



SCOA DISCUSSION PAPER

Employment solutions: Case studies of good settlement in practice

This discussion paper highlights settlement service provider's good practices in assisting migrants and people of refugee backgrounds in overcoming barriers to finding long-term employment. It follows on from the Settlement Council of Australia's (SCOA) 2012 Employment Discussion Paper detailing employment barriers faced by migrants and refugees. This paper updates the recommendations provided in SCOA's 2012 Employment Discussion Paper based on recent changes to employment services to be implemented on 1st July 2015.

Introduction

For newly arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds, obtaining employment represents an important step in the settlement journey and in generating a sense of belonging in Australia. Obtaining employment is not only important in terms of economic wellbeing but also leads to greater participation in their communities, better self-esteem and improved mental health¹. In a recent survey of 400 newly arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds, 59% stated that their biggest worry was finding a job². Although migrants and refugees possess a strong desire to gain employment upon arrival in Australia, they face considerable barriers to gaining suitable work.

In our *Discussion Paper Addressing Barriers to Employment*³, Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) identified a range of barriers that limit migrants and people from refugee backgrounds access to employment:

1. Lack of English linguistic skills
2. Issues with location of employment
3. Lack of work experience and knowledge of Australian workplace culture
4. Lack of education and training
5. Issues with recognition of prior learning and qualifications
6. Lack of job readiness skills
7. Discrimination and exploitation

Migrants and refugees relocating to Australia have varied experiences prior to settling which impacts their ability to find long-term stable employment. They have differing levels of English proficiency, work experience and education. Many have endured years of disadvantage with gaps in employment and education or have never undertaken any formal education at all. Others may be experiencing mental health conditions as a result of torture and trauma, feelings of loss around fleeing their home country or uncertainties in visa processing. Often when these issues are not addressed prior to seeking employment their impacts can result in loss of employment. Whether they arrive as humanitarian entrants or through the skilled migrants or family streams, each individual may have specific barriers to gaining employment. As such, migrant and refugee job seekers may require specialised assistance to overcome these barriers through settlement services. Culturally sensitive assessments of an individual's ability to find employment and matching services to this assessment's outcomes are key to establishing employment success.

Australia's settlement services for migrants and people from refugee backgrounds have evolved over time from the provision of basic on-arrival orientation and assistance to more intensive support targeted at meeting the specific needs of individuals relocating to Australia⁴. Migrants and refugees have access to employment support through the mainstream employment assistance programs also offered to the general population and via the limited settlement service provider employment programs. Eligibility for this support is dependent on each individual's situation. Mainstream employment support services for migrants and refugees are delivered across Australia by Jobactive

¹ Parsons, Richard 2013, *Assessing the Economic Contribution of Refugees in Australia*, Brisbane, MDA Ltd.

² AMES, 2013, *Life in Australia: a survey of newly arrived migrants and refugees*, [http://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/Migrant%20Refugee%20survey-findings\(1\).pdf](http://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/Migrant%20Refugee%20survey-findings(1).pdf)

³ SCOA, 2012. *Discussion Paper Addressing Barriers to Employment*, <http://www.scoa.org.au/research-and-publications/scoa-discussion-paper-addressing-barriers-to-employment>

⁴ DSS 2014, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services>

providers⁵ and are regulated by the Department of Employment to ensure consistency in service delivery. The provision of settlement service provider's employment programs varies across Australia as it is not compulsory to offer such programs. Settlement service providers refer individuals needing assistance to a Jobactive provider. The settlement employment programs are seen as supplementary assistance. This creates geographic inequities in specialised settlement employment assistance. These specialised programs are important as Jobactive providers have limited resources and may lack cultural competency to assist refugees and migrants in overcoming their specific barriers to employment.

Recently there have been a number of changes to employment support services affecting migrants and refugee job seekers. In December 2013 the long advocated for Migrant Communities Employment Fund that earmarked \$6.6 million in funding for projects that help refugee and migrant job seekers prepare for and gain employment was withdrawn. Beginning in 2015 a new employment services system will come into effect⁶. The most significant changes include placing employment services into three service streams dependent on job seeker's capacity to seek employment; requiring most job seekers to engage in the Work for the Dole Programme and minimising the number of employment providers thereby reducing their specialist capabilities. Loss of these specialised employment service providers is expected by the settlement sector to have significant impacts on migrants and refugees ability to find appropriate employment.

This discussion paper builds upon the *SCOA Discussion Paper Addressing Barriers to Employment*. It provides a summary of the employment barriers faced by migrants and people of refugee backgrounds, recommends actions to overcome these barriers and provides a series of case studies highlighting settlement service provider's best practices to overcome employment barriers for refugees and migrants.

