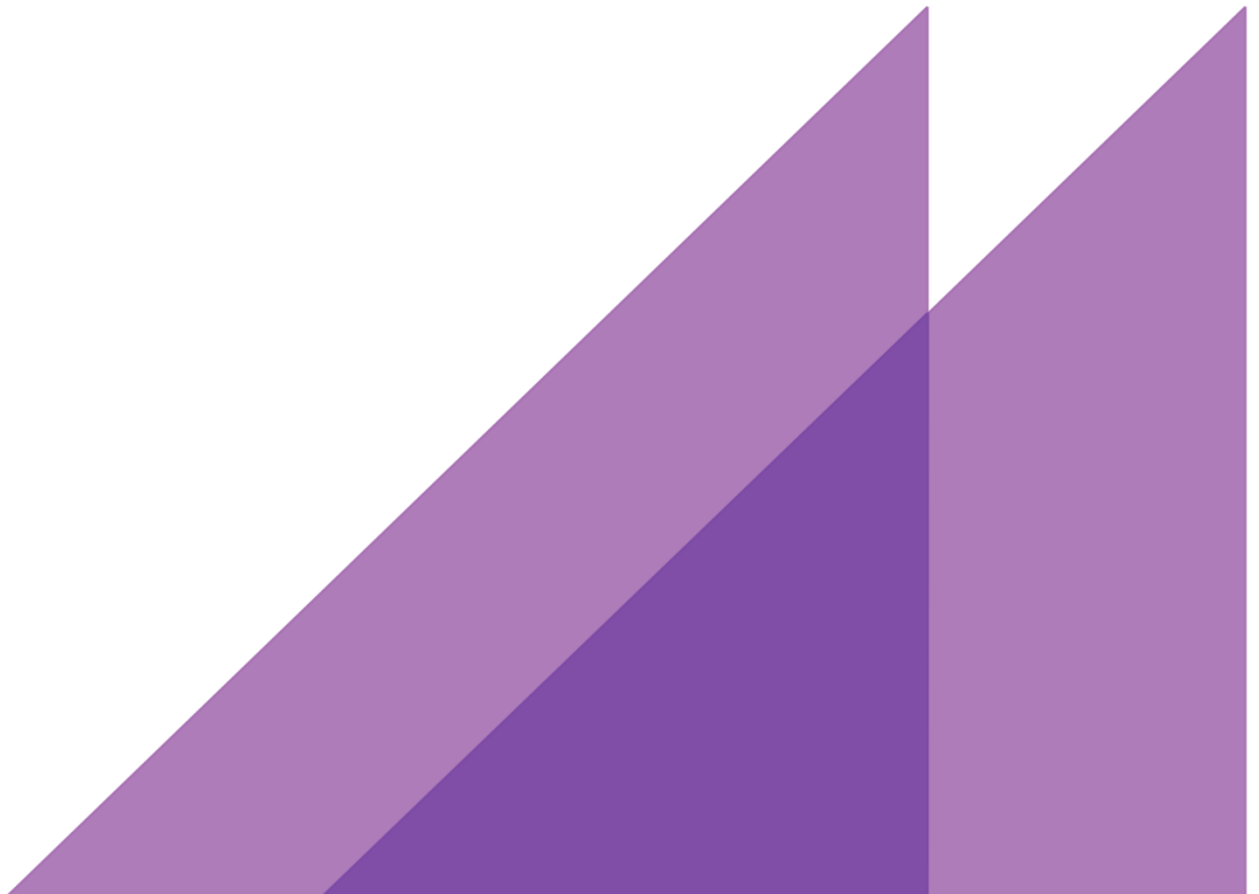


FINAL REPORT TO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

22 MAY 2015

SEE PROGRAMME EVALUATION





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The project team would like to thank all those who participated in consultations, provided public submissions and completed surveys. All participants were welcoming and generous with their time, and provided useful and interesting insights into the SEE programme.

Acronyms

ACER	Australian Centre for Educational Research
ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CGEA	Certificate in General Education for Adults
CSVV	Certificate in Skills for Vocational Pathways
DES	Disability Employment Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
EPP	Employment Pathway Plan
ESL	English as a Second Language
FSAT	Foundation Skills Assessment Tool
ITP	Individual Training Plans
JSCI	Job Seeker Classification Instrument
JSA	Job Services Australia
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LLNP	Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme
LOA	Learning Outcomes Assessment
NARWP	Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period
NEIS	New Enterprise Incentive Scheme
PPF	Provider Performance Framework
PPM	Post Programme Monitoring
PTA	Pre Training Assessment
RA	Referring Agency
ROGS	Report on Government Services
RJCP	Remote Jobs and Communities Programme

RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SDA	Service Delivery Area
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
SGT	Small Group Training
USI	Unique Student Identifier
USIQ	Underpinning Skills for Industry Qualifications
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy

Executive summary

Background

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training has commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme, in tandem with an evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The evaluations are timely in that the SEE programme moved to a new business model in 2011, and the recent co-location of the SEE programme and the AMEP within the Department of Education and Training provides an opportunity to explore potential synergies and the strategic alignment between the two programmes.

As a consequence this is one of three reports which can be read individually but are also inter-related:

- the SEE Programme Evaluation Report (this report)
- the AMEP Evaluation Report
- the AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report.

The SEE programme

The SEE programme commenced in 2013 as the continuation of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP). SEE is the Australian Government's primary programme for helping eligible job seekers to improve their language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force and lead to greater long-term gains for the economy and the community more broadly.

SEE programme clients can access up to 800 hours of free training which can be undertaken on a part-time (10 to 19 hours per week) or full-time (20 to 25 hours per week) basis over no more than a two year period. The programme provides initial, basic and advanced accredited English language training, as well as basic and advanced literacy and numeracy training. The number of training hours undertaken weekly by each client is set out in Individual Training Plans (ITP).

Clients are offered one of three streams of training based on their assessment results:

- *Initial Language stream* – is designed solely for clients whose first language is not English and who, at the time of the Pre Training Assessment (PTA), achieve Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Level 1 or below in all ACSF reading and oral communication indicators.
- *Basic Language, Literacy and Numeracy stream* – accommodates the needs of all language and literacy/numeracy clients and focuses on consolidating functional LLN skills.
- *Advanced Language, Literacy and Numeracy stream* – accommodates both language and literacy/numeracy clients who have higher ACSF scores than those in the Basic stream. These clients generally achieve between ACSF Levels 3 and 5 in reading, writing and oral communication.

Finding employment after undertaking the programme's training is the ultimate measure of success, however, attainment is also important. Attainment is measured by comparing the client's LLN improvements in ACSF indicators from their PTA to the later assessments during and at the end of their training.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation has been designed around a set of research questions examining the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, and performance management of the SEE programme. The research questions are broad ranging, covering the design of the programme, its systems for tracking against achievement of programme objectives, as well as operational monitoring and reporting, and its performance in delivering services to meet client needs.

The evaluation sought evidence from multiple sources involving a scan of programme documentation, analysis of programme administrative and operational data, and extensive consultation with stakeholders across all states and territories comprising interviews, focus groups, surveys and a public submission process. The nature of the evaluation has necessitated seeking input from multiple perspectives – from programme administrators, contracted providers and clients. The evaluation's findings and recommendations have also been informed by a review of relevant good practices in national and international literature.

Findings and areas for further consideration

The evaluation findings indicate that, overall, the SEE programme is valued and providing assistance to improve eligible job seeker's LLN skills, with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force. SEE is the only national programme to assist eligible job seekers with their LLN learning needs with the articulated goal of helping them acquire the LLN skills needed by employers.

The evaluation makes 11 recommendations, as discussed in the following sections. The recommendations are not listed in order of priority but are organised thematically.

Clarifying programme objectives

The objectives of the SEE programme are clear and are generally well understood by the programme's stakeholders. One of the tensions raised by SEE stakeholders in the consultations conducted for this review is between the long-term investment in employment-enhancing LLN and shorter-term focus on immediate job outcomes. While these objectives are not mutually exclusive, the current approach to employment services and income support means that immediate employment opportunities can displace the long-term commitment required to improve an individual's language, literacy, and/or numeracy skills.

Further education and training is also an explicit objective of the SEE programme. Improvements in language, literacy, and numeracy will better prepare participants for further study, however it is not immediately clear whether pathways from the SEE programme into further study are an explicit part of the programme design. Referring agencies are able to recommend SEE to job seekers who wish to engage in further study but lack the LLN skills necessary, but this does not appear to be common practice nor is it part of the formal referral system.

Recommendation 1
Programme objectives

The SEE programme's objectives to improve an eligible job seeker's LLN skills to enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force are clear and should be retained. Particular emphasis should be given in the programme's design to ensure that SEE can be utilised by job seekers wanting to engage in further study but lacking the necessary LLN skills.

Improving measurement against objectives

The stated objective of the SEE programme is very clear - to improve job seekers' levels of LLN to improve their ability to undertake further training or be employed. Its key performance indicator (KPI) measurements however do not provide a true indication of the programme's outcomes in these areas, with the required data not adequately collected or monitored.

In particular, there are no longitudinal studies once clients complete their 800 hours. In the past, post-SEE study and job related outcomes were collected through a Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey of participants. Given that job seekers continue to maintain contact with their referring agencies after participating in SEE, it should be possible to establish the necessary systems in partnership with other government agencies to track individual outcomes over time.

The Australian Government should explore the possibility of either implementing the necessary reporting frameworks for referring agencies or reintroducing the PPM survey in order to capture the data necessary to track the outcomes of the SEE programme against its objectives.

Recommendation 2
Measurement against objectives

The measurement of the outcomes of the SEE programme against its objectives could be improved. Options should be explored to capture the data necessary to measure the outcomes of the SEE programme, including:

- *developing and implementing the necessary reporting frameworks for referring agencies, and/or*
- *reintroducing the Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey of participants.*

Identifying target groups

The target groups of the SEE programme are defined primarily by those in receipt of income support as well as having the capacity to benefit from the Programme.

While being on income support is aligned with the Australian Government's role and responsibilities in the welfare system and employment services, some stakeholders have highlighted that this criterion may exclude parts of the Australian population with low LLN attainment who would otherwise benefit from the SEE programme. These include job seekers who are not on income support, people in part-time employment or who have transitioned to work but are seeking to up-skill, as well as those enrolled in full-time study but who need LLN support.

These ineligible cohorts highlight the fact that many Australians could benefit from the SEE programme. However, it is important to recognise that the SEE programme is not intended to be a universal programme for language, literacy, and numeracy training; the restriction of SEE to eligible job seekers is intended to ensure the programme's specific objectives are met. Other individuals are able to access LLN training through state/territory government subsidised programmes, fee paying courses, and as part of vocational and university courses.

While the policy design underpinning the SEE programme does not intend it to cater for clients with very low LLN skills, it is apparent from the LLN scores on SEE programme entry that participants include clients with very low levels of English language proficiency (that is, pre-ACSF Level 1). This was reinforced in some focus groups and other consultations undertaken as part of this evaluation.

To gain entry to the SEE programme, clients must be formally referred by referring agencies. In many cases, referring agencies are not well informed about the SEE programme's existence and/or purpose, and referring agency staff may lack the skills to identify LLN needs in referring their clients. Further, there may be a tension between the incentives faced by referring agencies (to place clients into employment or other vocational programmes) and the potential LLN needs of the individual job seeker which may be met by the SEE programme.

Recommendation 3
Targeting of income support recipients

The eligibility to the SEE programme should continue to be limited on the basis of whether individuals receive income support as it is an appropriate and necessary way to align the programme's target groups with the Australian Government's responsibilities for the welfare system and employment services.

Recommendation 4
Targeting of job seekers with very low LLN skills

The programme's guidelines should clarify whether job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group for the SEE programme and:

- *If not, minimum entry requirements in terms of LLN proficiency should be introduced.*
- *If so, changes to facilitate the participation and rates of progress should be considered to accommodate those with very low LLN skills (see Recommendation 9).*

Recommendation 5
Communication with referring agencies

Given referring agencies' key role in the SEE programme, the Department of Education and Training should work with the three relevant departments (Employment, Social Services, and Human Services) to improve the ability of referring agencies to refer suitable clients to the SEE programme, including through enhanced communications and the provision of information materials.

Improving assessment tools

The core instrument for assessment of progress in the SEE programme is the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). Alongside the ACSF, SEE providers must also assess participants according to the accredited qualifications that are being delivered. Most SEE providers argue that this results in significant duplication in assessment, and some emphasise that this is more than just an added administrative burden in that it diverts resources from training delivery and outcomes.

The requirement to periodically assess against the ACSF, however, is an important component of monitoring provider performance and therefore the SEE programme's performance, and one that can be validated through the independent verification process. As such, it is important to acknowledge that to a large degree the duplication of assessment is an intentional one and an important element of the programme's quality assurance mechanism.

This is not to say that improvements could not be sought to address the concerns raised, such as reducing the burden of the ACSF assessment tasks through more efficient instruments. In particular, the government has already made an investment in the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool (FSAT), currently being developed by the Australian Centre for Educational Research (ACER). The FSAT will be based around the theoretical underpinnings of the ACSF and is therefore well suited for use as part of SEE programme assessments.

Recommendation 6
Dual assessment

The two systems of assessment used in the SEE programme (the different training packages and the ASCF) should be maintained.

Recommendation 7
Streamlining of assessment

Given the amount of assessment involved, the SEE programme would benefit from the adoption of a more efficient and easy to use ASCF assessment tool like the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool (FSAT). The appropriate use of the FSAT should be formally considered and defined in the next tender round of the SEE programme.

Streamlining monitoring and reporting

More broadly, contract monitoring and reporting requirements of the programme received significant comment in the consultations for this evaluation as being unnecessarily burdensome, particularly duplication in data entry regarding attendance and the level of hard copy reporting and documentation. The online reporting system (SEE Online) ability to report on matters such as change of sites, courses or teacher details, and to submit an Initial Training Declaration¹ were identified as supporting provider productivity.

Recommendation 8
Reporting

There should be a review of SEE programme administrative requirements with a view to reducing the amount of data entry duplication and hard copy reporting.

The SEE programme has four KPIs. Stakeholders consulted as part of this evaluation identified issues with KPI 2, which aims to measure the performance of providers in increasing the LLN skills of their clients. SEE providers argue that KPI 2 acts as a penalty on providers which train low level / high needs clients, who are likely to progress more slowly.

Recommendation 9
KPIs for those with very low LLN skills

The future shape of KPI 2 depends on whether job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group of the SEE programme (see Recommendation 4). If they are, KPI 2 could be modified to include pre-ACSF attainment.

SEE providers also expressed concern that KPI 2 is causing over assessment as they try to ensure clients unexpectedly leaving the programme close but prior to an assessment do not significantly impact their attainment performance.

Recommendation 10
KPIs and over assessment

The Australian Government should better promote techniques providers can use to mitigate against over assessment.

The Independent Verification process itself appears to be a well-accepted and appropriate part of the SEE programme. That said, SEE providers reported that the requirements and expectations of Independent Verification may vary by assessor and are not well communicated to or understood by providers, and that more opportunities for supportive feedback between verifications would be beneficial.

Recommendation 11
Monitoring and reporting

The Independent Verification is a beneficial part of the SEE programme and the Australian Government should look to improve the consistency and communication around the process and the expectations of assessors.

Improving client outcomes

The importance of allowing flexibility to meet individual needs is well acknowledged in the literature on LLN programmes. Stakeholders generally agree that the SEE programme has the potential to have a significant impact on a large proportion of participants in preparing them for further study or employment, enabling clients who would not otherwise be able to

¹ These are submitted once per period.

afford course fees, to develop LLN skills and improve their chances of finding employment and being accepted into VET courses.

Study modes and work experience were consistently raised as areas for improvement. While SEE programme training can be delivered through face-to-face classes, small group training classes, distance mode and a mix of classroom and distance mode, training is primarily delivered face-to-face.

The take up rate of work experience is low in part due to the significant challenges faced by SEE providers in arranging suitable opportunities with employers. This is a common challenge across the VET system and not unique to the SEE programme. Within SEE, the administrative and financial effort required per individual in mapping work placement to ACSF outcomes and reporting on placement outcomes is time consuming for SEE providers. The removal of the requirement to seek prior approval for a client to undertake work experience has alleviated some of the administrative burden in this area, but delivery of work experience nonetheless remains a challenge.

The SEE programme justifiably requires that teachers and assessors are strongly qualified. Some of the SEE providers consulted for this evaluation support the current teacher qualification requirement, as did most SEE providers which responded to the 2012 LLNP Discussion Paper.

However, some SEE providers consider the requirements to restrict the pool of potential teachers as individuals possessing VET sector qualifications and experience as well as an undergraduate degree as limiting. The fact that the undergraduate qualification requirement is met by an undergraduate qualification in any field or discipline, including those unrelated to education, adult learning or LLN, is seen by some as indicating that the requirement is inappropriate and/or unnecessary.

An important strength of the SEE programme is the ability of providers to incorporate a range of VET units as part of their LLN delivery. The minimum undergraduate qualification requirements may limit this strength as in many cases non-SEE, specialist VET teachers lack undergraduate qualifications. While team teaching by SEE and vocational teachers does take place, this adds to the cost of incorporating a range of VET units in SEE.

Some SEE providers also point to the teacher qualification requirements as leading to recruitment difficulties. A key issue to be considered further is whether the benefits of these teacher qualification requirements outweigh the costs.

The Australian Government should undertake further research to comprehensively assess whether the SEE programme teacher qualification requirements strike the right overall balance between ensuring quality while not unduly restricting provider flexibility and innovation, particularly in relation to vocational units.

The training allocation

The allocation of 800 hours per SEE participant was generally well accepted, except in the case of clients from non-English speaking backgrounds who commence with very low level LLN. These clients should have either an increased up front allocation or the waiting period between completion and the issue of a re-referral should be waived to allow continuous training. It is commonly held that the waiting period is detrimental to the educational outcomes of those with very low levels of LLN.

The requirement that SEE programme clients who have completed 800 hours must wait six months before recommencing the SEE programme should be reviewed for clients with low

Recommendation 12 **Client outcomes**

Recommendation 13 **The training allocation**

scores across the ACSF core skills. The six month requirement should remain for other clients to encourage clients to test their improved LLN skills in the job market.

Enhancing the multi-provider model

The SEE programme's multi-provider model was expanded in 2013 to create an environment of improved quality training delivery, where the market is more responsive to demand within a geographic area. In many respects, the multi-provider model has delivered some key benefits to the SEE programme, particularly in terms of overall capacity and coverage. It is clear that having more than one SEE provider in a given area has also allowed improved management of SEE provider performance and promoted continuity of delivery.

However, there is much less evidence of the multi-provider model delivering benefits in terms of improved training quality and responsiveness to client needs. The primary issues in this regard have been the absence of an informed consumer or purchaser, whether in the referring agencies or their clients.

Possible improvements could be made in relation to improving the knowledge of referring agencies. In this regard, it is understood that changes to the next iteration of the employment services contract should reduce the disincentive for referring agencies to refer to the SEE programme.

This development notwithstanding, the Australian Government should work with stakeholders to develop and implement an information and communications strategy for clients and referring agencies. This could comprise a range of information delivery channels including integration with manuals and systems for referring agencies and online. Where possible, information on SEE providers should draw on the data already collected by the Department as part of administration of the programme and therefore avoid the burden of any additional data collection.

Recommendation 14 Multi-provider model

To improve the level of competition in the multi-provider model, the Australian Government should work with stakeholders to develop and implement an information and communications strategy that will deliver relevant information regarding the options of SEE providers that are available, and thereby promote informed choice by referring agencies and their clients.

Improving budget planning

The current approach to allocating and/or adjusting notional budgets is undertaken on a six month basis at the discretion of the programme administrators, creating issues for providers in terms of the certainty regarding forward levels of funding. For clients it means there can be a significant lag in addressing any issues with SEE provider quality.

A potential option is to consider a more regular forward rolling budget which is adjusted on the current measures including provider performance and level of provider delivery. A more regular rolling budget would provide more regular performance feedback to SEE providers and allow them to better plan service delivery. There are a range of possible variants on the rolling budget model and of the key design features that would need to be implemented.

Recommendation 15 Budget planning

The notional budget model should be enhanced to address where possible the uncertainty currently faced by SEE providers and facilitate better forward planning. Specific consideration should be given to moving some or all of the SEE programme nominal budget allocation to a more regular rolling budget.

Ensuring provision where needed

The introduction of the multi-provider model into Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) where there is a limited number of eligible job seekers has created issues for the financial viability of some SEE sites. At the same time, where client needs and programme objectives are not being met, alternative SEE Providers need to be considered.

In weighing up the costs and benefits of the multi-provider model in remote and regional areas where the scale of demand is limited, it is likely that programme participants would be better off with a single stable SEE provider with sufficient scale to support cost-effective delivery. However, such assessments will need to be made on a case-by-case basis and require a framework that takes into account factors such as the level of expected numbers of eligible job seekers based on forecast economic and labour market conditions, historical and expected levels of referral activity from referral agencies including the impact of any changes to contracts for employment services providers, population demographics, the costs of delivery and the presence of established prospective SEE providers in the region.

Recommendation 16 Multi-provider viability

A framework should be developed to assess and determine the viability of the multi-provider model in all regions across Australia, but especially where there are low levels of likely demand for the SEE programme.

Recommendation 17 Boundary alignment with employment services

The Australian Government should align the SEE programme SDAs with the revised boundaries of the employment services contracts. To aid the multi-provider model, where necessary the revised SDAs should be merged to allow for viable provision by more than one SEE provider, in accordance with the framework proposed in Recommendation 16.

Delivery in remote areas

In comparison to the metropolitan and regional areas, the requirements of SEE delivery in remote areas face specific challenges in terms of the relatively high proportion of clients with an Indigenous background, securing suitably qualified staff, significantly higher costs associated with remote delivery, and the lack of viable levels of demand in many cases.

SEE providers in remote regions also highlighted the challenge of establishing effective working relationships with Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP) providers, in part due to the fact that they have only been contracted since 2013 and have been focused on establishing a range of other programmes in their remote areas, as well as relatively low levels of awareness and understanding of the SEE programme. As a result, SEE does not appear to have yet become an integral part of the RJCP arrangements for streamlined employment-servicing through a single, local point of contact.

In addition, the SEE programme may duplicate the function of the Participation Account administered by RJCP providers, which allows them to purchase assistance according to the needs of individuals, communities and local employers, including building foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy, work habits and basic life skills.

Recommendation 18 Remote delivery

The model for remote SEE programme delivery should be reviewed ahead of the next contract period to ascertain if the LLN needs of eligible job seekers in remote regions are being met by the training secured by RJCP providers through their Participation Accounts, or whether the model of SEE programme delivery needs to consider alternative approaches, including the allocation of the notional budget to the local RJCP provider in a remote region to be responsible for the procurement of LLN training locally on an as needed basis.

Recommendations list

This section provides a list of recommendations as discussed above in the Executive Summary and Chapter 7 of the report.

Recommendation 1

The SEE programme's objectives to improve an eligible job seeker's LLN skills to enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force are clear and should be retained.

Particular emphasis should be given in the programme's design to ensure that SEE can be utilised by job seekers wanting to engage in further study but lacking the necessary LLN skills.

Recommendation 2

The measurement of the outcomes of the SEE programme against its objectives could be improved. Options should be explored to capture the data necessary to measure the outcomes of the SEE programme, including:

- developing and implementing the necessary reporting frameworks for referring agencies, and/or
- reintroducing the Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey of participants.

Recommendation 3

The eligibility to the SEE programme should continue to be limited on the basis of whether individuals receive income support as it is an appropriate and necessary way to align the programme's target groups with the Australian Government's responsibilities for the welfare system and employment services.

Recommendation 4

The programme's guidelines should clarify whether job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group for the SEE programme and:

- If not, minimum entry requirements in terms of LLN proficiency should be introduced.
- If so, changes to facilitate the participation and rates of progress should be considered to accommodate those with very low LLN skills (see Recommendation 9).

Recommendation 5

Given referring agencies' key role in the SEE programme, the Department of Education and Training should work with the three relevant departments (Employment, Social Services, and Human Services) to improve the ability of referring agencies to refer suitable clients to the SEE programme, including through enhanced communications and the provision of information materials.

Recommendation 6

The two systems of assessment used in the SEE programme (the different training packages and the ASCF) should be maintained.

Recommendation 7

Given the amount of assessment involved, the SEE programme would benefit from the adoption of a more efficient and easy to use ASCF assessment tool like the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool (FSAT). The appropriate use of the FSAT should be formally considered and defined in the next tender round of the SEE programme.

Recommendation 8

There should be a review of SEE programme administrative requirements with a view to reducing the amount of data entry duplication and hard copy reporting.

Recommendation 9

The future shape of KPI 2 depends on whether job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group of the SEE programme (see Recommendation 4). If they are, KPI 2 could be modified to include pre-ACSF attainment.

Recommendation 10

The Australian Government should better promote techniques providers can use to mitigate against over assessment.

Recommendation 11

The Independent Verification is a beneficial part of the SEE programme and the Australian Government should look to improve the consistency and communication around the process and the expectations of assessors.

Recommendation 12

The Australian Government should undertake further research to comprehensively assess whether the SEE programme teacher qualification requirements strike the right overall balance between ensuring quality while not unduly restricting provider flexibility and innovation, particularly in relation to vocational units.

Recommendation 13

The requirement that SEE programme clients who have completed 800 hours must wait six months before recommencing the SEE programme should be reviewed for clients with low scores across the ACSF core skills. The six month requirement should remain for other clients to encourage clients to test their improved LLN skills in the job market.

Recommendation 14

To improve the level of competition in the multi-provider model, the Australian Government should work with stakeholders to develop and implement an information and communications strategy that will deliver relevant information regarding the options of SEE providers that are available, and thereby promote informed choice by Referring Agencies and their clients.

Recommendation 15

The notional budget model should be enhanced to address where possible the uncertainty currently faced by SEE providers and facilitate better forward planning. Specific consideration should be given to moving some or all of the SEE programme nominal budget allocation to a more regular rolling budget.

Recommendation 16

A framework should be developed to assess and determine the viability of the multi-provider model in all regions across Australia, but especially where there are low levels of likely demand for the SEE programme.

Recommendation 17

The Australian Government should align the SEE programme SDAs with the revised boundaries of the employment services contracts. To aid the multi-provider model, where necessary the revised SDAs should be merged to allow for viable provision by more than one SEE provider, in accordance with the framework proposed in Recommendation 16.

Recommendation 18

The model for remote SEE programme delivery should be reviewed ahead of the next contract period to ascertain if the LLN needs of eligible job seekers in remote regions are being met by the training secured by RJCP providers through their Participation Accounts, or whether the model of SEE programme delivery needs to consider alternative approaches, including the allocation of the notional budget to the local RJCP provider in a remote region to be responsible for the procurement of LLN training locally on an as needed basis.

1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the SEE programme evaluation, including the evaluation's context, research questions and method.

1.1 Evaluation overview

1.1.1 Evaluation objectives

ACIL Allen Consulting was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to conduct an evaluation of the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme. The evaluation was undertaken in conjunction with an evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The joint evaluations examined:

- The appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and performance management of the SEE programme and the AMEP.
- The strategic alignment between the SEE programme and the AMEP, and whether there are opportunities to improve how the two programmes work together.

1.1.2 Evaluation context

An evaluation of the SEE programme is considered timely as there were contract modifications in 2012 which involved significant changes in programme delivery and administration which are yet to be assessed.

An additional impetus for the evaluation is the movement of the administration of the SEE programme from the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to the Department of Industry in 2011, then to the Department of Education and Training in late 2014. The current co-location of the AMEP and the SEE programme in the Department of Education and Training provides an opportunity to explore the strategic alignment between the two programmes.

1.1.3 Evaluation outputs

The joint evaluations of the SEE programme and the AMEP have produced three reports:

- the SEE Programme Evaluation Report (this report)
- the AMEP Evaluation Report
- the AMEP & SEE Programme Alignment Report.

1.2 Research questions

The SEE programme evaluation research questions are outlined in Table 1. The research questions are grouped under four key areas of investigation – appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and performance assessment.

Table 1 Key research questions for the SEE programme evaluation

Area of investigation	Research questions
Appropriateness	What are the needs of job seekers with low language, literacy and numeracy skills and are the programme's current target groups appropriate?
	How are these needs assessed, are the benchmarks appropriate, and to what extent is the programme appropriate in addressing these?
	Are there opportunities to improve assessment of these needs through novel assessment tools?
	What are the barriers to vulnerable job seekers accessing and participating in the programme including awareness of the programme and referral opportunities?
	Are there gaps in the coverage or eligibility for the programme?
	How do the two programmes overlap/align? What are the opportunities for improving how the two programmes work together?
	How well does the programme align with broader government objectives including emerging changes to government policies and programmes?
Effectiveness	Are the programme objectives clear and to what extent do they allow for measurement of successful programme outcomes?
	To what extent is the programme effective in achieving the programme objectives?
	To what extent does the programme deliver value to the government and the community?
	To what extent do programme clients value the services provided?
	What would be the effect of changing the number of hours of tuition on programme outcomes?
	What impact does tuition method have on programme outcomes and what method(s) are considered best practice in the provision of vocational training?
	What is the take up and completion rate of the programme? What are the barriers to take up and completion?
Efficiency	Is the programme design and funding model a cost efficient means to deliver services to the identified client groups? What impact do multi-service training providers have?
	Is there duplication of quality assurance monitoring undertaken under the programme by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)? If so, what opportunities are there to streamline quality assurance monitoring arrangements?
	Are there improvements that could be made to deliver similar outcomes at a lesser cost?
	What cost effective changes could be made to programme design and delivery to improve outcomes?
	What does it cost to deliver an outcome for a job seeker under this programme?
	What are the applicable regulations and legislation in relation to participation requirements and client eligibility? Is there scope for reducing associated regulatory complexity and administrative burden for contracted services providers and the department?
Performance assessment	To what extent does the programme have sound data collection methodologies for measuring and reporting against programme objectives/KPIs and client outcomes?
	Are monitoring protocols in place for the programme sufficient?
	Are there opportunities for improved methods for measuring and reporting post programme outcomes data?
	What Australian longitudinal data is available to support an examination of the relationship between clients participating in the programme and employment outcomes in the future?

Source: RFQ documentation, AMEP and SEE Evaluation Project Plan

1.3 Evaluation method

The SEE programme evaluation method included:

- A programme document review, and national and international literature review.
- Programme data analysis.
- Stakeholder consultations including interviews, focus groups, surveys and a public submission process.

1.3.1 Document and literature review

The review analysed a range of internal documentation relevant to the programme's design, delivery and quality assurance. Additional investigation was undertaken to check the

accuracy of these documents and to identify other Australian Government or state and territory government programmes relevant to the SEE programme.

On the basis of this material, the project team prepared an overview of the programme that encompassed programme guidelines, referral processes, eligibility criteria, SEE provider agreements, programme funding model, implementation and reporting documents, and quality assurance and monitoring protocols.

This material informed analysis presented in later chapters of this report and was used in the design of stakeholder consultation tools.

The literature review was based on a search strategy that identified a set of key research questions relevant to the programme and its evaluation. Appropriate search terms were derived from this question set and an initial search undertaken to confirm appropriate national and international search targets.

The search targets included national and international journal indexes and a hand search of selected and highly relevant journals. The search strategy extended to literature such as monographs and reports published by academic and research institutes, and reports commissioned by governments. Search terms and strategies were refined over three waves of searching and materials selected for inclusion in the literature review were entered into a bibliographic management database.

