still in their job after **3** months

516 jobseekers were still in their job after **6** months

408 jobseekers supported into accredited training as part of their career pathway

85 young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds supported in individualised career counselling sessions

26 people with disability or their family/carers from Arabic-speaking backgrounds participated in an entrepreneurship program with **9** starting a business

64% of survey respondents from 2022 skilled migrant employability program were in work 6 months after the program; of those:

- 89%** were satisfied/very satisfied with their job;
- 33%** earned more than \$60k; 33% earned more than \$80k - compared to the median skilled migrant income of \$55k after 1 year of residence



Good health and resilience: foundations for thriving

255 donated laptops from corporate partners provided to clients in need enabling them to navigate online services

68,847 direct care hours delivered to Kare ONE clients

151 clients assisted through NDIS support coordination

43 newly arrived women attended a Women's Retreat to support social connections

24 refugees and migrants participated in swimming programs

30 refugee women referred to breast screening for the first time

22 requests from vulnerable clients to People in Need Fund



Settlement outcomes*

refugees gained the ability to apply their knowledge of:

- 4,448** the healthcare system
- 4,161** the family and social support system
- 4,620** the transport system
- 3,611** local laws and rights
- 3,611** managing money



Safe, cohesive communities

1,161 newly arrived families in leased, long-term housing

1,620 basic household goods deliveries to newly arrived families

94% of AMES staff survey respondents felt more connected with colleagues outside their team as a result of AMES internal Hub structure

37% of volunteers were professional mentors including from corporates and industry

348 volunteers available

321 volunteers assisted clients



Representing diverse communities

197 participants from diverse backgrounds at **13** community consultations, representing **12** communities

\$2,657,000 relative value of media coverage on CALD social and economic issues

2,432 broadcast and online coverage pieces

32 insights, **6** Digests covering **12** settlement topics

68 print items published in mainstream media



Social media reach

8,000 LinkedIn users and **15,000** Facebook users reached

99,000 engagements on social media

AMES leadership and influence

175 community members sharing their knowledge and experience in focus groups, informing research with **10** service providers

15 submissions to government policy inquiries

5 invitations to Australian Senate inquiries

10 cultural awareness training sessions to **112** participants from community organisations and service providers

Successful advocacy for extending eligibility:

- for Afghans and Ukrainians to access pre-accredited training in Victoria
- to include international students and partners in Jobs Victoria Employment Services

Staff member from refugee background represented Australia at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in Geneva, Switzerland

16 responses to collaboration requests for research

Successful advocacy for one-on-one interpreter language supported information sessions about new ICT systems for NDIS participants from migrant backgrounds

88% of staff rated AMES as a 'truly great place to work'

*The settlement outcomes refer to specific measures of client progress in the Humanitarian Settlement Program funded by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. Go to www.homeaffairs.gov.au for more information.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



5 GENDER EQUALITY



Our impact aligned to SDG 3

Our impact in support of **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being** is achieved through directly empowering clients to participate and thrive in the community. Here, our wellbeing impacts span interrelated SDGs – in particular **SDG 5 Gender Equality**. Our work in disability support, facilitating community activities and prevention of violence against women exemplify our broad focus on SDG 3 and closely related aspects of community cohesion, equality, and individual mental wellbeing.

We are a part of the communities we work for

7
of AMES former volunteers are now employed with AMES

76%
of our employees were born overseas

50
languages spoken across our volunteer base

70
different countries represented

Connecting newly arrived women to foster friendships

Newly arrived women tend to prioritise family needs over their own, often leading to social isolation or loneliness. AMES organised a retreat for multicultural women at Camp Manyung, Mt Eliza that gathered 43 women from 9 different countries. The retreat offered an opportunity for the women to connect with others and participate in capacity building workshops. The retreat included an information session on family violence delivered by Victoria Police, and a health information session on breast cancer, cervical cancer and general women's health conducted by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. A survey revealed that 98% of participants learnt about new cultures, and 95% made new friends.

“Language is not a barrier when we are open to new ideas and laugh together. Dance and food have no language” – AMES staff member organising the retreat

Wellbeing, safety and community cohesion

When sport unites

Sport is a great leveller, able to unify diverse communities across Australia. AMES hosted three community soccer events that brought together multicultural communities across Victoria. These comprised a ‘Welcome to Melbourne’ tournament in Dandenong with 11 teams participating, including recently arrived Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. A second tournament, organised in conjunction with the Melbourne Afghan Soccer Association (MASA) attracted some 19,000 spectators. The 49 teams taking part represented members of the Afghan diaspora from across Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. A third tournament, the ‘AMES Multicultural Cup’ in Mildura celebrated the Sunraysia region’s growing multiculturalism. With attendance by former Soccerroo captain and prominent refugee advocate, Craig Foster, the Cup saw competition from 300 players across 15 teams.

