

Inquiry into Sustainable Employment for Disadvantaged Jobseekers

ECCV Submission

July 2019

Background

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the voice of multicultural Victoria and the peak policy advocacy body for eight regional ethnic community councils and more than 220 members, including ethnic and multicultural organisations across Victoria since 1974. During this time we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

ECCV is grateful for this opportunity to provide comment to the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into Sustainable Employment for Disadvantaged Jobseekers. ECCV's 2018 State Conference explored *The Future of Employment in Multicultural Victoria*, and featured over 500 delegates and 70 keynote and guest speakers from a diverse range of community, government, industry and academic stakeholders. The views presented in this submission are based upon representations from this conference, policy analysis, previous ECCV submissions and reports, and consultations with Victorian ethnic and multicultural organisations, peak bodies, community members, and employment and education networks and service providers.

ECCV congratulates the Victorian Parliament on establishing this inquiry, which we hope will lead to a more thorough understanding of why some Victorians face disadvantage in the employment market, and to the implementation of new strategies to support people from disadvantaged groups. ECCV would particularly like to draw the Government's attention to the disadvantages faced by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Victorians, especially new migrants and people from refugee and asylum seekers backgrounds.

ECCV believes that meaningful and sustainable employment is a crucial enabler for people from CALD backgrounds to be empowered in their life choices and to fully participate in Australian society. Australians born overseas have lower labour participation rates than the Australian-born population (57.6% v 70.2%) and higher unemployment rates (5.8% v 5.4%), and recent migrants and temporary residents, despite having a participation rate (69.8%) in line with the Australian-born population, have a much higher unemployment rate (7.4%).¹ Statistics like these tell only the barest part of the story, but they attest to the disadvantage that people from migrant backgrounds face in the jobs market. This submission will examine more carefully the nature of this disadvantage, and make some practical recommendations on steps that could be taken to overcome it.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Nov 2016, [Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia](#) [Accessed 31 July 2019]

Summary of Recommendations

1. ECCV recommends that the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU) is adequately resourced to provide more effective face-to-face community level advice, assistance and liaison opportunities in order to better fulfil its original mandate.
2. ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government ensures that community legal centres and organisations such as the Migrant Workers Centre are sufficiently funded to provide legal and casework support and run education sessions for vulnerable workers from migrant backgrounds, in order to promote workers' rights in Victoria.
3. ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government proceeds with the establishment of a framework under which criminal charges can be brought against employers who deliberately withhold wages, superannuation or other employee entitlements, or who fail to keep employee records as required by law.
4. ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government collaborates with multicultural and ethno-specific community organisations to improve access to Business Victoria and CAV resources that assist new entrepreneurs from CALD communities.
5. ECCV recommends that the Department of Education and Training provides enhanced funding to Local Learning Employment Networks to facilitate access to Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) placements for young people which are tailored to local priorities and employment opportunities.
6. ECCV recommends that JVEN contracts include milestone payments to providers for employment placements at 13 and then 26 weeks, and provide funding for continued post-placement support beyond 26 weeks in cases that meet specified vulnerability criteria.
7. ECCV recommends that major projects and infrastructure contractors are required and supported to engage in ongoing conversations with community organisations, JVEN providers and TAFEs about forecasts of future workforce requirements as part of collaborative planning.
8. ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates funding to support the rollout of the *Recruit Smarter Guidelines for Inclusive Recruitment* across the whole of government and public service, and encourages their use in the private sector by making their adoption one of the selection criteria by which social procurement tenders are evaluated.

What are the Barriers?

The cultural and linguistic diversity of Victoria's population is so substantial that one must be careful in making generalisations about disadvantage and access to employment services and the jobs market. With approximately two-thirds of new Australian migrants coming through the skilled worker stream, many people from migrant backgrounds could be perceived as having significant *advantages* in finding secure employment. However an unemployment rate of 7.7% amongst recently-arrived skilled migrants points to difficulties breaking into the jobs market even for a cohort selected for their employability.² For many other people from migrant or CALD backgrounds, finding sustainable, long-term employment can be an almost unachievable aspiration.