⁵ Department of Employment, 'Jobactive' Dec 2015, viewed May 2016, <https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/employment-services-have-changed>

⁶ Department of Employment, 'Employment Services 2015', October 2014, viewed November 2014, <https://employment.gov.au/employment-services-2015>

Barriers to Employment, Recommendations & Case Studies

1. Lack of English linguistic skills

A lack of English language ability is widely recognised as a major barrier to employment. Extensive research shows that English language proficiency is a major indicator of positive employment outcomes for migrants relocating to Australia⁷. Thus, with the improvement of English language skills, the employment performance of migrants and refugees also increases (Richardson et al., 2001).

The Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) currently provides 510 hours of English language courses for recently arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds for the first five years of settlement. The English language courses take place at learning centres and are delivered through approved service providers in each state with the aim of improving the English linguistic skills of eligible participants. A gap that is reported within the settlement sector is the need for teaching language skills specific to employment which would assist recent arrivals in securing suitable work⁸.

For some participants, varying characteristics such as age, disabilities and illiteracy in their native language impact their ability to fully grasp the English language and hence they require further specialised language classes to reach their potential. Currently, there is limited funding to undertake further English language study beyond the approved 510 hours.

SCOA recommends:

- 1) AMEP English language education contains a greater emphasis on English for the workplace.
- 2) The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) course is more accessible for those on lower incomes and those with carer responsibilities.
- 3) Content-based English language classes are made available to newly settled refugees.
- 4) Settlement programs developed to improve employment focused English language learning and content-based learning are supported through regular funding.

⁷ VandenHeuvel, A. and M. Wooden (2000) 'Immigrants' Labour Market Experiences in the Early Settlement Years', Australian Bulletin of Labour 26(1):59–69

W. Miller, P. and Neo, L. M. (2003), Labour Market Flexibility and Immigrant Adjustment. Economic Record, 79: 336–356. doi: 10.1111/1475-4932.00108

Ho, C. and Alcorso, C. (2004). 'Migrants and employment: challenging the success story'. Journal of Sociology, 40: 3, 237–259

Mahmud, S., Alam, Q. and Härtel, C. (2014), Mismatches in skills and attributes of immigrants and problems with workplace integration: a study of IT and engineering professionals in Australia. Human Resource Management Journal. doi: 10.1111/1748-8583.12026

⁸ SCOA 2014, 'State Consultations 2014 – National Report and State Report', <http://scoa.org.au/scoa-resources>

CASE STUDY: Ucan2 Program

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

The Ucan2 program was developed and is delivered through a collaborative partnership between Foundation House, Centre for Multicultural Youth and AMES.

Location:

Melbourne: English classes for eligible young adults and English Language Schools with a significant number of young people from refugee background.

Program Description:

Ucan2 supports the social inclusion of recently arrived young people of refugee background, aged 16-25 as they rebuild their lives which have often been disrupted by war and the refugee experience. It does this by fostering cooperation between providers of education, social support, training and employment services to provide young people from refugee backgrounds with:

- access to, and engagement in education, training and employment
- mental health and wellbeing support
- social connections and networks

Ucan2 runs for 16 consecutive weeks, one day per week, in an education setting which delivers on-arrival English language programs. It provides an opportunity for young people to do part time work experience in a retail setting. Program planning and referrals of program participants requiring additional support are addressed through fortnightly case coordination meetings of the delivery team.

Funding Source:

Ucan2 is funded through multiple sources.

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

Positive outcomes of Ucan2 have included increased capacity in English language and life skills, knowledge about education and employment pathways, workplace communication and employment seeking skills.

Many young people have reported increased emotional well-being and confidence alongside greater understanding of Australian culture and a sense of belonging. Their social networks and networking skills have expanded enormously through the program.

A significant number of young people have undertaken part time work experience in a local retail store, providing valuable skills for recently arrived young people who have not had the opportunity of working in Australia. A number of students have been successful in gaining casual employment directly through their work experience placement which has enabled them to continue studying full time.

Program learnings

- the importance of collaborative partnerships and targeted support to achieve successful outcomes for young people from refugee backgrounds.
- the benefits of working with corporate partners to deliver positive employment opportunities.

Personal Story – Sajad Sarvari, 22 years old from Afghanistan

'In Ucan2 I learnt about working in Australia and it made me feel like I belong in Australia, I can do whatever other youth in Australia are doing. It gives me a kind of strength, especially when I am working now. Ucan2 was very helpful, it gave us a broad insight to Australian society and what living life in Australia is all about. We feel like we are a family and Ucan2 gives us a feeling of unity, putting young people together and making people feel as one.'

For More Information Visit:

<http://cmy.net.au/article/employment>

<http://www.ames.net.au/ames-course-detail/ucan2-30>

<http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/ucan2/>

2. Issues with location of employment

Migrants and people from refugee backgrounds who settle in regional or non-metropolitan areas face a range of issues regarding employment due to their geographic location. Early studies of migrant settlement in regional areas conclude that migrants face difficulties brought on by social and geographical isolation, lack of transport options and a lack of access to services⁹. Those who settle in regional areas require additional support from Jobactive providers to find long term suitable employment.

