



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

A better life

Submission to Joint Standing Committee
Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes

Brotherhood of St Laurence

February 2017

The Brotherhood of St Laurence and migration

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is an independent, non-government organisation with strong community links that has been working to reduce poverty in Australia since the 1930s. Based in Melbourne, but with a national profile, the BSL continues to fight for an Australia free of poverty. We undertake research, service development and delivery, and advocacy with the objective of addressing unmet needs and translating the understandings gained into new policies, new programs and practices for implementation by government and others.

The Brotherhood's work in the areas of people seeking asylum, refugees, immigration and multiculturalism is led by our Multicultural Communities Team (MCT, formerly known as the Ecumenical Migration Centre), established in 1956 as Australia's first generalist settlement agency.

The Brotherhood provides evidence-based, responsive services that build on the strengths of these communities. We provide targeted support services for children and families, young people, employment and training opportunities for job seekers and capacity-building resources for communities. The Brotherhood is a Victorian Humanitarian Settlement Service provider, and part of the AMES consortium delivering Household Formation Packages to new arrivals.

Newly arrived people make up a large proportion of the Brotherhood's broader clientele in other programs for early childhood, youth, disability, employment and aged care services.

All of these services are complemented by the Brotherhood's research expertise across key themes of work and economic security, youth transitions and inclusive education. As part of this work we convene a network of researchers focused on migration and employment issues, which contributes to shared knowledge and subject matter expertise on the economic security of migrants in Australia.

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Overview

The Brotherhood welcomes this inquiry—the first of its kind in many years. Our submission draws on our extensive practical experience, research and proud history, spanning over 60 years, of supporting people from migrant and refugee backgrounds—particularly those facing disadvantage. We are well placed to provide insights into the focus areas of this inquiry, namely:

- strengthening the skills, capabilities and opportunities of young refugees and migrants
- enhancing the social and economic participation of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants
- testing best practice strategies to improve migrant settlement outcomes
- maximising the effectiveness of settlement services
- improving English language outcomes among migrant communities.

Investment in the capabilities and aspirations of young people pays dividends

In 2015–16, young people under 30 years made up 61% of Australia's humanitarian intake.

Australia has increasingly resettled young people who have had fractured educational experiences, longer stints in refugee camps and who have moved from one unstable situation to another (CMY 2006, 2007; MYAN 2016). Despite these challenges, these young people bring valuable skills, resilience and high aspirations. Approaches that invest in these attributes and harness the expertise and resources of services and the local community enable young arrivals to successfully study, work, build businesses and contribute to community life. This kind of investment protects against alienation and marginalisation, and decreases the risk of anti-social behaviour.

The Australian Government funded Youth Transitions Support Pilot (profiled below and in Attachment) is trialling an innovative approach to investing in the future of young arrivals. The Pilot was developed to address a significant gap in the settlement service system: settlement agencies are not equipped to provide employment support; and employment agencies are not equipped to provide employment support that is culturally responsive and tailored to the particular issues faced by young refugees and other vulnerable migrants. It is hoped that learnings from the Pilot will inform the design of the next iteration of Australia's settlement services and employment services.

Migrants are critical to Australia's social and economic development, but employment services are letting us down

Migration boosts economic productivity, contributes to labour force renewal, and stimulates trade and investment (Productivity Commission 2016; Migration Council of Australia 2015; Australian Human Rights Commission 2014). Diverse communities substantially grow Australia's human and social capital, enhance the nation's capacity for new knowledge and innovation, and open up valuable cultural and business opportunities with the rest of the world (Carrington, McIntosh and Walmsley 2007).

The Brotherhood's work with multicultural communities is based on the principle that if migrants have good opportunities, they will make significant economic, social and cultural contributions.

However, refugee families are increasingly struggling to establish themselves in a modern knowledge and services based economy that demands skills, qualifications and relevant Australian work experience. As the demand for low-skilled labour (the major area of initial employment for refugees) falls, so do employment prospects. Those who arrive with qualifications are often unable to have them easily recognised, or put to good use in Australia.

Employment is central to good settlement outcomes, yet our publicly funded employment services are performing poorly in assisting newly arrived migrants. The recent *Settling better report: reforming refugee and employment settlement services* (Centre for Policy Development and Boston Consulting 2017) laments the appalling record of mainstream employment services, with only 17% of humanitarian entrants in paid work 18 months after arriving in Australia. The report highlights the substantial economic and social dividend of getting recent arrivals into work sooner. Notably, it calls for targeted employment assistance for refugees and points to the Brotherhood's Given the Chance program (profiled in this submission) as a functional example of a successful labour market program that could be replicated.

Limited support for people seeking asylum is a missed opportunity

There are over 36,000 people currently seeking asylum living in the Australian community (DIBP 2016a, 2016b), most of whom have work rights. Nearly all will stay for an extended period, and many will eventually become permanent residents (Robertson and Boese 2015). Changes in visa classes and migration status create great uncertainty and stress. The restricted support available for people seeking asylum—reduced access to employment services, English language classes and training opportunities—represents a missed opportunity to benefit from the contribution they can make, and risks pushing them to the margins of society. Our experience has shown that people seeking asylum are highly aspirational. Our bespoke employment program for them (profiled in this submission) is delivering striking employment outcomes, to the delight of participants, their families and communities, and employers.

Early intervention prevents long-term disadvantage

Drawing on the learnings of the Brotherhood's Refugee Child Outreach program, this submission points to opportunities to re-orient settlement services to improve the life chances of refugee children by supporting a good start in life. It also calls for more effective mechanisms to ensure vulnerable humanitarian entrants get early, intensive support, to boost their settlement outcomes.

Everyone has a role in helping realise the potential of migrants

Maximising the potential long-term gains of migration requires broad community support for the social and economic inclusion of new arrivals. Communities that have welcomed people from migrant and refugee backgrounds—rather than viewing them with suspicion and distrust—have realised the social and economic benefits. However, where migrants experience hostility, discrimination, or unfair exclusion from social and economic life, the communities in which they live are characterised by lower levels of trust and social cohesion (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Hugo 2005).

There is much that can be done to build on and encourage the goodwill and cultural responsiveness of services, employers, local government and local communities.

Government leadership drives successful settlement outcomes

The Australian Government plays a pivotal role in providing social infrastructure and influencing community attitudes to immigration. We are concerned that Australia's longstanding social compact to support our migrant and refugee intake is under threat, with multiculturalism being called into question. Leadership is needed from ministerial representatives in setting a principled tone that informs mature public debate and sets appropriate policy directions. The design, coordination and implementation of targeted settlement services is vital in overcoming early participation barriers, contributing to education and employment outcomes, and building social cohesion, ensuring that all migrants and refugees have the opportunity to settle well.

This submission provides context and evidence for practical recommendations to improve long-term migrant settlement outcomes and prospects for all new arrivals. Our submission begins with the Brotherhood's recommended approach to maximising the social and economic participation of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds—particularly the most vulnerable (Section 1). We then address the Inquiry's call for input on national and international best practice (Section 2) and effective design and delivery of settlement services (Section 3), and respond to other matters related to settlement outcomes, including English language (Section 4) and a whole-of-government approach to fostering integration (Section 5).

