

# fairfield multicultural interagency refugee council of australia

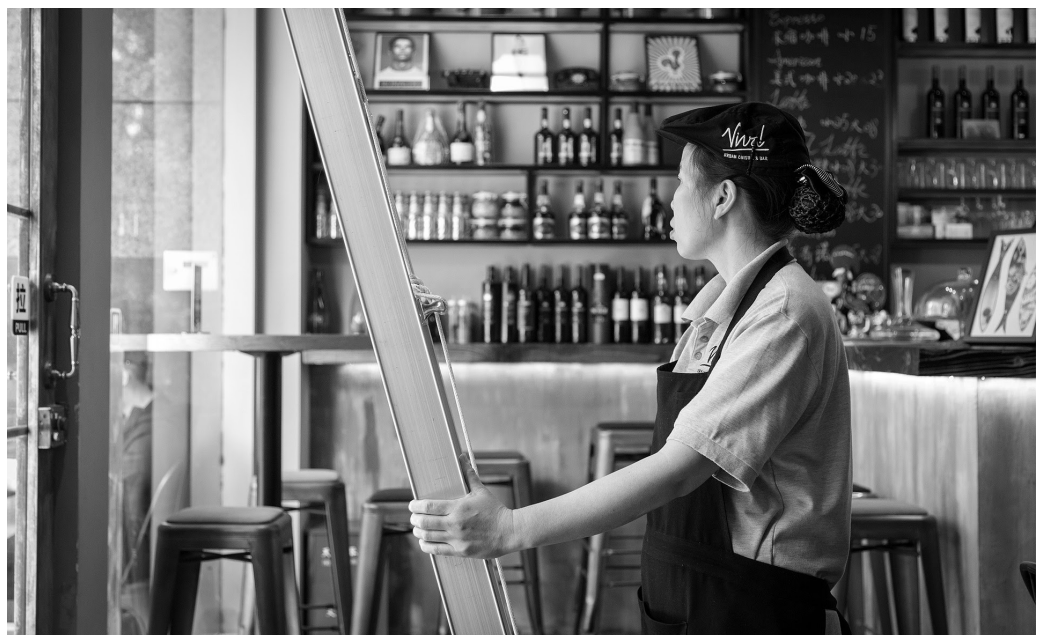
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Report No 03/2017

## **NOT WORKING:**

**EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS WITH JOBACTIVE**

Shukufa Tahiri



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Courtesy of the  
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## Executive summary

Refugees and migrants come to Australia with a wealth of skills, experience and aspirations. They are committed to pursuing employment as a means of ensuring economic security and contributing to their new home.<sup>1</sup> Often these groups have been forced out of their homes due to war and unrest, and many have experienced persecution, unemployment and interrupted schooling. However, they face multiple barriers in applying their skills and experience, and in fulfilling their aspirations, within the Australian labour market.

This report focuses on the barriers faced by refugees and migrants imposed by the main federal employment program, Jobactive. By the term 'refugees and migrants', we include those who have been recognised as refugees or have come here under Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program, as well as those who have come on other visas (for example, as family members, skilled workers or students) who come from similar backgrounds and face similar disadvantages.

The term 'migrant', in this report, does not refer to all migrants on these non-humanitarian visas, as they will not all face similar disadvantages. In particular, those who come from English-speaking countries with similar cultural norms (for example, English migrants) are unlikely to face the kinds of barriers outlined in this report.

This report records the many barriers with the existing Jobactive program. The report's findings are based on 102 case studies collected by the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency (FMI) and supplemented by national consultations conducted by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

The first part of this report focuses on barriers caused or made worse by the introduction of the Jobactive program, including:

- Lack of specialised service
- Choosing between learning English and looking for work
- Streaming and the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI)
- Compliance measures and implications
- Limited support with resumes and interview skills
- Job Plans and lack of understanding of rights and responsibilities
- Under-use of interpreters and lack of translated materials
- Inappropriate Work for the Dole placements
- Over-reliance on, and lack of support for use of, technology to look for work, and
- Being treated with disrespect.

The second part of this report identifies some longstanding barriers to employment. These include:

- Lack of opportunities to attain relevant Australian work experience
- Difficulties in the recognition of prior qualifications and experiences, and
- De-skilling than upskilling.

The findings of this report confirm the need for a targeted approach to address the complex needs of this cohort. This finding is consistent with previous research and with the findings of RCOA's previous report on employment, *What Works*.<sup>2</sup>

1. Graeme Hugo, *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants Summary of Findings* (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011) [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01\\_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf)  
2. Refugee Council of Australia, *What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants* (June 2010) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2010-Employment.pdf>

We have described some of the innovative and specialised employment initiatives designed to address the employment needs of migrants and refugees in an Appendix to this report. While this list is not exhaustive, they are useful examples of specialised and needs-based initiatives that take a targeted approach. Typically, they include elements such as: integrating Australian work experience; strengthening on-arrival support and post-employment support; collaboration; and personalised assistance such as casework and mentoring.

While we make recommendations to improve the existing Jobactive program, our view is that it will be difficult to properly address the specific needs of refugees and other migrants within a general national program. We therefore make four key recommendations:

- Develop a national multicultural employment strategy
- Review the effectiveness of the Jobactive program for refugees and migrants, and improve the program accordingly
- Invest in targeted employment programs, and
- Build and share knowledge about what works.

## List of recommendations

Recommendation #	Recommendation
1: Develop a national multicultural employment strategy	The Australian Government should develop a national multicultural employment strategy that incorporates a whole-of-government approach. This strategy should ensure the appropriate linking and collaboration between settlement, education and training, and employment services. It should identify areas for targeted investment in employment transition programs for refugee and migrant jobseekers.
2: Review and improve Jobactive services	The Australian Government should commission an independent review of the effectiveness of the Jobactive program in meeting the needs of refugee and migrant jobseekers, and develop a plan to address key areas for improvement identified in this review.
3: Invest in targeted employment programs	The Australian Government should review their funding of employment transition programs with a view to increasing investment in targeted employment programs.
4: Share knowledge about what works	The Australian Government should invest in research and platforms for sharing knowledge about effective employment programs that result in better outcomes for refugee and migrant jobseekers.

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## Methodology

The Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is the main forum for agencies working to support the multicultural communities in the Fairfield LGA. FMI meets regularly with a directive to address migrant, refugee and cultural matters in Fairfield.

The FMI has become increasingly concerned with the ineffectiveness of Jobactive providers in assisting with effective employment transitions for refugees and migrants. To explore these concerns further, members of the FMI conducted 102 qualitative surveys of refugees and migrants' experiences of Jobactive, from June 2016 to December 2016.

The surveys were designed to elicit qualitative data about the issues, desires and employment barriers refugees and migrants face. Community workers interviewed clients and filled out the surveys, as in most cases clients themselves did not have the language and literacy skills to do so. The major contributors to this study were CORE Community Services, Assyrian Resource Centre Fairfield, Navitas English College, Mission Australia Adult English Migrant Program-Pathway Advisors and Settlement Services International.

These case studies are supplemented by the 66 comprehensive annual consultations RCOA conducted with refugee communities around Australia in 2016,<sup>7</sup> RCOA's brief on community and service provider concerns in relation to Jobactive,<sup>8</sup> and RCOA's What Works report.<sup>9</sup>

This report also sought input from select job providers that demonstrate good practice and program responses. Consultations and interviews were held with programs and social enterprises that cater towards the specific needs of the refugee and migrant jobseekers. These findings are recorded in Appendix 1 to this report.

As an extensive evaluation of Jobactive is yet to be undertaken, this report builds on the experiences and feedback of the migrant and refugee users of Jobactive themselves, with the aim of recommending improvements to support these communities.

## Acknowledgements

The FMI would like to thank RCOA for writing this report and drawing from its own feedback about the current barriers jobseekers are facing across Australia. It would also like to thank the participants who took part in the case studies and the Fairfield City Council for funding this research.

We would also like to thank Kelly Walsh, who volunteered her time to help design the report.

