

Community Input into Budget

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Executive Summary

This paper addresses two areas.

1. Factors affecting [workforce participation for newly arrived refugees and migrants](#) and proposals to address these
2. Issues related to [utilising the skills of newly arrived refugees and migrants](#) as part of the solutions to skilling Australia's workforce

Data and qualitative evidence indicates that workforce participation rates are lower for newly arrived refugees and migrants than for many other Australians. For example, a DIAC study¹ found that 16-17 months after arrival 43% of Humanitarian Entrants were still unemployed and only 32% were participating.

Data and qualitative evidence also indicates that there are untapped skills within these groups that could be more effectively utilised both in the Australian economy and for individuals and families in building new lives.

AMES is optimistic that Australia can achieve more and proposes ideas for consideration in the areas of:

- Policy change with respect to income support requirements to address impediments and disincentives to early workforce participation
- New approaches to training and transitions to work that recognise existing skills and develop new skills where gaps exist
- Incentives for employers to recognise and use the skills of newly arrived refugees and migrants in their workplaces

Given the particular profile of Humanitarian Entrants AMES experience is that better outcomes are achieved when employment interventions happen at the same time as interventions which address non employment barriers and other settlement issues.

AMES has piloted a number of new ways to assist Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants into the workforce early in their settlement. This experience indicates that there are a number of policy areas that impede these initiatives in assisting new arrivals into employment. Based on these pilots, AMES recommends that there be increased flexibility in the rules and administration of income support entitlements in the early period of settlement. AMES experience is that alignment of policy with a more innovative program approach is essential.

Six areas have been identified for consideration.

1. The allowable income before social security benefits are reduced.
2. The number of hours worked by job seekers to meet Mutual Obligation requirements.
3. The capacity to combine work and training to meet Mutual Obligation requirements.
4. Increased flexibility in alternating learning English in the AMEP and getting casual work.
5. A review of penalties for leaving initial unskilled employment to transition to more skilled work and transition support.
6. Additional time often required for Humanitarian Entrants for family settlement and orientation.

¹ DIAC Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia

It is recommended that a number of these changes could be time limited to account for the gradual transition that newly arrived refugees make from initial settlement to employment. Reality is that non standard forms of employment are increasing and that these new settlers will often be part of these employment arrangements as part of a transition to more secure employment.

The paper also notes that the challenges faced by those arriving with all of the complexities attached to refugee journey are different from those of a migrant arriving in the Skilled Migrant or Family Streams. Skilled Migrants (and some Family Stream) have recognised skills and qualifications but can encounter significant barriers due to lack of local work experience and other factors. The paper proposes some programs already piloted by AMES and examples of international practice for consideration to increase the capacity of the Australian economy to use these skills early in settlement.

Humanitarian Entrants face many complex issues in settling. AMES experience is that participation in the workforce is integral to successful settlement. It is important that these Entrants, where appropriate, move into work and the independence this facilitates as early as possible. It is also important that these Entrants can learn English and, where required develop vocational skills that will allow them to gain sustainable employment. A number of training approaches are proposed.

These may build on work skills (and in the case of some refugees, professional qualifications) brought from overseas or may require learning new skills. An important challenge that is noted in this paper is to ensure that the services, programs and related policy facilitate movement through entry level low skilled work that may be a first job in Australia to more skilled and satisfying work that uses skills as English communication and other aspects of settlement are consolidated.

The Rudd Government has proposed options in relation to a range of groups requiring additional interventions to increase workforce participation. AMES proposes that a number of these be considered for use with the groups discussed in this paper. These include areas such as an option of expanding Mutual Obligation requirements to allow a wider range of activities to meet participation requirements. AMES recommends that this be applied to Humanitarian Entrants with full time Mutual Obligation requirements for a limited time after arrival. The use of future advisors is a second proposal that could be very effectively applied in assisting Humanitarian Entrants in transitioning from low skilled to more satisfying work that uses their skills and benefits the economy by contributing to skill shortages.

The Rudd Government has also proposed options in relation to engagement with employers that are applicable to this group. A willingness on the part of employers to offer vacancies to newly arrived job seekers and actively engage in other ways is an essential ingredient to increased participation and using the skills of Humanitarian Entrants and some Migrant Entrants.

Of particular importance for this group is the willingness of employers to be involved in work experience, intermediate labour market programs, employing job seekers who may require some particular initial support due to lack of English or familiarity with Australian workplaces and job seekers who may need to demonstrate their skills rather than come with accredited credentials. AMES has taken some steps to build these relationships and would welcome the government taking a leading role in encouraging and promoting a range of programs that increase participation of newly arrived Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants into the workforce.

AMES is optimistic that a combination of policy changes and program innovations can work hand in hand to both improve participation and more effectively use the existing skills and determination of Humanitarian Entrants and Migrant Entrants.

