



## **Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment**

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive

September 2018

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## Introduction

### About MYAN

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

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 rights and needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised, and to support a coherent and consistent approach to addressing these in policy and service delivery. MYAN undertakes a range of policy and sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills to influence the national and international agenda.

MYAN believes that children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have enormous potential to be active participants in and contributors to Australian society, but need targeted support to realise this.

MYAN has developed the *National Youth Settlement Framework* to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the rights and needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

### About this submission

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry of the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive. This submission highlights the particular concerns of and recommendations from young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia in relation to current employment services and proposed changes for the next generation. It focuses on the views and experiences of young people (12 to 24 year olds). Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds make up 45% of Australia's youth population<sup>1</sup> and should no longer be considered a marginal group but part of the 'mainstream' youth population – reflecting Australia's diverse and multicultural community.

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. This includes MYAN's national support role with services involved in the *Youth Transitions Support* pilot – a DSS funded program piloting new approaches to overcoming employment barriers for newly arrived young people.

MYAN conducted consultations with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the first half of 2018 to explore how they experience job-seeking processes, and their

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<sup>1</sup> VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 6.

experiences with employment service providers. Face-to-face consultations were held in Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania. A total of 97 young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds participated. MYAN also held a national teleconference in July 2018 with six service providers supporting young people in their journey to employment to inform this submission. These services are located in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

This submission comments on the proposed changes for future of employment services - especially around eligibility for enhanced employment services and online employment services - and is structured around the views of young people.

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## MYAN's Findings

### The nature and underlying causes of joblessness in Australia

#### Impact of settlement and learning a new language on refugee and migrant young people

Young Australians from refugee and migrant backgrounds are a diverse population group who commonly display immense resilience. They come to Australia with an array of strengths and capabilities and are often highly motivated to succeed in education and embrace the opportunities available to them.<sup>2</sup> However, they also face particular challenges in accessing the support and opportunities they need to navigate the demands of building a new life in a new country.

Their needs are distinct from adults (due to their age, developmental stage, position within the family and role they often play in supporting the settlement of family members) and they commonly face additional and more complex transitions than their Australian-born counterparts. The challenges young people face navigating the settlement journey are compounded by the developmental tasks of adolescence and include:

- Learning a new language and negotiating unfamiliar education and employment pathways (sometimes with a history of disrupted or no formal education)
- Understanding and negotiating a new culture/cultures and cultural values
- Establishing new peer networks; navigating unfamiliar and relatively complex social systems and laws, including new rights and responsibilities
- Negotiating new or changed family structures, roles, responsibilities and relationships in the context of new concepts of independence, autonomy, freedom and child and youth rights
- Negotiating (multicultural) identity
- Juggling family and community expectations;
- Managing grief and loss associated with separation from peers or family, and
- Building social capital as a young person in their new context.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to developing an understanding around the impact of settlement, employment services need to develop an understanding on the impact that learning a new language has on young people's access to employment opportunities.

Language acquisition is an important part of settlement for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and a factor which may hinder their access to employment. The importance and challenges of learning English has been raised in recent Australian Parliamentary inquiries into multiculturalism, migrant settlement and school to work transitions.

The Final Report of the *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes* by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration noted that the current system of English language teaching contains

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<sup>2</sup> See Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson (2009). *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, p, 15

<sup>3</sup> MYAN (2017), *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 12.

problems in relation to language education through AMEP as well as English language schools. The Joint Standing Committee recommended in its report to extend the window of registration for AMEP programs from one to two years, while recommending flexibility in AMEP programs to enable all newly arrived migrants to access AMEP.<sup>4</sup> It was also recommended that there be a shift in focus from limiting the AMEP program with certain hours of English tuition to measuring English competency for better social and labour market integration prospects in Australia.<sup>5</sup>

The Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism also recognized in its final report that the 'one-size-fits-all' model may not suit to all new arrivals<sup>6</sup> and a number of migrants and refugees that arrive may not be literate in their own language due to moving from country to country, with disrupted schooling.<sup>7</sup>

The Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training has also recognized in the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* the challenges for migrant and refugee families to navigate unfamiliar education systems, obtaining English language skills appropriate to their work, in addition to conversational skills, as well as culturally-aware learning environments.<sup>8</sup>

During MYAN consultations, many young people expressed concern that they may not have adequate English skills to navigate employment processes in Australia and may need additional support to have English skills commensurate to expectations of professional life. Furthermore, many young people mentioned limited English skills as a barrier to full utilization of employment services. Suggestions were made that employment services need to provide services in simple English, as well as to effectively use interpreters to help young people understand better employment processes.