Regional settlement of migrants and people from refugee backgrounds has long been considered by current and past governments as a win-win situation for all involved. Recent Australian immigration policies have favoured regional settlement by steering migrants to areas with labour gaps and dispersing refugee settlement to different regional sites¹⁰. Regional settlement serves a range of complimentary purposes by relieving pressure on major metropolitan centres and addressing regional problems of population decline and skills shortages¹¹.

Transport is a major issue for many job seekers in regional and non-metropolitan areas as they may be required to travel long distances to employment. Most newly-arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds do not have access to a motor vehicle or carry a driving license and hence need to rely on public transport, which is often sparse in regional areas.

Additional support is needed for secondary settlement of migrants and people from refugee backgrounds who move away from major cities to regional areas. Services that were offered in metropolitan areas are not always available in regional settings and Jobactive locations are not always convenient for clients. For those who relocate to regional areas after the first five years of their settlement journey, there are no settlement services offered beyond the five year period.

Recommendations:

- 1) SCOA recommends specialist employment service providers in remote areas remain funded so they are better able to support high-need complex-case clients.
- 2) SCOA recommends encouraging a focus on place-based initiatives. Jobactive providers would work directly with regionally located employers to build the capacity of their regional communities and respond to industry employment needs in those areas (ie- targeting skill-shortages in rural industries such as farming).
- 3) SCOA recommends waiving the Jobactive provider's relocation assistance program eligibility criteria that participants must be in receipt of income support, to ensure refugees are eligible during their initial settlement period.
- 4) SCOA recommends Jobactive providers work with employers to set up programs that provide housing and training incentives for people to remain employed in regional areas and make the drift to the major cities less attractive.

⁹ Gray, I, Dunn, P, Kelly, B & Williams, C 1991, Immigrant settlement in country areas, Bureau of Immigration Research, AGPS, Canberra

¹⁰ Boese, M.(2010). Challenging current policy rationales of regionalising immigration. Paper presented at the Australian Political Science Association Conference, University of Melbourne

¹¹ Taylor, J. (2005), Refugees and regional settlement: win-win?, Paper presented at the Australian Social Policy Conference, 20-22 July

CASE STUDY: Swan Hill Refugee Resettlement Program

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

The Swan Hill refugee program was initiated in 2002 by The Horn of Africa Community Network and Victoria University of Technology

Location:

Swan Hill, Victoria

Program Description:

The program developed out of the frustration of Horn of Africa communities about their high rates of unemployment in Melbourne. A partnership with Murray-Mallee Training was established with the aim of attracting and supporting refugees from the Horn of Africa who were residents in Melbourne to relocate to Swan Hill and work in its growing economy. The initiative was driven by a holistic development strategy that integrated employment, capacity building of the Horn of Africa communities and community development in the Swan Hill area¹².

Key components of the resettlement program included:

- Pre-relocation information tours of Swan Hill
- Pre-relocation training, including job search training, familiarisation with the rural community and preparation for work experience
- Relocation orientation and job placement: Murray-Mallee Training located full-time employment opportunities and assisted in gaining housing, cultural and settlement orientation and support
- Community engagement: promotion of refugee and migrant communities to the region as positive additions

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

Despite the good intentions of the resettlement program in Swan Hill, it encountered a number of hurdles. Due to a lack of consistent, long-term funding for community capacity building, case management support and assistance for families to relocate, the resettlement of refugees to the area did not go as originally planned. Other problems arose out of limited local government support to the project and a lack of organisation within the host community.

However, there are valuable lessons which can be drawn from the Swan Hill experience:

- A partnership between host communities, the refugee community and their advocates is fundamental to establishing a successful refugee relocation project
- Local government needs to play a significant role
- Planning for housing demand is critical
- Ongoing financial support must be sufficient

For more information:

Read the independent evaluation of the project funded by VicHealth

http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/Relocation_RefugeeSettleJune07.pdf

¹² McDonald, Brooke; Gifford, Sandy; Webster, Kim; Wiseman, John; Casey, Sue. (2008) Refugee Resettlement in Regional and Rural Victoria: Impacts and Policy Issues, Report Commissioned by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

CASE STUDY: Passport to Drive

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT) Passport to Drive Program

Location:

Darwin, NT

Program Description:

The Passport To Drive program is a driver education, training and mentoring program, unique to the Northern Territory, designed to assist recently arrived refugees to become safe and competent drivers and attain their driver's licenses in a cost-effective and timely manner.

There is considerable demand for driver's licences in newly arrived refugee and migrant communities in the Top End of the Northern Territory. A lack of the driver's licence is a barrier to meaningful education, employment and training opportunities. For newly arrived migrants and refugees in particular, a driver's licence facilitates social participation.

Length of Program:

This project initiated during 2010 and successfully running to date.

Funding Source:

This project was originally funded by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) through the Settlements Grants Program (SGP).

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

For newly arrived migrants and refugees, having a driver's license increases the chances of finding and maintaining employment and improves their overall quality of life.