Policy Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	1A:	AMES recommends that the amount of income that can be earned by a Newstart recipient before the benefit commences to be withdrawn be increased to a level that provides adequate incentive to choose employment over welfare for Humanitarian Entrants in their early settlement phase.
	1B:	AMES recommends that the threshold for Partner Payments also be reconsidered.
	1C:	AMES recommends that Health Care Card eligibility be retained for Humanitarian Entrants who gain work for a longer period – possibly the first two years after arrival.
RECOMMENDATION	2A:	AMES recommends that requirements with respect to the hours of work required to meet Mutual Obligation for Humanitarian Entrants be reconsidered.
	2B:	AMES recommends that fewer hours and/or part time work fully meet Mutual Obligation requirements for Humanitarian Entrants where this is part of a planned pathway.
	2C:	AMES recommends that a reasonable time that this would apply to Humanitarian Entrants for be determined – possibly the first year after arrival.
RECOMMENDATION	3A:	AMES recommends that the option of expanding Mutual Obligation requirements to allow a combination of part time work and part time training be extended to include Humanitarian Entrants with full time Mutual Obligations.
	3B:	AMES recommends that a reasonable time that this would apply for be determined – possibly the first year after arrival.
RECOMMENDATION	4A:	AMES recommends that the method of crediting hours used in the AMEP be reviewed to account for learners undertaking spasmodic and short notice casual work.
RECOMMENDATION	5A:	AMES recommends that sufficient flexibility in participation requirements and support through a planned pathway approach to facilitate new arrivals with skills to transition from low skilled into more skilled work be developed.
RECOMMENDATION	6A:	AMES recommends that the requirement for Humanitarian Entrants to meet Mutual Obligation requirements after the first six weeks be extended to a minimum of three months with discretion for extension in individual cases.
	6B:	AMES recommends that flexibility that takes account of the necessity to address non employment barriers and employment barriers concurrently be acknowledged.
RECOMMENDATION	7A:	AMES recommends that incentives be developed where appropriate to support employers in meeting additional costs of transitioning newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants into workplaces.
	7B:	AMES recommends that where wage subsidies are provided, these are contingent on the provision of time release for the employee to continue learning English (where communication skills are lacking).
	7C:	AMES recommends that the government takes a leading role in encouraging and promoting a range of programs that increase participation of newly arrived Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants into the workforce.

Program Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	8A:	AMES recommends that the skilled migrant program model be implemented as an early intervention for clients facing barriers to entry to their profession.
	8B:	AMES recommends that a similar program for new arrivals with para-professional and trade skills be piloted.
	8C:	AMES recommends that recognition and incentives be provided where appropriate to actively encourage employer involvement.
RECOMMENDATION	9A:	AMES recommends that employers offering intermediate labour market opportunities to new and recently arrived migrants and refugees are recognised and supported along the lines suggested for employers offering work to people with disabilities.
RECOMMENDATION	10A:	AMES recommends funding to support the establishment of work training enterprises.
	10B:	AMES recommends training at Certificate II level where this is appropriate.
RECOMMENDATION	11A:	AMES recommends that funding be available to deliver training in first language to newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants.
RECOMMENDATION	12A:	AMES recommends that funding for further projects based on this model be considered based on monitoring, development and evaluation of the UCan2 model.
RECOMMENDATION	13A:	AMES recommends that alternatives to current apprenticeship arrangements be further explored and implemented for migrants and refugees.
RECOMMENDATION	14A:	AMES recommends that alternative ways of recognising trade skills on the job be further explored and implemented for migrants and refugees who have skills but no recognised credentials.

SECTION 1 - Overview

AMES is a specialist organisation providing settlement, education, training and employment services to newly arrived refugees and migrants in their initial phase of settlement and to longer term migrants who require support to gain employment. AMES provides services in Victoria and in the western suburbs of Sydney. AMES works with over 50,000 people a year and has over 50 years experience.

The paper will therefore focus on ideas that can improve chances of social and economic participation for newly arrived refugees and migrants and their capacity to contribute to Australia's society and economy.

The Issues

The paper addresses two areas.

1. Factors affecting [workforce participation for newly arrived refugees and migrants](#) and proposals to address these
2. Issues related to [utilising the skills of newly arrived refugees and migrants](#) as part of the solutions to skilling Australia's workforce

Data and qualitative evidence indicates that workforce participation rates are lower for newly arrived refugees and migrants than for many other Australians. Data and qualitative evidence also indicates that there are untapped skills within these groups that could be more effectively utilised in the Australian economy and for individuals and families in building new lives.

AMES is optimistic that Australia can achieve more and proposes ideas for consideration in the areas of:

- policy change with respect to income support and requirements to address impediments and disincentives to early workforce participation
- new approaches to training and transitions to work that recognise existing skills and develop new skills where gaps exist
- incentives for employers to recognise and use the skills of newly arrived refugees and migrants in their workplaces

To illustrate the potential for new approaches to make a difference, the paper also provides some examples of initiatives that AMES has piloted. These serve to demonstrate where changes in policy are required to facilitate increased and sustainable workforce participation that utilises the skills and determination of newly arrived refugees and migrants.

