

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education



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AMES AUSTRALIA HELPS AFGHAN REFUGEES SETTLE IN VICTORIA

Afghan refugees are safely settling in their new homes in Victoria, thanks to the Victorian Government's support of AMES Australia, which has been a vital part of the community for 70 years.

AMES Australia is celebrating its platinum jubilee helping newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers and migrants start a happy and healthy life in Australia, with ongoing support from the Government.

Its legacy continues with case workers currently helping evacuees from Afghanistan through their quarantine process, connecting them with local Afghan communities, finding housing, schools for children, healthcare and government services provider, and connecting them with language, education and employment pathways.

Community leader Barat Ali Batoor has been helping settle new arrivals, including providing culturally appropriate food and other necessities, and said AMES Australia was vital in making them feel welcome.

AMES Australia was first established in 1951 by volunteer teachers who ran English lessons in makeshift classrooms in Nissen huts for new arrivals from Europe after World War II and now helps more than 30,000 every year.

It has become a leading settlement provider with a network of more than 600 paid staff and 500 volunteers, who collectively speak more than 90 languages, and connections with TAFEs and universities, health professionals, real estate and community organisations.

Programs delivered by AMES are funded through the Government's Adult, Community and Further Education Board – also offering *Skills First*-funded programs to help eligible students become job-ready.

The Government has continued providing significant investment to AMES including \$1.09 million over two years through the Knowledge Centre and Outreach Initiative and more than \$1.3 million in the *Victorian Budget 2020/21* to improve core skills in Victorian CALD communities.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

"Victoria's diversity and multiculturalism makes us stronger – and AMES should be applauded for helping refugees, asylum seekers and migrants start their new lives here in Australia."

"The service of AMES over the last seven decades is a testament to our state's skills and training system – which is all about removing barriers and creating opportunities for every Victorian."

Quote attributable to AMES Chief Executive Officer Catherine Scarth

"Many of these people have left behind loved ones and have suffered traumatic experiences – AMES Australia will walk beside them as they pick up the pieces of their lives and establish themselves in a new country."

Quote attributable to Afghani community leader Barat Ali Batoor

"We are fortunate to have an organisation like AMES Australia supporting the people arriving from Afghanistan, many of whom have been through difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences."

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