



**The Migration Youth and Children Platform (MYCP)**

<https://migrationyouthchildrenplatform.org/>

27 February 2023

**Committee Secretary**

Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

RE: Call for submissions for inquiry into the role of permanent migration in nation building  
(Migration, Pathway to Nation Building)

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Migration Youth and Children Platform (MYPC) is a self-organised space for children and youth (up to 31 years old) to contribute to and engage in intergovernmental and allied policy processes at the United Nations and realise our collective right to meaningful youth engagement as enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and other UN compacts. Our work so far with our key allies – the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Children’s Fund – has shown the potential of young people’s participation in decision-making. Since 2018, we have led consultation processes with stakeholders around the world and engaged them in the key areas where migration issues are discussed, including the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Migration has been a key driver of cultural diversity in Australia, which is reflected in 46 per cent of Australians being born overseas or having a parent who was born overseas. Furthermore, approximately 20 percent of Australians speak a language other than English at home.<sup>1</sup> Migration has also played a key role in driving Australian population and economic growth. Between 2012 and 2013, overseas migration accounted for 60 per cent of Australia’s population growth.<sup>2</sup> Migration to Australia has also diversified the labour force and created considerable economic benefits in four key areas: population, productivity, innovation and migrant employment, labour market outcomes and fiscal impact. The outcomes are particularly evident in rural and regional areas that had historically faced numerous roadblocks while ‘attracting and retaining workers to address labour market shortages’. The implications of migration for cultural

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://australiantranslationservices.com.au/cultural-diversity-in-australia/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mckellinstitute.org.au/research/articles/why-australia-is-the-worlds-most-successful-multicultural-society/>

diversity as well as the contributions to population and economic growth clearly illustrate some of the potential reasons why the Committee has established this inquiry into the role of permanent migration in nation building.

MYCP's vision is to create a space for young people's meaningful engagement in decision-making on migration policy and to empower them to participate effectively and create a more inclusive world for migrants. As a youth constituency, this submission focuses on bringing the concerns and perspectives of young people to the forefront of the Committee's decision-making. Beyond this submission, it is critical that the Committee gives detailed consideration to the voices and experiences of young people, and young migrants in particular, in any form of policy change.

Yours sincerely,

**Aidan Luchs and Vinkha Adinda**

MYCP Asia-Pacific Team Leads

**Laura Coburn, Ratu Bintang Assyifa Arweys, and Simran Dhingra**

MYCP Asia-Pacific Team Officers

## **I. IMMIGRATION AS A STRATEGIC ENABLER OF VIBRANT ECONOMIES AND SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN OUR CITIES AND REGIONAL HUBS**

Education, work, and tourism opportunities are key factors driving young migrants to relocate to Australia. Through engaging in these opportunities, young migrants have the potential to play a key role in sustainable economic and community development in Australia. Yet, key challenges remain for migrants in accessing student and working holiday visas. This section explores the challenges faced by young people in engaging with these visa schemes and identifies potential areas for reform to ensure full realisation of the potential benefits for Australian economies and communities.

### *A. Student visas*

Student visas in Australia are issued as a subclass 500 visa and provide a pathway for non-residents to undertake tertiary study in Australia.<sup>3</sup> MYCP identifies various barriers of existing student visa schemes in relation to full realisation of immigration as a strategic enabler of vibrant economies and socially sustainable communities in our cities and regional hubs. These include the genuine temporary entry requirement<sup>4</sup> and restrictions on working hours provided.<sup>5</sup>

#### *1. The genuine temporary entry requirement*

The genuine temporary entry requirement stipulates that students must intend to leave Australia after completing their studies. The intent behind this requirement is to ensure that the student visa is used for its purpose (as a temporary migration opportunity) and to reinforce that the student visa is “not a way for international students to maintain ongoing residency in Australia”. However, it is noted that the genuine temporary entry requirement is “not intended to exclude students who, after studying in Australia, develop skills Australia needs and who then go on to apply for permanent residence”.