The Client Groups

Newly arrived Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants typically arrive in Australia eager to settle and establish a new life as soon as possible. Along with immediate settlement support and English language development, employment is essential for effective settlement and engagement with the broader community.

Newly arrived Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants who are seeking employment broadly fall into three categories:

- those with recognised qualifications who have not been able to find work in their field in Australia

- those with skills and competence but no form of recognised credential (or no documentation due to the circumstances of their refugee journey)
- those with limited vocational skills and low spoken and written English skills

Humanitarian Entrants

Humanitarian Entrants often commence life in Australia with a low base in formal learning skills and English language levels. Humanitarian Program Entrants who are studying in the Adult Migrant English Program² had an average of less than five years schooling in 2005-2006 compared with seven years in 2001-2002. Only 2% said they read very well. 37% did not read at all.³ In the 2007 AMEP cohort, 53% of clients have less than seven years of education.

Many of those with low levels of education will not realistically achieve sufficient English competency in the number of hours currently available to work in jobs that require fluent English language communication. Likewise they will not successfully complete vocational training in English to prepare them for employment. This does not mean they cannot work - but it does flag a need for different approaches.

A DIAC study⁴ demonstrating that the probability of being unemployed was five times higher for those who had poor, rather than good, English speaking skills confirms the need to focus not only on additional training resources on this group but new approaches to providing this training.

A number of Humanitarian Entrants are also highly skilled with professional qualifications and overseas work experience.

Many entrants, by the nature of their refugee experience, arrive in Australia with complex needs - but nevertheless large amounts of tenacity, courage and determination. Their transition to successful settlement and work needs to use these qualities and take account of the complexities of their refugee experience.

In 2007-08 the Humanitarian Program will be maintained at 13,000 places.

Migrants

Skilled Migrant Stream

Migrants arriving under the Skilled Migration stream have professional or para-professional skills and an expectation that these can immediately be applied to an Australian workplace. They are selected to match skill shortages. Anecdotal evidence and AMES experience is that they frequently do not gain employment that uses their skills and qualifications. This is supported by a survey conducted in 2006 by VECI⁵.

Lack of Australian work experience, limited or no personal contacts and networks, limited workplace communication skills, limited or no understanding of Australian workplace and culture and, in some cases, issues with recognition of qualifications broadly summarise the barriers for this group.

Migrants arriving under the Skilled Migration stream all have a large potential to contribute but a number within this group need early interventions to address workforce participation and skills training.

In 2007-08 the Skilled Stream is set at 102,500 places.

Family Stream

Entrants in the Family Stream face many similar barriers to those in the Skilled Stream with respect to early workforce participation. In addition, they may have low levels of English further compounding their access to employment.

They may also face challenges in adjusting to a new way of life and lack social and community networks. A number have competence in para-professional or trade areas but no formal or recognised qualifications to facilitate employment.

In 2007-08 the Family Stream is set at 50,300 places.

In general, Entrants in the Migrant Streams have a waiting period of 104 weeks before being eligible for Centrelink benefits. Interventions for these groups must have the objective of ensuring that these individuals never become recipients of welfare and are using their skills and participating in the workforce before this eligibility is able to be accessed.

² The Adult Migrant English Program entitles newly arrived Refugees and eligible Migrants to 510 hours of English (and in some cases additional Special Preparatory Program hours of between 100 and 400 hours depending on eligibility)

³ DIAC Australia's Support for Humanitarian Entrants 2004-05

⁴ DIAC Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia

⁵ Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) Skills Survey 2006

SECTION 2 - Workforce Participation

Data

The most comprehensive survey undertaken on participation rates for Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants to Australia is the DIAC Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia.⁶

While data from this study indicates that participation rates have improved from LSIA 1 to LSIA 2, some groups continue to be severely under represented.

For Humanitarian Entrants surveyed in LSIA 2, 75% were unemployed after 4-5 months and only 16% were participating in the labour force. After 16-17 months 43% were still unemployed and only 32% were participating.

In the Preferential Family / Family Stream 21% were unemployed after 4-5 months and 54% were

participating in the labour force. After 16-17 months 13% were still unemployed and 62% were participating.

The survey also notes that the jobs held in Australia by Primary Applicants shortly after arrival tended, on average to be slightly less skilled. For example, when looking at the current main job of those in the Independent Group, one in eight jobs were either semi skilled or unskilled. In comparison only one in thirty jobs held in the former home country were semi-skilled or unskilled.

This data indicates room for improvement for both individuals and utilisation of skills and labour.

Policy Considerations: Issues affecting participation

Addressing non-employment related barriers along side the provision of employment assistance is important in leading to more sustainable participation.

