



SCOA DISCUSSION PAPER

Addressing Barriers to Employment

This discussion paper is put forward to stimulate conversation about the role between employment and settlement. It includes suggestions and recommendations, developed through member consultation and discussion with a wide range of agencies. SCOA recently held a national conference in Adelaide (June 2012), which included a key plenary theme on employment. Recommendations and outcomes from the conference are currently being collated, and this paper will be updated when they are available. SCOA welcomes feedback on any issues raised in the paper, acknowledging that there are a wide variety of programs operating successfully across the country, and that the policy landscape is one that can change rapidly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the 1970s migration numbers have generally been steadily increasing and refugee numbers are at the highest of the last 15 years (DIAC, 2011a). As a signatory of the Refugee Convention and other human rights treaties, Australia has an international responsibility to resettle refugees and migrants.

Settlement is a complex ongoing process, which includes practical outcomes (e.g. employment and housing) as well as life outcomes (e.g. personal happiness and community connectedness); with interrelationships existing between these. Gaining access to employment plays a vital role in the settlement process and is an integral part of helping migrants and refugees to gain not only an income and financial independence, but also a sense of belonging to the community and Australian society at large.

The Government recognises the skills and labour refugees and migrants bring to Australia, and their role in creating economic renewal and prosperity in communities (AMAC, 2011). Research has been done into the positive potential economic, social and civil contribution of refugees and migrants to Australian society when their settlement process has been adequately supported (Hugo, 2011; Law & Ziguras, 2007).

Because migrants and refugees come from enormously diverse backgrounds, with a range of skills and life experiences, there are a number of specifically targeted approaches and programs which can be effective in helping gain employment. These include:

- work experience and individualised training
- career advice, planning and job search support
- individual case management
- mentoring systems to support a transition into the workforce,
- assistance from services that advocate and directly liaise with employers on the client's behalf,
- English language classes which include employment-specific skills development
- client follow-up in the period after employment has commenced.

In order to support refugees and migrants through the process of finding employment, there has to be a dialogue between and across sectors including the settlement sector, JSAs and employment providers.

SCOA has identified key areas which represent barriers to employment with associated recommendations made to support them:

1) Lack of work experience and education

Issue:

For many migrants and refugees arriving in Australia, the most significant barrier to gaining employment is a lack of relevant work experience and/or education. Like Australian born job-seekers, poor job-readiness and a failure to demonstrate a proven employment history is a significant barrier to finding work – it is even more of a challenge for those whose first language is not English. Not only do they lack a work record, they have no actual experience of searching for employment. Additionally, many humanitarian settlers arrive with no post-school qualifications at all (ABS, 2010).

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends the introduction of a broader work experience program with expansion into the private sector: at present only not-for-profits can participate.
- B) SCOA recommends that training programmes be opened to all migrants and refugees and a greater focus placed on helping them connect with potential employers post-training.
- C) SCOA recommends that focus should be placed on accurately identifying a job-seeker's capacity and how this can be built on and/or developed, and services should ensure that the humanitarian *client* is the focus, rather than prioritising *the employer* or the job.
- D) SCOA recommends that reverse marketing programs which use a social enterprise model and actively promote candidates' life-skills and experiences to prospective employers, are a successful model which could be replicated more widely.

2) Issues with recognition of prior learning and qualifications**Issue:**

Many refugees and migrants face difficulties in having prior learning and qualifications recognised in Australia. The process requires large financial resources and is viewed as excessively complex, especially for new arrivals unfamiliar with the Australian system and lacking adequate English skills (Hugo 2011:166). By not recognising prior learning and qualifications, Australia is limiting the potential productivity of migrants and refugees and concentrating them in lower-status jobs (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006).

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that an effort be made to address the issue surrounding the recognition of overseas qualifications. While we acknowledge this issue cannot be addressed simply (public safety and maintaining competency standards are, for example, legitimate grounds to argue against 'open slather' in this area) we do believe it is made more complex than necessary.
- B) SCOA recommends that there be more targeted assistance to link clients with suitable pathways, for example, re-engaging with former professions or career planning.

3) Lack of English linguistic skills and knowledge of Australian workplace culture**Issue:**

A lack of English language ability is widely recognised as a major barrier to employment. Research has shown there is a significant correlation between English ability and employment, with better speakers of English being far more likely to be employed than those who do not speak well or at all (Wooden, 1994b:223). This is exacerbated by a lack of the necessary linguistic skills to search and apply for jobs and a limited understanding of Australian workplace culture (Hugo, 2001:165).