1.3.2 Programme data analysis

The SEE programme evaluation draws on the following datasets:

- SEE programme de-identified referral-level data.
- De-identified SEE provider contract prices.
- SEE programme aggregate expenditure data.
- JSA client numbers, aggregated at the service delivery area (SDA) level.

The SEE programme de-identified referral-level data are for referrals that took place in the four financial years: 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14. While the data are at the referral level, unique client identification also allows analysis to be undertaken at the client level. Due to the small number of years for which data are available, care must be taken when interpreting time series analysis.

The de-identified SEE provider contract prices are for the 2010-13 contract and the 2013-16 contract. In this report, prices are in 2012-13 dollars to aid comparisons with other programmes. Nominal prices are adjusted using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index and the 2014-15 MYEFO CPI inflation forecasts.

The SEE programme aggregate expenditure data are for three financial years: 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14. Appropriations data are for 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 and are taken from the 2014-15 Budget and the 2014-15 MYEFO. In this report, expenditure is in 2013-14 dollars. Nominal prices are adjusted using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index and the 2014-15 MYEFO CPI inflation forecasts.

The JSA client numbers data, aggregated at the SDA level, are for 30 September 2014.

1.3.3 Stakeholder consultations

The stakeholder consultations for this evaluation had four parts:

- interviews
- focus groups with clients
- surveys
- a public submission process.

The stakeholder consultations component of the evaluation provided valuable insights into the design of the SEE programme, training under the SEE programme, the effectiveness of the programme, funding and efficiency, performance assessment and reporting, and transition from the AMEP to the SEE programme or other types of training.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted nation-wide in the capital city of each state and territory, and in a regional town in all states and territories apart from the ACT. In NSW, interviews were conducted in two regional towns.

A discussion guide was developed which provided background on the evaluation for interviewees. It also included questions to guide and ensure consistency across the interviews.

A total of 50 interviews with SEE programme stakeholders took place – 44 were face-to-face and six were conducted via telephone. In addition, eight interviews were conducted with providers of both the SEE programme and the AMEP.

Interviews were conducted with a variety of SEE programme stakeholders including contracted SEE providers, referring agencies, Australian Government and state and territory government officials, and other organisations with an interest in the programme.

Focus groups

Six focus groups were conducted with SEE programme clients, across four states – Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania – in both capital cities and regional towns. Focus group participants included a wide variety of SEE programme clients from a variety of backgrounds, with a variety of SEE programme hours attended and with a range of language, literacy and numeracy skill levels. Where appropriate, translators were used to facilitate focus groups.

Survey

An online survey was developed for the evaluation. The survey included multiple choice and open ended questions, and covered the appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the SEE programme, and the strategic alignment between SEE programme and the AMEP.

The survey was open to contracted SEE providers and employers of past or present programme participants. Thirty eight (38) SEE programme stakeholders completed the survey.

Public submission process

Organisations and individuals were invited to make a public submission to the evaluation. An invitation was sent to stakeholders and added to the evaluation website.

The evaluation received 19 submissions from SEE programme stakeholders. Submissions were received from SEE providers, other service providers, other organisations and teachers.

1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: The current design of the SEE programme
- Chapter 3: Client needs and good practices in adult LLN programmes
- Chapter 4: The SEE programme cohort, take up and clients' LLN skills
- Chapter 5: The effectiveness of the SEE programme
- Chapter 6: Efficiency and performance management
- Chapter 7: The appropriateness and future of the AMEP.

2 The current design of the SEE programme

This chapter provides an overview of the SEE programme including the programme's objectives, design and curriculum. This chapter also details how other relevant Australian Government, and state and territory government programmes and services relate to the SEE programme.

2.1 Programme overview, objectives and eligibility

The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme commenced in 2013 as the continuation of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP). SEE is the Australian Government's primary programme for helping eligible job seekers to improve their language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force.

The LLNP commenced in 2002 when the Literacy and Numeracy Training Programme and the Advanced English for Migrants programme amalgamated to provide a more integrated management approach to addressing LLN needs among job seekers at the national level.

A review of the LLNP in 2013 identified opportunities to make the programme more flexible and efficient. This included a name change to remove perceived social stigma associated with the programme's name.

2.1.1 Programme objectives

The SEE programme seeks to improve eligible job seeker's LLN skills with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force, and lead to long-term gains for the economy and the community more broadly (Department of Industry, 2014).

For the purposes of the programme, language, literacy and numeracy are defined as follows:

- *Language* – refers to the understanding and use of spoken and written English.
- *Literacy* – refers to the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking. It incorporates numeracy and it includes the cultural knowledge that enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations.
- *Numeracy* – refers to the ability to use mathematics effectively to meet the general demands of life at home, in paid work and for participation in community and civic life.

2.1.2 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the programme, an Australian job seeker must:

- be of working age (15 to 64 years of ages) and looking for full time work, however these criteria are dependent on individual participation requirements, which are assessed on a case by case basis

- be registered as a job seeker with Department of Human Services (DHS) and eligible for Job Services Australia (JSA), Disability Employment Services (DES) or Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP) assistance
- be deemed suitable for training without any barriers that would prevent successful participation (see Box 1)
- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or have working rights in Australia
- and satisfy one of the following:
 - are in receipt of income support, including: Youth Allowance, Newstart Allowance, Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payments (single and partnered), Community Development Employment Project (grandfathered participants), Widow B Pension, Widow Allowance, Partner Allowance, or Special Benefit; or
 - are aged 15-21 years (irrespective of the receipt of income support), or
 - are migrants serving the two-year newly arrived residents waiting period (NARWP) for income support.

Box 1 Suitability for training

Clients must be deemed suitable for SEE programme training. Clients are considered suitable for training if:

- they demonstrate the potential to benefit from a particular stream and level of LLN training
- have no potential barriers which could inhibit their capacity to measurably improve their LLN skills, for instance, substance abuse or potential prolonged attendance difficulties
- are only engaged in acceptable concurrent participation in other programmes
- demonstrate they have the intention and capacity to meet attendance requirements.

Source: SEE Provider Instructions

The AMEP clients are eligible for referral to the SEE programme, though their participation in the AMEP must cease upon commencement in the SEE programme.

Clients are not eligible for the programme if they:

- are a full-time student at the time of referral
- are undertaking either the Green Corps or New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) programmes
- are currently a secondary visa holder (dependent) of a person who holds a Skilled Migrant Visa
- are current holders of a Skilled Migrant Visa
- have completed the programme (800 hours) with the last programme exit date within six months of the referral date, or
- have withdrawn or been suspended from the programme within 12 weeks of the exit date, except where the client is transferring to a new provider (Department of Industry, 2014).

2.2 Services provided under the SEE programme

SEE programme clients can access up to 800 hours of free training which can be undertaken on a part-time (10 to 19 hours per week) or full-time (20 to 25 hours per week) basis over no more than a two year period. The programme provides initial, basic and advanced accredited English language training, as well as basic and advanced literacy and

numeracy training. The number of training hours undertaken weekly by each client is set out in their Individual Training Plans (ITP).

Clients are offered one or more of three streams of training, based on their assessment results:

- *Initial Language stream* – is designed solely for clients whose first language is not English and who at the time of the Pre Training Assessment (PTA), achieve Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Level 1 or below in all ACSF reading and oral communication indicators.
- *Basic Language, Literacy and Numeracy stream* – accommodates the needs of both language and literacy/numeracy clients and focuses on consolidating functional LLN skills.
- *Advanced Language, Literacy and Numeracy stream* – accommodates both language and literacy/numeracy clients who have higher ACSF scores than those in the Basic stream. These clients generally achieve between ACSF Levels 3 and 5 in reading, writing and oral communication.

Finding employment after undertaking the programme's training is the ultimate measure of success, however, attainment is also important. Attainment is measured by comparing the client's LLN improvements in ACSF indicators from their PTA to the later assessments during and at the end of their training.

2.2.1 Programme delivery

SEE is delivered through Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) who are contracted to provide LLN training at sites within a specified Service Delivery Area (SDA, previously known as a Business Service Area). The programme provides for different service delivery options in remote areas. These include:

- The ability for providers to scope potential communities to determine whether there is a need for LLN training and whether the delivery of the programme can be sustained.
- Community protocols in remote areas and Indigenous community engagement.
- A more flexible referral process.
- The need to create strong working relationships with Remote Jobs and Community Programme providers.

Additionally, guidelines on remote service delivery recommend innovative and flexible practices when supporting client attendance, such as drawing on relationships with referral agencies and other service providers, and knowledge of social and cultural demographics within communities.

The programme requires that teachers and assessors must have a minimum three-year undergraduate degree and either:

- a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and at least 100 hours teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) or adult literacy/numeracy, or
- a specialist adult literacy qualifications, or
- a recognised specialist TESOL qualification.

In remote SDAs, where providers face a shortage of teachers and assessors meeting these minimum requirements, an application for a waiver may be made.

2.2.2 Training delivery

SEE programme training is delivered through:

- face-to-face classes
- small group training classes
- distance mode
- mixed mode.

In addition, participants are eligible to participate in work experience during their training.

Face-to-face delivery

Face-to-face delivery is standard training usually delivered via teacher contact in a classroom with a maximum of 20 clients per class, or by other electronic means such as video conferencing (Department of Industry 2013b).

Small Group Training

Small Group Training (SGT) differs from standard face-to-face training by restricting class size to no more than five individuals (Department of Industry 2013b). SGT allows participants who are uncomfortable or struggling in a larger class to build their confidence in a smaller class, before returning to larger classes.

SGT can be undertaken for the first 20 hours of training, however after the 20 hours of SGT, clients must commence in standard training (Department of Industry 2013b).

Distance mode

Distance mode provision is intended to service:

- clients in rural and remote areas who cannot easily access face-to-face training delivery
- clients with disability
- clients with primary caring responsibilities which preclude classroom attendance.

Clients may receive all 800 hours of training by distance provision. Distance mode training can only be delivered by designated national distance providers.

Distance mode delivery providers must supplement training material sent to the participants with direct contact. This may include the use of telephone, computer web cam, email or tutoring support from local tutors/mentors.

Mixed mode

Mixed mode is the delivery of training through a combination of both face-to-face and distance mode delivery. Mixed mode clients must complete 30 hours of face-to-face delivery before commencing distance mode learning. The distance mode must not account for more than four consecutive weeks of SEE programme training and clients must not exceed 12 weeks of distance training within 800 hours of training (Department of Industry 2013b).

Work experience

Work experience can be offered under the SEE programme to provide an opportunity for participants to gain practical experience and understanding of employers' needs and expectations. It is intended to increase participants' work-related skills and knowledge and, as a result, increase their future employability.

Providers integrate appropriate LLN preparation prior to work experience and consolidate learning on completion. Clients must complete 30 hours of Face to Face Delivery before commencing work experience and must not exceed 12 weeks of work experience within 800 hours of training.

2.2.3 Referral pathways

Centrelink, Job Services Australia providers, Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP) providers and Disability Employment Service (DES) providers are collectively known as Referring Agencies (RAs). After determining a job seeker's eligibility and obtaining their agreement, the RA is required to make an appointment for a Pre-Training Assessment (PTA) on the job seeker's behalf with the provider. The RA confirms the appointment details after discussion with the provider and advises the job seeker.

2.3 SEE programme curriculum

The SEE programme does not mandate a curriculum in order to allow SEE providers the flexibility to address the needs of individual clients and deliver training that is contextualised to local needs. SEE providers are required to be a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and to have within their scope of training the relevant accredited training, such as the Foundation Skills Training Package or the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA).

Other accredited training for LLN is also acceptable; this may include the Certificate in Initial Adult Literacy and Numeracy or the Certificate in Skills for Vocational Pathways (CSVP). SEE providers may also use the Course in Preliminary Spoken and Written English or the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE, the same curriculum framework used in the AMEP).

Use of accredited training curriculum may be influenced by foundation skills curricula commonly used in the different states and territories based on their arrangements for funding of foundation skills. The Certificate in Applied Vocational Study Skills or the Course in Underpinning Skills for Industry Qualifications (USIQ) are commonly used in Western Australia, while the CSWE curriculum framework is more widely used in the ACT. Victorian SEE providers may be more likely to use the CGEA while NSW SEE providers are more likely to provide the Certificate in Access to Work and Training as well as the CGEA and CSVP.

The SEE programme requires that progress and learning outcomes be recorded against the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), a benchmarking tool that describes the five core skills of learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy. The ACSF was developed to support a national approach to the identification and development of the core skills in diverse personal, community, work, and education and training contexts. A broad range of adult English LLN curricula have been mapped to the ACSF and it is also being used to identify, clarify and describe core skills requirements in national Training Package qualifications.

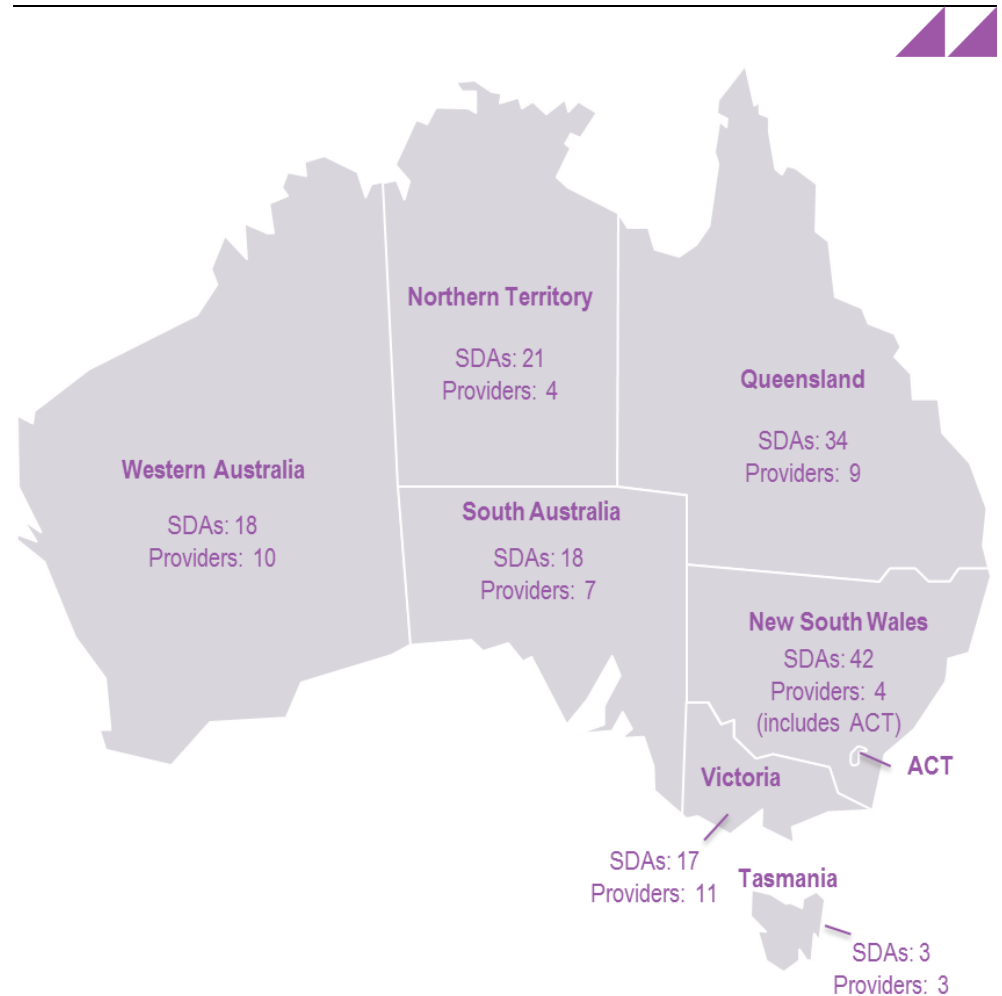
SEE providers using accredited training are required by their conditions of registration to record client outcomes against the course being delivered, such as the CGEA. This is in addition to recording progress and outcomes against the ACSF.

2.4 SEE providers

The SEE programme is delivered nationally and is divided into SDAs to ensure national geographic coverage. This ensures the equitable spread of services rather than SEE providers clustering services in highly populated areas. These areas were mapped to align with the Employment Service Areas developed by the Department of Employment.

Figure 1 provides an overview of SEE service provision in each state and territory. It indicates the number of SDAs and providers per jurisdiction.

Figure 1 Overview of SEE providers



Source: SEE programme information

RTOs are contracted to deliver assessment and training services. All training delivered as part of the programme is accredited and RTOs must have the training curriculum in scope to continue delivery of the programme.

The programme has the ability for assessment and training to be delivered by distance mode. The distance mode provider(s) also covers SDAs where there is no face-to-face provider contracted to deliver the programme in that area.

Aside from the key performance indicators (KPIs), other factors of performance will be taken into consideration when determining the length of the contract to be offered. Those components will include but are not limited to:

- The target cohort on which the provider has been focussing.
- Whether the provider has been involved with any Innovative and Research Projects.
- The ability of the provider to deliver on strategies outlined in their tender response and ensure site operations are commenced within the stipulated timeframe.
- Linkages to the local community and/or relationships with local referring agencies. Feedback on those relationships will be sought from the referring agencies.

2.5 Funding model

The SEE programme is delivered and funded under a competitive tendering model. RTOs apply to deliver services in specified SDAs and bid to provide training at SDA-specified prices. Unlike the AMEP which is demand driven, SEE programme funding is capped annually.

There are two prices in the programme. The first is for each PTA delivered. The second is for each hour of training delivered per client.

Total SEE programme funding is set in the annual Australian Government budget process. Successful tenders are given nominal budgets for each SDA in which they operate based on anticipated demand in each SDA and the provider's SDA-specific contracted prices. SEE providers are paid for each SDA and hour of training delivered up to their nominal budget. When SEE providers forecast they will exceed their nominal budget they may request an increased allocation from the Department.

Expenditure under the SEE programme in 2013-14 was \$111 million; approximately 26,000 clients commenced in 2013-14.

2.6 Recent programme changes

The review of the LLNP prompted a series of programmatic changes primarily related to programme delivery, flexibility in adapting training to client needs and programme administration. These changes were introduced with the SEE programme 2013-2016 contract.

There has been an increase in the number of SEE programme providers, and there are now more locations in which one or more SEE providers compete for clients. Flexibility in delivery has been increased through the removal of the requirement for blocks of training in 200 hours and a greater emphasis on SEE providers contextualising their training to local requirements and the needs of their clients.

Requirements for teacher and assessor qualifications were modified to maintain support for high quality accredited training delivery while ensuring that RTOs could access a sufficiently large pool of teaching staff to meet demand for training. There was also some modification to the wording of KPIs and they were more closely aligned to the programme's objectives of increasing the LLN skill levels of clients.

Details of administrative changes are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2 From LLNP to SEE: programme administrative changes for 2013-16

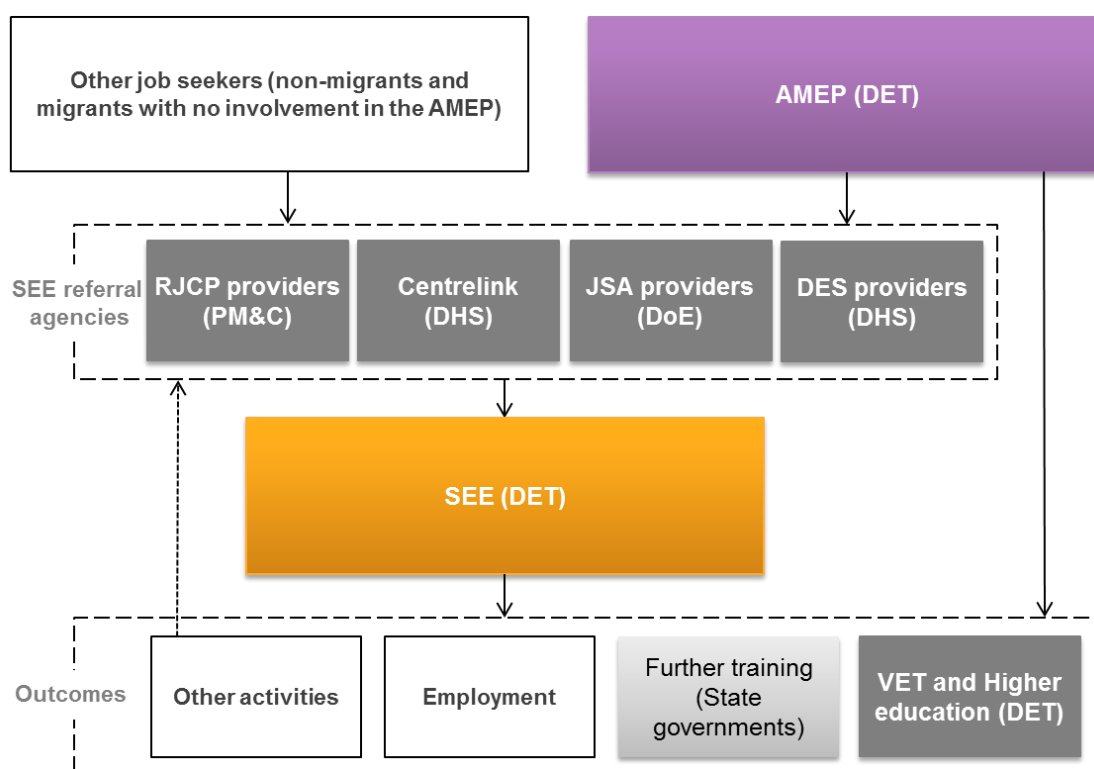
Programme area	Details of change
Assessment points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular assessments can now be undertaken at any time during a client's training, but will be required to be completed at least once in every 200 hours of training. Where clients do not improve in ACSF indicators, a waiver will not be sought. Instead the provider will need to make an assessment whether the client will improve their LLN skills by continuing in the program Failure to achieve improvements will be reflected in the Attainment KPI. Ongoing poor performance in the Attainment KPI will result in performance discussions. Previous assessments required for the programme will continue but will be split into two different assessment points. These are the Interval Progress Assessment and Learning Outcome Assessment.
Work experience	The cap of 40 hours is removed as 200 hour training blocks will no longer apply. Clients must complete 30 hours of Standard training first before commencing work experience.
Small group training	Small Group Training is still considered an important assimilation option and will continue to be part of the programme delivery with a minor change. The training should apply for the first 20 hours of training only as it is expected that after 20 hours of training, clients can commence in larger groups of training.
Mixed-mode training	A mix of face-to-face and distance mode training is an important training delivery option. To reflect the removal of the 200 hour training blocks, clients must complete 30 hours of Face to Face Delivery first before commencing the distance component of Mixed Mode study. The distance component of training must be no more than four consecutive weeks, and can be utilised no more than 12 weeks in 800 hours of training.
Milestone payments	<p>Milestone payment system will be removed and replaced with an hour by hour payment process.</p> <p>The previous system disadvantaged SEE providers by not paying for services delivered when job seekers leave courses prior to reaching the next milestone. This may have discouraged providers from taking on more disadvantaged job seekers who may be more likely to leave courses prior to completion. The new system aligns with the increased flexibility resulting from the removal of the 200 hour training block structure.</p>

Source: Department of Industry SEE programme documentation, 2014.

2.7 Other relevant programmes and services

The SEE programme has important links to other Australian Government, and state and territory government programmes and services. Figure 2 provides an overview of some of the most relevant programmes, which are then detailed below.

Figure 2 Overview of SEE and other relevant programme and services



Note: The purple, yellow and dark grey boxes are Australian Government programmes; the light grey box is a state/territory government programme; the Australian Government departments in brackets indicates which agency is responsible for the programme. The acronyms are as follows: DHS – Department of Human Services; DET – Department of Education and Training; DSS – Department of Social Services; RJCP – Remote Jobs and Communities Programme; PM&C – Prime Minister and Cabinet; JSA – Job Services Australia; DoE – Department of Employment.

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting

2.7.1 The Adult Migrant English Program

The AMEP, administered by the Department of Education and Training, provides up to 510 hours of free English language tuition to eligible new migrants and humanitarian entrants. The programme is delivered by RTOs, a number of which also deliver the SEE programme. In 2013-14, approximately 30,000 clients enrolled with AMEP. The programme's budget in the same year was \$247 million.

While some clients progress from the AMEP to the SEE programme, there are no reliable data on the proportion of AMEP clients that move on to the SEE programme.

2.7.2 Referral agencies

Centrelink

Recipients of Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance, Special Benefit or Parenting Payments have activity or participation requirements that are detailed in their Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) or, if in remote areas, their Individual Participation Plan (IPP).

These plans may describe a range of activities such as job search requirements, referrals to employment services providers, specialist assistance or other training and skills

development activities. Under EPPs and IPPs, job seekers may be referred to a number of skills and training activities including accredited training and programmes such as SEE.

Centrelink must connect job seekers to a Job Services Australia or Disability Employment Services provider to assist with job searching and preparation for employment.

Job Services Australia providers

Job Services Australia (JSA) providers are contracted by the Australian Government to provide employment services to eligible job seekers. JSAs provide support for job seekers through assistance with job search techniques and facilities, identification of training and development opportunities, access to work experience and assistance with personal barriers to finding and keeping a job. This pathway to employment is documented in the job seeker's Employment Pathway Plan (EPP).

The level of assistance provided by a JSA depends on the level of need of the job seeker and is categorised according to the following streams:

- Stream 1, for job seekers who are work ready
- Stream 2, for job seekers with relatively moderate barriers to employment
- Stream 3, for job seekers with relatively significant barriers to employment
- Stream 4, for job seekers with severe barriers to employment.

The most intensive assistance is offered to Stream 4 job seekers who may receive a range of services to address vocational and non-vocational barriers, including providing or organising assessments, counselling or professional support, referral and advocacy and other support services.

JSAs work with a range of training providers, community organisations and employers in their communities to access the range of services required by job seekers. Job seekers in Streams 2, 3 or 4 may be referred to locally available LLN programmes, of which SEE may be one. When a JSA client is referred to the SEE programme, they may also be required to attend other training by their JSA provider and will need to comply in order to continue receiving their income support payment. JSAs do not receive an outcome payment for placing a client with the SEE programme.

Remote Jobs and Communities Programme providers

The Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP) is an Australian Government programme that provides a jobs, participation and community-development service in 60 remote regions in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales.

A single SEE provider with a permanent presence in each remote region delivers the RJCP on behalf of the Australian Government. Key features of the new programme are:

- Employment and participation activities, including personalised support for job seekers.
- The Remote Youth Leadership and Development Corps (Youth Corps) to help young people move successfully from school to work.
- SEE providers and communities working together through the development of Community Action Plans to identify the strategies and resources needed to overcome barriers to employment and participation.
- The Community Development Fund to help communities build strong social and economic foundations.

RJCP providers develop a tailored Individual Participation Plan that sets out the assistance provided to job seekers and the activities they will participate in to move into employment or towards job readiness. These may include work experience and activities that address their employment and participation barriers and needs.

RJCP participants are also eligible for SEE and it is expected that SEE providers will work closely with RJCP providers to ensure that SEE programme delivery is complementary to, or embedded within, relevant RJCP activities. It is also expected that RJCP providers will take up training and foundation skills, including programmes supported by the Australian Government such as SEE and financial literacy programmes (RJCP Programme Guidelines 2013-2016).

Disability Employment Service providers

Disability Employment Service (DES) providers contracted by the Australian Government to provide employment services to job seekers with disability. There are two types of DES providers:

- Disability Management Service – for clients who require employment services but not long-term support in the workplace.
- Employment Support Service – for clients with a permanent disability who need ongoing support in the workplace.

DES providers help prepare clients for work including training in specific job skills and provide job search support, on-the-job training and co-worker and employer support, and workplace modifications.

The DES programme is managed by DSS.

2.7.3 Australian Government VET programmes

While the states and territories have primary responsibility for VET, the Australian Government funds other programmes in the VET sector, in addition to the SEE programme.

For a number of years, the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) provided funding to businesses with demonstrated need for LLN training. The funding allowed for targeted training for in need individuals through registered training organisations, aimed at improving employee LLN and helping employees meet their employment and training needs (Department of Industry and Science 2014b). WELL also undertook the development and trialling of training, assessment and reporting materials (Department of Industry and Science 2014c).

In the 2014-15 Budget the Australian Government closed 11 skills and training programmes, including Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL), and created the Industry Skills Fund, which opened on 1 January 2015.

Like WELL, the Industry Skills Fund assists Australian businesses to access training and support services as well as develop innovative training solutions so businesses can adapt to new business opportunities, technological change and market driven structural adjustment. However, unlike WELL, which provided funds for an identified need for LLN training, the Industry Skills Fund provides businesses with access to funds or:

- Skills advice: to help identify skills opportunities and maximise training outcomes, or
- Training for growth: Co-investment for businesses to improve the skills of their workplace for an identified growth opportunity.

Business who access funding for training for an identified growth opportunity must co-contribute to the project, where the amount is dependent on the size of the business (Business.gov.au 2014c).

The fund is targeting small to medium enterprises (SMEs), including micro businesses, which are preparing to take up growth opportunities outside of their normal day-to-day business operations (Business.gov.au 2014c). Larger businesses are also eligible, however are required to make a larger co-contribution to the costs of training.

In addition, the Industry Skills Fund – Youth Stream comprises two pilot programmes targeting youth unemployment – the Training for Employment Scholarship and Youth Employment Pathways.

The Training for Employment Scholarships will be trialled in 2015 and designed to tailor training to the specific requirements of the job and needs of the young person. An employer will have flexibility to negotiate with the approved training provider(s) a training programme of up to 26 weeks (Department of Industry n.d). It may deliver literacy, language and numeracy support among other skills.

It is intended that Youth Employment Pathways will assist disengaged youth to get back into school, move into the workforce or start a VET pathway. From 1 March 2015, community organisations will be able to apply for funding to deliver support services to a person aged 15-18 who is not in school (Department of Industry n.d).

2.7.4 VET funded by state governments

The following table provides an overview of state and territory funding arrangements for foundation skills, accessible to any student (subject to age requirements).

Table 3 **Foundation skills in VET: state and territory comparison**

	New South Wales	Victoria	South Australia	Queensland	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory
Implementation	January 2015	2008	2012	2013	January 2014	2014	
Age requirements	15 or over without a certificate IV or above	Over 15	Over 16	15 or over, no longer at school	-	Over 15	17 and over, no longer at school
Range of courses	Identified foundation skill qualifications, published on website	Identified foundation skill qualifications, published on website	Identified foundation skill qualifications, published on website	Identified foundation skill qualifications, published on website	-	Identified foundation skill qualifications, published on website	-
Courses limit	-	2 courses per year	-	-	-	-	-
Student fees	Set by NSW Government and concessions apply	Set by RTO and concessions apply	Foundation skills courses, Certificate I and II courses and courses in priority areas are student fee free	Set by RTO and concessions apply	Set by WA government and concessions apply	-	-
Funding mechanism	Approved RTOs will be paid a loading on top of the base price for training disadvantaged students, on a per qualification basis	Funding is paid per hour of training delivery and higher subsidies are provided for foundation skill qualifications	Funding is paid at an hourly rate per unit of competency	Funding is provided per qualification and the Queensland Government will pay a higher subsidy for any participant requiring literacy and numeracy training	Foundation skills courses and qualifications will receive the highest proportion of government	-	-

Source: ACT Education and Training Directorate (2014)

2.8 Previous reviews

The Australian Government released a Discussion Paper in 2012 to seek stakeholder feedback on the programme, with a view to modifying it prior to the 2013-2016 contract period. The Discussion Paper sought comment on aspects of market delivery, including the multi-provider and panel models. A range of programme elements was also presented for discussion including teacher and assessor qualifications, the place of work experience, service delivery, geographic coverage, the performance framework, and payment structure. Attention was also paid to the matter of remote service delivery and the Independent Verification process (DIISRTE 2012).