AMES has piloted a number of new ways to assist Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants into the workforce early in their settlement. These are

outlined in Section 4. This experience indicates that there are a number of policy areas that impede these initiatives in assisting new arrivals into employment.

Policy recommendations apply to Humanitarian Entrants as they are subject to Mutual Obligation. Migrant Entrants are subject to a 104 week wait.

Context

It is important to consider the ideas proposed in relation to policy change in the context of:

- the high priority AMES places on getting people into work as soon as possible - based on an analysis that employment is a critical factor in successful settlement
- the high priority AMES places on getting new arrivals into a mindset of earning an income

rather than depending on welfare in the long term

- the transitional nature of how newly arrived settlers gain employment often through casual and part-time work and work in the informal economy
- the importance of allowing transitions so that new arrivals are not consigned to unskilled

⁶ The DIAC Longitudinal Survey surveys Primary Applicants in all visa categories over an extended period. LSIA 1 surveyed arrivals between September 1993 and August 1995, LSIA 2 surveyed arrivals between September 1999 and August 2000. LSIA 3 surveyed arrivals and those granted their visa onshore between December 2004 and March 2005. Humanitarian Entrants were not included in LSIA 3.

work for ever where they commence in this area for early employment entry reasons but have other skills they can use in securing more skilled employment when, for example, they have learnt English

- a number of options that have been proposed by the new government to address current policy impediments that will apply well to this client group⁷

Increasing flexibility for clients with Mutual Obligation requirements

In our efforts to assist Humanitarian Entrants into employment, AMES has identified a number of areas that need consideration.

1. The allowable income before social security benefits are reduced
2. The number of hours worked by job seekers to meet Mutual Obligation requirements and for Job Network providers to claim an employment outcome and gain recognition in performance ratings
3. Combinations of concurrent work and training by job seekers to meet Mutual Obligation requirements
4. Flexibility in alternating learning English in the AMEP and getting casual work
5. Penalties for leaving initial unskilled employment to transition to more skilled work and transition support
6. Additional time often required for family settlement and orientation for Humanitarian Entrants

1. The allowable income before social security benefits are reduced

Reward for Effort: Meeting the Participation Challenge⁷ proposes an option to increase the amount of income that can be earned by a Newstart recipient before the benefit commences to be withdrawn. AMES supports this option.

AMES experience is that the risk of losing benefits is a strong disincentive for new arrivals from refugee backgrounds. This group has significant levels of uncertainty and insecurity with respect to financial resources required to re-establish their lives, repay debts to community and / or family members who have supported their travel and settlement and to support family members who may still be in refugee camps or other unsafe situations.

The allowable income acts as a disincentive to taking up employment – particularly where the income received may be only marginally better than social security or, very importantly, the work may be casual and therefore provide less security than staying on benefits. The impact on partner payments is likewise a disincentive.

The level of Centrelink reporting required for a person with limited communication skills in

English and little understanding of the system does not encourage the move into casual work. A person with experience of a social security system that does provide protection may be more confident to take these risks in moving in and out of casual work. Those from a background of refugee experience have no such concepts or experience of social security to reassure them the benefits of taking on casual work (eg Australian workplace experience for future employment applications) will outweigh the risks of losing a regular benefit.

A second significant disincentive is the anxiety of forgoing Health Care Card benefits. AMES experience in working with Humanitarian Entrants in the provision of services under contract in the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy is that Entrants frequently have a range of chronic health issues that need to be addressed over an extended period.

Resolution of these health issues is critical if Entrants are to establish reasonable lives and are also critical in ensuring that people have the physical capacity to undertake sustained employment. AMES experience is that, without a

⁷ Reward for Effort: Meeting the Participation Challenge. A discussion paper on Australia's workforce participation issues. Issued by Senator Penny Wong November 2006

Health Care Card, families do not continue to address their own and their family's health needs.

Loss of Health Care Card benefits can result in Entrants not having the financial resources to continue to address their chronic health issues or alternatively placing immense financial pressure on families where these issues are urgent.

AMES experience in establishing relationships with market gardeners in Werribee (Melbourne) and opportunities for casual work for members of the Burmese community as pickers has confirmed these barriers. This is not to say that this community is not actively seeking work but the above barriers have clearly been issues needing to be resolved. AMES has addressed this by working

with people from the community to identify the work opportunities, providing first language support to explain systems and provide support in Centrelink reporting and employing members of the Burmese community to work with the employers and support workers who have very limited English. See page 20 for a further analysis of this project.