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that English services made available to migrants and refugees be improved with a greater emphasis on English for Work and Australian workplace culture training.

4) Issues with location of employment

Issue:

In recent years refugees and migrants are increasingly moving to non-metropolitan areas in the search for employment. This creates issues when the move takes place after initial settlement services have been provided, leading to many challenges and costs for settlement and employment providers. Alternatively, when the move takes place after the 5 year period of settlement support, those who have moved receive no employment support and therefore cannot help contribute to overcoming labour shortages in these areas.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends increasing funding for outreach services for specialist JSAs so they are better able to support high-need complex-case clients who are physically remote from their service hub.
- B) SCOA recommends encouraging a focus on place-based initiatives and individualised services that look not only to build the capacity of job-seekers, but also their regional and remote communities by responding to industry and employment needs in those areas; for example, targeting skill-shortages in rural industries such as farming.
- C) SCOA recommends developing a relocation assistance program to help those job-seekers who wish to move to an area offering greater employment opportunities.
- D) SCOA recommends providing housing and training incentives for people to remain in regional or remote areas and make the drift to the major cities less attractive.

5) Discrimination and exploitation

Issue:

Employer discrimination is a key obstacle for migrants and refugees seeking to obtain employment. There is a common perception that refugees lack awareness of Australian workplace cultures and practices and therefore will present difficulties to employers if hired (Hugo, 2011:165). Additionally, mature age applicants face age-related discrimination.

Exploitation in the workplace is also a problem commonly faced by migrants and refugees with many suffering poor conditions of employment, including those that are either illegal or opportunistically attempt to function outside norms of industrial law, or in cycles of short-term, casual and seasonal work.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that an emphasis should be placed on employer education and raising awareness that migrants and refugees bring a diverse and valuable range of skills to a workplace.
- B) SCOA recommends that more effort be made to ensure the rights of migrants and refugees are supported by employment laws

6) The current 2 year waiting period for employment assistance for migrants

Issue:

Skilled migrants cannot access full JSA services for the first two years after their arrival in Australia and only receive stream 1 services during this period. In the initial two years, most migrants have little or no knowledge of the Australian labour market and many new arrivals lack the informal networks that can help in obtaining employment.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that the employment services model needs to be amended so as to build greater flexibility into the support provided to migrants and refugees who are subject to the two year waiting period.
- B) SCOA recommends Business Mentoring programs by established migrants and refugees to help those newly arrived migrants who do not have their own networks to build up a business.

7) Issues with employment assistance and support

Issue:

SCOA is concerned that generalist JSA employment providers fail to offer the flexibility, expertise or resources that allow services to provide targeted assistance for CALD clients. Settlement services offer a vast wealth of knowledge and resources which could be better utilised in helping assist migrants and refugees find employment.

Recommendations:

- A. SCOA supports the recommendations made in the recent RCOA discussion paper '*Job Services Australia: Refugee community and service provider views*'
- B. SCOA recommends that increased funding from DEEWR in the next tender process should be open to settlement services for employment support/ social enterprise programmes (See Appendix 1)

Introduction to SCOA and why position statement was developed

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) represents a broad network of more than 70 settlement agencies around Australia. Settlement agencies have played a pivotal role in enabling settlement, enhancing integration and ensuring equity across the country. As advocates and service providers, the sector has a unique knowledge of the realities of the settlement experience, over time, across the country, and among hundreds of different ethno-cultural communities. Through this detailed knowledge the settlement sector is aware of what supports and network connections are needed to help migrants and refugees gain access to employment, a key settlement goal for all. Some settlement agencies have also been involved more directly through developing social enterprises and as Job Services Australia providers.

SCOA has been working on the issue of employment for some time, with the issue being discussed at member consultations in 2012, the focus of a submission to DEEWR in January 2011 and one of the major plenary themes at the Second National Settlement Conference (Creating Our Future) in Adelaide June 2012.

SCOA recognises the importance of helping migrants and refugees find suitable employment, not only in order to gain financial independence and become active economic participants in the Australian community, but so as to further their progress in the settlement process and become active participants in their communities.

SCOA understands that refugees and migrants face a number of barriers in their search for employment and feel these issues need to be addressed.