2.8.1 Review report of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme, 25 February 2005

The Review of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP) was undertaken in response to a request by the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC), on 15 April 2004, for the Education, Science and Training portfolio to report to the ERC in the 2005 Budget context. The scope of the Review was to address the employment and other economic outcomes of the programme. This was the first review of the LLNP, which commenced operation in January 2002.

It found that the programme had measurably improved the skill levels of participants and, consequently, the likelihood of participants finding employment, entering further education and coming off income support. Additionally, the Review found that the programme did not duplicate other training then funded by Australian Government agencies (Department of Education Science Training 2005).

The review made a number of recommendations with regard to best practice, referrals, efficiency, monitoring and KPIs, whole of government approaches, and understanding long term programme outcomes. It recommended flexibility in programme delivery to meet individual needs and a continued emphasis on teacher quality. In order to manage the referrals process and demand, it sought better use of AMEP data and exchange of information between the two programmes, close relationships with referring agencies and the introduction of assessment of the capacity to benefit in order to access additional rounds of training.

The review was concerned with appropriate monitoring and KPIs and recommended that progress reporting be adopted along with clarification of programme indicators. The latter sought to more clearly denote KPIs addressing quality provision of LLN training, accurate and timely verifications, and outcomes that the programme as a whole is trying to achieve, namely increases in employment in clients on income support (Department of Education Science Training 2005, pp. 15-18).

3 Client needs and good practices in adult LLN programmes

This chapter sets out findings from client focus groups undertaken as part of this evaluation. It then sets out best practice principles for LLN programmes, including cohort specific practices.

3.1 Clients' needs as indicated in focus groups

Based on focus groups carried out for this evaluation, the primary outcome clients seek to achieve following their completion of the SEE programme is full-time employment, and many clients recognise that once they complete the SEE programme, finding employment will be easier.

Many clients also discussed their objective of transitioning from the SEE programme into further education and training, and having their previous qualifications obtained in their home country (in the case of international students) recognised formally in Australia.

Many clients also expressed their interest in transitioning into VET to undertake certificate/diploma level courses, in order to ultimately find higher level full-time employment. Concern surrounding the type of jobs available to them is shared by most clients, with many acknowledging that to obtain high quality, skilled employment, they need to complete further study following completion of the SEE programme.

In addition to obtaining employment, the outcomes many clients wish to obtain from undertaking the SEE programme are communication skills, team skills, computer skills and other skills that may assist them in the workplace. Furthermore, achieving proficiency in basic LLN skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing, were also expressed by many as their desired outcomes from the SEE programme.

Many clients also view the SEE programme as a means to participating in the community, making them more independent and better increasing their prospects of securing employment.

3.2 Principles of adult literacy, language and numeracy programmes

The importance of adequate levels of LLN skills is seen in a range of outcomes for individuals and the economy. The economic productivity of countries is improved as higher levels of LLN proficiency among adults enables employers to access an increased pool of skilled labour. The benefits for individuals are seen in multiple social outcomes including improved health, ability to access services, employment rates, social inclusion and political efficacy (OECD 2013).

Contemporary policy and practice acknowledges that literacy is more than reading: it encompasses speaking, listening and communication in multiple contexts. Similarly, numeracy supports more than just numerical skills, encompassing an understanding of when to apply mathematics, how to do it, the degree of accuracy required and how to act on the result.

From this broader understanding of what constitutes LLN proceeds the understanding that LLN is for all aspects of an individual's life and not just their work. The goal of LLN is to understand and use information for knowledge, problem solving, interpersonal communication and to engage fully in home, community and work life (OECD 2013).

3.3 Good practices in adult LLN programmes

This section discusses the key insights from the academic literature on good practices in adult LLN programmes, an overview of which is provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Overview of good practices in adult LLN

Program delivery	Teaching practice	Other practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching qualifications: bachelor degree + specialist qualification Volunteers are rigorously selected, trained and supported Professional development for paid staff Attendance support: flexible scheduling, accessible child care, transport assistance, access to counselling Flexible modes of delivery with access to individual support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostic assessment integrated into curricula and teaching programmes Learner-centred curricula (authentic instruction) Individualised learning plans with clear goals Practices support engaging with LLN outside the classroom Build self-esteem and self-efficacy Emphasis on formative (continuous) assessment Support for learning disabilities and dyslexia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising learner persistence: continuing but not continuous engagement Adult appropriate learning environments Amount of tuition required will vary but evidence supports 100 hours per grade increase (more required for learners with low skill levels) Supporting the development of social networks

Source: Alkema and Rean 2013; Benseman *et al.* 2005; Crowther *et al.* 2010; Human Resources & Skills Development Canada 2012; NIACE 2011a; NIACE 2011b; NZCER 2010; Tett *et al.* 2006; Vorhaus *et al.* 2011; Vorhaus *et al.* 2008.

3.3.1 Programme delivery

The literature strongly supports the practice of integrating literacy and numeracy into vocational and workplace training improving the likelihood of retention and success when content is tied to vocational or real life contexts and when literacy and vocational tutors work closely together. Where embedding is not possible, it is appropriate that stand alone LLN programmes are heavily contextualised so as to provide a strong link to education and employability skills.

A seminal work on embedding by Casey *et al.* (2006) found that where LLN skills were embedded in courses, there were more positive outcomes for clients than in courses in which these skills were treated separately. It also found that there was a positive impact on retention, achievement and success rates and that success rates were higher in embedded than in non-embedded courses. The key factors were considered to be the removal of stigma associated with stand-alone LLN programmes and that teaching LLN within programmes enabled learners to cope more effectively with the content of the course.

Casey *et al.* found that a number of teaching and administrative practices supported LLN embedding. Team work between literacy, ESL numeracy and vocational teachers was essential and may include having specialist teachers in classrooms alongside vocational teachers. Also important were teaching and learning needed to connect LLN to vocational

outcomes and positive staff understanding, and values and beliefs. At the organisational level, policies and administrative practices needed to be designed so that resources could be directed into embedded programmes (2006).

This whole-of-organisation approach was supported by Leach *et al.* (2009) whose review of organisational factors impacting on embedded LLN provision found that close collaboration across LLN and vocational teachers is required, and that ongoing professional development is also necessary.

The literature also identified the need to build in understanding and support of learner persistence in adult education. As Crowther *et al.* (2010) observe, LLN learners are disproportionately likely to come from areas of social deprivation and low income families, lead unstable lives, experience ill health and cope with disabilities, with each of these factors impacting on their ability to sustain their engagement in learning programmes. Consequently, the formal engagement of adult learners in LLN is more often marked by breaks or pauses in learning as they swap formal study with self-directed study or take breaks to manage life circumstances.

Acknowledging persistence, rather than completion, through the adoption of particular teaching strategies and programmes that allow clients to break from study and re-enter without penalty is considered a contributing factor to increasing LLN proficiency (Crowther *et al.* 2010; Reder 2013). This can be considered as continuing, but not continuous, engagement. Those teaching practices which enable LLN engagement outside the classroom are appropriate and are discussed in more detail below. Attendance support strategies are also a contributing factor, including access to child care, flexible schedule and multiple delivery modes (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education 2011).

3.3.2 Teacher qualifications and development

Similar to adult language learning, the literature finds that teaching qualifications such as a bachelor degree and specialist qualification in adult LLN are essential (Alkema and Rean 2013). Effective programmes provided staff with adequate time for planning and coordinating provision and used full-time staff as much as possible for consistency of teaching methods and efficient use of professional development resources. Where volunteers are used, they should be rigorously selected, trained and supported (Benseman *et al.* 2005).

Benseman *et al.* (2005) found that providers of LLN programmes can also take action to support effective LLN teaching. These included:

- planning for professional development
- enabling staff to access professional and support networks
- ensuring tutors have access to resources
- providing tutor non-contact time allocation (for planning and preparation)
- undertaking robust initial assessment and learning plans
- recording literacy skill gain
- ensuring tutors have learner-centred teaching strategies
- providing assistance for learners with high literacy needs.

Vorhaus *et al.* (2011) has found strong associations between teacher qualifications, experience, subject matter knowledge and learner progress.

3.3.3 Teaching practice

Effective teaching practice in adult LLN is characterised by flexible and individualised approaches that provide contextualised materials and curricula, recognition of progression in small steps and the need for confidence-building and raising aspiration (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education 2011).

More specific practices that are recommended include the integration of diagnostic assessment into curricula and teaching programmes and a teaching approach that encourages engaging with LLN outside the classroom. The US-based Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning observed a strong positive relationship between programme participation and changes in literacy and numeracy practices measures. It found that there are strong relationships between participation in adult education programmes and increased engagement with literacy (such as reading books) and numeracy practices (such as using maths at home or at work). Reder argues that the sequence of the observed changes makes it clear that programme participation influences practices rather than vice-versa (Reder 2013). Crowther nominates working in pairs or small groups, providing immediate feedback, reciprocal teaching and encouraging fluent and oral reading as important in fostering engagement in literacy and numeracy activities outside the classroom (Crowther *et al.* 2010).

3.4 Cohort-specific good practices in adult LLN programmes

This section details cohort-specific good practices in adult LLN programmes based on the academic literature. An overview of these good practices is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Overview of cohort specific good practices

Indigenous learners	ESL learners	Learning disability or limited formal education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally supportive environment • Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages • Experiential, learner-centred and cooperative approach • Community ownership of training and learning process • Small group classes with in-class one-on-one support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including cultural values, understandings and competencies in the curriculum • Vocationally focused curriculum appropriate after functional literacy is achieved • Group interactions support significant ESL learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisensory learning strategies • Phonic and phonemic awareness strategies • Tutors, both paid and volunteer, trained in appropriate strategies • Sensitivity to any prior negative experiences of learning • Specific teaching of learning skills (study management, problem solving, skill transfer)

Source: Feeley and Hegarty 2013; Leach *et al.* 2009; McGlusky and Thaker 2006; Vorhaus *et al.* 2008.

3.4.1 Indigenous learners

Culturally supportive environments are critical to the success of adult LLN programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. This includes recognition of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander languages and community ownership of the training and learning process.

McGluskey and Thaker's (2006) investigation of literacy support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders undertaking VET identified one-on-one support as the most effective method of delivery for Indigenous VET students. This was achieved through in-class tutorial support and peer tutoring, with both teachers and students advocating these systems as the most effective. In-class tutorial support provided immediate help with class content, assessments and assignments. Students relied heavily on peer tutoring, whether informal or formal.

Good practice principles for adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners were identified in the *Gettin' into it! Working with Indigenous learners* publication produced by the Department of Education, Science and Training (Department of Education Science and Training 2004). It recommended an experiential, learner-centred and cooperative approach to learning informed by intercultural competence, respect, negotiation with the community over programme content and outcomes, deep relationships with community elders and representatives and heavily contextualised learning materials and curricula.

McGlusky and Thaker (2006) also found that the relationship between teacher/tutor and the student is of primary importance to Indigenous students. As such, there is a need for more Indigenous staff throughout the VET sector, including teachers/trainers, administrators and support staff. Cross-cultural training should be made available for non-Indigenous teachers delivering courses in which Indigenous students are enrolled.

3.4.2 ESL learners

Although there is less material concerning the needs of ESL learners in mainstream LLN programmes, evidence from Leith's investigation (2012) suggests that it is essential to include cultural values, understandings and competencies in the curriculum. A vocationally focused curriculum becomes appropriate after functional literacy is achieved. Additionally, group interactions support significant ESL learning.

3.4.3 Learning disability or limited formal education

Teachers of adult LLN learners need to be cognisant of the possibility that some learners may have a learning disability that requires particular teaching strategies. Investigation of this in the literature has found that strategies appropriate for adults with learning disabilities are also appropriate for adult learners who have limited formal education.

For this cohort, relevant strategies include those that are multisensory and emphasise phonic and phonemic awareness strategies. It is important that tutors, whether paid or volunteer, are trained in these strategies so that they are able to support the classroom strategies adopted by the learner.

Teachers are recommended to be aware of, and respond to, any sensitivity arising from prior negative experiences of learning. This can be assisted by the specific teaching of learning skills such as study management, problem solving and skill transfer (Vorhaus *et al.* 2008).

3.5 Implications for the SEE programme

The literature strongly supports the integration of LLN into vocationally oriented or workplace training as this promotes skill retention and learner motivation. The design of the SEE programme is explicitly linked to vocational outcomes through its eligibility criteria, and its

approach to curriculum. The absence of a mandated curriculum enables SEE providers to provide accredited training in LLN that is contextualised to local employment, education and training needs and is able to meet the needs of individual clients.

Other programme elements, such as requirements for teacher qualifications, attendance support through flexible delivery modes, and support for remote service delivery are in line with good practice LLN programmes. Specialist qualifications in LLN are recommended due to the need to diagnose and address complex learner needs and backgrounds and are shown to have a positive effect on learner progress. Mixed mode delivery – such as the availability of small group tutoring and distance education – enables providers to schedule delivery in a manner that is accessible to adult learners. Guidelines for remote service delivery recognise the circumstances of providers and clients in these areas, particularly Indigenous communities.

The efficacy of these programme elements are reviewed in the following chapters.

4 The SEE programme cohort, take up and clients' LLN skills

This chapter details the participation and take up rates of the SEE programme, and SEE programme clients' characteristics and LLN skills.

4.1 SEE programme participation and take up

In this report, SEE programme participation is measured by the number of clients who commence training under the programme. A client is considered to have commenced training when they attend their first SEE programme class.

The take up of the SEE programme is measured by comparing the number of clients who commence the programme with the number of eligible job seekers identified as having LLN needs.

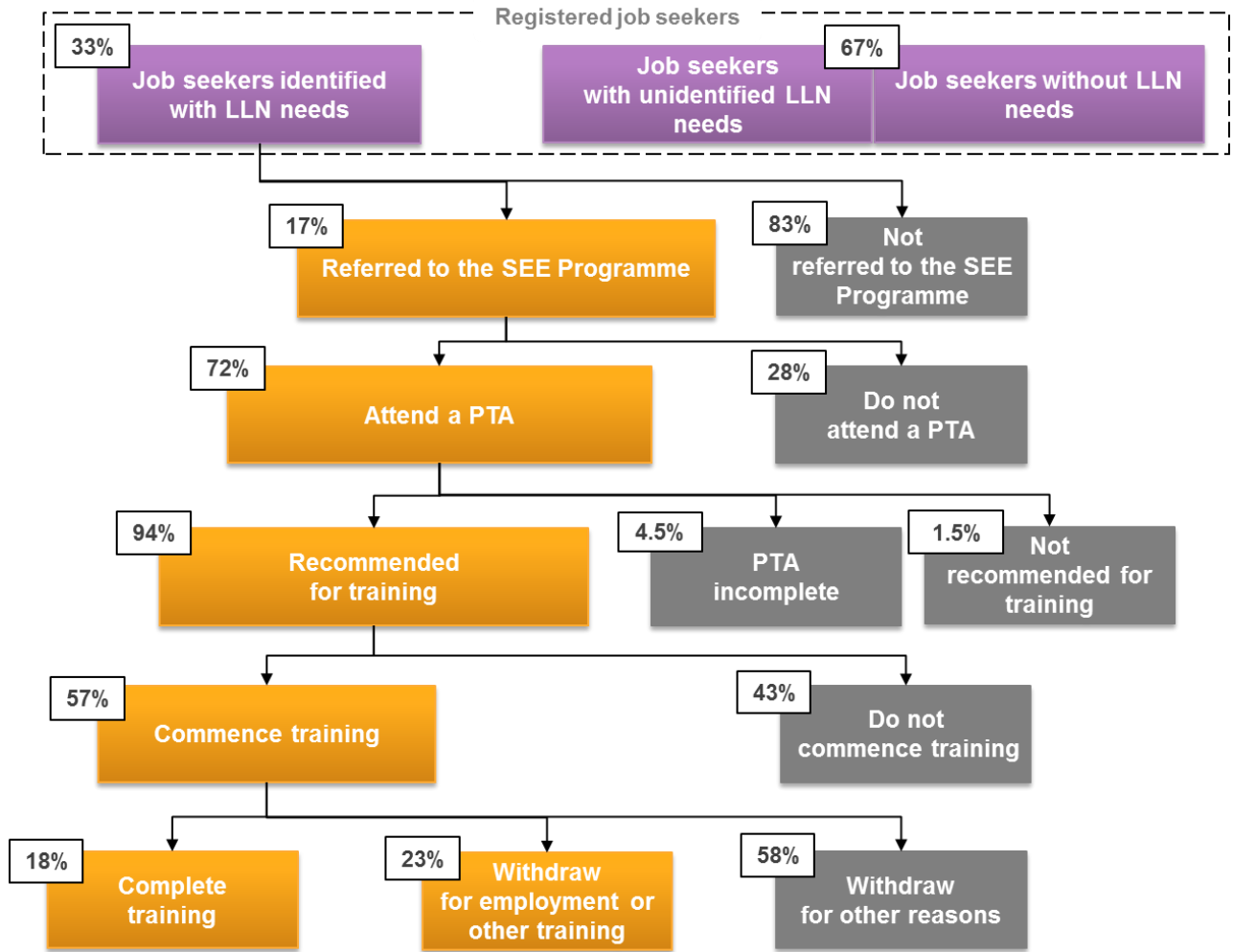
4.1.1 SEE programme take up

As detailed in Section 2.1.2, before being referred to the SEE programme job seekers must be registered with by a JSA, RJCP or DES provider, or with DHS. In order to examine the SEE programme take up rate, this section compares the number of job seekers registered with JSAs/RJCPs to the number of job seekers commencing the SEE programme.

The data show that the number of referrals to the SEE programme is split evenly between Centrelink offices (50 per cent) and JSAs/RJCPs (50 per cent).

Figure 5 provides an overview of the referral and programme process, beginning from when a job seeker is registered through to programme exit. This section of the report analyses the process shown in the first two rows of the diagram, with the remainder of the diagram explored in the following sections.

Figure 5 Overview of the SEE programme flow (rows sum to 100 per cent)

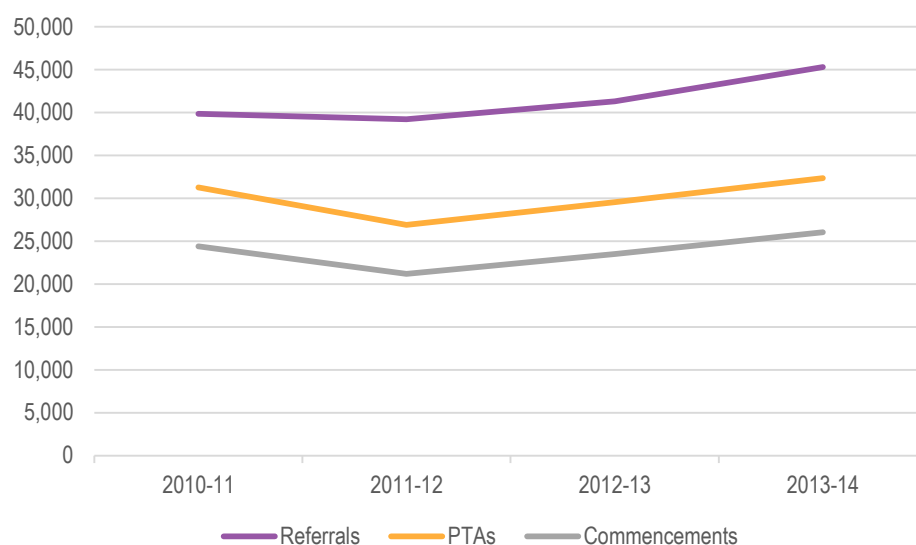


Note: Figures in this diagram should be considered an approximation and are for illustrative purposes. Figures in the first row are derived from JSA client data as at 30 September 2014. Figures in the second row are derived from combining JSA client data with SEE referrals and commencements totals for 2013-14. Figures in the third, fourth and fifth rows are derived from SEE programme clients referred to the Programme in 2010-11 – 2013-14. Figures in the sixth row are derived from SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14 and are no longer in the programme.
 Source: JSA dataset, SEE programme dataset

4.1.2 SEE programme participation

The number of referrals to the SEE programme has increased since 2011-12 to around 45,000 in 2013-14. Similarly, annual commencements have increased to 26,000 in 2013-14 (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Referrals, PTAs and commencements in the SEE programme, 2010-11 – 2013-14



Source: SEE programme dataset

Across all SDAs in Australia around 33 per cent of registered job seekers are identified as having LLN needs. Between SDAs there are significant differences in job seekers identified as having LLN needs, with rates around 80 per cent in some SDAs down to 25 per cent in others.

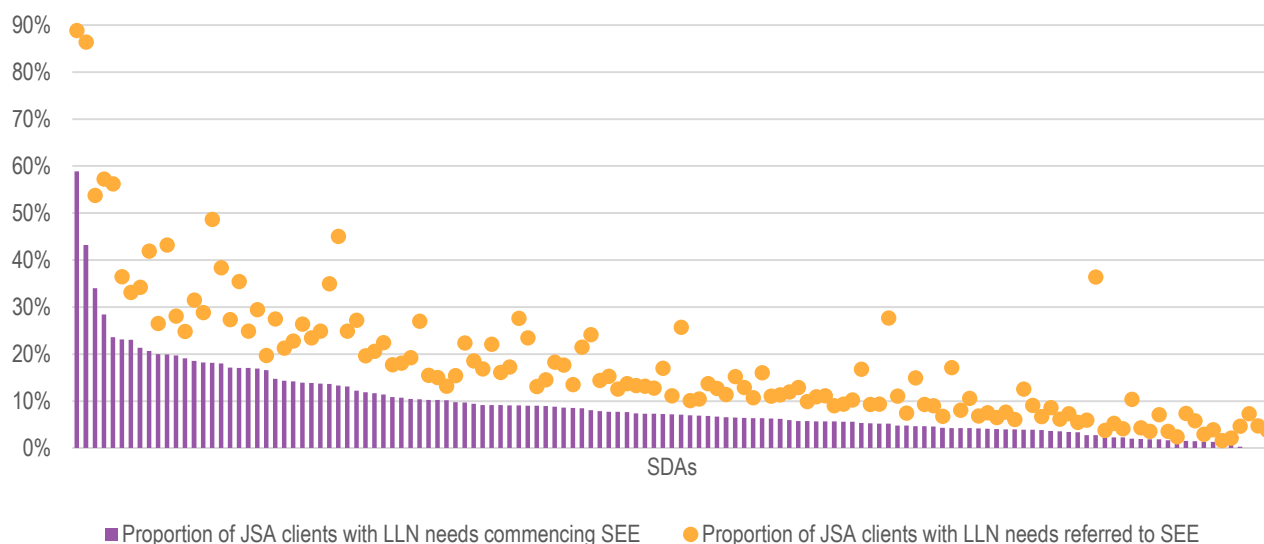
Figure 7 sets out the estimated proportion of registered job seekers with identified LLN needs that are referred to the SEE programme and the estimated proportion that commence.

An estimated 17 per cent of job seekers with LLN needs are referred. But as Figure 7 shows there is considerable variation between SDAs; out of a total of 134 SDAs, 17 SDAs are witnessing referral rates above 30 per cent and 10 SDAs are seeing take up rates above 20 per cent.

In addition to differences in referral rates, there are also differences in the rate at which referrals are converted to PTAs and then commencements. An estimated 57 per cent of referred clients commence the SEE programme – differences between SDAs may be due to a number of factors including inappropriate referrals and/or variable capacity amongst providers to meet demand.

Overall, the result is that 91 per cent of SDAs have less than one in five LLN needs JSA clients commencing in the SEE programme.

Figure 7 Estimated proportion of JSA clients with identified LLN needs and proportion referred to the SEE programme by SDA



Note: Analysis is an estimate. SEE referrals and commencements are totals for 2013-14. JSA clients are as at 30 September 2014. The chart excludes four outlier SDAs, two at either end, which returned invalid results.

Source: JSA dataset, SEE programme dataset

Key Finding 1

An estimated 10 per cent of job seekers take up the SEE programme. 17 per cent of job seekers with LLN needs are estimated to be referred to the SEE programme.

There is considerable variation between SDAs' referral rates and take up rates, with 17 SDAs witnessing referral rates above 30 per cent and 10 seeing take up rates above 20 per cent

Interstate differences in need, referrals and take up rates

Table 4 shows the needs, referrals and take up rates by state/territory. The JSA clients in most states have similar levels of LLN needs, close to the national average of 33 per cent. The NT and ACT have above average levels of need while Queensland has a below average level of need; the LLN needs in each state in part depend on the quality of compulsory schooling, as well as the size and characteristics of the migrant population.

Estimated referral rates are higher than average in SA, NSW and NT. The referral rate in Tasmania is less than half the national average. This results in Tasmania having a particularly low estimated take up rate, with only 4 per cent of those with identified LLN needs commencing in the SEE programme.

Table 4 Proportion of JSA clients with identified LLN needs and proportion referred to the SEE programme by state and territory

	JSA clients with LLN needs	Proportion of JSA clients with LLN needs referred to SEE	Proportion of JSA clients with LLN needs commencing SEE
Australian average	33%	17%	10%
Australian Capital Territory	37%	11%	7%
New South Wales	32%	21%	12%
Northern Territory	46%	21%	8%
Queensland	31%	16%	9%
South Australia	33%	23%	13%
Tasmania	32%	8%	4%
Victoria	34%	15%	9%
Western Australia	33%	15%	8%

Note: SEE referrals and commencements are totals for 2013-14. JSA clients are as at 30 September 2014. Below average SEE programme proportions are bolded.

Source: JSA dataset, SEE programme dataset, ABS Census

It is possible that some of the inter-state differences in the referral and take up rates are the result of intrastate characteristics such as population dispersion. Table 5 shows the proportion of JSA clients with identified LLN needs and proportion referred to the SEE programme by ARIA remoteness index. It shows that estimated referrals rates are lowest in Regional Australia, as are take up rates. Very Remote Australia has a high referral rate and take up rate. Having remote areas out-perform regional areas in terms of referrals and subsequent take up is an unexpected result.

Table 5 Proportion of JSA clients with identified LLN needs and proportion referred to the SEE programme by ARIA remoteness index

	JSA clients with LLN needs	Proportion of JSA clients with LLN needs referred to SEE	Proportion of JSA clients with LLN needs commencing SEE
Australian average	33%	17%	10%
Major Cities of Australia	32%	20%	12%
Inner Regional Australia	31%	12%	6%
Outer Regional Australia	37%	11%	5%
Remote Australia	44%	17%	8%
Very Remote Australia	37%	26%	12%

Note: SEE referrals and commencements are totals for 2013-14. JSA clients are as at 30 September 2014. Below average SEE programme proportions are bolded.

Source: JSA dataset, SEE programme dataset, ABS Census

Consistent with the data in Table 5, consultations for this evaluation indicate that some regional areas lack SEE programme provision due to SEE providers seeing such provision as financially unviable. As discussed in Section 2.5, providers set prices through a competitive tender and so the lack of provision in some regional areas is likely due to overly-competitive bidding by relevant providers which ultimately struggle to provide training at the price they tendered. While this may explain a degree of under provision in regional areas compared to metropolitan areas, it does not fully explain the comparatively better performance in remote areas.

An alternative explanation is that eligible job seekers have access to fewer training programmes in remote areas and the SEE programme therefore faces higher demand. In regional areas, eligible job seekers may be able to access almost the same suite of programmes as metropolitan areas, but the smaller population base means that there is lower net demand for programmes like SEE.

Public submissions received by the evaluation set out providers' views on how the multi-provider model can contribute to issues of provision in regional areas.

Multi-provider model is appropriate in areas where referrals are high, or cannot be met by the existing provider. Where referrals are low, increasing competition and lowering market share places additional financial strain on the training provider.

– *Chisholm Institute submission*

The multi-provider model is suitable where referrals to SEE are high and not able to be met by the current provider. It is difficult to establish as a second/new provider in competition with the original provider established in an SDA.

– *GoTAFE, Chisholm Institute and LfE joint submission*

The new multi-provider business model is suitable for metropolitan delivery where there is a high number of referring agencies. This may not be the case in regional areas and there may be issues with insufficient numbers of referrals to the programme, to sustain business for SEE providers. However, there needs to be a balance struck because economies of scale provide better cost effectiveness in delivery.

– *SEE provider confidential submission*

This issue is discussed further in Section 7.2.1.

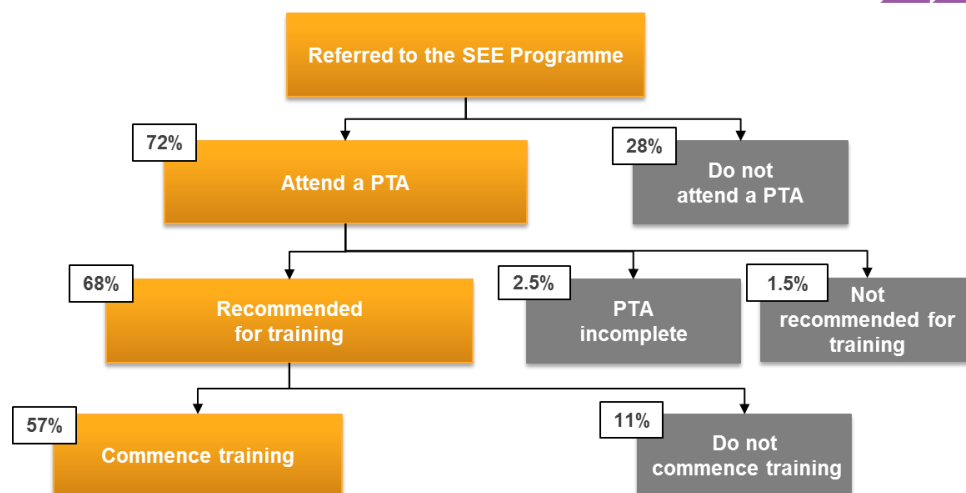
Key Finding 2

Referral and take up rates differ by state/territory. Estimated referral rates are higher than average in SA, NSW and NT. Tasmania has a particularly low estimated take up rate. Estimated referrals rates are lowest in Regional Australia, as are take up rates.

4.1.3 The referral process

Figure 8 provides an overview of the referral process. It shows that of the potential clients referred to the SEE programme, 72 per cent attend a PTA and 68 per cent are recommended for training. Of the total referred to the SEE programme, 57 per cent commence training. The most significant drop off point in this process is the PTA, with 28 per cent of referrals not attending their PTA.

