



**ethnic  
communities'  
council of  
victoria**

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# **Work Solutions: Improving Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace**

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**Discussion Paper  
Full Report**

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Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the *Voice of Multicultural Victoria*. As the peak body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria, we are proud to have been the key advocate for culturally diverse communities in Victoria since 1974. For 40 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

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## GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Australian Migrant Education Scheme
ASDOT	Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals program
CDFI	Community Development Finance Institution
DCA	Diversity Council of Australia
DIICSRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ECCV	Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia
G20	Group of 20 major economies
IAF	Immigrant Access Fund
JSA	Job Services Australia
JSCI	Job Seeker Classification Instrument
LLENs	Local Learning and Employment Networks
MCEF	Migrant Communities' Employment Fund
MEF	Melbourne Employment Forum
NAB	National Australia Bank
NESB	Non-English speaking background
NOOSR	National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition
OQU	Overseas Qualifications Unit
PR	Permanent Residency
PWH	Price Water House
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RTO	Registered Training Organisations
SBS	Special Broadcasting Services
SEDIF	Social Enterprise Development and Investment Fund
SPP	Special Preparatory Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VECCI	Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry
VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
VICSEG	Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy Unit
WPP	Workforce Participation Partnerships
YES	Youth Employment Scheme

## FOREWORD

Victorian migrants and people from a refugee experience are enthusiastic about finding jobs, however they face many challenges. Multiculturalism is good for Australia as it generates resources for our changing workforce. Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) through this Policy Discussion Paper provides a voice for Victoria's multicultural community.

Victoria would do well to make the most of its human resources and embrace newcomers who want to work no matter where they have been educated and gained their skills and experience. Recent research shows that the most productive, profitable and innovative organisations are those with a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Why then, after 40 years of multiculturalism, do we still find postgraduates from non-English backgrounds working as taxi drivers? Why are young graduates from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds still struggling to make it in the workforce? New challenges and concerns are just starting to emerge with job seekers from new and emerging communities excluded, marginalised and even further disadvantaged by the casualisation of work.

The Discussion Paper: *Work Solutions – Improving Cultural Diversity in the Workplace* shows that not much has changed in the last ten years regarding some of the difficulties migrants and refugees experience in finding jobs. This paper arose from the landmark *Work Solutions Forum* that ECCV conducted in 2013 to map the issues regarding Victoria's multicultural sector in relation to unemployment and under-employment.

It provides insights into complex and varied issues that relate to equitable access to employment, education and training for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It also provides practical strategies and policy solutions. We call for positive action by government and employer organisations to create tangible work solutions for new migrants and refugees.

I pay a special tribute to Joe Caputo OAM JP, our Past Chairperson for driving the employment issue as a priority for ECCV and for providing the impetus for the *Work Solutions* public forum and subsequently this paper. I take this opportunity to thank Erik Lloga, Convenor of the ECCV Employment, Education and Training Policy Sub-Committee for his passion and guidance in driving the key issues and I thank its committee members for their insightful multicultural expertise. I also express a note of appreciation to Julie Fam, our intern from the Monash University School of Social Work, for her thorough and diligent commitment in preparing the basis for this paper.

I commend the recommendations in this Discussion Paper for consideration to all three levels of government.



Eddie Micallef  
Chairperson

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employment is the central issue for migrants and refugees. In Victoria the discussion continues about the challenges and barriers that migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face when seeking meaningful employment appropriate to their skills and experience. In recent decades a range of positive employment policies and programs were developed to assist migrant and refugee job seekers and yet, despite this, over 35 per cent of recent migrants experience some difficulty finding their first job in Australia.<sup>1</sup> There is a real risk of entrenched disadvantaged groups emerging, made up of unemployed migrants and people from refugee backgrounds including disillusioned young people, women and newly arrived people. What, if anything, has changed? More needs to be done. Greater leadership by government at all levels is required.

International research shows that global migration has had a positive impact on the workplace; that diversity is a key driver of innovation and increases equity<sup>2,3,4</sup>. The Australian Government has increased the Skilled Migration Program. This discussion paper shows that the necessary adjustments in the local labour market and recruitment strategies in the public sector workplace have lagged behind those trends. It is essential that migration policies and programs be linked to employment opportunities and fair treatment around access to employment and training for migrants and refugees.

Employment brings many social, economic and health benefits to individuals, families and communities. Conversely, unemployment brings an increased risk of depression, poor health, and social and economic exclusion.

This paper was inspired by ECCV's *Work Solutions Forum* in May 2013 where participants shared their ideas, expertise and experience around workforce participation for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. It shows that the debate around employment challenges faced by migrants and refugees needs to be reinvigorated and tackled from a fresh perspective – one that places greater emphasis on practical and positive solutions that make use of evidence-based findings and on-the-ground expertise.

Contributors to this discussion paper, representing community organisations, governments, human rights groups and academics highlighted continual barriers faced by migrant job seekers in Victoria such as employer demands for local experience and lack of local networks that assist the process of finding a job. There was a reluctance of employers and professional organisations to recognise overseas qualifications, skills and experience. Limited English language proficiency was also a disadvantage. There are deficiencies in employment services for migrants and refugees and the available employment guides are overwhelming to navigate. Funding cuts to the TAFE sector have had a negative impact on education, training and employment pathways, particularly for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, Nov 2010*. Cat.no. 6250.0, Canberra, 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/6250.0~Nov+2010~Main+Features~Employment?OpenDocument>

<sup>2</sup> "Global diversity and inclusion. Fostering innovation through a diverse workforce", Deloitte, Global Report, April 2011. [http://www.deloitte.com/view/en\\_AU/au/services/consulting/human-capital/DiversityandInclusion/6d02779d94ae1310VqnVCM1000001956f00aRCRD.htm](http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_AU/au/services/consulting/human-capital/DiversityandInclusion/6d02779d94ae1310VqnVCM1000001956f00aRCRD.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Barta, Markus Kleiner and Tilo Neumann, "Is there a payoff from top-team diversity?", *McKinsey Quarterly*, (April, 2012). [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/Is\\_there\\_a\\_payoff\\_from\\_top\\_team\\_diversity](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/Is_there_a_payoff_from_top_team_diversity), accessed 23 September 2013.

<sup>4</sup> "Global diversity and inclusion. Fostering innovation through a diverse workforce", Deloitte, Global Report, April 2011. [http://www.deloitte.com/view/en\\_AU/au/services/consulting/human-capital/DiversityandInclusion/6d02779d94ae1310VqnVCM1000001956f00aRCRD.htm](http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_AU/au/services/consulting/human-capital/DiversityandInclusion/6d02779d94ae1310VqnVCM1000001956f00aRCRD.htm)

Contributors also pointed to innovative policy solutions to improve Victoria's culturally diverse workforce participation such as a review of employment services and overseas skills and qualifications recognition processes; establishing a better appeals process via an independent Fairness Commissioner, similar to that in Canada; and establishing a Cultural Diversity in Employment Advisory Network to ensure sustainable job creation and economic growth.

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### Federal Government

ECCV recommends:

1. That the Australian Government establishes an independent Office of the Fairness Commissioner similar to that in Canada to facilitate a fair and transparent appeals process that serves migrant skills and qualification recognition.
2. That a review of overseas qualifications and skills recognition processes be conducted at national and state levels to ensure appropriate recognition processes by trade associations, professional bodies and employer organisations in a fair and transparent manner.
3. That legislation is developed for the mandatory collection of cultural diversity data by federal, state and local governments and private organisations to monitor and track inclusive, diversity employment policies and practices.
4. That an independent, professional research body similar to the former Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research be established, in line with the recommendation of the Howe report *Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia* (2012).
5. That the Australian Government conducts a review of the Job Services Australia (JSA) employment services with a view to improve collaboration with ethnic and multicultural organisations, settlement service providers and employers to develop more sustainable employment outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
6. That the Australian Government develops a community-driven grants fund in close consultation with relevant multicultural groups to address unemployment and under-employment of disadvantaged migrants and refugees.

### Victorian State Government

ECCV recommends:

7. That the Victorian Government establishes a Cultural Diversity in Employment Advisory Network with representation from state and local governments, academia, Victoria's multicultural sector, VEOHRC and VicHealth to promote the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce and to provide expert advice to public sector, business community and employer organisations to assist them in becoming more culturally diverse and inclusive.

8. That the Victorian Government redirects allocations for reforms in the TAFE sector and Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) programs to target disadvantaged young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
9. That the Victorian Government forms a new Overseas Qualifications Assessment Board for the recognition of overseas skills, qualifications and experience that functions to:
  - a. Secure proper assessment independent of profession and trades associations
  - b. Provide training pathways for accreditation in line with Australian standards
  - c. Streamline fair and equitable assessment procedures
10. That the Victorian Government establishes 'one-stop shop' information hubs in several locations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to provide face-to-face information and advice on overseas qualifications recognition for new migrants and refugees and accreditation pathways that lead to further training and employment.
11. That the Victorian Government reintroduces and expands community-based employment initiatives that work in partnerships with employers to provide job opportunities for disadvantaged migrant and refugee job seekers.
12. That the Victorian Government actively promotes and tailors existing language, literacy and numeracy programs and education and training pathways to better meet the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## **Local Government**

ECCV recommends:

13. That Victorian local government develops inclusive recruitment strategies and targets to increase the employment of people from culturally diverse backgrounds to a minimum of at least a third in each local council within the next 10 years to reflect the level of cultural diversity in the broader population.
14. That the Victorian local government reallocates resources and grants to support community-based networking initiatives for job seekers from new migrant and refugee backgrounds.

## **Community-based Employment Initiatives**

ECCV recommends:

15. That VECCI works in partnership with multicultural peak organisations to develop effective work experience and mentoring programs for new migrants and refugees, and more inclusive workplaces.

16. That all levels of government work in partnership with multicultural community organisations to promote resources for social enterprise initiatives that are targeted at new migrant and refugee job seekers.
17. That media awareness campaigns be developed in partnership with VEOHRC, VicHealth and multicultural peak organisations to improve inclusive and culturally diverse employment policies and practices.