Recommendations

The Brotherhood urges the Joint Standing Committee on Migration to make the following recommendations to the Australian Government:

1. Continue investing in evidence-informed programs that successfully transition young refugees and migrants into employment and education.
2. Invest in targeted programs to address labour market barriers that particularly impact on vulnerable migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These should incorporate engagement with employers and the local community to identify employment, training and small business opportunities.
3. Support rapid recognition of skills and qualifications obtained overseas by:
 - establishing a national framework through the Council of Australian Governments
 - piloting approaches to enable rapid skills recognition, prioritising skills shortage areas.
4. Support the establishment of local Immigration Employment Councils in areas with high numbers of new arrivals. These Councils would work to enable employers and the local community to maximise the benefits of the skills, experience and knowledge that refugees and other migrants can offer.
5. Support community initiatives to assist new migrants and refugees. Consider engaging coordinators in regional areas accepting Safe Haven Enterprise Visa holders, to enable the local community and new arrivals to realise the social and economic benefits of positive integration.
6. Provide people seeking asylum and those with temporary protection with access to:
 - Settlement Support Grants services
 - tailored employment programs
 - English language instruction under the Adult Migrant English Program
 - subsidies for training and higher education.
7. Designate improved child wellbeing and development as an outcome in the future commissioning of Settlement Services Grants.
8. Enhance the Humanitarian Settlement Services exit process to identify and respond to vulnerability by requiring providers to:
 - assess a refugee's capabilities and needs prior to the cessation of HSS support
 - develop a settlement action plan (with connections to relevant services and supports)
 - make warm referrals to the Complex Case Program where the assessment identifies considerable vulnerabilities likely to meet that program's 'exception needs' criteria
 - make warm referrals to the relevant Settlement Support Grant provider for follow-up support where lower-levels of vulnerability are identified.

A parallel approach should be embedded in the exit processes of the Status Resolution Support Service for those who have been granted temporary protection.

9. a) Establish a framework for consistent data collection about the pre-arrival characteristics and post-migration experiences of new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, to inform policy and service design.

b) Mandate and resource rigorous evaluation of settlement service outcomes.
10. Strengthen the cultural responsiveness of government agencies and non-government organisations delivering publicly funded human services by commissioning processes that:
 - encourage cultural diversity plans and cultural diversity targets
 - assess prospective service providers on their commitment to and performance with respect to cultural inclusiveness
 - require the collection of data that measures the engagement of and outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse clients.
11. Align the efforts of different tiers of government and service providers to develop targeted responses that address the settlement experiences of particular groups.
12. Strengthen the effectiveness of English language assistance by:
 - extending eligibility for the Adult Migrant English Program from 12 months to five years post-settlement and providing additional hours of language tuition to those who are not sufficiently proficient in English after exhausting the allocated hours
 - improving flexibility of tuition hours to fit with work commitments
 - working with jobactive providers and their peak bodies to increase referrals to the Skills for Education and Employment program
 - tailoring the AMEP curriculum to meet individual needs and interests, including learning English through employment programs or job training.
13. Undertake a campaign which builds public awareness of and confidence in the humanitarian program and its impact, by highlighting:
 - why Australia has a refugee program and plays a global role
 - which countries people are coming from and why these have been prioritised
 - accurate information about entitlements and support provided to tackle myths
 - the positive contribution of humanitarian entrants as an asset to our economy and society.

1 Investing in the potential of young people

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have a vital and long-term contribution to make to the social and economic fabric of Australia. They make up a high proportion of our humanitarian intake: in 2015-16, young people under 30 years made up 61%, and the main source countries were Iraq, Syria, Myanmar, Afghanistan and the Congo (DIBP 2016c).

As a result of their migration journeys, young people are typically resilient, multilingual and adaptable, with a strong sense of family and community, high educational aspirations and an eagerness to participate in Australian society (MYAN 2016). However, they face a number of crucial transition points: their arrival in a new country; the transition to school and the transition from school to work. Without adequate support at such periods of risk and vulnerability, life chances can be negatively affected. Hence, specialist supports, particularly around settlement enablers such as employment, education and training, are crucial.

Finding sustained and meaningful work in the current labour market is a challenge for many young Australians. For those with refugee and vulnerable migrant experiences, securing good work opportunities can be even more challenging. While many young people of refugee and vulnerable migrant backgrounds are typically highly aspirational and motivated to work, they often encounter structural, language and cultural barriers. Developing community networks, learning a new language and navigating new systems are some of the key foundational activities young people undertake during their settlement.

The Youth Transition Support Pilot (YTSP), funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) until June 2017 (with the promising prospect of a one-year extension) is an important intervention to support the transitions of young migrants and refugees aged 15–25 years. Announcing the pilot, the Social Services Minister emphasised the importance of ‘supporting young people who want to build a positive future for themselves’ to mitigate the risks of ‘social isolation and disengagement’ (Porter 2015).

The Pilot is running in six locations across Australia (Vic., NSW and Qld). Delivery in each location is led by a local organisation. Agencies work with young humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants to improve their workplace readiness, provide access to vocational opportunities and create strong social connections through education, sport and community participation.

The Brotherhood delivers the YTSP in the City of Hume (Vic). It also collaborates with other YTSP providers through a Community of Practice. Core elements of the Hume program are shown in Table 1.1 (see also the program practice guide, provided as an Attachment)

Table 1.1 Core elements of the Youth Transition Support Pilot

Vocational guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career development activities from skilled practitioners • Guidance from employers, volunteers and mentors • Ongoing coaching and guidance
Real-world opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and trade tasters • Work experience placements • Industry guest speakers • Address book of professional contacts • Volunteering • Apprenticeships, traineeship and job opportunities • Placement support
Co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of informal learning • Support to identify aspirations • Employment and education pathway planning • Reflections and celebration of achievements • Referral to specialised support services
Skills and capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group employability workshops • Career management and maintenance skill building • Individual and self-placed learning activities • Workplace and applied learning • Mentoring • Enrolment in pre-accredited and accredited training services

In delivering the YTSP, the Brotherhood has used approaches that our research and practice has shown are particularly effective in successfully engaging young people:

Advantaged Thinking: This is a shift in the way we think about and respond to young people experiencing disadvantage and exclusion. It is a shift away from deficit, disadvantaged or problem-saturated thinking and acting, towards identifying, developing and, most importantly, investing in the skills, capabilities and assets of these young people. Advantaged thinking values the potential contribution each young person can make to social and economic life, recognises and builds on individual capacity and matches aspirations with opportunities. It also reinforces the concepts of rights, responsibilities and a person's commitments to themselves and the wider community. The approach builds a sense of belonging, personal agency and capacity to make decisions.