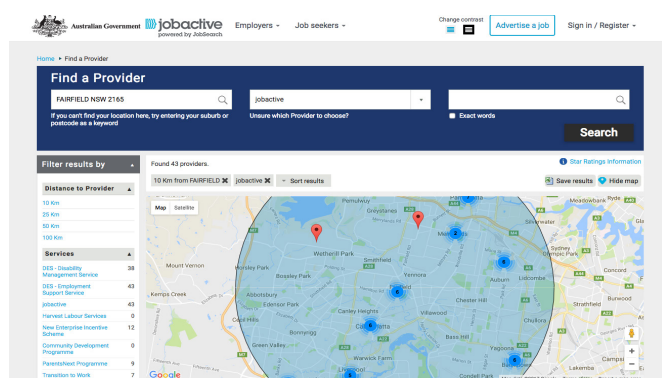
6. Settlement Services International (2017), Humanitarian Settlement Support Program Report LAC April 2017 meeting minutes. This refers to those who came on visa subclasses 200 and 202.

7. Refugee Council of Australia, *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2017-2018: Community Views on Current Challenges and Future Directions* (May 2017) [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/RCOA\\_intake-sub\\_2017\\_2018.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/RCOA_intake-sub_2017_2018.pdf)

8. Refugee Council of Australia, *Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns* (13 April 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/jobactive-refugee-community-service-provider-concerns-april-2016>

9. Refugee Council of Australia, *What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants* (June 2010) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2010-Employment.pdf>

## 2. Barriers in Jobactive: What they told us



### The Jobactive program

From 1 July 2015, Jobactive replaced the former Job Services Australia program (JSA). Jobactive is the Australian Government's main program that aims to assist Australians into the workforce. Jobactive connects job seekers with employers through a network of Jobactive providers in over 1,700 locations across Australia.

Under the program, the Department of Human Services refers and assesses job seekers who receive Centrelink benefits and are obliged to apply for jobs and undertake training. Other features of the program include:

- Penalties that are applied for failing to comply with its requirements, including the suspension of Centrelink payments if people fail to report or miss appointments
- Job seekers are streamed into different levels of support, according to a classification instrument
- Job seekers under 'Mutual Obligation Requirements' are required to participate in Work for the Dole programs to continue receiving support, and
- The number of job applications required to continue receiving benefits has increased.

JSA, the previous government employment program, had a limited number of specialist providers targeting people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. There were even fewer JSA providers with special expertise or funding for an accountability framework that serviced refugees.<sup>10</sup> A significant change under Jobactive has been the loss of those specialist employment providers.

### Key barriers

All participants in FMI's research indicated a strong desire to find employment, develop and enhance their economic participation and contribute to Australia. However, refugees and migrants face a range of structural, social and institutional barriers to gaining meaningful employment.

This section outlines the key areas of feedback identified by participants and in RCOA's wider consultations regarding the Jobactive program. The first part focuses on issues caused or made worse by the introduction of Jobactive, namely:

- Lack of specialised service
- Choosing between learning English and looking for work
- Streaming and the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI)
- Compliance measures and implications
- Limited support with resumes and interview skills
- Job Plans and lack of understanding of rights and responsibilities
- Under-use of interpreters and lack of translated materials
- Inappropriate Work for the Dole placements
- Over-reliance on, and lack of support for use of, technology to look for work, and
- Being treated with disrespect.

The second part of this section examines longstanding issues that continue to be reflected in the Jobactive program, namely:

- Lack of opportunities to attain relevant Australian work experience
- Difficulties in gaining recognition for prior qualifications and experiences, and
- An emphasis on de-skilling rather than upskilling.

10. Refugee Council of Australia, *Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns* (13 April 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/jobactive-refugee-community-service-provider-concerns-april-2016>

## Lack of specialised Jobactive providers

The introduction of the Jobactive program in 2015 resulted in the loss of specialist providers for people from CALD backgrounds under the previous JSA program. Many service providers have expressed significant concerns about the lack of specialised services under the new Employment Services 2015-2020 Purchasing Arrangements.

Previously, under the JSA, specialist providers offered much needed support to address the specific and individual needs of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The removal of these specialist providers has had a devastating effect, further entrenching communities' dissatisfaction with the Jobactive model, and increasing the difficulties people face in accessing employment.

Both FMI and RCOA received strong feedback about the need for targeted approaches to support those seeking employment, so that Jobactive providers recognise the barriers that refugee entrants face in entering the Australian labour market. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be successful in meeting the needs of such a diverse group of jobseekers.

Many participants felt that Jobactive providers lacked an understanding of the complex needs and experiences of job seekers from refugee backgrounds.

“ [The] Jobactive system is complex and frustrating because there is often not enough understanding provided to help people explore individual employment pathways or find work that matches their skills and experience.

— A community service provider from NSW

This lack of understanding of where people come from and what their needs are is reflected in RCOA's previous research, *What Works*. That report identified that a key part of achieving success in employment was to ensure a targeted approach that addresses the distinct needs and barriers faced by refugee and migrant jobseekers.



## Choosing between learning English and looking for work

ABS data suggest that Humanitarian migrants are twice as likely to find a job if they can speak English well.<sup>11</sup> Jobseekers with mutual obligation requirements must comply with the directions of Jobactive providers. Although attending AMEP classes to learn English is considered an approved activity for these purposes, the case studies revealed that a person's English classes often conflicted with their Jobactive appointments, interviews and other requirements. Left with no choice, many reported they had adhered to Jobactive demands, even if doing so compromised their English learning.

Many local service providers in Fairfield LGA and nationally have reported that Jobactive providers do not understand the importance of AMEP in supporting newly arrived people. As one AMEP pathway advisor described:

“ A young 24-year-old client has been pressured to find work as a cleaner and asked to stop learning English when he is still in level 1/2.

Furthermore, many Jobactive providers are not referring people to the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program which can provide up to an additional 800 hours of English and employment training. The SEE program requires referral by a Jobactive provider, yet many are unaware of and misinformed about the program and its importance in the settlement process. As one case study participant described:

11. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migrants Case Study* [http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/4a256353001af3ed4b2562bb00121564e036aa00f7c6805cca257f960008e68e/\\$FILE/ATTJB3MW.pdf/Migrants%20Case%20Study.pdf](http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/4a256353001af3ed4b2562bb00121564e036aa00f7c6805cca257f960008e68e/$FILE/ATTJB3MW.pdf/Migrants%20Case%20Study.pdf)



“ [The] Jobactive consultant said I cannot continue to do the English course at Navitas to improve my English. I had an appointment for an English test to enrol into SEE program. She cancelled my appointment and said to stop the beauty TAFE course I was doing on Fridays for the past 10 weeks. She said she found a job for me as a kitchen hand and that I need to start the job in a few days' time; if I don't Centrelink will stop my money.

— A young Iraqi woman from Fairfield LGA

Jobactive providers are also often unaware of the strong correlation between the low level of English many people arrive with and the impact it has on employment outcomes. Many providers do not seem to value the importance of English classes or understand the significance of English proficiency for jobseekers. Many people who are new to Australia do not have adequate English to write a resume, participate in a job interview or understand the significant reporting and application requirements.

By focusing on the need to take up a job to the detriment of learning English, the Jobactive system results in people being stuck in lower-skilled jobs, unable to fulfil their potential.

### Streaming and the Job Seeker Classification Instrument

Under Jobactive, the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) is used to allocate job seekers to one of the first two levels of employment assistance, Stream A or B. Job seekers who have complex or multiple barriers to employment may be identified as requiring more support under Stream C, through a more comprehensive assessment known as an Employment Services Assessment.

However, feedback for this report indicates that newly arrived refugees and migrants are being incorrectly streamed into the lowest support category, despite needing significant support. The feedback from the Fairfield LGA was that, without improvement to assessment procedures, those from refugee and migrant backgrounds will continue to be misidentified.

As a result, many people are unlikely to receive adequate support and instead become subject to income support exclusion periods.

The feedback indicates that refugee and migrant jobseekers who are illiterate or have very basic English are left with minimal or no support. As one community service provider describes:

“ Most of our clients who cannot speak a word of English are streamed A to Jobactive which has the same level of reporting requirements as an Australian born person. So there is your first barrier. And how easy is it to get someone re-streamed? They will take what Department of Human Services have streamed and said that's it. There is no initiative on their part to go back and re-stream. This is purely compliance.