## **POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Action strategies for further consideration to improve cultural diversity in the workplace are as follows:

- a) A public campaign is needed to promote the benefits of cultural diversity in the workplace and to raise awareness of discrimination in the realm of employment on cultural and racial grounds.
- b) In the interests of better business outcomes and meeting human rights and anti-discrimination obligations, the employee composition of organisations should be compatible with the nature of the cultural diversity of the communities and clients that they serve. This may be achieved by:
  - Reviewing human resource policies, including recruitment policies and practices.
  - Developing work experience and networking opportunities for new migrants.
  - Establishing cultural diversity in employment networks.
  - Developing cultural competence within workplaces.
  - Ongoing data collection and research.
- c) Providing additional resources to foster the entrepreneurial talent of new migrants and refugees.
- d) Further reform is required in the employment services sector in order to better meet the needs of disadvantaged migrant and refugee job seekers.
- e) National reform is required to ensure that overseas qualifications and skills are recognised by trade associations, professional bodies and employer organisations in a fair and transparent manner.
- f) More needs to be done to address the educational and training needs of new migrants and refugees with a particular focus on young people.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights a range of hidden and informal barriers to the recruitment and employment of culturally diverse people. The emphasis of this paper is derived from the in-depth insights as evidenced by the May 2013 ECCV forum and presents forward looking perspectives on multicultural employment in Victoria. The consultations, whilst informal and lacking a degree of academic rigor, consisted of broad-based community engagement with over 100 participants at a ground-breaking *Work Solutions* forum<sup>5</sup> in 2013 as well as expert multicultural input via the ECCV Employment Education and Training Policy Committee. Participants included representatives from several universities, ethnic community organisations, multicultural organisations, local government, and generic community organisations with an interest in improving cultural diversity in the workforce.

The scope of the paper includes a mapping and exploration of a wide range of issues that impact on unemployment and under-employment of migrants and refugees in Victoria. It provides a unique overview of the enormous complexity of relevant government policies and issues around migration and job creation. Whilst this paper has its limitations, as it cannot be considered a comprehensive literature review, it provides an important impetus for further academic research.

This discussion paper is divided into the following sections:

- **Background**

This section sets the scene by giving a snapshot of cultural diversity in Victoria, migrant labour force statistics and the relationship between employment and wellbeing. Employment challenges for particular groups of disadvantaged migrant job seekers and cultural diversity statistics in the Australian public and private sectors are also examined.

- **Policy Overview**

This section gives an overview of relevant policies internationally, in particular in Canada, followed by a mapping of Australian and Victorian State Government and local government policies, programs and services for new migrants and refugees in relation to employment, education and training.

- **Employment Barriers – Insights from Community Consultations**

This section provides insights into the day-to-day difficulties experienced by migrants and refugees in finding jobs.

- **Solutions that Work**

This section details some examples of community sector employment initiatives and partnerships. It presents key findings from multicultural community stakeholders on how to improve cultural diversity recruitment strategies, issues relating to the recognition of overseas skills and qualifications and how to develop more inclusive workplaces.

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<sup>5</sup> Forum *Work Solutions – Improving Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace* – jointly conducted by ECCV, Darebin Ethnic Communities Council and Darebin City Council at Preston on 21 May 2013

- **Resources for Employers**

Practical and comprehensive resources are provided in this section to assist employers improve the cultural responsiveness of their recruitment and employment practices.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

Some of the key factors in achieving social cohesion and communal harmony are levels of unemployment and government responsiveness to issues of poverty and disadvantage according to the Mapping Social Cohesion 2013: National Report (Scanlon Foundation).<sup>6</sup>

This section summarises background, evidence-based research on various groups of Victorians and Australians from migrant and refugee backgrounds regarding workforce participation challenges and employment barriers. It shows that job seekers from culturally diverse backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to being trapped in insecure work.<sup>7</sup> Additional challenges of specific groups such as refugees, women, young people and international students from culturally diverse backgrounds are highlighted as well as the lack of cultural diversity in some private and public sectors. The following issues are crucial as they point towards what needs to change.

### Employment barriers

The unemployment rate of migrants is higher than that of the Australian born population. In Victoria, the unemployment rate of migrants is 8.7 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

Victoria's population is among the fastest-growing and most diverse in Australia. At the 2011 Census, the total population of Victoria was over 5 300 000 persons. Over a quarter (26 per cent) of Victorians was born overseas in more than 200 countries and 47 per cent of Victorians were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of Victorians spoke a language other than English at home.<sup>9</sup>

The Australian Bureau of Statistics report *Perspectives on Migrants* (ABS 2011) states that the recent migrant population had a higher rate of unemployment (8.5 per cent) than the Australian born population (4.6 per cent).<sup>10</sup> It reports that 35 per cent of recent migrants, who arrived in Australia after the year 2000, experienced some difficulty finding their first job in Australia. The most common challenges experienced are:

- A lack of Australian work experience or references (64 per cent)
- Language difficulties (33 per cent)
- Lack of local contacts or networks (23 per cent)
- No jobs in their locality, line of work, or at all (15 per cent)

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Markus, 2013 p13 *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2013 National Report* (Caulfield, Monash University)

<sup>7</sup> Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work Australia. *Lives on Hold: Unlocking the Potential of Australia's Workforce. The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work Australia* (Melbourne: Inquiry into Insecure Work Australia, 2012), 23.

<http://www.actu.org.au/Publications/Other/LivesonHoldUnlockingthepotentialofAustraliasworkforce.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Migrants 2011*, Cat. No. 3416.0, Canberra, 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3416.0Main+Features22011?OpenDocument#>

<sup>9</sup> Victorian Multicultural Commission, *2011 Census: a snapshot of our diversity* (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2013).

<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/population-and-migration/victorias-diversity/2011-census-a-snapshot-of-our-diversity>

<sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Migrants 2011*, Cat. No. 3416.0, Canberra, 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3416.0Main+Features22011?OpenDocument#>

- Difficulties with their skills or qualifications not being recognised (15 per cent).<sup>11</sup>

### Employment and wellbeing

Migration, employment and personal well-being are linked. The need to address employment barriers facing recent migrants is not simply a question of economic productivity, however. Research points to the link between employment and economic self-sufficiency and positive self-identity, financial independence and a successful resettlement experience.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, unemployment and joblessness increases the risk of economic hardship, reduces social status and inhibits engagement in meaningful activities.<sup>13</sup> Further, people who are unemployed are more likely to experience depression and poor health, with the burden of unemployment more concentrated among particular population groups, such as recent migrants.<sup>14</sup>

The changing patterns of work in Australia and increasing casual employment further disadvantage vulnerable groups such as women and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds as well as international students many of whom eventually become permanent residents.

### Changing forms of work in Australia

Australia's labour market has changed radically in recent decades. The predictability and security employment once offered for immigrant families to re-build life no longer exists in the same way. The flexible workforce of today has resulted in increased job insecurity. The 2012 *Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work* identified that almost one quarter of all employees and one fifth of the total workforce are engaged in casual employment. Workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to being trapped in insecure work.<sup>15</sup>

### Refugees

Migration has consistently contributed to Australia's immediate and long term productive capacity<sup>16</sup>. In its submission to the Parliamentary *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, the Victorian State Government acknowledged the significant contribution of skilled migrants to the economy by diversifying the workforce, satisfying skill shortages, increasing demand for locally produced consumer goods and encouraging international travel.<sup>17</sup> The Inquiry noted that Humanitarian migrants' contribution to productive capacity is more long term. Following what may be a heavy reliance on government support services initially, humanitarian migrants are more likely to show entrepreneurial and risk taking attributes regarding start-up businesses with many going on to establish successful business enterprises.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> ABS, *Characteristics of Recent Migrants*.

<sup>12</sup> Louise Kyle, et al., *Refugees in the labour market: Looking for cost-effective models of assistance* (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2004), i. [http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/refuges\\_in\\_labour\\_market.pdf](http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/refuges_in_labour_market.pdf) in Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, "Real Jobs: Employment for Migrants and Refugees in Australia" (ECCV Policy Discussion Paper No. 3 2008, ECCV, 2008), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Rosalie McLachlan, Geoff Gilfillan, Jenny Gordon, *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia*, Australian Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, (Canberra, 2013) 126. [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/124549/deep-persistent-disadvantage.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/124549/deep-persistent-disadvantage.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *National Health Survey: Mental Health, Australia 2001*. Cat.no. 4811.0, Canberra, 2003, <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/9ff78528b74f5ac5ca256df100796e89?OpenDocument> in VicHealth, 'Access to Economic Resources as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing', (Research Summary 4, VicHealth, 2005), 5. <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Economic-participation/Access-to-Economic-Resources-as-a-determinant-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> *Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work 2012, Lives on hold*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia: March 2013), 170. [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_Committees?url=mig/multiculturalism/report.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=mig/multiculturalism/report.htm)

<sup>17</sup> 2013 Australian Government Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism*, 171.

<sup>18</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism*, 179-180.

## Women

For women, having insecure work, serves to increase the gender gap in pay, superannuation and workplace equity. Changes to the affordability and accessibility of education, employment and settlement services present added challenges for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and makes them more vulnerable to social exclusion.<sup>19</sup>

More generally, ECCV has previously highlighted employment issues affecting humanitarian migrant and refugee women including: the double discrimination effect of being a woman and a woman from a humanitarian background; religious affiliation and dress; having a lower level of education than their male counterparts; familial roles and responsibilities that discourage participation in the labour force; and limited access to childcare.<sup>20</sup>

## Youth

In 2013, growing economic uncertainty coincided with an increase in unemployment and a marked increase in reported experiences of discrimination according to the Mapping Social Cohesion 2013 National Survey (Scanlon Foundation).<sup>21</sup>

ABS figures show that Australia's unemployment rate increased to a post-global financial crisis high of 5.8 percent in August 2013<sup>22</sup>, while youth unemployment (15-19 year-olds) increased to 17.3 per cent, its highest level since October 2010.<sup>23</sup> Opportunities to find full-time work have decreased dramatically over the past 25 years meaning that increasing numbers of young people are more susceptible to long term unemployment than the rest of the population and are more likely to be employed in casualised industries.<sup>24</sup>

Young people from recently arrived backgrounds and refugees are at greater risk of leaving education earlier than their local-born counterparts and therefore are represented more highly in the jobless rates. There are many complex factors that contribute to educational disadvantage and unemployment. A young person's still-developing English language skills can lead to communication challenges with other students and teachers. Some young people with a disrupted education pre arrival may experience additional learning difficulties, for example being illiterate in their first language. Experiencing racism and discrimination at school adds further discouragement. Young people and their families from migrant and refugee backgrounds are often unfamiliar with the Australian education system. Further, inflexibility within the system, limited pathways from education to employment and sector funding cuts only serve to further discourage participation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Olga Bursian, "Employment: Issues for immigrant women and their families", *Australian Mosaic* Issue 33, Autumn 2013: 37.

