



Social Impact Report 2021



Our vision

**Full participation for
all in a diverse
and cohesive society**

Contents

Message from Cath Scarth, CEO	4
AMES and our impact	5
AMES Settlement Framework	6
2021 impact highlights	8
SDG alignment examples	10
Health, resilience, and thriving communities	10
Purposeful education pathways	12
Creating opportunity for better employment	14

Reporting in this document covers data collected in 2020/2021 FY

Message from the CEO

I am pleased to share this 2021 AMES Australia Social Impact Report to demonstrate that what we do and how we deliver our services positively impacts our clients. AMES continues to purposefully measure our impact, building from and aligning with the United Nations Social Development Goals (SDGs). SDG alignment is increasingly being mainstreamed in AMES approach to our service delivery, grant and tender applications, policy responses and underpins evaluation and evidence gathering.

In what has been a challenging year, both locally and globally due to the enduring disruptions of COVID-19 and ongoing conflicts, we have repositioned, refocused and refreshed our approach to servicing both existing and new clients. As a Victorian statutory authority celebrating 70 years of serving and supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, our vision - 'full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society' - has never been more important.

This report, our fourth, takes forward the message that 'doing' is not enough - demonstrating impact is key to ensuring that AMES continues to make a valuable contribution to our clients and communities.

Cath Scarth, CEO AMES Australia
August 2021



AMES and our impact

AMES Australia (AMES) defines social impact as a significant, positive change that improves the social fabric of the community and wellbeing of individuals and families. AMES public value continues to be delivered through our end-to-end, comprehensive range of services. This includes **settlement support, English language and literacy tuition, vocational training, employment services, community development and programs targeting prevention of violence and gender equity, disability awareness and cultural safety**. The scope of our program delivery spans Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Sydney. Our client cohorts include refugees, asylum seekers, skilled and recently arrived migrants, job seekers, youth and international students.

Our approach to meeting client needs is to listen to and work with our clients, to focus on their strengths and skills to develop their assets and assist their successful settlement. Working in partnership with government, employers, community groups, settlement agencies, other educational institutions and specialist settlement organisations broadens and extends our scope and capacity for service provision. This is further enhanced by **capturing the client voice** to ensure that what we offer is what is needed and generates new knowledge about our clients and their communities. Learning from our clients informs our service development and practice, and drives responses to government and key stakeholders on policies that impact settlement outcomes.

AMES continues to align with three core SDG goals: **Goal 3 Health and Wellbeing, Goal 4 Quality Education and Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth**. In the report we have signposted additional alignment with SDGs - **Goal 5 Gender Equality, Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities, Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals** which are increasingly emerging in our operations and partnerships.



AMES Social and Economic Participation Framework identifies four domains that influence successful settlement ...



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

Better health and wellbeing outcomes for new Australians 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.





Education for successful settlement and careers

4,396

students in accredited and non-accredited courses

1,064

92% of SEE students made measurable improvements in language, literacy or numeracy skills - 2% improvement on 2019/20

152

VET students in work placements

68%

VET course completion compared to 47.6% in 2019-20

69%

of VET student graduates found employment compared to 48% in 2019/20

86%

of this group are satisfied with their job

Educating new arrivals



173

children enrolled in school



291

adults referred to Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)



Satisfying, long-term employment

3,943

jobseekers found work, and of these;

92%

of survey respondents from 2019 skilled migrant employability program are in work;

554

are the most disadvantaged, long-term unemployed ('Stream C' jobseekers);

85%

satisfied/very satisfied with their job;

1,149

are refugees

67%

earning approximately \$53k - \$10k over the median skilled migrant income after 1 year of residence

2,603

jobseekers in AMES employment services were still in their job after a month, and;

1,568

of these are of CALD background

Sustainable employment



Sustainable employment numbers relate to particularly disadvantaged jobseekers ('Stream B' or 'C') and are measured by number of individuals with a consistent 26 week period of employment. Impacting:

26

Indigenous Australians

54

homeless

40

in Refugee Training and Employment Program initiative

237

refugees

572

women



Good health and resilience: foundations for thriving

30

Kareni community members engaged to co-design a health literacy intervention

65%

of participants surveyed post completion of online employment short course reported more motivation to find employment

33

newly arrived refugees participated in our bowel cancer screening project

61%

felt their confidence to seek and undertake employment had improved

23

CALD people with disability were engaged in our Community Connectors program;

89%

of survey respondents from 2017-2019 program for our skilled refugee employability and;

11

referred to partner and awaiting an NDIS plan;

69%

of our 2019 skilled migrant employability cohort surveyed are now in employment well matched to their skills

9

participants have a disability support plan

Settlement outcomes¹

1,702

1,709

1,686

1,723

refugees gained the ability to apply their knowledge of

the healthcare system

the family and social support system

the transport system

local laws and rights



Safe, cohesive communities

210

newly arrived refugees in leased, long-term housing

62

refugees, including 13 families, supported to relocate to regional Victoria to build a life around sustainable employment

242

refugees engaged and informed about regional resettlement opportunities

Representing diverse communities



180

volunteers assisted clients

5

Knowledge Exchange webinars delivered to Victorian Government and community service sector