### Lack of knowledge around employment services and work place rules

Young people need support including information on how to access employment services, what employment services can offer to them, and the relevance of worker rights in Australia (as well as complaint mechanisms).

Young people reported having very limited information about the range of employment-related services available to them, including readily accessible information in the community about jobactive providers. Young people accessing services are not aware of the support they should be receiving and what support they can request. Young people mentioned they found out the eligibility for certain types of support (such as driving lessons, funding for uniforms etc.) through their family, friends and communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (2018) *Unique individuals, broad skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 70.

Young people also discussed their lack of knowledge about employment rights in Australia. The Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training recognized this issue in the *School to Work Transition Inquiry*, referring to a lack of familiarity with Australian social norms and workplace laws, resulting in young people from recently-arrived families more vulnerable to exploitation at work, which can undermine the success of school to work transitions.<sup>9</sup>

### Lack of individualised supports to prepare for employment in Australia

Young people reported that they need support to prepare them for seeking employment in the Australian context, in order to boost their confidence and prepare them for each step of the job application process (such as resume writing support, practice interviews, how to dress for an interview, etc.). They also require ongoing employment support - to make sure they understand and meet expectations in Australian work places and work place culture, and to ensure they hold on to their jobs longer. This requires individualised support for young people to gain and sustain employment and increase their employability skills. These issues were also highlighted in MYAN's service provider consultations as a key issue when supporting and preparing young people for the workforce.

The Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism in its final report mentioned that employment assistance should ensure that new migrants and refugees are prepared for work in the Australian context, including support for resume writing, preparation for interviews and assistance in navigating the jobs market.<sup>10</sup>

*Jobactive* assistance should be based on the aspirations and capacities of young people, incorporating a strengths-based approach. *Jobactive* providers need to better understand young people's capabilities, what they bring to Australia, their needs and barriers as well as their strengths and aspirations, in order to better and more actively support them. This includes support during the job seeking process, and in advocating on their behalf with employers. This more individualised support model has been voiced by many young people as a way to best support young people to access employment. This requires moving away from what several described as a 'cookie cutter' model. This includes, for example, the option of longer appointments with young people who require more intensive support.

The job services model needs to incorporate case planning, including limits being set on the number of people that job brokers can support, in order to make sure they can support each individual young person meaningfully. In consultations with MYAN, service providers mentioned this as a vital issue to make sure young people receive the support they need. A stronger focus is needed on supporting meaningful employment, i.e. to deliver employment services which start with the needs of the clients, rather than getting them into employment without a long-term view of future employment outcomes.

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<sup>9</sup> Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (2018) *Unique individuals, broad skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 28.

## **Methods by which Australians gain employment and their relative effectiveness**

### Limited social capital<sup>11</sup> and networks

'*The next generation of employment services: Discussion paper*' notes that 1 in 3 people who get employment know the person hiring them. This creates a disadvantage for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, who don't know anyone in Australia other than their immediate families.

Personal connections are one of the most common methods of finding employment used by young people. However, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have limited social capital in Australia, which in turn limits their opportunities. While they refer to their friends and social networks for finding jobs, the opportunities that result are limited, as most often their family, friends and social networks are themselves new to Australia and have limited social capital.<sup>12</sup> Where they can find jobs, young people may be then stuck in employment fields that do not reflect their desire and are below their qualifications and capabilities.<sup>13</sup>

Over time, young people establish connections with people from other cultural backgrounds and diversify their networks. But it takes time to build these "bridging networks". Young people may still primarily depend on social networks that are made up of people from their own or similar cultural backgrounds. A recent research summary of the *Building a New Life in Australia* (BNLA)<sup>14</sup> report looking into settlement outcomes of young humanitarian migrants in Australia supports this. According to BNLA findings, over time the proportion of young people reporting 'a mixture' of friends from their own and other ethnic/religious communities increased significantly, from 34% to 50%; and the proportion reporting having friends mostly from their own communities decreased significantly. However, a large proportion of young people (39%) were still relying mainly on networks from their own communities two-and-a-half years after arrival to Australia.<sup>15</sup> This was reflected in MYAN's consultations, with young people often mentioning the importance of 'knowing someone to get a job' or 'get ahead'.