Even though Jobactive provides a framework for reassessment of the jobseeker, many report that the Jobactive providers simply do not re-stream even if job seekers grossly differ in need for support than their initial designated stream through DHS.

### Disability and Jobactive streaming

A particular issue is the assessment of clients with disabilities. Case studies from Fairfield LGA suggest that jobseekers with severe disabilities are not supported by the Disability Employment Services or do not receive a Disability Support Pension. Several clients have either been incorrectly assessed or not assessed at all by the Employment Services Assessment, a specialised assessment process carried out by DHS for their medical conditions or disability. Instead, they are expected to attend the compulsory Jobactive appointments.

“ I was referred to Jobactive service and was made to sign a job plan agreement. Prior to signing the agreement, I told the Jobactive provider that I have permanent medical issues such as renal impairment, gouty arthritis, pulmonary hypertension, post trauma experiences and stress disorder. I presented my medical report/ certificate as evidence to the provider. However, I was advised by the Jobactive provider that I still need to contact 20 employers per month, attend regular appointments, attend interviews, [and] attend literacy and numeracy language courses for 40 hours per fortnight as compulsory. When I told the provider [that] I don't know how to look for work due to my limited English language and perhaps more importantly due to my medical conditions, I was told by the provider that my Centrelink payment will cease if I don't meet the above-mentioned requirements. I was told therefore to study and look for jobs regardless of my medical condition to avoid cessation of my payment. But I am constantly stressed and this is taking a significant toll on my health and wellbeing.

— A 63-year- old Karen humanitarian arrival from Fairfield LGA



## Compliance measures and implications

Participants raised several concerns with the compliance-driven approach to employment services. Routine appointments with the Jobactive provider (usually every fortnight) are considered a key part of a job seeker's Mutual Obligation Requirement, and the first step to getting the jobseekers the assistance they need to find work. These appointments are intended to serve as motivation to keep jobseekers engaged with the assistance offered to them by the Jobactive provider until employment is found.

Many raised concerns that these appointments do not provide even the most basic level of support:

“Every week I attend Jobactive provider for two hours, sitting in front of the computer for two hours for nothing, cannot access the internet to search for a job because of poor English language and not one of the employees in the centre helps out. [The] Jobactive provider advised me to search in Arabic shops in Liverpool for a job because they don't need English they said. The owner of the Arabic shops requires English language, drivers licence and a lot of them prefer young people.  
— A humanitarian arrival from Fairfield LGA

However, if people do not attend these appointments for even valid reasons, this can directly result into the suspension of Centrelink payments.<sup>12</sup> This is common even though the Jobactive provider can decide not to suspend the jobseeker's Centrelink payments and arrange alternative methods of engagement with the client that is a more 'appropriate re-engagement strategy' to secure the job seeker's ongoing participation.<sup>13</sup>

“We've now got a systemic payment suspension problem because as soon as a client misses their even one of their reporting, their payment is stopped. We are up to eighty, ninety clients who have their payments suspended for reasons that they do not understand for which the Jobactive will not help them.  
— A settlement service provider, Perth

The suspension and reduction of payments has a severe impact on jobseekers. Often people are not aware that their payments are being delayed or suspended, nor do they understand why this has occurred. Cutting off payments for those who have very few financial resources creates significant problems with people being unable to purchase essentials such as food and pay for rent. Consequently, many other settlement service providers are required to provide people with emergency funds until their income support is restored. Often other service providers must intervene directly with Jobactive providers to explain the situation and assist people to rebook appointments for their payments to be restored.

Case studies from the Fairfield LGA evidence that people routinely attend the appointments, even if they do not provide any support in gaining employment. One settlement service provider from Perth describes the punitive nature of the appointment arrangements:

“Refugee and humanitarian entrants and people from CALD backgrounds will always come out poorly when it's purely [a] compliance framework. So, this is a typical story, every second day at our place ... remember they've got two lots of reporting. Even now after three months when they've just started AMEP. Still got to do Jobactive; still got to apply for jobs. They'll roll up to the center very distraught. What's happened: got no money in the bank, don't know why. We think we know why, did you do your reporting? What reporting? We don't understand the reporting. What are we supposed to do? We phone up Jobactive; oh we sent them a letter. Well what's good is that? They can't even read English.

## Limited support with resumes and interview skills

Most jobseekers considered basic job readiness support — such as writing resumes, searching for jobs online and interview skills — as an essential step in entering the job market. This practical

12. Department of Human Services, Australian Government, *If You Don't Meet Your Mutual Obligation Requirements* (24 May 2017) <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/if-you-dont-meet-your-mutual-obligation-requirements>

13. Australian Government Department of Employment, *Managing and Monitoring Job Seeker Appointments* (26 June 2017) <https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/managing-and-monitoring-job-seeker-appointments-guideline>

14. Refugee Council of Australia, *Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns* (13 April 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/jobactive-refugee-community-service-provider-concerns-april-2016>



Photo: Kathryn Decker, via Flickr

support is especially necessary for jobseekers with a low level of English literacy.

However, an overwhelming majority indicated they were not offered such support by Jobactive providers. Instead, participants suggested that the service provided by Jobactive required self-direction with little or no support from staff.

“Jobactive could not speak to me as I have no English so they gave me an Arabic newspaper and told me to look for jobs. The newspaper didn't have a job section. Confused, I would just read the news for 2 hours until they would let me go.  
— A Syrian refugee from Fairfield LGA

Many surveyed jobseekers noted that they did not have a current resume and were not assisted in creating or updating one, despite the critical role of a good resume in getting a job interview.

Writing a successful job application requires a nuanced understanding of Australian recruitment practices that cannot be assumed. For example, resumes are expected to follow a specific structure that should appropriately highlight a person's skills, qualifications and experience, as well as being tailored to the key selection criteria. However, the template provided through Jobactive is too basic to enable jobseekers to be competitive in the job market. Many jobseekers reported assistance with resumes as their priority.

More assistance is also required to develop interview skills. Going for a job interview can be daunting for any jobseeker, and those from different cultural backgrounds can fall down at the interview stage even where they are well suited to a position. This can be related to factors such as a different communication styles and cultural expectations. Appropriate language, body language and expected attire are important aspects of any interview. Fostering these skills and knowledge is essential in facilitating successful employment opportunities for refugee and migrant jobseekers.

## Job Plans and understanding of rights and responsibilities

Jobseekers need to be actively involved in the negotiation process of their Job Plan. A Job Plan is a binding document that outlines activities, responsibilities and items that will satisfy the jobseeker's employment needs under the Mutual Obligation Requirements agreement.<sup>15</sup>

However, most of those who provided feedback for this report were not sufficiently aware of their rights and obligations before signing a Job Plan. Most were told to sign the Job Plan without the specific needs of the client taken into consideration. Such complex needs include lack of English literacy and unfamiliarity with job searching skills, lack of familiarity with technology, resume writing and understanding of Australian cultural expectations. The feedback from Fairfield LGA also suggests that Jobactive providers are overwhelmingly indifferent to complex needs that may arise because of forced displacement and past experiences with trauma.

“I need someone to help me overcome my barriers to employment. I want my rights to be explained to me and what service I can expect from Jobactive.  
— A Syrian humanitarian arrival from Fairfield LGA

## Under-use of interpreters and lack of translated materials

Jobactive providers are required to provide access to an interpreter. However, often clients are not aware of their right to request free interpreter services. The feedback collected for this report indicates that most Jobactive providers are not using interpreters in their meetings with clients, including where clients are signing binding documents such as Job Plans.

“Every time I attend my appointment, I request an interpreter service but my request is ignored by the Jobactive service and no interpreter is provided.  
— A Burmese refugee from Fairfield LGA

RCOA and FMI also note the lack of translated factsheets on how to report to Jobactive and how to meet other requirements. The move to using technology such as smartphones also presents a barrier in providing information in other languages. Migrant and refugee clients have expressed frustration that Jobactive providers can suspend a person's pay without properly informing them of the issue and their obligations in their first language.