475

volunteers available

16

submissions to government policy inquiries

3

invitations at Australian Senate inquiries

38%

of volunteers were professional mentors including from corporates and industry

\$1,525,300

relative value of media coverage on CALD social and economic issues

918

broadcast and online coverage pieces

51

print items

Covid-19 pandemic response

Connecting with communities

38

unique scripts with factual, up-to-date COVID-19 information developed and delivered in-language through phone calls to settlement clients

197

participants at 15 online community consultations

1,649

phone calls by 18 bicultural workers with families of refugee / migrant background in the City of Wyndham

50

families supported with referrals or connections to support through this project

347

online learners – Into Work Intensive

34,772

unique sessions – AMEP online

Resilient employment for skilled refugees

64%

of respondents had not missed any time from work at all;

11%

had some hours reduced; only 5% had lost their job

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



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 multiple interrelated SDGs – in particular **SDG 5 Gender Equality** and **SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities**.

Prevention of violence against women, wellbeing calls during COVID, and work in the NDIS space all exemplify our broad focus on SDG 3 and closely related aspects of community cohesion, equality and individual mental well-being.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



5 GENDER EQUALITY



We're a part of the communities we work for

9 of AMES former volunteers are now employed with AMES

71% of our employees were born overseas

57 languages spoken across our workforce

64 different countries represented



Wellbeing, safety and community cohesion

Building CALD community reconnections to the NDIS

CALD communities are underrepresented in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Through delivery of an NDIS Community Connectors program in the Dandenong and Casey regions, there has been increased awareness of disability and support in **8 languages** for community members with a disability and their carers to assist them to access the NDIS. Twenty-six clients have received individual support, with nine applicants now having an NDIS plan. Addressing CALD underrepresentation in the NDIS continues to be a priority and was raised in the response to the Royal Commission into disability.

Settlement journeys enhanced through podcasts

With COVID-19 restrictions preventing most face-to-face orientation for HSP clients, podcasts in multiple languages are providing easily accessible information to newly arrived refugees navigating their new lives in Australia. **31 episodes** on different orientation topics have been produced in **13 languages** and have been **downloaded 2,643 times**.

COVID-19 messaging empowering CALD communities to stay informed

CALD communities reported issues accessing trustworthy, up-to-date, and in-language information on COVID-19 restrictions. A just-in-time response was actioned with a series of audio messages in 10 community languages developed to explain the COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria, such as mask wearing, and requirements to work from home. The messages targeted diverse communities living in areas with high numbers of COVID-19 cases, and were shared through SMS, social media, and through CALD community leaders. This practical response and assurance of accurate and timely information has been positively received.

Building capacity to prevent gendered violence

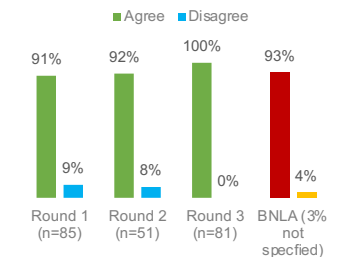
Domestic violence is a significant issue in all communities. A prevention of violence against women in CALD communities leadership initiative builds capacity for community leaders to drive prevention activities within their communities. A graduate of the program, Peter, a Chinese migrant has developed the first Chinese Communities Online Forum on family and domestic violence. This forum impacted 100 participants who attended - 60% Chinese speaking practitioners who work in relevant sectors; and 40% from the general Chinese speaking community.

Former clients settling well in their neighbourhood

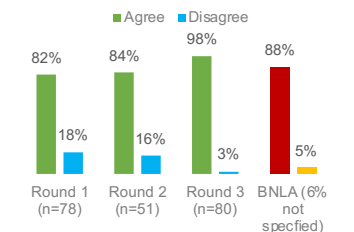
Former AMES Syrian and Iraqi settlement clients surveyed annually for the past 3 years reported gradual improvement in perceptions of neighbourhood safety over the three rounds. Survey respondents, AMES former clients, **report high levels of satisfaction with the areas they have settled** – indicating their long-term **settlement trajectories are looking positive**.

These results compare favourably against national survey data using the same question set (the Building a New Life in Australia [BNLA] survey).

'I feel safe in my neighbourhood'



'My neighbourhood is a good place to bring up my children'





Our impact aligned to SDG 4

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 to services, employment and social participation through education is at the heart of AMES work: all rely on foundational education around language, literacy, numeracy, employability, community orientation and more.



Volunteering to enhance education impact

180
volunteers

38%
of volunteers were professional mentors

31%
of volunteers assisted clients learn English.

6%
of volunteers supported office administration across different programs

17%
of volunteers assisted newly arrived refugees to learn about daily life in Australia

8%
of volunteers supported jobseekers to seek and prepare for work

Purposeful education

Digital technology and skills support life, learning and employment opportunities

Many CALD clients are challenged by limited digital skills and access to learning compounded by English language barriers. Programs, supported by the Victorian government, are available to all clients so that they build familiarity with technology; have access to courses when it suits them; and gain English language, literacy, numeracy, and employment readiness skills. **5,625 clients** have accessed **186,630 sessions** of online learning – independently or supported by teachers.