The issues MYCP identifies in relation to the GTER are three-fold. First, the requirement frames Australia as a destination in which students have a limited future beyond their period of study, which can influence feelings of belonging and integration into the community. Second, the requirement weakens Australia’s position as an international education destination, particularly when considering that the United Kingdom, another popular international education destination, imposes no such requirement on students during their visa application.<sup>6</sup> Third, while beyond the scope of this submission’s terms of reference, it must also be noted that a significant judicial burden is created by the scheme. Approximately 34% of lodgements to the Administrative

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500>

<sup>4</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500/genuine-temporary-entrant>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.studyaustralia.gov.au/english/live/work>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/documents-you-must-provide>

Appeals Tribunal under the Migration and Refugee Division relate to the GTER, potentially delaying access to justice for various other matters.<sup>7</sup>

MYCP recommends that the genuine temporary entry requirement is removed to bring Australia in line with other international education destinations such as the United Kingdom. This removal will ensure that international students experience a greater sense of belonging and potential for a future in Australia, at least from an administrative perspective, and that their presence in Australia is not merely transactional.

## *2. Restrictions on working hours*

International students have been traditionally restricted to working 40 hours per fortnight during the semester, with unlimited working hours during semester holiday periods.<sup>8</sup> However, these restrictions were removed in 2022 in order to respond to critical skill shortages faced by Australian businesses. The removal of these restrictions to address skill shortages highlights the critical role that international students play in a vibrant Australian economy. However, working hour restrictions will be reintroduced as of July 1 2023. Given that Australia continues to experience skills shortages across various industries, including early childhood care, hospitality,<sup>9</sup> and retail in which international students have a strong ability to make significant contributions to the workforce, there is a clear need to remove these restrictions should Australia wish to create a more vibrant economy post-COVID. Removal of such restrictions also provides an opportunity for international students to work increased hours in response to rising cost of living pressures, should this be required. Though beyond the scope of this submission, MYCP also notes further government support for international students could more directly address rising cost of living pressures facing international students.<sup>10</sup>

MYCP recommends that the working hour restriction to 40 hours per week is removed on a permanent basis. However, this removal must coincide with the implementation of further safeguarding measures and information campaigns to ensure exploitation of international students is avoided. International students in Australia continue to be exploited in the Australian workforce and a socially sustainable economy cannot be built on migrant worker exploitation.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aat.gov.au/AAT/media/AAT/Files/Statistics/MRD-detailed-caseload-statistics-2021-22.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500/temporary-relaxation-of-working-hours-for-student-visa-holders>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.smartcompany.com.au/finance/economy/care-sector-australia-skills-shortages/;](https://www.smartcompany.com.au/finance/economy/care-sector-australia-skills-shortages/)

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/demand-for-hospitality-staff-hits-two-year-high-as-union-warns-on-exploitation-20220317-p5a5ja.html>; <https://insideretail.com.au/business/vacancies-surge-as-labour-shortages-cripple-the-retail-industry-202209>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/topics/skills-priority-list>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-22/international-students-exploitation-report-fair-work-ombudsman/100114432>

## ***B. Working Holiday Visa***

Australian Working Holiday Visas are governed by a series of bilateral agreements that allow young people under 30 (under 35 in certain regions) to work in Australia for one year, which can be extended up to three years in certain circumstances.<sup>12</sup> The Working Holiday Visa plays a key role in enabling Australia to strengthen economic ties to other countries and develop multicultural and socially vibrant communities. However, various issues exist with the program. These issues include the inability to pursue permanent residency in Australia and age restrictions on the visa.

### *1. Pathways to permanent residency*

There are no pathways to permanent residency through the Working Holiday Visa. This can lead to “visa hopping” amongst international migrants to Australia seeking to make a permanent contribution to the community and the economy, leading to feelings of isolation and no sense of community in Australia. Providing a pathway to permanent migration, particularly for those with skills in critical areas of shortages, could provide an opportunity for Australia to attract workers to the country and strategically enable more vibrant economies and multicultural communities. It is recommended that pathways to permanent migration through the Working Holiday Program are investigated in further detail. While MYCP recognises that permanent migration is not the primary intention of this program, it is critical that the Government explore the opportunities to innovate in this space, specifically due to the critical contributions of Working Holiday Visa holders to Australian skill shortages.