Discrimination, Isolation and Lack of Networks

The barriers for culturally diverse Victorians finding employment are almost as diverse as the communities themselves, but ECCV's consultations have revealed some common themes. Evidence suggests that racial discrimination in hiring remains a problem.³ In 2018 the Victorian Government's *Recruit Smarter* initiative tested the effects of de-identifying CVs so that candidates' demographic characteristics were not visible, and found that this significantly increased the proportion of people shortlisted who were either born overseas or who had names perceived as being non-western.⁴ *Recruit Smarter* was itself created in response to earlier findings that applicants with "Anglo sounding names" enjoyed a considerable advantage in being shortlisted for interviews compared to applicants with names reflective of CALD backgrounds.⁵

It is likely that much of this bias in recruitment is unconscious, though some almost certainly isn't. It is improbable that racism in general society, negative media portrayals of certain communities (for example, around "African gangs"), and even some comments by prominent politicians, do not have an effect on recruitment decisions by employers.

Jobseekers from CALD backgrounds may be hindered by a lack of English proficiency, or, perhaps even more, by a perception that they will lack English proficiency because of their cultural background or (as with the findings above) be unable to meet employer requirements by the name on their CV. An even more significant difficulty for jobseekers from CALD backgrounds, particularly new migrants, is the lack of local networks. Numerous studies attest to the importance of networks as the most significant pathway to securing employment⁶.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Nov 2016, [Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia](#) [Accessed 31 July 2019]

³ Australian HR Institute, 10 August 2018, [Undisguised racism in Australian recruitment](#) [Accessed 31 July 2019]

⁴ Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria & The Centre for Ethical Leadership, University of Melbourne, 2018, [Recruit Smarter: Report of Findings](#), p.24

⁵ Sydney Morning Herald, 4 March 2013, [Job hunt success is all in a name](#) [Accessed 31 July 2019]

⁶ See e.g. Recruiting Blogs, 26 March 2012, [80% of today's jobs are landed through networking](#), and LinkedIn, 29 February 2016, [New Survey Reveals 85% of All Jobs are Filled Via Networking](#) [Both accessed 31 July 2019]

Migrants bring qualifications, experience, skills and assets that are of immense value to the nation, but establishing the social networks and locals connections that recognise this is a key challenge. ECCV hopes that the Committee will make careful consideration of how to help culturally diverse jobseekers to overcome these barriers.

Recognition of Qualifications and Experience

A concern raised regularly by jobseekers from migrant backgrounds is that their qualifications from outside Australia are not recognised or given sufficient weight by potential employers. ECCV examined this problem in depth in 2015 in our discussion paper *Qualified but not Recognised*⁷, which looked at the Australian system for skills recognition and compared it with models operating in comparable countries overseas. It noted that the Australian system for recognising overseas qualifications was fragmented and complex, and very difficult for many people to navigate.

ECCV believes that most of the issues raised in this paper are still relevant today, and regularly hears in our community consultations that migrants with tertiary qualifications are unable to work in their professional fields and are forced to settle for lower-level and lower-paid jobs. The Qualifications Recognition Policy Unit (at the federal level) and Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit (at the state level) are useful starting points for migrants seeking recognition, but actual assessing decisions are made by professional assessing authorities in specific industries, which are not accountable to any centralised body. It is important that in situations where jobseekers must undertake bridging courses, that they are affordable, accessible and information about them is transparent.

ECCV believes that as a starting point to tackling this issue, the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit should be better resourced to fulfil its original mandate of addressing “the lack of a central, specialised agency in Victoria responsible for assisting migrants in the recognition of their skills and overseas qualifications”.⁸ It should be able to provide face-to-face as well as online advice.

Recommendation 1:

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU) is adequately resourced to provide more effective face-to-face community level advice, assistance and liaison opportunities in order to better fulfil its original mandate.

Issues around lack of recognition mean that they many jobseekers from migrant backgrounds must settle for lower-level jobs (a phenomenon referred to as “occupational skidding” by Professor Graeme Hugo of the University of Adelaide⁹), which has the knock-on effect of limiting the availability of opportunities for younger people looking for roles at entry level.

As employers increasingly place a higher premium on workplace experience, jobseekers from migrant backgrounds also regularly report that their work experience from overseas is discounted by

⁷ Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria, 2014, [Qualified but not Recognised](#)

⁸ Victorian Taskforce on Overseas Qualifications, 1990, *The Challenge of Change: Enriching Futures*, p.16

⁹ Hugo, Graeme, May 2011, [Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second generation Humanitarian Entrants: First Report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship](#)

employers who demand local experience.¹⁰ This creates a frustrating “Catch-22”, where jobseekers’ lack of local experience becomes a barrier to them gaining the experience that open opportunities. ECCV is concerned by this trend and believes that it is a symptom of Australian workplaces not showing sufficient appreciation of the benefits in an internationalised economy of a diverse workforce, with different experience, skills, and the ability to adapt and innovate. Workforce diversity and inclusion is a topic further explored in the “Inclusive Workplaces” and “Best Practice Models” sections of this submission.