MCNT Passport to Drive project officer, Nitesh Raj Pant explains, "Having a driver's license is also an important of settlement for refugees and migrants because it gives them familiarity with our community and increases their employment opportunities".

For more information:

Contact Kellie Marks, ICAE Training Manager, and the ICAE website address of <http://icae.edu.au/> or MCNT <http://www.mcnt.org.au/>

3. Lack of work experience and knowledge of Australian workplace culture

For newly arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds a lack of work experience in Australia and/or their desired field of work is a major barrier to employment. With no professional networks in their new location, migrant and refugee jobseekers may find it difficult to connect with employers, requiring the assistance of support services.

Traineeships and work experience programs targeted specifically for migrants and people from refugee backgrounds are lacking. There have been many successful work experience programs that connect job seekers to potential employers that can be replicated on a larger scale. For some employers, however, the health and safety costs of providing work experience for migrants and people of refugee backgrounds may be unfeasible.

Although migrants and people from refugee backgrounds may have pre-migration work experience in their chosen field, employers are still reluctant to hire those who do not have host country work experience, which often leaves job seekers struggling to break into the Australian workplace market¹³.

Additionally, many newly arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds have only a limited understanding of Australian workplace culture and consequently may experience difficulty in adjusting effectively to some workplaces¹⁴.

Recommendations:

- 5) SCOA recommends provision of more funding to settlement service providers to develop work experience programs for migrants and refugees.
- 6) SCOA recommends employment services providers develop a promotional campaign promoting the benefits of creating work experience programs to employers.
- 7) SCOA recommends research on how employers can more easily and cost-effectively access liability insurance for work experience programs.
- 8) SCOA recommends the advancement of development workplace mentor programs for refugees and migrants.
- 9) SCOA recommends that focus should be placed on employment services accurately identifying a job seeker's capacity to ensure they are placed in a stream with the appropriate level of employment assistance.
- 10) SCOA recommends that employment services replicate existing reverse marketing programs that use a social enterprise model to actively promote candidates' life-skills and experiences to prospective employers.

¹³ Mahmud et al., 2014

¹⁴ Hugo, G. 2011, Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrant, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australian Government

CASE STUDY: Work & Welcome Program

Organisation/Settlement Program:

Work & Welcome is run in partnership with fourteen schools and two corporate partners, and the Multicultural Development Association (MDA Ltd), which handles the program administration, nominates candidates, supports participants and helps them find work after they complete the program.

Location:

Brisbane, Toowoomba and Yeppoon

Program Description:

Work & Welcome offers new Australians short-term paid work opportunities at a local school or corporate employer, providing participants with valuable work experience in a supportive Australian work environment as an important step towards finding ongoing employment. The participants work in a variety of areas at the hosting workplace and develop new skills and confidence while building support networks and learning about Australian workplace culture.

Length of Program:

Full-time work placement for the duration of a school term, or 10 to 12 weeks. The program began in 1993 with a shift of focus to helping refugees and migrants in 2000; MDA has been a program partner since 2010.

Funding Source:

Voluntary donations from staff at participating workplaces administered as regular payroll deductions.

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

The program has employed over 80 refugees and migrants since 2000 with participants coming from around 20 different countries. More than 80% of people participating in the program since MDA's involvement have gained ongoing employment post-program or have enrolled in further study and training. These outcomes have gone a long way to restoring the hope and dignity of program participants and setting them off to a successful work life in Australia.

For newly arrived migrants and refugees, this highly successful program highlights the importance of having local work experience when trying to secure suitable employment. Participants are also able to build strong professional and personal relationships with staff, students and parents at the schools and gain a sense of connectedness with the community.

Work & Welcome won the 2014 Premier's Cultural Diversity Award in the Education and Training category.

Personal Story:

Nasrin arrived in Australia as a refugee from Iran in 2011 and successfully applied for a position at Mt St Michaels College, a girls' secondary school in Brisbane's inner west suburb of Ashgrove, under the Work & Welcome program. Since taking part in the program, a world of new opportunities has opened up for her.

'Before I got a job through the Work & Welcome program, it was very hard to find employment. I had no work experience in Australia,' said Nasrin, who is a trained IT professional.

'Having this work experience has helped me a lot. I worked for three months as a reception and administration worker and learned many new skills.'

The program also helped Nasrin demonstrate to her colleagues the full range of her talents.

'I got to speak to other staff about my IT qualifications and employment experience in Iran, and was able to demonstrate to them some of my skills. They all know now what I can do. The school offered me a contract as an IT support worker once I finished Work & Welcome. Now I'm doing work that I was trained to do ... It's great.'

For more information:

<http://www.mdainc.org.au/?q=work-welcome>

CASE STUDY: Work Ready Project

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

The Work Ready Project is run by Whittlesea City Council

Location:

Whittlesea, Melbourne

Program Description:

The Work Ready program supports newly-arrived non-student migrants and refugees in the Whittlesea municipality to become ready for the workforce.