Harnessing community effort and resources: In harnessing community effort, our goal is to recognise the good work and experience that exists within the community and to work with key local agencies and organisations to build on—as opposed to duplicating—current assets and services.

To deliver the YTSP in Hume, the Brotherhood developed a partnership model that builds on existing good work, infrastructure and experience to strengthen local capacity and align efforts and resources. YTSP funds have been used to employ Youth Development Coaches who are housed with local organisations already trusted by young people and their families that the YTSP is seeking to reach, including:

- Arabic Welfare Inc. (ethno-specific community organisation)
- Banksia Gardens Community Services (neighbourhood house)
- Centre for Multicultural Youth (youth specialist)
- Spectrum (settlement services provider)
- Victorian Arabic Social Services (ethno-specific community organisation)

This is helping to build the expertise of settlement and local services to provide a specialised response to the employment and training aspirations of young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds.

An Employer Engagement Officer has been funded to work within Hume City Council, Economic Development Unit, sourcing work experience and employment opportunities for YTSP participants.

The Brotherhood's YTSP team is located on the Kangan TAFE campus in Broadmeadows, enabling supported and streamlined access for YTSP participants into mainstream education. It also supports Kangan to strengthen its cultural responsiveness.

Volunteers and mentors: These play an essential role in supporting the work of the YTSP team. They help to deliver workshops; assist participants to acquire and practise new skills, and address foundational skills gaps; provide access to resources, opportunities and networks to help participants achieve their goals and recognise their capacity to make positive changes in their lives.

The Brotherhood has established a **Community Investment Committee** in Hume, which brings together local knowledge (from employers, government, education and training providers, and service clubs) about what is happening for young people in the local labour market, addresses factors influencing local youth unemployment, informs development of training pathways, and promotes a positive view about the potential of young jobseekers.

The **national evaluation** of the YTSP by Synergistiq is still underway. The Brotherhood's preliminary data from the Hume pilot is promising. Since May 2016, 330 young people have participated in group and individual activities, with 164 receiving one-to-one coaching support to progress their employment and education aspirations. Early indicators show:

- 53 per cent of participants so far have achieved employment and education outcomes
- a further 38 per cent of participants have achieved progressive outcomes (e.g. work experience, experiential learning) towards employment
- 36 per cent have achieved social participation outcomes through sport and recreation.

Approaches modelled on the YTSP will ensure our society is well placed to prevent the well-known and damaging long-term impacts of unemployment—disempowerment, disconnection, disenfranchisement and disengagement. While these are common to disadvantaged groups, the additional danger for youth of migrant and refugee backgrounds is that anti-social behaviours may fuel other people's racism and erode social cohesion.

Recommendation 1:

Continue investing in evidence-informed programs that successfully transition young refugees and migrants into employment and education

2 National and international best practice strategies

In August 2016 the Brotherhood attended a roundtable on Settlement Services for Humanitarian Migrants and labour market integration. It explored best practice from four countries—Australia, Germany, USA and Canada, and led to the *Settling Better Report* (Centre for Policy Development and Boston Consulting 2017). We profile below some of the key learnings from the roundtable.

The need for targeted support to support recognition of skills and qualifications, economic participation and integration in the broader community were key themes from the roundtable.

Tailored employment interventions work

For new migrants and refugees of working age, having a job—ideally one that matches their skills and qualifications—is critical for successful settlement. As well as providing income, employment can help migrants to develop social connections, language and cultural understandings, stability, self-reliance and confidence (Ager & Strang 2008).

Recent migrants and refugees face particular challenges in the Australian labour market: language barriers, accessing appropriate training, navigating the job market and unfamiliar recruitment processes, acculturating to Australian workplaces, and having overseas qualifications recognised and valued. With limited social networks, securing local work experience is a major barrier, even for migrants who are relatively skilled or educated (BSL 2016, Fozdar & Hartley 2013, Colic-Peisker 2011, (Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Hebbani & Colic-Peisker, 2012). Table 2.1 summarises employment barriers experienced by recent migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum

These challenges are compounded by Australia’s changing labour market. Low-skilled, entry-level roles (labourers, drivers, machinery operators)—once the mainstay of newly arrived groups—are in decline. The modern knowledge and service based economy demands skills, qualifications and relevant Australian work experience.

Table 2.1 Employment barriers for migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum

Job search/recruitment barriers	On-the-job issues	Other factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of or access to information about the job market Limited understanding of job application processes, interview techniques and expectations of employers during recruitment Lack of access to resources to support job search activities (e.g. transport, home computer, work attire) Minimal Australian work experience, or foreign experience undervalued Employer recruitment practices that ‘screen out’ many migrant groups Non-recognition of overseas qualifications by employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of Australian ‘workplace culture’ Difficulty understanding Australian workplace expectations, work standards or ethics Unable to utilise skills/capabilities obtained in home country Poor computer literacy or technical and ICT knowledge Low English language proficiency and/or limited literacy in language of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement issues such as access to stable housing or child care Health/mental health issues arising from forced migration experience Loss of personal confidence and belief Limited access to affordable education and training options (including lack of subsidised training places) The need to prioritise immigration processes and demands over employment Restrictive visa conditions (such as short-term work rights expiry dates)

While Centrelink and jobactive services provide basic support to eligible newly arrived jobseekers, this regularly falls short of addressing the particular employment barriers they face. The *Settling Better Report* shines a light on the appalling performance of mainstream employment services in assisting humanitarian entrants, with only 17% in paid work 18 months after arriving in Australia, and women four times more likely not to have a job than men.

We echo the recommendation of the *Settling Better Report*, which called for employment interventions tailored for the specific needs of humanitarian entrants. This investment is needed as a matter of urgency.

A number of promising state and not-for-profit programs are enabling migrants' local work experience, skills and labour market 'know-how'. For example:

- In November 2016, the NSW Government announced the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), a \$22 million, four-year program to support up to 7,000 refugees and 1,000 asylum seekers in Western Sydney and the Illawarra. At least 100 refugees will be employed in the public sector, while corporates such as AMP, Australia Post, Harvey Norman and Telstra have committed to provide training, mentoring, or employment opportunities (NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet 2016).
- In Victoria, the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) has resourced specialist multicultural service providers (including the Brotherhood) to target jobseekers from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. To achieve sustainable employment outcomes, these providers are expected to engage CALD groups and prepare jobseekers for work, bring together community resources, and facilitate access to support including training, recruitment, pre-employment and post-placement support (DEDJTR 2016).
- The *Settling Better Report* named the Brotherhood's Given the Chance program (profiled below) as a functional example of a successful labour market program that could be viably replicated (see Box 2.1).

Box 2.1 Giving refugees a chance

Given the Chance at ANZ, a Brotherhood/ANZ partnership, has been providing customised pre-employment training and supported work placements in the ANZ bank network since 2007. Recruits are prepared for the particular role they will take on and are trained in Australian workplace culture and expectations. Employers are supported through 'Building Bridges' training for workplace mentors and supervisors to build their understanding of the needs and experiences of refugee workers and ensure recruits receive appropriate support and guidance in the workplace.