Brief summary of employment issues

For migrants and refugees coming to Australia one of the most significant challenges they face is finding suitable employment. While many do find work and enjoy upward mobility, others face a multitude of barriers to employment and require extensive support (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller, 2005). Barriers include limited proficiency in written and spoken English; restricted access to affordable housing that is close to transport and/or viable employment options; racism, discrimination and related forms of stigmatisation in the workforce (either in gaining employment or experience in the workplace); failure of employers, professional bodies and education institutions to recognize prior learning and qualifications gained outside of Australia, and/or a limited range of Australian-based work experience.

Research has shown that the situation is more difficult for humanitarian settlers than other migrants, with one third still unemployed after three years (VandenHeuval and Wooden, 1999). This has been attributed to a number of factors including the deskilling of refugees whilst in camps, trauma, a limited ability to research employment options prior to arrival in Australia and a lack of relevant work experience (Hugo, 2011:164).

Although the situation for many migrants is seen to get better over time, with employment levels for migrants nearing that of the Australian-born population after ten years and even surpassing them in the second generations, this is not equally true for humanitarian settlers (Hugo, 2011:108). Even for refugees with high levels of education and English language skills who have been in Australia for extended periods of time, unemployment levels remain higher than for the Australian born

population indicating persistent barriers to gaining employment (Jones and McAllister 1991:21). This phenomenon labelled 'the Refugee Gap' describes how even when other factors are controlled, refugees have lower occupational, employment and earnings than other migrant groups and the native-born (Connor, 2010:377, Hugo, 2011:172).

SCOA'S POSITION

Refugees and migrants have the potential to make a significant contribution to Australian society with the achievement of settlement outcomes. SCOA recognises that access to appropriate, adequately remunerated work where legal conditions of employment are met, provides a pathway to better self-esteem and health generally. Employment helps ensure adequate accommodation, nutrition and social inclusion; it may also impact upon education and training opportunities. Employment is viewed by many migrants and refugees as an opportunity to give back to the community and country and offers a pathway to meaningful community participation (Hugo, 2011:161). It is for these reasons that there is a need for collaboration between sectors to help reduce barriers to employment for refugees and migrants.

It is felt by SCOA that the following key areas need to be addressed:

1. Lack of work experience and education
2. Issues with recognition of prior learning and qualifications
3. Lack of English, linguistic skills and knowledge of Australian workplace culture
4. Issues with location of employment
5. Discrimination and exploitation
6. The current 2 year waiting period for employment assistance for migrants
7. Issues with employment assistance and support

KEY AREAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SCOA has identified the following as key areas that need to be addressed and has made recommendations for the course of action for the employment and settlement sectors.

1) Lack of work experience and education

Issue:

For many migrants and refugees arriving in Australia, the most significant barrier to gaining employment is a lack of relevant work experience and/or education. The link between education and employment is commonly recognised: the lower the level of education achieved, the higher are job-seekers' labour market disadvantages.

Young CALD job-seekers, particularly those who are first generation humanitarian entrants, are likely to suffer an array of disadvantages including limited (or even no) schooling, few if any qualifications, vocational skills or work experience in Australia. Like Australian born job-seekers, poor job-readiness and a failure to demonstrate a proven employment history is a significant barrier to finding work – it is even more challenging for those whose first language is not English. Not only do they lack a work record, they have no actual experience of searching for employment.

Many humanitarian settlers arrive with no post-school qualifications (ABS, 2010). However, while they may not have qualifications on arrival, according to the DIAC Report: *Settlement Outcomes for New Arrivals (SONA)*, humanitarian entrants are far more likely to be studying full-time, studying and working or studying and looking after their families. Many Humanitarian entrants are strongly focused on creating a new life, and studying for a qualification is an important step in this journey (DIAC, 2011b).

While, there are a number of training programmes in place to help migrants and refugees gain the necessary skills to join the workforce, a common complaint heard amongst settlement agencies in Australia is that little support is given post-training to help graduates connect to the job market and potential employers.

Concerns have also been raised about the fact that many traineeships are restricted to youth, leaving older migrants and refugees who could benefit from greater access to these programmes without adequate opportunities to improve their skill levels.

A factor that is preventing some companies and organisations from establishing work experience programmes, which would provide clients with the necessary skills to gain work in that sector and also give the companies access to willing and eager employees, is the health and safety costs involved in such programmes (Hugo, 2011:165).

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends the introduction of a broader work experience program with expansion into the private sector: at present only not-for-profits can participate.
- B) SCOA recommends that training programmes be opened to all migrants and refugees and a greater focus placed on helping them connect with potential employers post-training.
- C) SCOA recommends that focus should be placed on accurately identifying a job-seeker's capacity and how this can be built on and/or developed, and services should ensure that the humanitarian *client* is the focus, rather than prioritising *the employer* or the job.
- D) SCOA recommends that reverse marketing programs, which use a social enterprise model and actively promote candidates' life-skills and experiences to prospective employers, are a successful model which could be replicated more widely.