The Work Ready Program creates meaningful work experience placements to overcome the employment challenges and lack of Australian work experience faced by migrants and people from refugee backgrounds. It also builds participants skills, networks and confidence to help participants go on to pursue and secure a job in the wider community. Types of Work Ready placements include: civic administration, community services, engineering and transportation, financial services and human resources to name a few.

Candidates are screened and interviewed and their skills matched to specific employers who provide employment pathways through on-the-job training opportunities.

Length of Program:

12 week placement (2 days per week)

Funding Source:

Whittlesea City Council

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

Since the program was introduced 56 people have participated and 21 of them have since been employed in Australia including 10 within Council in their chosen field on a full or part-time basis. Participants were able to apply their overseas skills and experience in a local context and build strong professional networks that will help them to find and maintain suitable employment or further study or training in the future.

Personal Story

Work Ready Project Officer, Madeleine Nguidjol, said: "Our Work Ready Participants are highly skilled and qualified individuals. We've placed people with a range of professional backgrounds, including civil engineering, marketing and communications, community planning and information technology."

A skilled migrant originally from France, Madeleine knows first-hand about the difficulties new migrants can face in finding work in Australia.

"I am very grateful, having done my own work experience with the City of Whittlesea before achieving my current job. As a skilled migrant desperately looking for my first job in Australia, I was given the chance. Giving people like me the same opportunities that I was given is really rewarding," Madeleine said.

For more information:

<http://www.findyourbalance.com.au/career-pathways/work-ready.asp>

4. Lack of education and training

A barrier to employment for newly arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds is a lack of education and training. Those who wish to settle in Australia bring with them varying levels of education based on their pre-migration experiences. Many have limited or no previous formal education, while some may have experienced a disruption to their education due to time spent in refugee camps or in detention. Job seekers who haven't worked in their chosen field in a long time may need gap training in order to find employment.

Migrants and people from refugee backgrounds may also experience issues with access to education and training due to family commitments, cost, living in remote areas and limited access to transport.

Those who have made the commitment to relocate to Australia often pursue further education in an effort to increase their chances of employment and/or connect with Jobactive providers that run specific programs aimed at creating employment pathways. While there are a number of training programs 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.

Recommendations:

- 1) SCOA recommends that focus should be placed on accurately identifying client's education and training needs and gaps to build their capacities to obtain long-term employment.
- 2) SCOA recommends training programmes be opened to all migrants and refugees.
- 3) SCOA recommends provision of greater support for clients with family commitments undertaking education or training (ie – child care or carer support).
- 4) SCOA recommends improving access to technological resources that allows for distance education and training by allowing the Employment Pathway Fund to assist with this access.
- 5) SCOA recommends that employment service provider's refugee client's access to education and training is a priority over fulfilling Work for the Dole requirements and this is formally adopted by the Department of Employment as a practice.
- 6) SCOA recommends a greater focus be placed on helping clients post education and training connect with employers.

CASE STUDY: Family Day Care Village

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

Communicare, Family Day Care Village Program

Location:

Cannington, WA

Program Description:

The Family Day Care Village Program began seven years ago when Communicare Family and Employment Services in Western Australia identified a need for affordable accommodation suitable for the purpose of Family Day Care. The initial plan was to set up a family day care business for women from CALD backgrounds to help them gain financial independence while allowing them to move into affordable housing.

With the help of Communicare six two-story houses were built in which a family lived and ran a family day care centre for up to 5 children. The program included a training course in which participating women could not only improve their English skills but attain knowledge and skills necessary to work with children. Through this innovative program, women from CALD backgrounds were able to attain a qualification, form lasting links with the community and eventually be in a position to own their own homes.

Length of Program:

Usually families would stay in the program for 2-3 years.

Funding Source:

Communicare funded the project, building the houses on land that they already owned.

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

The Family Day Care Village Program ensures long-term affordable rental as participants are given a three-year lease. During the lease, they are encouraged to save up for a housing deposit, leading to eventual home ownership. By providing women with the opportunity to participate in vocational training courses, they were able to successfully plan and run their own business. To date 18 women have completed the program with some of them going on to gain further qualifications in childcare.

Personal Story – Sara

Sara is a Family Day Care Educator who lives, and runs her own business, in the Communicare Family Day Care Village. Originally a refugee from Somalia, she has now obtained her Cert III license in childcare and is a licensed Family Day Care Educator.

“I would be happy enough to be able to find a job in childcare, but this is so much better- I’m actually running my own business and making money for the family. Best of all, I enjoy it, it doesn’t even feel like work”

Prior to the program, Sara went through the arduous process of looking for private rental, to no avail. She faced a recurring series of rejections.

“My husband and I went for so many home opens, about six every week for a few months. We filled in countless forms but kept on getting rejected.”