Adjusting policy to make casual work or other part time work more attractive can serve to gradually transition Humanitarian Entrants into the workforce. This is an essential early intervention to develop an independent rather than dependent mindset and set individuals and communities on a path to building their lives in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1A:** *AMES recommends that the amount of income that can be earned by a Newstart recipient before the benefit commences to be withdrawn be increased to a level that provides adequate incentive to choose employment over welfare for Humanitarian Entrants in their early settlement phase.*
- 1B:** *AMES recommends that the threshold for Partner Payments also be reconsidered.*
- 1C:** *AMES recommends that Health Care Card eligibility be retained for Humanitarian Entrants who gain work for a longer period – possibly the first two years after arrival.*

2. The number of hours worked by job seekers to meet Mutual Obligation requirements and for Job Network providers to claim an employment outcome and gain recognition in performance ratings

AMES experience is that, in some cases, newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants can transition from casual or part time work in a field that has the capacity to provide long term employment prospects that use the skills of the job seeker. In the short term this work does not provide sufficient hours or regularity to meet Mutual Obligation requirements.

This puts pressure on the job seeker to accept less suitable and less sustainable work. The Job Network is also obligated to pressure the job seeker to take any job in order for the provider to generate revenue, maintain performance ratings and ensure the job seeker meets their obligations.

An example illustrates the impact of this policy. This is illustrative only and is likely to be replicated in many employment contexts across Australia for this group.

A planned pathway approach that can progressively use the skills of new settlers is very important. This can facilitate a transition from unskilled and / or casual work to more sustainable employment that progressively uses skills as other settlement issues (including an ability to communicate in English in the workplace) are addressed.

A Humanitarian Entrant Example

AMES employs a large number of Community Guides on casual rates. These Guides work in first language with newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants supporting them in initial settlement as part of the delivery of IHSS services. AMES also employs a number of Settlement Information Officers on a part-time contract basis. These workers are frequently recently arrived refugees themselves.

Where these workers have Mutual Obligation requirements there is often pressure to take other full time unskilled work that does not use their bilingual and bicultural skills.

Results to date with this group of workers has shown that the experience gained in AMES, and the reputation they establish with other service providers, lead to ongoing work. Other service providers include health, other not for profit and government agencies including Centrelink. This work uses their skills and provides a valuable workforce to other agencies.

Where these job seekers are required to take a lower skilled full time job to meet immediate Mutual Obligation requirements they are denied these more sustainable work opportunities. While

a slightly longer term approach is required, the outcome is much more beneficial.

AMES has a policy of employing people from new communities to improve our service provision and provide “first work opportunity” experience for new arrivals. AMES does not have the capacity to offer full time employment because the organisation wants opportunities to be available to as many new arrivals as possible. See the analysis of AMES Intermediate Labour Market Program in Section 4.

Humanitarian Entrants with Mutual Obligation requirements are also required to meet these after the first six weeks of arrival, putting a large amount of pressure on Entrants to find any work rather than transition gradually and in a more sustainable way to independence.

RECOMMENDATION:

2A: *AMES recommends that requirements with respect to the hours of work required to meet Mutual Obligation for Humanitarian Entrants be reconsidered.*

2B: *AMES recommends that fewer hours and/or part time work fully meet Mutual Obligation requirements for Humanitarian Entrants where this is part of a planned pathway.*

2C: *AMES recommends that a reasonable time that this would apply to Humanitarian Entrants for be determined – possibly the first year after arrival.*

3. Combinations of work and training by job seekers to meet Mutual Obligation requirements

Reward for Effort: Meeting the Participation Challenge proposes an option of expanding Mutual Obligation requirements to allow a wider range of activities to meet participation requirements – for example including work and training to meet obligations. The Reward for Effort paper proposes this only for those with part-time Mutual Obligation requirements, noting that people in this group are some of the most vulnerable income support recipients.

Expanding this increased flexibility to newly arrived people – particularly those who arrived

under the Humanitarian Program would provide an additional support to gain employment.

AMES has trialled a number of training models that could provide entry to employment for newly arrived entrants who have low vocational skills. These could be used successfully with job seekers with full time Mutual Obligations if there was a capacity to meet these requirements through combined training and work. This combination is very beneficial for people with low levels of formal education who frequently learn by observing, doing and applying their learning in a real work context.

RECOMMENDATION:

3A: *AMES recommends that the option of expanding Mutual Obligation requirements to allow a combination of part time work and part time training be extended to include Humanitarian Entrants with full time Mutual Obligations.*

3B: *AMES recommends that a reasonable time that this would apply for be determined – possibly the first year after arrival.*

4. Flexibility in alternating learning English in the AMEP and getting casual work

As one of a range of strategies to assist new arrivals into employment, AMES has brokered short term casual work where workers are required at short notice. Newly arrived clients who are studying in the AMEP but also eager to gain employment are offered these opportunities.

Experience is that some are reluctant to take up the work as they forfeit their AMEP hours on the days they are absent as a result of the way in which hours are counted. Learners see these hours as a valuable resource making it difficult for them to make this choice.