Figure 8 Proportion of referrals leading to a commencement



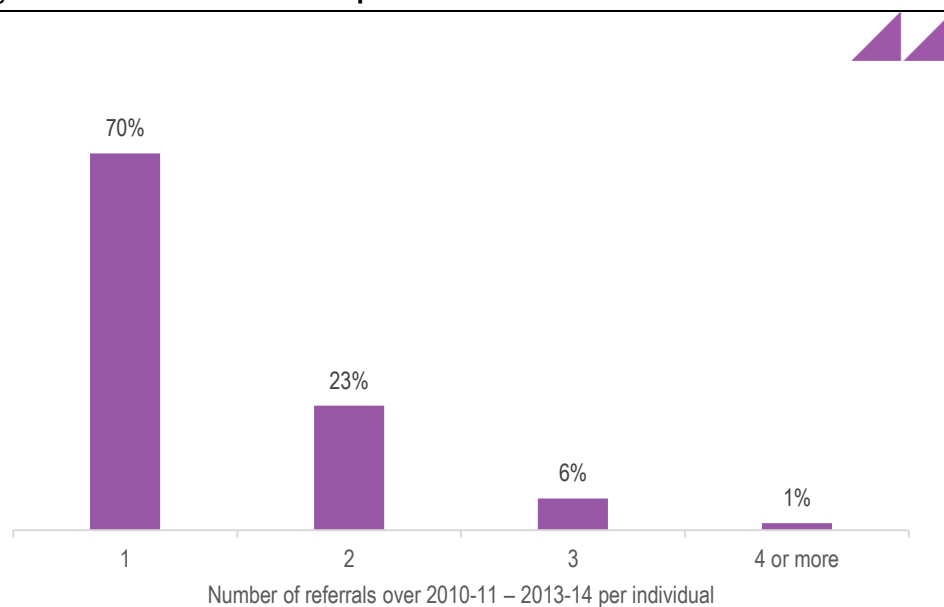
Note: Based on analysis of SEE programme clients referred to the programme in 2010-11 – 2013-14.
Source: SEE programme dataset

While clients who are withdrawn from the programme have 12 weeks to recommence without a new referral required, it should be noted that around 30 per cent of clients referred to the SEE programme are referred more than once (Figure 9). There are numerous reasons why clients may be referred more than once including that:

- Clients moving SDAs must be referred to the programme again in cases where their current SEE provider does not operate in the destination SDA
- Clients may withdraw from the programme (for more than 12 weeks) for non-ongoing work and wish to re-enter
- Clients may fail to attend the programme for longer term health or personal reasons, but wish to re-enter the programme more than 12 weeks after being withdrawn.

With a third of clients experiencing the referral process more than once, it is important that the process be as streamlined as possible. Otherwise, clients who rely on the referral process more than once may become discouraged and not re-commence in the SEE programme.

Figure 9 Number of referrals per individual over 2010-11 – 2013-14



Note: SEE programme clients that were referred in 2010-11 – 2013-14.

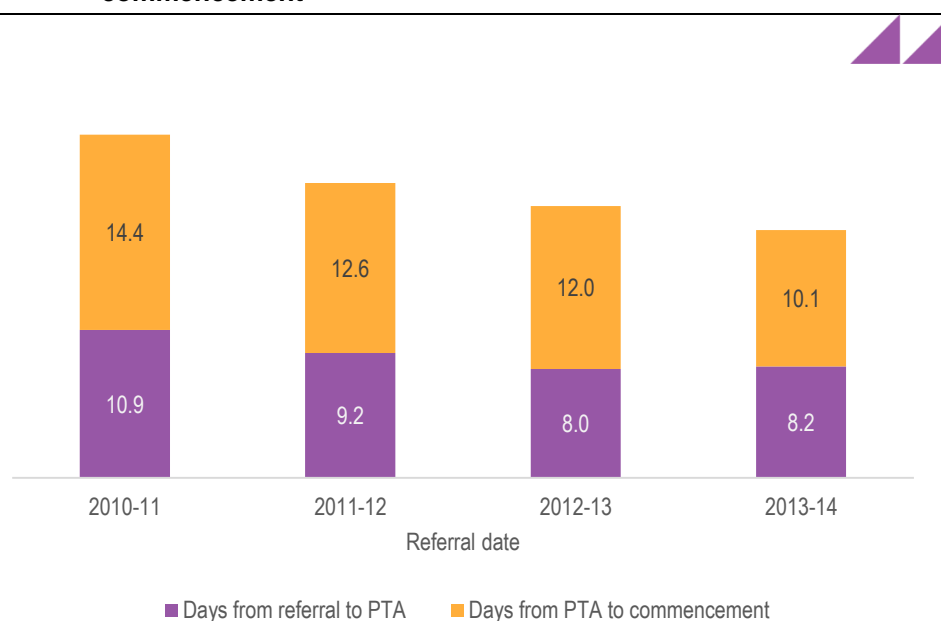
Source: SEE programme dataset

Figure 10 shows the average number of days it takes for clients to attend a PTA after being referred, and the average number of days it takes clients to commence the SEE programme after attending a PTA and being recommended for training.

Both of these measures have been trending down since 2010-11 with the average time from referral to PTA currently around eight days, and the average time from PTA to commencement around 10 days.

The improvement in these data is likely a positive for the SEE programme as an efficient referral-to-commencement process decreases the chance potential clients will drop off between referral and commencement.

Figure 10 Average days from referral to PTA and from PTA to commencement



Note: SEE programme referrals during 2010-11 – 2013-14.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Key Finding 3

Of the potential clients referred to the SEE programme, 72 per cent attend a PTA and 68 per cent are recommended for training; of the total referred to the SEE programme, 57 per cent subsequently commence training.

Around 30 per cent of clients referred to the SEE programme are referred more than once, but there are insufficient data to reveal whether the reasons for re-referral are based on client need or administrative necessity.

The average time from referral to PTA is currently around eight days, and the average time from PTA to commencement around 10 days. Both of these measures have fallen over recent years, likely having a positive impact on take up.

While there is evidence that parts of the referral process are improving, consultations indicate that the process has issues which is hampering take up.

Many referral agencies appear to lack an understanding of the SEE programme, and the referral process.

As an available, government-funded program for eligible job seekers on income support, SEE has surprisingly poor visibility with its key referrers.

– Jobs Australia submission

Knowledge of the SEE program is not always apparent across SEE referring agencies – for instance, this Swinburne SEE Coordinator has visited many JSAs this semester; at times, their awareness of the SEE program is minimal.

– Swinburne submission

Some RAs have commented that understanding the eligibility requirements is too complex and have subsequently refused to refer eligible clients.

–MTC submission

Some stakeholders argue that the lack of understanding witnessed in some JSAs may be due to the current JSA contract not incentivising referrals to the SEE programme. JSAs may also prefer to refer clients to programmes they deliver rather than to the SEE programme.

Centrelink offices have SEE programme referral KPIs but some SEE providers report that Centrelink referrals can be particularly uneven over time, rising sharply as the KPI period nears an end.

Other issues identified through the consultations include that referral agency staff are not equipped to identify clients with LLN needs who would benefit from the SEE programme and that some potential clients (particularly non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients) are not comfortable identifying the need for and requesting LLN training.

Key Finding 4

While there is evidence that parts of the referral process are improving, consultations indicate that the process has issues hampering take up.

Some referral agencies lack an understanding of the SEE programme, the referral process and/or how to identify LLN needs in clients.

The current JSA contract does not appear to provide appropriate incentives for referrals to the SEE programme.



4.2 The SEE programme client cohort

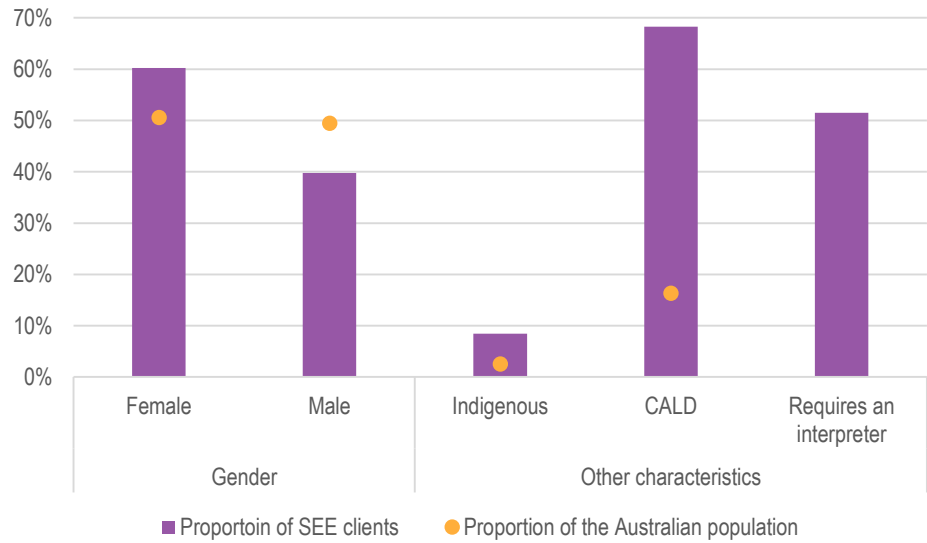
This section details the characteristics of the SEE programme client cohort, including by location and LLN skills level.

4.2.1 SEE programme clients by background gender and age

Around 60 per cent of SEE programme clients are women, a higher proportion than the general Australian population (Figure 11). Similarly, Indigenous Australians are over represented, making up 8 per cent of SEE programme clients.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) clients, those clients not born in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, UK, USA, or South Africa, account for 68 per cent of SEE programme clients. This is significantly higher than the proportion of CALD individuals in the general population (16 per cent). Emphasising the low level of English language skills of some CALD clients, more than half of SEE programme clients require an interpreter at some point in the programme.

Figure 11 Overview of SEE programme clients

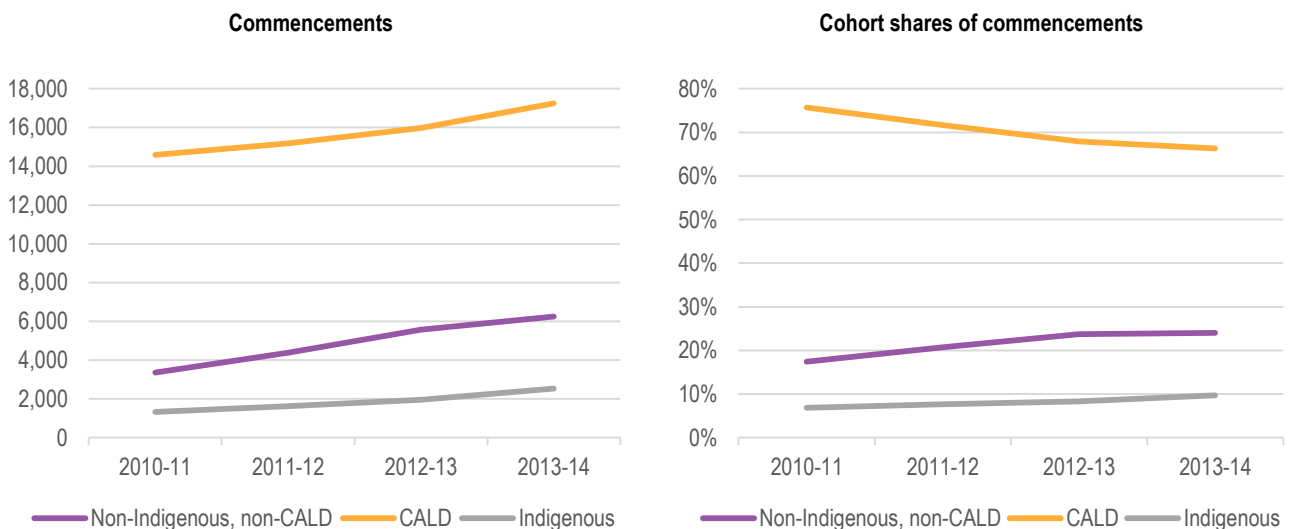


Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14. In the SEE programme dataset, 'CALD' refers to clients who have a country of birth which is not one of the following: Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, UK/Eire, USA, and South Africa. The Australia population proportion comes from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census which defines CALD as 'Born in non-English speaking country'. There is no Census measure that corresponds to 'requires an interpreter'.

Source: SEE programme dataset, ABS Census

Figure 12 shows SEE programme commencements over the last four years for non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients, CALD clients and Indigenous clients. While all cohorts have seen rising commencements, the proportion of CALD clients in the programme has fallen over the last four years with a greater share of commencements of non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients and Indigenous clients.

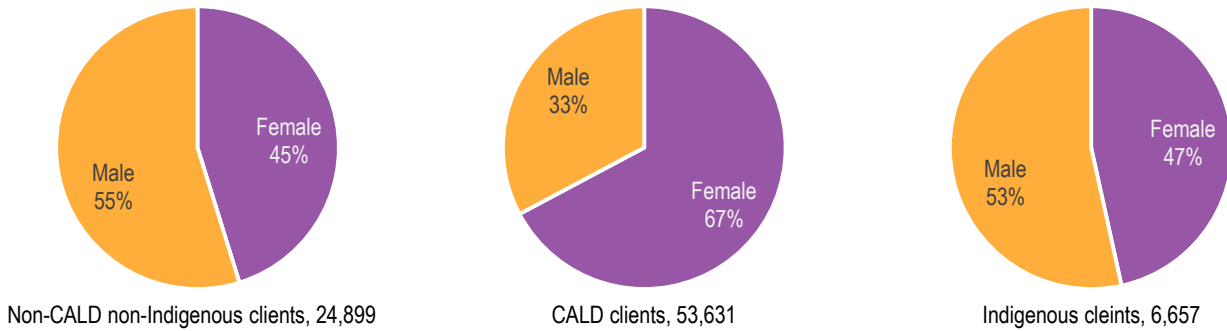
Figure 12 Cohort commencements and shares over time, 2010-11



Source: SEE programme dataset

While women are overrepresented in the SEE programme, there are gender differences between cohorts. As Figure 13 shows, the majority of Indigenous and non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients are men, while women account for 67 per cent of CALD clients.

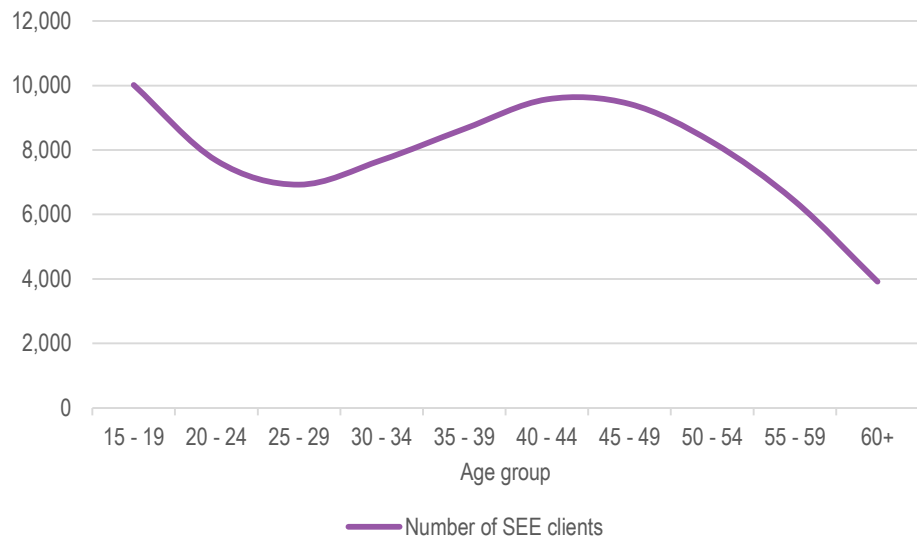
Figure 13 Gender make up of SEE programme client groups



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

The age profile of the SEE cohort has two peaks – one at the 15-19 age group and another between 40-49 (Figure 14).

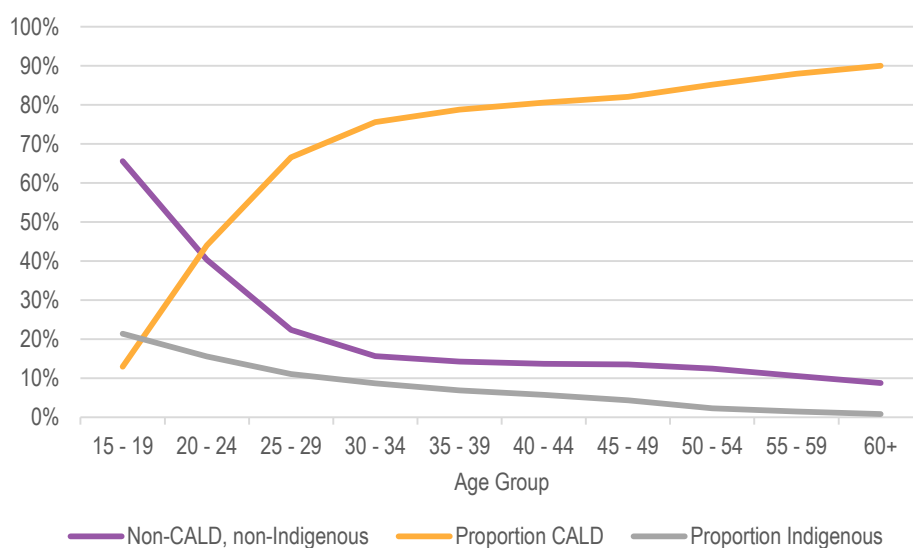
Figure 14 SEE programme clients by age group



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.
 Source:

Figure 15 shows that the younger age groups are primarily non-CALD, non-Indigenous and Indigenous clients. CALD clients account for the majority of clients in the 25-29 age group and each older age group. In the age groups above 40, CALD clients make up 80 per cent or more of SEE programme clients.

Figure 15 SEE programme clients by age group and client group



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Key Finding 5

More than two thirds of SEE programme clients have a CALD background, although this share has been falling steadily in recent years. 8 per cent of SEE programme clients are Indigenous.

There is significant gender differences between cohorts with women making up 67 per cent of CALD clients but less than 50 per cent of other cohorts.

The age profiles of each cohort also differs, with non-CALD, and non-Indigenous and Indigenous SEE programme clients concentrated in younger age groups, and CALD clients making up 80 per cent or more of SEE programme clients in the age groups above 40.

4.2.2 SEE programme clients by state/territory and remoteness

The majority of SEE programme clients (68 per cent) are located in either NSW or Victoria (Table 6). NSW and SA have an overrepresentation of SEE programme clients relative to their share of JSA clients, while Queensland, WA and Tasmania have a significantly fewer SEE programme clients than would be expected based on their number of JSA clients. This may indicate that there is a degree of unmet demand in these states.

The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous clients, with Western Australian and Queensland also having above average shares. Victoria and ACT has the highest share of CALD clients.

Table 6 State and territory SEE programme client cohort make up, compared to JSA clients

	Non-CALD, non-Indigenous	CALD	Indigenous	Share of SEE clients	Share of JSA clients
Australian average	23%	68%	8%		
Australian Capital Territory	11%	88%	1%	1%	1%
New South Wales	23%	69%	8%	38%	31%
Northern Territory	7%	4%	89%	2%	2%
Queensland	30%	59%	11%	19%	23%
South Australia	36%	60%	4%	11%	9%
Tasmania	56%	38%	6%	1%	3%
Victoria	11%	88%	1%	21%	23%
Western Australia	24%	63%	13%	7%	9%

Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14. Above average proportions are bolded.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Table 7 shows the distribution of SEE programme clients in each state/territory relative to the population distribution. It shows that a major driver of the high proportion of Indigenous clients in the SEE programme in the NT is the fact that 27 per cent of the NT population is Indigenous. Similarly, the high proportion of CALD individuals in ACT, NSW and Victoria is likely contributing to the overrepresentation of CALD SEE programme clients in these states.

Table 7 State and territory SEE programme client cohort make up, compared to population groups

	Non-CALD, non-Indigenous		CALD		Indigenous	
	SEE	Population	SEE	Population	SEE	Population
Australian average	23%	81%	68%	16%	8%	3%
Australian Capital Territory	11%	81%	88%	17%	1%	1%
New South Wales	23%	78%	69%	19%	8%	2%
Northern Territory	7%	63%	4%	11%	89%	27%
Queensland	30%	86%	59%	10%	11%	4%
South Australia	36%	85%	60%	13%	4%	2%
Tasmania	56%	91%	38%	5%	6%	4%
Victoria	11%	79%	88%	20%	1%	1%
Western Australia	24%	81%	63%	16%	13%	3%

Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.

Source: SEE programme dataset

The vast majority of SEE programme clients are located in the Major Cities of Australia (Table 4), with CALD clients overrepresented in this region. The share of non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients is highest in Regional Australia, while in Remote Australia Indigenous clients make up the vast majority of clients.

Table 8 ARIA Remoteness Index SEE programme client cohort make up

	Non-CALD, non-Indigenous	CALD	Indigenous	Share of SEE clients	Share of JSA clients
Australian average	23%	68%	8%		
Major Cities of Australia	14%	84%	2%	79%	64%
Inner Regional Australia	60%	24%	16%	9%	17%
Outer Regional Australia	47%	20%	33%	9%	16%
Remote Australia	19%	2%	79%	2%	2%
Very Remote Australia	8%	2%	90%	1%	1%

Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14. Above average proportions are bolded.

Source: SEE programme dataset, ABS.

Key Finding 6

NSW and SA have an overrepresentation of SEE programme clients relative to their population. The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous clients, with Western Australian and Queensland also having above average shares. Victoria and ACT has the highest share of CALD clients.

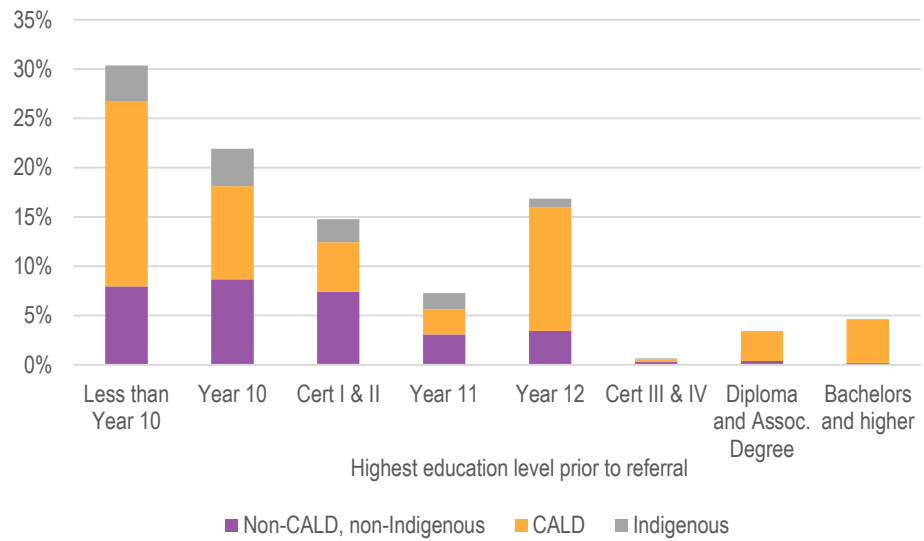
CALD clients are overrepresented in Major Cities of Australia. The share of non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients is highest in Regional Australia, while in Remote Australia Indigenous clients make up the vast majority of clients.

4.2.3 SEE programme clients' educational background and payment type

Figure 16 shows the proportion of the SEE programme cohort by highest education level prior to referral. More than half of clients have completed Year 10 or less of schooling. CALD clients are over represented in the client groups with Year 12 and above attainment, while Indigenous and non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients are over represented in the groups with Year 11 or Certificate I-IV as the high prior level of education.

There are likely a number of factors driving this distribution of clients. CALD clients may have a high school or post-school qualification from their country of origin, achieved in a language other than English, and thus still benefit from the SEE programme. Conversely, individuals born in Australia with a post-school qualification are unlikely to be eligible for the SEE programme. Therefore, most Indigenous and non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients in the programme will tend to be early school leavers. Furthermore, given the capacity to benefit test, early school leavers are those most likely to benefit from additional LLN training and therefore referred to the SEE programme.

Figure 16 SEE programme clients by highest education level prior to referral

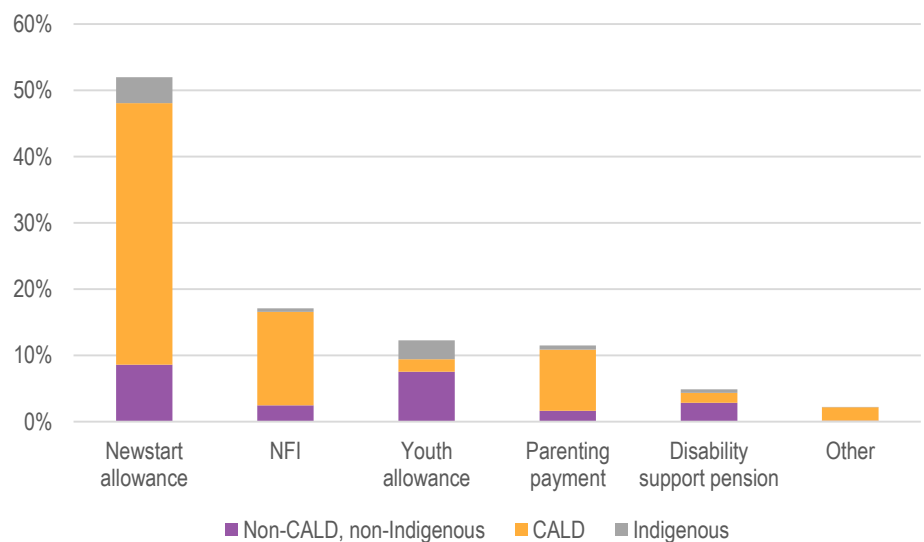


Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.

Source: SEE programme dataset

The majority of SEE programme clients are receiving the Newstart Allowance at referral (Figure 17). Around 18 per cent are not receiving income support, the vast majority of which are CALD clients. Of the clients receiving youth allowance most are non-CALD, non-Indigenous.

Figure 17 SEE programme clients by payment type at referral



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Key Finding 7

More than half of SEE programme clients have completed Year 10 or less of schooling. The majority of clients with Year 12 and above attainment are CALD clients.

The majority of SEE programme clients are receiving the Newstart Allowance at referral with around 18 per cent not receiving income support, the vast majority of which are CALD clients.

4.3 SEE programme clients' LLN levels

As set out in Section 2.3, the SEE programme uses the ACSF to measure client progress and learning outcomes.

The ACSF covers five core skills areas learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy. There are 11 performance indicators across the ASCF two each for Learning, Reading, Writing and Oral Communication and three for Numeracy (Table 9).

Table 9 **ASCF performance indicators**

Core Skill	Indicator Number	Description
Learning	.01	Active awareness of self as a learner, planning and management of learning
	.02	Acquisition and application of practical strategies that facilitate learning
Reading	.03	Audience, purpose and meaning-making
	.04	Reading strategies
Writing	.05	Audience, purpose and meaning-making
	.06	The mechanics of writing
Oral Communication	.07	Speaking
	.08	Listening
Numeracy	.09	Identifying mathematical information and meaning in activities and texts
	.10	Using and applying mathematical knowledge and problem solving processes
	.11	Communicating and representing mathematics

Source: ACSF

The ACSF uses six levels to describe performance at each performance indicator (Table 10).

Table 10 **ACSF levels of performance**

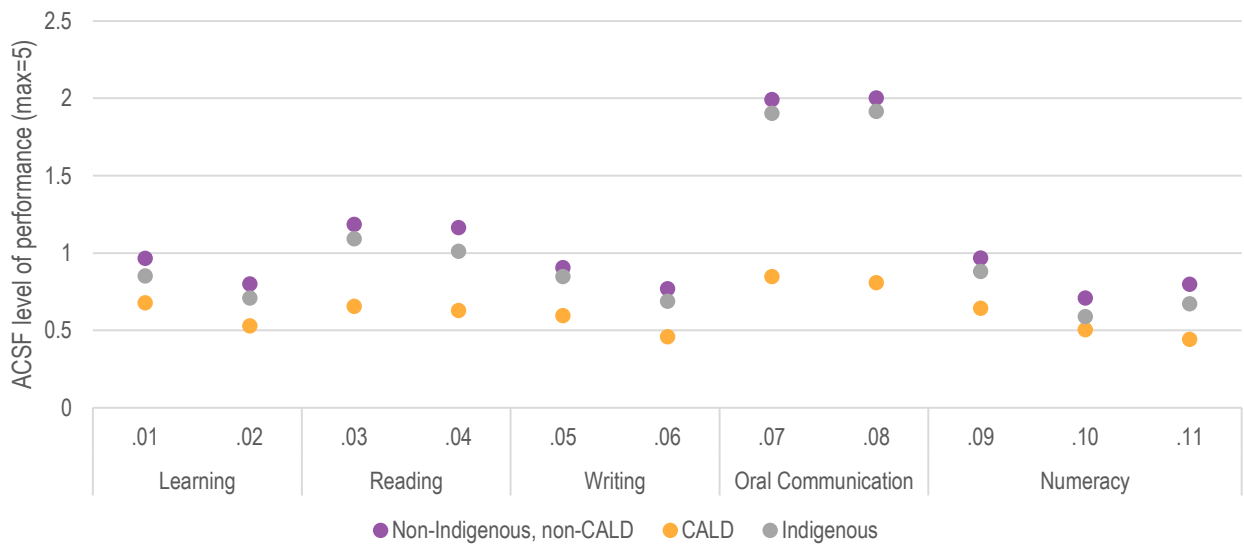
ACSF level	Support	Context	Text complexity	Task complexity
Pre-level 1	Significant support Works alongside an expert/mentor Prompting, advice and modelling provided	Highly familiar contexts only Concrete and immediate Extremely restricted range of contexts	Short and simple Highly explicit purpose Limited, highly familiar vocabulary	Single step, concrete tasks Processes include copying, naming, matching, ordering
1	Works alongside an expert/mentor where prompting and advice can be provided	Highly familiar contexts Concrete and immediate Very restricted range of contexts	Short and simple Highly explicit purpose Limited, highly familiar vocabulary	Concrete tasks of 1 or 2 steps Processes include locating, recognising
2	May work with an expert/mentor where support is available if requested	Familiar and predictable contexts Limited range of contexts	Simple familiar texts with clear purpose Familiar vocabulary	Explicit tasks involving a limited number of familiar steps Processes include identifying, simple interpreting, simple sequencing
3	Works independently and uses own familiar support resources	Range of familiar contexts Some less familiar contexts Some specialisation in familiar/known contexts	Routine texts May include some unfamiliar elements, embedded information and abstraction Includes some specialised vocabulary	Tasks involving a number of steps Processes include sequencing, integrating, interpreting, simple extrapolating, simple inferencing, simple abstracting
4	Works independently and initiates and uses support from a range of established resources	Range of contexts, including some that are unfamiliar and/or unpredictable Some specialisation in less familiar/known contexts	Complex texts Embedded information Includes specialised vocabulary Includes abstraction and symbolism	Complex task organisation and analysis involving application of a number of steps Processes include extracting, extrapolating, inferencing, reflecting, abstracting
5	Autonomous learner who accesses and evaluates support from a broad range of sources	Broad range of contexts Adaptability within and across contexts Specialisation in one or more contexts	Highly complex texts Highly embedded information Includes highly specialised language and symbolism	Sophisticated task conceptualisation, organisation and analysis Processes include synthesising, critically reflecting, evaluating, recommending

Source: ACSF

Figure 18 sets out the average entry scores for SEE programme clients across all 11 performance indicators by cohort. On this and subsequent charts, 'pre-level 1' is displayed as 0.

It shows that non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients enter the programme with higher average scores across all indicators, while CALD clients have the lowest average entry scores. The largest difference is between CALD clients and other clients on oral communication.