### *2. Age restrictions*

While technically outside the scope of MYCP’s work as a youth constituency, the age restriction of 30 years is noted as a critical inefficiency of the Working Holiday Visa in using migration as a strategic enabler of vibrant economies. Calls have been renewed in late 2022 for removal of this upper limit.<sup>13</sup> While it could be argued that the age limit is a way to attract younger migrants to start their lives in Australia more permanently, the lack of permanent migration pathways through the scheme means this is not the case. Without permanent migration pathways through the Working Holiday scheme, the logic behind upper age limit is unclear. MYCP recommends that the age restriction is lifted to at least 50, to ensure that more age-diverse migrants are welcomed to the contribute to the Australian economy, as well as to ensure that skills shortages continue to be filled.

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/work-holiday-417/first-working-holiday-417>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/push-to-change-working-holiday-visa-age/ujcnu7kwu>

### ***C. Exploitation of young migrant workers***

Migrant worker exploitation in Australia occurs to individuals on student visas as well as Working Holiday visas. This is despite the critical contribution of these workers to the economy. In 2020, as COVID-19 arrived on Australian shores, many job shortages were attributed to the lack of working holiday makers, highlighting the critical role that these workers play in the Australian economy.<sup>14</sup> Yet, these workers continue to be undervalued and underpaid and in certain cases, subject to various forms of abuse.<sup>15</sup> Vibrant economies and socially sustainable communities in our cities and regional hubs cannot be built on migrant worker exploitation. It is therefore critical that stronger protections and education programs be introduced for international students and Working Holiday visa holders to ensure they are fully aware of all their working rights. Furthermore, stronger monitoring and safeguard protections must be introduced to ensure that employers do not violate the rights of workers on these visas.

## **II. ATTRACTION AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR WORKING MIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA**

Attracting and retaining young, working migrants is essential for addressing skills and labour shortages in Australia's domestic market. Migrants of all skillsets are known to increase productivity in host nations – complementing the existing skill set of the domestic labour force, increasing standards of living, and boosting the size of the working population.<sup>16</sup> However, with many countries experiencing a myriad of challenges such as a declining workforce, slowed economic growth, and sector-specific labour shortages, the need to attract and retain talent is a source of fierce global competition.<sup>17</sup> There are a range of factors that contribute to the decision of working migrants to immigrate to a particular country, as well as what influences them to stay. This section explores these factors and analyses strategies to strengthen Australia's appeal for working migrants globally and to reinforce their ability, and will, to remain.

### ***A. Attracting Working Migrants***

#### ***1. Cultural factors***

The expertise and experience of many young, working migrants are widely sought after in a range of countries across the world. This makes attracting workers to a specific destination a challenge. Research into factors that have attracted working migrants to Australia has found that,

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2022-02-12/farm-labour-shortage-unaffected-by-holiday-visa-surge/100822150>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-01/wage-theft-migrant-exploitation-visa-immigration-policy/102025028>;  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-16/calls-to-regulate-backpacker-work-ahead-of-federal-visa-changes/11186178>

<sup>16</sup> Jaumotte, F, Koloskova, K & Saxena, S (2016). *Migrants Bring Economic Benefits for Advanced Economies* <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2016/10/24/migrants-bring-economic-benefits-for-advanced-economies>

<sup>17</sup> Khoo, S (2014) Attracting and Retaining Globally Mobile Skilled Migrants: Policy Challenges based on Australian Research, *International Migration*, Vol. 52, Issue. 2

for many, it is the lifestyle, climate and culture of Australia that presents the biggest drawcard.<sup>18</sup> In fact, while further research is needed in this area, it appears that this is relatively common across host nations, as locations that are considered creative, vibrant, diverse and innovative are typically very attractive to highly-skilled migrants in particular.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Australia, and - importantly - its regional centres, should continue to invest in developing sustainable, cultural and creative lifestyle and community opportunities, particularly for young people, in order to attract global talent.