Over 170 refugees and asylum seekers have been placed into jobs that would not have been accessible to them through mainstream recruitment methods. The retention figures have been impressive: over 90% of participants complete the six-month supported placement program; 86% gain ongoing work with ANZ and (of those) 94% are still working for ANZ six months later. Given the Chance has enabled ANZ to recruit skilled, loyal employees; increase workforce diversity; and strengthen community connections in its branch network and call centres.

The program's methodology has been well tested and documented, and has informed the development of a related program Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers (profiled below).

Supporting self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship among refugee or migrant communities can provide a viable alternative to mainstream employment, as well as a source of supplementary income.

The Brotherhood developed the Stepping Stones Program (profiled in Box 2.2) in response to the shortcomings of mainstream services—including the New Enterprise Initiative Scheme—to support the development of enterprising skills of migrant and refugee women in a culturally responsive way.

Box 2.2 A bridge to economic participation for migrant and refugee women

The Brotherhood's 'Stepping Stones to Small Business' program provides business training, networking opportunities and mentoring for migrant and refugee women, in partnership with local government and Small Business Victoria. Training is delivered flexibly over 10 weeks, in ways that meet migrant women's language requirements and their family and caring responsibilities. Upon completion of the training and achievement of business milestones, women are paired with business mentors drawn from a pool of local volunteers.

Evaluations of the program (van Kooy 2016) have found that participants acquired new knowledge and confidence to pursue business ideas, reported better social and business networks, and increased financial capacity to assist families and others in their home countries. Since 2011, the program has supported 797 women from 45 countries in small business training workshops). Nearly half (48%) have started a small business. Others have continued to develop their business idea, enrol in education or have found employment. The program has also trained and supported 122 mentors from the banking and finance, business, community and education sectors to support participants in implementing their business plans.

Recommendation 2:

Invest in programs to address labour market barriers that particularly impact on vulnerable migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These should incorporate engagement with employers and the local community to identify employment, training and small business opportunities.

Rapid recognition of overseas skills & qualifications is needed

Gaining the appropriate recognition of overseas qualifications and skills has become increasingly difficult for people from refugee or migrant backgrounds due to the high costs and complexity of Australia accreditation systems (ECCV 2014). Australia does not have a consistent, national approach to overseas skills and qualifications recognition and offers limited opportunities for practical demonstration of work skills (DSS 2015). Examples to illustrate the systemic shortcomings include:

- VETASSESS, an organisation offering skills assessments for migrants and brokering gap training, is no longer funded to assist refugees and people seeking asylum. Migrants need to self-fund this service (in the order of \$900), which is typically used to support skilled migration visa applications
- Victoria's Overseas Qualifications Unit assists employers, educational institutions and others to interpret overseas education and qualifications, ([Victorian Government](#) 2016) but it is not adequately resourced to provide community-level advice and assistance (ECCV 2014).

As a consequence, many migrants are left to take on jobs that are below their professional skill level (ECCV 2014):

- Almost 65% of all recent migrants had a non-school (vocational or higher education) qualification before arrival in Australia; however, only one-third of these had their overseas qualification recognised (ABS *Perspectives on migrants* 2011, cited in ECCV 2014).
- Around 60% of humanitarian entrants held high skill jobs in their former country of residence, while only 26% have those jobs in Australia. In contrast, just 17% worked as labourers in their former country, but 38% worked as labourers in Australia. (CPD 2017, citing data from Building a New Life in Australia: Longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants 2016)

This represents a considerable 'brain waste' of migrants who compete for lower-skilled, entry-level jobs (Papademetriou & Sumption 2011; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2006), and a missed opportunity to fill areas of labour demand, such as those identified on the Skilled Occupation List (DIBP 2016e).

Germany has adopted an accelerated matching process in which a person's existing skills or qualifications are assessed and then matched to industries with skills shortages for rapid placement. Job placements are supplemented through the completion of qualifications by attending relevant courses. This has led to improved labour market integration and provided clarity about what further training is needed. People with no German language skills and no

formal qualifications are skills tested using a method supported by pictures and videos, to identify skills which may be applicable to 30 professions. Results indicate the level of competency in a particular industry. The person is placed in that work environment and then registered to attend a training program to gain a full certificate (Boston Consulting Group 2016).

Switzerland has developed a national framework for accrediting a migrant's learning in their home country. In some cases refugees have never gained a formal qualification, in others they have fled without their documentation. Using the federal framework, step-by-step assessments of individual qualification levels are conducted by local governments in partnership with community and employer associations. Migrants can obtain a basic VET diploma that recognises the informal skills that they gained for their work experience, and provides entry points into the Swiss labour market (Liebig, Kohls & Krause 2012).

Recommendation 3:

Support rapid recognition of skills and qualifications obtained overseas by:

- **establishing a national framework through the Council of Australian Governments**
- **piloting approaches to enable rapid skills recognition, prioritising skills shortage areas**

Local employers and community networks can help find solutions

Business leaders, local employers and community networks play a critical role in enabling the economic participation of migrants and refugees. We are inspired by Canada, which has established localised Immigration Employment Councils that bring together business, community organisations and local government. They work with employers and other stakeholders—including government, unions, regulatory bodies, educators, community organisations and immigrants—to improve hiring practices, encourage new policies and change perceptions about immigrants. The Immigrant Employment Councils seek to connect immigrants to employment that reflects their knowledge and experience, so that employers can access the full potential of these workers, and the economy and communities can benefit from their skills, training and knowledge ([Canadian Technology Immigration Network](#) 2017).

Business has an appetite to be actively involved in supporting settlement outcomes in Australia. The Friendly Nation Initiative, established in 2015, to provide a platform for Australian businesses to pledge support for incoming Syrian refugees, demonstrates this. Participant businesses are raising funds, hosting cultural awareness seminars and providing corporate volunteering or mentoring, assisting with retraining or skills recognition, and sponsoring in-work programs to help refugees adjust to the Australian workforce (UNHCR 2015). Engaging employers in the process of welcoming migrants is supporting the realisation of the benefits of cultural diversity in the workforce (DIAC 2013).

Another example is the Community Investment Committees (referred to earlier) that the Brotherhood and partner organisations have established in 13 locations nationally to support youth employment (as part of the Australian Government funded Transitions to Work Program and Youth Transitions Support Pilots). These committees bring together local government

economic development divisions, business representatives, training institutes and community organisations. They inform program design and delivery, identify and address local employment barriers, and provide specific opportunities for young people (such as work experience placements or mentoring). While in its early stages, the localised collaboration with employers and services is showing promising results. There is potential to learn from and adapt this approach in areas with high numbers of new arrivals.

Recommendation 4:

Support the establishment of local Immigration Employment Councils in areas with high numbers of new arrivals. These Councils would work to enable employers and the local community to maximise the benefits of the skills, experience and knowledge that refugees and other migrants can offer.

