



# Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia)

## Response to the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Inquiry on School to Work Transition

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## About MYAN

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) is the national peak body representing multicultural youth issues.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure that the particular needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised, and to support a coherent and consistent approach to addressing these needs in policy and service delivery. The MYAN undertakes a range of policy and sector development activities, and also supports young people to develop leadership and advocacy skills to influence the national agenda.

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds demonstrate high levels of resilience and resourcefulness and have the potential to be active participants in and contributors to Australian society. However, they can face particular barriers to accessing services and opportunities, including language, culture, limited social capital and unfamiliarity with Australian systems and processes (including the service system), racism and discrimination. These factors can place them at a social and economic disadvantage within Australian society, which can mean they are at higher risk of social and economic isolation. The MYAN believes that a targeted approach to policy and service delivery is essential to addressing these barriers.

The MYAN has recently developed the National Youth Settlement Framework to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia. The Framework includes a set of indicators across four domains, including Economic Participation.

## About this submission

The MYAN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Standing Committee Inquiry into School to Work Transition. This submission does not respond directly to individual terms of reference for this inquiry, but rather highlights the specific challenges faced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in navigating the school to work transition that MYAN would like to bring to the Committee's attention.

This submission provides a national perspective, drawing on the MYAN's breadth of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors across Australia. Education, training and employment transitions are one of the MYAN's policy priorities – consistently identified by both young people and services providers as the most significant issues facing young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

The MYAN sees firsthand the significant challenges facing young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in making successful transitions to work.

This submission focuses on the specific challenges for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and the need for better support and information for this group.

## The needs of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds

One in four young Australians is from a refugee or migrant background.<sup>1</sup> Their engagement as active citizens in Australian society, including their meaningful economic participation, has significant and long-term benefits for them, their families and communities, and for a diverse, socially cohesive Australia.<sup>2</sup>

Across most OECD countries, migrants aged between 15 and 34 take longer to make the transition from school to work than those born locally. Migrants from non-English speaking countries have higher rates of non-involvement in post-school education, training or employment than native born or youth who migrated from English-speaking countries.<sup>3</sup>

Australia has high levels of young people from migrant backgrounds who are not engaged in employment, education and training. Young people born into non-English speaking households account for almost 20% of the total group aged 15 to 29 not in employment, education or training.<sup>4</sup>

Second-generation migrants, by contrast, are no more likely than native-born young people to be not in employment education and training.<sup>5</sup> Migrant employment levels approach those of the Australian-born population after ten years and even surpass them in the second generation.<sup>6</sup> So there are specific issues for young people migrating to Australia that dissipate for the next generation.

In 2016, the Centre for Multicultural Youth found that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds (and their families and communities) lack critical but unseen knowledge and understanding of the links between education and employment in the Australian context. This includes:

- a) information regarding employment pathways,
- b) professional contacts,
- c) understanding of the current job market in Australia, and
- d) knowledge around what kind of skills and experience are required.<sup>7</sup>

Close connections with others from similar backgrounds and cultural connections may create strong, supportive networks and a sense of identity for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, but don't necessarily assist young people to find employment. Recently arrived young people often lack the bridging networks that can help them in the transition to work, despite overwhelmingly reporting that they have friendships with those of culturally diverse backgrounds and know people from different 'walks of life'.<sup>8</sup>

This report noted that a significant factor contributing to employment disadvantage for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds was their limited social and

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<sup>1</sup> MYAN, 2014., The CALD Youth Census Report. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)

<sup>2</sup> MYAN, 2016, National Youth Settlement Framework. Carlton: CMY.

<sup>3</sup> Küchenhoff & Lourie, 2016., The Education and Integration of 16- to 25-Year-Old Refugees and Other Humanitarian Migrants: Examples from Policy and Practice in IGC Participating States. Geneva: Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum & Refugees (IGC).

<sup>4</sup> OECD, 2016., Investing in Youth: Australia. OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Kellock, 2016., The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment. Carlton: CMY.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

professional networks beyond their own (cultural or ethnic) community.<sup>9</sup> Young people from refugee backgrounds have been found to be particularly disadvantaged, lacking professional and social networks beyond their immediate community.<sup>10</sup> Unequal access to social capital has the potential to reinforce inequality of life opportunities for these young people, particularly regarding access to professional careers.