<sup>20</sup> Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 'Restricted Access: Humanitarian migrant women and employment in Victoria' (ECCV Policy Discussion Paper No. 5. 2008) 8.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Markus, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2013 National Report* (Caulfield, Monash University, 2013), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force, Australia Aug 2013*, Cat. No. 6202.0, Canberra 2013, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/6202.0Main%20Features2Aug%202013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6202.0&issue=Aug%202013&num=&view=>

<sup>23</sup> Pat McGrath, Australian Broadcasting Commission, "Australia's unemployment rate climbs to 5.8 per cent to its highest level in four years", ABC News, posted 12 September 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-12/jobless-rate-up/4953338>

<sup>24</sup> Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work, *Lives on Hold*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> "Education, Training and Employment", Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2013, <http://www.cmy.net.au/EducationTrainingandEmployment>

On an international level youth unemployment is a ticking time-bomb as it has reached a critical level in most G20 countries, including Australia, according to the Ernst and Young report: *Avoiding a Lost Generation* (2013<sup>26</sup>). The findings show that young entrepreneurs have a crucial role to play in tackling the youth unemployment crisis and governments are increasingly looking for incentives to provide young people with the tools and support to start up new businesses to create jobs and economic growth. Suggestions for action include: expanding funding choices, increasing mentoring, harnessing the power of diversity, changing society's perceptions to be more tolerant of failure, targeted 'speed up' incentives and reducing red tape and excessive taxation for new businesses.

### International students

In general international students studying at tertiary level are permitted to work subject to the conditions set out in the particular subclass of their Student Visa. This is usually limited to a maximum of 40 hours per fortnight while their course is in session and unlimited hours during course breaks<sup>27</sup>. International students with limited English and little or no work experience are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in forms of insecure work.<sup>28</sup> The pressure of living costs leads many students to work additional hours for cash-in-hand wages and accept employment conditions that are poor and sometimes unsafe.

Following graduation, international citizens who remain in Australia on a Temporary Visa 485 with the view to gaining Permanent Residency (PR) can find it difficult to establish networks, access work experience and find employment commensurate with their qualifications.

### Under-representation of migrants in the public sector

Underrepresentation of migrant workers in the public sector has impacts on the quality and efficiency of public service, access and equity, equitable participation in government policy development and social cohesion.<sup>29</sup> Based on 2006 Census data, 11.34 per cent of Australian Public Sector employees were of non-English speaking background (NESB) compared to 14.42 per cent in the broader workforce.<sup>30</sup> The federal public sector has the same proportion of employees from a non-English speaking background as in the general workforce (approximately 14 per cent). The Victorian State and Local Governments public service however, falls significantly short of this mark with 10.6 per cent and 7.6 per cent respectively.<sup>31</sup>

### Cultural diversity employment in the private sector

While data on culturally diverse employment in the private sector is limited, a recent Australian-first study by the Diversity Council of Australia (DCA) and Price Water House (PWH), *Capitalising on Culture, a National survey of Australian Business Leaders* (DCA October 2013) revealed the cultural origins of board members and senior executives in Australia's top 200 publicly listed companies.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ernst and Young June 2013, *Avoiding a Lost Generation – young entrepreneurs identify five imperatives for action*, produced for the G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance Summit Russia.

<sup>27</sup> Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Fact Sheet: Permission to Work Arrangement for Student Visa Holders* (Canberra: Australian Government, March 2012) <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/pdf/permission-to-work-students.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work, *Lives on Hold*, 72.

<sup>29</sup> Bertone et al, 2011 *Employment Barriers*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 *Census of Population and Housing*. Canberra: ABS, in Santina Bertone et al, "Report to the Potter Foundation: Employment Barriers and Success Factors for Skilled Immigrants in the Public Sector in Melbourne", Victorian Local Governance Association, 2011, 3. <http://www.vlga.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Leading%20Edge%20Forums/EXT.%202011-07-07%20Ian%20Potter%20report.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> ABS 2006 in Bertone et al *Employment Barriers*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> "Putting the microscope on board cultural diversity", Diversity Council of Australia, 2013. <http://www.dca.org.au/news-and-publications/putting-the-microscope-on-board-cultural-diversity.html>

Whilst it finds some encouraging breadth and depth in cultural diversity amongst business leaders, it also identifies a degree of underrepresentation in key areas, especially when compared with the general population. Key findings showed that 22.2 per cent of directors are 'culturally diverse' (referring to people from non-Anglo-Celtic cultural origins such as European, Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander origins), 21.9 per cent of CEOs, 19.9 per cent of senior executives and 13.5 per cent of chairs. This compares to 32.2 per cent in the general Australian community<sup>33</sup>.

According to the DCA cultural diversity represents an untapped potential for the workforce as it provides businesses with vital language skills; overseas business networks, cultural knowledge and insights into diverse consumer preferences.<sup>34</sup>

From the research, DCA makes a series of eleven checklist recommendations to assist organisations to capitalise on cultural diversity in employment such as:

- Ensure that perceptions of the concept of 'cultural fit' are not being used to filter out culturally diverse candidates
- Recognise and value the cultural intelligence or cultural quotient (CQ) in an organisation that is the ability employees' ability to adapt as they interact with people from different cultural backgrounds to their own
- Adopt an inclusive rather than an assimilatory or colour blind approach to managing workforce diversity as assimilatory approaches are associated with poorer team performance and greater racial bias<sup>35</sup>.

## 3.0 POLICY OVERVIEW

### 3.1 International

To give a wider perspective on the issues facing culturally diverse job seekers in Australia, this section highlights three aspects of international policy and practice using Canada as an example. This is a useful exercise given similarities between Australia and Canada in terms of overall numbers of migrants, population distribution, geographical size, standard of living and style of government.<sup>36,37</sup>

#### Fairness Commissioners, Canada

Like Australia, Canada has experienced an increase in skilled migrants who have studied abroad and are seeking registration to practice in their new country. In Australia there is no direct appeal or complaints process for individuals to question decisions made by the diverse and fragmented range of professional and trades bodies regarding the assessment of overseas qualifications and skills. As the

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<sup>33</sup> DCA 2013 *Capitalising on Culture Capitalising on Culture: A Study of the Cultural Origins of ASX 200 Business Leaders*, and produced in partnership with the federal government's Australian Multicultural Council, and PwC Australia, the Australian Government and IBM Australia stage 1 released in October 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Diversity Council of Victoria Factsheet accessed 12.1.2014 at [http://dca.org.au/files/file/Cultural%20diversity%20docs/ATOH2013\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://dca.org.au/files/file/Cultural%20diversity%20docs/ATOH2013_FactSheet.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Checklist (October 2013) on *How Can My Organisation Capitalise in Culture?* Produced by the Diversity Council of Australia, Price Water House and the Australian Government accessible at <http://dca.org.au/files/file/Cultural%20diversity%20docs/DCA%20Capitalising%20on%20Culture%20Flyer%20WEB.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Canada Country Brief", (Canberra: Australian Government, September 2013).

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/canada/brief.html>

<sup>37</sup> "Country and Comparative Data: The Top Sending Regions of Immigrants in Australia, Canada and the United States", 2013, Migrant Policy Institute MPI Data Hub. [http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/migrant\\_sendingregions.cfm](http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/migrant_sendingregions.cfm)

Australian recognition system is complex, fragmented and lacks accountability, and there is an anecdotal history of unfairness, much can be learned from fairness approaches in Canada.

In 2006 the Government of Ontario introduced legislation to mandate transparency, objectivity, impartiality and fairness in the policies and procedures that regulators use to license applicants in their professions. The Office of the Fairness Commissioner was established to hold regulators accountable for meeting requirements set out in the legislation. Significantly, the Office recognises that internationally trained professionals bring “new ideas and innovation, global experience and networks, and linguistic and cultural competencies that enhance their ability to serve the increasingly diverse population of Ontario.”<sup>38</sup>

### Immigrant Access Fund

The Immigrant Access Fund (IAF) Loan Program is a microfinance scheme set up in 2005 to assist skilled migrants get back into their field of work following settlement in Canada. Loans of up to \$10 000 are provided to cover costs such as training, professional fees, exam expenses, assessment, books and childcare. The Loan Program is not limited to particular occupations but is open to migrants of any profession or trade. “IAF invests in people who the banks would turn away – people who have skills and abilities our society needs....We lend to people not based on where they are today, but where we believe they will be in the future”.<sup>39</sup>

### Welcome to Canada Guide

*Welcome to Canada – What you should know* is considered to be the official handbook for new migrants to the country. A revamped version of the publication, first published in 1997, was launched in 2013.<sup>40</sup> That Canadian resource succeeds in being a friendly, comprehensive and practical source of advice. As well as detailing government employment services, *Welcome to Canada* highlights the important role that taking part in volunteering, internships and mentoring programs play in finding work. A page is dedicated to describing “Nine Essential Soft Skills for Immigrants”; there are words of advice from a recent migrant; and the importance of *Workplace language skills* is recognised.<sup>41</sup> The Guide is available in English and French.

### **Recommendation 1**

That the Australian government establishes an independent Office of the Fairness Commissioner similar to that in Canada to facilitate a fair and transparent appeals process that serves migrant skills and qualification recognition.

<sup>38</sup> Office of the Fairness Commissioner, *A Fair Way to Go: Access to Ontario's Regulated Professions and the Need to Embrace Newcomers in the Global Economy. Executive Summary*, (Ontario: Office of the Fairness Commissioner, 2013), <http://www.fairnesscommissioner.ca/>

<sup>39</sup> Immigrant Access Fund in “Investing in Character: Immigrant Access Fund”, Cities of Migration, 2013. [http://citiesofmigration.ca/good\\_idea/investing-in-character-calgary-immigrant-access-fund/](http://citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/investing-in-character-calgary-immigrant-access-fund/)

<sup>40</sup> “Minister Kenney Unveils Revamped *Welcome to Canada* Guide and *New Living in Canada* Online Tool”, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2 April 2013. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2013/2013-04-02.asp>

<sup>41</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Welcome to Canada: What you should know*. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, April 2013), 64-65. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/index.asp>

## 3.2 Federal

### English language education

Limited English proficiency presents challenges to both migrant job seekers and employers. For migrants, limited English ability can be a significant barrier to finding employment relevant to their skills.<sup>42</sup>

Data taken from the report *How Australia is Faring* (2010), published by the Australian Government Social Inclusion Board indicated that the employment rate for people aged 15 to 64 years varied significantly according to their level of English proficiency:

- 36 per cent of people who did not speak English well or at all were employed;
- 65 per cent of people who spoke another language but also spoke English very well or well were employed; and
- 73 per cent of people who only spoke English were employed.<sup>43</sup>

The Australian Federal Government provides English language tuition for migrants and refugees through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

AMEP is described as the Australian Government's largest settlement program, reflecting the position that gaining proficiency in English is a key to successfully settling in Australia.<sup>44</sup> Eligibility for AMEP is complex, but in general is available free to eligible migrants who do not have functional English, whether from the humanitarian, family or skilled visa streams. AMEP clients have voluntary access to 510 hours of English Language courses in the first five years of settlement. ECCV community feedback indicates that for many new arrivals 510 hours of English tuition is insufficient to prepare them for effective workforce participation. Some migrants with complex needs, however may be eligible to access additional hours of tuition through the Special Preparatory Program (SPP) classes.<sup>45</sup>

Questions have been raised about the effectiveness of AMEP with reports that many job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds complete AMEP without being able to effectively read, write or speak English.<sup>46,47</sup>

### Job seeker support

In addition to the fundamental importance of being able to communicate in English there is increasing recognition that additional language support is needed for job seekers using the services of Job Services Australia (JSA) who are looking for work in particular professions.