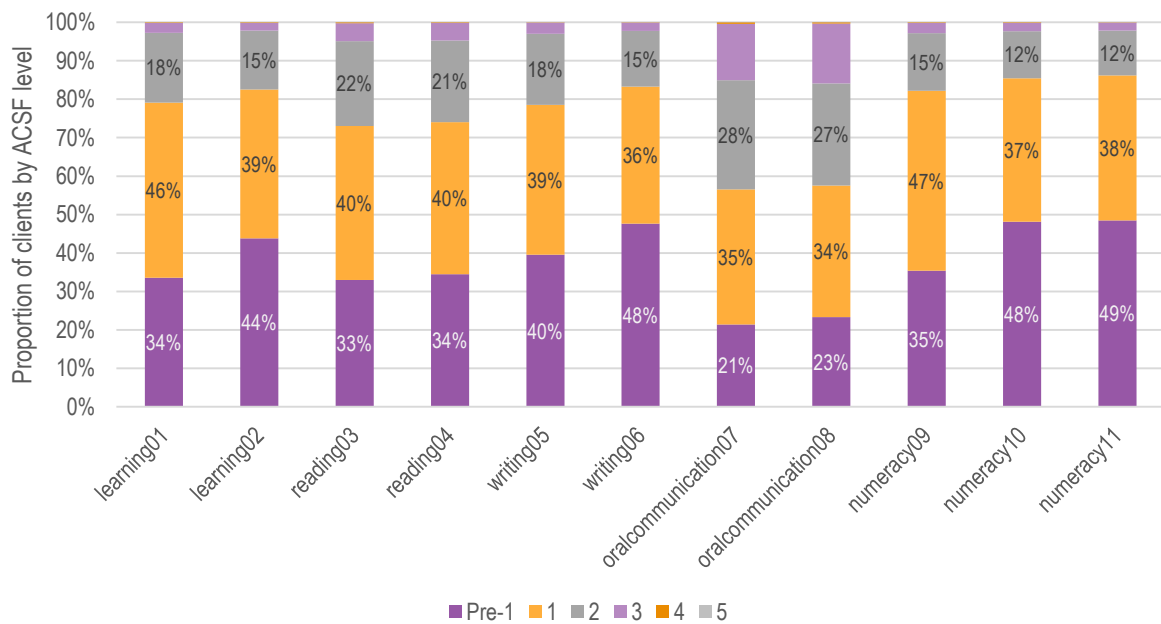
Figure 18 Average entry assessed ACSF performance by cohort



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

Figure 19 shows the proportion of clients being assessed at each ASCF level across the 11 performance indicators. On all indicators apart from the two oral communication indicators, a third or more of all clients are at pre-level 1.

Figure 19 Distribution of client entry scores by assessment area

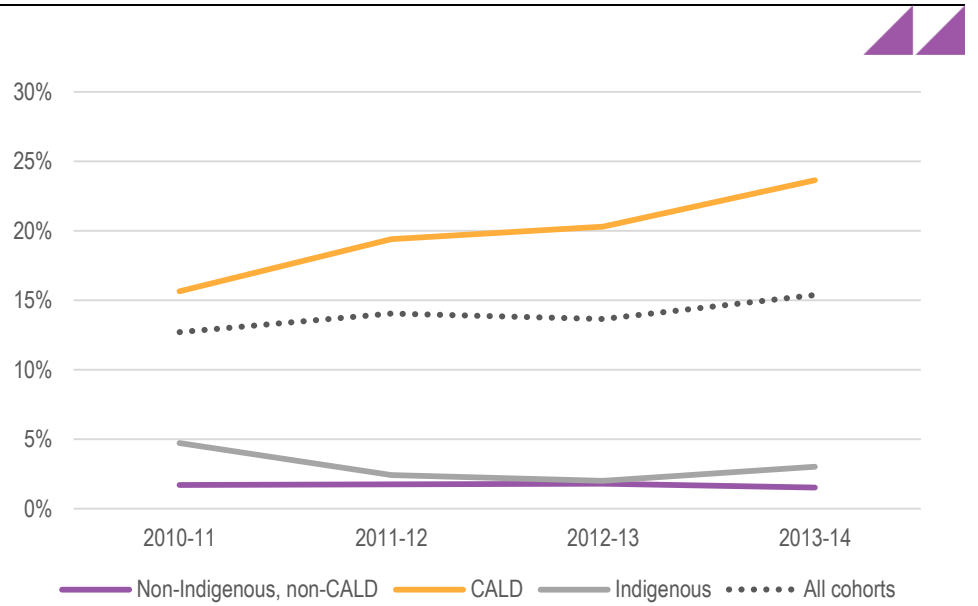


Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14
 Source: SEE programme dataset

While average entry scores are a useful measure of the SEE programme cohort on entry into the programme, it can be more instructive to examine the clients that are entering the programme at a very low LLN level.

Figure 20 sets out the proportion of SEE programme clients assessed as pre-level 1 across all 11 performance indicators by cohort. The proportion of CALD clients entering the programme with this skill level is around 25 per cent and has risen from 15 per cent in 2010-11. The share of the non-CALD cohort assessed as pre-level 1 across all 11 performance indicators is relatively low, in part because, due to growing up in an English speaking country, most score above pre-level 1 in the oral communication indicators.

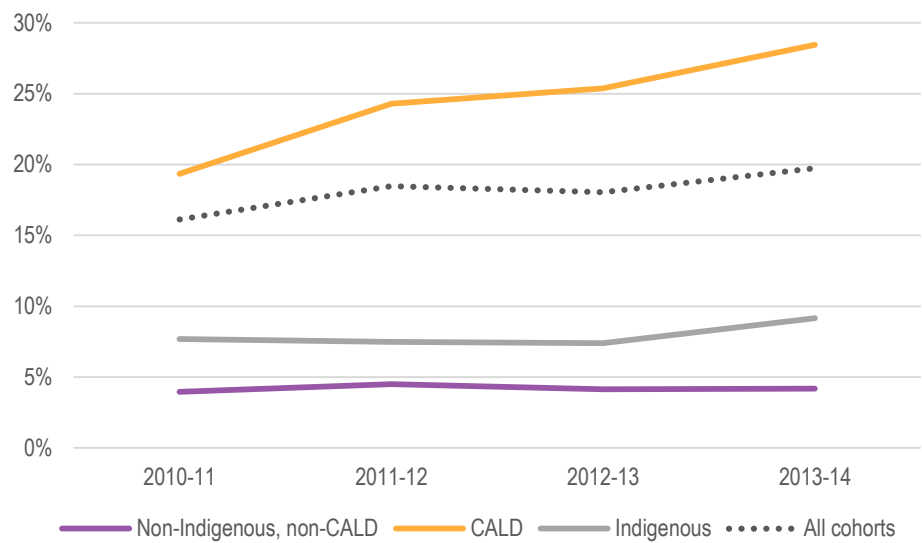
Figure 20 Proportion of clients at pre-level 1 on all 11 performance indicators



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14
 Source: SEE programme dataset

To control for this, Figure 21 shows the proportion of SEE programme clients assessed as pre-level 1 across nine performance indicators, excluding oral communication. This brings the share of low level Indigenous clients to around 9 per cent. More than 4 per cent of non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients are assessed as pre-level 1 across the nine performance indicators.

Figure 21 **Proportion of clients with zero in 9 assessment areas, excluding oral communication**



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14

Source: SEE programme dataset

Taking the above entry assessment charts in totality, the data show that a significant proportion of clients are entering the SEE programme at the pre-level 1 on the ASCF performance indicators. The share of clients entering the SEE programme with lower proficiency levels has increased over the last four years, mainly driven by falling ACSF entry assessments in the CALD cohort.

It is not clear what is driving the increasing proportion of CALD clients with very low LLN entry assessment scores. It has occurred in the context of a steady increase in the English language skill level of clients entering the AMEP over 2004-05 to 2012-13 (although there was a fall in 2013-14). AMEP entry level skills have increased on average and the proportion of clients assessed at the lowest level of English Language proficiency has fallen (see the AMEP Evaluation Report, Chapter 4).

Consultations for the evaluation emphasised the low levels of LLN of some clients entering the SEE programme. Just as in the AMEP cohort, some CALD clients lack literacy in their first language and this can have a significant impact on the speed at which clients are able to learn. Despite this, CALD clients are recognised by providers as having above average levels of commitment to the programme.

Key Finding 8

In total, 17 per cent of SEE programme clients are assessed as having pre-level 1 performance on all ACSF indicators. The majority of these clients are CALD clients

2010-11 to 2013-14 saw an increase in the share of clients at this very low level, driven by an increasing proportion of CALD clients assessed as having pre-level 1 performance on all ACSF indicators.

Excluding oral communication, 9 per cent of Indigenous clients and 4.5 per cent of non-CALD, non-Indigenous cohorts are assessed as pre-level 1 on all of the nine remaining ACSF performance indicators.

CALD clients are seen as more committed to the programme on average, while other clients are more likely to have issues with attendance.



5 The effectiveness of the SEE programme

This chapter examines the effectiveness of the SEE programme. It begins by analysing the SEE programme sub-elements before looking at completion rates of the SEE programme. The chapter then examines the LLN, training and employment outcomes of the programme.

5.1 SEE programme sub-elements

As noted in Chapter 2, the SEE programme has a number of sub-elements. This section examines the take up and effectiveness of:

- small group training classes
- mixed mode delivery
- work experience.

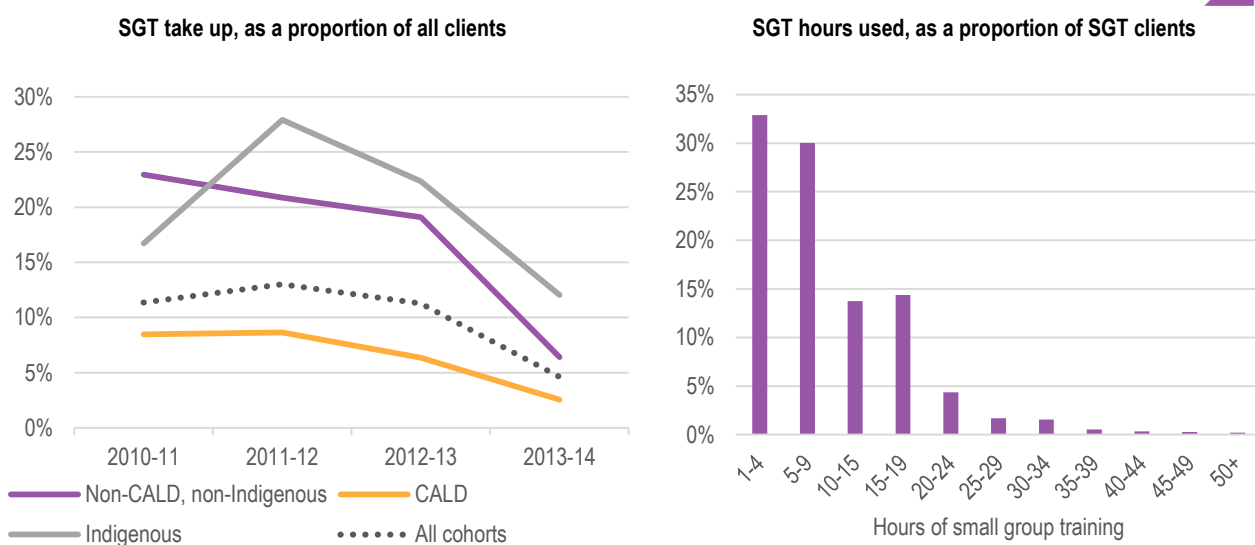
5.1.1 Small Group Training (SGT)

SGT offers clients, when they begin the SEE programme, 20 hours of training in a class of no more than five clients. The goal of SGT is to provide a transition into the SEE programme for clients who are uncomfortable or may struggle in a larger class.

Take up of SGT has averaged 10 per cent of all clients over the last four years, although data for the last four years shows that SGT take up is falling (Figure 22). Take up has generally been higher among the Indigenous cohort and low among CALD clients.

The average number of SGT hours used by clients is around nine, and this is uniform across the three cohort groups. Only 23 per cent of clients use more than 15 hours of SGT.

Figure 22 Small group training take up and hours used



Note: Hours used for clients commencing in 2010-11 to 2013-14

Source: SEE programme dataset

SEE providers use SGT with high needs clients and see the sub-element as important in assisting clients with the transition to training. The low utilisation of SGT with CALD clients as noted above may be surprising due to their average low level of LLN skills on entry. This may reflect CALD clients' relatively high levels of familiarity with the classroom environment due to their experience in the AMEP and/or previous education. Conversely, providers may be underutilising SGT with this cohort.

Some SEE providers contend that the current maximum SGT hours is inadequate to assist high needs clients.²

The change in Small Group Training (SGT) to 25 hours – this is not enough hours for vulnerable clients. The financial reimbursement is not commensurate with the workload involved in establishing SGT. Delivery of SGT in the initial 25 hours only of training restricts involvement in class for clients who fall into this category and may require ongoing assistance. SGT could be extended to assist clients who will engaged in WE prepare for their placement e.g. develop resume and cover letter, develop schedule for WE.

– Confidential submission

Others suggest that SGT should be available throughout clients' SEE programme training.

Small group training at various stages of training, rather than just at entry [is needed].

– Survey respondent

Small Group Training should be available throughout the 800 hours not just within the initial 25 hours for maximum benefit for all clients who may require extra support at different times during their SEE pathway.

– Survey respondent

While expanding SGT may assist clients develop their LLN skills, it should be noted that the goal of SGT is to primarily build the confidence of clients so they can transition into larger classes, rather than to provide ongoing LLN support. There are also benefits to clients from attending larger classes including developing team work skills and networking.

² Some providers erroneously note the maximum SGT hours as 25, rather than the correct 20.

Key Finding 9

Take up of SGT has averaged 10 per cent over the last four years. Take up has generally been higher among the Indigenous cohort and low among CALD clients. The average number of SGT hours used by clients is around nine, and this is uniform across the three cohort groups.

Some SEE providers would like to see the number of SGT hours increased for high needs clients, and offered throughout clients' 800 hours.



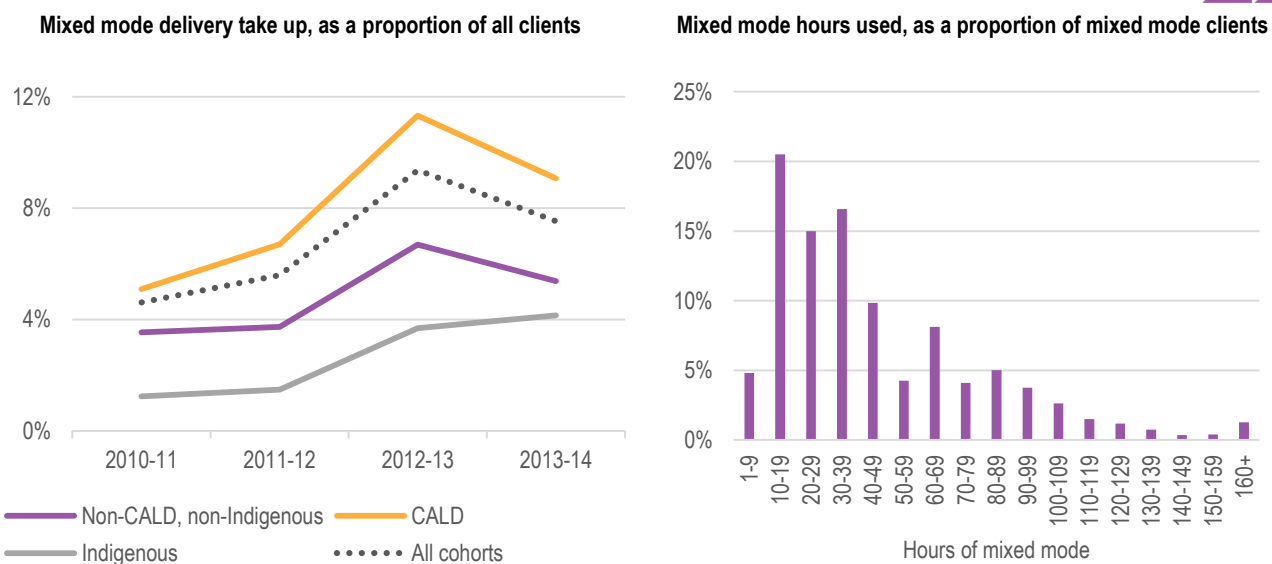
5.1.2 Mixed mode

Mixed mode is the delivery of training through a combination of both face-to-face and distance mode delivery. The distance mode must not account for more than four consecutive weeks of SEE programme training and clients must not exceed 12 weeks of distance training within 800 hours of training.

Take up of mixed mode has averaged 7 per cent over the last four years, and in that period there has been an upward trend in take up (Figure 24). Take up is higher among CALD clients, and low in the Indigenous cohort.

Participating CALD clients complete an average of 52 hours of mixed mode training, more than non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients (46 hours) and Indigenous clients (31 hours). The all client average is 50 hours. A third of mixed mode clients use more than 50 hours of mixed mode training (Figure 24).

Figure 23 Mixed mode delivery take up and hours used



Note: Hours used for clients commencing in 2010-11 to 2013-14
 Source: SEE programme dataset

Many SEE providers see mixed mode as providing a good balance between classroom training and the more flexible delivery method of distance training.

Classroom based learning is the preferred method. Most SEE clients are not independent learners and need the support /guidance of classroom approach. Also they benefit from interacting with other students and developing communication and learning skills.

...

Distance learning via Mixed Mode is a workable option during vacations periods when most students cannot get to classes either because of child care and/or lack of bus services. This short term change of delivery mode suits regional providers.

– Confidential submission

Some SEE providers argue that mixed mode take up should be expanded to help address barriers some clients face in attending the SEE programme. For example, mixed mode could be offered to 'clients with school age children who find it difficult to access holiday care' (survey response), or to address barriers clients face with transport.

This discussion around mixed mode of delivery in the SEE programme emphasises the position of the SEE programme as part of both the training system and the social services system. As SEE programme clients face no fees and, in most cases, meet clients' Centrelink obligations, there is a need to ensure that clients are engaged with the training and not using the programme to avoid looking for work. As a result, the programme is designed so that the majority of training takes place face-to-face in a classroom.

As some providers argue, this face-to-face instruction is also suitable and important for the higher LLN needs clients the SEE programme works with. Yet some clients with considerable LLN needs also face additional barriers to attending classes, including health problems, transport difficulties and family responsibilities. Flexibility in the modes of SEE programme training delivery can assist in addressing these barriers.

Key Finding 10

Take up of mixed mode has averaged 7 per cent over the last four years; take up is higher among CALD clients, and low in the Indigenous cohort. Participating clients complete an average of 50 hours of mixed mode training.

SEE providers value mixed mode training but contend that compliance associated with delivering mixed mode training reduces take up. Some providers argue that mixed mode take up should be expanded to help address barriers some clients face in attending the SEE programme.

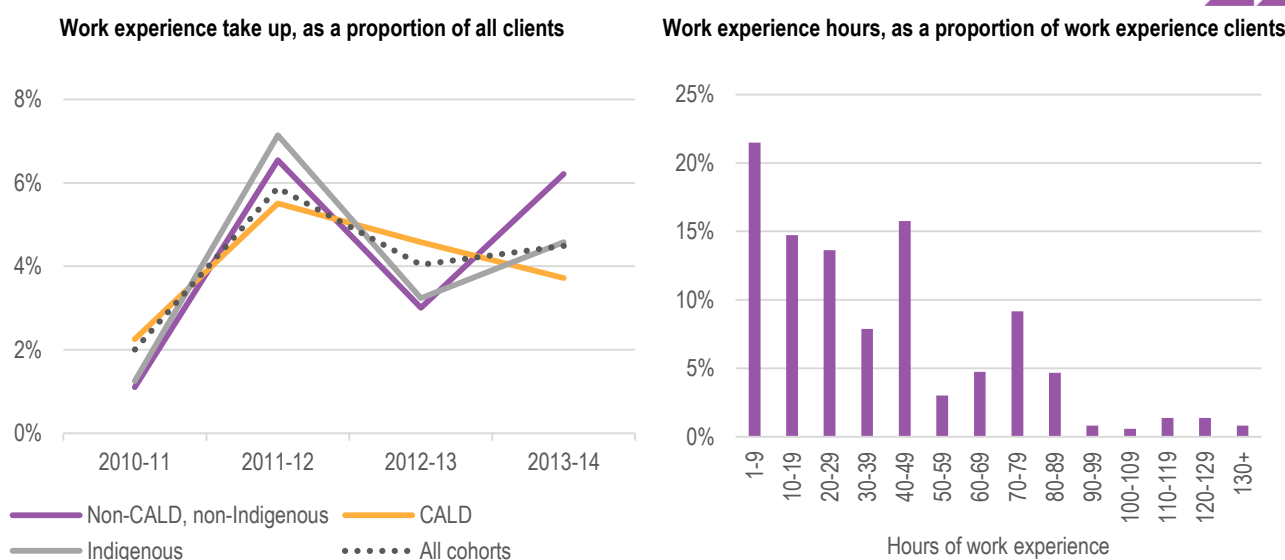
5.1.3 Work experience

This sub-element provides clients a chance to undertake work experience as part of the SEE programme. SEE providers integrate appropriate LLN preparation prior to work experience and consolidate learning on completion. Clients must complete 30 hours of Face to Face Delivery before commencing work experience and must not exceed 12 weeks of work experience within 800 hours of training.

Take up of work experience has averaged 4 per cent over the last four years (Figure 24). Each cohort group has around the same level of work experience take up.

Participating non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients complete an average of 48 hours of work experience compared to 30 hours for CALD clients and 31 hours for Indigenous clients. The all cohort average is 36 hours. Around 20 per cent of clients use more than 70 hours of work experience training (Figure 24).

Figure 24 Work experience take up and hours used



Note: Hours used for clients commencing in 2010-11 to 2013-14

Source: SEE programme dataset

The work experience component of the SEE programme is being used by some providers to provide an introduction or reintroduction to the workplace, an experience that is difficult to simulate in the classroom. This is particularly important for migrant clients who have not worked in Australia before and young clients with little work experience.

SEE promotes the use of work observation and Work Experience. As some of our job seekers have not worked in Australia these provide an important introduction to the actual workplace rather than the simulated workplace of the classroom.

– Foundation College Chisholm submission

SEE providers with strong relationships with industry are well placed to source and support work experience placements. Familiarity with local businesses also allows providers to tailor training before and after work placements to ensure LLN tuition is integrated with work experience.

The removal in the most recent SEE programme contract of the need to seek prior approval for work experience is welcomed by providers and is likely to support greater take up of work experience.

Many SEE providers note that significant resources are needed to source and support the work experience component of the SEE programme. This includes developing relationships with industry, identifying specific work experience opportunities, mapping work placement to ACSF outcomes, reporting on placement outcomes and placement visits.

For work experience to be a meaningful and beneficial experience for both the employer and client, clear linkages need to be made between the client's employment pathway and the business needs of the host employer. This requires dedicated focus on individual placements, which in turn requires additional resourcing and therefore additional investment for work experience programs to be delivered within SEE.

– MTC submission

Similarly, to manage work experience programs efficiently, the SEE training provider needs extra time/ personnel to complete the necessary SEE paperwork so that everything is compliant with the SEE contract. It is also very time-consuming to find work placements for the students.

– Swinburne submission

Stakeholders suggest three options to increase the amount of work experience offered under the SEE programme:

- A higher funding rate for work experience hours to recognise the additional resources needed to deliver the sub-element
- Funding for dedicated employment pathway advisors, similar to the education pathway advisors (or counsellors) funded under AMEP.

To deliver these courses effectively, it would be useful to consider a different funding model for the SEE programme. This could include funding for a “Pathway to Work Advisor”, to work with clients on specific pathways and to liaise with JSA/DES provider case managers. This role could also engage with employers, source work experience placements and give assistance to clients and employers during work placements

– Confidential submission

- Financial support for organisations which host work experience clients.

It should be noted that SEE providers, through the competitive tendering process, are able to set the per student contact hour price at which they deliver SEE programme training (as discussed in Sections 2.5, 6.1 and 7.2) and this rate is paid for each work experience hour clients undertake. The fact providers are paid for the hours clients spend on work experience is intended to compensate providers for the costs of setting up the work experience placements.

The SEE programme attempts to balance a training focus with an optional work experience component. While it has clear employment-focused goals, it is primarily a LLN training programme. The broader context in which SEE programme training is delivered is also important – the programme is delivered to clients who, as registered job seekers, can access other work experience programmes through Centrelink or their JSA.

As noted above, only around 4 per cent of clients undertake work experience. The SEE programme’s objectives do not specify whether this is policy administrators’ intended level of work experience participation. The above policy changes could assist with increased take up but it is important that the SEE programme does not lose its emphasis on LLN tuition, considering LLN improvement is the programmes’ objective and there are other complementary services for job seekers which provide work experience.

Key Finding 11

Take up of work experience has averaged 4 per cent of over the last four years. Participating non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients complete an average of 48 hours of work experience compared to 30 hours for CALD clients and 31 hours for Indigenous clients. The all cohort average is 36 hours.

The work experience component provides an introduction or reintroduction to the workplace, an experience that is difficult to simulate in the classroom. This is particularly important for migrant clients who have not worked in Australia before and young clients with little work experience.

SEE providers view work experience as resource intensive and contend that greater funding for the SEE sub-component through a different hourly rate or a dedicated employment pathway advisor is needed.

5.2 Training outcomes

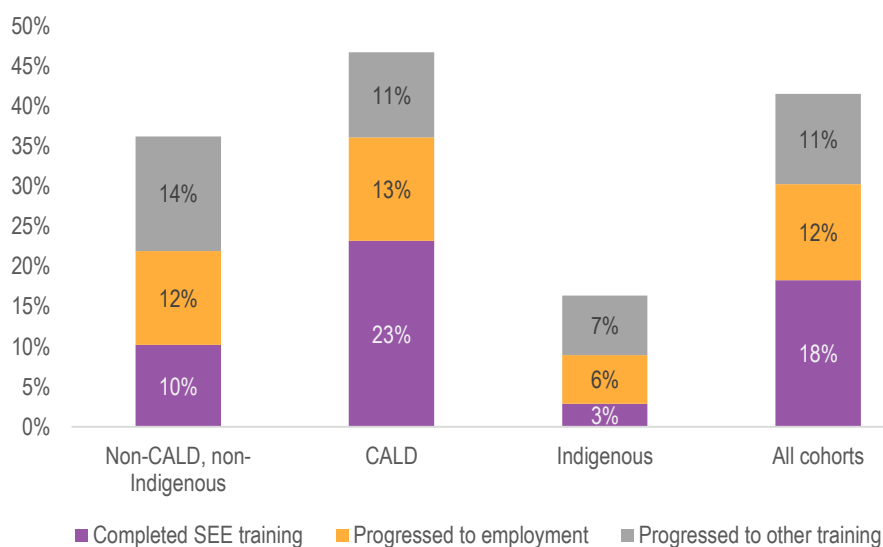
5.2.1 Programme completions

In the SEE programme a completion of the programme is considered to be 'where a client that has commenced has either completed the programme, or has exited the programme due to gaining employment or moving into further education' (Department of Industry, 2014).

Over the past four years, 42 per cent of clients have completed the programme. The majority of these clients have done so by completing 800 hours. 12 per cent of SEE programme clients complete the programme by moving on to employment, while 11 per cent complete by progressing to other training.

CALD clients (47 per cent) are more likely to complete the SEE programme, while Indigenous clients have a lower completion rate (16 per cent). Most CALD clients that complete do so by using their training allocation. Conversely, the most common way for non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients and Indigenous clients to complete the SEE programme is by moving on to other training.

Figure 25 SEE programme completions

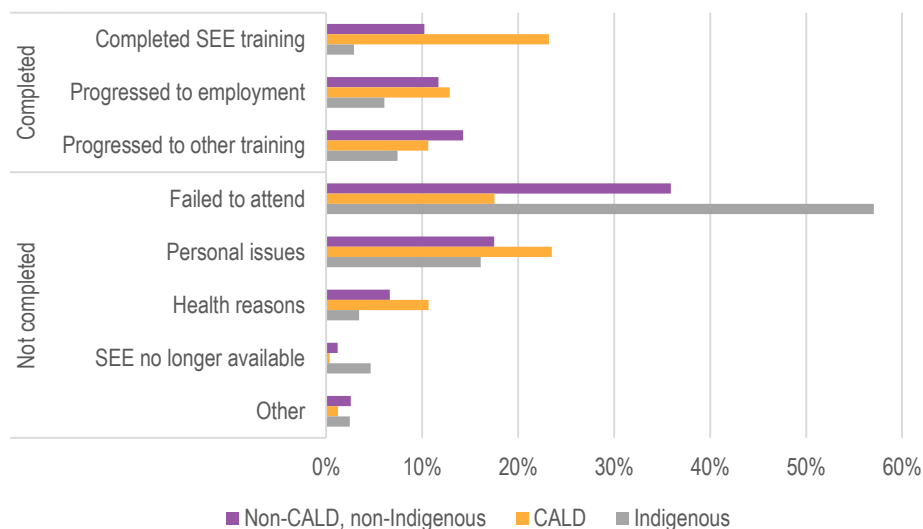


Note: Data are for commencements in 2010-11 to 2013-14, excluding clients who are still attending SEE programme training.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Figure 26 shows all possible outcomes for SEE programme clients as recorded in the SEE programme dataset. CALD clients are more likely to withdraw for personal or health reasons while other clients are more likely to be withdrawn from the programme after failing to attend class. Failure to attend is a significant reason for non-completion for all groups, but especially Indigenous participants with over 55 per cent of participants failing to complete the programme for this reason.

Figure 26 SEE programme client outcomes by cohort



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14 and are no longer in the programme.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Key Finding 12

Around 42 per cent of clients complete the programme. 18 per cent of clients complete the programme by completing 800 hours of SEE programme training, 12 per cent of SEE programme clients complete by moving on to employment, while 11 per cent complete by progressing to other training.

CALD clients are more likely to complete the SEE programme, while Indigenous clients have a lower completion rate.

Most CALD clients complete by using their training allocation. Conversely, the most common way for non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients and Indigenous clients to complete the SEE programme is by moving on to other training.

Employment outcomes

The programme contributes to client employment outcomes in numerous ways. Clearly, improved LLN skills make clients more attractive to prospective employers.

Employers are looking for employees who have the LLN skills to undertake on-the-job training. They have highlighted the need for workplace health and safety (WH&S) awareness training and awareness of workplace expectations and language specific to their industry.

– Confidential submission

But the SEE programme also allows clients to acquire LLN skills with an employment focus. This can take many forms, depending on client and provider preference and ability:

- LLN tuition focused on the local labour market
- Vocational skill sets such as WH&S included in SEE programme tuition
- Work experience and work observation (as discussed in Section 5.1.3)
- Information literacy and IT skills development

- Team-based learning and developing communication skills
- Job search training including application letter and resume writing, interview skills and personal presentation.

The use of these techniques by SEE providers is often contingent on two important factors recognised by most stakeholders:

- the quality, skillset and effectiveness of teachers
- the relationship of providers to industry.

These issues are discussed further in Section 7.1.6.

Many providers work to develop linkages with businesses and the local labour market but recognise more could be done to build these relationships. Strong relationships would allow greater integration of relevant employment-related concepts into SEE programme training.