## Examples of programs providing tailored transition support

### Youth Transitions Support Pilot (National)

One important Government initiative focused on supporting young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to transition into training and employment is the Youth Transition Support Pilot (YTSP). In 2015, the Department of Social Services (DSS) announced the Pilot (YTSP) programme to trial new approaches to helping young refugees and vulnerable migrants develop the skills and networks to support their economic and social participation. The Pilot operates out of the DSS Settlement Services area and is delivered by six providers, two each in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

The key elements of this pilot involve employment preparation, access and support to engage in education and training, as well as social engagement through sporting participation as participants extend their networks. Strategies being trialled include working in partnership with local government Economic Development units, corporate mentoring projects, industry bodies, and social enterprises, as well as tailored employment preparation strategies.

The MYAN plays a national support role to the Pilot, overseeing the independent evaluation and supporting a Community of Practice among the providers.

### Refugee Employment Support Program (New South Wales)

While not specifically youth-focused, this four-year \$22 million initiative by the NSW Government, managed by the NSW Department of Industry, addresses the challenges refugees and asylum seekers face in finding long term skilled employment opportunities.

Some of the specific services offered that are of relevance to the youth cohort include:

- Language training - with participants enrolled in a relevant language training course.
- Education and Training - enrolments in skills training or higher education.
- Mentoring.
- Assistance relating to basic employability skills, such as interview preparation and understanding Australian workplace culture and norms.
- Work Experience - with one or more employers.

### Pathways to Opportunity (Victoria)

This pilot project, funded by philanthropic organisations in 2016, is a partnership between the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), AFL SportsReady and Master Plumbers.

Pathways to Opportunity is trialling an employment and education pathways program with young school leavers from communities that are facing the greatest barriers to finding work. The pilot group are young people from Pasifika and African communities in the inner

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> RCOA, 2012., Finding the Right Time and Place. Melbourne: RCOA.

northern and western suburbs of Melbourne, who are over-represented in Victorian youth unemployment statistics.

In this program, young people are given the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills in the job search process, to access formal education and training relevant to the work environment; and to engage support and mentoring throughout the program, including regular workplace visits, check-ins and support to resolve workplace issues. Participants receive support from CMY and volunteer mentors to access traineeships and apprenticeships in growth industries in Victoria and to connect with networks and systems that will help solidify their work prospects for the future.

### **Meeting the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds – what is needed**

Transition support for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds needs to be targeted, with tailored programs or strategies to identify and address their specific needs. Young people must also have access to targeted and appropriate English language learning, including a range of models responsive to age and proficiency, to ensure educational engagement and facilitate transitions to training, higher education and employment.

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds face multiple disadvantages in the employment market. They need support to understand the cultural expectations regarding job seeking and employment in Australia, as well as access to opportunities for various forms of work experience. They also need access to formal education and training and employment programs that offer appropriate skills development in job seeking.

MYAN recently explored and provided recommendations on, the challenges of addressing the specific issues faced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in navigating the school to work transition in a submission to the Federal Government Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes. (This submission has been attached for the Committee's reference.)<sup>11</sup>

Based on this submission, and our expertise and knowledge of this complex area, MYAN propose that an appropriate school to work transition strategy for young Australians who are from a refugee or migrant background should include the following:

- Targeted, flexible support to at-risk and disengaged young people.

#### Education:

- Bridging programs that support educational transitions in every state and territory.
- Programs that support parent/carer engagement in young people's educational journey.
- The expansion of existing models of multicultural youth workers based in schools to all states and territories (to ensure young people have support to address non-educational needs that can get in the way of their educational engagement).
- Increased investment in programs that support young people's transition from intensive English language programs into mainstream secondary schools or from AMEP into further training/higher education. This would be complimented by:

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<sup>11</sup> MYAN, 2017., Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes (March 2017). Carlton: MYAN Australia. (Attached for the Committee's reference.)

support for initiatives in and outside the classroom that help young people to remain engaged in education and English language learning (e.g. homework support groups), and the development and implementation of nationally consistent definitions, measurements and cost structures for English language provision to newly arrived young people that are tied closely to the education needs and outcomes of students.

Employment:

- Programs that support young people's transition from education/training to employment.
- Targeted programs that develop young people's social capital and networks, with a focus on building links with industry and potential employers
- Mentor programs and industry work placement schemes.

MYAN recommends that the Committee consider the particular needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in school to work transitions in its deliberations.

## References

Kellock, 2016., The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)

Küchenhoff & Lourie, 2016., The Education and Integration of 16- to 25-Year-Old Refugees and Other Humanitarian Migrants: Examples from Policy and Practice in IGC Participating States. Geneva: Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum & Refugees (IGC).

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