Competency in English language alone is usually not sufficient to gain employment. Support is needed to help job seekers gain local work experience, knowledge of Australian work place culture and the

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<sup>42</sup> 2013 Joint Standing Commission on Migration, Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism, 194.

<sup>43</sup> Australian Social Inclusion Board, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring*. (Canberra: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2010), 26–28.

<sup>44</sup> Department of Immigration and Border Protection, "Fact Sheet 94 – English Courses for Eligible Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia", (Canberra: Australian Government, August 2013) <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/94amep.htm>

<sup>45</sup> Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Fact Sheet 94.

<sup>46</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2012, Inquiry into Migration

Job seeker support

<sup>47</sup> ECCV, 2009 "Restricted Access", 9.

opportunity to practise their language skills in the context of work. A number of government initiatives exist to support job seekers such as the Seeking Education and Employment (SEE) and Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) programs, however there is limited evidence of how widely promoted those programs have been and to what extent employers take them up.

The SEE program, administered by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICSRTE), provides assistance to job seekers experiencing significant disadvantage in the labour market due to low levels of language, literacy and/or numeracy. Once in employment the WELL program gives tailored assistance to organisations to provide job-related workplace training in English language, literacy and numeracy skills. Whilst approximately 27 per cent of WELL participants are from non-English speaking backgrounds<sup>48,49</sup> further research is required to establish how effectively those training programs are embedded in the mindset of employers.

### Recognition of overseas skills and qualifications

Australia does not have a single, unified authority that assesses and recognises overseas qualifications. Navigating the system is complex and difficult for anyone, let alone a recently arrived migrant. What appears to be a rigorous system is often fraught with frustration for the newly arrived migrant. Having already undergone a pre-migration assessment, migrants may face a lengthy and costly process to have these attributes recognised for employment once in Australia. In effect their pre-migration assessment often becomes invalid and ignored, or irrelevant.

Many migrants seeking recognition of their work-related skills, experience and qualifications perceive excessive duplication in the assessment process from their overseas migration application through to finding a job in Australia. Recognition pathways include authorities such as:

- Overseas immigration authorities
- Local Australian trades committees
- Professional and trades bodies that vary within each State
- Local employers who make decisions about appropriate qualifications with or without advice from relevant trades and business authorities such as the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) and other relevant authorities.

Once in Australia, the qualifications recognition process commonly starts with translation of documents followed by an assessment of the educational level of an overseas professional qualification by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR), then further assessment is required by the relevant industry associations. In fact, depending on the profession, registration and membership in the relevant professional association may be required before employment can be sought. If further study is required, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) may be involved with recognition of prior learning and determining what gaps exist in a person's knowledge. For migrants and refugees with a trade, state training tribunals or Trades Recognition Australia need to be engaged to assess and recognise overseas skills. For trades that require a license, a provisional license needs to be obtained from the

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<sup>48</sup> Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Fact Sheet 94

<sup>49</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. "WELL: Benefits to Business", (Australian Government) DVD recording.

relevant State or Territory licensing regulator. A general license may be obtained after Australian content training and a period of supervised employment.<sup>50</sup>

An Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals program (ASDOT) to help skilled overseas-trained professionals with the cost of assessments and exams to practice in Australia is limited to a few health and medical professions for example a dentist, general medical practitioner, nurse, optometrist and pharmacist.<sup>51</sup>

A process exists in the Australian Government for continuous improvement especially regarding the streamlining of processes for overseas skills recognition for migrants. The former Department of Immigration and Citizenship implemented a number of procedural reforms around skill awareness and acceptance of overseas qualifications in the workplace<sup>52</sup>, following the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Review in 2006 on overseas skills recognition of migrants in Australia<sup>53</sup>. The most recent ABS statistics (2010) show that while 65 per cent of all recent migrants had obtained a non-school qualification prior to arriving in Australia only 51 per cent of these migrants had used their highest non-school qualification in their first job in Australia.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that in order to address the issue of under-employment among migrants, further streamlining and facilitating of the current recognition system is required. Furthermore, Australia lacks an independent authority where skilled migrants are able to make appeals regarding the fairness, transparency and impartiality of the overseas qualification recognition process.

## **Recommendation 2**

That a review of overseas qualifications and skills recognition processes be conducted at national and state levels to ensure appropriate recognition processes by trade associations, professional bodies and employer organisations in a fair and transparent manner.

### Data collection and research

Times are changing as data collection in the workplace becomes more common place, for example in 2012 new Australian Government legislation, the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* introduced reporting requirements on gender and employment composition.<sup>55</sup> There is no formal requirement, however, for workplaces to collect data on their cultural diversity (for instance an employee's language, ethnicity and national origin). Mandatory data collection of the composition of culturally diverse employees would enable organisations to make informed policy decisions on how to improve cultural diversity in the workplace that respond to both employer and employee needs. A lack of facts also serves to perpetuate

<sup>50</sup> "Qualification and Skills Recognition", Australian Government, Canberra, 2013, <http://australia.gov.au/topics/education-and-training/qualifications-and-skills-recognition>

<sup>51</sup> Department of Human Services, "Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals", (Canberra: Australian Government, 2013) <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/assessment-subsidy-for-overseas-trained-professionals>

<sup>52</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration. *Negotiating the Maze*.

<sup>53</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration. *Negotiating the Maze: Review of arrangements of overseas skills recognition. Upgrading and Licensing*. (Canberra: The Parliament of Australia, September 2006),

[http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary\\_business/committees/house\\_of\\_representatives\\_committees?url=mig/reports.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=mig/reports.htm)

<sup>54</sup> ABS, November 2010 *Characteristics of Recent Migrants*.

<sup>55</sup> Australian government Introducing the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and reporting requirements at [https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-07-31\\_WCAG%20script%20for%20website%20%282%29.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-07-31_WCAG%20script%20for%20website%20%282%29.pdf) accessed 18 February 2014

myths that may exist about employing new migrants and further embed non-inclusive practices and policies.

The Diversity Council of Australia in its report on *Capitalising on Culture (2013)* recommends that employers should analyse data by gender and cultural diversity simultaneously to generate important workforce insights and for more efficient use of resources.

On a national scale, ongoing data collection and research is needed in order to document migrant and labour force trends, including the effects of diversity and inclusion on workplace productivity. In line with one of the recommendations of the 2012 Howe report *Inquiry into Insecure Work*, an effective way of achieving this would be through the establishment of an independent, professional research body similar to the former Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research.<sup>56</sup>

### **Recommendation 3**

That legislation is developed for the mandatory collection of cultural diversity data by federal, state and local governments and private organisations; to monitor and track inclusive, diversity employment policies and practices.

### **Recommendation 4**

That an independent, professional research body similar to the former Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research be established, in line with the recommendation of the Howe report *Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia (2012)*.

### Employment Services and Programs

Refugee and humanitarian migrants have access to a range of employment services offered by Centrelink and Job Services Australia (JSA). Many disadvantaged job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds utilise specific services to help them find and keep a job<sup>57</sup>. Centrelink also provides a range of free services to newly arrived migrants and refugees such as interpreters, a translation service and a multilingual phone service.<sup>58</sup> The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) provides accredited small business training, business advice and mentoring for eligible job seekers as well as income support for up to 52 weeks.<sup>59</sup>

Despite a Federal Government review of service delivery in 2009 that resulted in positive reform, a Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) employment strategy paper based on community consultations has indicated that the current JSA model is not sufficiently effective in

<sup>56</sup> Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work, *Lives on Hold*, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, "Job Services Australia" Australian Government, 2013, <http://deewr.gov.au/how-job-services-australia-can-help-job-seekers>

<sup>58</sup> "Multi-lingual Phone Service", Department of Human Services, Australian Government, August 2013.

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/multilingual-phone-service>

<sup>59</sup> Joint Standing Committee, *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism*, 196.

providing the most disadvantaged job seekers, in particular recently arrived humanitarian program migrants and refugees, with the support they require.<sup>60</sup> Issues include: a focus on compliance to government policy rather than service delivery; not effectively taking into account individual circumstances that affect the job seeking process; flawed use of the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) tool to measure the relative disadvantage of job seekers; limited cultural responsiveness among some JSA staff; and lack of information flow between JSA providers and other groups supporting recent migrants and refugees such as settlement service providers.<sup>61</sup>

Organisationally and as service providers, some JSAs have low levels of cultural competency and lack the policies, tools, procedures and resources to effectively deal with the complex issues that disadvantaged job seekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds present.<sup>62</sup>

A positive step toward further reform in the employment services sector was made at an Australian Government *Best Practice Forum* in 2012, where ECCV was represented in collaboration with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Melbourne Employment Forum.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That the Australian Government conducts a review of the Job Services Australia (JSA) employment services with a view to improve collaboration with ethnic and multicultural organisations, settlement service providers and employers to develop more sustainable employment outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

#### *Migrant Communities Employment Fund*

In 2013 the Australian government worked in close collaboration with the multicultural sector in Victoria to develop the Migrant Communities Employment Fund (MCEF), an innovative community-based initiative to fill gaps in employment service delivery to migrants and refugees in a targeted and culturally competent manner. The MCEF was designed to provide better engagement with employers and improve employer perceptions of migrant and refugee job seekers and workers.<sup>63</sup>

In December 2013 the Federal Coalition Government decided not to proceed with the MCEF and redirected the allocated \$6.6 million (over two years)<sup>64</sup> without any replacement program to address higher levels of unemployment among recent migrants.

MCEF was an innovative community-driven program that aimed to:

- Improve employment outcomes for refugee and migrant job seekers;

<sup>60</sup> Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia New and Emerging Communities Policy Committee 2011, *Employment Strategy Paper. Submission to the Member for Melbourne*, FECCA 2011, 3.

<sup>61</sup> FECCA, *Employment Strategy Paper*.

<sup>62</sup> FECCA, *Employment Strategy Paper*.