Forging work pathways depends on specific knowledge about Australian culture and its business environment, which young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds need

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<sup>11</sup> Social capital is defined as a person's ability to access and mobilise resources within social relationships. See Lin, 2000; Coleman, 1990 in Graham, Shier and Eisenstat, 2015: 3 in Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Tomlinson and Egan, 2002 in Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) is an ongoing longitudinal study about how humanitarian migrants settle into a new life in Australia. Data is collected annually starting in 2013 with participants' early months in Australia. For more on BNLA see <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programmes-services/building-a-new-life-in-australia-bnla-the-longitudinal-study-of-humanitarian-migrants>.

<sup>15</sup> Rioseco, P & Liddy, N (2018) *Settlement outcomes of humanitarian youth and active citizenship Economic participation, social participation and personal wellbeing*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1804\\_bnla\\_settlement\\_outcomes\\_of\\_humanitarian\\_youth\\_research\\_summary.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1804_bnla_settlement_outcomes_of_humanitarian_youth_research_summary.pdf), p. 4.

time to build and navigate. This reinforces the importance of bridging networks (connections with those of dissimilar backgrounds)<sup>16</sup> in facilitating employment opportunities.<sup>17</sup>

MYAN believes employment services can play a unique role in helping newly arrived young people overcome such barriers, as they can enable young people to access professional networks through networking opportunities, employment fairs and forums, and by facilitating introductions to professional circles. This could also assist in overcoming misconceptions and stereotyping from employers about the capabilities and skills of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

While there have been some initiatives to link migrants and refugees with employers at the state level through some state government funded programs, Commonwealth-funded employment services should allocate funding for such opportunities to better ensure national consistency.

### **The extent of consultation and engagement with unemployed workers in the design and implementation of jobactive**

#### **Experiences of young people with jobactive providers**

In MYAN consultations, young people often referred to their negative experiences of seeking employment through *jobactive*. These concerns relate to all stages of the process, from initial referral from Centrelink, to ongoing engagement with *jobactive* providers.

Centrelink's allocation of young people to streams<sup>18</sup> which are not in line with their individual situations and capabilities (in some situations automatic referral to Stream B, rather than Stream C) was often raised in consultations with young people and service providers. Effective utilisation of services is made more complex due to difficulty changing allocated streams later on.

Concerns were also raised about Centrelink streaming newly arrived young people (aged 16 to 19) who were early school leavers to employment services, rather than linking them with possible education pathways that they could pursue in order to achieve better employment outcomes. Research has identified that early school leaving can have a profound negative

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<sup>16</sup> Kellock (2016), *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p.11.

<sup>18</sup> Job seekers on income support will have their first contact with Centrelink, who will assess their needs for *jobactive* services. Centrelink will refer a job seeker to a service 'stream' depending on their readiness for work. Stream A job seekers are the most job ready. They will receive services to help them understand what employers want and how to navigate the local labour market, build a résumé, look for jobs and learn how to access self-help facilities. Stream B job seekers need their *jobactive* provider to play a greater role to help them become job ready and will be referred for case management support. Stream C job seekers have a combination of work capacity and personal issues that need to be addressed and will get case management support so that they can take up and keep a job. See for more, [https://docs.jobs.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/program\\_fact\\_sheet\\_for\\_jobactive\\_w\\_track\\_changes\\_aug16\\_0.pdf](https://docs.jobs.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/program_fact_sheet_for_jobactive_w_track_changes_aug16_0.pdf)



effect on an individual's employment prospects<sup>19</sup>, leaving them at risk of experiencing persistent disadvantage compared with their peers who have completed Year 12.<sup>20</sup>

Many newly arrived young people need further study and employment preparation. Appropriate support responses based on increased flexibility and resources would assist young people to increase their skills, and in the longer term to gain employment.