15. Australian Government Department of Employment, *Job Plans Guideline* (20 June 2017) <https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/job-plans-guideline-0>

“It took us 6 months for them to get a translated document on the Department of Employment website. And it's only because the Department of Social Services who we said [to] 'look, we're going to go to the Minister, we're told that Department of Employment refused outright'. This is a national website; [it] had not had one translated document on their website. And [they] did it very begrudgingly to be honest. So, you have none of the Jobactive [having] any cultural competencies.

— A community service provider, Perth

There continues to be a lack of recognition of the need for and use of translating and interpreting services. Previously, under JSA funding there was an additional Employment Pathway Fund credit of \$1,000 per participant provided specially for interpreting costs for non-English speaking clients. However, there is no provision for this under the new arrangements.

“I would like an interpreter especially when I am signing the job plans. I want my rights to be explained to me and what service I can expect from Jobactive. I need someone to help me overcome my barriers to employment.

— A Syrian refugee from Fairfield LGA

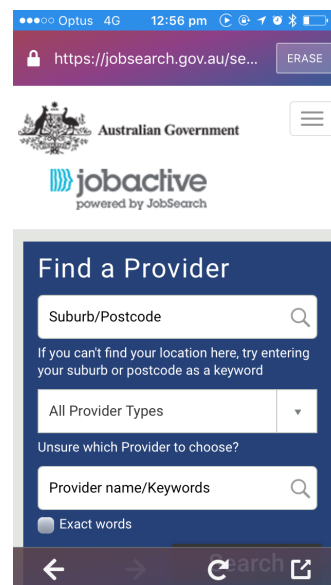
## Inappropriate Work for the Dole placements

The feedback gathered for this report acknowledged the importance of the Work for Dole program as a vital opportunity to gain work experience. However, many participants shared concerns that some of the placements were not suitable for refugee and migrant jobseekers.

Many reported that their placement conflicted with their English classes. Others pointed out that some of the placements did not cater for the various levels of English and skills. The benefit of the placements was diminished due to their inability to communicate with their placement provider. Work for the Dole programs that were successful were ones where the providers of the program could effectively communicate with the refugee and migrant jobseeker.

“They send us to do volunteer jobs for working for the dole program in places that not related to our qualifications. Not helpful as they do not provide us with assistance to get for the job that we are qualified for.

— A Syrian refugee from Fairfield LGA



## Overuse of, and lack of support for use of, technology

Jobactive has introduced requirements for people to report, view appointments and apply for jobs online. Providers seem unaware of the lack of experience many refugees and migrants may have with this technology. Many refugees, for instance, have been living in refugee camps for many years and have never had access to this kind of technology, let alone to search for jobs. Rather than supporting people in using this technology, Jobactive providers instead are leaving people to navigate this technology themselves with devastating consequences. Many of the case studies from Fairfield LGA reported that the requirement to look for a job online has left them demoralised and confused.

“The system assumes that clients have knowledge [of] technology and they can read English and can get information for themselves, rather than being there to help them to navigate the system.

— A Swahili-speaking refugee from Fairfield LGA

## Being treated with disrespect

The Fairfield case studies included many hostile interactions with staff from Jobactive providers. Participants reported feeling disrespected and stigmatised and often threatened with having their welfare benefits suspended. Dealing with clients in this way, especially clients of a refugee and migrant background, only serves to make the jobseeker less confident in their ability to find a job and in the entire settlement process.

“ They don’t treat me well; the caseworker when he interviews me stated that I just arrived in Australia to get easy money from the first interview... upset me a lot. He did not help me with my job plan he just judged me.  
— A newly arrived humanitarian arrival from Syria, Fairfield LGA

These interactions undermine the trust and rapport needed to negotiate and plan a meaningful employment outcome, especially for those who have previously experienced trauma. These negative interactions are especially unhelpful for someone who is new and unfamiliar with the Australian workplace.

“ Staff of my Jobactive provider routinely treat me with disrespect. For instance, they once told me that my clothes and shoes are very dirty and that I looked shabby. I felt ashamed and was unhappy and very angry with the provider but I could not do anything due to my dependence on Centrelink payment and my limited English proficiency.  
— A 32-year-old Karen humanitarian arrival from Fairfield LGA

## Opportunities to attain relevant Australian work experience

A commonly expressed frustration among those who participated in this research was that Jobactive failed to provide sufficient opportunities for clients to gain Australian work experience. This has been a longstanding issue. ABS data from 2011 suggests that of the migrants reported having trouble in finding their first job in Australia, 64% attributed their difficulty to a lack of Australian work experience to expand their references and exposure to the Australian labour market.<sup>16</sup>

Many expressed their keen desire for opportunities that would give them insight and understanding of Australian work cultures and systems and for job service providers to be able to facilitate targeted Australian local work experience:

“ We hope to get the benefit from our qualifications and previous experience to get a job. Our challenges are local experience as requested by employers without giving the opportunity for us to practice that.  
— A former Syrian engineer from Fairfield LGA

An overwhelming number of those surveyed suggested that they needed more training and local work experience to upskill and equip themselves for skilled jobs that they have had previous qualifications for. Most considered the lack of

Australian work experience and professional referees or links as a major barrier in securing their first job in Australia, regardless of how extensive their overseas work experience has been.

“ I was with Jobactive for 4 years ... I wanted an IT job as I have overseas qualifications and experience in IT as well as Australian recognition, but they did not help. I wanted them to help me get local work experience and to do reverse marketing so I can go for job interviews with employers that do IT software development. I have all the job seeking needs; a good resume, overseas recognised qualifications and experience, but I only need 3 weeks of local Australian work experience in IT web design as I completed a diploma with TAFE, but they [Jobactive] refused to help me. So, I went back to study at TAFE and changed to Austudy so I didn’t need to go to Jobactive. Now I am looking for work experience in IT after 3 years [and] I am hoping to get a placement.  
— A former Syrian engineer from Fairfield LGA

An ideal model in terms of employment outcomes is where work experience placements provide an opportunity for jobseekers to demonstrate their aptitude within a workplace with a clear pathway or possibility of transitioning into an ongoing position at the end of the placement.<sup>17</sup>

## Recognition of prior qualifications and experience

Some refugees and migrants, especially those who have experienced protracted displacement, may not have had the opportunity to attain qualifications. However, many others were well established in their careers and occupations before coming to Australia.

Despite their skills, most find that the process of having their overseas qualifications recognised within Australia is often lengthy and costly. Currently, there is no one agency or organisation responsible for assessing all overseas qualifications in Australia. Rather, recognition of previous skills differs by State and industry, with overseas qualifications assessed by different authorities across Australia.

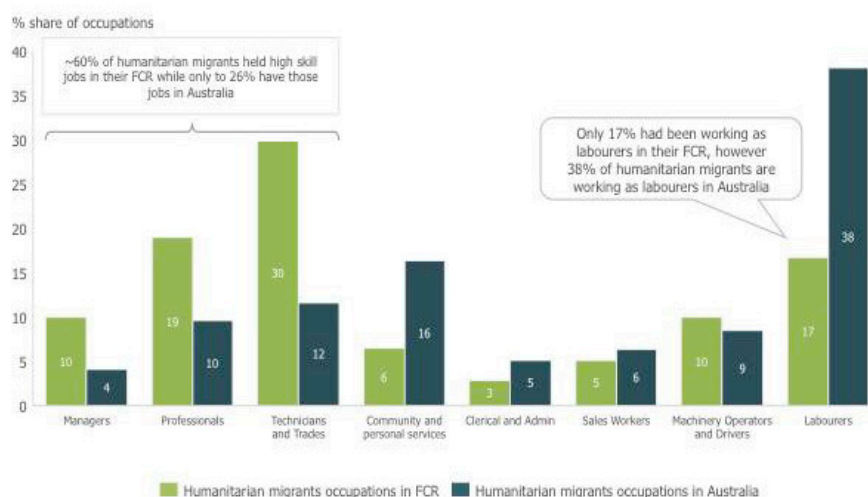
Every state and territory, except for NSW, has an Overseas Qualification Unit that assesses overseas qualifications in general terms or provides advice on how to get overseas qualification recognised. However, community feedback reports that the process is complex, costly and time consuming, effectively excluding people from using their skills as illustrated in figure 1 below.