“And then there’s the cost of rent as well. Now I’ve found such a beautiful place to stay, managing my own business... it’s a great feeling. It really is. I’m looking forward to buying a house to call my own and continuing to operate my business.”

“I know not many people are as lucky as me.”

For more information:

Contact Communicare <http://www.communicare.org.au/>

CASE STUDY: Construction Training Course

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

Introductory Construction Course delivered by the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Southern Tasmania with support from OnRoad OffRoad Training and Connect Employment Support Services

Location:

Glenorchy, Tasmania (OnRoad OffRoad Training facility)

Program Description:

The training program gives migrant job seekers an opportunity to participate in a Certificate I Construction Course to accompany their English language study. Students from the Adult Migrant English Program at TasTAFE worked towards their qualifications through a two week training course which included participants from Burma, Bhutan and Sudan.

The course included an introduction to the construction industry, completion of a 'White card', reading and interpreting plans, measurements and calculations and completion of a practical project. The practical project involved students working together to accurately measure a boundary for a fence, ordering appropriate materials and constructing the fence.

Length of Program:

2 week Training course

Funding Source:

The program was made possible with funding from Skills Tasmania's Equity Grants Program.

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

This training program has given migrants from CALD backgrounds an opportunity to gain practical skills in the construction industry as well as Australian work experience which will aid them in finding suitable employment in the future. Some of the participants have shown a keen interest in pursuing a career in the construction industry following the training course.

Personal Story – Justine Duku & Lal Monger

For Justine Duku "The course was a great opportunity to learn and understand OHS, the use of hand tools and Australian industry language. More importantly I found I worked well in a team environment which I've never done before."

Lal Monger, another participant of the program, found the experience to be very helpful in his quest for future employment. "I'm sure will help me in life in general. Fantastic course, especially the trainers who taught us heaps."

For more information:

<http://www.mrchobart.org.au>

5. Issues with recognition of prior learning and qualifications

Many migrants and people from refugee backgrounds face difficulties in having prior learning and qualifications recognised in Australia. This results in higher levels of unemployment within migrant groups. By not recognising prior learning and qualifications, Australia is underutilising the potential human capital that migrants and people from refugee backgrounds offer while limiting their potential productivity. Many are under-employed with a mismatch in their skills and occupation being concentrated in lower-status jobs.¹⁵ The process of having qualifications recognised requires financial resources and is viewed as excessively complex, especially for new arrivals unfamiliar with the Australian system and lacking adequate English skills.¹⁶

Migrants coming to Australia through the Skilled Migrants Stream usually suffer downward mobility in employment based on the skills, qualifications and work experience they attained in their home country. It can take a number of years before skilled migrants are able to work in their field of expertise and even longer to reach employment of equal status to what they are used to. The ability of migrants to reach their potential in the Australian workplace market is greatly reduced by not recognising the full extent of their skills and qualifications.

Recommendations:

- 1) SCOA recommends that effort be made to remove the complexity in the process of obtaining recognition of overseas qualifications. While we recognise this issue is difficult we do believe it is made more complex than necessary.
- 2) SCOA recommends improving information and communication on how to navigate the process of obtaining overseas qualification for migrants and people of refugee backgrounds.
- 3) SCOA recommends expanding the occupations eligible for the VETASSESS Migrant Skills Recognition Service (MSRS) beyond skilled tradespeople occupations.¹⁷
- 4) SCOA recommends early identification of clients needing skills upgrading (ie-bridging courses) to obtain recognition of overseas qualifications.
- 5) SCOA recommends more specialised targeted assistance to link refugee and migrants with suitable pathways to qualification recognition (for example, re-engaging with former professions or career planning).
- 6) SCOA recommends working with employers to develop work experience programs connected with skills recognition.

¹⁵ Colic-Peisker, V. and Tilbury, F., 2007. Refugees and Employment: the Effect of Visible Difference on Discrimination: Final Report. Murdoch University, Western Australia. <http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/docs/refugeesandemployment.pdf>

¹⁶ Hugo 2011

¹⁷ VETASSESS, 'Migrant Skills Recognition Service', viewed June 2014, <http://www.vetassess.com.au/Skills-Assessment/Migrant-Skills-Recognition-Service-MSRS>

CASE STUDY: Overseas Qualified Engineers Project

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

Developed by the Employment Working Group of the Fairfield Emerging Communities Action Partnership and delivered by Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (FMRC) and STARTTS

Location:

Fairfield LGA, NSW

Program Description:

This was a pilot project that engaged qualified engineers of Sydney South West to deliver information sessions to migrants with overseas engineering qualifications. The sessions included information on how to obtain recognition of prior learning and qualifications, addressing gaps in training, orientation to the sector in Australia, updating CVs and other job search skills. If required participants were referred to TAFE for English language assessment and many enrolled in full-time language courses. Industry competitive engineers were referred to a partnering employment agency, Skilled Employment.

Length of Program:

The pilot project ran for a seven week period.