<sup>63</sup> "Applications open for migrant employment program", Senator Kate Lundy, July 2013. <http://www.katelundy.com.au/2013/07/05/applications-open-for-migrant-employment-program/>

<sup>64</sup> Australian Government, Department of Employment Migrant Communities employment fund website at <http://employment.gov.au/migrant-communities-employment-fund> accessed on 18 February 2014

- Increase the capacity of employers to employ refugee and migrant workers;
- Improve understanding of how to best support migrant and refugee job seekers and their employers; and
- Provide models that could be replicated to other locations and groups of migrants and refugees.<sup>65</sup>

The MCEF was designed to provide opportunities for migrants and refugees to access suitable training (including English language training) and mentoring support; improve participation in work experience and training in Australian workplace culture; give better access to employment opportunities; and provide employment support and post placement support. Programs supported by the fund were intended to complement existing programs such as AMEP<sup>66</sup>.

### **Recommendation 6**

That the Australian Government develops a community-driven grants fund in close consultation with relevant multicultural and ethnic organisations to address unemployment and under-employment of disadvantaged migrants and refugees.

#### Employment guides for job seekers

Australian Government resources for new migrants seeking employment include the *Guide to Employment for Migrants* (DEEWR 2013) and the publication *Beginning a life in Australia - Welcome Guide* (DIAC 2012). These resources set out and describe the steps involved in finding work in Australia, for example arranging for qualification documents to be translated, getting skills and qualifications recognised and obtaining Australian work experience.

When compared with the Canadian guide *Welcome to Canada – What you should know* (see International section above) the Australian *Beginning a life guide* is less welcoming to the reader and comes across as a lengthy fact sheet. However to its credit, the Australian guide is available in 37 different languages whereas the Canadian Guide is available in just two.

The *Guide for Employment for Migrants* (DEEWR 2013) is a comprehensive and precise resource that covers every aspect of finding work in Australia. The guide's limitations are that the amount of information is overwhelming if presented solely in its written form. There is also an assimilatory tone in the *Getting Help* section, when discussing the importance of language, literacy and numeracy skills, as "a heavy accent that is difficult to understand can actually be a liability and may hold you back."<sup>67</sup> That may have a discouraging, possibly unintended effect, of tempering the aspirations of the migrant or refugee job seekers.

<sup>65</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, "Migrant Communities Employment Fund" (Canberra: Australian Government, July 2013) <https://deewr.gov.au/migrant-communities-employment-fund>

<sup>66</sup> DEEWR, "Migrant Communities Employment Fund".

<sup>67</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Hills-Holroyd Paramatta Migrant Resource Centre, *Guide to Employment for Migrants*. (Canberra: Australian Government, February 2013), [http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/skills\\_trade\\_recognition/employment/index.html](http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/skills_trade_recognition/employment/index.html), 26.

### 3.3 State

#### Education, training and employment options for young people

In the State of Victoria there is limited information available on the extent to which Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions adequately target disadvantaged young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. We sometimes take for granted the link between higher levels of education and better employment outcomes, and that it is the route out of disadvantage for most people of working age. Ideally education also creates greater labour market resilience within individuals.<sup>68</sup>

The following TAFE and Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) programs are pivotal in providing appropriate education, training and employment options for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

TAFEs work with schools to support better outcomes for students, and with local communities to develop programs and support for students from disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They aim to provide pathways to higher education and to the professions, and in doing so, aim to support Australia's need for a highly educated workforce and social mobility. The LLENs programs are designed to improve education, training and employment options for young people from 10-19 years particularly those at risk of making poor transitions from compulsory schooling to the next stage of their lives and careers.<sup>69</sup>

Funding cuts to the TAFE sector imposed by the State Government in 2012 have resulted in course cuts, campus mergers and closures, with consequent impact on people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.<sup>70</sup> In its report *Training Days* (2013) the independent think tank *Per Capita* criticises the cuts stating that they “undermine TAFE’s ability to deliver their statutory community service obligations which assist disadvantaged and disabled students”.<sup>71</sup>

#### **Recommendation 7**

That the Victorian Government establishes a Cultural Diversity in Employment Advisory Network with representation from state and local governments, academia, Victoria’s multicultural sector, VEOHRC and VicHealth to promote the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce and to provide expert advice to public sector, business community and employer organisations to assist them in becoming more culturally diverse and inclusive.

<sup>68</sup> McLachlan, Gilfillan and Gordon, 2013 *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage*, 109. Commonwealth of Australia

<sup>69</sup> Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, “Locate Local Learning and Employment Networks”, (State Government of Victoria, October 2013). <http://www.llen.vic.gov.au/>

<sup>70</sup> Leesa Wheelahan, “TAFE cuts will affect everyone: state governments should think again”, *The Conversation*, (20 September 2012) <https://theconversation.com/>

<sup>71</sup> David Hethrington and Jarrod Rust, *Training Days. Models of Vocational Training Provision: Lessons from the Victorian Experience*. (Per Capita, July 2013), 3. <http://www.percapita.org.au>

### **Recommendation 8**

That the Victorian Government redirects allocations for reforms in the TAFE sector and Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) programs to target disadvantaged young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

### Overseas Qualifications Unit

A Victorian State Government body, the Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU), has been established to provide qualified professionals who are living permanently in Victoria with an assessment of their overseas qualification to assist them to undertake work in Victoria. The OQU provides an on-line service to assist employers, educational institutions and others to appropriately interpret overseas education and qualifications.<sup>72</sup> ECCV community feedback indicates that some job seekers from culturally diverse backgrounds are overwhelmed by the complexity of the system and would benefit from additional face-to-face support. Research indicates that the process for gaining full recognition of foreign qualifications is cumbersome.<sup>73</sup>

### **Recommendation 9**

That the Victorian Government forms a new Overseas Qualifications Assessment Board for the recognition of overseas skills, qualifications and experience that functions to:

- a) Secure proper assessment independent of profession and trades associations
- b) Provide training pathways for accreditation in line with Australian standards
- c) Streamline fair and equitable assessment procedures

### **Recommendation 10**

That the Victorian Government establishes 'one-stop shop' information hubs in several locations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to provide face-to-face information and advice on overseas qualifications recognition for new migrants and refugees and accreditation pathways that lead to further training and employment.

### Community partnership employment programs

In the past decade, a Victorian State Government employment programs such as the *Workforce Participation Partnerships (WPP)* program have not been renewed or replaced. The WPP was a successful program in terms of concrete employment outcomes for migrant and refugee communities, as well as other disadvantaged job seekers. Between 2005 and 2008 the WPP program funded 98 projects to assist over 2,040 job seekers across Victoria secure ongoing employment. The funding of migrant resource centres and ethno-specific organisations to deliver tailored employment services to

<sup>72</sup> State Government of Victoria, "The Overseas Qualifications Unit", (State Government of Victoria: October 2013)

<http://www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au/employing-overseas-talent/settle-and-retain-new-workers/the-overseas-qualifications-unit>

<sup>73</sup> Hawthorne, Lesleyanne 2011 Competing for skills: Migration an Trends in New Zealand and Australian, Department of Labour, Australia

migrants and refugees was a promising aspect of this program. For example, the New Hope Foundation assisted dozens of young men from African backgrounds to secure employment in the meat industry in the regional area of Castlemaine. Additionally, Victorian Arabic Social Services assisted over 160 young people from Arabic speaking backgrounds develop employment skills and enter the labour market.<sup>74</sup> Program funding ceased in late 2008.

Currently there are several generic employment initiatives coordinated by the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation. They include: *Business in Transition Support*, an information and referral service that supports employers and employees through the process of retrenchment; *the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) Trainee Scheme* which gives recent school leavers on-the-job skills and work experience with the state public service; and *Employment Start Up for Business* support which encourages businesses that are experiencing difficulties filling roles to employ young people supported with a traineeship.<sup>75</sup> While each of these programs may be accessed by eligible migrant workers and job seekers, they are not targeted at or tailored to the needs of new and emerging migrant communities.

#### **Recommendation 11**

That the Victorian Government reintroduces and expands community-based employment initiatives that work in partnerships with employers to provide job opportunities for disadvantaged migrant and refugee job seekers.

#### **Recommendation 12**

That the Victorian Government actively promotes and tailors existing language, literacy and numeracy programs and education and training pathways to better meet the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### **3.4 Local Government**

#### Hidden Barriers

Employment in local government in the Melbourne Metropolitan Area does not reflect the community it serves according to the Swinburne University report *Employment Barriers and Success Factors for Skilled Immigrants in the Melbourne Public Sector* (Bertone et al 2011).<sup>76</sup> Findings show that a range of hidden, informal barriers limit the recruitment and employment of skilled migrants, and especially recent migrants, in the Melbourne public sector, despite positive Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation and diversity principles.

<sup>74</sup> Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, "ECCV 2008-09 State Budget Submission: Maintaining a Multicultural Victoria," (ECCV: 2008) 4. <http://eccv.org.au/doc/ECCV200809StateBudgetSubmissionfinal.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Business Victoria, "Business in Transition Support", (State Government of Victoria, June, 2013). <http://www.business.vic.gov.au/operating-a-business/employing-and-managing-people/ending-employment/business-in-transition-support>; Department of State Development, Business and Innovation, "Youth Employment Scheme", (State Government of Victoria, July 2013) <http://www.dsdbi.vic.gov.au/employment-with-us/employment-programs/youth-employment-scheme>; Business Victoria, "Employment Start Up for Business", (State Government of Victoria, August 2013) <http://www.business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-assistance/employment-start-up-for-business>

<sup>76</sup> Bertone et al 2011, *Employment Barriers and Success Factors for Skilled Immigrants in the Melbourne public sector*, Swinburne University

### Recruitment drive

According to Bertone's report positive factors that helped migrants gain public sector employment included mentoring programs, work experience, short term contracts, revised recruitment rules, and temporary visas where the employer sponsors the immigrant. The research proposed mandatory workforce data collecting on cultural diversity to assist organisations track and improve the cultural diversity profile of their staff. The study indicated that, in light of looming skill shortages and the known benefits of cultural diversity in the workforce, a concerted policy and practice drive is needed at the local government level to overcome employment barriers faced by job seekers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

### Summary

So far, this section of the discussion paper has provided a policy overview of international legislation as well as federal and Victorian employment policies and programs for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The next section provides insights into the impact of unemployment and under-employment on Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds. They include the findings of extensive community consultations.

## **4.0 EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS - INSIGHTS FROM COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS**

On 21 May 2013, ECCV held its forum *Work Solutions: Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace* at the Preston City Hall, in partnership with Darebin Ethnic Communities Council and the Darebin City Council. Almost 100 people attended representing multicultural organisations, ethnic communities, sports clubs, local councils, the health sector, emergency services, educational institutions and private employers. They identified important issues around the unemployment and under-employment of Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The following is a summary of the key barriers identified by forum participants regarding employment challenges experienced by migrants and refugees.