Communities that welcome migrants reap the benefits

Settlement services are most effective when complemented by initiatives which harness community effort to provide a welcoming environment. Local government is well placed to foster local programs, activities and events that build the inclusion of refugees and migrants in the broader community and to promote social cohesion through justice, inclusion, access and equity measures (Australian Human Rights Commission 2015). For example, some 143 local governments across Australia have established refugee 'welcome zones'. The zones encourage a local policy and program environment that enables the broader community to assist in settling new arrivals through community programs and gatherings that support inclusion.

Examples of successful regional integration programs include:

- the Canadian regional integration initiative in which newcomers receive orientation and are matched with a local family, who provide activities ranging from introducing them to services such as transport, banking, local schools and shops to social and recreational outings. Other undertakings include career mentoring, providing job leads and general job readiness skills.
- the Victorian town of Nhill's Karen refugee resettlement program. The resettlement of 160 Karen refugees over the last five years in the Wimmera region has added more than \$40 million and 70 jobs offered by local poultry producer Luv-a-Duck to the local economy. Karen community members have not only fitted in well and provided a reliable workforce modelling a good work ethic, on a social level they are contributors to the wider community, including with sporting, social and community organisations (AMES & Deloitte Access Economics 2015).

While such 'welcoming' initiatives often emerge from the community, they could be strengthened by the engagement of a coordinator to foster volunteer and other supports. Consideration should be given to supporting a coordinator role in regions (particularly more isolated rural communities) that have opted to participate in settling SHEV holders. This coordinators would inform locals about the circumstances of the newcomers (e.g. develop community profiles about countries people are being settled from and why, and the benefits of their settlement to Australia's economic, cultural and social growth). They would also help local communities and businesses to maximise the benefits of supporting the settlement of new arrivals for themselves and their

economy. The role would assist new arrivals to connect with local clubs and support services and to broaden their networks. There would be considerable synergies and efficiencies in housing such a role with local government, or in some instances with settlement services providers.

Recommendation 5:

Support community initiatives to assist new migrants and refugees. Consider engaging coordinators in regional areas accepting Safe Haven Enterprise Visa holders, to enable the local community and new arrivals to realise the social and economic benefits of positive integration.

3 Effectiveness of settlement services

A strong case to increase settlement support for asylum seekers

There are multiple pathways to settlement in Australia, with many temporary and humanitarian migrants, including asylum seekers, eventually becoming permanent residents. To facilitate smooth transitions between temporary and permanent visa classes, and to maximise the social and economic benefits of Australia's migration intake, it is critical that temporary migrants and people seeking asylum have access to a broader base of settlement support. This includes English language training, education and employment services and social integration programs.

As of September 2016, there were over 36,000 people seeking asylum living in Australia, inclusive of boat and plane arrivals (DIBP 2016a; 2016b). While awaiting resolution of their visa status, the overwhelming majority of onshore asylum applicants live in the country for several years without access to the full range of settlement and associated services (RCOA 2017). The processing time for asylum claims is highly variable. Even those eligible for fast-track processing often wait for well over a year before being granted temporary protection. The recent introduction of the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) and the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) subclasses will see many asylum seekers resettled on temporary visas for initial periods of up to five years.

People seeking asylum, including bridging visa, TPV and SHEV holders have neither the same entitlements nor access to the same services as refugees who are resettled as part of the offshore humanitarian program. For example:

- Those holding TPVs, SHEVs and bridging visas cannot access Humanitarian Settlement Support services (which provides support for household formation, rental assistance, and intensive case support for 6 months) or Settlement Support Grant services (which provide up to five years of case work support, orientation and connections to services). Bridging visa holders have access to the Status Resolution Support Service, but this is generally very light touch support, focused on connection with other services. Access to the Complex Case Support program is available, subject to meeting the tight eligibility criteria.
- Bridging visa holders are not eligible for the Adult Migrant English Program.
- Bridging visa holders who have work rights are only entitled to access the light touch voluntary 'Stream A' employment support from a jobactive provider, usually reserved for

those most job ready. (Jobseekers with multiple barriers to employment would usually receive the more intensive Stream C support.)

- Income support for people holding bridging visas is paid at a reduced rate (up to 89% of the base Newstart rate)
- There is limited or no access to subsidies for vocational education and training—this varies between states. As of October 2016, the Victorian Government has extended VET training subsidies to BVE, TPV and SHEV holders. Employers cannot access incentives to hire apprentices and trainees who do not have permanent visa status
- Full fees are required to access higher education. Currently only Australian citizens and permanent residents are eligible for HECS-HELP.

Being locked out of key services and support diminishes people's ability to secure decent work and live above the poverty line, undermines positive settlement outcomes and hinders social integration. It risks creating an underclass of vulnerable migrants with limited options for social and economic participation, regardless of their length of stay. These groups will be particularly vulnerable to being pushed into exploitative working conditions (Robertson 2013).

For the nation, this approach adversely impacts Australia's productive capacity. The Brotherhood's experience in delivering a tailored employment program for asylum seekers (profiled below) demonstrates the economic and social contribution people seeking asylum can make, if given the right support, from their earliest days in Australia.

Box 3.1 Giving asylum seekers the chance pays off

With funding from a private donor, the Brotherhood established the 'Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers' program in 2013. It provides tailored, one-to-one support for people seeking asylum to get their first job in Australia. The program assesses job readiness, provides pre-employment advice and guidance, and engages employers to source job and training opportunities.

To date over 330 participants have found jobs across a range of industries through the program, with a retention rate of 71% after six months. Many of these are critical 'first jobs', building people's local work experience, language skills and networks.

Employers who have taken on new employees through the Given the Chance program have been able to access a pool of qualified, experienced and motivated workers, while reducing the overhead costs of recruitment, particularly for entry-level vacancies.

The Appendix provides further detail.

Recommendation 6:

Enable people seeking asylum and those with temporary protection to access:

- **Settlement Support Grants services**
- **tailored employment programs**
- **English language instruction under the Adult Migrant English Program**
- **training and higher education subsidies**

A stronger focus on the wellbeing & development of children is needed

Families that are new to Australia experience challenges in understanding and accessing unfamiliar service systems. Refugees and asylum seekers typically encounter additional challenges given the vulnerability that flows from forced displacement, torture and trauma, grief and loss. Many have limited access to supports and are at risk of poor health, financial hardship and prolonged uncertainty about their future. These experiences can impact negatively on the development of children (Shallow & Whittington 2014).

The early years of life are the most critical time to lay the foundation for a child's future. Children's early experiences shape how they form relationships in adult life, their participation in the workforce and their future inclusion in society. (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs 2010, DET 2016).

While Settlement Services support humanitarian entrants in their first five years, high case-loads together with the priority placed on housing, employment and income support work against a child-centred approach. Newly arrived parents too are often focused on the most pressing day-to-day needs, like securing housing, learning English, managing health issues and employment. Attendance at Maternal and Child Health centres and early education programs may not be a priority (DEECD 2011).