Across the states and territories, young people told similar stories about their unsatisfactory interaction with the *jobactive* service. *jobactive* appointments were said to leave young people seeing themselves as a burden or inconvenience to the worker. In summary, *jobactive* was considered to be:

- not helpful
- not responsive to individual situation and needs
- a poor service provision, and
- operating on a "tick the box" basis rather than offering meaningful engagement.

The need for training of *jobactive* staff, and better customer service, were also raised in MYAN's consultations with service providers. They cited the need for *jobactive* providers to be more welcoming and responsive to (culturally, linguistically and faith diverse) people throughout the process. The need for *Jobactive* providers to receive training around cultural competency and cultural responsiveness was also raised; with a view to helping them better understand young people's experiences during settlement and how best to meet their needs.

This 'tick box' approach to service users has been associated with high caseloads for staff under the current business model of *jobactive*. It does not allow for individual support to young people, or allow scope to service smaller numbers of clients to ensure more intensive, targeted work with people in accessing and sustaining employment.

There is a common view from both young people and the sector that the contractual obligations do not allow the *jobactive* providers to work with people in a more intensive way, with co-designed employment pathways and outcomes consistent with their own employment prospects and goals.

Young people also reported that employment services staff frequently lacks knowledge of the employment market and available jobs. This limits young people's prospects of finding the right jobs through targeted training opportunities and up-skilling.

Service providers mentioned that they are often required to advocate on young people's behalf on issues that result from a lack of flexibility. Common examples given include when *jobactive* appointments clash with English language (AMEP) classes, resulting in young people missing their English classes in order to avoid being in breach of their mutual obligations with Centrelink and *jobactive*.

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<sup>19</sup> McLachlan, Gilfillan & Gordon 2013 in Dommers, E, Myconos, G, Swain, L, Yung, S & Clarke K (2017), *Engaging young early school leavers in vocational training*. Adelaide: NCVER. Available at: [https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf), p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> COAG 2009 and van Alphen 2012 in Dommers, E, Myconos, G, Swain, L, Yung, S & Clarke K (2017), *Engaging young early school leavers in vocational training*. Adelaide: NCVER. Available at: [https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf), p. 11.

Consultations indicated that there are inconsistent approaches on this issue by *jobactive* providers. Some jobactive providers recognize such activities as an eligible job activity, while others do not. This suggests an element of discretion in decision making in relation to eligible activities, but clarity on this issue is needed.

Young people consistently identified their need for individualised support designed around their needs and aspirations. In light of this, MYAN strongly believes the proposed access to employment services through self-service, on-line options for enhanced services would further disadvantage young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Young people need more intensive and one-on-one support, not self-serviced online services, as these would increase young people's isolation from the employment market and make it harder for them to access employment support.

### **Ability of jobactive to provide long-term solutions to joblessness, and to achieve social, economic and cultural outcomes that meet the needs and aspirations of unemployed workers**

#### Racism and discrimination in accessing employment for young people

According to initial findings of the recent Multicultural Youth Australia Census, racial discrimination is the most common reason why young people have difficulty finding work.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the findings indicate that more than 11% of young people reported facing discrimination in the work place with 10% reporting witnessing discrimination in the work place.<sup>22</sup> The *Building a New Life in Australia* research findings on youth also refers to higher levels of discrimination with longer time in Australia.<sup>23</sup> The *Select Committee Report on Strengthening Multiculturalism* identifies that many culturally and linguistically diverse people experience labour market discrimination, despite high levels of education and overseas working experience.<sup>24</sup>

Young people report that discrimination is a key barrier to them accessing employment. MYAN believes this is an important aspect of the job seeking process, and that employment services need to acknowledge and explicitly address this in their efforts to help young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds find jobs.

Employment services need to consider potential discrimination in their communication with employers, to ensure that young people do not experience discrimination or stereotyping, and to ensure they make meaningful connections which lead to future opportunities in their employment life.