Temporary Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants

The number of Australian residents on temporary visas has grown significantly in recent years, and those who are able to seek employment constitute a growing group of disadvantaged jobseekers. With the Federal Government having announced a reduction in the total number of permanent visa grants available per annum, it seems inevitable that temporary visa holders will continue to grow in number, and that more migrants will be forced to endure on successive temporary visas as part of a pathway to eventual permanent residency.

Temporary visa holders face particular challenges in accessing the jobs market, many of them specific to their visa conditions and the nature of temporary migration, and not within the powers of the Victorian Government to influence. However some of the challenges that they face can be alleviated with careful planning and resourcing.

ECCV is particularly concerned that workers on temporary visas are vulnerable to exploitative work practices. Unacceptable work conditions, wage theft, and forced labour and servitude are particularly prevalent in retail, hospitality, and in agriculture in regional Victoria. Migrants experiencing exploitation are often either unaware of available means of redress, or reluctant to use them because they believe they will have a limited chance of success, or that raising complaints will endanger their employment and current and future visa status.¹¹

ECCV believes that the establishment of a Labour Hire Licensing Authority and creation of the Migrant Workers Centre are important steps in combatting exploitation, and hopes that sufficient funding is allocated to ensure that the Government’s other prevention strategies can be enacted. We are also pleased that the Victorian Labor Party’s Platform for the 2018 election included prominent commitments to protect workers’ rights and reduce exploitative employment practices, especially with regards to the criminalisation of wage theft.¹²

¹⁰ See e.g. Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (2018), Submission to the Inquiry on the Future of Work and Workers, p.3

¹¹ For a thorough examination of reasons why exploited migrants often do not seek redress, see Farbenblum, Bassina & Berg, Laurie, October 2018, [Wage Theft in Silence: Why Migrant Workers do not Recover their Unpaid Wages in Australia](#)

¹² Australian Labor Party (Victorian Branch), [Platform 2018](#)

Recommendation 2:

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government ensures that community legal centres and organisations such as the Migrant Workers Centre are sufficiently funded to provide legal and casework support and run education sessions for vulnerable workers from migrant backgrounds, in order to promote workers' rights in Victoria.

Recommendation 3:

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government proceeds with the establishment of a framework under which criminal charges can be brought against employers who deliberately withhold wages, superannuation or other employee entitlements, or who fail to keep employee records as required by law.

The very nature of temporary visa status also limits job opportunities, especially amongst people who have arrived in Australia through the humanitarian program and are holders of bridging visas, Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) or Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs). These are perceived as being particularly precarious, subject to sudden changes in Federal Government policy, and therefore holders are considered a risk by employers. ECCV is aware of several cases in which preferred candidates for particular roles had offers withdrawn when employers discovered the visa status of humanitarian entrants. This precariousness is in addition to factors common to all refugees and people seeking asylum, including those with permanent residency, such as interrupted education, and traumatic pre-migration experiences that can have destabilising effects on mental health.

ECCV believes that the Committee should make special consideration of enablers to the employment market for temporary visa holders, and for people who have entered Australia through the humanitarian program.

Other Barriers

Another significant barrier to sustainable employment for jobseekers from CALD backgrounds is a lack of inclusive culture in many Victorian workplaces, with employers not fully embracing the need to make changes to recruitment, HR and workplace practices to enhance their inclusiveness to people of all types of diverse backgrounds. We will look at how this can be improved later in the submission.

Jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds can also be confronted with financial barriers, such as travel costs due to geographical isolation. Jobseekers may also require certain additional costs to be fully job-ready, such as completing Working with Children Checks, Police checks, or OHS White Card training. Costs like these can be prohibitive to people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have trouble meeting the expenses of daily living. Jobactive employment agencies have capacity to assist clients with these expenses through the Employment Fund, and ECCV believes that the Victorian

Government should ensure that Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) agencies are fully resourced to support vulnerable clients who are not registered with Jobactive.

Entrepreneurship

Difficulties in securing sustainable employment are undoubtedly amongst the reasons why people from migrant backgrounds are more inclined to starting their own businesses than the Australian-born population. (A third of Australian business owners were born overseas¹³, while people from refugee backgrounds are the most entrepreneurial group in Australia, with 30% of them starting a business at some time.¹⁴)

Despite this success, migrants and refugees are also faced with particular difficulties in establishing their own businesses, most notably isolation from startup communities and the rest of the startup ecosystem. Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs show a high level of initiative and creativity, and the Government should look at how they can act to help new entrepreneurs to refine their ideas, seek out niches in the market, and try to ensure that, as happens sometimes, entrepreneurs in a certain community do not all follow the same idea and end up competing with one another.