17. Refugee Council of Australia, *What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants* (June 2010) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2010-Employment.pdf>, 36.



**Figure 1: A high percentage of humanitarian migrants accept work below their skill level<sup>18</sup>**

## A high percentage of humanitarian migrants accept work below their skill level



### De-skilling or upskilling?

A recurring theme in the Fairfield case studies was the feeling that Jobactive providers often failed to recognise their previous qualifications or skills, instead placing them in very low skilled, insecure jobs. Participants emphasised that they wanted to develop themselves through further education and training, but were not presented with such opportunities through Jobactive.

“I have a qualification and experience from overseas that can help me to work in Australia, but I don’t have any qualifications in Australia. I am not getting any assistance from my job provider in terms of guiding me to the right way to help me with my qualifications and experience.  
— A Syrian refugee, previously a Hospital Laboratory Assistant from Fairfield LGA

As a result of pressures put on jobseekers by Jobactive providers to find work quickly, many refugees and migrants with overseas qualifications end up working in areas outside of their

profession or at disproportionately lower skilled jobs. Evidence suggests that 95% of refugees with tertiary educational qualifications from countries outside Australia end up taking jobs in manual labour.<sup>19</sup> There remains much “to be done to assist humanitarian settlers to enter the Australian labour market and to facilitate their upward mobility”.<sup>20</sup>

The case studies echo a common theme — that pushing humanitarian entrants, refugees and migrants into low-skilled employment does not assist in providing more meaningful job prospects. The capacity for these jobseekers to leave low-paid and low-skilled jobs decreases the longer they remain in those industries, due to loss of original skills and missed opportunities for networking and career progression.

“I just finished 510 [hours of] English and want to study hairdressing. Jobactive said that I am job ready and put me on work for the dole. I am only level 2 CSWE and struggle to understand instructions sometimes. JA is pushing me away from my long-term career goals.  
— A young migrant from Fairfield LGA

18. Centre for Policy Development, *Settling Better: Reforming Refugee Employment and Settlement Services* (February 2017) <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Settling-Better-Report-20-February-2017.compressed.pdf>. The graph is compiled using data from Building a New Life in Australia, Longitudinal Study of humanitarian migrants, Wave 1 and 2 interviews responses,

19. Caroline Fleay, Anita Lumbus and Lisa Hartley, ‘People Seeking Asylum in Australia and Their Access to Employment: Just What Do We Know?’ (2016) *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 63.

20. Professor Jock Collins, Ignite: From Refugee to Entrepreneur in Sydney in Less than Three Years: Final Evaluation Report on the SSI Ignite Small Business Startups Program (Settlement Services International, February 2017) [http://www.ssi.org.au/images/stories/documents/ignite/SSI\\_Ignite\\_evaluation\\_report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.ssi.org.au/images/stories/documents/ignite/SSI_Ignite_evaluation_report_2017.pdf)

### 3. Discussion and recommendations

Refugees and migrants overwhelmingly want to contribute to the Australian economy and society, and governments rightly want them to succeed in doing so. Yet the main national employment program, Jobactive, is failing both refugee and migrant jobseekers and the wider Australian community.

This report has identified a series of employment transition barriers, drawn from the 102 case studies of people who have used Jobactive services in the Fairfield LGA and from broader national consultations. It has identified several recommendations and established the need for a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the Jobactive program for refugees and migrants.

Yet, while reforms to Jobactive are much needed, there is also a vital need to rethink the national Jobactive program in the longer-term as the main model of employment support. There are many innovative initiatives that seek to fill the gaps left by Jobactive, which could provide the ingredients of a much more effective (and ultimately cost-effective) program for helping refugees and migrants into work.

The following provides a brief discussion and four key recommendations for ways forward.



#### Developing a national multicultural employment strategy

RCOA has previously called for the development of a national employment strategy that specifically addresses the employment transitions of refugee and migrant jobseekers.<sup>21</sup> The need for a national multicultural employment strategy that maps out pathways and supports that lead to more sustainable employment outcomes for people settling in Australia was likewise reinforced in this research. A whole-of-government approach to such a strategy could ensure there are effective links and collaboration between settlement, education and training and employment programs. The development of such a strategy would need to take into consideration the views of settlement and other community service providers as well as refugee and migrant communities themselves.

#### Recommendation 1: A national multicultural employment strategy

*The Australian Government should develop a national multicultural employment strategy that incorporates a whole-of-government approach. This strategy should ensure the appropriate linking and collaboration between settlement, education and training and employment services. It should identify areas for targeted investment in employment transition programs for refugee and migrant jobseekers.*

21. Refugee Council of Australia, *What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants* (June 2010) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2010-Employment.pdf>; Refugee Council of Australia, *Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns* (13 April 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/jobactive-refugee-community-service-provider-concerns-april-2016/>

## Reviewing and improving Jobactive services

There are several ways in which the Jobactive program could be improved in the interim to better meet the needs of refugee and migrant jobseekers. The need to improve the effectiveness of Jobactive is particularly important for those living in areas of Australia that are unlikely to see the critical mass of refugee and migrant jobseekers that would warrant the funding of a specialist employment service. For these jobseekers, it is vital that the significant limitations of the Jobactive model and services are addressed.

To inform areas for improvement in the Jobactive program, the Department of Employment should commission an independent review into the effectiveness of the Jobactive program for refugee and migrant jobseekers, informed by the views of refugee and migrant jobseekers themselves, as well as settlement and specialist migrant services. Key elements of this review should include an assessment of the:

- Cross cultural competency of Jobactive providers
- Use of translating and interpreting services
- Appropriateness of streaming processes for refugee and migrant jobseekers, including the streaming of those with a disability
- Suitability of Work for the Dole placements for refugee and migrant jobseekers
- Accessibility of Jobactive services and support for jobseekers with limited proficiency in using online platforms and technologies
- Effectiveness of collaboration and referral between Jobactive providers and other key services and supports, including AMEP and settlement services
- Effectiveness of processes and support for Jobactive clients who have prior qualifications and experience to have these recognised
- Effectiveness of engagement between Jobactive providers and refugee and migrant jobseekers in the negotiation of Job Plans
- Adequacy of compliance processes, including the suspension of Centrelink payments, processes for reinstating Centrelink payments, and the effectiveness of routine appointments
- Effectiveness of Jobactive in ensuring refugee and migrant jobseekers have adequate support to develop resumes and interview skills, and
- Effectiveness and accessibility of complaint mechanisms to ensure Jobactive providers are accountable for providing poor service.

## Recommendation 2: Review and improve Jobactive program

*The Australian Government should commission an independent review of the effectiveness of the Jobactive program in meeting the needs of refugee and migrant jobseekers, and develop a plan to address key areas for improvement identified in this review.*

## Investing in targeted employment programs

A strong theme identified in this research as well as in RCOA's research on best practice in employment, What Works, is the need for targeted and collaborative approaches to address the barriers to employment that are faced by refugee and migrant jobseekers. While this report suggests several areas where Jobactive services could be improved, ultimately there is a limit to the ability of a generalist model such as Jobactive to address the distinct needs of refugees and migrants settling in Australia, especially in the absence of policy incentives or a significant investment in additional and targeted resources.

This report therefore also recommends that the Australian Government should consider alternative ways of achieving what should be the substantive outcome of Jobactive: helping refugee and migrant jobseekers into long-term, sustainable and meaningful employment. As Appendix 1 of this report notes, there are a range of existing employment models, programs and initiatives that appear to be more effective in helping refugee and migrant jobseekers succeed in the Australian labour market. Investing in these targeted employment programs is likely to represent a more effective use of government funding.

In other words, if Jobactive services could refer refugee and migrant jobseekers to a specialist employment service—and a portion of the funding to support these clients was diverted from Jobactive to specialist employment program providers—the outcomes may be better for all.

For the jobseeker, there is a greater likelihood that they will get the support they need to find work. For generalist Jobactive providers, they can focus on developing their services for those that they are better able to service and achieving outcomes. For specialist employment services, there is the

potential to attract increased resourcing and further develop or sustain their programs.