2) Issues with recognition of prior learning and qualifications

Issue:

Many refugees and migrants face difficulties in having prior learning and qualifications recognised in Australia. The process of having qualifications recognised requires large financial resources and is viewed as excessively complex, especially for new arrivals unfamiliar with the Australian system and lacking adequate English skills (Hugo 2011:166).

By not recognising prior learning and qualifications, Australia is underutilising the potential human capital resources that migrants and refugees offer and limiting their potential productivity (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007:12). By mismatching skills and occupation, many refugees end up

concentrated in lower-status jobs, which some research has indicated may be leading to an emerging segmented second tier labour force in Australia (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006). For skilled migrants and refugees, their skills are being wasted and the resulting loss of occupational status can have significant impacts on levels of job satisfaction (DIAC 2011b:120).

The current system has meant that powerful and wealthy groups have been able to retain control of many sectors of the employment market. For example, specialist medical colleges have been able to control the supply of specialists by claiming their colleagues with overseas qualifications must be excluded from membership of the colleges, thus removing them from much of the workforce and a viable income in the long-run. What applies in this setting applies across a range of professions, this continues to impact upon thousands of individuals who have come to Australia either freely (as skilled migrants) or under the humanitarian program by using the claims of professional accreditation as grounds for exclusion.

SCOA recognises that not all clients can expect to travel along a linear career path, but suggests that they be supported to move into professional positions that are at least related or linked. For example, engineers could be retrained to undertake technical trades, para-medical staff to work in health administrative roles, graphic designers to do web-based development work etc.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that effort be made to address the issue surrounding the recognition of overseas qualifications. While we acknowledge this issue cannot be addressed simply (public safety and maintaining competency standards are, for example, legitimate grounds to argue against 'open slather' in this area) we do believe it is made more complex than necessary.
- B) SCOA recommends that there be more targeted assistance to link clients with suitable pathways, for example, re-engaging with former professions or career planning.

3) Lack of English linguistic skills and knowledge of Australian workplace culture

Issue:

A lack of English language ability is widely recognised as a major barrier to employment. Research has shown there is a significant correlation between English ability and employment, with better speakers of English being far more likely to be employed than those who do not speak well or at all (Wooden, 1994b:223). 2006 data indicated that only 16% of humanitarian settlers who did not speak English well or at all were employed, compared to 40% of those who spoke English well (ABS 2010:9).

Many job seekers also lack the linguistic skills required to search and apply for jobs and participate effectively in the work place. Additionally, many migrants and refugees have only a limited understanding of Australian workplace culture and consequently may experience difficulty in adjusting effectively to some workplaces (Hugo, 2001:165).

A compounding problem is that some CALD candidates lack literacy in their first language; in some cases their first language is limited to an oral form and cannot be represented in writing, which makes them particularly challenging to assist into the workforce. Furthermore, employment provider staff are not trained to conduct language assessments and can only guess what a client's standard

may be; this can lead to significant or continuing employment performance, retention and matching problems.

Programmes which in the past have successfully focussed on jobs and workplace language as part of the 510 hours of English language training have been reduced and currently there is little assistance provided if people want to work and learn English.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that English services made available to migrants and refugees be improved with a greater emphasis on English for Work and Australian workplace culture training.

4) Issues with location of employment

Issue:

The location that migrants and refugees choose to settle within Australia is of significance for a number of reasons; it influences their access to work opportunities, the extent to which they are able to utilise networks of fellow settlers in their search for employment, their interaction with local communities and their access to settlement and employment services (Hugo, 2011:83).

Migrants and refugees have historically tended to concentrate in major cities (Hugo, 2011:83). However, in recent years refugees and migrants are increasingly moving to non-metropolitan areas. This shift has been attributed in part to expansion of job opportunities in remote and regional communities, and in part due to government policies such as the State Specific and Regional Migration (SSRM) Scheme (Hugo, 2011:94). In moving to regional and remote areas, migrants and refugees have the potential to significantly contribute to overcoming labour shortages in these regions and industries (Hugo 2011:95).