Isolation can also make it difficult for migrants with entrepreneurial ambitions to access seed funding and venture capital, and many migrants also report difficulties understanding and navigating the complex regulatory environment necessary to start a business and comply with Australian taxation and company law. Some entrepreneurs from refugee backgrounds or who have had refugee-like experiences are distrustful of government, and it is important that government bodies recognise this and have strategies to make themselves as reassuring and accessible as possible to members of diverse communities. ECCV hopes that bodies like the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) will further their efforts to make themselves more accessible to multicultural communities.

Recommendation 4:

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government collaborates with multicultural and ethno-specific community organisations to improve access to Business Victoria and CAV resources that assist new entrepreneurs from CALD communities.

¹³ CGU, 2018, [Migrant Small Business Report](#), p.1

¹⁴ Collins, Jock & Krivokapic-Skoko, Branka, [The \(Apparent\) Refugee Entrepreneurship Paradox in Australia: Regional and Rural Experiences](#), (Paper to the ISA World Conference, Toronto, July 2018)

Current and Future Initiatives

Job Readiness

Disadvantaged jobseekers from many different backgrounds can often be most effectively assisted through programs that assist with job readiness. Jobseekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds, especially young people, can sometimes lack skills or practical experience in job searching, resume and job application writing (cover letters and responding to selection criteria), interview skills; and Australian workplace behaviour and expectations. ECCV consultations with disadvantaged jobseekers often reveal that they are not sufficiently supported to acquire these “soft skills” while being placed with Jobactive or JVEN providers.

Organisations such as the Melbourne Employment Forum¹⁵, which works with African-Australians to remove barriers to employment, provide examples of programs that place job readiness as the centre of their model. It would be highly beneficial for Victoria to have more organisations like this that can broker conversations with culturally diverse Victorians about the needs of employers while working closely with jobseekers to ensure they are ready to meet these needs.

ECCV believes that good practice in seeking to ensure sustainable employment for new migrants would also more consistently incorporate job readiness training into settlement services, as well as assisting with issues such as seeking recognition of qualifications and location of registered training organisations and opportunities for voluntary work.

ECCV has heard of many examples of jobseekers from migrant backgrounds who have found jobs but had difficulty sustaining them because of unfamiliarity with norms of the Australian workplace. Disadvantaged jobseekers sometimes do not understand the importance of matters such as punctuality, or professional conduct with colleagues, or when or how to take personal leave. Understandings of protocols such as these can make all the difference in whether someone holds a job or does not.

It is clearly preferable not to wait until a jobseeker has commenced employment to identify gaps in these areas. Young people and students can best learn workplace culture through work placement programs or internships, which enable skills to be developed before an individual is in paid employment. Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley Local Learning Employment Network’s Youth Internship Initiative provides an example of a program in which disadvantaged young people (mostly VCAL and VET students) gain on-the-job experience teaching them skills essential to enhancing their employability.¹⁶

Recommendation 5:

ECCV recommends that the Department of Education and Training provides enhanced funding to Local Learning Employment Networks to facilitate access to Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) placements for young people which are tailored to local priorities and employment opportunities.

¹⁵ See <http://www.melbourneemploymentforum.org.au/> [Accessed 28 July 2019]

¹⁶ See <https://www.mmvllen.org.au/projects/youth-internship-initiative-yii/> [Accessed 28 July 2019]

Jobs Victoria Employment Network

Assisting jobseekers to overcome disadvantage in the employment market requires a multifaceted approach, and for each individual different formal and informal supports play a role. It is worth noting findings of the ABS *Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey* from November 2016, which asked recent migrants (defined as having arrived in Australia in the last 10 years) about their employment status upon arrival. 43% identified as having received some form of support to find their first job, with the most common sources of help being:¹⁷

- 74% had help from friends or family
- 17% had help from Centrelink, a Job Network agency or Job Services Australia provider
- 4.2% had help from an educational institution

ABS surveys reveal an even more stark loss of faith with employment services from an employers' perspective, with just 4% of employers using the employment services to help them find workers in 2018, down from 18% in 2007.¹⁸ Government funded employment services are clearly not playing a central role in linking jobseekers with employers.