Investment in targeted employment programs reflects a trend towards a person-centred approach in government-funded services. For example, disability services moved some time ago towards giving the individuals at the centre of services — people with a disability — a choice in who and how they access services. The same shift is evident in the vocational education and training sector, where funding is provided to individuals to access the training they require from a provider of their choice.

### **Recommendation 3: Invest in targeted employment programs**

*The Australian Government should review their funding of employment transition programs with a view to increasing investment in targeted employment programs.*

## **Sharing knowledge about what works**

To better inform the development of effective and employment transition programs targeting refugee and migrant jobseekers, it is apparent that more work needs to be done to document what works and ensure that knowledge about effective models and approaches are widely shared.

There is an existing body of research on a variety of employment programs, including RCOA's What Works, evaluation reports of different programs, and academic and other literature identifying barriers to employment. However, there is a need to integrate and update this research, and to develop a platform for ensuring such knowledge is both shared and used to inform government policy.

### **Recommendation 4: Learn and share knowledge**

*The Australian Government should invest in research and platforms for sharing knowledge about effective employment programs that result in better outcomes for refugee and migrant jobseekers.*

## Appendix 1: Examples of other employment approaches

### Specialist employment services

Currently, few Jobactive providers have expertise in working with people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. As a result, the needs of migrants and refugees are not always well understood, including for example the impact of past experiences of torture and trauma, destitution, and missed opportunities such as extended periods of missed education. Specialist employment services are very often developed in local areas to fill the gaps left by Jobactive providers.

### NSW Refugee Employment Support Program

A notable very recent example of a specialist program is the NSW Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP). It is a 4-year \$22 million initiative by the NSW state government that is being rolled out in 2017, managed by the NSW Department of Industry and delivered by Settlement Services International.

RESP is designed to address the challenges that are experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum. It aims to find long-term skilled employment opportunities by developing career plans and forging links between employers, education and training as required. RESP aims to assist up to 6,000 refugees and 1,000 asylum seekers across Western Sydney and Illawarra, the areas where most refugees settle in NSW.

RESP offers services and support to eligible individuals depending on their needs, such as:

- Language: Participants may be enrolled in a relevant language training course
- Education and training: Participants may be enrolled in Smart and Skilled Training or in higher education
- Recognition of overseas skills/ qualifications: Participants may be assisted with associated costs subsidised by the NSW Government.
- Mentoring: An appropriate mentor may be identified and a meeting plan implemented
- Work ready development: Participants may receive assistance relating to basic employability skills, such as interview preparation and understanding Australian

workplace culture and norms

- Work experience: Participants may be offered relevant work experience with one or more employers, and
- Business skills development: participants who wish to start a business may receive direct support and access to advisory services.

This program could serve as a model for specialist employment support designed to fill the gap left by the federally-funded Jobactive program. However, RESP is a pilot program and is only being implemented in NSW. The program has a set quota and is limited to refugees and humanitarian arrivals that have arrived after 2011.

Although this program could fulfil many of the ingredients required of a specialist employment program, its effectiveness and coordination with Jobactive is yet to be known.

### Integrating local work experience

As described earlier, an important element in supporting transitions to work for refugees and other migrants is providing local work experience opportunities. There are a range of work experience models that have been trialled by employment services across Australia, dependent largely on the resources and time available for arranging and supporting placements.

### Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET)

FMI members highly commended the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) program for its effectiveness and ability to offer English language learning that takes an approach of immersive learning and training for employment purposes. Navitas offers the SLPET program where eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants can study English within the context of the Australian workplace. Enrolment in this course is open to current or ex-AMEP client with at least 1 hour of AMEP entitlement remaining and are ready to work or go on to further study. In SLPET course, students learn about Australian workplace language, practices and culture, gain valuable work experience and participate in vocational training.<sup>22</sup> By enriching the Australian workplace and industry knowledge, this program has been able to transition many clients into employment.<sup>23</sup>

SLEPT offers courses in a broad range of industries.<sup>24</sup> This includes:

- Administration and Financial Services
- Administration and Real Estate



- Childcare
- Communication for Professional Pathways
- Community Services
- Customer Service
- Hospitality
- Workplace Communication for Qualified Professionals.

## Refugee and Migrant Talent

A current employment initiative that focuses on long-term employment by creating opportunities for people to gain local work experience is Refugee Talent, recently renamed Refugee and Migrant Talent.<sup>25</sup> This is a social enterprise that has seen a major expansion to now serving migrants as well since its inception in 2016.<sup>26</sup>

Refugee and Migrant Talent involves an online platform that matches refugees and other migrants looking for work with companies offering opportunities. It aims to ease the difficulties faced by many refugees and migrants who struggle to gain their first local work experience in a new country, despite their qualifications and transferable skills. Refugee and Migrant Talent offers a digital platform that connects skilled refugees with job opportunities in such a way that benefits both.

Employment areas targeted varies across different industries and skills sets from Accounting, Banking and Finance, HR, Marketing, IT, Sales and Design. It works with more than 200 companies from government departments, corporates, small to medium businesses and start-ups. In 2017, after only one and a half years since inception, they have placed more than 100 refugees into employment across Australia.



Anna Robson and Nirary Dacho, Co-Founders of Refugee and Migrant Talent.

Refugee and Migrant Talent assists refugees and migrants at various stages in the employment process. It reviews resumes, prepares individuals for interviews, gives local industry insights, matches individuals with businesses, and supports them after the placement. Refugee and Migrant Talent also coordinates and hosts 'Speed dating' events where representatives from different businesses have the opportunity to meet refugee and migrant talent from a range of industries and backgrounds for dating. Community or refugee and migrant organisations can refer individuals in the community to Refugee and Migrant Talent.

Refugee and Migrant Talent is self-funded. It receives a commission from long-term employment contracts that funds their services.

## CareerSeekers

Another current example of an effective program that capitalises on the importance of Australian work experience and close mentoring is CareerSeekers, a social enterprise created in 2016 and based in Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>27</sup> CareerSeekers partners with employers to create paid internships lasting twelve weeks for asylum seekers and refugees. Specifically, CareerSeekers works with two 'streams' — current university students, and mid-career professionals.

University students intern over their summer university break. An internship provides an intern with an understanding of possible career options, the chance to build professional networks and relevant skills, and it increases the likelihood of the intern securing a graduate role after university.

Mid-career professionals (tertiary qualified abroad, with foreign experience and having arrived in the past three years) are placed across the course of the year. Prior to an internship, they complete a week-long 'Internship Preparation Program' providing them with a baseline understanding of professional work in Australia. Internships serve as a transition back into professional employment. They are in the intern's preferred industry, positioned at an entry level.

CareerSeekers support interns over the twelve-week period. They receive a pre-induction prior to commencing their internship. In the first two weeks of their internship, they set 'Internship Objectives' with a CareerSeekers Advisor and their Manager, to provide a framework for the twelve weeks. They check in with interns at the end of each week and present back to their team at the internship's conclusion.

22. Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET), (July 2017) Navitas English <http://www.navitas-english.com.au/amep/amep- courses/slpet-courses/>.

23. Pathways to Employment and Training - What Our Clients Say, (July 2017) Navitas English <http://www.navitas-english.com.au/slpet/pathways- to-employment- and-training- what-our- clients-say/>

24. Navitas English, AMEP-SLPET Course Information Sheet (April 2017) <http://www.navitas-english.com.au/assets/Uploads/pdf-brochure/SLPET/SLPET- Course- Information- Sheet-Flyer.pdf>

25. Refugee Talent, <https://refugeetalent.com/>.

26. Shyamolima Mutsuddi, 'The Team at Refugee & Migrant Talent Has Expanded!', *Refugee Talent* (4 July 2017) <https://refugeetalent.com/team-refugee- migrant- talent- expanded/>

## The need for increased coordination and collaboration

Participants for this report indicated that those who had not received the support they were looking for from Jobactive providers turned to other local settlement service providers and their own communities to find work. Many local and community organisations indicate that they are approached by jobseekers requesting help writing and updating resumes.