## 2. *Employment-related strategies*

There are a range of employment-related factors that contribute to the decision of working migrants to migrate – for example, to gain international experience, to develop professionally, and to access better employment opportunities.<sup>20</sup> As such, it is important to implement strategies that capitalise on these factors and reduce barriers for migrants to access employment opportunities in Australia. These strategies could include, for example, increasing the availability of transparent information for migrants about procedures for securing a position at work and available vacancies, and hosting recruitment events both inside and outside the country to target sector-specific shortages.<sup>21</sup> The Committee should also consider the importance of encouraging industry to avoid filtering job candidates solely based on residency status. For example, while the extension of post-study working rights in certain skills shortages is welcomed, many international students will still not be considered for various job listings which will only consider candidates with permanent residency or citizenship.<sup>22</sup> MYCP recommends that an information campaign amongst employers be launched to dispel myths around post-study work visas amongst employers and encourage employers to consider candidates with all forms of working rights, not only permanent residency or citizenship. It should also be noted that reducing bureaucratic barriers in order to expedite the process of receiving employment documentation and relevant visas for is also crucial for attracting working migrants<sup>23</sup> – particularly as research suggests that migrants are also influenced to select a host country based on the acceptance time. This is outlined in a study<sup>24</sup> which determined that when skilled migrants were asked their reason for migrating to Australia, rather than another country to which they had applied, 23 per cent indicated that this was because acceptance into Australia came first.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Florida (2002) cited in Brown, Julie (2015). Home from home? Locational choices of international 'creative class' workers. *European Planning Studies* 23 (12) , pp. 2336-2355

<sup>20</sup> Khoo, S (2014) Attracting and Retaining Globally Mobile Skilled Migrants: Policy Challenges based on Australian Research, *International Migration*, Vol. 52, Issue. 2

<sup>21</sup> Kvashnin, Y.D (2022). European Urban Strategies for Attracting Highly Skilled Migrants. *Her Russ Acad Sci.* 2022; 92(Suppl 2): S113–S118. Published online 2022 Jun 29. doi: 10.1134/S1019331622080068

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/graduate-visas-just-papering-over-the-skills-gap-20220916-p5bipl>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Khoo, S (2014) Attracting and Retaining Globally Mobile Skilled Migrants: Policy Challenges based on Australian Research, *International Migration*, Vol. 52, Issue. 2

## ***B. Retaining working migrants***

### *1. Clear pathways for international students*

Interacting with higher education institutions and creating policies that target international students and establish defined routes for permanent residency following graduation are key strategies for retaining young, working migrants. An example of this can be seen in Canada, where concerted efforts are being made to not only increase the number of international students within the country, but also to ease their transition to employment and permanent residency at the conclusion of their studies. Indeed, the Canadian Government explicitly notes that “international students are seen as ideal candidates for permanent residency due to their proficiency in English and/or French, their Canadian education credentials, and their Canadian work experience”.<sup>25</sup>

Policies to promote retention of international students as working migrants in Canada include increases in the number of hours that international students are allowed to work, increases in the length of post-graduation work permits, allocation of extra points for international students under Express Entry (a government system to manage Canadian permanent residence applications for filling labour gaps), increases in the proportion of former international students invited to apply for permanent residency, and the development of specific provincial immigration programs for international students, such as the “Study and Stay” program in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. Under this program, international students in their final year of higher education are granted access to the resources and connections necessary to enhance their ability to settle in the province following graduation. This includes a managed, one-on-one mentorship component, immigration and career support, and assistance in the development of employment connections.<sup>26</sup> As pilot initiatives like this continue to be assessed and evaluated, their outcomes must be well noted by Australian policymakers as they may very well form an evidence base from which Australia can learn and develop similar practices to retain international students as working migrants to grow Australia’s workforce.