In providing occasional child care to families participating in the Adult Migrant English Program, the Brotherhood observed first hand that many refugee children were unable to engage in play, were distressed and fearful, were delayed in some areas of development, and were not engaged with early years services. In response, we established the Refugee Child Outreach program (see Box 3.2) which aims to improve the developmental outcomes of refugee children by helping their families to understand and access early childhood services, supporting families as their child's first teachers and building the cultural responsiveness of mainstream services. The program has attracted funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services through the Settlement Support Grants Program (orientation category), which we supplement with philanthropic funding.

Box 3.2 Outreach to strengthen the life chances of refugee children

The Brotherhood's Refugee Child Outreach program supports families with young children (0–8 years old) who have recently arrived in Australia as refugees. It is available to families living in the local government areas of Hume, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Moonee Valley and Yarra.

Families receive one-to-one casework and are also matched with volunteers, many of whom have themselves experienced resettlement with young children and speak community languages matched to those in the program.

The program has proved effective at

- engaging families with early years services such as playgroups, childcare, kindergarten and maternal and child health
- strengthening parents capacity to support their child's learning and development (play sessions in the home, parenting advice)
- helping identify and address developmental delays (linkages to speech pathologists, occupational therapists and other specialists)
- reducing social isolation (peer support and links to local children's activities)
- supporting mainstream early years services to improve their cultural responsiveness and engage with culturally diverse communities.

A focus on the wellbeing and development of the youngest members of refugee families will reap long-term benefits. It will help prevent, or arrest, disadvantage and vulnerability. This could be achieved by re-orienting the commissioning of Settlement Service Grants to encourage local agencies to develop grant proposals that work with families to address child development.

Recommendation 6 (above) calls for extending the eligibility for SSG services to people seeking asylum and those granted temporary protection. It is our experience that mothers and their children in these circumstances are particularly vulnerable and isolated and would benefit from an intervention comparable with our Refugee Child Outreach program.

Recommendation 7:

Designate improved child wellbeing and development as an outcome in the future commissioning of Settlement Services Grants.

Intensive and timely support for vulnerable humanitarian entrants prevents longer term disadvantage

Growing numbers of new arrivals have complex pre-arrival experiences like prolonged stints in refugee camps (once 7 years, now often twice as long) and/or in immigration detention. This can adversely impact on their wellbeing and settlement.

Refugees receive six months of dedicated support through the Humanitarian Settlement Support program. Following this, participation in services (up to five years) funded through Settlement Support Grants is voluntary. Our experience is that refugees often disengage from settlement

support once exited from the HSS program. Some are unaware of what local SSG providers are offering. Others are too consumed by daily commitments and challenges to participate. While good practice is for HSS providers to do 'warm handovers' with SSG providers, alerting them to people in their catchment that have particular vulnerabilities and would benefit from follow-up support, this does not always occur.

The Complex Case Support program has been a welcome initiative to provide more intensive, extended support for humanitarian entrants (including those granted temporary protection) with exceptional needs (e.g. critical health issues; homelessness; family violence; child and youth welfare concerns). However, it is our experience that many who would benefit from this intensive support have not been referred to it, and are unaware that it exists.

We recommend a systemic approach that embeds early identification of people with vulnerabilities in the exit process of HSS services. Specifically, the current exit checklist should be enhanced by the use of a screening tool to assess capabilities and needs, development of a settlement action plan to connect refugees with relevant supports and advice on local SSG services and the Complex Case Support program. For those assessed as having vulnerabilities the HSS provider would either:

- make a warm referral to the Complex Case Support program where a person met its exceptional needs criteria, or
- provide a warm handover with local SSG providers, who could then offer follow-up support.

People granted temporary protection are not eligible for Humanitarian Settlement Support. Instead, they access the light touch Status Resolution Support Service while their application for asylum is being resolved. We recommend a parallel approach (i.e. assessment of capabilities and need, advice and settlement planning) be embedded in the SRSS exit process. This would ensure that highly vulnerable people who go on to receive temporary protection are referred to the Complex Case Support program. Those assessed with lower level vulnerabilities would be made known to their local SSG providers (if our recommendation to extend eligibility for this service to this group is adopted) for follow-up.

Front-ending intensive support to address vulnerabilities will improve the prospect of better settlement outcomes in the longer term.

Recommendation 8:

Enhance the Humanitarian Settlement Services exit process to identify and respond to vulnerability by requiring providers to:

- **assess a refugee's capabilities and needs prior to the cessation of HSS support**
- **develop a settlement action plan (with connections to relevant services and supports)**
- **make warm referrals to the Complex Case Program where the assessment identifies considerable vulnerabilities likely to meet that program's 'exception needs' criteria**
- **make warm referrals to the relevant Settlement Support Grant provider for follow-up support where lower levels of vulnerability are identified.**

A parallel approach should be embedded in the exit processes of the Status Resolution Support Service for those who have been granted temporary protection.

Policy and programs should be better informed by data and evidence

The absence of reliable data to inform policy and programs development for CALD groups has been repeatedly highlighted. The Australian Government's Access and Equity Inquiry found:

Current data collection across government is inadequate and is a major barrier to the effective planning and delivery of services for CALD clients. [The panel] also accepts that many Australian Government funded agencies are unaware of the cultural and linguistic diversity of their clients (Access and Equity Inquiry Panel 2012).

Similarly, the Victorian Auditor-General reported that without an understanding of the diversity of existing clients, mainstream services are unable to report on the extent to which they are meeting the needs of Australia's increasingly diverse population. In addition, a lack of accurate new settler data from the Commonwealth—such as ethnicity or pre-migration information—has made it difficult for states and service providers to effectively address the needs of newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Victorian Auditor-General 2014).

The cessation of previous outcome studies such as the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) has made matters worse.

Systematic and transparent data collection on service user characteristics, combined with rigorous research and evaluation of program models and outcomes, is critical for evidence-based services for migrant and refugee populations. Unless there is investment in addressing existing gaps in client and outcomes data, it will be challenging to design and implement effective settlement and mainstream services for CALD groups.

We recommend investment in data collection and analysis to better inform an evidence base for mainstream, culturally-responsive services as well as specific settlement support for migrant and refugee groups. Important areas include:

- differential impacts of migrants' pre-arrival experiences, skills and capabilities
- differences in outcomes between populations with different CALD characteristics
- trajectories of settlement experience over the short, medium and long-term
- impact of settlement and other mainstream services on outcomes
- economic and employment contribution of migrants over time
- changing levels of health and well-being among migrant cohorts.

Data collection, research and evaluation ought to focus on client outcomes, rather than participation outputs.

Recommendation 9:

a) Establish a framework for consistent data collection about the pre-arrival characteristics and post-migration experiences of new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, to inform policy and service design.

b) Mandate and resource rigorous evaluation of settlement service outcomes.

The cultural responsiveness of mainstream services needs improvement

Culturally responsive services go a long way to helping improve settlement outcomes. Whether they are government agencies, such as health and education, or public funded community services, frontline public services need to prioritise local community needs and develop their capacity to implement best practices in engaging newly arrived communities.