For newly arrived refugees and migrants in Australia, navigating complex and unfamiliar service systems can be enormously challenging. Providing tailored casework can be resource- and time-intensive, as it involves helping people navigate systems, expectations and cultures in the Australian labour market. It is often also intensive due to the parallel settlement issues that refugee and humanitarian entrants are negotiating because of their migration experience. There is therefore a need for strong coordination, collaboration and governance among service providers, employers, the private sector and refugee and migrant entrants' communities in facilitating sustainable employment outcomes.

Many service providers suggested that it would be best to ease the caseload by providing more referrals to a range of ancillary services that work in conjunction with providing employment support.

### Bridges to Employment Project

Local service providers in the Fairfield LGA such as Fairfield City Council, CORE Community Services, Multicultural Communities and MTC Australia have banded together to provide a service two days a week. This service is available for people seeking asylum, refugees and people who arrived with a spousal visa.

Among other things, its aims include:

- Greater awareness amongst local businesses of the employment needs of residents from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Increased understanding of referral pathways amongst local service providers including Job Active services
- Increased capacity of asylum seekers and partner visa holders to engage in training, business and employment opportunities
- Increased understanding amongst the target group of work rights and responsibilities within the Australian job market
- Development and dissemination of an employment centric service mapping resource for Fairfield City and surrounds, and
- Thorough documentation and evaluation of project process and outcomes that can be used as an advocacy tool and resource for other similar initiatives.

The service is a case management style service to be delivered by a part time project worker. The project worker is supported by Diploma in Community Services TAFE student placements.

Through the project clients can receive one on one support to:

- Seek jobs
- Prepare resumes
- Undertake mock interviews
- Be connected with volunteering and paid work experience opportunities, and
- Undertake training on such topics as work rights and responsibilities, how to set up a business, and work health and safety.

### Bright Employment

Another initiative is Bright Employment, a social enterprise that was founded in 2012 by former hedge-fund manager Tim Davies. Its special focus is on preparing refugees and migrants for jobs in the agriculture sector and then moving into hospitality.<sup>28</sup> It offers training to new migrants, people seeking asylum and refugees as the first step in the employment process by combining intensive training for qualifications and assistance to find work with ongoing support and mentoring.

It now runs commercial cleaning with Western Sydney TAFE as pre-employment training.

This 4-week commercial cleaning course leads to a qualification in Cleaning Operations Certificate III.

It has since grown to include a separate hospitality-oriented arm, Bright Hospitality, which runs two pre-employment training and jobs programs:

- Hospitality program with Giants Cafe: This program is a pre-employment program that targets youth. It offers a 10-week training and work experience where students provide food service to Giants players, staff and public. At the completion of this training, the trainees are provided certificates in vocational pathways and hospitality, food handling, commercial cleaning and a Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) Certificate.
- Hospitality program with Wesley Mission's Edward Eager Lodge: This hospitality training takes place in commercial kitchens with world-class chefs. Students gain the necessary kitchen skills and experience in food preparation, kitchen workplace safety, coffee making, RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol), cleaning and front of house service

27. CareerSeekers, <http://www.careerseekers.org.au>

28. About Us, Bright Hospitality <http://www.brighthospitality.org.au/why-bright/about-us>

to secure employment as a kitchen hand, waitperson, cook or apprentice.

As the program acknowledges the specialist needs of refugees and migrants, the building block of the program is its comprehensive casework in the process of securing employment for refugees and migrants.

## Initiatives tapping into entrepreneurial spirit

There has been significant research that provides evidence of the entrepreneurship of refugees. Research funded by the Australian Government in 2011 suggests migrants from a refugee background display greater entrepreneurial qualities compared with other migrant groups, with a higher than average proportion engaging in small and medium business enterprises.<sup>29</sup>

ABS data reveals that humanitarian migrants are more entrepreneurial than other migrants.<sup>30</sup>

Providing information, training and support on starting and sustaining a small business was seen as key to supporting entrepreneurship among refugee and humanitarian entrants.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 2: Proportion of migrants reporting own unincorporated business income, by period of residence in Australia and visa stream, 2009-10<sup>32</sup>**



*Ignite participants and special guests at the Ignite launch event. Photo courtesy of Saghar Amir Azimi*

## Ignite

A successful initiative that has helped establish some small businesses so far is the Ignite Small Business Start-Ups (Ignite), developed by Settlement Services International (SSI). The aim of this initiative is to facilitate small business creation and expansion for refugees living in NSW who would like to utilise their entrepreneurial skills to interact with and directly participate in the Australian business environment.

The initiative has emerged on the basis that potential entrepreneurs are unaware of where to source raw materials for their business and whether it is viable to pursue their business in Australia. They often face a lack of start-up capital and a credit history, as well as an understanding of the bureaucracy and administration necessary for a small business in Australia.<sup>33</sup>

This initiative offers clients customised assistance and entails its process in four steps:

Engage, empower, establish and evolve. SSI case managers identify passionate entrepreneurs and refer them to the Ignite Enterprise Facilitator in the first instance.

The clients are then interviewed by the Enterprise Facilitator who provides one-on-one assistance and guidance to each client, using interpreters where necessary to support limited

29. Graeme Hugo, *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants Summary of Findings* (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011) [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01\\_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf), 38.

30. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Humanitarian Migrants the Most Entrepreneurial* (Media Release, 4 September 2015) <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/3418.0Media%20Release1200910?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3418.0&issue=2009-10&num=&view=>

31. Centre for Policy Development, *Settling Better: Reforming Refugee Employment and Settlement Services* (February 2017) <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Settling-Better-Report-20-February-2017-compressed.pdf>

32. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Income of Migrants, Australia, Experimental, 2009-10* (Catalogue No 3418.0, 4 September 2015) <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/8800F9BC6CCB7830CA257F0F00115759?opendocument>

33. Professor Jock Collins, *Ignite: From Refugee to Entrepreneur in Sydney in Less than Three Years: Final Evaluation Report on the SSI Ignite Small Business Startups Program* (Settlement Services International, February 2017) [http://www.ssi.org.au/images/stories/documents/ignite/SSI\\_Ignite\\_evaluation\\_report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.ssi.org.au/images/stories/documents/ignite/SSI_Ignite_evaluation_report_2017.pdf)





*Mahir Momand, CEO of Thrive, speaking at the Refugee Council of Australia's conference in February 2017*

English language skills and meeting where it is most convenient for the client. The client is then referred to the Ignite Business Mentor to further develop their business plan and link the client to relevant business networks including access to financial support.

A Resource Team also supports the Ignite initiative and provides pro bono links to relevant networks for the Ignite client as well as expertise, business knowledge and skills with the aim of broadening knowledge and understanding of issues including local laws, suppliers and business networks. The Resource Team is made up of local business owners, members of local councils, community organisations and chambers of commerce. In the final fourth stage, the Evolve stage, the successful Ignite entrepreneurs move towards exiting the program through a formal graduation process.

A recent evaluation of the Ignite initiative suggests that "of the 240 SSI refugee clients who had shown an interest in starting a business (at the time of compilation of these statistics), 61 had completed the Ignite program to become entrepreneurs and are currently running their own enterprise, or a success rate of 25%.<sup>34</sup>

34. Ibid.

35. Thrive Refugee Enterprise, <http://thriverefugeeenterprise.org.au/>

36. 'Microfinance Helping Refugees Fund Their Start-up Dreams', (12 June 2017) *Lateline* <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-12/microfinance-helping-refugees-fund-their-start-up-dreams/8601318>

37. 'Giving Refugees a Break', (July 2017) *A Current Affair* <https://www.9now.com.au/a-current-affair/2017/extras/latest/170711/giving-refugees-a-break>

## Thrive Refugees Enterprise

Another initiative focusing on enterprise is Thrive Refugees Enterprise. This is a not-for-profit organisation established with the financial backing of Westpac, private donors and the generous support of leading companies such as Allianz, Deloitte, Gilbert & Tobin, KPMG, Korn Ferry, LOUD, Newgate and Equifax.<sup>35</sup>

Its primary role is providing micro- financing for migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum who have few assets or business links in their new country and find it hard to access capital to stimulate their entrepreneurship and grow viable new businesses. By supporting their business enterprises, Thrive enables and empowers them to become financially independent, to create jobs, and to integrate faster and more successfully as active contributors to the economy and society.