In 2018 ECCV and iEmpower Youth Inc. examined the extent to which Jobactive is meeting the needs of jobseekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in a submission to the Federal Government on *The Next Generation of Employment Services*.¹⁹ This submission outlined our assessments about why Jobactive is returning poor results for jobseekers from CALD backgrounds, especially those with high needs who were in danger of long-term unemployment.

Chief among ECCV and iEmpower's views about Jobactive are that its assessment processes for CALD jobseekers are flawed, and that its contractual incentives tend to lead it to prioritise turnover of clients likely to achieve early outcomes, and therefore "parking" its higher-needs and more long-term clients. Its ability to find the best solutions for disadvantaged clients is compounded by its focus on compliance, the nature of much of its workforce and the lack of specialist skills therein, and the low priority it places on job readiness.

Against this background, ECCV commends the Victorian Government for the establishment of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) in 2016, to address gaps in the current employment services system and provide additional resources to assist disadvantaged jobseekers in the labour market. ECCV's consultations have drawn diverse views as to how well the JVEN is meeting its initial objectives. There is much appreciation of the fact that it is not as compliance-focused as Jobactive, and that this allows more tailored and strengths-based support, as well as more time focusing on job readiness.

There is still concern, however, that contractual financial incentives do not align with the best interests of clients, especially the payments payable to agencies for placing clients in employment

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Nov 2016, [Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia](#) [Accessed 31 July 2019]

¹⁸ Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018, [I Want to Work: Employment Services 2020 Report](#)

¹⁹ iEmpower Youth and the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, August 2018, [The Next Generation of Employment Services: Discussion Paper](#)

for a period of 26 weeks. ECCV believes that this approach is not creating sustainability, and would like to see future JVEN contracts include several milestone payments that increasingly reward providers for increased length of job placements. There should also be funding available for continued post-placement support beyond 26 weeks in cases that meet specified criteria for vulnerability.

Recommendation 6:

ECCV recommends that JVEN contracts include milestone payments to providers for employment placements at 13 and then 26 weeks, and provide funding for continued post-placement support beyond 26 weeks in cases that meet specified vulnerability criteria.

Major Projects

ECCV is pleased that the Victorian Government has made efforts to ensure that disadvantaged jobseekers are included in the procurement processes of its major infrastructure projects, as outlined in its *Social Procurement Framework 2018*.²⁰ We believe that setting targets for employment of disadvantaged jobseekers and embedding social procurement objectives into evaluation criteria for government contracts have the potential to significantly improve the outlook for the state's disadvantaged jobseekers.

In order for this objective to be properly realised, it is important that government contractors start talking to community organisations, JVEN providers and TAFEs early before seeking their assistance in sourcing workers. Several of these organisations have reported to ECCV that they are often contacted at very short notice by contractors, and that this makes it hard to act in the best interests of their clients. Community organisations, JVEN providers, and TAFE providers of the Skills First Reconnect program can help jobseekers with job readiness, but need to be kept informed about upcoming opportunities in employment and when new intakes are likely to occur, so that they can ensure that their clients are well prepared in advance for the roles that they wish to fill.

Recommendation 7:

ECCV recommends that major projects and infrastructure contractors are required and supported to engage in ongoing conversations with community organisations, JVEN providers and TAFEs about forecasts of future workforce requirements as part of collaborative planning.

ECCV believes that organisations such as Yarra Trams, Transdev and Metro Trains (through its GROW project, part of the Levels Crossing Removal Program) provide good examples of inclusive employment practices, but it is important that they take a collaborative approach with local and community employment specialists, rather than a reactive piecemeal approach accompanying the awarding of new tenders and contracts.

²⁰ State of Victoria, 2018, [Victoria's social procurement framework: Building a fair, inclusive and sustainable Victoria through procurement](#)

Inclusive Workplaces

The approach taken by employers is a crucial part of opening opportunities to disadvantaged jobseekers, and ECCV believes that the Victorian Government must play a constructive role in helping employers open themselves up to culturally and linguistically diverse employees.

Department of Premier and Cabinet's examination of how unconscious bias affects recruitment in *Recruit Smarter* culminated in the publication late last year of the *Recruit Smarter Guidelines for Inclusive Recruitment*, which outlined 18 strategic and practical guidelines for inclusive recruitment and workplace diversity. ECCV believes that the Government must support the rollout of these guidelines across the whole of government and the public service, and encourage their use in the private sector by making their adoption one of the selection criteria by which social procurement tenders are evaluated.