Funding Source:

Flexible Funding Project, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

26 participants attended the information sessions. 71 persons passed resumes and copies of credentials to Assyrian Resource Centre for review. These were all reviewed and updated over the following 2 months. Free language level assessments were offered by SWSI TAFE. A significant number (at least 7 at end of funded period) were assessed and some subsequently enrolled in additional language study. 24 took up TAFE offer of 'informal' qualification recognition.

Further information sessions were delivered on Overseas Qualification Recognition (TAFE) online tool, Engineering Pathways to Local Govt (Fairfield Council), Pathways to non-Engineering careers (Dept Ed, NSW), Australian Workplace Culture (Overseas Trained Professionals Network).

Participants were also invited in August to a Sydney Heritage Fleet 'fleet discovery day' for volunteer induction (6 attended). One participant subsequently volunteered and was employed in the same industry a few weeks later. The cohort was also referred to the UTS Engineering open day and a 'Manufacturing Excellence' info day at Miller TAFE in August.

Personal Story:

One project participant found formally supervised work in the building industry which allowed him to study a Building and Construction Cert IV at TAFE. This qualification, in conjunction with a Diploma obtained while working under supervision of a licensed builder, will allow him to obtain a builders licence. The Project was able to pay for his course and materials fees for one semester. The Head Teacher of his course was able to provide an assessment recognising his prior learning (RPL). This has meant the student now only has to attend the course one evening per week instead of four.

For more information:

Contact Simon Emsley, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, 02 9727 0477, cdac@fmrc.net or Gary Cachia, Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, Ph. 02 9794 1900, Gary.Cachia@swsahs.nsw.gov.au

CASE STUDY: Skilled Professional Migrants Program

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

AMES, Skilled Professional Migrants Program

Location:

AMES Flagstaff, Melbourne

Program Description:

AMES's Skilled Professional Migrants Program is a four week intensive employment orientation program for professionally qualified migrants. The program specifically targets the real difficulties that can prevent skilled professional migrants from successfully entering the job market.

Length of Program:

4 week intensive course which runs Monday to Thursday. New courses start every 4 to 6 weeks

Funding Source:

Partly funded through Victorian Government subsidies and partly by the participants

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

The Skilled Professional Migrants Program aids participants in preparation of resumes and job applications, interview skills and networking. The program also aims to develop participants' understanding of the Australian job market and workplace culture.

The program has resulted in most of its participants securing a job which properly reflects their qualifications and work experience in their home countries by addressing the employment barriers that newly arrived migrants face during the first few years of settlement in Australia.

Personal Story

Mechanical Engineer from Iran, male:

"You know actually the first thing was understanding the working culture. The teachers explained what happens in the job market and the workplace. I found out about writing a resume in Australia. The interview skills, this was very important. Also all the guys who attended had the same situation. We helped each other, this was teamwork. The teachers helped us so much, they were very kind.

Jacky, IT Engineer from China, male:

Jacky has a Masters in Computer Science and had worked in Shanghai as a database administrator for two large companies over eight years. His hope was to find similar work in Australia.

On arrival Jacky applied for many jobs in his field but was not successful. He attributes this to having "poor job hunting knowledge" and no local work experience.

He enrolled in the Skilled Professional Migrants Program in January 2011, having learned about it online. The program was effective from Jacky's point of view.

"I understood the employment market better after the course. I improved my employment skills and my language skills."

Three months after completing the SPMP, Jacky applied online for a job with a government department in New South Wales. He was successful and now works full time in a permanent role as an IT Engineer Officer for the NSW Government.

"What I am doing is what I like and what I am good at. The position is pretty stable and I can improve."

For more information:

[http://www.ames.net.au/ames-course-detail/skilled-professional-migrants-program-\(spmp\)/68](http://www.ames.net.au/ames-course-detail/skilled-professional-migrants-program-(spmp)/68)

6. Lack of job readiness skills

Finding suitable employment can often take time for anyone. It is especially difficult for those who do not have job readiness skills. Migrants and people from refugee backgrounds often lack job readiness skills that are required to sell their skills to potential employers and successfully secure employment. They are usually not familiar with the processes for finding and applying for jobs in Australia as these processes can vary from culture to culture.

Both newly arrived migrants and refugees and those who have been settled longer may need assistance in acquiring skills to find suitable employment. Those who have been settled longer may have recently undertaken training or finished their education in a new field and are unfamiliar with finding a job in their new professional area.

Job readiness skills they may need to acquire include knowing where to look for jobs and how to network within their employment area. They may also need to learn job applying skills such as how to prepare a job application, CV and properly address selection criteria. Others may be able to navigate these processes and but need to learn interview skills.

Recommendations

- 1) SCOA recommends greater provision of funding resources for job readiness programs for migrants and people of refugee backgrounds.

CASE STUDY: Steps to Work Pilot Program

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

The Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT) coordinated the Steps to Work pilot program. It was delivered by Darwin's International College of Advanced Education.