“Tournaments like these bring us together. What we see here is a true reflection of what Australia is” – Craig Foster

Advocating to support the wellbeing of newly arrived refugees with disability

Refugees and migrants with disability may experience significant obstacles to accessing help in their home countries and are often nervous about potential experiences when they arrive in Australia. In 2023, AMES Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) team supported 11 newly arrived refugees with a physical disability. Helping one client born with congenital blindness, through a partnership with the Department of Home Affairs, the NDIS, and Australian technology company Moorup, AMES provided the client with practical support - specialist accommodation, a live-in carer who spoke the same language, and a mobile phone with a number of accessibility features suited to low vision users. The client is now able to socialise and access essential services in their local community. **“I would like to thank my Case Manager, and the whole AMES team for organising these supports for me, for the house and for the phone. I have not had to worry since arriving in Australia. I am grateful that someone is taking care of me in Australia”**

– AMES HSP client

Engaging young people to connect with their new community

Young people, including those from multicultural and refugee backgrounds, often struggle to connect with community organisations and the broader community. Working with the Victorian Government through its Engage! program, AMES delivered the ‘Welcome to Melbourne’ program offering activities for young people aged 17 to 25. The program provided opportunities for leadership, skills development, community connection, and supported the transition to adulthood. Activities were designed collaboratively with young people through a Youth Steering Committee. Activities focused on helping refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine become involved in their local communities. Participants met with Melbourne City Soccer players, attended and spoke at Refugee Week events, and toured the Melbourne Museum to become more familiar with the history and culture of Victoria.

“I was extremely nervous, but it made me feel really strong to be able to talk directly to the Minister” – Newly arrived young woman from Afghanistan who spoke at an event, attended by the Federal Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

Building AMES capacity through active bystander training sessions

Domestic and family violence continues to be an ongoing issue that affects both women and children born in Australia, and those from overseas. Through the internationally led ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign’ AMES Prevention of Violence Against Women team provided introductory sessions to 197 staff members on how being an ‘active bystander’ can help reduce violence against women. These sessions raised awareness of why gendered violence occurs, and provided an understanding of strategies that bystanders can use to challenge attitudes and behaviours that either disrespect or condone such violence.

“The session was very informative, and we need to develop active bystander training to raise the awareness of everyone within the community” – Participating AMES staff member

Photo: The AMES Australia Multicultural Cup in Mildura, Victoria with former Soccerroo captain and refugee advocate Craig Foster as a special guest.

Our impact aligned to SDG 4

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Education success is important for settlement success. Our education activities, as well as much of our work on social participation programs is aligned to **SDG 4 Quality Education** for all. Extending the opportunity to access services, employment and social participation through education is at the heart of AMES work: all rely on foundational education around language, literacy, numeracy, employability, digital literacy, community orientation and more.

Volunteering to enhance education impact

321

volunteers

37%

of volunteers were professional mentors

32%

of volunteers assisted clients to learn English

17%

of volunteers supported office administration across different programs

8%

of volunteers assisted newly arrived refugees to learn about daily life in Australia

3%

of volunteers supported jobseekers to seek and prepare for work

Helping those in times of need

Volunteering provides an opportunity to give back to the broader community, especially in times of crisis. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, AMES saw volunteers come out in force to help support newly arrived Ukrainian refugees. One volunteer at AMES, herself of Russian-origin, was able to find a sense of meaning through volunteering to help Ukrainian families who had fled the war. As a Russian speaker, she offered translation services, but was concerned that speaking Russian would be associated with the occupation. She was welcomed however by the Ukrainian refugees, many of whom were Russian speakers themselves, and helped clients with resolving issues with setting up services, providing them with food that reminded them of home, and offering 30 surplus computers to the community.

“Getting involved and seeing the impact and simple things that can change people’s lives is very rewarding. We all need to do what we can. And seeing how people have responded to help Ukrainians restored my faith in humanity”

- AMES volunteer

Purposeful education

Donated laptops help new arrivals navigate everyday life

Newly arrived migrants and refugees, as well as people looking for work, often have limited digital literacy, and can struggle to access digital technologies. In partnership with 7-Eleven, AMES ran a pilot program that provided 189 donated laptops to clients enrolled in study, or who needed technology to support their settlement, education, or employment outcomes. These laptops were distributed on a needs basis through selection criteria. Following this, the technology company Moorup provided an additional 66 laptops for AMES to distribute to our clients.