### *2. Social connectedness*

Research demonstrates that social integration into Australian communities is crucial for retaining working migrants. Indeed, the stronger the social ties that migrants have to their local community, the less likely they are to leave.<sup>27</sup> With this in mind, it is important for countries wishing to retain working migrants, such as Australia, to invest intentionally in the development of social support infrastructure including child care services, religious groups and activities, meeting places and social events, schools, sporting facilities, among others – giving migrants the

---

<sup>25</sup> [www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/annual-report-2017.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/annual-report-2017.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://studynovascotia.ca/studyandstay-2-2/>

<sup>27</sup> Wulff, M. G., & Arunachalam, D. (2008). Retaining skilled migrants in regional Australia: the role of social connectedness. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 9(23), 147 - 160.



opportunity to build ties to their local community.<sup>28</sup> The importance of these services, particularly childcare services, are explored in more detail in the following section.

### **III. STRENGTHENING LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF MIGRANTS, INCLUDING FAMILY AND HUMANITARIAN MIGRANTS AND THE PARTNERS OF WORKING MIGRANTS**

The integration of migrants into a host country is a multi-faceted process that encompasses various dimensions including socio-economic, legal-political, and cultural integration. A successful integration process is essential to the full participation of migrants in the labour market and recognition of their economic and social contributions. Socio-economic integration encompasses the convergence between immigrants and Australian society in terms of access to employment opportunities, education and training programs, housing, social welfare provisions, and public services. Legal-political integration refers to citizenship rights. Cultural integration, as a final aspect, encompasses the adoption and internalisation of the values and beliefs of the host country. These various dimensions of integration are critical in facilitating the full participation of immigrants in the labour market and the recognition of their economic and social contributions to promote a more inclusive and diverse economy. This section considers pathways to further develop existing mechanisms designed to strengthen labour market participation amongst migrants and identifies potential areas for further policy innovation.

#### ***A. Workforce Australia***

To strengthen labour market participation and the economic and social contribution of migrants, we recommend that the Australian Government enhances and expands the services provided by Workforce Australia. This could include increasing funding for the program to ensure that job seekers, including migrants, are supported in finding and retaining employment. Additionally, we recommend that the government invest in outreach efforts to improve access to Workforce Australia services, particularly for migrants who may face language barriers or other challenges. To better support migrant job seekers, Workforce Australia could offer specialised support services, such as language training or cultural sensitivity training for employers.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the Government could encourage partnerships between employers and Workforce Australia to facilitate the employment of migrants, and promote the role of Workforce Australia in addressing skills shortages by offering training and skills development programs that help migrants and other job seekers acquire the skills needed to fill in-demand jobs.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Wulff, M., & Dharmalingam, A. (2008). Retaining skilled migrants in regional Australia: The role of social connectedness. *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale*, 9(2), 147-160.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.dewr.gov.au/workforce-australia-employment-services>

### ***B. The Professional Year Program***

As a youth constituency, we believe that the Professional Year Program (PYP) has the potential to play an important role in attracting and retaining talented international students in Australia, and in building the skills and experience needed to support the country's economic growth and development.<sup>31</sup> We recommend that the government continue to support this program and explore ways to expand its reach and impact.<sup>32</sup> This could include working with educational institutions and industry partners to promote the program and increase participation rates among international students. Additionally, we recommend that the government consider offering incentives to employers who participate in the program, to encourage them to provide work experience opportunities to international students.

However, it must be noted that the expiration of points earned through the PYP may disadvantage certain migrants who are unable to lodge permanent residency applications within the four-year expiration timeframe of their points. Furthermore, the financial burden involved in enrolling in the PYP may act as a barrier to participation for migrants with fewer financial resources. The expiration timeframe and high cost to participation could potentially deter international students from participating in the program and make it less accessible for those who cannot afford to do so, thereby potentially favouring individuals who have more financial resources and can complete the program sooner, rather than those who may need more time or support to complete the program and lodge a permanent residency application. MYCP recommends that the Committee consider opportunities to expand pathways to post-study work visas beyond existing programs, such as the PYP. This should include giving consideration to removing the additional cost imposed by existing pathways such as the PYP. In relation to the PYP specifically, MYCP recommends that the Committee considers lengthening the expiration timeframe for permanent residency points as well as ways to improve the affordability of the scheme for international students.