RECOMMENDATION:

4A: *AMES recommends that the method of crediting hours used in the AMEP be reviewed to account for learners undertaking spasmodic and short notice casual work.*

5. Penalties for leaving initial unskilled employment to transition to more skilled work and transition support

Some newly arrived Entrants will choose to undertake any work to establish themselves in their early phase of settlement. Lack of English or experience in Australia may preclude them from gaining work that uses their skills.

There is a risk that these new arrivals will be consigned to low skilled work in the long term. This may result from a client being penalised for moving from an entry level unskilled job taken on early in the settlement phase as an interim employment option for immediate income.

Some recognition of this gradual transition to more skilled employment and the support required to achieve this needs consideration. Moving to more skilled work may require new arrivals to leave unskilled work and not immediately take up new work – therefore requiring a period of social security support in making the next transition.

A penalty would apply for a client who has moved early into work compared to a new arrival who has not taken up work in a low skilled area and remained on income support in the hope of gaining higher level work directly.

Reward for Effort: Meeting the Participation Challenge proposes Future Advisors for young people. A similar facility could be implemented

to transition new arrivals into more highly skilled work where this was appropriate. Continued support through Job Network or an aligned service may be an additional option.

Under current arrangements once a job seeker is placed in employment and has reached thirteen and twenty six week milestones, obligations to support the client cease. A planned pathway approach that transitions clients to more skilled work, where this is appropriate and realistic is valuable for the individual and the economy, but has no existing structure to support it.

A risk of providing no transitioning facility is that new arrivals with skills will take no work in the belief that they will achieve their desired employment directly. Unfortunately evidence does not support this and there is a risk that long term welfare rather than a reasonable transition through lower skilled work results.

It is very important to incorporate sufficient flexibility into participation requirements to facilitate new arrivals with skills to transition into more skilled work that both provide more satisfying employment for individuals and provides the benefit of these skills to the economy.

RECOMMENDATION:

5A: *AMES recommends that sufficient flexibility in participation requirements and support through a planned pathway approach to facilitate new arrivals with skills to transition from low skilled into more skilled work be developed.*

6. Additional time often required for family settlement and orientation

Given the particular profile of Humanitarian Entrants AMES experience is that better outcomes are achieved when employment interventions happen at the same time as interventions which address non employment barriers and other settlement issues.

Humanitarian Entrants require time to deal with urgent settlement issues, family settlement and orientation. For job search and retention of work once employment has been secured to be effective, other non employment barriers must be managed concurrently. These will include dealing with urgent and chronic health issues for the job seeker and their family members, finding suitable housing, establishing children in schools and learning English.

This tension between addressing early settlement needs, especially health needs and the benefits of gaining work and income security early is a fact of

refugee settlement. It is possible to manage these issues concurrently but requires some flexibility (for example in allowing time to attend health appointments where individuals have gained employment) and an awareness that all of these issues are pressing and need simultaneous attention.

These tensions will apply both to initially finding work and the transition that may be required to move from casual or part-time work to more sustainable employment – either in the same field or in a field that better utilises skills.

While some new Entrants are in a position to start looking for work very quickly after arrival, this is not realistic for all Entrants. The current requirement to meet Mutual Obligation requirements after the first six weeks therefore requires review.

RECOMMENDATION:

6A: *AMES recommends that the requirement for Humanitarian Entrants to meet Mutual Obligation requirements after the first six weeks be extended to a minimum of three months with discretion for extension in individual cases.*

6B: *AMES recommends that flexibility that takes account of the necessity to address non employment barriers and employment barriers concurrently be acknowledged.*

Employer Engagement

Employer perceptions

Employer perceptions and awareness are potentially limiting the uptake of skills in newly arrived migrants and refugees. The VECCI Skills Survey found that employers with a skill shortage have not considered the possibility of recruiting a skilled migrant. AMES experience is also that employers are frequently impressed with the calibre of migrants placed on work experience but would not have considered employing these candidates had this advocacy not been undertaken through work placement programs.

Likewise the survey highlights the small number of employers who have considered advertising for an apprentice or trainee to fill a vacancy. There is a reluctance to invest in training up employees. Where training occurs, it is mostly non-accredited. This highlights the need to work with employers to broaden options for new ways of

recruiting workers and new ways of recognising skills and competencies. The use of some incentives may also be applicable – particularly in areas such as mature age apprentice wage subsidies.

Increasing the awareness of employers of currently under used sources of labour – both skilled and unskilled requires concerted effort. There is a role for advocacy by government in raising awareness and actively promoting implementation.

A full employment economy provides an incentive for employers to explore new ways of meeting their labour shortages. It also provides additional imperatives to form partnerships between government and industry to build on existing skills to get job seekers into employment or better use

the skills they have through innovative approaches to training.

Employer Partnerships

A willingness on the part of employers to offer vacancies to newly arrived job seekers is an essential ingredient. This requires active engagement with employers in the whole program. Gradual transition to employment for, particularly but not exclusively, Humanitarian Entrants requires employers to be involved in work experience, intermediate labour market programs, employing job seekers who may require some particular initial support due to lack of English or familiarity with Australian workplaces and job seekers who may need to demonstrate their skills rather than come with accredited credentials.