### **4.1 Non-recognition of overseas qualifications and skills**

Employers are reluctant to recognise the range of skills and global outlook that people from culturally diverse backgrounds bring to the workplace. Overseas qualifications, skills and experience are often not adequately recognised resulting in under-employment.

Many migrants and refugees find the system for recognition of overseas skills and qualifications too complex to navigate without face-to-face support resulting in unemployment and under-employment. What appears to be a rigorous assessment system, in practice is more of a disabling system that dashes the hopes and aspirations of migrants and refugees with overseas qualification who seek productive employment in Australia.

## **4.2 Lack of culturally inclusive training programs**

There is a lack of culturally inclusive programs for both job seekers and employees. More targeted programs in mentoring, coaching, induction or counselling are needed to improve employment outcomes for people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

## **4.3 Cultural competence for employers**

There is a general lack of awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity in the workplace and inadequate training and education programs to improve the cultural competence of employers and employees.

## **4.4 Unconscious bias in recruitment**

Current recruitment processes can be ineffective for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Workplace HR (Human Resources) practice is often discriminatory as unconscious bias places too much emphasis on merit-based selection and inconsistent use of selection criteria. Staff responsible for recruitment is often unaware of their personal bias and the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce.

In relation to organisational human resources and recruitment policies, community participants raised the following as issues of concern that disadvantage culturally diverse job seekers:

- Job descriptions are often more complex than they need to be.
- Use of key selection criteria as a recruitment tool is over emphasised.
- Staff responsible for recruitment often prefers applicants with a similar background to themselves, undervaluing overseas experience, skills and qualifications.
- There is an over-emphasis on written English skills that excludes otherwise suitable candidates.
- Workplace induction programs need to be more inclusive – for example by explaining work place norms, the importance of safety, encouraging open communication among colleagues and acknowledging the value of global experience and perspectives.

## **4.5 Over-focus on English language**

Varying levels of English language competence present a barrier to employment and diminished opportunities within a workplace; for example an employee with a lower level of English language ability may be misunderstood by assimilatory attitudes of colleagues or be overlooked for promotional and other work related opportunities.

## **4.6 Lack of data and research**

Mandatory data collection and reporting on workplace diversity is needed to help drive change in employee demographics. Similarly, more research is needed in order to dispel myths and present a business case to employers for a culturally diverse and inclusive workplace.

## **4.7 Discrimination**

Despite anti-discrimination legislation, racial discrimination still exists in the workplace and in employment practices as a significant human rights issue. Education and engagement at a community level is needed to help stop such discrimination and improve inter-cultural understanding.

These barriers must be addressed to ensure a fair and equitable access to jobs and training. The following section provides examples of positive diversity-focused employment initiatives and inclusive workplace practices.

## 5.0 SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

The following section includes examples of work solutions with positive employment outcomes for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. They include recent studies and initiatives that have made a positive contribution to inclusive and diverse workplaces such as distinguishing between cultural diversity and genuinely inclusive practices in the workplace; local government recruitment initiatives; practical resource guides and kits for employers; examples of mentoring programs; suggestions for improving networking for disadvantaged job seekers; and the growing potential of social enterprise initiatives for migrants and refugees.

### 5.1 Community partnerships

Many not-for-profit charitable and community organisations work with and run employment programs for disadvantaged migrants and refugee job seekers. They are beneficial in that they develop partnerships with employers. Strengthening partnership with employers is pivotal for successful community-based employment projects that provide employment for culturally diverse job seekers. Two examples are given below.

#### Given the Chance

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's *Given the Chance* program links refugees in Victoria with mentors from business, community and government and also offers work experience opportunities and job seeking training specific to the individual. More than two-thirds of participants go on to find employment or undertake study to improve their chances of finding work. In 2013 *Given the Chance* developed extensive partnerships with major local employers in finance, health, entertainment and domestic services.<sup>77</sup> *Given the Chance* also offers a training resource for employers employing refugees called Building Bridges.<sup>78</sup>

### 5.2 Place-based approach

#### Victorian Co-operative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) New Futures

VICSEG New Futures is a non-government community organisation that provides support and training to newly arrived and recently settled migrant communities in northern and western metropolitan Melbourne.

The *New Opportunities in Family Day Care* project involves the delivery of Certificate III in Children's Services as well as an eight-week (35-hour) orientation to becoming a family day care educator. Participants receive customised tuition such as bilingual language support to ensure conceptual understanding and competence, work placement support, mentoring and assessment.

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<sup>77</sup> "Given the Chance", Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2010. <http://www.bsl.org.au/Services/Refugees-and-migrants/Given-the-Chance>

<sup>78</sup> "Building Bridges", Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2010. <http://www.bsl.org.au/Services/Refugees-and-settlement/Building-Bridges>

Their Project has forged valuable partnerships with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and local councils, with benefits such as curriculum enhancement and customisation, professional development opportunities and employment creation.

In 2012 VICSEG developed *New Futures Family Day Care*, a culturally-responsive, place-based cluster model provided by qualified and experienced bilingual educators.<sup>79</sup> Research indicates that a place-based approach improves people's wellbeing by creating connected and engaged communities to address multiple issues such as poor housing, social isolation and fragmented services at the local neighbourhood level<sup>80</sup>.

The following case story exemplifies how the place-based programs offered by VICSEG New Futures addressed multiple and complex issues of a female jobseeker from a culturally diverse background and supported her to successfully find employment.

**Table 1 Case study about multicultural community sector employment support**

**SUCCESS - ONE JOB SEEKER'S STORY**

Samira migrated to Australia from Lebanon to get married in 2005. She arrived with little knowledge of the culture and did not speak English.

Before leaving her home country, Samira completed first-year university studies in biology and worked part-time at a hospital. The unexpected death of her father meant she was unable to complete university but she continued working at the hospital for the next three years – in reception, medical records and accounts. "I am a quick learner so my boss moved me around", she says.

Samira recalls her initial settlement experience as challenging – she felt as though she'd landed on a different planet. Learning English through Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP) at NMIT helped though, as it enabled her to grasp the language of her adopted country and make new friends.

Following the birth of her son, Samira attended a local playgroup for migrant and refugee women and it was here that she learnt about the Certificate III in Children's Services offered by VICSEG, a not-for-profit organisation that provides learning and employment opportunities for new migrants and refugees.

Samira commenced the Certificate III six months after the birth of her second child. Access to occasional childcare offered by VICSEG was an important factor in her enabling her to commit to and complete the qualification. In a similar vein, Samira then completed VICSEG's *New Opportunities in Family Day Care* orientation program, which gave her the skills, knowledge and support to become a family day care educator and run a business in her own home.

<sup>79</sup> ECCV interview July 2013, Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) New Futures; <http://www.vicseg.com.au>

<sup>80</sup> Policy Brief Issue 23, 2011 Place-based approaches to supporting children and families, an initiative of the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne Centre for community Child Health.

Embarking on study was of vital importance to Samira not only professionally, but also in terms of her overall wellbeing. “If you stay at home you can feel isolated and depressed”, she says.

An avid learner, Samira is now studying for the Diploma in Children’s Services. She balances this with her family responsibilities and work as a family day care educator with the VICSEG-run *New Futures Family Day Care*. She currently looks after two children but plans to increase the number in her care when she finishes her studies.

Samira enjoys her job and is committed to working in the children’s services sector for now, but is open to what the future might hold. When asked about her career path, she admits that she hadn’t considered childcare initially, but it became a possibility when she realised her employment options were limited. Despite her overseas experience Samira says her job prospects in health administration were poor due to her lack of English language skills and formal qualifications. Combined with not having a driver’s license; looking after two young children and little family support; the task of finding a job was daunting. “It’s difficult for anyone but especially for women,” she says.

Source: ECCV interview, August 2013 (name changed)

### 5.3 Diversity + inclusion

Inclusive workplace practices are the key ingredient to improving workplace diversity and business performance in Australia according to the recent report *Waiter, is that Inclusion in my soup?* of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC 2012). Significantly, the findings have added this new, essential ingredient – inclusion - to the recipe for achieving market expansion, a broader knowledge base, robust decision making and innovation in business. The research notes that in comparison to diversity, there is a lack of academic research on inclusion. It found that:

- Employees who believe their organisation is committed to diversity *and* also feel included report better business performance;
- Focussing not just on diversity but also inclusion enables organisations to unlock their diversity potential; and
- Feelings of inclusion are driven by perceptions of fairness and respect; and value and belonging.<sup>81</sup>

The report points out that there has been a lopsided focus on diversity instead of a balanced focus on ‘diversity + inclusion’ as drivers of business success;<sup>82</sup> for example it is possible to have high levels of diversity in a workplace but low levels of inclusion, where people do not feel they belong.

“This means that to feel highly included, a person would not only say that they are treated fairly and respectfully, but that their unique value is known and appreciated, and they belong to the group”.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Deloitte and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance*, Research Report (Sydney: Deloitte, November 2012), 4.

<sup>82</sup> Deloitte and VEOHRC, *Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup?*, 25.

<sup>83</sup> Deloitte and VEOHRC, *Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup?*, 12

The VEOHRC report has positive implications for both recruiting and retaining a culturally diverse workforce as high commitment to diversity and high levels of inclusion are needed for top performance.

## 5.4 Local government

Melbourne is one of the world's most harmonious and culturally diverse cities with its people coming from more than 200 countries, speaking more than 230 languages and following more than 130 religious faiths.<sup>84</sup>

That picture is contrasted by the research findings on in the report *Employment Barriers and Success Factors for Skilled Immigrants in the Melbourne Public Sector* (Bertone et al 2011) that show attracting and recruiting migrants is not a priority in state and local governments. Further, there is little awareness of the possible need to increase workplace diversity, partly due to lack of reliable or complete data on the countries of birth or cultural backgrounds of their staff.<sup>85</sup>

### Recruitment

In Bertone's study recruitment processes were described as merit-based, and yet there were a range of practices that could disadvantage job applicants from culturally diverse backgrounds<sup>86</sup> such as employer preferences to employ people like themselves. Potential barriers to employment for people from culturally diverse backgrounds listed in the study included: a lack of local contacts, references and support networks, and other specific requirements such as lack of knowledge of local planning laws, literacy, numeracy, drivers licence, and citizenship. On the positive side the research showed that local government participants agreed on the need for workplace demographic change.<sup>87</sup>

Both managers and employees offered a range of positive strategies to improve the recruitment and employment of people from a non-English speaking background in the public sector such as:

- Mentoring, work experience placements and scholarships for culturally diverse job seekers
- Reducing the number of key selection criteria and explaining how to address them
- Removal of names from applications to create a level playing field
- A concerted policy drive to target cultural diversity in recruitment
- Cultural diversity training for those involved in recruitment.
- Allowing for different approaches to recruitment
- Collecting workforce data on cultural diversity

### **Recommendation 13**

That Victorian local government develops inclusive recruitment strategies and targets to increase the employment of people from culturally diverse backgrounds to a minimum of at least a third in each local council within the next 10 years to reflect the level of cultural diversity in the broader population.