### ***C. Recognition of skills and qualifications***

The issue of the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications and work experience among migrants in Australia represents a significant barrier to their full participation in the labour market and to their economic and social contributions to the country.<sup>33</sup> To this end, we recommend that the government develop a national framework for the recognition of foreign

---

<sup>31</sup> Jones, Asheley. "What role do professional year programs play in developing work-readiness attributes for Australian-educated international postgraduate students?." PhD diss., Victoria University, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.studiesinaustralia.com/Blog/life-after-study/the-benefits-of-an-australian-professional-year-program>

<sup>33</sup> Cameron, Roslyn, Farveh Farivar, and Jaya Dantas. "The unanticipated road to skills wastage for skilled migrants: The non-recognition of overseas qualifications and experience (ROQE)." *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work* 29, no. 1 (2019): 80-97.

qualifications and work experience that is designed to streamline the assessment process and reduce the costs associated with obtaining recognition. This framework should be developed in consultation with stakeholders, including migrant communities, employers, and education providers, and should take into account the specific needs and experiences of different groups of migrants.

MYCP also recommends that more affordable and targeted training opportunities specifically tailored to the needs of migrants are launched. This is important because while degrees in Australia are often seen as a pathway to migration, the cost of obtaining degrees in Australia holds significant financial barriers to international students, especially those who come from lower-income backgrounds. Expanding existing schemes, such as the Australia Awards, could be one way of attracting international students and breaking down financial barriers. To facilitate the entrepreneurial aspirations of migrants, the government could also expand support in the form of small loans, financial literacy classes, and employment law training to help migrants navigate the challenges of starting a business in Australia. This would have the potential to foster job creation and stimulate economic growth in a diverse range of local communities.

#### ***D. Family and Partners of Working Migrants***

Ensuring that the partners of working migrants have access to affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements is vital for supporting their labour force participation and enabling them to contribute fully to the Australian economy. A lack of affordable childcare can be a significant barrier to labour force participation for parents, particularly mothers. However, flexible working arrangements can increase job satisfaction and productivity, as well as support work-life balance.

MYCP recommends that a focus is placed on the expansion of affordable childcare services for migrants, with a focus on increasing availability and affordability for low-income families and those in rural and remote areas. This could involve working with state and territory governments, as well as with community and not-for-profit organisations, to identify and address gaps in service provision. In addition, we suggest that the Government work with employers to promote and support flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible scheduling options. This could involve developing guidelines and best practices for flexible work arrangements, as well as offering incentives to employers who adopt these practices. By taking these steps, the Government can help to remove barriers to labour force participation for the partners of working migrants, enabling them to fully participate in the economy and contribute to the growth and development of the country. This will not only benefit individual families, but also the wider Australian society, by promoting social and economic inclusion and building a stronger, more resilient labour market for all Australians.

### *E. Humanitarian Migrants*

Australia's commitment to supporting the settlement and integration of migrants and refugees is demonstrated through programs such as the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program and the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP).<sup>34</sup> However, as the migration landscape evolves, there is a need to continually review and enhance these programs. Therefore, MYCP recommends the following key policy changes to improve the effectiveness of the SETS and HSP programs, ensuring they better support the settlement and integration of migrants and refugees into Australian society.<sup>35</sup>

#### *1. Strengthen Case Management*

Additional funding and training for case managers can improve their capacity to provide support, including cultural competence training to respond to the unique needs of humanitarian migrants. Regular monitoring and evaluation of case management practices can help to ensure that case managers are meeting the needs of humanitarian migrants.