In AMES experience a number of inputs are critical:

- preparing job seekers adequately
- working with employers to establish vacancy needs
- working closely with employers to support employees in the early stages of employment

- in some cases, providing incentives to take on employees
- providing recognition of employers who are actively working to employ new arrivals either as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility program or a broader business imperative (the two are frequently inter-dependent)

A number of areas noted in Reward for Effort: Meeting the Participation Challenge are applicable to an employer partnership strategy for newly arrived Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants.

There is a clear role for the government to lead by example in offering work experience and employment opportunities to skilled migrants and those from refugee backgrounds who can provide bilingual and bicultural services in government agencies working with newly arrived clients.

The government's role in encouraging and supporting corporate responsibility in companies through co-contribution for innovative programs and promotion of good practice is also valuable.

RECOMMENDATION:

7A: *AMES recommends that incentives be developed where appropriate to support employers in meeting additional costs of transitioning newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants into workplaces.*

7B: *AMES recommends that where wage subsidies are provided, these are contingent on the provision of time release for the employee to continue learning English (where communication skills are lacking).*

7C: *AMES recommends that the government takes a leading role in encouraging and promoting a range of programs that increase participation of newly arrived Humanitarian and Migrant Entrants into the workforce.*

SECTION 3 - Under Utilisation of Skills

Data

There is substantial anecdotal evidence and qualitative reporting indicating that newly arrived migrant and refugee entrants are not readily gaining employment that productively uses skills and experience gained overseas. At each of the three interview time points in the LSIA study,⁸ about one third were in a skilled job, one quarter in a semi skilled job and 40% in an unskilled job. Humanitarian Entrants are concentrated in unskilled jobs. English language skill also impacted on the capacity to make use of qualifications.

A survey undertaken by AMES of clients enrolled in Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) programs in 2007 established that in the AMEP approximately 40% of participants are seeking employment (25% are registered job seekers) and a further 34% are already employed. A significant number of employed AMEP clients are looking for more work or employment more closely aligned to their skills. The remaining 26% are not immediately seeking employment but many will be potential employees in the future.

Table 1: Age Distribution (on arrival) of Humanitarian and non-Humanitarian Entrants, Australia 2002-03 to 2006-07⁹

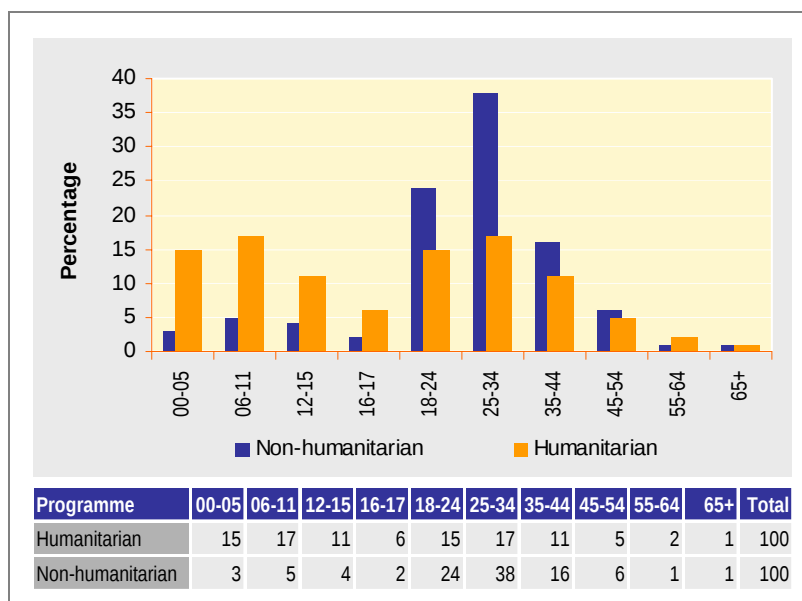


Table 1 shows the large percentage of arrivals in both the Humanitarian and Non humanitarian groups who are of working age, a proportion of whom will already have skills and experience and be seeking employment.

Analysis of the skill base of refugees and migrants enrolled in the AMEP in Victoria indicates that there is a substantial bank of skills that, with some changed training approaches, could be much more effectively accessed and could contribute to filling gaps in skill shortage areas.

⁸ DIAC Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia Interview points were at 4-5 months after arrival, 16-17 months and 3½ years

⁹ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Victoria Settlement trends and needs of new arrivals 2007, figure 14 page17

Preliminary analysis of AMEP (Table 2) and Job Network client data (using clients enrolled in AMES services in Victoria) (Table 3) comparing stated occupations against VLESC State-wide Training Priorities – 2007 for (ie priorities for high priority industry areas for publicly funded vocational education and training) was undertaken. This analysis indicates that there are substantial numbers of potential labour force participants in these high priority groups.

