**A Closer look at the Virtual EAL New Arrivals Program (8:21)**

**Art:** Hi, I’m Art and I come from Thailand. I live in Apollo Bay.

**Albert:** Hi, my name is Albert. Nepalese is my first language. Now I’m learning English in Mitta Mitta.

**Micaela:** Hi my name is Micaela. I was born in South Africa. Now, my family has moved to Murrayville. Miss Voula and Miss Willersdorf is my English teacher.

**Voice over:** The Department of Education and Training provides the New Arrivals Program to meet the English language needs of newly arrived students. Until now, that program has been delivered through face-to-face teaching in schools in metropolitan areas and regional centres. But more and more, migrant and refugee families are settling in rural areas of Victoria. Often, there is no specialist EAL teacher in these areas. The Virtual EAL New Arrivals Program uses technology to connect those isolated EAL students with specialist teachers, to give them the same foundation for their education as any new arrival in the city.

**Owen Ziebell:** Art came to us at Apollo Bay a couple of months ago, mid-way through term one. He’s originally from northern Thailand and when he arrived at school, he had very limited English language skills.

**Tiffany Holt:** I contacted the EAL and Multicultural unit. They offered us two programs, initially. One of those programs required Art to spend six months intense learning in Geelong. That option just was not possible. The other option was The New Arrivals Program which could be done virtually, and Art having one-on-one lessons. So that was perfect for us and perfect for Art.

**Brett Libbis:** Probably the reason I was a little bit sceptical about the program in the beginning, was I didn’t want him to be…felt like he was singled out or stuck in a corner doing something different. Yes, he is doing something different, but it’s taught him so much in just a short time. The other people in the class have accepted that as well, so it’s worked out really well.

**Tiffany Holt**: What we’ve noticed recently is he’s now looking forward to going to his lessons. His confidence around school has really improved. He’s engaging better with the students. The program’s invaluable for us in our isolated and rural area.

**Voula MacKenzie:** The students dial in to the VSL where the program is hosted. The students come to us timid and inhibited. Within weeks, you can see that their confidence has started to increase and they’re able to speak more because you ask them to slow down. You give them the opportunities to practise and they’re able to take risks.

**Mandy Gay**: Mitta Mitta primary school is located in the Mitta Valley which is an hour from the nearest big regional centre. We have eight students. Albert is our only new-arrival student. His father came to work at a local pub. He was able to bring members of his family out at different stages and Albert was one of the last ones to come over, just after the earthquake. The virtual conferencing program is vital to assist Albert in developing his English skills and without it, his dad would have to take him somewhere else. And that’s not good for Albert because this is where he wants to be. The teachers ask you what you’re actually doing in your program at the time and link the things that they’re doing to what we’re doing here, so it makes things so much more relevant.

**Albert:** I learn with Voula in Polycom. I learn how to make a paragraph. If I didn’t have Miss Voula, I didn’t have the opportunity to learn English.

**Mandy Gay**: Being the only grade six student here, sometimes that can be very isolating. But, being involved in the program, especially now with Micaela being involved too, he’s got a wider peer group. The other students have been interested in the activities he’s been doing, so have joined him and really benefited from that exposure to the wider world.

**Dinesh Rijal:** This is very good for the migrant children. I think this is the only chance in Mitta Mitta. I did not see and I did not hear of any other place, in a remote place also. The Education Department is doing hard work for the children.

**Natasha Mudie:** Murrayville Community College is located in north-west Victoria, very close to the South Australian border. We have 115 students in 2016 and most of those students, come from farming families.

**Louise Mayer**: In South Africa, we don’t speak a lot of English and that was one of our main concerns, how she will fair in English. We are amazed at what’s available in such a small town. What surprises me is that they go to so much effort for only one or two children.

**Micaela:** Voula has helped me with my confidence and my pronunciation of words, my spelling and my reading. I feel more confident around my friends, knowing that the words that they say, more sophisticated words, that I can understand and I can say something equally sophisticated to in the conversation

**Karen Willersdorf:** The children actually sat a pre-test which Voula had emailed to me. From that, she put the children on the appropriate EAL Continuum. During this semester, we’re collecting samples of the children’s writing and Voula is going to mark those samples of writing and provide a half-year report to parents where the children will be marked on the EAL Continuum scale.

**Micaela:** I feel more connected to the outside world, not just Murrayville. I feel happy that I have Voula and Albert and I am interested in their culture. I feel more comfortable knowing that I’m not the only one.

**Voice over:** The EAL and Multicultural Unit partnered with the Department’s South Western Victoria Region, the Western English Language School and the Victorian School of Languages to develop the pilot program, which was evaluated by the Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne. (20 seconds)

**Ute Knoch:** One of our key aims of this project was to investigate whether this program is actually effective and one way of measuring that, is by examining whether they improve their language proficiency from the beginning of the program to the end. We collected work samples from the students before they started and then at the end again and these were rated or evaluated on the EAL Continuum. And of the ten students who took part, eight had quite significant gains in their language proficiency. We mainly focused on speaking and writing for this because they have, they can be more tangibly measured. And there was also evidence of other benefits beyond the students. The families were more integrated in the school and there were also professional development opportunities for staff.

**Mandy Gay:** Undoubtedly, I would recommend this program to another school because of the benefit to Albert. Learning is about providing students at their point of need. It was his point of need, but it also enhanced my professional development

**Stefo Stojanovski**: I would encourage all schools to think about this provision. We can take one child, we can take multiple children. They can be for a semester; they can be for a year. Whatever their need is, this is a way of getting them into language standards that they can participate in general classroom activities.

**Voula MacKenzie**: I love seeing the students through their journey. I love seeing them, in the initial stages when they’re shy and reserved and then blossom. So they’re able to communicate in the mainstream.

**Albert:** I have improved my English. Not quite, but I’m coming along.