<sup>84</sup> Plan Melbourne, 2013 a Metropolitan Planning Strategy, Victorian Government

<sup>85</sup> Bertone et al, 2011 *Executive Summary: Employment Barriers*, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Bertone et al, 2011 *Executive Summary Employment Barriers*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Bertone et al, 2011 *Employment Barriers*, 29.

Some local governments have begun a commitment to becoming more diverse and inclusive workplaces such as in the Moreland and Whittlesea City Councils. The impact on Victoria population of culturally diverse job seekers is small and without State Government endorsement and is therefore not yet capable of being promoted as reasonable and required practice.

a) Moreland City Council

The Moreland City Council's inclusive *Recruitment, Selection and Induction Policy* states its support for greater access to employment and traineeships to residents from disadvantaged groups such as youth, people with a disability, indigenous people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Whilst some positive strategies are implemented, the outcomes have not been formally evaluated. Inclusive strategies include informing relevant employment agencies to encourage applications from local residents in each of the target groups that meet 80 per cent of a position's selection criteria. Applications with diverse backgrounds are then prioritised for interview via their *Inclusive Employment Program*.<sup>88</sup>

b) City of Whittlesea – Work Ready

City of Whittlesea's *Work Ready Project* originated in Council's Multicultural Plan<sup>89</sup> and is part of the VicHealth's LEAD (Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity) pilot program that addresses discrimination and supports diversity within local communities.

The Whittlesea *Work Ready Project* offers newly arrived adults from migrant and refugee backgrounds a 12-week work placement at the Council. Participants are sourced through direct applications and community organisations that work with new migrants and refugees in the locality. Placements are negotiated with department managers and candidates are screened, interviewed and skill-matched with department needs. A daily allowance is given to participants. In general, placements require a commitment of 12 hours per week for 8-12 weeks.<sup>90</sup>

It is a positive inclusive initiative however the community impact is still small. From December 2010 to August 2012, 43 people from a range of professional backgrounds have been placed in civil engineering, marketing and communications, community planning and information technology. Of those individuals, eight achieved employment with the City of Whittlesea and a further seven participants are known to have achieved employment outside of Council.<sup>91</sup>

**Recommendation 14**

That Victorian local government reallocates resources and grants to support community-based networking initiatives for job seekers from new migrant and refugee backgrounds.

<sup>88</sup> Moreland City Council, 'Recruitment, Selection and Induction Policy', (Moreland City Council: 2013, 5).

<sup>89</sup> "Work Ready Project", City of Whittlesea, July 2013. <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/your-council/grants-and-major-programs/localities-embracing-and-accepting-diversity-project/lead-enews/work-ready-project>

<sup>90</sup> City of Whittlesea, Work Ready Project, Presentation notes at Victorian Local Government Multicultural Issues Network "Workplace Diversity: Workforce for the Future" Forum, Dandenong, 6 August 2013.

<sup>91</sup> City of Whittlesea, "Work Ready Project."

## 5.5 Mentoring

Research shows that job seekers from migrant backgrounds are disadvantaged by a lack of local experience, references and support networks<sup>92</sup>. While a change in the dominant recruitment paradigm would reduce disadvantage by placing greater value on employees with a global outlook and experience, there is no doubt that migrant job seekers would be more competitive in the labour market if increased opportunities for work experience and mentoring were available. An obvious benefit to organisations that offer such programs is the opportunity to put their cultural diversity policies into practice. Employers also benefit from ready access to a culturally diverse workforce. Two examples of successful work experience and mentoring programs are described below.

### a) Jesuit Social Services and National Australia Bank – African Australian Inclusion Program

The *African Australian Inclusion Program* is a professional training program for qualified African-Australians, providing six months paid workplace experience at National Australia Bank (NAB). It is a joint initiative of the Jesuit Social Services and NAB. Since the program was piloted in 2009 over 90 people were placed in the Melbourne and Sydney NABs. In March 2013 there were 15 participants in the program. Another 78 participants have graduated with an 89 per cent average retention rate.<sup>93</sup> Although the sample is small, this inclusion program is an indication of a successful initiative that benefits culturally diverse professional job seekers and the workforce.

The need for the program was identified by the African-Australian community to address the lack of local experience in the Australian business sector as it was a significant barrier to employment for qualified African-Australians. The joint response of the collaborating organisations has been well-documented and praised by many areas of the broader community.

The program aims to provide commercial experience and learning opportunities for participants, including enhancing their business networks. All participants are provided with a workplace coach and mentor throughout their placement. Participants are also provided with comprehensive job search support including interview techniques and resume writing.<sup>94</sup>

### b) SBS-Deakin-ECCV Media Mentoring Program

The SBS-Deakin-ECCV Media Mentoring Program was established in 2012 following concerns raised by ECCV regarding negative media portrayals of migrants and aims to increase multicultural diversity within the Australian media. The Media Mentoring program assists tertiary students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and refugees to develop career pathways in the media, providing them with hands-on skills and networking opportunities during their studies. Eligible students majoring in Media, Journalism or Public Relations apply in their first year of study at Deakin University. Each intern is assigned an SBS mentor and has the opportunity to participate in the *National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council Youth Conference*. In 2014 five students are undertaking the internship at SBS<sup>95</sup>. The numbers may be small; however the value lies in the experiences of training diverse people on the job and in lessons to be learnt from the program evaluation.

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<sup>92</sup> Bertone et al, 2011 *Employment Barriers*, 29.

<sup>93</sup> "African Inclusion Program", Jesuit Social Services, 2013. <http://www.jss.org.au/programs/all-programs/african-australian-inclusion-program>

<sup>94</sup> Jesuit Social Services, "African Inclusion Program".

<sup>95</sup> Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, "Promoting Diversity in the Media". ECCV, Media Release October 2013. <http://eccv.org.au/community/news/promoting-diversity-in-the-media/>

Work experience and mentoring programs such as those described above not only assist migrant and refugee job seekers gain valuable local experience, but also help them to develop networks and contacts that can be vital in the search for longer term and more secure employment.

### **Recommendation 15**

That VECCI works in partnership with multicultural peak organisations to develop effective work experience and mentoring programs for new migrants and refugees, and more inclusive workplaces.

## **5.6 Networking**

Networking is about developing relationships and using informal and social contacts to help a person gain employment and improve employment pathways<sup>96</sup>. Lack of networks and local contacts was cited by recent migrants as one of the difficulties in finding their first job in Australia (ABS 2011)<sup>97</sup>. The report *What Works Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants* (Refugee Council of Australia June 2010)<sup>98</sup> states that opportunities to build social capital, or develop informal social networks, are rarely provided by employment and job search agencies. ECCV community feedback notes that similar challenges are faced by many international students come to Australia to undertake full-time study in registered courses and subsequently become permanent residents<sup>99</sup>.

The Melbourne Employment Forum (MEF) is a relatively new on-line employment forum to assist job seekers with networking. To illustrate how networking that is driven by informal social connections, can be formally supported, it is worth examining a successful international professional networking employment initiative, *Les derouilliers* (*The Scalers*<sup>100</sup> in English) that assisted first, second and third generation migrants in France find jobs.

The following cases include examples of one Victorian and one international community-based networking initiative, supportive of job seekers from culturally diverse backgrounds in both face-to-face and virtual forms. Also included is the case story of one of Melbourne's young international student that provides a typical insight into the challenges they face.

<sup>96</sup> Melbourne Employment Forum – networking at <http://www.melbourneemploymentforum.org.au/employment/how-to-find-the-job/networking/> accessed 28 January 2013

<sup>97</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Migrants 2011*, Cat. No. 3416.0, Canberra, 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3416.0Main+Features2011?OpenDocument#> accessed 29 January 2014

<sup>98</sup> Refugee Council of Australia June 2010 *What Works Employment Strategies For Refugee And Humanitarian Entrants* page 65

<sup>99</sup> ECCV Submission on the Migration Programme for 2014-15 to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, December 2013

<sup>100</sup> The term "scalers" refers to youth who 'rust' at the bottom of buildings. The term was coined by Azouz Begag, French writer, politician and researcher. Malika Grogga-Bada, "Zoubeir Ben Terdeyet", *Jeune Afrique*, 7 April 2010. <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2568p062-063.xml0/>

**Table 2 Case study about local on-line networking initiative in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia**

MELBOURNE EMPLOYMENT FORUM

The Melbourne Employment Forum (MEF) is an independent association working with a diverse range of community groups, job service providers, employer and industry groups, and the community sector, with the aim of helping all members of the Melbourne community to improve their employability.

MEF was formed following extensive consultation with key stakeholders and through assistance provided by the previous and current Federal members of the City of Melbourne. MEF currently has over 70 member organisations and individuals. The organisation continues to advocate for tailored services for migrant and refugee job seekers. It has produced various resources to help disadvantaged job seekers.

Source MEF Chairperson

**Table 3 Case study about international networking initiative Les derouilliers in Paris, France**

LES DEROUILLIERS – AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING INITIATIVE

*Les derouilliers* (*The Scalers*<sup>1</sup> in English) is an international example of an innovative employment networking initiative that has helped first, second and third generation migrants find jobs.

The initiative was started in Paris by Zubair Bin Terdeyet, a young, second generation migrant from Tunisia. He learnt first-hand as a master's student struggling to secure an internship, that it wasn't just his skills that were going to get him a job, but knowing people who know people. After establishing a career in Islamic finance, Zubair was inspired to help others without access to the hidden job market - word of mouth.

Les derouilliers held a first meeting in Paris to discuss the challenges about difficulties finding jobs. Evening networking meetings were then organised every three months, where employers, recruitment agencies, friends and colleagues and business organisers were invited. Those who had jobs brought their employers. Networking opportunities were created through informal networking meetings. As momentum built, the group advertised on social media. To register for an event job seekers sent in their personal profile and detailed the issues they wished to discuss. The movement has since spread to Paris, London, Germany, Canada and the Middle East and membership has grown from from 41 to 61,000.<sup>1</sup>

The activities of Les derouilliers demonstrate how the underrepresentation of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in the workforce may be addressed in a practical and grass roots way.

Source: Youtube clip about les derouilliers – the scalers at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmvrMOW0a3Y> and presentation at ECCV Workforce Participation Policy Sub-committee meeting on 11 July 2013

In Australia the work rights afforded to international students are limited by their visa class. Even with Australian qualifications, some international students who go on to become permanent residents, still face barriers to entering employment at an appropriate level once they have graduated. The following case story is an example of how networking continues to be a challenge to them and is often a crucial factor in gaining suitable employment.

