



## Settlement Council of Australia

### AT A GLANCE



#### Target Participants

Refugee and migrant women



#### Aim

To support participants to complete vocational training, find work and participate in activities that lead to employment



#### Organisations Involved

AMRC, TAFE SA, employment service providers, employers, skills recognition authorities



#### Location

Adelaide, SA



#### Funding

Australian Government Try Test and Learn Fund (TTL)



### CASE STUDY

## Australian Migrant Resource Centre

The Australian Migrant Resource Centre's (AMRC) 'Women's Employment into Action' (WEIA) started in March 2019. The project supports migrant and refugee women to complete vocational training and find work or participate in activities that are pathways to employment in the care sector. Intensive case management and tailored support were crucial to the project's success.

### About the program

The WEIA project was developed to address barriers refugee and migrant women may face in entering the workforce or undertaking vocational training.

These barriers can include low levels of English language proficiency; lack of Australian work experience and networks; difficulty obtaining recognition for overseas qualifications; lack of knowledge of local workplace requirements; and family responsibilities and caring roles. Activities undertaken as part of the project included

- **Mentoring** – working with women to identify and address their individual needs and barriers, and developing a personal learning plan for each participant. Women were constantly engaged through workshops, one-on-one mentor sessions, phone 'check-ins' and email
- Specific, non-accredited training designed by AMRC that addressed soft skills employers are looking for, how to apply for jobs, different work cultures, online applications, updating resumes, cultural understanding and understanding how the care industry works. A creche service was made available to support participation of women with young children.
- In partnership with TAFE SA, delivering **culturally appropriate accredited training** in Certificate III in Individual Support, and developing formal accreditations for those who were not qualified to do a Certificate III in Individual Support
- **Linking with employers**, including a number of aged care and disability sector employers to connect women to work experience and employment opportunities.
- Working with **employment service providers** to recruit and support women in the program, including by providing case management support, subsidizing petrol and transport and work uniforms, and assisting with updating police and other checks required for work.
- Working with skills recognition authorities and TAFE SA to obtain **advice on the recognition of overseas qualifications** and Recognition of Prior Learning.



- **Cultural awareness training was also provided to employers** who were hiring the participants. Some employers requested this training for all of their staff

Individualised and tailored support was central to the success of the project. AMRC facilitated this by providing holistic mentoring and case management, as well as by screening participants and developing four cohorts based on their qualifications and experience in the care sector, and their ACSF literacy, language and numeracy levels. The program is only in its 18 months with the last 8 months having to deal with the added challenge of COVID-19 which affected, employment, work experience and accredited training.

## Challenges

Challenges have included:

1. The program received a high level of interest from women and men in the community – 267 expressions of interest were received, but the program had limited capacity.
2. One off funding for the project limits its ability to continue its successes.
3. Engaging with employers was challenging for refugee and migrant women especially in regards to negotiating complex HR systems.
4. The level of work required to provide individualised support and address often complex needs (such as family violence, child care during work experience, housing needs etc) were often outside the project's scope and funding, despite the centrality of this work to the project's success



## Outcomes

Despite the relatively short time within which the program has been running, the program has enjoyed great success. Notable outcomes include:

1. 44 participants engaged in employment and volunteering in the first year of the project (despite the employment outcome and/or work experience being also highly affected by COVID-19 restrictions over the past 8 months)
2. 52 participants engaged in formal education or training
3. 101 participants completed the pre-vocational training
4. Participants had greater confidence, reduced isolation, improved mental health outcomes, built social and professional networks, and were able to embrace professional development while supporting their families
5. Participants were able to engage in other activities because of the project. For example, some women went on to study other courses such as understanding dementia, child safe environments, DV alert and other further professional training such as nursing, Food processing, Community services, Social Work etc.

The WEIA project has received significant positive feedback from participants, with one participant saying:

*“This has been life changing for me, I have been trying to find work for two years with no success and the information I got from the training at AMRC helped me so much. Just knowing I was not alone in my journey helped my confidence too”*



## Key Learnings

### This experience has generated three key learnings for AMRC

1. Intensive case management and mentoring, provided by experienced and culturally competent staff, was key to assisting participants to obtain a qualification and either find employment or a pathway to employment.
2. The focus on one vocational training course rather than a range of courses was helpful because women from a range of backgrounds and levels of experience could be recruited according to their interests and experiences in the care sector, and time and resources could focus on the experience of the women, rather than absorbed in the administrative load that multiple courses from multiple providers would bring.
3. Staff had to be flexible and adjust and adapt their resources to meet individual women's needs, including supporting changes in family life and women's personal circumstances. The project shows that needs across the full spectrum of settlement are inseparable from employment outcomes.
4. The need for understanding of the backgrounds of refugees and migrants is paramount in providing successful employment services.

### More information

AMRC presented on the Women's Employment into Action project at SCoA's *Settlement in Practice: Education and Training* webinar. To view the webinar, visit: <http://scoa.org.au/settlement-best-practice/settlement-practice-education-training-webinar/>.

In addition, the Hugo Centre for Population and Housing, University of Adelaide recently published 'An evaluation of the Australian Migrant Resource Centre Women's Employment into Action' in August 2020. For a copy of the report, please contact the AMRC at [admin@amrc.org.au](mailto:admin@amrc.org.au).