Location:

Darwin, NT

Program Description:

The Steps to Work program provided migrants and people from refugee backgrounds the opportunity to access job readiness training. It aimed to help participants find jobs appropriate for their skills, needs and desired careers. It also offered opportunities to undertake work experience.

- Program participants learned about the Australian and local Darwin labour market.
- They identified their employable skills and strengths and learned how to sell them to prospective employers.
- They were educated on how to find and access job opportunities.
- Practical guidance was provided on job application preparation including CV writing and how to prepare for interviews.
- Training requirements of selected industries were identified and participants mapped out how to acquire these skills and training.

Darwin's International College of Advanced Education delivers the program offering seven nationally accredited units.

The course facilitates work experience placements with employers and site visits to employers.

The MCNT plans to run this course again in the near future.

Funding Source:

The Steps to Work pilot was an NT Government funded program.

MCNT's Program Manager Ron Mitchell explains, "Steps to Work is about helping migrants and refugees finding meaningful employment. It is a great example of how State Government funding can make a real difference in the lives of migrants and people of refugee backgrounds."

For more information:

Contact MCNT's Program Manager Ron Mitchell - <http://www.mcnt.org.au/>

7. Discrimination and exploitation

Discrimination against migrant and refugee jobseekers is still a common barrier faced today in the Australian workplace market. 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 hired¹⁸.

Unfortunately it is still commonplace for employers to discriminate against people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Recent studies show that employers regularly discriminate against job applicants with 'non-Anglo' names, even when their CV is identical to those with Anglo-Saxon names¹⁹.

Due to cultural differences, especially from non-English speaking background people, employers are less likely to hire migrants and people from refugee backgrounds over native English speakers. There has been research that indicates discrimination amongst Asian and non-Asian migrants with the former facing more difficulties in finding employment during the first few years of settlement²⁰.

Exploitation of newly arrived migrants and people from refugee backgrounds is also a problem commonly faced in the Australian workplace. Many CALD, refugee and international student workers suffer poor conditions of employment including being underpaid and overworked.

Recommendations:

- 1) 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
- 2) SCOA recommends that more effort be made to ensure the rights of migrants and refugees are supported by employment laws

¹⁸ Hugo, 2011

¹⁹ Booth, A., Leigh, A., Varganova, E. (2010). Does Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence From a Field Experiment, *Economics Letters*, Vol.107, No.2

²⁰ Paul, Satya; Junankar, P. N. (Raja); Yasmeen, Wahida (2004) : Are Asian Migrants Discriminated Against in the Labour Market? : A Case Study of Australia, IZA Discussion paper series, No. 1167

CASE STUDY: Given the Chance

Organisation/ Settlement Program:

Brotherhood of St Laurence

Location:

Various locations in the Melbourne area. This case study located at ANZ Dandenong.

Program Description:

Given the Chance™ (GtC) is an adaptable employment program designed for refugees and or asylum seekers who are ready to enter the workforce but lack the local experience required to gain employment. As part of the program candidates take part in a 2-3 week workplace preparation program where they learn necessary skills to gaining and sustaining employment at ANZ.

Length of Program:

6months/ 16 weeks dependant on the position

Successful Outcomes and Learnings:

Given the Chance Program educates ANZ on the benefits of employing people from diverse backgrounds. Placement led to candidates securing ongoing employment with the employer.

Personal Story

Peter Gak:

Born during war time in Sudan in 1989 Peter's first few years of life saw him and his family flee. When it was safe to do so in 1993, they returned to Sudan where he and his family faced further challenges. In a time of terrible drought Peter recalls there being little assistance from the Sudanese government and recalls losing so many people to famine and dehydration. In 1998 Peter's father chose Peter from all of his sons to join the army. Peter's time as a boy soldier was short as he sought refuge at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Here he completed his entire primary school education and his passion for mathematics began.

Eager to learn more Peter applied to study high school but had his application approved and moved to Australia to live with his nephew. Committed to building himself a better life, Peter enrolled himself in Certificate III in Accounting and Finance. Finding it difficult to survive on the assistance provide by UNHCR and the minimal job opportunities in Traralgon, Victoria Peter decided to complete his security licence and move to Melbourne.

Whilst seeking a job in the security industry Peter approached the Brotherhood's Security Traineeship program. Upon meeting with the programs recruitment coordinator Peter was identified as being better suited to the ANZ Given the Chance program. To gain an opportunity with ANZ, Peter attended a three week pre-employment course where he learnt about workplace communication, Australian workplace culture and what to expect at ANZ.

Upon completing his training Peter secured himself a 6 month contract at ANZ. Almost 12 months later Peter is still working at ANZ and is currently the teller making the most business referrals. Peter is very thankful for the opportunity and considers himself lucky as it's not an opportunity that everyone can get. Peter hopes that one day he can return to Sudan and improve the way they bank.

For more information:

<http://www.bsl.org.au/services/refugees-and-settlement/employment/given-the-chance/>

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