It would be beneficial if employers and SEE providers were part of a forum to update on regional issues, along with JSA/DES providers. This could guide SEE delivery and would encourage a current, responsive approach to identified local/industry skills gaps.

– Confidential submission

Training outcomes

While the SEE programme's primary focus is on employment outcomes, the programme also aims to progress clients into further education and training.

The provision of LLN training is central to this as on entry many SEE programme clients do not have the LLN skills to undertake further education and training. In addition to LLN training, providers identify other ways in which the SEE programme can prepare clients for further training: by helping clients become more comfortable with a formal training environment and by offering LLN training through vocational training units.

As well as improving LLN skills the SEE Program is effective in empowering students to engage with a learning environment, improving general attitudes to learning and the provision of pathways to further study.

– Confidential submission

‘Taster’ programs organised at Swinburne give students a sample of some vocations (while still improving their LLN). This means they have an idea of what an industry entails, and can gauge their suitability for it, before fully committing.

– Swinburne submission

Some stakeholders argue that it is not immediately clear whether pathways from the SEE programme into further study are an explicit part of the programme design. Furthermore, it does not appear to be common practice or a part of the formal referral system for referring agencies to recommend the SEE programme to job seekers who want to engage in further study but lack the LLN skills necessary. For these reasons, some stakeholders consider that pathways to further training are an area where the programme is currently underutilised (see Section 7.1.6 for further discussion).

Key Finding 13

The SEE programme is designed to align training content with local labour market needs where possible. SEE providers are using multiple techniques to deliver employment-related LLN training including LLN tuition focused on the local labour market, vocational skill sets, work experience and work observation, and job search training.

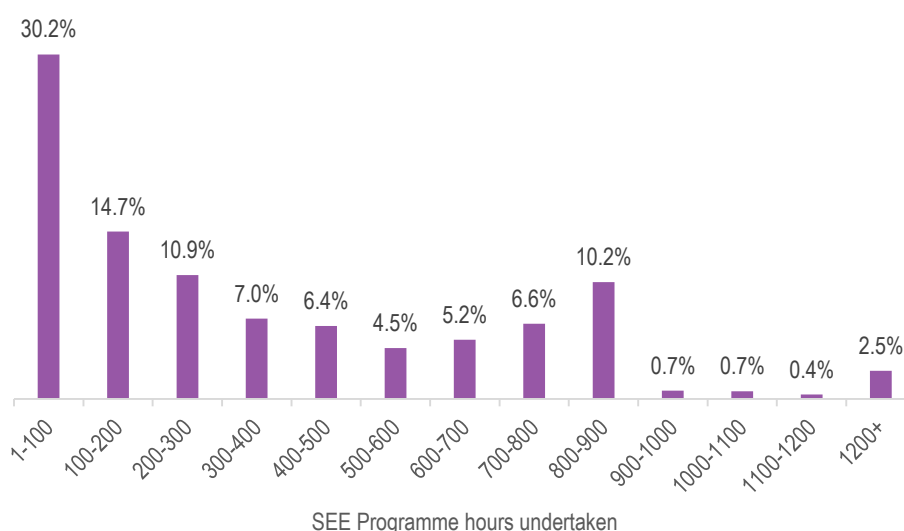
The provision of LLN training is central to this as on entry many SEE programme clients do not have the LLN skills to undertake further education and training. In addition to LLN training, providers identify other ways in which the SEE programme can prepare clients for further training including by helping clients become more comfortable with a formal training environment, by building good work habits, and by offering LLN training through vocational training units.

5.2.2 Hours of training undertaken

This section examines the number of hours clients undertake as part of the SEE programme. The analysis of hours spent in the programme is restricted to commencements from 2010-11 to 2012-13 as it allows the tracking of 2012-13 (and all earlier) commencements to 2013-14, by which time the majority of these clients are estimated to have ceased attending the SEE programme.

Figure 27 shows the number of hours undertaken by SEE programme clients. One third participate in the SEE programme for less than 100 hours, with around 30 per cent completing more than 500 hours. There is also a group of clients (around 5 per cent) that complete more than 800 hours, indicating that they re-entered the SEE programme (at least six months) after completing their initial 800 hours in two years or more, or received a waiver for this waiting period.

Figure 27 SEE programme hours undertaken by clients



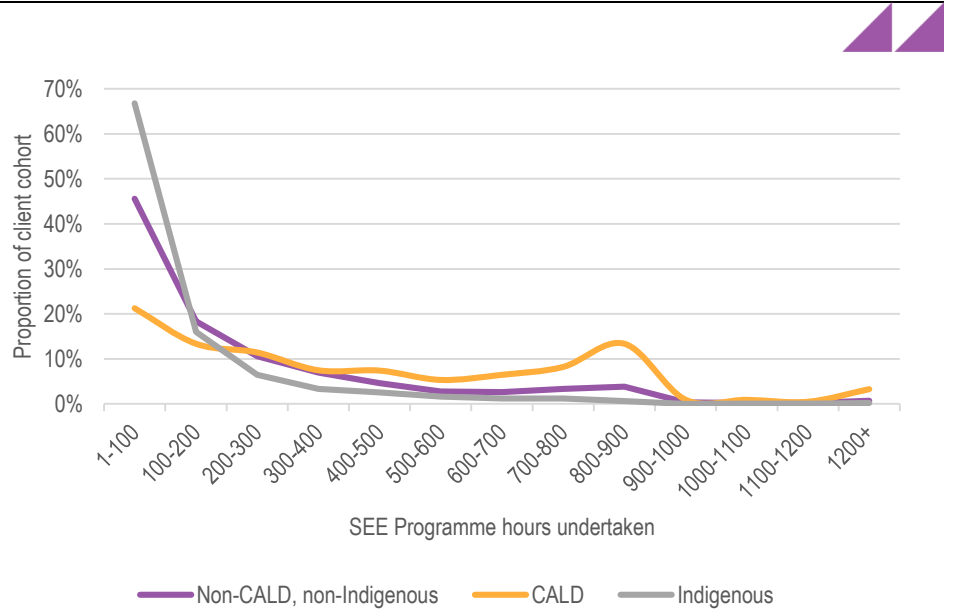
Note: SEE programme clients that commenced in 2010-11 to 2012-13.

Source: SEE programme dataset

Figure 28 disaggregates the hours undertaken data by non-CALD, non-Indigenous, CALD and Indigenous clients. It shows that most Indigenous clients complete less than 100 hours of SEE programme training and 67 per cent undertake less than 200 hours.

Half of all non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients complete less than 200 hours, with a quarter undertaking more than 300 hours. CALD clients are more likely to complete more hours and make up 91 per cent of the clients undertaking more than 700 hours.

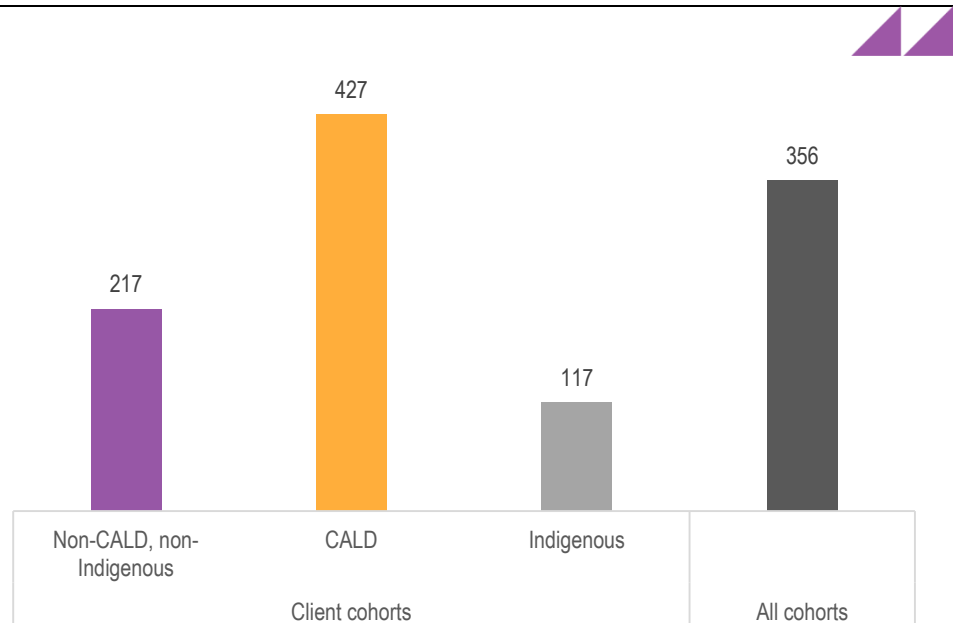
Figure 28 SEE programme hours by cohort



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced in 2010-11 to 2012-13.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

Given this, it is not surprising that CALD clients average a relatively high 427 hours completed, compared to 217 hours for non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients and 117 hours for the Indigenous cohort (Figure 29).

Figure 29 Average hours completed by SEE programme clients



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced in 2010-11 to 2012-13.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

Key Finding 14

CALD clients average a relatively high 427 hours completed, compared to 217 hours for non-CALD, non-Indigenous clients and 117 hours for the Indigenous cohort.

One third of clients participate in the SEE programme for only a short amount of time and complete less than 100 hours. At the other end of the spectrum a fair proportion of participants (around 30 per cent) remain in the programme long enough to complete more than 500 hours.

5 per cent complete more 800 hours, indicating they are repeat participants that have re-entered the SEE programme after completing a previous allocation of 800 hours.



Consultations for this evaluation indicate a number of issues which may be leading to clients completing fewer hours of SEE programme training than their LLN needs are likely to require. As discussed in Section 5.1.2 and below in Section 7.1.6, some SEE providers view a lack of other training modes as hampering the programme's ability to meet the needs of clients who struggle to attend class.

Personal or health issues outside of the programme can also lead to clients withdrawing from the programme before exhausting their 800 hours (see Section 5.2.1). Further, consultations indicate that in remote areas 800 hours of training is often seen by clients as an insurmountable task.

A number of other SEE providers, particularly those who are AMEP providers as well, contend that the lack of fee-free childcare in the SEE programme reduces the number of training hours some clients are able to undertake.

As discussed above in Section 5.2.1, some clients exit the SEE programme to move into employment. While normally a positive, stakeholders argued some clients are withdrawing from the SEE programme at the encouragement of their JSA to the detriment of their long-term employability. These clients may have been better served completing 800 hours of SEE programme training before entering the workforce; the additional LLN training may have allowed them to progress further in their career.

At the other end of the spectrum, some clients may benefit from more than 800 hours of SEE programme training.

MTC has found that the allocation of 800 hours for each client may or may not be sufficient depending on individual client backgrounds, education history, LLN proficiency etc. For example, a pre-literate client who commences in the SEE Program may often need more than the allotted 800 hours to be sufficiently prepared for employment or further education.

– MTC submission

Many low level students with severely disrupted or no formal education need at least 2 x 800 hours SEE training (or even more).

– Swinburne submission

Some... clients will need more than 800 hours of participation to gain employment and/or proceed to further study. They would benefit most from general LLN skills development training before moving on to a specific vocational area focus.

– Confidential submission

While clients who complete 800 hours of training may return to the SEE programme after a six month waiting period, some stakeholders argue this break should be waived for high needs clients.

A six month hiatus for someone whose LLN skills are still embryonic can result in the loss of much of this crucial foundational knowledge. Consideration should be given to waiving the six-month wait on a case-by-case basis where it is assessed that the learner has the capacity and motivation to continue with SEE as a pathway to employment.

A more flexible approach is warranted to enable students in this group, who have a demonstrated commitment to improving their skills, and an assessed capacity to benefit, to transition to a further period in SEE without the 6-month break. Checks could be built in at the half-way point of an additional 400 hundred hours to ensure that the learner is benefiting from the additional instruction and progressing at an appropriate rate.

– Jobs Australia submission

The adequacy of the SEE programme training allocation is discussed further in Section 7.1.7 below.

Key Finding 15

There is a variety of reasons why clients may not complete the 800 hours of SEE programme training, including clients that withdraw having achieved their LLN goals. Stakeholders argue that more flexible training delivery, childcare provision and more supportive JSAs would improve the chances of clients completing SEE programme training.

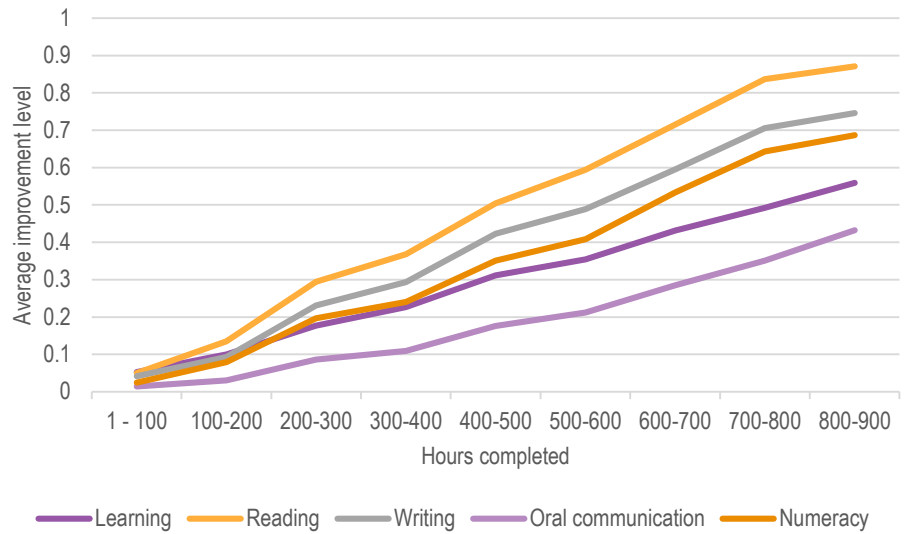
While many clients do not complete 800 hours, those that do may in fact require more training. Currently a six month hiatus is enforced for completing clients, which may hamper LLN acquisition, especially for clients that still have not achieved basic levels of English language proficiency.

5.3 LLN outcomes

As set out in the SEE programme guidelines (2013): 'Finding employment after undertaking the programme's training is the ultimate measure of success, however, attainment is also important. Attainment is measured by comparing the client's LLN improvements in ACSF indicators from their PTA to the later assessments during and at the end of their training.'

Figure 30 shows a clear correlation between the hours clients spend in the SEE programme and the average improvement they achieve in the five ACSF core areas. For example, clients who spend 800-900 hours in the programme achieve on average a 0.8 greater increase in their average reading ASCF level than clients who spend less than 100 hours in the programme.

Figure 30 Average improvement by learning area

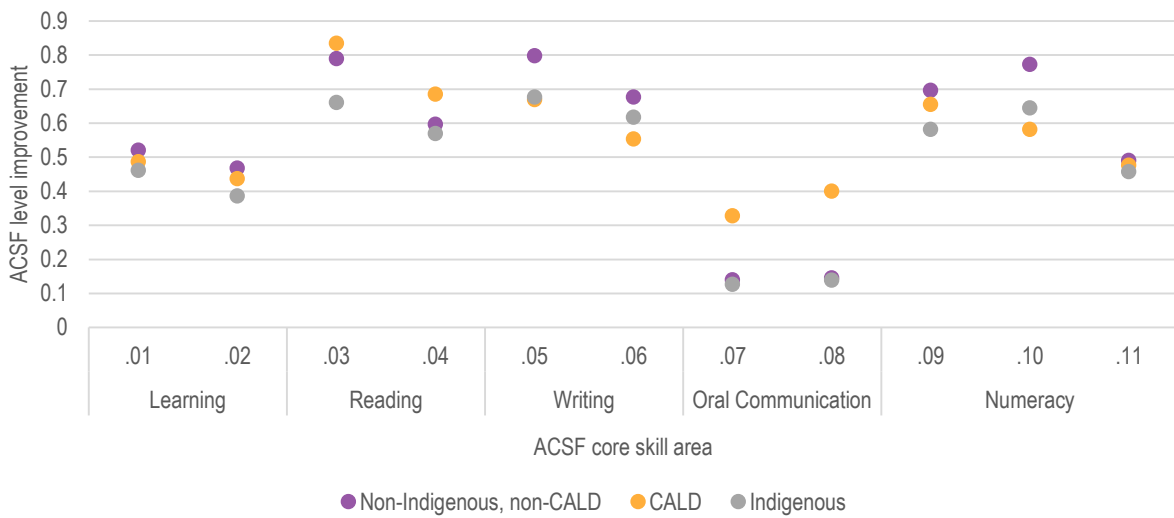


Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14. Improvements are averaged across each ASCF core skill area. The sample of clients with more than 900 hours is too small to take a reliable average of and so is not included in the chart.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

The following analysis of ACSF level improvement is restricted to clients who have completed more than 500 hours. The 500 hours cut off is used as it is a reasonable time in which to expect to see LLN outcomes associated with the programme. It is also consistent with analysis undertaken in the AMEP Evaluation Report. 31 per cent of SEE programme clients complete more than 500 hours.

Figure 31 shows the average ACSF level improvement on the 11 performance indicators for SEE programme clients completing at least 500 hours. Average improvement is highest in the reading, writing and numeracy areas. Improvement is lowest in oral communication; this area also exhibits the most significant difference between the cohort groups, with CALD clients making significantly greater improvements than other clients, likely due to their low entry oral communication assessment scores.

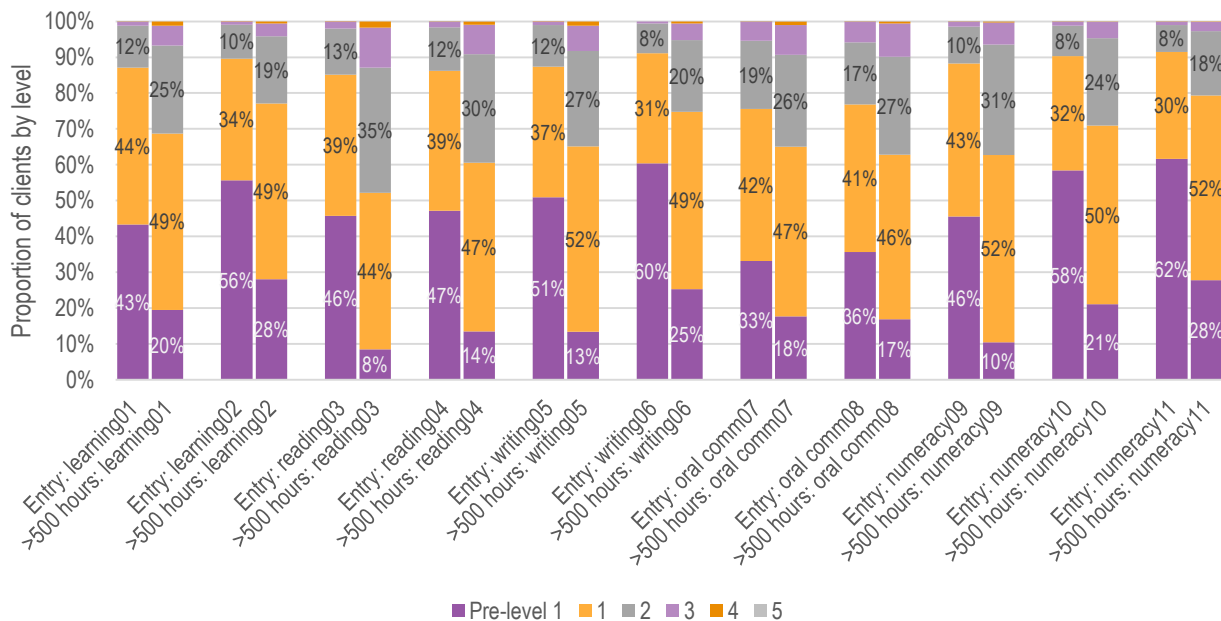
Figure 31 Average ACSF level improvement for SEE programme clients completing at least 500 hours



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14 and have completed at least 500 hours.
Source: SEE programme dataset

Figure 32 sets out entry and latest ACSF assessment levels for the cohort of SEE programme clients who have completed at least 500 hours of training over the last four years. It shows a significant reduction of the proportion of clients assessed as pre-level 1 across all 11 performance indicators, and an increase in the proportion at level 1 and level 2.

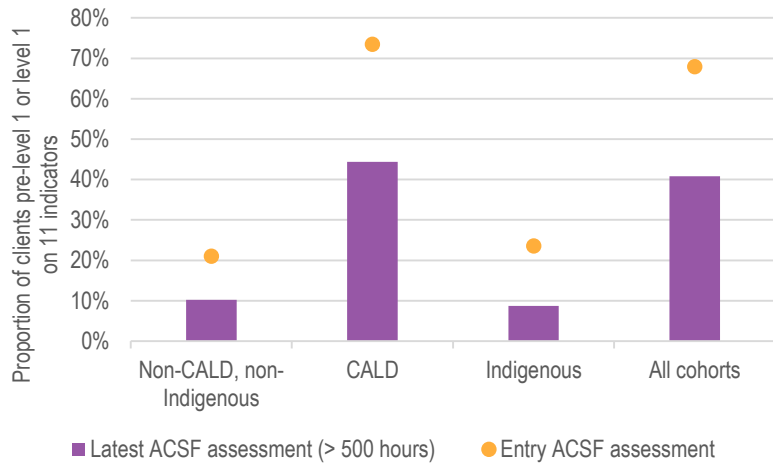
Figure 32 Entry ACSF levels and levels after at least 500 hours



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14 and have completed at least 500 hours.
Source: SEE programme dataset

The proportion of clients pre-level 1 or level 1 on the 11 ACSF indicators at entry into the SEE programme is around 70 per cent. After more than 500 hours of training this share has fallen to 40 per cent (Figure 33).

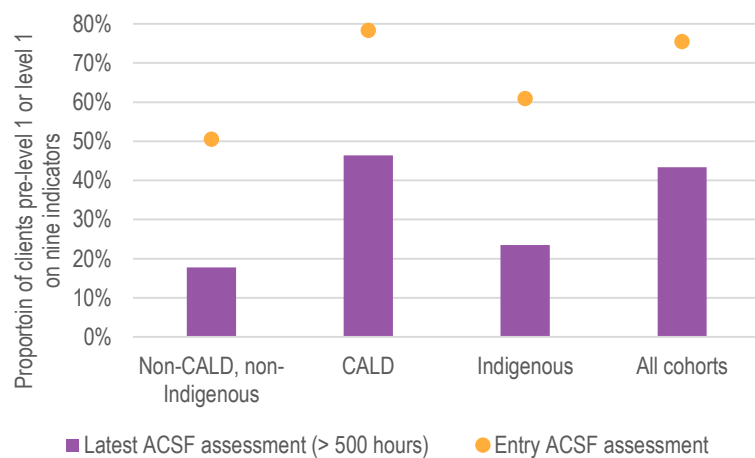
Figure 33 Proportion of clients pre-level 1 or level 1 on the 11 ACSF indicators, before and after more than 500 hours of training



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14 and have completed at least 500 hours.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

As discussed in Section 4.3, most of the non-CALD cohort are assessed above pre-level 1 on the oral communication indicators due to growing up in an English speaking country. To control for this, Figure 34 shows the proportion of clients pre-level 1 or level 1 on the non-oral communication ACSF indicators, before and after more than 500 hours of training.

Figure 34 Proportion of clients pre-level 1 or level 1 on nine ACSF indicators, not including oral communication, before and after more than 500 hours of training



Note: SEE programme clients that commenced training in 2010-11 – 2013-14 and have completed at least 500 hours.
 Source: SEE programme dataset

LLN programme effectiveness is driven by a number of factors as discussed, in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

SEE providers note the importance of classroom based learning for LLN outcomes.

Classroom based learning is the preferred method. Most SEE clients are not independent learners and need the support /guidance of classroom approach. Also they benefit from interacting with other students and developing communication and learning skills.

– Confidential submission

Other providers noted the importance of clients feeling comfortable, engaged and having their needs met.

... LLN effectiveness is also reliant upon:

- clients settling quickly into the learning environments;
- clients being offered a training load which matches their needs; and
- clients being offered training which is contextualised and engaging.

– Confidential submission

Meeting clients LLN needs and improving the programme's outcomes are further discussed in Section 7.1.6.

Key Finding 16

There is a clear correlation between the hours clients spend in the SEE programme and average improvement they achieve in the five ACSF core areas.

For the cohort of SEE programme clients who have completed at least 500 hours of training over the last four years there is:

- a significant reduction of the proportion of clients assessed as pre-level 1 across all 11 performance indicators, and
- an increase in the proportion at level 1 and level 2.

The proportion of clients pre-level 1 or level 1 on the 11 ACSF indicators falls from 70 per cent to 40 per cent after more than 500 hours of training.



6 Efficiency and performance management

This chapter examines the efficiency of the SEE programme, including trends in expenditure over time and the prices paid to providers. The second half of the chapter focusses on the performance assessment and management aspects of the programme.

6.1 Efficiency

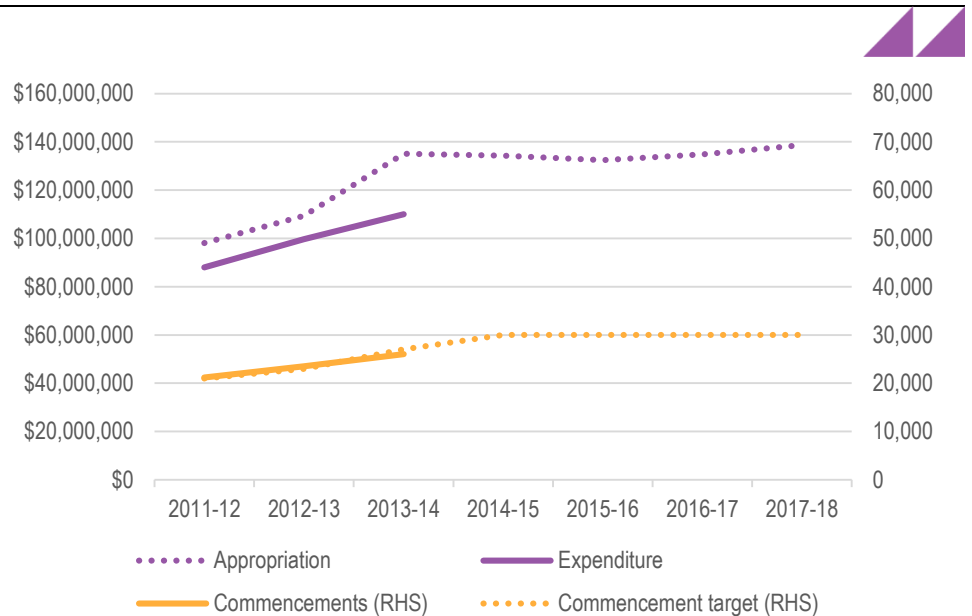
Efficiency refers to the cost of the programme producing outputs and outcomes. This section examines the efficiency of the SEE programme, beginning with expenditure over time.

6.1.1 SEE programme expenditure

Figure 35 sets out SEE programme expenditure and commencements for the last three years. It also includes the budget appropriation for the programme's and its commencement target.

It shows that the SEE programme exceeded its commencement target in 2011-12 and 2012-13, before falling 3.5 per cent short in 2013-14. Despite typically meeting the programme's commencement targets, SEE programme expenditure has averaged 11 per cent below appropriations for the last three years.

Figure 35 Expenditure and budget appropriations, 2013-14 dollars



Note: In 2013-14 dollars. Real data generated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A) and 2014-15 MYEFO CPI forecasts.

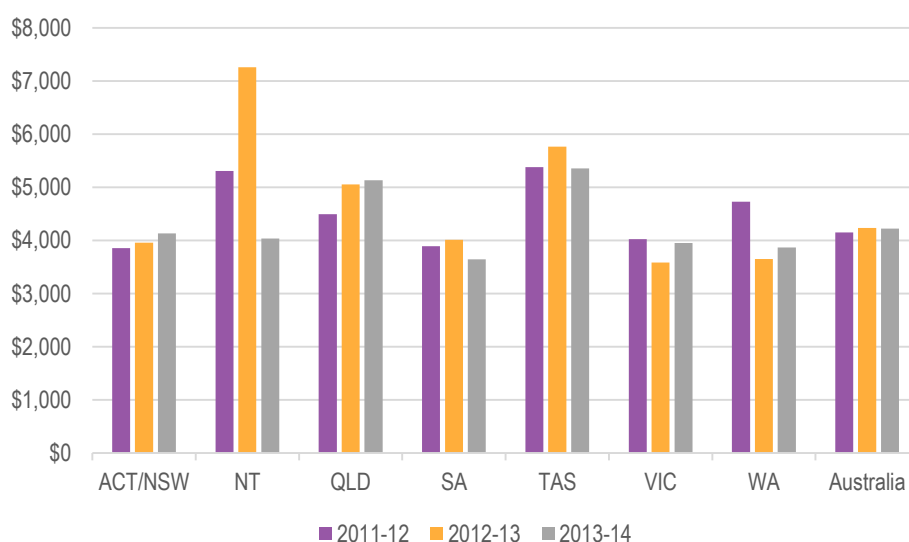
Source: SEE programme expenditure dataset

SEE programme expenditure per commencement has averaged \$4,206 and remained steady over the last three years. Figure 36 shows expenditure per commencement by

state/territory. Expenditure per commencement is highest in NT and Tasmania, and lowest in Victoria and SA.

- Differences *between states* are likely due to the contracted cost of delivery within each state which is in turn driven by the combined effects of local costs of delivery, the population dispersion of the state, the level of price competition, and the effects of economies of scale.
- Differences from year-to-year *within states* can only be attributed to either changes in the retention rate (i.e. the number of hours per commencement) or shifts in market share between providers that may be contracted at a higher or lower rate per hour.

Figure 36 Expenditure per commencement by state/territory, 2012-13 dollars



Note: In 2012-13 dollars. Real data generated using the ABS General Government Final Consumption Expenditure Chain Price Index (ABS 5204.0, Series ID A2420885A).

Source: SEE programme expenditure dataset

Key Finding 17

The real Government cost per SEE programme commencement is \$4,206 in 2013-14. Expenditure per commencement has remained steady over the last three years, but there is considerable variation between states and territories.

6.2 Performance assessment and management

The SEE programme performance assessment and management framework has five major components:

- assessment
- SEE Online
- SEE provider reporting
- key performance indicators (KPIs)
- auditing and quality assurance

6.2.1 Assessment

The SEE programme uses two types of assessments – the Pre-Training Assessments (PTA) and the Interval Progress Assessment (IPA). The PTA and the IPAs are developed by SEE providers. Both assessments are part of the process that allows the Department to assess the performance of SEE providers and the SEE programme more generally.

Pre-Training Assessments (PTA)

A PTA is an assessment conducted by a qualified Training Assessor, to determine the appropriate skill level of the client (job seeker) at the time of referral. A PTA is required in order to assess the LLN skills of the client and thus determine their most appropriate training stream. Applying the ACSF, the Training Assessor is required to grade the client against the five core skills and develop an Individual Training Plan (ITP). The PTA is undertaken at the initial job seeker appointment and prior to commencement of training.

Interval Progress Assessment (IPA)

An IPA is an assessment that is undertaken to determine a client's level of attainment against the ACSF, across all five core skills. IPAs are developed by SEE providers and can be undertaken at any time during a client's training, but must be completed at least once in every 200 hours of training. Satisfactory client progress is demonstrated by the client achieving at least eight full ACSF indicators within 800 hours of training or proportionate to the hours of training completed. SEE providers must record attainment of a minimum of two ACSF indicators to permit satisfactory progress to be attained.

