



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

People from migrant and refugee backgrounds



Aim

To support migrants and refugees to start their own businesses, improve their employment opportunities, elevate their English skills, and generate business enterprises.



Organisations Involved

Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Multicultural Futures, Business Foundations, and North Metropolitan TAFE- AMEP.



Location

Perth, WA



Funding

Department of Social Services, 'Try Test and Learn' Initiative.

CASE STUDY

Multicultural Enterprise Development Project - MMRC

The Multicultural Enterprise Development Project (MED) uses business-centred training as a key tool to support people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to improve their employment outcomes.

Nearly all MED participants have faced various barriers to employment, long term exclusion from the workforce, welfare dependency and difficulty in accessing culturally appropriate training. The MED project enables them to overcome these barriers by offering a structured and unique program which combines business and employment training, English language teaching, practical work experience, and professional support.

"At the beginning I was very shy to speak with you in English, but with time I felt very comfortable to speak in English with you and other people outside." - Participant

The project is run by the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) in partnership with Multicultural Futures and delivery organisations including North Metropolitan TAFE-AMEP and Business Foundations.

About the program

The MED offers two streams for participants, each catering to different business and employment needs:

- The Collective Enterprise stream; and
- The Individual Enterprise stream

The Collective Enterprise stream

The Collective Enterprise stream teaches business skills and improves English proficiency through participants running social enterprises as a group. The program embeds English language learning and individual support alongside practical experience in running a social enterprise. The Collective Enterprise stream also gives participants the tools and support to pursue further education and training pathways as well as reducing social isolation.



The program is held at TAFE Balga campus with both interpreters and a free crèche service available.

The Collective Enterprise stream has, to date, developed two active social enterprises in Perth. 'Sisters on a Mission' is a catering team that cooks and delivers international multicultural dishes. 'The World Music Café' is a social enterprise, coordinated by Multicultural Futures, where participants perform on stage, organise and manage events, and work in the kitchen preparing food from all over the world. The World Music Café celebrates the musical skills of participants from all different backgrounds, while supporting their skill development and networking.

"I was very happy to cook for many people and hear from them that they like my food ... it made me very happy."

Individual Enterprise Stream

The individual enterprise stream aims to deliver a culturally competent version of the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS). NEIS is a national program that fosters self-employment for individuals through accredited small business training, mentoring and support. This version of the NEIS includes additional in-class support and a CALD tailored NEIS syllabus.

Some of the business ventures established by participants include:

- a media company – the 'Great Bailey Production Company'
- a health food company that uses only Southern African ingredients and recipes
- a niche motorcycle performance parts importing company
- a babysitting and childcare company that hires 'nannas' from diverse backgrounds who are 55 years of age and older
- an IT literacy training company for Arabic speaking clients
- a Chinese language and cultural studies program which is open to people from Australian and Chinese backgrounds



Participant's Stories and Feedback

Jessica Bailey

Jessica owns and operates her own production company called 'Sona Images' which specialises in corporate and non-fiction photography and videography. A great example of her business success is her recently being awarded funding and a partnership with ScreenWest to create content for high-traffic viewing at Yagan Square in Perth. The work shown was a documentary about an African-Australian medical worker who has a mental illness.

Rumbidzai Mudzengi

Zimbabwean-born Rumbidzai Mudzengi, was supported to start her own business to address a gap in the retail market for women of colour to find makeup for their skin tones. For decades, makeup brands have largely geared their products towards people with light to medium skin tones, mostly neglecting those with deeper complexions. Rumbidzai had experienced the lack of diversity first-hand and was determined to help girls and women of colour embrace their skin. With business training, support and mentoring from MMRC and its delivery partner Business Foundations, Ms Mudzengi started running her own makeup workshops. Ms Mudzengi's workshops and makeup artistry have already proved highly popular for women of colour of all ages.

Challenges

There was considerable co-design and tailoring required to develop the new program streams. Changes to delivery of long established mainstream programs, such as NEIS and AMEP required considerable negotiation, flexibility and cooperation with North Metropolitan TAFE and Business Foundations.

For the Social Enterprise, a key challenge was to embed accredited English language units within a suitable small business education program considering the specific needs of participants who were from different language groups and education backgrounds. This was addressed in conjunction with North Metropolitan TAFE – AMEP with a unique and tailored hybrid program which included interpreters and creche facilities.

For the NEIS program, there was a need to tailor aspects of the program including additional business support, longer course delivery, and simplified syllabus.

Working with partners to navigate these challenges has ultimately resulted in an optimised experience for people from CALD and refugee backgrounds.

Currently, the greatest challenge is that the demand for the program exceeds capacity, with a current wait list of 32 people interested in participating in the program.



Outcomes

Since the commencement of the MED project in March 2019:

- two successful social enterprises have been established and are actively trading;
- approximately 20 new successful individual enterprises under the NEIS stream have been created; and
- 160 participants have been engaged in the project.

Participants have improved their English language proficiency, built their job-readiness, moved into part time or full time employment, or pursued further training. The program embeds new learnings following each new cohort intake to continue to improve the program's effectiveness.

Key Learnings

This experience has generated three key learnings:

1. People of migrant and refugee backgrounds are eager to start small businesses, and a key barrier between them having their idea and then actually starting their own business venture is access to culturally competent business education, employment and training programs.
2. People of migrant and refugee backgrounds have business ideas and access to market niches that are innovative and unlikely to be duplicated by others.
3. The program demonstrates significant improvements in the employment outcomes of participants and the benefits of investing in culturally competent and tailored business training, employment and work experience programs which meet the needs of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

More information

For more information, visit:

<http://mmrcwa.org.au/programs/multicultural-enterprise-development-project>

<http://worldmusiccafe.com.au/>