Consider for example, the plight of a person from a refugee or migrant background with a mental illness and experiencing homelessness. An already difficult situation is heightened by language difficulties, unfamiliarity with service systems, social dislocation, estrangement from culture and community, grief related to experiences of torture, trauma and separation, and limited culturally appropriate service options (Multicultural Mental Health Australia 2011). The capacity of mainstream services to respond in a culturally sensitive way will significantly impact the outcome.

Poor engagement in mainstream services and substandard outcomes for CALD communities stemming from poor cultural responsiveness has been a long-running issue in Australia. Over 20 years ago, the 1995 Council of Ministers for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs agreed that improvements in access and equity were required by Australian governments. In 2004, the former Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) found that people from CALD backgrounds accounted for round 15% of the Australian population, but only 2.5% of their clients.

More recently, the Victorian Auditor-General was critical of the cultural responsiveness of many Victorian services. The Report on Access to Services for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers found that services frequently failed to undertake a systematic analysis of needs so they could not demonstrate that their programs and strategies were designed in response to community needs. While some departments could demonstrate understanding of multicultural principles, only the Department of Health demonstrated at a strategic level that it understood the complex and multiple needs of this group. Further, the report found that service provision to refugee or migrant communities and the achievement of related policy outcomes were not monitored, reported or held to account (VAGO 2014).

With the proportion of Australians who were born overseas hitting its highest point in over 120 years at 28 per cent (ABS figures at 30 March 2016) there is a strong case for mainstream publicly funded services to strengthen their cultural responsiveness.

This could be achieved in many ways such as:

- **Cross-cultural responsiveness training.** We suggest this should be a mandatory part of the induction and ongoing professional development of mainstream service providers at all levels of policy and program development and delivery. We acknowledge that some areas of government (federal, state and local) have introduced cross-cultural training (for example, Victoria has established a panel of providers); however, it is far from universal.
- **Recruitment of bi-cultural workers.** For services working with newly arrived communities, employing bicultural or bilingual workers from the target communities can bring enormous benefits (CMY 2011). Diverse workforces have been shown to provide fertile ground for innovation and creativity, particularly in cross-cultural community services (DIAC 2013).
- **Cultural diversity plans.** Plans provide a transparent mechanism for services to articulate and work towards cultural diversity goals and a workplace culture that builds respect, fosters inclusiveness and promotes diversity. A plan might include setting targets (for recruitment or program participants) which are a key enabler of systemic change – and reporting on performance in relation to those targets. There are potential lessons from the approach to affirmative action, underpinned by the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* which provides a frame to monitor gender equality indicators and promote business accountability.
- **Data collection and contract metrics:** These should transparently measure engagement of and outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse clients.

Recommendation 10:

Strengthen the cultural responsiveness of government agencies and non-government organisations delivering publicly funded human services by commissioning processes that:

- **encourage cultural diversity plans and cultural diversity targets**
- **assess prospective service providers on their commitment to and performance with respect to cultural inclusiveness**
- **require the collection of data that measures the engagement of and outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse clients**

Collaboration strengthens settlement outcomes

Settlement Services are primarily a federal government responsibility. However, there is increasing state and territory involvement; and local government and community organisations are at the critical front line of service delivery. There is significant opportunity to enhance collaboration and use resources more effectively to improve settlement outcomes. In particular, there is an opportunity to align efforts to address the challenges and opportunities facing discrete communities.

Examples of this include:

- The NSW Government's leadership in rallying cross-government and community collaboration to support settlement of 12,000 Syrians. The aim is to coordinate services across all levels of government, non-government, community, education and corporate sectors. This is combined with efforts to prepare host communities for their arrival and settlement, and coordinate state support through health, education and employment services to complement settlement services.
- The former Victorian Settlement Planning Committee (VSPC) established an African Youth Issues Subcommittee in 2005, with representatives from the three tiers of government, settlement and other community services, and communities. Secretariat support was funded by the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs over two years.

The Subcommittee established an evidence base for best practice in improving education, employment and settlement outcomes for young African refugees, based on real case studies and programs that worked. Key elements underpinning the methodology included: recognising and building on young's people skills; coordination that aligns effort and resources and fills gaps; working with the local community (CMY 2008). The Subcommittee also facilitated local programs in Dandenong and Wyndham LGAs which helped to increase the take-up of local mainstream services by young African people and their community, strengthening the connection with schools, youth centres and social activities (VSPC 2007)

The Victorian Government (led by the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion branches) has recently established the Victorian Settlement Planning and Outcomes Committee to advance the objectives of the new National Settlement Framework. The focus includes coordination and

alignment, building on what is working, strengthening capacity and integrated early intervention approaches to promote positive settlement outcomes. The Brotherhood is one of the community organisations participating on the Committee. While the federal Department of Social Services (DSS) is represented, it brings no funds to the new Committee.

Recommendation 11

Align the efforts of different tiers of government and service providers to develop targeted responses that address the settlement experiences of particular groups.

4 English language ability

With the right support new arrivals can become proficient in English

English language proficiency is central to ensuring that migrants can participate in mainstream Australian society. Good quality, accessible English programs, backed by support to practise in everyday life, are sufficient to enable the acquisition of language skills, regardless of a person's pre-arrival English language experience. We reject the notion that screening potential migrants for English language ability prior to their arrival will improve settlement outcomes.

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provision of 510 hours of English language courses goes some way in preparing newly arrived people to reach a competent level of English. However, a number of practical issues limit access to and effectiveness of the program.

First, people need to register within 12 months of their arrival and failing to do so results in losing their entitlement to the classes. The Brotherhood's experience tells us that for most people from refugee backgrounds, finding work is among their highest priorities upon arrival in Australia. Many have fled their home countries, losing all their financial assets and even accruing debts from family or friends to fund their journey. Learning English and up-skilling themselves, although important, is seen as a second order issue. The AMEP eligibility timeframes do not factor in people's employment, personal and family caring commitments during initial resettlement; and therefore migrants and refugees may not be able to capitalise on the full number of allocated hours. A rethink is needed. We suggest extending the eligibility for AMEP to five years after arrival, in line with other settlement services, to maximise access.

Second, access is limited by the class times. AMEP classes frequently clash with hours of work, making it challenging to juggle competing commitments. Consideration should be given to how AMEP can be delivered to more effectively cater for the needs of newly arrived communities. More flexible hours, including evening and weekend classes would be a positive step.

Third, AMEP could be considerably enhanced by tailoring the content according to need. The 2015 AMEP evaluation report suggested the ESL curriculum options could be broadened in order to support participants' transition and access to further education, training and employment.

Fourth, for some new arrivals, 510 hours of language instruction is not sufficient. While the additional 200 hours through the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) program is welcome, a recent report indicated that up to 2,000 hours of training may be

needed for people with no background to learn English (ACIL Allen Consulting 2015). After 510 hours of free language tuition in Australia, only 7% of migrants achieve a level of English which satisfies basic social and work needs. About 60% of AMEP clients begin the program with little or no English and so will require considerably more instruction. Additional support is also needed for those people who lack literacy in their first language and have limited formal education experience.