Issues arise, however, when migrants and refugees move to such areas after initial settlement services have already been provided. Settlement comes at significant costs to both the Commonwealth as funder, and to those agencies providing settlement services. Therefore this secondary resettlement, where individuals, their families, and even segments of communities may relocate (often a small cohort may move, triggering others to follow) in pursuit of employment opportunities, can provide many challenges and costs to service providers and to society at large. (SPN, 2011)

Alternatively, for those migrants and refugees who move after the initial 5 year period of settlement support, no support is provided upon arrival in their new destinations. This lack of support and appropriate training can significantly limit their ability to effectively find employment, in turn affecting their ability to help address labour shortages in the areas. Northern Territory settlement services, for example, suggest that making training in mining sector jobs and connecting migrants and refugees with potential employers could offer very real benefits to both the job seekers and the mining industry.

Another concern regarding the location of employment for many CALD clients is that they locate in areas where accommodation is more affordable. Such locations are often poorly serviced by public transport infrastructure, as a result this makes it difficult for them to continue accessing employment service support.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends increasing funding for outreach services for specialist JSAs so they are able to better support high-need but complex-case clients who are physically remote from their service hub.
- B) SCOA recommends encouraging a focus on place-based initiatives and individualised services that look not only to build the capacity of job-seekers, but also their regional and remote communities by responding to industry and employment needs in those areas; for example, targeting skill-shortages in rural industries such as farming.
- C) SCOA recommends developing a relocation assistance program to help those job-seekers who wish to move to an area offering greater employment opportunities.
- D) SCOA recommends providing housing and training incentives for people to remain in regional or remote areas and make the drift to the major cities less attractive.

5) Discrimination and exploitation

Issue:

Employer discrimination is a key obstacle for migrants and refugees seeking to obtain employment in Australia. There is a common perception amongst employers that refugees lack awareness of Australian workplace cultures and practices and will therefore present difficulties to employers if hired (Hugo, 2011:165). Additionally, mature age applicants face age-related discrimination.

Exploitation in the workplace is also a problem commonly faced by migrants and refugees. Many CALD, refugee and international student workers suffer poor conditions of employment including those that are either illegal or opportunistically attempt to function outside norms of industrial law (for example, the case of Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd where, in October and December 2010, according to claims that were reported in the media, one worker was killed and others [mainly recent non-English speaking immigrants] exploited and under-paid). Many find themselves in cycles of short-term, casualised and seasonal work. This is exacerbated by poor knowledge of Australian workplace systems, laws (including entitlements) and avenues of complaint.

The conditions that allow for migrants and refugees to find employment are not restricted to the industrial setting, employment laws may also provide some important protections. These must be strengthened by a broader normative setting such as committing to other human rights protections (many worker-rights are covered under human rights based conventions and treaties). Australia is the only liberal democracy that has failed to enact some form of human rights charter (either legislative or constitutional) and the infrastructure of protections against discrimination are woefully inadequate, especially for those who have experienced racially-based discrimination. The recent study by Booth et al "*Does Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence From a Field Experiment*" illustrates how employers regularly discriminate against job applicants with 'non-Anglo' names, even when their curricula vitae are identical to those with Anglo-Saxon names.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that an emphasis should be placed on employer education and raising awareness that migrants and refugees bring a diverse and valuable range of skills to a workplace
- B) SCOA recommends that more effort be made to ensure the rights of migrants and refugees are supported by employment laws

6) The current 2 year waiting period for employment assistance for migrants

Issue:

Skilled migrants cannot access JSA services for the first two years after their arrival in Australia. Government assumes, because migrants have the skills and qualifications for work in an area of workforce demand, that they *will* be actually employed. However, lack of Australian-based work experience and, in some cases, discrimination, often form barriers to finding employment. Those migrants who are subject to a two-year waiting period before they are able to access income support only receive stream 1 services - this includes adult refugees who may have limited formal schooling and who enter under the family stream of Australia's migration program as well as migrants and refugees with overseas qualifications and skills entering under the family and skill streams.

During the initial two years, most migrants and refugees have little or no knowledge of the Australian labour market. Only 23.4% actually seek work within the first three months of arrival and 43% are still unemployed after 18 months, which can lead to significant negative impacts on the individuals and their families (DIAC, 2006, Hugo, 2011:162).

Additionally, in this initial period many new arrivals lack the informal networks that can help in finding employment. A significant proportion of humanitarian settlers get their first jobs through friends or relatives indicating the importance of informal networks for job-seekers arriving in Australia (Hugo, 2011:129). However, it should be noted that research by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury has indicated that such networks can contribute to leading new arrivals into undesirable employment within secondary labour-market niches. These jobs are characterised by unhealthy work environments, including long hours, relatively high occupational health and safety risks, and limited job security (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006).