“We consistently receive requests from clients looking to acquire low-cost computers to support their, or family members’ education, settlement or employment pathways, and in most cases personal financial circumstances are a barrier to be able to purchase a device of their own. We know technology is an enabler for our clients in achieving independence, so we were really grateful to 7-Eleven and Moorup”

– AMES staff member

Supporting women from migrant backgrounds into work while learning English

Migrants to Australia often struggle to find meaningful employment commensurate with their skills, a problem that is even more pronounced for women from migrant backgrounds. AMES Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) program is helping women into work by improving their English proficiency while also giving them exposure to Australian workplace cultures and practices. One AMES client came to Australia a year ago with her husband and two children. Unable to find work in Australia, she enrolled in the SLPET program where her teacher organised a placement with a local business. Receiving on the job training, she now has a pathway to a more fulfilling career.

“AMES has been my pathway to interacting with more people and the community here. And the SLPET course showed me how to use my skills better and it gave me confidence” – AMES SLPET student

Artificial Intelligence supporting students with learning English

Artificial Intelligence offers a powerful new tool to engage students in the learning process. In conjunction with partner organisation GetMee, and following a successful year-long pilot initiative, AMES launched the MyAMES Chat app in 2023. MyAMES Chat is a communication-coaching tool that aims to improve the speech, language, and professional skills of migrants and refugees. Through personalised teaching, the technology offers help in developing English language proficiency, understanding Australian idioms and refining job interview techniques. The application also offers features to enhance pronunciation, vocabulary, and presentation skills. Speaking to the success of the app at its launch, the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Honourable Andrew Giles, said that the initiative aligned with the Federal Government’s vision of ensuring migrants and refugees could realise their full aspirations for life in Australia.

“The app has been really helpful. It’s helped me understand the idioms used in Australia. It has taught me about the language of the workplace and it has given me more confidence in my search for a job” – AMES student

Watch AMES students Anh and Mujibur talk about the app: <https://youtu.be/fQM4yKlsiy8>

Photo: AMES students practicing English and digital literacy

Our impact aligned to SDG 8

Employment is both an AMES impact domain and one of the core SDGs with which we align, because finding a job is such a critical turning point for migrants and refugees. Employment is captured in **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth** which articulates a vision of decent work for all people, particularly for marginalised groups who should have access to good jobs and fair pay. The examples demonstrate our holistic vision for employment impact – support into a sustainable job guided by our clients' diverse goals and aspirations.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Of recent VET graduates survey respondents:

73%
now work in a job related to their studies

50%
got a job from their placement

92%
thought the course helped them achieve their employment goals

63%
think their practical placement was extremely useful

79%
rated their course experience 4 or 5 out of 5

“The course content was rich and rigorous, it included relevant professional knowledge, laws and regulations and coupled with practical application, it was very good” – Former VET student

Photo: Syrian refugee Nayran in her restaurant, Melbourne, Victoria

Creating opportunity for better employment

Providing First Nations jobseekers with culturally safe employment support

First Nations communities in Australia trace cultural connections that are among the oldest in the world, yet still face significant obstacles and discrimination when seeking employment. AMES Indigenous employment service launched in 2022, and based in Western Sydney, supports First Nations people to find rewarding and sustainable employment. With frontline support staff comprised entirely of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, the service offers case management support for individual jobseekers, and enables better connection and greater cultural alignment between clients and AMES staff. This service has supported a total of 606 First Nations clients into employment across Australia with women making up more than a third.

“The new service is more about progressing people towards the right job, rather than getting them into the first job that comes along” – AMES Service Delivery Manager, a First Nations person

Opening minds, building futures for young people

Young people from marginalised communities can struggle to find appropriate employment. Funded by the Careers Institute of Australia and in partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), AMES ran a career development project with 267 young people from South Sudanese and Pasifika communities in Melbourne. Of those, 81 participants attended workshops and 85 participants attended one-on-one career counselling sessions where 78 individualised career pathway plans were completed. Engaging with 40 parents and 33 community leaders, the project provided an opportunity for parents to better understand career development, decision-making, and goal setting for their children.

“Young people and their families were able to reflect about their future aspirations with a majority of participants being able to form a plan about their career pathway after seeing the counsellors” – Youth worker

“Learning that goals are achievable” – Young participant when asked what they liked most about the workshop

Supporting communities with experience of disability to start their own business

People with disability can struggle to find the support they need to access meaningful work, and this can be even harder when trying to start their own business, especially if they are from a non-English speaking background. Working together with Amaze, the peak body representing autistic people in Victoria, AMES Business Matters program provided support to autistic people, or carers of autistic people, from Arabic-speaking backgrounds to set out on the journey of building a business. With the help of an AMES Arabic-speaking community support worker, participants in the Business Matters program received training on developing business plans, understanding the tax system and ABNs, marketing and promotion, as well as budgeting and finance. On completion of the mentoring, 9 participants had actively started their small business with a further 5 completing preparatory research prior to starting a business.

“I love the work I’m doing helping people. The whole process has given me confidence and the knowledge I need to run my own business” – Program participant who works with autistic children



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