



## **MEDIA RELEASE: SCOA WELCOMES CHANGES TO ADULT MIGRANT ENGLISH PROGRAM**

**Friday, 28 August 2020**

The Settlement Council of Australia welcomes changes to the Adult Migrant English Program announced today by Minister Tudge.

Removing the cap of 510 hours, allowing students to strive for 'vocational English' rather than only 'functional English', and removing time limits for enrolment and completion are all positive changes to the program.

Several inquiries and reports support the changes, and SCoA has long advocated for these restrictions to be removed. Earlier this year, SCoA published a report informed by extensive consultation with the settlement sector. The report emphasised a range of limitations in the program, including those being addressed in the announcements. The changes announced by Minister Tudge are a welcome step in the right direction.

SCoA's Chairperson, Melissa Monteiro, said "These changes will make a real difference to migrants and refugees who are working hard to improve their English. They will ensure more people can achieve a higher level of English proficiency, which will result in countless benefits to their lives and the lives of their families."

"Greater English language proficiency has flow on effects into employment, income levels, social participation, and outcomes for the children of migrants and refugees over their life-course."

She added that "This announcement is particularly timely as migrants and refugees who have recently lost employment look to invest time in building their English language proficiency and other skills. Migrants and refugees, and particularly migrant and refugee women, have been heavily affected by COVID-19 due to their overrepresentation in low-skilled, insecure and casualised employment."

SCoA's CEO, Sandra Elhelw Wright said "Migrants and refugees overwhelmingly want to learn English and give back to Australian society. These announcements will mean more people can do that."

“The changes will be of particular benefit to women. In the past, the five-year limitation has meant many women who took time out to care for their children missed out on that opportunity.”

She added “SCoA believes helping migrants and refugees with their settlement journey is the most effective way to enhance social cohesion. Migrants and refugees are committed to this country and want to give back, we just need to make sure they have the right tools to do that. Today’s announcement of changes to the AMEP is a welcome contribution to that toolbox.”

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