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<sup>21</sup> Wyn, J, Khan, R & Dadvand, B (2018) *MY Australia Census: Draft Summary report 2017-2018*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Wyn, J, Khan, R & Dadvand, B (2018) *MY Australia Census: Draft Summary report 2017-2018*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Rioseco, P & Liddy, N (2018) *Settlement outcomes of humanitarian youth and active citizenship Economic participation, social participation and personal wellbeing*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1804\\_bnl\\_settlement\\_outcomes\\_of\\_humanitarian\\_youth\\_research\\_summary.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1804_bnl settlement_outcomes_of_humanitarian_youth_research_summary.pdf), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 42

While it is not specifically youth- focused, the “*New Arrivals New Connections - An employer’s guide to working with migrants and refugees*”<sup>25</sup> by the Department of Social Services is a good example of engaging employers on this issue. Youth-specific guides developed and utilised by government could assist employers to be more receptive to job applications by refugee and migrant young people - recognizing their strengths as well as their challenges.

### **The fairness of mutual obligation requirements, the jobactive Job Plan negotiation process and expenditure of the Employment Fund**

*jobactive* service providers need to develop specific understanding of the impact on newly arrived young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds of having to learn a new language, as well as the series of challenges they face in navigating the settlement process. They face many additional pressures compared to Australian-born young people. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds need opportunities to access activities which suit their needs through appropriate employment support programs.

Practically, there needs to be more flexibility in interpreting the application of eligibility criteria when meeting mutual obligations. For some young people this may mean English language programs tailored to specific occupations; for others it may mean access to driving license programs.

There is a particular lack of flexibility on the part of *jobactive* providers in recognising job readiness activities undertaken by young people to increase their employability skills. Lack of recognition of these activities as eligible activities under the Employment Fund is a common concern.

Where job readiness services and programs are not accredited *jobactive* programs, they are not counted by *jobactive* towards meeting mutual obligations. Recognising job readiness programs as eligible activities would increase program options. Otherwise young people are pulled out of these programs in order to complete the tasks that the *jobactive* wants them to do, which can prevent them from attending programs that are more likely to support their employability and increase their skills.

Newly arrived young people are provided with lots of information which they cannot understand, even when this information is provided in simplified English. Some key materials should be translated into key languages, and interpreters should be used more readily.

A revised business model for *jobactive* would allow young people to have more control over the funds to which they are entitled under the Employment Fund, rather than providers being directive about what activities young people need to do to get a job. An individualized funding model similar to the one adopted for Disability Employment Services (delivered by the Department of Social Services) could be adapted for employment services.

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<sup>25</sup> Department of Social Services (2017) *New Arrivals New Connections — An employer’s guide to working with migrants and refugees*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Available at: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02\\_2017/new\\_arrivals\\_-\\_new\\_connections.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2017/new_arrivals_-_new_connections.pdf).

## **The adequacy and appropriateness of activities undertaken within the Annual Activity Requirement phase, including Work for the Dole, training, studying and volunteering programs and their effect on employment outcomes**

### Limited access to suitable work experience opportunities

Young people need access to work experience, as well as other opportunities that help them gain other professional experiences in the Australian job market, including internships and volunteer opportunities. These are essential in Australia where local work experience is highly valued.

The final report of the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* by the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training made important recommendations related to government-led work experience programs, which we believe should be reflected when planning for the future of employment services. The Committee recommended work experience programs to;

- *incorporate defined training components which are directly connected with specific planned and agreed work-experience component(s);*
- *require employment service providers to ensure that employers within the current “Jobactive” system are engaged with government-led work-experience programs; and*
- *ensure program design takes into account the importance of promoting secure employment, compliance with industrial relations laws, the avoidance of exploitation, value-for-money in respect of any publicly-funded incentives, and ongoing accountability for employment outcomes.*<sup>26</sup>

Young people often mentioned a lack of work experience being a significant barrier to subsequently accessing meaningful employment. They need structured support to be able to participate in work experience programs.

