



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

Newly arrived refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds, primarily those entering Australia on Women at Risk visas and other mothers of babies and very young children.



Aim

To facilitate participation in the Adult Migrant English Program by these mothers in the Townsville area.



Organisations Involved

Townsville Multicultural Support Group (TMSG) and the Townsville Intercultural Centre (TIC)



Location

Townsville, QLD.



Funding

The Adult Migrant English Program, Department of Home Affairs.

CASE STUDY

TAFE Queensland

TAFE Queensland's Townsville 'Rose' Community Class enables newly arrived refugee mothers of babies and very young children to learn English while taking care of their young ones in a safe and supportive environment.

About the program

Many newly arrived mums were very keen to commence English classes through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) but did not want to be separated from their babies and very young children. To support these mothers, TAFE Queensland and Townsville Multicultural Support Group (TMSG) discussed with Townsville Intercultural Centre (TIC) representatives the possibility of TAFE Queensland delivering English classes in the TIC training room, allowing mums to attend, accompanied by their children. The TIC training room was well suited to the needs of this class, containing normal classroom equipment as well as a play area with plenty of room for the children. It was also ideally situated, being across the road from the Stockland Shopping Centre public transport hub and close to the Aitkenvale State School, attended by older children of several of the mothers.

Commencing in November 2019, the 'Rose' mums and bubs class was an instant hit with the 23 students and their children. Their enthusiasm spread amongst their communities, leading to additional enquiries from other mothers eager to join. The topics covered in the classes were carefully selected to address the observed and identified needs of the students—for example, completing simple forms and preparing for cyclone season. This approach resulted in immediate, concrete benefits to all participants. The TAFE Queensland Case Manager was also on hand either before or after every class to ensure students were able to raise questions, seek advice, discuss issues and obtain any additional support needed.

The welcoming staff at the TIC provided fruit platters for the students' morning / afternoon tea. Due to the trauma suffered by many of the women, provision of a supportive, understanding and non-threatening learning zone was critical. The all-female staff involved in delivering the class, including the highly experienced TAFE Queensland TESOL teacher, Case Manager and the bi-lingual volunteer tutors who helped with the babies and infants, combined to create a relaxed, comfortable and safe learning environment.



Challenges

The challenges faced during the program include:

1. Classroom noise: A significant challenge was the noise and activity generated by the large numbers of small children playing in the classroom. To reduce the number of children at each session and limit the impact on learning activities, the class was split into two, with some students attending a morning session and others attending an afternoon session.
2. Attendance: Many of the students were single parents with school age children at the Aitkenvale Primary School. These mothers had only a limited support network, at best. Lesson start and finish times were therefore arranged to ensure mums could drop off and collect their children at school.

Outcomes

These classes ensured nursing mothers could commence following a formal, structured, curriculum-based English language program, delivered by TESOL professionals, with their children in the same room and always in view. As well as building their language skills, providing vital settlement information and guidance, and increasing their social networks, these classes also increased students' confidence and goals, with many keen to take advantage of free AMEP childcare places and transfer to campus-based classes.

Key Learnings

This experience has generated three key learnings for TAFE Queensland:

1. Careful lesson planning and activity organisation, along with flexibility to reorder different parts of the lesson, is vital for such community classes to be successful. For example, oral communication activities, such as listening to guest speakers, watching videos or practising speaking and pronunciation were undertaken whilst mums were breastfeeding ensuring they could continue learning, with reading and writing activities programmed at other times.
2. Creating the right environment for any group of students, which considers their specific circumstances and needs is key to motivating students and ensuring they are able to focus fully on their studies.
3. The excellent relationship, close collaboration and cooperation between the various stakeholders was critical to the success of this undertaking and demonstrated that by working so well together, we can deliver a truly tailored and holistic settlement experience for new humanitarian entrants.

More information

For more information, visit: TAFE Queensland English Language & Literacy Services ([Facebook](#) | [Website](#))

cyclone		torch	
lighter		batteries	
candles		tinned food	
stove		plastic bags	
radio		water	