It does this via a three-step process:

- It reviews the candidates' knowledge and understanding of how businesses operate in Australia. If necessary, it provides free knowledge and training internally or through external training partners
- It provides the candidates with microfinance loans for new or existing businesses. If a loan is approved, Thrive supports the candidate with mentoring and general business support.
- It provides post-loan mentoring to guide refugee entrepreneurs towards business success.

Some of these success stories have been featured on ABC TV,<sup>36</sup> and on Channel Nine's *Current Affair*.<sup>37</sup>

# Appendix 2: FMI Survey Questionnaires

## Fairfield Multicultural Communities Experiences with Job Active Providers

### Case Study Research

#### Background

Fairfield Multicultural Interagency (FMI) is a major forum for the Fairfield Local Government Area (LGA), with a directive to address migrant, refugee and cultural matters. Membership and participation is extended to government and non-government agencies within Fairfield City and surrounding suburbs.

Fairfield City has a rich history of migrant and refugee settlement that continues today. More than 52% of Fairfield City's residents were born overseas and approximately 144 different languages are spoken locally (Census, 2011), making Fairfield one of the most multicultural cities in Australia.

Job seeking and employment for multicultural community members can present additional challenges to that of Australian, native English speaking, job seekers. The barriers experienced by refugee and humanitarian entrant communities can be especially challenging.<sup>38</sup>

Concern about the capacity of providers under the current Job Active contract to be able to meet the complex needs of vulnerable, multicultural community members was raised numerous times by FMI members throughout the 2015 and 2016 calendar years. At the June 2016 FMI meeting, a motion was passed whereby FMI members agreed to collect case studies and reports of their multicultural clients' experiences when engaging with Job Active providers.

#### Purpose

The purpose of the case study collection is to promote changes to the Job Active model so that more consideration is given to the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse job seekers, especially those from a humanitarian, refugee or refugee like background.

#### Case study collection

Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is interested to learn more about the experiences of multicultural community members when engaging with Job Active providers. We are also interested in different perspectives regarding what policy and service changes can be made to improve the support available for this group.

The following questions will be discussed in relation to the job seeker:

• Age: Under 18 [ ] 19–29 [ ] 30–49 [ ] 50–59 [ ] 60+ [ ]

• Gender: Female [ ] Male [ ] Other [ ]

• Visa type \_\_\_\_\_

• Language/s spoken (other than English) \_\_\_\_\_

• English language proficiency:  
Basic [ ] Intermediate [ ] Advanced [ ] Native [ ]

• Existing qualifications (overseas) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Existing qualifications (Australia) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Work history (overseas) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Work history (Australia) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Experience with Job Active?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• What type of support would help in accessing employment?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Other comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>38</sup>. See Refugee Council reports for a comprehensive overview



## Ethical Considerations and Consent

Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary. All information collected will remain confidential in so far as feasible.

For **organisations**, this means:

- Your organisation will not be identified by name and no reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to the study.
- You may refuse to participate in the interview, or any part of the interview at any time.
- Any identifying characteristics of clients will be altered to retain confidentiality.
- Draft case studies will be sent to you for comment before being made public.

For **individuals**, this means:

- You will not be identified by name and no reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to the study. Any identifying characteristics will be altered to retain confidentiality;
- You may refuse to participate in the interview or any part of the interview at any time.
- Draft case studies will be sent to you for comment before being made public.

The interview may be audio taped and notes will be taken during interview.

No details relating to the client's personal information are required, case studies can be used as an example of the types of circumstances you have come across, assisted in or addressed during the course of your service provision.

By participating, you will have the opportunity to provide us with important information about your experiences. This information will be used to lobby for improved service provision and options aiming to minimise the vulnerability of migrants and refugees.

By signing this form, you are indicating that you have read and understood the information provided about your participation in this interview.

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Signature

Name

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Date

39. Australian Government Department of Education and Training, *Adult Migrant English Program* (30 June 2017) <https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-englishprogram-0>

40. Refugee Council of Australia, 'What is the difference between a migrant and a refugee?' (11 May 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/international/definitions/difference-migrant-refugee/>

41. '3.2.8.30 What Is a Job Plan?', (9 November 2015) *Guide to Social Security Law* <http://guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law/3/2/8/30>

## Appendix 3: Terminology and acronyms

**Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP):** The AMEP provides eligible clients up to 510 hours of free English language lessons (increased to up to 1000 for certain groups in July 2017). The AMEP is a settlement English language program which covers practical topics including money, housing, work and transport, and an introduction to learning in Australia.<sup>39</sup>

**CALD:** Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**FMI:** Fairfield Multicultural Interagency, the main forum for agencies working to support the multicultural communities in the Fairfield LGA. FMI meets regularly with a directive to address migrant, refugee and cultural matters in Fairfield.

**Refugee and migrant:** The term refugee refers to people who have been forced to leave their country because they are at risk of, or have experienced persecution and have sought protection in Australia or have come through Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. The term migrant commonly refers to a person who decides to leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere as a conscious choice.<sup>40</sup> In this report, we use the term 'refugees and migrants' to refer to refugee and humanitarian entrants as well as those who arrived in Australia through non-humanitarian migration pathways (i.e. Skilled, Family, student) but who face similar barriers to employment as refugee and humanitarian entrants particularly, family migrants or family members of Skilled entrants.

**Job Plan:** A Job Plan is an 'employment pathway plan' for the purposes of social security law. The Job Plan underpins the provision of services to a job seeker. For jobseekers with mutual obligation requirements the Job Plan will record all the items that the job seeker must undertake to receive social security support.<sup>41</sup>

**Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI):** The JSCI is a measurement of a job seeker's relative difficulty in gaining and maintaining employment. It helps identify what level of support the job seeker will need to find work. Job seekers must have an assessment when they first register for Australian Government employment assistance, and whenever their circumstances change. A job seeker's JSCI can identify whether they have multiple and/or complex barriers to employment that may require further assessment. These job seekers may be referred for an Employment Services Assessment to determine

the best services to suit their circumstances.<sup>42</sup>

**Job Services Australia program (JSA):** The previous main federal employment program.

**LGA:** Local Government Area.

**Mutual Obligation Requirements:** Mutual Obligations refers to the requirements that those receiving social security benefits must undertake to continue receiving support. Job seekers must meet certain requirements and show proof that they are actively engage in applying for jobs, completing training or study to keep receiving income support. Mutual Obligation Requirements apply if a person gets:

- Newstart Allowance
- Youth Allowance as a job seeker
- Parenting Payment Single, from the time your youngest child turns 6, or
- Some categories of Special Benefit.<sup>43</sup>

**RESP:** Refugee Employment Support Program, a 4-year \$22 million initiative by the NSW state government that is being rolled out in 2017, managed by the NSW Department of Industry and delivered by Settlement Services International.

**RCOA:** Refugee Council of Australia, the national peak body for organisations and individuals supporting refugees and people seeking asylum.

**SSI:** Settlement Services International, a settlement services provider.

**Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program:**

The SEE program (formerly known as the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program) provides language, literacy, numeracy and other training to eligible jobseeker clients aged 15–64 for up to 25 hours a week. The program aims to improve capabilities required to move on to further training and increase the chances of employment.<sup>44</sup>

**Work for the Dole:** Eligible job seekers registered with a Jobactive provider may need to participate in Work for the Dole or another approved activity for six months each year to keep receiving their income support if they have mutual obligation requirements.<sup>45</sup>

42. Australian Government Department of Employment, *Job Seeker Classification Instrument* (16 November 2016) <https://www.employment.gov.au/job-seeker-classification-instrument>

43. Australian Government Department of Human Services, *Mutual Obligation Requirements* (6 June 2017) <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/mutual-obligation-requirements>

44. Australian Government Department of Education and Training, *AMEP and SEE 2017 Tender Outcomes* (18 April 2017) <https://www.education.gov.au/amep-and-see-2017-tender-outcomes-08>

45. Australian Government Department of Employment, *Work for the Dole* (9 May 2017) <https://www.employment.gov.au/work-dole>



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