



Settlement Council of Australia

AT A GLANCE

**Target Participants**

New migrants and refugees

**Aim**

To facilitate employment opportunities, and build entrepreneurial skills and experiences

**Organisations Involved**

MercyCare, City of Stirling, The Square Mirrabooka Shopping Centre, Fare Go Food Truck, Propel Youth Arts. Edmund Rice Centre, Save the Children and Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

**Location**

Perth, WA

**Funding**

Department of Home Affairs (Fostering Integration), Mirrabooka Shopping Centre, Office of Multicultural Interests, Lotterywest grant and City of Stirling Grants, MercyCare CEO Innovation Fund and Indigenous Money Network.

CASE STUDY

Employment, Micro Enterprise and Livelihoods Projects

MercyCare, alongside a range of partners, have developed a model to support newly arrived migrants and refugees to access suitable employment by offering a range of pathways. This includes employment streams, including employer matching and work via social enterprises, and a microenterprise pathways. The project is a collaboration between different service providers and local businesses and initiatives, and collaboration has been key to the success of the program.

MercyCare, Save the Children and Edmund Rice Centre deliver a range of key services, including employment support through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program Mirrabooka, WA. However, they identified a need for additional employment support for people who are not eligible for settlement support through SETS. To address this need, they developed a model to support people to enter into various livelihood streams, including Employment and Microenterprise pathways. The clients' needs, including their goals, interests, skills, experience, and family circumstances are first assessed to identify which pathway is most suitable.

Unity Employment Network

The Unity Employment Network was developed through partnership of MercyCare, Red Cross and the Coalition for Asylum Seekers Refugees and Detainees. It offers job readiness preparation including resume support, qualification recognition and training. Through partnerships with mainstream employers, they match job seekers with employers, complete the necessary pre-employment training or skill development, run tailored work experience or traineeship programs, and provide post placement support to workers. Partnerships with businesses such as the Mirrabooka Square shopping centre, corporate gifting sites, manufacturers and employers have contributed to the program's success.



They have found that ‘taster’ experience in different workplaces can help participants experience what a role is like before committing to doing a qualification or taking a job in a particular sector.

Microenterprise project

The Microenterprise project is the other component seeking to provide employment opportunities. The idea for this came about through awareness that workforce employment is not the best for everyone, and some participants may be more interested in running their own businesses or earning an income through small home industry enterprises. MercyCare had identified that traditional small business schemes weren’t always culturally responsive or suitable for the target group, which were mainly women.

To begin the project, MercyCare completed an iterative human centred design process, co-designed with participants, including a community group of around 60 individuals from refugee and new migrant backgrounds, to generate ideas and identify how to create best outcomes. They identified 3 key needs, including recruitment and preparation of appropriate participants to start an enterprise, micro-enterprise training to help women package their business idea and get support to navigate the legal, compliance, finance and marketing aspects of running a business; and channels for selling to open up opportunities for the refugee enterprises to reach a greater range of customers

In response to this, a number of key initiatives were developed. These included:

- Tools for caseworkers to help participants work out what kind of enterprise they want to try, what entrepreneurship is and how they might approach it, such as the **Money in My Hand** tool.
- Partnerships with other services to provide tasters in a range of skills, such as soap making, candle making, sewing, etc. They also set up partnerships with organisations like Business One Stop Shop ([BOSS](#)) to offer free or low-cost workshops in business and marketing.
- The **Mirrabooka Community Markets** were piloted. This provided an easy opportunity for participants to try out selling products at a monthly market stall. During this pilot, basic training was provided, including registering ABN, Safe Food Handling, setting up a stall and packaging. All infrastructure (marquees, access to a commercial kitchen, etc.), was provided for all to host their stall as first-time sellers. They also partnered with Propel Youth Arts to feature multicultural musicians and performers at each event. Providing access to physical infrastructure such as market stalls and commercial kitchen enabled participants to overcome the financial barriers to entry in selling goods and services. The business development supports leading up to the Mirrabooka Community Markets series also gave stallholders the best chance of success both at the markets and beyond. Several participants also benefited from the New Enterprise Investment Scheme (NEIS) multicultural business program which added to their skills.



- A partnership with CARAD which offers participants the chance to gain experience in hospitality through the **FareGo food truck** and other food-based enterprises.
- MercyCare also developed a small enterprise which teaches and pays refugee women to make **Good Habits** gift soap, using oil from MercyCare's own olive grove. They have worked with local manufacturer, St James Supply Co, to produce the soap and a range of corporate gifting partners to sell it. All proceeds from sale of this soap go back into advancing refugee enterprises.
- City Rotary offered their support to the project. Its members contributed to planning and scanning of grants and income sources, as well as volunteer time to support employability workshops and business coaching. Introductions to employers such as the Hyatt Hotel have resulted in successful work experience placements.

Challenges

The challenges of this program have included:

1. **Market Timeline:** The initial timeline between initial grant funding being approved and the Mirrabooka Markets commencing was very short, meaning there was not a lot of time for participants to do all the training needed and prepare their displays. To address this, they have introduced a longer lead time for preparation of the Markets.
2. **Microenterprise demand:** There were high levels of interests from women learning to set up enterprises, more than could be catered for at stalls. They are scoping additional locations to address this.
3. **Ongoing viability -** MercyCare self-funds the Unity Employment Network project and contributed to the overheads for CARAD's food enterprise. They have been able to fund each round of the Mirrabooka Community Markets and associated preparation work through one-off grants. There is a need for dedicated staffing to create platforms (online stores, popup shops, etc) to amplify our migrant entrepreneurs and grow their businesses as well as growing our own enterprises which employ refugees and asylum seekers. They are investigating models to help the markets diversify its income sources and scoping opportunities to leverage volunteer skills.

Outcomes

There are several outcomes from the project:

1. New migrants and refugees that present to MercyCare are provided with opportunities that are best suitable for them.
2. The Mirrabooka Markets have successfully run for 2 years, and are continuing with great success



Key Learnings

This experience has generated 4 key learnings:

1. Many new migrants bring great entrepreneurial spirit and skills from their countries of origin. With some modest support and investment, they can grow enterprises to generate income to support their families.
2. The general public is keen to purchase food, items and services which have a story, and which support a new migrant starting out in business. However, it matters where and how the product is presented and how the story is told. The same item can sell for a much higher markup if packaged and presented well and in a context where people are looking to spend at a higher price point.
3. Resources such as culturally accessible food handling training and other business skills workshops are valuable to new migrants. Most will also benefit from one-on-one support to develop their own business. Participant directed learning with a mentor has proven to work well.
4. Booking out a commercial kitchen for participants to access throughout the project has proved a worthwhile investment. By making it free at the start means that there is a very low barrier to entry to get started. Gradually adding in a co-payment for the kitchen and market stall as their business grows, means participants get used to paying closer to market rates to access resources so that they aren't dependent on subsidised overheads, and can eventually succeed in the open market.

More information

For more information, contact Samira Husic, Manager Multicultural Services at shusic@mercycares.com.au or 0411 053 085. You can find out more about Mirrabooka Community Markets [here](#) ; check out volunteering opportunities to be involved [here](#); buy hand-made lemon myrtle soap [here](#) ; or find out more about the Unity Employment Network [here](#).