The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program can provide up to an additional 800 hours of employment-focused English instruction. However, uptake is lower than it could be. Referrals from jobactive providers are low, possibly because of limited awareness of the program and its benefits; they could be encouraged to make referrals to SEE in appropriate circumstances. As suggested in a recent report on program alignment, AMEP and SEE could be better integrated and redesigned as an overarching program delivering different streams to meet different learning needs (ACIL Consulting 2015a).

Recommendation 12:

Strengthen the effectiveness of English language assistance by:

- **extending eligibility for participation in the Adult Migrant English Program from 12 months to five years post-settlement and providing additional hours of language tuition to those who are not sufficiently proficient in English after exhausting the allocated hours**
- **improving flexibility of tuition hours to fit with work commitments**
- **working with jobactive providers and their peak bodies to increase referrals to the Skills for Education and Employment program**
- **tailoring the AMEP curriculum to meet individual needs and interests, including learning English through employment programs or job training.**

5 Related matters

Government plays a leadership role in setting the tone

A public perception of refugees as assets, supported as such during settlement, has the potential to strengthen the country's economic, cultural and social growth as well as foster their integration and acceptance in the broader community. The Brotherhood believes that we all have a role in championing the government's refugee intake program and to assist with broader community readiness and acceptance of refugee arrivals. Settlement services are the direct response, and fostering a community climate of acceptance is a necessary complement,. Each strategy multiplies the benefits of the other.

A recent European Union study confirmed that integration policy can play an important role in improving social inclusion, filling vacancies, boosting jobs and growth, and addressing Europe's alarming demographic challenges (Kancs & Lecca 2016).

While Australia has a long history of harmoniously practising our unique brand of multiculturalism, the Brotherhood is concerned that without vigilance, this risks being eroded.

Research by the Melbourne Social Equity Institute (Muller 2016) into voter attitudes towards asylum seekers (which are also relevant to refugees) found that negative attitudes were often linked to a lack of information. It recommended Australian governments play a proactive role in fostering acceptance and enabling positive integration.

Recommendation 13:

Undertake a campaign which builds public awareness of and confidence in the refugee program and its impact, by highlighting:

- **why Australia has a refugee program and plays a global role**
- **which countries people are coming from and why these have been priorities**
- **accurate information about entitlements and support provided to tackle myths**
- **the positive contribution of humanitarian entrants as an asset to our economy and society**

Appendix: Case study – Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers

The BSL launched *Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers* as a pilot initiative in 2013, supported by a philanthropic sponsor interested in helping migrant workers find jobs. The pilot was designed to ‘fast track’ people seeking asylum into their first job in Australia by assessing job readiness, providing pre-employment advice and guidance, and supporting candidates during recruitment.

The practice model has since been expanded to include simultaneous jobseeker support and employer engagement, which matches jobseekers to available jobs, as well as cultivating opportunities for work experience, training and other forms of employment preparation:

When I was in my country I had my own employment; I was helping myself [...] I have the skills, I’m young, I can work and help myself [...] That’s why it’s important for me.
(Female asylum seeker, aged 29–34, Ethiopia)

Target group: people seeking asylum in Australia

People seeking asylum face complex disadvantages in the Australian labour market. Four in five participants in the GtCAS program are aged 25–54, close to two-thirds are tertiary educated in their home country, and nearly half speak either an advanced or professional level of English. However, many of the people who join the program have never worked in Australia, have limited access to job information, possess few local contacts or networks, and are unfamiliar with mainstream recruitment practices. People on temporary bridging visas—especially recent arrivals—are unlikely to have local work experience and employer references.

In this context, organisations that can provide access to labour market ‘know-how’ become critical bridges into mainstream employment for people seeking asylum.

Demographic profile of GtCAS participants:

- Seven in ten GtCAS participants are men aged 15–54 who arrived in Australia by boat.
- More than three-quarters of all GtCAS participants are from the regions of the Middle East and North Africa or Southern and Central Asia.
- Nearly half (47%) of GtCAS participants have been assessed by case workers as having either an advanced or professional level of English proficiency.
- Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) hold tertiary qualifications (at least a bachelor’s degree or equivalent) from a foreign country, and around one-third (32.9%) of participants have obtained a Certificate III or IV since arriving in Australia.

Employment mentoring and support for jobseekers

GtCAS assists job seekers to navigate labour market demands, obtain crucial work experience and training, and develop local contacts and networks.

The model takes each participant along a Pathway Plan that is tailored to their level of skill, experience and barriers as identified and determined at intake. Core components include:

- engagement and induction (Month 1) – assess for skills, job readiness, language and literacy, motivation, barriers to employment and identification of training and support needs. Participants are linked, where required, to relevant support services within the community
- job preparation (Month 2) – ‘Crossing Bridges Training’ is focused on Australian workplace expectations and behaviour, resume writing, and interview skills. This is followed where required with specific job interview coaching, industry specific training, and business mentoring or volunteer support. From Month 2 participants are also encouraged to attend job club activities and English conversation groups.
- Job application and post placement support (Months 3–1) – supported job application process, attendance at interviews or introductions to other job agencies, structured field support and additional support required if an employment outcome is not sustained and assistance is needed to secure another role.

Employer engagement

The model also actively brokers opportunities, using a demand-led approach that is responsive to the business needs of employers. The approach to employer engagement includes:

- networking with different employers to identify opportunities
- assessment of current vacancies offered by employers or forecasting future vacancies
- redesign and restructuring of roles where necessary
- reaching agreement on employer support requirements
- negotiation and management of the formal engagement between BSL and the employer.

Where an employer has agreed on a program that supports asylum seekers, industry workshops are conducted to prepare candidates for brokered jobs. Most of the jobs accessed by participants have been actively brokered by the program either as individual or group placements:

[The program] makes my HR issues a lot easier in sourcing staff and certainly eliminating the cost of [online advertising]. That takes considerable time [and] gives you no guarantees you’re actually going to find the right person. With the Given the Chance program, that’s all done for you [...] I can get an idea straight away.
(Manager, Hospitality employer)

Outcomes

A total of 331 GtCAS participants had found a job as at 30 June 2016, and around 4 in 10 of these had found more than one job. Participants who found a job from July 2013 to February 2016 had retention rates of 71% six months after placement. The employer engagement function of the program directly brokers job vacancies for GtCAS participants; over half (55%) of all jobs were brokered by directly by the BSL. Participants who found jobs were working across a range of industries, with top industries being retail trade (33.1%), accommodation and food services (26.7%), and manufacturing (21.3%).

Employers who access the recruitment and placement support offered by the GtCAS program stand to gain substantially from the engagement. In many cases, employers get access to a pool of qualified, experienced and motivated workers, often for entry-level vacancies.

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