There have also been concerns raised about the lack of support for bridging visa clients.

Recommendations:

- A) SCOA recommends that the employment services model needs to be amended so as to build greater flexibility into the support provided to migrants and refugees who are subject to the two year waiting period.
- B) SCOA recommends Business Mentoring programs by established migrants and refugees to help those newly arrived migrants who do not have their own networks to build up a business.

7) Issues with employment assistance and support

Issue:

The nature and extent of support required by migrants and refugees to achieve employment in their occupation varies based on a number of factors; including their early access to recognised support services, access to local work experience, the availability of gap-training and their proficiency in English. Some achieve a sustainable employment outcome in their field relatively quickly and with minimal support. Others, however, require more intensive support from personnel with the specialist knowledge and skills to provide quality services in this area.

SCOA is concerned that generalist JSA employment providers fail to offer the flexibility, expertise or resources that allow services to provide targeted assistance for CALD clients, which has proven to support their employment transition. The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) recently released a detailed discussion paper outlining issues with and recommendations for the current JSA system. SCOA supports the points made in this submission with SCOA members regularly expressing concern about directing CALD clients to JSA services due to a lack of cultural sensitivity amongst staff, a lack of follow up procedures and issues with translators. Many clients find the system confusing and fail to receive the appropriate streaming for their needs.

Settlement services are an essential component in employment initiatives and can efficiently identify, early in their case work, those clients who can be best served by specific employment providers. Their wealth of knowledge and experience can be used to collaboratively strengthen the performance-base of employment providers. Settlement services are also uniquely positioned to provide information and support that will assist building job-seeker capacity to gain and maintain meaningful and sustainable employment.

Given that specialist migrant/refugee services are also more likely to employ people from a range of cultural, racial and religious backgrounds than 'mainstream' employers, this can help build confidence amongst their clients (seeing a culturally/racial diverse 'face' in a service can be a positive experience for those searching for employment). This adds to the argument that settlement service agencies could successfully provide employment services for CALD clients to help shift away from the welfare paradigm that currently dominates the sector to one more focussed on community empowerment (Hugo, 2011:252). However, a current lack of ongoing funding has limited many settlement services' ability to continue to deliver previously successful employment programmes (See Appendix 1 for more details).

Recommendations:

- A. SCOA supports the recommendations made in the recent RCOA discussion paper '*Job Services Australia: Refugee community and service provider views*'
- B. SCOA recommends that increased funding from DEEWR in the next tender process should be open to settlement services for employment support/ social enterprise programmes (See Appendix 1)

Conclusion

Employment is an important aspect of the settlement process and the barriers to accessing appropriate employment infringe on the ability of refugees and migrants to reach their potential and contribute to Australian society. These groups have the potential to not only contribute to the

Australian economy, but to address key labour shortages in many regions and industries throughout Australia. Research, however, has shown that refugees especially are concentrated in low-skill, lowly paid and insecure occupations (Hugo, 2011). This can be attributed to a number of factors including a lack of work experience and education, a lack of English skills and knowledge of Australian workplace cultures, discrimination, non-recognition of skills and qualifications, and issues related to employment assistance offered to these groups. With the aim of better supporting refugees and migrants through settlement, recommendations have been made to address these identified key areas. It is vital that work is done across sectors to support refugees and migrants. There is a need for settlement services and JSAs in particular to work together, but collaboration also needs to extend to other sectors (such as the legal sector) if the potential of refugees and migrants is to be fully realised.

Acknowledgements:

SCOA would like to thank members for sharing information about their employment programs.

SCOA would also like to thank our intern: Lauren Pevy for her help on this project.

APPENDIX

1) Settlement Service Programmes

In recent years, many specialist migrant skills and qualifications services, often developed and run by TAFE institutes in collaboration with community, employers, and other key stakeholders, are no longer available due to a lack of funding. Employment service providers are poorly placed to deliver such services because they lack staff with the specialist knowledge and skills to deliver such services. These services include programmes such as the Specialist Migrant Placement Officer Program, previously funded by the New South Wales government, orientation programs for skilled migrants, access programs for refugee youth and retraining programs for mature age job seekers.

Many of these initiatives provide vocational skills development that is integrated with English language training. They have been very effective in achieving employment and/or further study outcomes for job-seekers from non-English speaking backgrounds. In the past such programs were funded under a migrant-dedicated program – the Advanced English for Migrants Program - which was later subsumed into the advanced vocational stream of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy program (LLNP), also funded by DEEWR. As an outcome of the current LLNP tender this stream of advanced provision is no longer provided for.