... I can now do a job search, email, and have computer skills ... this has helped a lot and makes life easier ... and I have a confidence to use the technology - Rima, CALD jobseeker

Steps to creating a respectful service environment

Feeling safe in our community is underpinned by cultural safety and self-determination. Not all community members feel safe or are treated with respect in accessing services. The Victorian Government requested an online training module to support staff working, or seeking employment, in key industries such as the large and growing social services sector. The aim of the training was to support a respectful service environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. The content was designed in partnership and with guidance from the Koorie Heritage Trust. This project has enduring impact as the online course is offered to thousands of Victorians impacted by COVID-19 through the Working for Victoria initiative.

Purposeful education creates opportunities

The power of education can drive significant change and create opportunities regardless of previous background. This is specifically relevant for new arrivals who are unfamiliar with the Australian education system and learning environments. English language programs scaffold learning and individual student progression is supported to maximise learning goals which may include vocational or employment focused pathways.

Rahman, who arrived in Australia from Iran, and started with AMES in 2015 as a volunteer tutor working in the AMEP program, is now a teacher at AMES and said it is “...a dream come true”.

Volunteers creating online communities of settlement support

Volunteering enhances people’s capacity and builds community participation and social cohesion. AMES continued to support and facilitate a significant volunteering program during 2020-21 with 180 volunteers supporting clients remotely, such as tutoring English students in Mildura. Volunteer, Jolie said that despite the challenges, she has continued to enjoy volunteering.

“I do enjoy my online teaching despite the fact we miss meeting face-to-face.” - Jolie, volunteer English tutor



Our impact aligned to SDG 8

“I hope [to] move...into a trade job such as carpentry in the future but it is good to be working” - Yonaten



Employment is both an AMES impact domain and one of the core SDGs we align with, 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, equally, should have access to good jobs and fair pay.

The examples demonstrate our holistic vision for employment impact – support into a sustainable job and guided by our clients’ diverse goals and aspirations.

57%

of former clients who completed our skilled refugee employability program (2018-19) have found resilient jobs, increasing their employment rate through the pandemic from:

14% employed in 2018, 28% employed in 2019 and 40% employed in 2020.

One graduate, Dr Al-Bana said:

“I have finally reached my goal of getting a job and starting my career as a doctor again in Australia. I am very grateful to AMES for supporting me throughout these three years.”



Creating opportunity for better employment

Fast-track to employment through mentoring and intensive support

Migrants and refugees are overrepresented in under- and unemployment statistics due to lack of local work experience and language barriers. CALD jobseekers are supported through career planning, mentoring and intensive support offered through an initiative which impacted jobseeker, Yonaten, who landed his first job in Australia after a year being unemployed and is happy to have a job and to be earning money.

Partnerships enable career pathways

Young migrants often have disrupted education, a lack of knowledge of the local labour market and struggle with identifying a clear career plan. Syed, a young Afghan refugee gained an apprenticeship as an electrician thanks to a partnership between apprenticeship provider MEGT and AMES. *“It was very hard to find a job after I arrived last year. Now, I’m really happy I have an apprenticeship...I want to make this my career and maybe one day open my own business.”* AMES continues to seek out like-minded partners, benefitting our clients through industry workplacement and meeting prospective employers.

Addressing barriers to resuming a professional pathway

Refugees with overseas qualifications and professional experience are unable to easily, or ever, resume their career pathway in Australia due to lack of English relevant to their occupation; difficulty gaining overseas qualification recognition; and a lack of support. An employability program has helped 361 refugees gain employment in their professional fields, however the impact is broader. Our research demonstrated that former program participants have secured work that is well-paid, well-matched to their skills and aspirations, and resilient through economic disruption. The majority of those in employment throughout 2020 they were not negatively affected by the pandemic. This research will be published in a UK-based employability journal.

Self-employment pathway for entrepreneurial refugees

Refugees are the most entrepreneurial migrant cohort in Australia, and nearly twice as likely to be entrepreneurs than Australian taxpayers overall. A program supported by Thrive Refugee Enterprise, enables a self-employment pathway for refugees

with limited or no credit histories in Australia. The impact is already being shown with 11 businesses commenced. One new business owner, Aboud is working with Australia Post as a subcontractor in NSW. He started deliveries using a hired vehicle but has since purchased a van with the assistance of a Thrive loan. The program is also addressing barriers to self-employment for refugee women to further bolster their economic participation.

Regional resettlement – a solution for regions and families

Regional areas are increasingly becoming a desirable option for refugee resettlement, however many refugees lack local networks and connections to support this process. By working with regional employers and communities 13 families have resettled from Melbourne to the Grampians and the Loddon Mallee regions.

“...we are very happy in Australia and even happier since [we] came to Mildura, it is easy to find work here and people are friendly” - Tibetan family resettled in Mildura



AMES Australia

ABN 49 056 993 913

Head Office

Level 4, 1 Little Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000

GPO Box 4381 Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel: 13 26 37

Email: enquiries@ames.net.au

www.ames.net.au

Report prepared by AMES Australia Knowledge Centre

Design by Ali Banan