## **The impacts and consequences of the job seeker compliance framework**

An implication of recent changes to the *jobactive* Compliance system from 1 July 2018 is that when mutual *jobactive* obligations are not met by clients, payments are now cancelled. In the past, suspended payments could be fairly easily re-instated within a short time, through intervention from settlement providers helping clients to re-book *jobactive* appointments etc. Clients will now have to completely re-apply for their benefits via a new cl in order to recommence their Centrelink benefits. This will have adverse impacts on clients from the resultant delays.

Young people already struggling with understanding and meeting their existing *jobactive* mutual obligation requirements (particularly those studying at AMEP) may lead to experiencing severe financial stress, and an increased need to access financial/emergency

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<sup>26</sup> Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (2018) *Unique individuals, broad skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*.. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, pp. 70-71.

support from various agencies.

## **Alternative approaches to addressing joblessness; and any other related matters**

### Specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

The final report of the *Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism* recommends the development of specific migrant-stream employment services under the *jobactive* model. This recognises that employment pathways for migrants and refugees are convoluted and slow, and that there is a need for an integrated employment assistance service that meets the unique needs of migrants and humanitarian entrants.<sup>27</sup> The Committee's recommendation included details about what the new stream should entail, in order to support migrants and refugees, including the following:

- *a robust assessment framework that recognises overseas education and qualifications;*
- *stronger coordination with the Adult Migrant English Program;*
- *alternative assessment guidelines under the jobactive star rating performance framework; and*
- *comprehensiv cross-cultural training, including torture and trauma training, for all staff.*<sup>28</sup>

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration in its report following the *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes* recommended a support service under the *jobactive* program designed for newly arrived and longer term migrants, which would include migrant and refugee youth.<sup>29</sup> The Joint Standing Committee also recognised the challenges young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face in accessing to employment, including discrimination and unconscious bias.<sup>30</sup>

There is broad consensus among young people and service providers on the need to have specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, in order to best achieve employment outcomes (and therefore settlement/integration outcomes). Such services should have interpreter support as well as bicultural workers who are from refugee or migrant backgrounds.

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<sup>27</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 92.

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## MYAN's Recommendations

MYAN recommends the following changes to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive:

1. Establish a specific migrant-stream employment service to provide support designed to meet the complex needs of migrants under the *jobactive* program, which would include migrant and refugee youth.
2. Introduce automatic referral to enhanced/specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds without any additional eligibility criteria and set self-servicing periods through the online system.
3. Develop a flexible business model for jobactive providers to ensure individual support can be provided to young people, with lower caseload allocation for *jobactive* staff.
4. Develop/update quality standards for employment service provider staff, ensuring it includes cultural responsiveness, as well as good customer service principles.
5. Deliver training to employment services staff on cultural competency and cultural responsiveness, and ensure *jobactive* providers are up-to-date with current job market expectations as well as employment fields and opportunities.
6. Invest in training and professional development for employment services staff to address issues of discrimination/unconscious bias and stereotyping that young people face, in order to eradicate this in *jobactive* providers.
7. Provide young people with suitable supports to develop their language skills to meet the expectations of professional life in Australia, while ensuring information is provided and services are delivered in plain and simple English to make sure they are not excluded from the services delivered by *jobactive* providers, using interpreters as needed.
8. Train employment services staff to ensure they understand the settlement journey for young people, as well as the language acquisition process, to ensure they deliver services which meet the unique challenges young people face while also supporting them to reach their potential in accessing jobs.
9. Expand eligibility to organisations/services that already deliver such specific and tailored programs which support young people's access to employment.
10. Adopt an individualised support model for delivery by employment service providers, including a case planning approach, to ensure the support young people receive from the employment services is tailored to and meets their needs.

11. Develop an individualised funding model for the Employment Fund that is tailored to individual situation, needs and strengths of young people - similar to the Disability Employment Services delivered by the Department of Social Services.
12. Provide young people with more work experience (as well as internship and volunteer) opportunities in different fields of employment based on their aspirations and interests.
13. Understand the limitations of some young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in their ability to undertake unpaid work experience, and provide them with paid internships and opportunities depending on their individual circumstances.