#### *2. Streamlining*

Establishing a centralised information hub or a single point of contact for all HSP and SETS service providers. In addition, service providers could receive training to improve their understanding of the referral process, such as the criteria for referrals and the services available.

#### *3. Community Engagement*

Providing opportunities for cultural events, community activities, and volunteering can foster a sense of community and belonging for humanitarian migrants, facilitating the development of social networks. To support these efforts, community organisations and local councils could receive funding to develop and implement community engagement programs. Regular evaluation and monitoring of such activities can identify effective strategies and areas for improvement to ensure that these programs are meeting the needs of humanitarian migrants.

## **IV. THE ROLE OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN UTILISING MIGRANT EXPERIENCES, KNOWLEDGE, AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Migrant experiences, knowledge, and opportunities bring positive impacts to host countries if utilised fully. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that workers with a variety of skill

---

<sup>34</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/sets-program/sets-client-services>

<sup>35</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/humanitarian-settlement-program/about-the-program>

sets benefits their host countries by bringing diverse talent and expertise.<sup>36</sup> However, despite the very real benefits that migrants bring to their host countries, migrants are still facing key challenges in utilising their experiences and knowledge as well as realising their full potential, particularly in the labour market.

A report by OECD indicates that while migrants who have received fewer education opportunities are employed at approximately the same rate as local people, employment rates for highly-educated migrants are lower than their local counterparts and they have an almost 50% higher chance of being overqualified for a job.<sup>37</sup> Integration remains a significant reason why migrants' potential are underused and language is a critical skill for integration.<sup>38</sup> The challenges faced by migrants for both integration and labour market can be magnified if they are humanitarian migrants, when considering the role of psychological wellbeing.<sup>39</sup> This section considers these challenges and the role of settlement service in utilising and creating migrant experiences, knowledge, and opportunities, particularly in relation to the role of the Youth Transition Support Service to assist young migrants.

#### ***A. Youth Transition Support Service***

The Youth Transition Support Service, aimed at young humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants aged 15-25 years, is designed to help build capacity and resilience by providing early intervention assistance and support for them to remain engaged in education or training and make successful transition to employment.<sup>40</sup> There are 4 pillars to the service: (1) partnerships for employment to improve work readiness, (2) strong connections to education to support ongoing engagement with education, (3) vocational opportunities to help youth obtain and strengthen vocational skills, and (4) sports engagement to help youth build social connections and confidence through sporting programs.

The support and guidance provided by the Youth Transition Support Service reflects positively on Australia's commitment to invest in young migrants and help them transition and succeed in their new life in Australia. The services and support of the Youth Transition Support Service are also noted as being extensive when compared to services provided in other countries. This includes through work-readiness, education and vocational training, as well as sport engagement to support integration of young humanitarian entrants.

However, there is potential for further development of the service to best assist young migrants. Key settlement issues that migrants might face include ongoing mental health challenges as well as language barriers and racism.<sup>41</sup> If these issues are left unaddressed, young migrants may not

---

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2016/10/24/migrants-bring-economic-benefits-for-advanced-economies>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-3.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-3.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au/settlement/settlement-challenges.html>

<sup>40</sup> <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/support-for-young-refugees>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au/settlement/settlement-challenges.html>

be able to integrate fully into their new Australian environment due to trauma created by these experiences. MYCP therefore recommends that the services offered by the Youth Transition Support Service be expanded to specifically address these challenges. First, the Youth Transition Support Service should expand engagement with mental health experts, such as psychiatrists and psychologists, to ensure that all programs and engagements are trauma-informed, particularly in relation to trauma created by language barriers and racism. Second, the Youth Transition Support Service could work to develop guides and response strategies for migrants facing racism and discrimination. These guides and response strategies should be informed by lived experience of previous migrants. Finally, the Youth Transition Support Service should build a trauma-informed plan for how to respond when disruptions in a young migrants' experience in the program occur (such as no longer wanting to engage with the program). Empathy must be at the centre of this plan and approach.