



Settlement Council of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

People from refugee backgrounds settling in Australia.



Aim

To enable refugees to master the local language and gain new employment skills.



Organisations Involved

STARTTS NSW, NSW Police, Transport NSW, Legal Aid, Department of Human Services, Department of Fair Trading – Consumer rights, CORE Community services, Lebanese Muslim Association, Western Sydney University, Smith Family, NSW Refugee Health, Fairfield hospital – health services, Immigrant Refugee Women’s Health



Location

NSW

CASE STUDY

Special Preparatory Program - Navitas

Background

During the height of the Syrian conflict in 2016, the Australian Government passed emergency legislation for a one-off intake of refugees from the region. At this time, Navitas English enrolled more than 6,000 clients, most of whom required extensive support with settlement, medical and personal issues. Navitas English’s Fairfield campus alone took in over 4,000 clients - 950 of whom were eligible to start their settlement journey in the Special Preparatory Program (SPP).

About the program

Navitas English responded to the challenge through development of its Special Preparatory Program (SPP) that would allow some refugees and special humanitarian entrants to access an additional 100 or 400 hours of English Language and settlement support, above the standard AMEP offering of 510 hours. The SPP provides a strong foundation for clients, who then access further support in the mainstream AMEP and Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programs respectively.

Delivered over five weeks, the SPP focuses on key areas including: Learning English, Money, Housing, and Health. Information sessions were delivered in partnership with organisations such as NSW Refugee Health, Legal Aid, Centrelink and Fair Trading.

“With over 40 SPP classes to be delivered over the year, the program needed to go beyond what was being delivered in the AMEP General Services program. Understanding the refugee experience and being able to provide support services to address their unique personal circumstances was at the centre of our minds during the development of our SPP program.” said Chen Zhao, Academic Team Leader, Navitas English Fairfield.

“The Special Preparatory Program (SPP) is a very important program that prepares newly arrived refugees to start their AMEP learning journey with us. We aim to make them feel welcome, not only in our colleges, but also to Australia.”



At the heart of the Navitas English SPP was the integration of providing settlement information within a purpose-built environment, a hub for nurturing security, confidence and a sense of belonging. This was especially important given most SPP clients had very low levels of English when entering the program.

To maximise successful outcomes, Navitas English employed bilingual support assistants. The clients were also made aware of counselling services offered by STARTTS (Service for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors) and the support provided by Navitas English Pathway Guidance Advisors.

On completion of SPP, clients moved into mainstream AMEP classes where they continued their education pathway, learning English within a settlement framework. Each fortnight we focused on a particular Settlement theme, and invited local support agencies, government and community organisations to speak to students; this helped consolidate vocabulary and build awareness around each theme or topic.

Participant Experiences

Sami Askr said of the program: *“The friendly and helpful teachers made my learning journey enjoyable and beneficial. The mix of activities gave me an opportunity to practise speaking and helped me to add to my vocabulary every day. I was also thankful for the help with online activities and lessons to understand Australian workplaces and the appropriate language used there.”*

Zina Toma expressed similar sentiments.

“I will never forget the care that Navitas English showed me – they checked up on me if I was absent from class and that really made me feel like I mattered. The help I received from my teachers helped me to develop my speaking and listening skills. Thanks to the SPP I gained the confidence to move into AMEP and then go into the SEE program and was able to get work on a local farm. I still think of my friends and teachers at Navitas English.”

“Thanks to the SPP I was able to join AMEP and then the Navitas English SEE program and further my workplace skills. I then secured employment at a local Café, working four days a week. I’ll always have my teacher’s words in my mind – ‘practise talking, do not be shy, you can do it’.”

Navitas English’s efforts with the SPP have enabled students to gain the confidence to access additional programs and support, with many SPP students undertaking further training in the SEE program. We are also fortunate to have employed some previous SPP clients who are now part of the Navitas English teaching and administrative team.