Job Employment Services are concerned about employer relations, this equates to providing employers with people: there is little written material that clarifies what they actually *do* for the client (what the client is entitled to and or eligible for). This results in services having to provide both training on workplace and industrial matters, as well as other forms of formal training (eg: learning to drive or in-house workplace training); often these responsibilities are borne by other organisations such as humanitarian settlement organisations. For example, the MRC of South Australia provides in-house training through work experience for over 300 of its volunteers, through this process it finds approximately 100 jobs each year for this cohort through its partnerships and relations with employer groups; in addition, through its industry networks it finds another 50 jobs per annum for humanitarian entrants. While doing so it receives no re-imburement from government or from Job Employment Services for this work.

Social enterprise programs (which function somewhat like a labour hire firm by brokering employment arrangements between a settlement service's CALD clients and local employers) have also been successful at offering employment pathways and solutions in organisations such as Diversitat. However, social enterprise initiatives are often operated by the settlement service *without* specific funding. Several examples include those run by FMRC, SSI, and Communicare WA.

Recommendations for Settlement services and programmes:

- A. SCOA recommends that increased funding from DEEWR in the next tender process should be open to settlement services for employment support/ social enterprise programmes including:
 - a. pre-vocation training for clients of refugee background and other CALD clients at risk
 - b. in-house training through work experience and volunteer training
 - c. six month traineeships that may include front-line management training

- d. case-work based employment services for specific target groups through an open purchasing process
- e. innovations funding to develop alternative employment models, and
- f. funded advocacy roles to engage key employment stakeholders such as JCA, JEA's, employers and industry groups (this funding was available through DEEWR to MRCS over a decade ago and proved highly successful in ensuring linkages, coordination and entry into employment).

2) Refugees and Migrants in Australia

Migrants

With the abolition of the White Australia Policy in the early 1970's, an increasing number of migrants from Asia, the Pacific, and Africa have joined the streams from Europe and the Middle East. Reasons for this increase include the pursuit of opportunities offered in Australia, wanting to be immersed in a stable and multicultural democracy, to join their families, and to escape war and persecution (AMAC, 2010).

Australia prides itself in its multi-cultural heritage and has accepted over 7 million migrants since 1945, with one in four of Australia's current 22 million people being born overseas. The Government recognises the skills and labour refugees and migrants bring, and their role in creating economic renewal and prosperity in communities (AMAC, 2010).

Net overseas migration (NOM)¹ was estimated to be at 264,200 in 2009; 171,000 in 2010 and 167,100 in the twelve months ending March 2011 (DIAC, 2011d; Scanlon Foundation, 2011a). The decline in NOM over the past few years has given DIAC more leeway for a moderate increase in the migration program for 2011-2012 to 185,000 places - augmenting the 168,700 places in 2010-11 allocated for permanent migration (DIAC, 2012).

Humanitarian programs have been fixed at 13,750 places bringing the total of both migration and humanitarian entrants to 182,450 places. This excludes the entry of New Zealand citizens which is uncapped and as of 30 June 2010 was at 24,400 (Scanlon Foundation, 2011b).

Despite migration numbers declining over the past few years, these numbers are significant as these are people who will be needing, availing, and consequently be competing for the same housing and accommodation services with those migrants already in Australia, refugees and other Australian born low income earners.

Refugees

As defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Refugee Convention, refugees are people who have been forced to leave their home country for fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social groups or political opinion (UNHCR, 2012). Refugees often leave for Australia without much notice or planning and have little idea about Australian society on their arrival. Refugees have often experienced severe trauma and spent long periods of time in refugee camps which offer only limited protection (RCOA,

¹ NOM is the number of overseas travellers who stay in Australia for 12 months or more over a 16 month period, including overseas students, business visa holders and working holiday makers (DIAC, 2011d; Scanlon Foundation, 2011a).

n.d.). This is different to migrants who choose to leave their home countries and often are able to plan ahead and learn about Australia before their move.

According to the UNHCR, at the end of 2010 there were an estimated 15.4 million refugees and 837,500 asylum seekers worldwide. This is the highest number in 15 years (DIAC, 2011b). As a signatory to the Refugee Convention and other human rights treaties, Australia has a responsibility to the international community to help these people.