Some SEE providers consider the PTA a comprehensive assessment of clients' LLN skills and needs while others see the PTA process as too lengthy and cumbersome. SEE providers indicate there may be an opportunity for information sharing between the AMEP and SEE programme as clients transition from one to the other, which may reduce the time needed to undertake the PTA for former AMEP clients.

Many SEE providers see the IPA process as unduly time consuming as teachers must develop ACSF-compliant and curriculum-compliant assessment tasks for each client.

The administrative burden is huge, time consuming and overwhelming. It could be streamlined much more - especially the amount of reporting required on the ACSF.

Survey respondent

Admin processes are important for accountability and ensuring excellence. However most teachers say they are more than they have had to do in any other teaching position and the amount of admin impacts negatively on staff retention. Reduction or simplification of reporting processes would be welcomed!

Survey respondent

Our members report that the requirement to assess and report against both the ACSF and a curriculum framework such as the EAL Frameworks or the CGEA creates a double assessment workload for teachers in developing and implementing assessment tasks. While tasks can sometimes be mapped to cover both the ACSF and the relevant curriculum framework, the very specific criteria of each framework means that separate tasks are often required.

AEU submission

Some suggest a similar arrangement to the AMEP Assessment Task Bank (ATB) may assist with reducing this burden and would increase consistency in assessment across the programme, although others argue an ATB would reduce provider flexibility and result in training and assessment being less contextualised.

Other providers argue that 200 hours of training is too regular an interval to be administering the IPA as LLN skills development is not linear. It may be the case that clients see no ACSF improvement for many hours of training before witnessing an increase in many performance indicators.

Students do not improve in one ACSF indicator at a time as all skills are integrated both in teaching delivery and in learner development, nor do students improve skills at regular intervals.

Survey respondent

As noted in 6.2.4 below, the change in KPI 2 has led to some providers administering IPAs every 100 hours.

Key Finding 18

The PTA is an important part of client orientation, initial assessment and training planning. Some providers argue the PTA can be too long and cumbersome.

The IPAs allow the SEE programme to track client LLN improvement on ACSF performance indicators and are an important part of the programme's KPIs. SEE providers view the regular assessments as unduly time consuming and some argue an assessment task bank would reduce administration and increase consistency in assessment across the programme.

6.2.2 SEE Online

SEE Online is the online database used by SEE providers to record service delivery details and training activities. It also provides payment for services delivered to providers (Australian Government, 2013).

Unless otherwise specified in programme documentation, the contracted SEE provider must regularly submit invoices payable to it via SEE Online. Data on provider performance is extracted from the SEE Online system, and is used in the generation of the annual and/or *ad hoc* reports prepared for the Department (Department of Industry, 2013).

Consultations for this evaluation revealed that stakeholder views on SEE Online vary. Some consider it to have reasonable usability while others argue there is significant scope to make it more user-friendly.

SEE Online could be modified to allow it to interface with AVETMISS-compliant systems which all RTOs operate, reducing the need to manually enter data both on the AVETMISS compliant system and on SEE Online. SEE providers would also benefit from being able to run customised reports on SEE Online to gain insights into their own clients.

There is currently limited reporting functionality in SEE Online... so that providers are unable to extract potentially valuable student data, which, if available, would allow more refined analysis of client demographics and needs and, as a consequence, more effective targeting in the provision of services... SEE Online currently has no capacity to extract customised reports.


AMES Consortium submission

Ability to produce a report of all clients in training and their current training hours would assist internal provider monitoring.

Survey respondent

Key Finding 19

SEE Online could be updated to improve usability. The ability to interface with other RTO compliance reporting systems would reduce duplication for SEE providers. Allowing providers to generate customised reports from SEE Online could improve provider intelligence about their clients and thus decision making.


6.2.3 SEE provider reporting

SEE providers are required to prepare and provide an annual report to the Department of Industry, as well as *ad hoc* reports within 7 days of a request from the Department (Department of Industry, 2013).

Ad hoc reports

SEE providers are required to submit *ad hoc* reports to the Department within 7 days from the initial request. These requests are rare. *Ad hoc* reports detail the services each provider delivers, such as the duration of contracts, the contractor's performance against relevant measures and the fees paid or payable by the Department for the relevant period.


Annual reports

SEE providers are also required to submit annual reports to the Department within 2 weeks of the anniversary of the commencement date. Annual reports include information on provider programme operations, online delivery, work experience placements, Indigenous action plan, stakeholder relationships developed, sustainability of programme outcomes, staffing, financial viability and risk management (Department of Industry, 2013).

Consultations indicate SEE providers view the current arrangements around *ad hoc* reports and annual reports to be appropriate.

Key Finding 20

Consultations indicate providers see the current arrangements around *ad hoc* reports and annual reports to be appropriate.


6.2.4 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The SEE programme KPIs are used to monitor SEE providers' performance and play a role in determining whether providers are awarded future SEE programme contracts. The KPIs for SEE providers are set out in Table 11 below.

Table 11 SEE Provider key performance indicators

		Indicator	Measurement
KPI 1	Participation	Number of clients recommended for training who commence in the programme.	90% of clients recommended for training actually commence training.
KPI 2	Attainment	Client benefits from programme training as measured by ACSF improvement.	80% of clients attain one ACSF indicator per full 100 hours of training.
KPI 3	Accurate assessment	Client assessment is accurate in accordance with the ACSF.	80% of client assessment outcomes are appropriate and accurate against the ACSF.
KPI 4	Quality training	Client receives quality training aligned to the ACSF.	

Source: SEE Provider Instructions, Department of Industry, 2014.

KPI 1 is seen as problematic by many stakeholders as SEE providers consider they have limited control over the proportion of clients recommended for training who commence in the programme. There are many reasons why potential clients may not commence after being referred including:

- the referring agency has referred an unsuitable client
- the client has moved on to employment or another activity before commencing
- the client may be high needs and difficult to engage.

There is a risk that the KPI acts as a disincentive to trying to engage such disengaged and high needs clients such as youth or long term unemployed clients.

As noted in Section 6.2.1, KPI 2 may be having the unintended consequence of encouraging SEE providers to assess clients every 100 hours rather than every 200 hours as is currently required. When a client withdraws from the programme SEE providers must enter a learning outcome assessment which counts toward KPI 2. They report that if it has been over 100 hours since a client's last IPA and they are not able to enter an ACSF indicator increase, it can impact their performance on KPI 2. It should be noted however, that a Learning Outcome Assessment (LOA), an electronic statement of attainment produced when a client leaves the programme, can be informed by course work produced by the client before they left the programme.

The KPIs are discussed further in Section 7.1.5.

Key Finding 21

Four programme KPIs are used to measure provider performance.

In relation to KPI 1, which measures the proportion of clients recommended for training who commence in the programme, providers argue that this is something that they have limited control.

In relation to KPI 2, which measures the proportion of clients that attain one ACSF indicator per full 100 hours of training, this may be having the unintended consequence of encouraging providers to assess clients every 100 hours.

6.2.5 Auditing and quality assurance

Department of Education and Training

The Department of Education and Training undertakes performance monitoring of SEE providers through on-site file and infrastructure monitoring, off-site file monitoring, targeted monitoring; and desk top systems monitoring.

The frequency of monitoring is determined by the level of assessed inherent risk posed by the SEE provider, ranging from low to very high. For those assessed at low, minor or moderate risk, off-site monitoring occurs at least annually and on-site monitoring occurs at least once per contract. For those assessed at high risk, off-site or on-site monitoring is conducted at least quarterly, and for those considered very high risk, the frequency of monitoring rises to at least monthly.

Departmental audits are also concerned with the Provider Performance Framework (PPF). The PPF is a critical element of the programme given that it is used to determine contract extensions and the length thereof.

Independent Verification

The Department contracts an Independent Verification (IV) provider who conducts the IV process, to assess the quality and reliability of assessment, PTAs, IPAs, LOAs, and reviews of work experience placements conducted and developed by each SEE provider.

The IV provider undertakes on-site and off-site verification, develops and delivers professional development workshops to ensure national consistency of the programme, and maintains moderation. SEE providers are required to maintain records which substantiate service delivery, and provide information and access to enable verification to be conducted (Department of Industry, 2013).

The IV provider aims to ensure the accuracy and reliability of claimed outcomes by observing evidence of assessments undertaken by participants and comparing the actual LLN improvements of clients against the ACSF, and certifies that the ACSF has been accurately applied. The process of IV ensures that assessments undertaken by SEE providers across service delivery areas are comparable (Department of Industry, 2013).

The role of ASQA

As RTOs, all SEE providers are subject to quality assurance monitoring by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or the relevant state body. ASQA audits focus on training organisations meeting the RTO accreditation requirements and delivering training and assessments in line with training packages. The focus of each audit type is set out in Table 12.

Table 12 ASQA audit focus

Type of audit	Focus of audit
Registration audits	
Initial registration	<p>Evidence of the preparedness of the applicant organisation to operate as an RTO and/or to deliver training to international students studying in Australia. Includes consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the appropriateness of management systems, delivery strategies and other resources whether proposed implementation of delivery strategies meets training package and/or accredited course requirements the suitability and sufficiency of facilities and equipment, and the competence of nominated delivery personnel.
Renewal of registration	<p>Evidence of the ongoing effective deployment of systems for the delivery of quality training and assessment. Includes consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ongoing appropriateness of management systems, delivery strategies and other resources whether ongoing implementation of delivery strategies meets training package and/or accredited course requirements the ongoing suitability and sufficiency of facilities and equipment the ongoing competence of nominated delivery personnel.
Change scope of registration	<p>Evidence of the preparedness of the organisation to deliver the units/qualifications/courses contained within the application. Includes consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the appropriateness of management systems, delivery strategies and other resources whether proposed implementation of delivery strategies meets training package and/or accredited course requirements the suitability and sufficiency of facilities and equipment the competence of nominated delivery personnel.
Compliance audits	
Post-initial audit and compliance audit	<p>Evidence of the ongoing effective deployment of systems that ensure the provider's ability to deliver the units/qualifications/courses on their scope of registration. Includes consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the appropriateness of management systems, delivery strategies and other resources whether proposed implementation of delivery strategies meets training package and/or accredited course requirements the suitability and sufficiency of facilities and equipment the competence of nominated delivery personnel.

Source: ASQA, *Fact sheet: ASQA audits* (2013), available at: <http://www.asqa.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/fact-sheets/fact-sheets.html>.

The most common concerns of providers regarding the auditing process is the administration associated with IV and the lack of clear direction on compliance.

There is also an opportunity to reduce the burden of reporting and administration required in the SEE program due to the regular external verification regime. This is a very demanding and excessive process whereby a significant focus for trainers is continual assessment and annotation of client achievements for the frequent independent verification visits.

AMES Consortium submission

The Independent Verification goal posts are not transparent and seem to keep shifting. After many years of reporting against the ACSF many teaching professionals find that some performance criteria and their requirements are less than clear, and can only be discovered through the verification process. Interpretation of these criteria seems to vary from one verification to the next.

Confidential submission

Verification is both a barrier and a facilitator of good performance. A barrier because it imposes a high level of continuous reporting and in some cases leads to a push to develop provider mandated, standardised assessment tasks which in turn encourages a 'teach to the test' attitude... This is not to suggest that accountability and monitoring/assessing of learner progress is not an essential component but it often seems to have become the primary focus.

Linda Wyse submission


The SEE programme produces contract and provider instructions to inform SEE providers of their reporting and performance assessment responsibilities. SEE providers, however, contend the IV process could be improved through the introduction of checklists from the IV providers to clarify what is required in ACSF interpretation and by supportive feedback between verifications.

In consultations, few providers indicated that there was overlap between monitoring under the SEE programme and ASQA (or the equivalent state body).

Key Finding 22

The SEE programme has a comprehensive auditing and quality assurance process that many SEE providers consider a significant and excessive burden. Some providers contend the Independent Verification process could be improved through clearer communication of expectations.

There is little evidence of duplication of quality assurance monitoring by the SEE programme and ASQA (or the equivalent state body).




6.2.6 Additional areas for potential performance assessment

Notwithstanding the areas discussed above, the SEE programme performance assessment and management system is well placed to monitor and report on the performance of the SEE programme. On the whole the programme has sound data collection methodologies for measuring and reporting against programme objectives and client outcomes.

However, measuring and improved reporting of employment and further training outcomes could further aid performance measurement. Some SEE providers argue better integration of SEE programme systems with other government databases could allow client outcomes to be tracked over time. The linking of the new Unique Student Identifier (USI) to social services databases could aid such outcome measurement. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Key Finding 23

SEE programme performance assessment and management system is well placed to monitor and report on the performance of the programme. Further measurement and reporting of employment and further training outcomes would aid performance management.



7 The appropriateness and future of the SEE programme

This chapter examines the appropriateness of the SEE programme and makes recommendations on how the programme could be improved based on the analysis set out in the previous chapters. The recommendations are not listed in order of priority but are organised thematically.

7.1 Potential improvements to the SEE programme

7.1.1 Clarity and measurement of programme objectives

The SEE programme seeks to improve eligible job seeker's LLN skills with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force, and lead to greater long-term gains for society.

In this respect the SEE programme is regarded as unique.

SEE is the only national programme that addresses the LLN learning needs of eligible job seekers with the clearly articulated purpose of helping them acquire the skills needed by employers in the workplace.

– *Jobs Australia submission*

Its objectives are clearly specified on the Department's website and are generally well understood by the programme's stakeholders. That being said, there are aspects of the design of the SEE programme that require further consideration, as discussed in the following sections.

Language, Literacy and Numeracy and employment

One of the tensions raised by stakeholders in the consultations conducted for this evaluation is between the long-term investment in employment enhancing LLN skills and shorter-term focus on immediate job outcomes. While these objectives are not mutually exclusive, stakeholders reported that the current approach to employment services and income support means that immediate employment opportunities can displace the long-term commitment required to improve on individuals' language, literacy, and/or numeracy skills.

This tension is often raised by SEE providers who find that participants are sometimes exiting the programme before meaningful gains in LLN can be made because a job opportunity has presented itself, and referring agencies are predisposed to encouraging clients take up such opportunities. Several stakeholders suggested that these opportunities tend to be in local skill, low-paying, and insecure employment.

SEE Providers and learners frequently experience disruption to their program from JSAs wanting to move students into work or short-term employability, when their LLN is not adequate.

– *Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission*

It would appear that this tension in the SEE objectives rests primarily in the incentives faced by referring agencies, as discussed in Section 4.1.3.

Further training and employment

Further education and training are an explicit objective of the SEE programme. While improvements in LLN will better prepare participants for further study, it is not immediately clear whether pathways from the SEE programme into further study are an explicit part of the programme design.

Consistent with the issue raised in the previous section, much of the emphasis of SEE is on pathways into employment. While a referring agency can recommend SEE to job seekers who want to engage in further study but lack the LLN skills necessary, this does not appear to be common practice nor is it part of the formal referral system. As discussed in Section 5.2, some stakeholders consider this to be an area where the programme is currently underutilised.

Recommendation 1

The SEE programme's objectives to improve an eligible job seeker's LLN skills to enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force are clear and should be retained.

Particular emphasis should be given in the programme's design to ensure that SEE can be utilised by job seekers wanting to engage in further study but lacking the necessary LLN skills.

7.1.2 Measurement against objectives

It is possible to measure the immediate outcomes for SEE participants, in terms of whether they progress on to employment or further study, although it may be more difficult to demonstrate causality.

Based on the feedback from stakeholders and examination of the programme's measurement and reporting, it is clear that significant emphasis is placed on the attainment of LLN outcomes.

The Programme's stated objective to increase job seeker LLN participation to further training or work is very clear. Measurements through KPIs do not provide a true indication of programme outcomes.

– SEE provider confidential submission

The SEE Online database has not been developed to capture data on employment or further study... Similarly, the SEE programme KPIs do not focus on client outcomes related to employment or further study outcomes.

– SEE provider confidential submission

Effectiveness is undocumented as there are no longitudinal studies once clients finish 800 hours to inform Providers of employment or other pathway outcomes... Some way of recording 'other' outcomes (jobs & pathways) on SEE Online at end of 800 hours: for example, SEE learners go on to employment, volunteering or further study but these are not recorded or acknowledged in the current contract.

– Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission

In the past, post-SEE study and job related outcomes were collected through a post-programme survey of participants. The Department of Education Science and Technology undertook a review of the LLNP in 2005, and in doing so demonstrated the value and validity of the Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey of participants, which was administered three to six months after exiting the programme.

In order to analyse employment and further education outcomes, the Review relied on the employment and further education outcomes collected in the Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey of participants three to six months after exiting the programme. The overall response rate for this survey was around 58% and the results coincided closely with available data from Centrelink and DEWR regarding clients' income support status, which supported the

validity of the data obtained in this manner. DEWR found that the overall response rate for the PPM survey, at around 60%, provides outcomes estimates that are generally accurate to within plus or minus 1 percentage point at the National level.

– DEST (2005) Review of the LLNP

The reasons for discontinuing the PPM survey of participants are not known.

Given that job seekers continue to maintain contact with their referring agencies after participating in SEE, it should be possible to establish the necessary systems in partnership with other government agencies to track individual outcomes over time.

The government should explore the possibility of either implementing the necessary reporting frameworks for referring agencies or reintroducing the PPM survey in order to capture the data necessary to measure the outcomes of the SEE programme against its objectives.

Recommendation 2

The measurement of the outcomes of the SEE programme against its objectives could be improved. Options should be explored to capture the data necessary to measure the outcomes of the SEE programme, including:

- Developing and implementing the necessary reporting frameworks for referring agencies and/or
- Reintroducing the Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey of participants.

7.1.3 Target groups

The target groups of the SEE programme are defined primarily by the receipt of income support and having the capacity to benefit.

Recipients of income support

The criterion of only including eligible job seekers receiving income support in the SEE programme aligns well with the Australian Government's role and responsibilities for the welfare system and employment services.

Some stakeholders have highlighted that this may exclude parts of the Australian population with low LLN attainment would otherwise benefit from the SEE programme. These include:

- Job seekers who are not on income support
- People in part-time employment
- People who have transitioned to work but are seeking to up-skill
- Those enrolled in full-time study but who need LLN support.

There is a huge demand for the SEE Program from clients who are no longer deemed eligible e.g. clients registered with DHS, however not receiving benefits, carers, spouses of skilled migrants, eligible job seekers who opt not to receive payments, partners of low-income earners who don't qualify for benefits. Historically, these clients have demonstrated a high level of engagement and have often successfully transitioned into employment or further education courses. There are also a number of other potential clients that could greatly benefit from the SEE Program and henceforth contribute to their communities if they were granted access to the Program to increase English language fluency and employability skills. Exclusion from SEE of some NESB migrants actually promotes disadvantage and vulnerability as they are unable to communicate in everyday situations and seek help and local services when necessary.

– MTC submission

In part, these ineligible cohorts highlight the fact that many Australians would benefit from the SEE programme. However, it is important to acknowledge that the SEE programme is not intended to be a universal programme for LLN training; the restriction of SEE only to eligible job seekers is intended to ensure the programme's objectives are met. Other individuals are able to access LLN training through state/territory government subsidised courses, fee paying courses, and as part of vocational and university courses. The current eligibility criteria also maintain the separation of roles in the funding of VET between the Australian and state/territory governments.

To some extent, it would be counter-productive to restrict participation in SEE until the point at which an individual has been unsuccessful in either further study or employment due to their shortcomings in LLN and ultimately ends up on income support. However, it is not the role of the SEE programme to provide individuals with training in order to "avoid" income support – this is the role of the broader education and training system. Rather, it is more appropriate to conceive the SEE programme as being designed to assist individuals to "exit" income support.

It is possible that stakeholders' concerns with the cohorts being excluded from the programme are exacerbated by the perceived lack of viable alternatives outside of the SEE programme for those who are not on income support. This is part of a much larger issue related to the shared responsibility for VET between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments. These issues go beyond the terms of this evaluation and will form a critical part of the debate on Australia's federation. Many of these issues are already being canvassed in the recently released issues paper on *Roles and responsibilities in education* (DPMC, 2014).

At a more practical level, SEE providers noted that many inappropriate referrals of ineligible clients may be because they are not automatically rejected by the systems currently in place. There is also a degree of inefficiency given that many SEE providers presume they need to re-confirm the eligibility of those referred, and do so without access to the necessary systems.

Recommendation 3

The eligibility to the SEE programme should continue to be limited on the basis of whether individuals receive income support as it is an appropriate and necessary way to align the programme's target groups with the Australian Government's responsibilities for the welfare system and employment services.

Capacity to benefit

The capacity to benefit from SEE programme training is a somewhat subjective assessment made by SEE providers, based on the PTA. According to the programme design, those with no 'capacity to benefit' should not be admitted into the programme, but at the same time, there is no minimum level of LLN skills that needs to be demonstrated in order to participate.

As discussed in Section 4.1.3, less than 2 per cent of SEE programme clients who complete a PTA are assessed as 'training not recommended'. It is therefore unclear whether SEE is intended to meet the needs of those with very low literacy and language skills.

The current requirements that participants demonstrate continuous progress and the cap of 800 hours (both of which are discussed in further detail below) further underscores the

expectation that the SEE programme is not intended to cater to those with very low LLN skills.

Regardless of the programme's intent, it is apparent from the data on LLN scores at the PTA (see Section 4.3) that participants in SEE include clients that are pre-level 1 on the ACSF benchmarks, with very low levels of English language proficiency. This was reinforced in some focus groups with SEE participants, which would have been impossible without the support of an interpreter.

It is clear that there are a large number of job seekers with very low LLN skills who would be interested in the SEE programme, and at least a proportion of these are being admitted into the programme.

Whether or not these job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group for the SEE programme needs to be clarified.

At the other end of the spectrum, it is clear that the SEE programme is not intended to provide for development of advanced LLN skills. There does not appear to be a benchmark level at which a participant must exit or no longer qualifies for the programme.

Recommendation 4

The programme's guidelines should clarify whether job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group for the SEE programme and:

- If not, minimum entry requirements in terms of LLN proficiency should be introduced
- If so, changes to facilitate the participation and rates of progress should be considered to accommodate those with very low LLN skills (see Recommendation 9).

Eligibility as determined by referring agencies

As outlined in Section 2.1.2 and discussed above, eligibility for the SEE programme is determined by a combination of criteria, some objective and others subjective. However, as discussed in Section 4.1.3, the overwhelming feedback from stakeholders with regards to the programme's target groups is that this is almost wholly dependent on the knowledge, understanding, capability and interests of the referring agencies.

The first issue highlighted consistently by stakeholders – in particular SEE providers – is that referring agencies generally have very limited knowledge of the programme.

The first barrier [to good performance of the SEE programme] is lack of programme knowledge by referring agencies.

– SEE provider confidential submission

Many JSAs are unaware of the referral process and require support from us in learning this process. This is also time consuming for our administration staff as there is a high turnover in referring agency front line staff.

– SEE provider confidential submission

As discussed in Section 4.1.3, many SEE providers attribute these issues to:

- The lack of internal communications and marketing by the government to referring agencies.
- The staffing profile and generally high turnover of staff at referring agencies.

Most SEE providers agree that this means that they must invest significant resources in 'continually raising awareness, promoting and marketing the program' (SEE provider

confidential submission). SEE providers generally accept that this is part of their role and have reported positive outcomes from such marketing efforts.

While SEE providers tend to refer to the lack of knowledge amongst JSA and Centrelink staff, it would appear that the same applies to DES providers also (NDS submission).

Secondly, where referring agencies are aware of the SEE programme some struggle with the referral process. While referring agencies are provided with a step-by-step guide to referring to the SEE programme, some providers report that they regularly have to walk referring agencies through the process.³ While the material is provided, referring agencies appear to have little incentive to ensure staff are familiar with the referral process. High staff turnover likely contributes to this issue also.

Thirdly, stakeholders highlight the fact that relevant staff at referring agencies may not be well qualified to determine whether a job seeker has LLN issues and whether he/she could benefit from the SEE programme. The range of reasons underpinning this concern include:

- That the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JCSI) is reliant on self-assessment and sections in relation to the client's LLN abilities are optional.
- That opportunities to observe LLN needs may be reducing with referring agencies having fewer face-to-face interviews and fewer tasks requiring reading or writing skills at these interviews.
- The general stigma of admitting to having low LLN skills, and the ability of native speakers to 'mask' their low LLN skills.
- Frontline staff at referring agencies having limited qualifications themselves and do not have the training to identify and assess LLN needs.

Finally, by far the most significant issue raised by stakeholders is the perceived tension between the incentives faced by referring agencies and the potential interests and needs of the individual job seeker. In particular, many SEE providers and referring agencies concede that the incentives to refer to the SEE programme and to retain participants within the programme are generally weak compared to the incentives to place clients into employment or other vocational programmes.

The SEE Program relies on referrals from RAs and these RAs also have specific KPIs and contractual obligations that they need to adhere to. In some instances, contractual requirements adversely affect the performance of the [SEE] through reduced referrals [due to] the absence of an educational outcome for SEE, the introduction of Work for the Dole, pressure to achieve an employment outcome for RA staff.

SEE clients have been withdrawn from the Program to be placed in courses which will attract an educational outcome regardless of the suitability of the course for the client e.g. pre-literate clients enrolled in Certificate III qualifications.

– MTC submission

While SEE participation is an approved activity, the SEE programme accredited course results are not outcomes for referring agencies. The SEE programme does not align with JSA outcomes and apart from outcomes for Early School Leavers; there is no incentive to refer to the programme.

– SEE provider confidential submission

I think it would help if JSAs received an outcome payment for clients who are studying in the SEE program... There is no financial incentive for JSAs to refer to SEE otherwise.

– Swinburne submission

³ This evaluation has not examined the specific issues within the Department of Employment's Employment Services System (ESS); one submission describes it as a 'fiendishly fiddly process.'

Some JSAs prefer to refer to their own programs regardless of whether the SEE program is the best program for the client or not.

Confidential submission

Some stakeholders felt that referring agencies did not give adequate priority to the investment in LLN in the long-term interests of their clients; rather they were responding to the terms and conditions of their contracts and KPIs set by the government.

Some or all of the issues outlined above contribute to the fact that only an estimated 17 per cent of job seekers identified with LLN needs are referred to the SEE programme (see Section 4.1). The challenge for the SEE programme is that many of these issues lie beyond design of the programme itself, and are dependent on policies and practices determined by other government portfolios, most notably the Departments of Employment, Social Services, and Human Services.

In the near future, it appears that policy changes will be introduced which providers expect will improve the rate of referrals into the SEE programme. Submissions to the evaluation suggested that from July 2015, the new employment services contract will:

- Recognise the SEE programme as a Work for Dole/mutual obligation activity for all age categories.
- Allow job seekers to combine participation in the SEE programme with other activities to make up their Annual Activity Requirement.
- Allow job seekers who are participating in the SEE programme to continue this training to its conclusion when they reach their Work for the Dole phase.
- Allow the SEE programme to be combined with other activities to make up the number of hours appropriate for their age requirement.

These new arrangements provide an incentive that should result in significantly better recognition among ES providers of the role and value of SEE in preparing their job seekers for jobs and in helping them to comply with their Mutual Obligation requirements while they are receiving employment service support.

– Jobs Australia submission

The new employment services contract presents a valuable opportunity for the Department to work with the three relevant departments (Employment, Social Services, and Human Services) to improve the ability of referring agencies to refer suitable clients to the SEE programme, including through enhanced communications and the provisions of information materials.

Recommendation 5

Given referring agencies' key role in the SEE programme, the Department of Education and Training should work with the three relevant departments (Employment, Social Services, and Human Services) to improve the ability of referring agencies to refer suitable clients to the SEE programme, including through enhanced communications and the provision of information materials.

7.1.4 Assessment tools

The core underlying instrument for assessment of progress in the SEE programme is the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). Alongside the ACSF, SEE providers must also assess participants according to the accredited qualifications that are being delivered.

Most SEE providers agree that this results in significant duplication in assessment, and some emphasise that this is more than just an added administrative burden and is in fact detrimental to training outcomes.

Even teaching professionals, who are LLN specialists, find that the SEE program interferes with the delivery of training packages and other accredited courses...It is well recognised that LLN clients require more individual attention and support, rather than individual and extra assessment.

– *SEE provider confidential submission*

To be honest the level of paperwork and amount of individual assessment reporting against the ACSF required for this program is overwhelming clients and teaching professionals, leaving a lot less time for effective teaching and support of clients...or development of materials and teaching resources...

– *SEE provider confidential submission*

SEE teachers report that they find the requirement for double reporting against both the ACSF and an accredited course not only onerous but pointless – as one person said, it “adds a lot to the teachers' workload with no additional value for the learners”.

– *ACTA submission*

Many SEE providers consider that reporting against the ACSF is unnecessary given that the accredited curriculum that is used is normally already mapped to the ACSF.

In the current guidelines, Providers are required to assess and describe both accredited outcomes and ACSF outcomes. It would be most helpful to educators and learners if an accredited curriculum outcome could form the basis and evidence of an ACSF outcome. This would reduce the amount of formal assessment

– *Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission*

Our members report that the requirement to assess and report against both the ACSF and a curriculum framework such as the EAL Frameworks or the CGEA creates a double assessment workload for teachers in developing and implementing assessment tasks. While tasks can sometimes be mapped to cover both the ACSF and the relevant curriculum framework, the very specific criteria of each framework means that separate tasks are often required.

It would be far preferable if clients in the SEE program were assessed only against curriculum frameworks as occurs in other language and literacy programs.

– *AEU Submission*

While the use of ACSF assessments in addition to the training package assessment results in two systems of assessment under the SEE programme, each assessment system serves a distinct purpose.


As noted in Section 2.3, providers may deliver a range of LLN training packages (or qualifications) under the SEE programme. The training package assessments test client competency against the qualification they are studying and ensure that providers are delivering an accredited training package.

As discussed previously, the requirement to periodically assess against the ACSF is an important component of monitoring provider performance. The ACSF assessments allow the Department to track the attainment of LLN and job readiness skills of SEE programme clients, and therefore measure the performance of providers in delivering the programme and the performance of the programme overall.

As such, the two systems of assessment under the SEE programme is intentional, with each playing an important role in the programme.

Recommendation 6

The two systems of assessment used in the SEE programme (the different training packages and the ASCF) should be maintained.


Approaches to reducing resources devoted to assessments

The primary issue raised by SEE providers that the dual assessment requirement is in fact detrimental to SEE participants could be addressed through considering a number of options:

1. Removing the requirement to assess against the ACSF and relying on assessments against the accredited qualifications delivered by providers.
2. Reducing the frequency of assessments against the ACSF.
3. Reducing the burden of the assessment task through more efficient instruments.

The option of removing the requirement to assess against the ACSF in its entirety could, however, pose significant risk to an important quality assurance mechanism. Without the ACSF assessments the Department would lose the primary tool used to measure whether the SEE programme is meeting its objectives of improving clients LLN, and would lose an important measure of provider performance.

The frequency of assessments against the ACSF is determined by providers, based, in large part, on KPI 2 and their attrition rate. This issue is discussed further in Section 7.1.5.

With respect to reducing the burden of the assessment task through more efficient instruments, the Australian Government has already made an investment in the development of the online Foundation Skills Assessment Tool (FSAT).


The FSAT, currently being developed by the Australian Centre for Educational Research (ACER), will assist approved providers to assess a client's foundation skill levels, and help identify any gaps in skills and knowledge.