**Table 4 Case story of an international student job seeker in Melbourne**

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK - A JOBSEEKER'S STORY

Penny is happy that her Project Coordinator position at a community organisation that provides services to young people from refugee and humanitarian entrant backgrounds, is about to become full time. The road to finding full-time employment has been somewhat rough, but one that she has tackled with resourcefulness and determination.

Penny came to Australia four years ago as an international student from the Sichuan Province, China. As a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) student at Victoria University, she relied on part-time work to cover her living costs. Now as a graduate, having a job has been just as crucial for her to continue living in Melbourne on a Temporary Graduate Visa (Subclass 485).

Penny knows a lot about the barriers to finding work for international students and graduates. Limited English language skills combined with a lack of confidence and knowledge of workplace culture sees many become trapped in hospitality work, often for wages less than the national minimum hourly rate.

Unlike a lot of her friends, however, Penny is not shy. She actively sought friendships with local students at university which not only enriched her personally, but paid dividends in helping her to find work. Through a friend's contact, Shirley secured a relatively well paid, two-day-a-week job as an Australia Post counter clerk while her international friends continued waitressing.

As a graduate, Penny's networking skills continued to be of vital importance, but she faced new obstacles in finding accounting work. "Employers are reluctant to hire people on a 485 visa", she says. "I attended around 10 interviews but in the end I was always rejected because of my visa status." Penny also believes employers won't consider 485 visa holders for full time work. "They think it's too risky and they are worried about us handling sensitive information". In the end, she decided to stop looking for accounting jobs and concentrate on administrative and book keeping roles instead.

Unclear of her exact direction, but understanding the importance of building her experience, Penny continued the search for work. She secured a three-month part time contract as a book keeper, and before the full time role at the community organisation came up, juggled an accounts clerk job at a construction firm two days a week with her other the three-day-a-week Project Coordinator job. Again, Penny attributes her ability to land each of these jobs to her networking skills - contacts made through her friends and her studies - most recently her lecturers at a CPA (Certified Practising Accountants) Professional Program.

Despite her achievements, Penny is the first to acknowledge the journey has not been easy. For the international student or migrant, “Networking is hard work. You start with nothing”.

Penny hopes to become a permanent resident in 2014.

Source: ECCV interview, August 2013 (name changed)

## 5.7 Social enterprises

The emergence of increasing numbers of social enterprises in the not-for-profit and community sector has provided employment opportunities for new migrants and refugees. Ongoing growth in this sector is a promising source of sustainable employment for disadvantaged job seekers, including young people and women from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Discussion about social enterprise is often in the context of improving social inclusion outcomes.<sup>101</sup> Research findings in this area are limited but show that social enterprises can contribute to increased levels of employability (either in the enterprise itself or in mainstream employment); and participation in social enterprises can lead to increased skills, capacities and access to training both formal and informal.<sup>102</sup>

The following are two examples of Australian Government supported business schemes that provide practical hands-on training and work opportunities for Victorian’s from culturally diverse backgrounds and encourage business ideas.

### a) The Social Studio

An example of a social enterprise that supports young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, particularly women, to gain training and jobs is *The Social Studio* in Collingwood. In partnership with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the Australian Migrant Education Scheme (AMES), accredited, certificate-level training is provided in fashion and hospitality respectively. The enterprise consists of clothing production and fashion design technologies using recycled materials and a café. *The Social Studio* pays above award wages to its trainees and staff, workers are given commission for products sold in the shop-front and keep 40 per cent of what they produce to sell. This in turn provides workers with the opportunity to create microenterprises within a supported setting.<sup>103</sup>

### b) Fostering Entrepreneurs – microfinance

As noted earlier, humanitarian entrants to Australia are more likely to possess entrepreneurial and risk-taking attributes than other types of migrants regarding the starting of new businesses. For migrants and refugees with a good business concept, securing finance to start a business is difficult due to limited funds, capital or credit history. There are, however, financial institutions that offer microfinance to individuals and organisations that larger, mainstream banks do not normally lend to. These community-minded organisations are an important resource for business-minded migrants and refugees. One

<sup>101</sup> Burkett, Ingrid, *Social and Community Enterprises Pathways for Women’s Economic Participation*. Report for Commonwealth, State and Territories Ministers’ Conference on the Status of Women MINCO, Foresters Community Finance, 2010, 18.

<sup>102</sup> “About Social Enterprise”, Social Traders. A force for social enterprise, 2013c. <http://socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise-0>

<sup>103</sup> Burkett, Ingrid, *Social and Community Enterprises*, 27.

example is the Brisbane-based Foresters Community Finance Ltd (Foresters), a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) that has received funding through the Australian Government's Social Enterprise Development and Investment Fund (SEDIF).

Foresters use community finance and social investment to service and support people, non-profit organisations and social enterprises that are disadvantaged and underserved by mainstream financial institutions. Operational since September 2011, Foresters' Social Enterprise Solutions provides access to capital, property, business development and equipment purchase for social enterprises nationwide<sup>104</sup>.

### **Recommendation 16**

That all levels of government work in partnership with multicultural community organisations to promote resources for social enterprise initiatives that are targeted at new migrant and refugee job seekers.

## **5.8 Preventing workplace discrimination**

Workplaces are a priority area for the prevention of racism and discrimination. The ECCV *2013 Work Solutions Forum* brought together many like-minded stakeholders including organisations with broad, social reform agendas such as VicHealth and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC).

By virtue of its role as an educator of people about the rights and responsibilities contained in the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, VEOHRC shares common values with ECCV and supports the principles that drive its advocacy work.<sup>105</sup>

VicHealth takes a multifaceted approach to improving the health of Victorians and in doing so highlights the impact that social issues have on individual, organisational and community health. VicHealth has published research summaries that present research findings on various issues in an accessible way, for example *Ethnic and race-based discrimination as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing* and *Access to Economic Resources as a determinant of mental health*.<sup>106</sup> These research summaries highlight the disadvantage faced by new migrants and refugees and the negative effect that being subject to racial discrimination has on one's mental health and ability to secure employment. VicHealth also funds programs and campaigns such as *Localities Accepting and Embracing Diversity* (LEAD) (see City of Whittlesea example in 5.4 Local government) and the public awareness campaign *See Beyond Race*.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Foresters Community Finance Ltd, 2013. <http://www.foresters.org.au>.

<sup>105</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2013. <http://humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/about-us>

<sup>106</sup> VicHealth, "Ethnic and race-based discrimination as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing", Research Summary 3, VicHealth, 2007.

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Ethnic-and-race-based-discrimination-as-a-determinant-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing.aspx> ;

VicHealth, "Access-to-Economic-Resources as a determinant of mental health". <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Economic-participation/Access-to-Economic-Resources-as-a-determinant-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing.aspx>

<sup>107</sup> VicHealth, "See Beyond Race", VicHealth, 2013, <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Programs-and-Projects/Freedom-from-discrimination/Localities-Embracing-and-Accepting-Diversity/See-beyond-race.aspx>

A current collaborative project between VicHealth and VEOHRC is the *Creating Healthy Workplaces: Reducing Race-based Discrimination* project. A key focus of this project is to build an evidence base by identifying interventions that effectively change workplaces in terms of improving inclusion, participation and engagement; and by reducing experiences of race-based discrimination and harassment. The three-year project involves approximately 1,000 employees from a large organisation in the aged care sector and will conclude in 2015.

### **Recommendation 17**

That media awareness campaigns be developed in partnership with VEOHRC, VicHealth and multicultural peak organisations to improve inclusive and culturally diverse employment policies and practices.

## **6.0 RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS**

ECCV feedback indicates that the culturally diverse job seekers' opportunities to obtain local work experience, improve their English and gain knowledge of Australian workplace culture is compounded by the lack of cultural awareness amongst staff in many organisations, as well as the prevalence of discriminatory recruitment practices. The task of learning to fit into a workplace, however, should not rest solely with the newly employed person from culturally diverse background. The resources listed below show that it is in the interests of all employees and organisations' productivity to improve their cultural competence regarding employment practices.

Cultural competency training programs, advice and resources for organisations and employers are readily available. Three notable resources are discussed below.

- a) The *ECCV Cultural Competence Guidelines and Protocols* (2006) is a short, practical resource providing guidance to individuals and organisations wishing to become culturally competent.<sup>108</sup> The guide includes examples of cultural competence at work and *Ten Key Questions for Organisations Striving for Cultural Competence*.
- b) *An Employer's Guide to Working with Migrants and Refugees* (2013), a significant new resource is pitched at employers. It details the benefits of employing migrants and refugees and sets out practical steps and tips for making their employment a reality. Positive endorsements of having migrant and refugees in their workforce are given by businesses such as Luv-a-duck, ANZ, Southern Meats and Lentil-As-Anything.<sup>109</sup>
- c) The FECCA *Harmony in the Workplace: Portfolio of Factsheets for Australian Employers and Organisations* (2013)<sup>110</sup> is a comprehensive toolkit that covers a diverse range of issues to develop

<sup>108</sup> Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria 2006, "ECCV Cultural Competence Guidelines and Protocols", ECCV, December 2006.

<sup>109</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2013 *Connections: An employer's guide to working with migrants and refugees*. Canberra

<sup>110</sup> Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, *Harmony in the workplace. Delivering the diversity dividend. Portfolio of factsheets For Australian employers and organisations*, (Canberra: FECCA, 2013).

a confident and culturally competent workforce. It is a practical resource that dispels myths and perceptions about cultural diversity in the workforce; provides innovative strategies for maximising the value of cultural diversity in the workplace and explains legal frameworks concerning workplace discrimination. This ground breaking comprehensive, research-led and highly practical resource also discusses myths and commonly held misperceptions about cultural diversity in the workplace. It is a suitable resource for local government.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

After decades of discussion about migration and employment, the challenges and barriers faced by migrant and refugee job seekers in Victoria are many, varied and complex.

While there are many examples of effective, but fragmented, 'work solutions' for migrants and refugees already in place; a more coordinated and cohesive approach is required at individual, organisation, government and community levels.

Fundamentally, access to employment by migrants and refugees is a human rights issue and is a responsibility of all three levels of government. The findings of this discussion paper point to the key recommendations such as an in-depth consultation on the overall process of the recognition of overseas skills and qualifications; legislation for an Australian Office of Fairness Commissioner and a high level Victorian State Government *Cultural Diversity in Employment Advisory Network*. Commitment to the recommendations made in this paper would be a positive step towards removing barriers to employment for migrants and refugees and enhance Victoria's workforce participation.

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