Australia fulfils this responsibility through its Humanitarian Program which offers both onshore protection and offshore processing. In 2010/2011 13 799 visas were granted through this program, of which 8971 visas were through offshore processing and 4828 were through onshore processing.

Humanitarian Program grants by category 2006–07 to 2010–11					
Category	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
Refugee	6003	6004	6499 ²	6003	5998
Special Humanitarian (offshore)	5183	4795	4511	3233	2973
Onshore ¹	1793	2131	2492	4534	4828
Temporary Humanitarian Concern	38	84	5	-	-
Total	13 017	13 014	13 507	13 770	13 799

¹ Includes protection visas and onshore humanitarian visa grants that are countable under the Humanitarian Program.

² This figure included a one-off allocation of 500 refugee places for Iraqis.

(DIAC, 2011b)

3) Australia's Settlement Programs

Australia offers a range of settlement programs to newly arrived refugees and migrants. These are funded by the Commonwealth Government and aim to aid in the achievement of settlement outcomes to allow full participation in Australian society as soon as possible (Bohm, et al., 2006). These services include: the Adult Migration English Program, the Translating and Interpreting Service, the Settlement Grants Program, and Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.

- **Adult Migration English Program (AMEP):** The AMEP is available to all eligible migrants and refugees, providing free English language courses to those without proficient English. All eligible refugees and migrants have access to 510 hours of English courses in the first five years of settlement (DIAC, 2009).
- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National):** TIS National is an interpreting service provided by DIAC for people who do not speak English proficiently and those English speaking people/organisations that need to communicate with them. The TIS is available 24

hours a day, seven days a week to all persons or organisations requiring an interpreting service. The TIS provides telephone interpreting and on-site interpreting (DIAC, n.d.(1)).

- **Settlement Grants Programs (SGP):** SGP is a source of funding from DIAC for which eligible organisations within the settlement sector can apply (DIAC, n.d (2)). The target group of clients of the SGP are permanent residents who have arrived in Australia less than five years who arrived as humanitarian entrants, family stream migrants with low English proficiency, or the dependants of skilled migrants with low English proficiency living in rural or regional areas of Australia (RCOA, 2011; DIAC, n.d (2)).
- **Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS):** With an awareness of the added challenges of resettlement for refugees, the Government's HSS work to provide intensive support for refugees when they first arrive and through the initial stages of their settlement process. The services provided are done so on a needs basis using case management as a way of assessing need, resulting in some refugees not being deemed ineligible for HSS. Services provided include accommodation services, AMEP and the onshore orientation program which provides skills and knowledge to better live in Australian society (DIAC, 2011c; RCOA, 2011). Clients exit HSS services when they are seen to have reach settlement outcomes which will enable them to complete the settlement process (DIAC, 2011c).

4) The Contribution of Refugees and Migrants to Australian Society

The research of Graeme Hugo (2011a) has been very significant in highlighting the contribution of migrants and refugees to Australian society. Hugo's research highlights that if one considers the cost versus the benefit of taking in refugees and migrants, their potential to greatly contribute to and benefit Australian society in the long term outweighs the cost (Hugo, 2011a; RCOA, 2010). Hugo's research ties in directly with the Department of Treasury's Intergenerational report on the 'three P's' - Population, Participation, and Productivity.

The impact of migration and refugee settlements in Australia is extremely important in terms of the current demographics of Australia. Australia is experiencing a decline in the domestic labour force because of declining birth rates and the ageing population. Refugees and migrants' ability to fill the labour gaps coupled with their higher fertility rates offsets the decline in population growth of Australia (Hugo, 2011a; Law & Ziguas, 2006). Migrants and refugees are able to impact on the labour shortages in regional areas and attract the currently dwindling service provision due to the declining resident population in these areas (Hugo, 2011a). Even if migrants and refugees are disadvantaged to begin with, it has been shown that over time they have experienced greater upward mobility and have been assets within the workforce (Hugo, 2011a).

Refugees and migrants in the long term bring much needed skills and labour which gives Australia an economic edge over its neighbours with the importance of diversity creating economic renewal and prosperity in communities. It strengthens trade relations, broadens business horizons, and has become a competitive advantage in the global economy (Australian Government, 2011).

Worth noting within Hugo's research is the significant contribution refugees have within their role as entrepreneurs, with humanitarian settlers having higher rates of owning their own businesses, which makes increasingly important contributions in regional development (Hugo, 2011a).

The findings in Hugo's report (2011) shows that the contribution of refugees and migrants goes beyond a demographic one, and with successful settlement this group makes economic, social and civic contributions to Australian society.

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