The FSAT will be able to test an individual's LLN performance against the ACSF and is therefore well suited for use as part of SEE programme assessments. While much of the FSAT will be automated, SEE providers will be able to define and tailor an assessment against the relevant ACSF skill areas.

As the FSAT is an online tool which will require little provider assessor time, the use of the FSAT could have a material impact on the resourcing and time required for SEE programme ACSF assessments. As such FSAT should be formally considered and defined in the next tender round of the SEE programme.

Recommendation 7

Given the amount of assessment involved, the SEE programme would benefit from the adoption of a more efficient and easy to use ASCF assessment tool like the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool (FSAT). The appropriate use of the FSAT should be formally considered and defined in the next tender round of the SEE programme.



7.1.5 Monitoring and reporting

On the whole, SEE providers consider the monitoring and reporting requirements of the programme to be unnecessarily burdensome. Related to this, there is the issue of having to assess against both accredited qualifications and the ACSF, as discussed in the previous section. The following discussion centres on the programme's reporting requirements, the independent verification process, and the key performance indicators.

Reporting

SEE providers consider that there is significant scope to reduce the reporting burden by:

1. Reducing the duplication in data entry, where examples include:
 - the need to report both attendance and absences
 - the need to maintain special attendance records for the SEE programme on top of the provider's own systems simply to meet SEE contract requirements or to ensure compatibility with SEE Online.
2. Reducing the need for hard copy reporting and documentation, where examples include:
 - the need to maintain a hard copy roll as well as a softcopy record in SEE online
 - the need to print and retain hard copies of all documents already available on SEE online.
3. Allowing most, if not all, reporting to be conducted via SEE online, for example:
 - Allowing providers to report on matters such as change of sites, courses or teacher details, and to submit an Initial Training Declaration via SEE Online.
4. Increasing the flexibility of SEE Online to allow SEE providers to more easily extract relevant data and thereby allow them to track and manage their own performance (although SEE providers can request reports from the Department on their performance).
5. Relying on the financial incentives faced by SEE providers rather than regulating and requiring reports, for example:
 - Prescribing that SEE providers follow up on individual absences with the client and/or the relevant referring agency and to record detailed notes on the follow-up actions in the client file.
6. Ensuring that ongoing changes to programme requirements are appropriately reflected in the reporting protocol, for example:
 - SEE Providers report that the removal of the 200 hour blocks and milestones is not reflected in SEE Online because the system continues to require IPA data entry before a client completes 200 hours, otherwise the data is deemed overdue.

This evaluation has not undertaken a detailed stocktake of the SEE programme's reporting requirements. Aspects of the reporting discussed above, namely, the requirement to report attendance and non-attendance and following up absences, are requirements related to social security policy for which SEE providers are financially compensated.

But based on their experience across various government programmes, the consistent feedback from SEE providers is that the reporting requirements under the programme are generally out of step with contemporary good practice record keeping and the Australian Government's policy of red tape reduction.

Recommendation 8

There should be a review of SEE programme administrative requirements with a view to reducing the amount of data entry duplication and hard copy reporting.



Key performance indicators

As discussed in Section 6.2.4, stakeholders – in the main SEE providers – highlight specific issues with respect to the KPIs 1 and 2.

KPI 1 – 90% of clients recommended for training actually commence training

KPI 1 aims to incentivise SEE providers to keep potential clients engaged with the programme from the PTA process through to commencing the programme.

It could be argued that SEE providers already have considerable financial incentive to keep potential clients engaged, as they receive payment for training hours once a client has commenced.

SEE programme administrators appear concerned that without KPI 1, the relatively large PTA payment could lead to providers ensuring referrals are converted to PTAs but deprioritising ensuring clients commence post-PTA.

While there is a risk that the KPI acts as a disincentive to trying to engage disengaged and high needs clients such as youth or long term unemployed clients, it must be balanced against the need to incentivise providers to encourage clients who are recommended for training to commence.

KPI 2 – 80% of clients attain one ACSF indicator per full 100 hours of training

KPI 2 aims to measure the performance of providers in increasing the LLN skills of their clients.

SEE providers expressed concern that this measure does not reflect the natural rate of learning. 'Students do not improve in one ACSF indicator at a time as all skills are integrated both in teaching delivery and in learner development, nor do students improve skills at regular intervals' (SEE provider confidential submission).

The uneven and often reduced rate of learning is particularly common for clients who come with a background of trauma and dislocation, lack basic literacy in their first language, have a disability or face other barriers. SEE providers cite this as a disincentive to accept pre-level 1 ACSF job seekers.

While the pre level 1 ACSF learning outcomes were introduced in 2013 to address the needs of this cohort, such progression does not contribute towards our KPI 2 attainment within SEE. This makes it difficult for this pre Level 1 ACSF job seekers to achieve the rate of attainment (1:100 hours training) required within the SEE program.

– Chisholm Institute submission

With respect to those clients that are assessed at pre-level 1 at the outset, a number of SEE providers note that these job seekers are allowed to participate in the programme but achievement of pre-level 1 outcomes is not currently accepted as progress for these cohorts. (The appropriateness of these job seekers participating in the programme is discussed in Section 7.1.3.)

Pre-level ACSF achievement must be implemented as a level 'outcome'. This would allow for appropriate teaching, learning and assessment of this cohort.

– Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission

We suggest that consideration is given to modifying the attainment required, within this band only, from the current one ACSF indicator to the demonstration of increases in four Pre-Level 1 ACSF performance features within each 100 hours until the learner is able to demonstrate competence in that Core Skill at ACSF Level 1.

– Jobs Australia submission

While LWA believes the program can meet the needs of these clients due to the flexibility in delivery options, the outcomes would be significantly enhanced if providers were able to use the pre-level 1 supplement of the ACSF to record progress. As many of these learners, particularly those from an EAL background, come from a pre-literate background, the pre-level 1 supplement was designed to capture and record the significant learning that can be made at this level.

– LWA submission

In addition, some SEE providers are continuing to assess clients against one ACSF indicator per 100 hours in order to mitigate the risk of high rates of withdrawals amongst this cohort. They acknowledge that this does not reflect actual progress of LLN learners or best practice in LLN delivery/assessment.

The decision to remove the obligation of assessing every 200 hours in recognition of the fact that learners will achieve outcomes at different rates was commendable. However, in reality providers are now assessing every 100 hours to ensure they are not penalised if a learner leaves before completing what was previously known as the '200 hour block'.

– LWA submission

The SEE programme's approach to KPI 2 in the future will depend on the extent to which the programme is intended to provide training to low level clients, as addressed in Section 7.1.3.

If the programme is not to target low level clients, there are two options:

- Maintain the current approach which sees KPI 2 act as a soft cap on the number of low level clients in the programme, by dis-incentivising providers commencing too high a proportion of clients who will not be able to demonstrate the necessary speed of LLN improvement. This risks reducing the ability of provider to specialise in low level clients.
- Tighten the eligibility criteria to prevent clients entering the programme at the pre-ACSF level, and maintain the current KPI allowing the flexibility of the 80 per cent target to be used by providers to account for uneven progress in target group clients.

If the SEE programme is to include pre-ACSF low level clients among its target groups, KPI 2 could be modified to include pre-ACSF attainment, or pre-ACSF could be excluded from KPI 2 and another KPI could be developed to measure of performance of providers with these clients.

Recommendation 9

The future shape of KPI 2 depends on whether job seekers with very low LLN skills are an intended target group of the SEE programme (see Recommendation 4). If they are, KPI 2 could be modified to include pre-ACSF attainment.

To address concerns about over assessment caused by clients unexpectedly leaving the SEE programme close but prior to an assessment, the Department should better promote techniques providers can use to mitigate against this having an impact on their KPI

performance. For example, by using course work produced by the client before they left the programme in the LOA.

Recommendation 10

The Australian Government should better promote techniques providers can use to mitigate against over-assessment.

Independent Verification

The Independent Verification process was generally well accepted as an appropriate part of the SEE programme, as exemplified below.

The external verification protocol is well designed. It is clear, transparent and consistent. All providers know in advance approximate time frames for annual verification and are given adequate notice of the type of verification (on site or off site). The time frame to get files submitted is reasonable and the time frame for the report to come back from the external verifier is also consistent and reasonable.

Confidential submission

The primary issues raised by SEE providers with respect to the Independent Verification process were two-fold:

1. The documentation associated with the PTA reporting is significant, solely for the purposes of ensuring sufficient material to allow for the Independent Verification process.
2. The requirements and expectations of Independent Verification can be inconsistent, opaque and poorly documented or communicated to providers.

The Independent Verification goal posts are not transparent and seem to keep shifting. After many years of reporting against the ACSF many teaching professionals find that some performance criteria and their requirements are less than clear, and can only be discovered through the verification process. Interpretation of these criteria seems to vary from one verification to the next. Verification would be more effective if there was more room for supportive feedback between verifications. Feedback and instructions for Independent Verifications are provided through LWA Newsletters and ACSF Moderation sessions. However, only a limited number of teachers from each provider are able to attend the Moderation workshops. It would be helpful to have all guidelines available in one accessible document.

SEE provider confidential submission

Providers consulted as part of this evaluation were keen to receive greater guidance on how they could best meet the audit requirements of the IV process.

Recommendation 11

The Independent Verification is a beneficial part of the SEE programme and the Australian Government should look to improve the consistency and communication around the process and the expectations of assessors.

7.1.6 Improving client outcomes

In the 2004 Review of the LLNP, the DEST highlighted the importance of flexibility in the programme in order to cater to diverse needs.

International literature suggests the importance of allowing the flexibility of adjusting programmes to meet individual needs. Consequently, efforts should be made to strengthen and support innovative programmes to address the language, literacy and numeracy needs of

clients who currently show poor outcomes under LLNP, such as Indigenous Australians, younger males and people with disabilities.

Stakeholders generally agree that the SEE programme has the potential to have a significant impact on a large proportion of participants in preparing them for further study or employment.

The SEE Program is very effective in providing students with the language, literacy and numeracy that contribute to further education, training and employment. It enables students who would not otherwise be able to afford course fees, to study English language and improve their chances of being accepted into VET courses and finding employment.

– Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission

Flexibility to include VET units

Because the SEE programme is based on the ACSF and does not prescribe any compulsory curricula, SEE providers have the flexibility to include other VET units.

Flexibility of SEE means that for level 2+ ACSF we can deliver vocational tasters and some units of competence from VET Cert I and II. This exposure give job seekers a better idea of what is involved in different industries which informs their future learning and vocational goals.

– GoTAFE, Chisholm Institute and LfE joint submission

As it was intended, the removal of 200 hour blocks of training and specific Complementary Training (CT) and Advanced Vocationally Oriented Courses (AVOC) have also improved programme flexibility.

A barrier to greater inclusion of a wider range of VET units is the minimum teacher qualification requirements and this is discussed further below.

Study modes

As set out in Section 2.2.2, SEE programme training can be delivered through face-to-face classes, small group training classes, distance mode and a mix of classroom and distance mode. In addition, participants are eligible to participate in work experience during their training.

Despite this, in the SEE programme training is primarily delivered face-to-face – only 11 per cent of SEE programme clients participate in mixed mode and/or work experience (see Section 5.1).

Some SEE providers consider the lack of additional non-class-based modes to be a constraint on the SEE programme that means that other modes cannot be used where appropriate or necessary. Also, some consider they need more the flexibility to incorporate e-learning, independent project-based work, or independent group activities.

The 100% Face to Face (FtF) component of SEE does not allow for mixed-mode methods of teaching and learning...

– Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission

It is imperative SEE clients receive face-to-face contact for engagement and training. The use of technology and digital learning enhances the training experience.

– SEE provider confidential submission

Swinburne offers classroom- based learning. Many students in the Initial stream of SEE, in particular, need and prefer this kind of delivery.

However, it would also be beneficial to be able to offer other modes of delivery from Swinburne, to increase the flexibility of our delivery and to cater to all student needs.

Swinburne submission

On the other hand, other SEE providers argue that, for disadvantaged learners with low LLN skills, study modes that are not in person and face-to-face are not likely to be appropriate or effective.

Classroom based learning is the preferred method. Most SEE clients are not independent learners and need the support /guidance of classroom approach. Also they benefit from interacting with other students and developing communication and learning skills.

– Chisholm Institute submission

Work experience is a key feature of the SEE programme that prepares participants for transitions into employment.

SEE promotes the use of work observation and Work Experience. As some of our job seekers have not worked in Australia these provide an important introduction to the actual workplace rather than the simulated workplace of the classroom.

– SEE provider confidential submission

However, the take up rate of work experience is generally low due to the significant challenges faced by providers in arranging suitable opportunities with employers. This is a common challenge across the VET system and not unique to the SEE programme.

Due to the amount of administrative effort required per individual e.g. mapping work placement to ACSF outcomes, reporting on placement outcomes, placement visits etc., it is a financially unviable for SEE providers. For work experience to be a meaningful and beneficial experience for both the employer and client, clear linkages need to be made between the client's employment pathway and the business needs of the host employer. This requires dedicated focus on individual placements, which in turn requires additional resourcing and therefore additional investment for work experience programs to be delivered within SEE.

– MTC submission

The removal of the requirement to seek prior approval for a SEE programme client to undertake work experience has alleviated some of the administrative burden in this area, but delivery of work experience nonetheless remains a challenge.

In other areas, SEE providers may lack the understanding of how to take advantage of the flexibility they have under the SEE programme. Particularly considering the recent significant increase in the number of SEE providers, the Department may need to increase its communication with providers around programme delivery flexibility and supports.

Teacher qualification requirements

The SEE programme requires that teachers and assessors must have:

- a minimum three-year undergraduate degree
- and either:
 - a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and at least 100 hours teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) or adult literacy/numeracy OR
 - a specialist adult literacy qualifications OR
 - a recognised specialist TESOL qualification.

The SEE programme justifiably requires that teachers and assessors are well qualified. Some of the providers consulted for this evaluation support the current teacher qualification requirement, as did most providers which responded to the 2012 LLNP Discussion Paper.

However, some SEE providers consider these requirements to be overly restrictive, especially in remote areas, citing that:

1. individuals possessing VET sector qualifications and experience as well as an undergraduate degree are generally uncommon

2. the undergraduate qualification required can be in any field or discipline unrelated to education, adult learning or LLN.

Recruitment difficulties faced by SEE providers cannot be solely attributed to these minimum qualification requirements. In its submission, Jobs Australia takes the view that 'the ongoing recruitment difficulties faced by SEE providers are essentially part of a much broader issue of workforce shortages.'

The key issue for the SEE programme is whether the benefits of these teacher qualification requirements exceed the costs. The costs of the qualification requirements are twofold. First, some locations may not have access to the SEE programme due to the lack of staff; to an extent, this may be ameliorated by the ability for providers to apply for a waiver in remote areas. Second, the ability of SEE providers to embed vocational units – which as discussed above are critical to support transitions into further study and work – may be curtailed by the costs and impracticalities of needing to have either:

- a suitably qualified and experienced staff with current industry experience in the relevant area as well as the specific minimum qualifications, or
- both an experience VET trainer and a SEE qualified teacher in the class at the same time in order to comply.

In summary, a key strength of the SEE programme is the ability of providers to incorporate a range of VET units as part of their LLN delivery to ensure that participants are better prepared for employment and/or further study. The minimum undergraduate qualification requirements may limit this flexibility as in many cases non-SEE specialist VET teachers lack undergraduate qualifications. While team teaching by SEE and vocational teachers does take place, this adds to the cost of incorporating a range of VET units in the SEE programme.

The evaluation has not been able to definitively determine whether the most appropriate course of action would be to amend the teacher qualification requirements, allow for discretionary waivers, or for some requirements to be removed completely. As such, further research is required to comprehensively assess whether the aggregate the SEE programme requirements strike the right balance between ensuring quality whilst not unduly restricting provider flexibility and innovation.

Recommendation 12

The Australian Government should undertake further research to comprehensively assess whether the SEE programme teacher qualification requirements strike the right overall balance between ensuring quality while not unduly restricting provider flexibility and innovation, particularly in relation to vocational units.

7.1.7 The adequacy of the training allocation

Few stakeholders expressed any concerns regarding the allocation of 800 hours per SEE participant, except in the case of clients from non-English speaking backgrounds that commence at pre-level 1 on the ACSF benchmarks. For these clients, SEE providers advocated for either an increased up front allocation or the option of waiving the six month waiting period between completion and the issue of a re-referral. Most stakeholders considered that the six month waiting period is in fact generally detrimental to the educational outcomes of those with very low levels of LLN (that is, pre-ACSF level 1).

Pre-Level 1 and level 1 clients (especially if English is not their first language) need to access more than 800 hours training. For these clients upon completion of the 800 hours the 6 month break between training should be waived, as many job seekers at this level are unlikely to gain sustainable employment and their LLN skills are likely to regress away from training.

– GoTAFE, Chisholm Institute and LfE joint submission

Clients who commence SEE learning at Pre Level 1 or level 1 may benefit from extra hours without needing to wait six months for re-referral.

– Melbourne Polytechnic (NMIT) submission

Clients who enter at pre-Level 1 ACSF typically require in excess of 800 hours of training to make discernible progress. At the end of 800 hours of training in SEE, job seekers must have a six month break before they can be re-referred to SEE. In that time it is likely that the job seekers skills will regress. We recommend that for Pre-Level 1 ACSF clients, this imposed break from SEE training should not be enforced and these students should be able to access two continuous blocks of 800 hours.

– Chisholm Institute submission

SEE providers report that while SEE is well designed to address these learning needs the time this group of job seekers needs to progress through the ACSF skill levels is considerable. The 800 hours may be enough to get them started with the process of learning basic skills but it will not be sufficient to give them skill levels adequate for getting and keeping a job. Nor will it generally be sufficient time for them to achieve the eight full ACSF indicators which is the programme benchmark for achievement by the end of the 800 hours of training.

– Jobs Australia submission

As discussed in Section 7.1.3, the key issue for the SEE programme in this respect is whether or not it is in fact intended to cater to job seekers with very low LLN skills.

Recommendation 13

The requirement that SEE programme clients who have completed 800 hours must wait six months before recommencing the SEE programme should be reviewed for clients with low scores across the ACSF core skills.

The six month requirement should remain for other clients to encourage clients to test their improved LLN skills in the job market.

7.2 Improvements to programme design and efficiency

Further improvements to the SEE programme design and efficiency spans three key areas:

1. Making the most of the multi-provider model.
2. Accounting for the challenges of remote delivery.
3. Positioning SEE for the future.

7.2.1 Making the most of the multi-provider model

The SEE programme's multi-provider model was expanded in 2013 based on the following rationale:

The change is intended to create an environment of improved quality training delivery, as the market will be more responsive to demand within a geographic area. The multi-provider model will also allow the Government to provide greater coverage within a SDA as some providers may be stretched and unable to service the whole area. If provider performance is poor, geographical coverage is limited or the current provider goes out of business, the department will have the option to select another suitable provider to service the required area. This will facilitate increased program assurance, accountability and continuation of service delivery.

– SEE programme changes summary document

The multi-provider model has delivered some key benefits to the SEE programme, particularly in terms of overall capacity and coverage. It is clear that having more than one SEE provider in a given area has also allowed improved management of SEE provider performance and promoted continuity of delivery.

However, there is much less evidence of the multi-provider model delivering benefits in terms of improved training quality and responsiveness to client needs. The primary issues that have limited the performance of the programme in this regard have been:

1. The absence of an informed consumer or purchaser in either Referring Agencies or their clients – as discussed in Section 4.1.3, Referring Agencies have been surprisingly poorly informed purchasers of the SEE programme.
2. The limits on competition due to the infrequent updating of notional budgets which ultimately act as a brake on competition.

There are a number of possible improvements that could be made in response to both of these issues.

Improving informed choice

Improving the knowledge and awareness of Referring Agencies is a significant challenge but it appears likely that changes to the next iteration of the employment services contract could improve the incentives for Referring Agencies to understand and subsequently refer to the SEE programme.

This may not, however, overcome the issue of high staff turnover and therefore low levels of corporate knowledge within Referring Agencies. The issues of information asymmetry and informed choice may be addressed by providing Referring Agencies and their clients with better information regarding their options including:

- A listing of local SEE providers and their delivery locations and class options and schedules.
- Key characteristics of each SEE provider including cohort specific class, and available vocational units.
- Data on SEE provider performance such as retention rates, average class sizes, and average hours participants spend in work experience.

To this end, the government should work with stakeholders to develop and implement an information and communications strategy for clients and Referring Agencies. This could comprise a range of information delivery channels including via integration with manuals and systems for Referring Agencies and online. Where possible, information on providers should draw on the data already collected by the Department as part of administration of the programme and therefore avoid the burden of any additional data collection.

Recommendation 14

To improve the level of competition in the multi-provider model, the Australian Government should work with stakeholders to develop and implement an information and communications strategy that will deliver relevant information regarding the options of SEE providers that are available, and thereby promote informed choice by Referring Agencies and their clients.

Adapting the model of notional budgets to be more predictable for providers and responsive to changes in client demand

The current approach to allocating and/or adjusting notional budgets in the SEE programme is as follows:

1. In the annual Australian Government Budget process, the SEE programme receives a capped allocation.
2. At the beginning of the financial year SEE providers are allocated a nominal budget for the financial year, based on total programme funding, previous performance, forecast demand and other factors.
3. Six months into the financial year, SEE providers can request an increase in their nominal budget if they believe they are likely to exceed their budget for the financial year. Whether this request is met is determined by expenditure trends in the SEE provider's SDA and in the SEE programme overall. Just as some SEE providers can have an increase in their nominal budget at this point, others can have their nominal budget decreased.
4. At the beginning of the next financial year, the process starts afresh.

Stakeholders identify issues for both providers and clients in this approach:

- From the perspective of SEE providers, they generally face a 'cliff edge' in terms of future funding and do not have any certainty regarding forward levels of funding as they approach the end of each six month cycle. Some SEE providers also report delays in terms of being notified in a timely manner of updates to notional budgets.
- From the perspective of clients, voicing satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with the delivery of training by SEE providers may have an impact through a financial signal to providers but with a significant lag. The dampening of this signal to SEE providers does not necessarily translate well into immediate responsiveness to client needs. and when applied also limits their ability to meet client needs where demand exceeds their notional budget.

In order to manage the notional budget we have to decline eligible clients, including our own exiting AMEP clients, and suggest that they be referred to our competitors. This in turn can have an impact on future referrals from those referring agencies once the notional budget is increased or the new financial year commences. We have had an increase in referrals in our SDA due to dissatisfaction with another SEE provider from both clients and referring agencies. However, we have yet to be given a reallocation of notional budget to help us cater for this increase in our business.

SEE provider confidential submission

The capped funding model has restrained the growth in some areas of higher need and the programme may benefit from a timely process to move funding between SDAs to meet emerging client need for the target groups.

Confidential submission

The annual nominal budget allocation to SEE providers is based on the Department's measurement of their quality, ensuring they are rewarded for strong performance in keeping clients engaged and delivering LLN outcomes.

The mid-financial year reallocation, while taking into account SEE provider quality, also considers the quantum of each provider's SEE programme delivery in the first six months of the financial year and likely demand for that provider's services in the second half of the financial year.

Moving some or all of the SEE programme nominal budget allocation to a more regular rolling budget could address the two issues identified above. For example, the Department could consider:

- Replacing the mid-financial year reallocation with a monthly rolling six month nominal budget. This would be similar to the current approach, except that instead of carrying out one large reallocation of nominal budgets at the six month point, nominal budgets would be reallocated monthly in much smaller quantum. This would remove the ‘cliff edge’ providers currently face mid-financial year.
- To take this approach one step further, the allocation that currently takes place at the beginning of the financial year could also be moved to a rolling approach. As the annual allocation is based on SEE provider quality, moving this allocation to a rolling budget may require relevant KPIs to be measured more regularly.

When combined, these two measures would eliminate the uncertainty that SEE providers currently face mid-financial year and at the end of the financial year. It would mean SEE providers’ nominal budget would be updated regularly (monthly based on enrolment levels and monthly or quarterly based on provider quality) to reflect their KPI performance over the previous 12 months, demand for their services in a given region, and the level of funding available.

There are of course a large number of possible variants on the rolling budget model and a range of key design features that would need to be developed, tested and implemented.

Recommendation 15

The notional budget model should be enhanced to address where possible the uncertainty currently faced by SEE providers and facilitate better forward planning. Specific consideration should be given to moving some or all of the SEE programme nominal budget allocation to a more regular rolling budget.

Potential lack of viability for multiple providers in regional areas

As discussed in Section 4.1.1, stakeholders consistently raised concerns regarding the lack of viability of multiple SEE providers in many regional SDAs.

The decision to introduce a multi-provider model into SDAs where there is a limited number of eligible job seekers, however, has adversely impacted the financial viability of particular SEE sites. This impact has been further exacerbated as a result of changes to eligibility criteria in the SEE Contract e.g. job seekers not on payments, or on Carer’s payment no longer eligible.

– MTC submission

In some Service Delivery Areas where client needs and programme objectives are not being met; alternative service providers need to be considered. Community consultation and demographic analysis may find that more than one provider is not necessary in some SDAs.

– SEE provider confidential submission

The multi-provider model has resulted in greater competition in our Service Delivery Area but the Notional Budget Allocation needs to be reviewed more often than twice a year to allow for reallocation of funding based on each provider’s service delivery patterns and performance. Alternatively, there could be no cap on budget for the financial year, as with the AMEP, with each provider able to deliver to the level of referrals they receive.

– SEE provider confidential submission

In weighing up the costs and benefits of the multi-provider model in regional areas where the scale of demand is limited, it is likely that SEE programme participants would be better

off with a single stable provider with sufficient scale to support cost-effective delivery. However, such assessments will need to be made on a case-by-case basis.

In order to support such assessments, a framework is required to assess the viability of multiple competing SEE providers based on a range of relevant factors including:

- the level of expected numbers of eligible job seekers based on forecast economic and labour market conditions
- historical and expected levels of referral activity from Referral Agencies including the impact of any changes to contracts for employment services providers
- the population density of the region
- the costs of delivery
- the presence of established prospective providers in the region
- experience from other areas of government service delivery.

Recommendation 16

A framework should be developed to assess and determine the viability of the multi-provider model in all regions across Australia, but especially where there are low levels of likely demand for the SEE programme.

As part of this assessment, consideration should also be given to whether the boundaries for SEE SDAs should be aligned with the revised boundaries of the employment services contracts, and whether some areas should be merged to increase their footprint and thereby increase the potential for the multi-provider model to be successful.

Recommendation 17

The Australian Government should align the SEE programme SDAs with the revised boundaries of the employment services contracts. To aid the multi-provider model, where necessary the revised SDAs should be merged to allow for viable provision by more than one SEE provider, in accordance with the framework proposed in Recommendation 16.

7.2.2 Responding to the challenges of remote delivery

Recognising the challenges of remote delivery

In the consultations with stakeholders from remote locations, it is clear that the requirements of SEE programme delivery in such regions are substantially different from those of regional and metropolitan areas, namely:

- Differences in the client cohort with the majority of clients in regional areas being of Indigenous background.
- Significant challenges in the securing suitably qualified staff.
- The significant costs associated with remote delivery.
- The lack of viable levels of demand in many cases.
- A different set of Referring Agencies, namely Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP) providers.

As noted in Section 4.2.2, around 3 per cent of SEE programme commencements take place in remote or very remote Australia.

The alignment of the SEE programme and RJCP

SEE providers in remote regions highlighted difficulties in establishing working relationships with the RJCP providers that have been appointed to support job seekers and employers in 60 remote regions across Australia. In particular RJCP providers:

- Have only been contracted since 2013 and have been focused on establishing a broader range of other programmes in their remote areas.
- Have had low levels of awareness and understanding of the SEE programme, consistent with the broader feedback provided on Referring Agencies, as discussed in Section 7.1.3.
- Do not have explicit incentives to refer to the SEE programme (like all referring agencies), consistent with the discussion in Section 7.1.3.

In areas where SEE providers have been working to deliver the programme to Indigenous job seekers receiving services under the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP), providers report that long delays occurred while RJCP, itself a new approach to service delivery, was being established. This has had various negative results on the capacity of providers to deliver SEE as effectively as planned at the outset of this contract period. In particular, providers have reported poor flows of referrals to the programme, even though the evidence indicates that there are considerable numbers of job seekers in RJCP who need, and have the capacity to benefit from, the training SEE provides.

– Jobs Australia submission

Given that the RJCP was established specifically to provide a streamlined employment-servicing arrangement through a single, local point of contact, it would appear that the SEE programme does not have the benefit of being a part of this streamlined arrangement. As a result, the SEE programme may also be isolated within the range of other programmes offered through RJCP providers including the Remote Youth Leadership and Development Corps, Community Development Employment Projects, Community Action Plans, and the Community Development Fund.

In addition, the SEE programme may duplicate the function of the Participation Account administered by RJCP providers, which allows them to purchase assistance – including building foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy, work habits and basic life skills – according to the needs of individuals, communities and local employers. Such assistance is based on commercial agreements between RJCP providers and suitable external organisations in their regions.

It appears that the rationale for introducing the RJCP and RJCP providers would also apply to the design and delivery of the SEE programme in remote areas. Arguments that led to the RJCP model include the need for simple and flexible employment and participation services, greater responsiveness to the needs of local communities and employers, improved engagement through a permanent presence in remote areas, and greater community ownership (Australian Government, 2013).

Revisiting the model for SEE remote delivery

As a result of the feedback from the *Creating a more flexible LLNP in 2013-16* discussion paper process, the Department considered changes to the SEE programme and at the time concluded that these would largely address many of the remote issues that have been raised in the past. It would appear that in fact many of these issues remain and relate primarily to the alignment between the SEE programme and RJCP.

Significant changes to the approach to remote delivery are unlikely to be possible in the current contract period. In advance of the next contract period, the SEE programme should

revisit the current model for remote delivery, first to determine whether the LLN needs of eligible job seekers in remote regions will be adequately met by the training secured by RJCP providers through their Participation Accounts. While recently the size of Participation Accounts has been reduced, if LLN needs can be met through the Participation Accounts there would be no need for the SEE programme to provide duplicate services in remote locations.

If however, this is not the case, then the model of delivery should be examined, specifically regarding whether remote service delivery for SEE programme clients requires a different approach and funding model in order to be sustainable. Possible alternative approaches could include:

- Allocation of the notional budget to the local RJCP provider in a remote region to procure SEE programme training locally on an as needed basis.
- Changes to the programme design and funding model for remote regions to allow for a wider variety of potentially viable delivery models, for example:
 - allowing for short intensive delivery in 100 hour blocks
 - additional funding streams for the high establishment and fixed costs associated with remote delivery
 - funding for classes rather than hours attended to account for the lack of viable scale and volatility in demand.
- The ability to apply or adopt different funding and operational models based on the local needs and provider availability and capability.
- A robust framework for identifying those regions where delivery of the SEE programme is potentially not viable would therefore necessarily be not available.

Recommendation 18

The model for remote SEE programme delivery should be reviewed ahead of the next contract period to ascertain if the LLN needs of eligible job seekers in remote regions are being met by the training secured by RJCP providers through their Participation Accounts, or whether the model of SEE programme delivery needs to consider alternative approaches, including the allocation of the notional budget to the local RJCP provider in a remote region to be responsible for the procurement of LLN training locally on an as needed basis.



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