Recommendation 8:

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates funding to support the rollout of the *Recruit Smarter Guidelines for Inclusive Recruitment* across the whole of government and public service, and encourages their use in the private sector by making their adoption one of the selection criteria by which social procurement tenders are evaluated.

As much as jobseekers from diverse backgrounds should be supported with job readiness and to learn about Australian workplace culture, employers must also be encouraged and supported to implement an inclusive culture in which workers from all backgrounds feel comfortable and valued. Many organisations offer training in cultural competency and the like, and these can certainly be useful, but ECCV considers that in order to offer properly inclusive workplaces, organisation must have inclusive employment practices embedded in all parts of their policies and procedures.

Best Practice Models

HealthWest Partnership has developed a set of *Standards for Workforce Mutuality* to address the "diversity gap" observed in the health and community workforce in Melbourne's west.²¹ The Standards have been designed to provide organisations with guidelines to attract, develop and retain a workforce that is more inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the community, thereby improving the responsiveness of their services. The Standards and associated tools, including a self-assessment tool and good practice guide, were piloted and externally evaluated in 2018. The evaluation demonstrated that the tools are valuable and useful resources which effectively support organisations to reflect upon and improve their workforce mutuality practices.²²

ECCV is pleased that Victoria Police has recognised the importance of workforce mutuality in fostering strong community engagement and ensuring that their workforce is reflective of the

²¹ HealthWest Partnership, 2018, [The HealthWest Partnership Standards for Workforce Mutuality](#) (prepared by Martin Plowman)

²² HealthWest Partnership, February 2019, [Pathways to Diversity: Evaluation of the Standards for Workforce Mutuality Pilot - Summary Report](#)

cultural diversity of the communities they serve. ECCV believes that the Victoria Police Diversity Recruitment Program, which aims to open employment pathways to African-Australians through partnerships with training and community organisations and employment services, provides an example of the sort of collaboration that can open employment pathways for people from CALD backgrounds.

Jesuit Social Services helps Victoria Police to select applicants to attend a police preparation course at Victoria University, in which community members from African backgrounds learn skills that will assist them to enter the Police Academy. The program has already exceeded its targets, with 44 students attending through its first two intakes, and a third intake commencing in October this year. Victoria Police has also established an African Employee Network to help African-Australians navigate the recruitment process and to provide support to officers and employees from African backgrounds. ECCV is aware that police recruitment standards are unavoidably rigorous, and therefore applauds the recent initiatives to increase their inclusiveness.

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) has recently launched the *Employment Empowers* program, aimed at removing barriers to employment for multicultural youth, with a particular emphasis on engaging employers to provide work experience, direct employment opportunities, and traineeships and apprenticeships.²³ The program provides job readiness training and mentoring for young people, and post-placement support for both employee and employer. It provides the most intense support in the crucial first few weeks after a young person has commenced a job, when they meet regularly with their mentor, and CMY will work closely with the employer to manage any issues that arise in this period.

ECCV hopes that the Government will examine how it can best support organisations such as this that have very close ties to their communities and are best placed to support the needs of priority cohorts.

²³ See <https://www.cmy.net.au/employment-empowers> [Accessed 31 July 2019]

Conclusion

ECCV commends the Victorian Parliament for establishing this Inquiry as part of its ongoing efforts to improve employment outcomes across the Victorian population. ECCV believes that well-informed changes can greatly enhance the employment prospects of disadvantaged jobseekers, and asks that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee takes special consideration of barriers and enablers to sustainable employment for people from migrant, refugee, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

ECCV believes that pathways to employment for disadvantaged jobseekers can be improved particularly through a clearer and more uniform approach to recognition of overseas qualifications, enhanced support for migrant entrepreneurs, greater opportunities for student placements and internships, changes to the incentives for job placements under the Jobs Victoria Employment Network, a more collaborative and strategic approach to major project social procurement, and greater incentives and support for the adoption of inclusive employment practices. It is also vital that further steps are taken to eliminate exploitative practices against migrant and other workers who are in employment.

ECCV thanks the Committee for considering its recommendations, and looks forward to continuing to work with the Government on improving employment outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.

Acknowledgments

ECCV would like to acknowledge and express its gratitude to members of its Policy Advisory Committee on Employment, Entrepreneurship, Education and Training (PACEEET) for their guidance, information and valuable feedback. In particular, ECCV would like to thank the following organisations:

- HealthWest Partnership
- WEstjustice
- Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley Local Learning and Employment Network
- Youth Activating Youth
- iEmpower Youth Inc.

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