Table 2 indicates that there are significant numbers of CALD Victorians in the AMEP with

existing experience and skills in the occupation groups identified by Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) as the high priority areas for training. Whilst this data is for Victoria only it is likely that a similar situation exists in other states.

(Note: This AMEP sample uses only approximately 50% of the total of 11,000 clients enrolled in 2006-2007 financial year. Potential numbers in these groups are therefore likely to be even higher.)

Table 2: Sample AMEP participants' occupations against the 2007 industry areas of higher priority

INDUSTRY	Increase training effort occupational groups (higher priority)	Approximate numbers of AMES AMEP clients in these or related occupation groups 2006-2007
Automotive	Repair, Service and Retail Vehicle Manufacturing	110
Building and Construction	Civil Operations & General Construction Plumbing	265 27
Business Services	Business Management Finance	224 636
Community Services and Health	Residential and Home Care Children's Services – Diploma only (including underpinning skills at AQF levels 3 and 4)	161 53
Culture and Recreation		165
Electro- technology and Printing (EPIC)	Electrical / Electro-technology	149
Food Processing	Baking	18
Metals and Engineering	Engineering	105
Primary	Agriculture Production Horticulture	343
Tourism and Hospitality	Cookery	200
Transport and Storage	Road Storage and Distribution	68
WRAPS	Wholesale Hairdressing	203

Table 3 shows AMES Job Network analysis by clients placed in employment. (DEWR data collection system does not include this data for all job seekers; only those placed in employment.)

Table 3: CALD Job Network participants placed in employment in 2007 industry areas of higher priority

INDUSTRY	Increase training effort occupation groups (higher priority)	Job Network CALD clients job placements 2006-2007
Automotive	Repair, Service and Retail Vehicle Manufacturing	159
Building and Construction	Civil Operations & General Construction Plumbing	1608 128
Business Services	Business Management Finance	354 170
Community Services and Health	Residential and Home Care Children's Services	94 217
Electro- technology and Printing (EPIC)	Electrical/Electro-technology	82
Food Processing	Baking	101
Metals and Engineering	Engineering	43
Primary	Agriculture Production Horticulture	171 28
Tourism and Hospitality	Cookery	199
Transport and Storage	Road Storage and Distribution	244 670
Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services (WRAPS)	Hairdressing	62
Total		4,330

Table 3 indicates that there is capacity to meet labour shortages by utilising CALD Victorians registered with Job Network. Further analysis of Job Network placements may well identify that job seekers were frequently placed in entry level work in these areas. Targeted training interventions may be a cost effective way to better use existing skills.

SECTION 4 - Brief overview of relevant AMES practice

AMES Programs: Workforce Participation

1. Skilled Professional Migrants Program (SPMP)

Program description

This program assists migrants with professional qualifications prepare for and secure employment in their professional fields. This may include Humanitarian Entrants as well as Skilled Migrant Stream Entrants.

The program consists of intensive training addressing crucial areas including the Australian job market, Australian workplace culture, resume writing, telephone skills, application writing, addressing key selection criteria and interview skills. An essential element is a four week work experience placement.

The SPMP also provides one-to-one mentoring by local skilled professionals to provide an avenue for migrants to focus on their professional skills, build networks and to make the transition into full time professional employment. AMES staff provide significant support to employers in preparing for the work experience placement with many participants subsequently securing employment with their work experience employer at the end of the program.

Successful features

The most successful features of the SPMP for skilled migrants are:

- one-to-one mentoring
- practical work placement
- Australian workplace experience on resume
- Australian employer referees
- awareness and first hand experience of Australian workplace culture
- increased confidence in seeking employment
- employment outcomes

For the employer the SPMP has provided access to a previously under-utilised source of diverse, skilled and experienced employees.

Learnings and policy implications

Participants have qualifications recognised in Australia and often many years of relevant experience overseas but may still find it extremely difficult to get employment in their field in Australia. Many have searched unsuccessfully for 12 months or more before enrolling in the program.

A survey of SPMP participants found that most identified their lack of personal contacts / networks in Australia and their lack of understanding of Australian workplace culture as significant barriers to employment.¹⁰ The VECCI Victorian 2006 Skills Survey report¹⁰ indicates that many skilled migrants are taking up jobs in un-skilled and semi-skilled occupations such as aged care, sales and taxi driving rather than in the skilled sector. The imperative to find employment quickly after arrival and lack of support systems to overcome the barriers identified above results in this under-employment in un-skilled and semi-skilled occupations.

Early intervention

AMES Skilled Professional Migrants Program (SPMP) has proved very successful in assisting migrants overcome many of these barriers to gain work in their profession. The course has run since 2004 – at times with Victorian Government funding at other times as fee for service. Out of 134 clients for 2006 over half were employed in their professional field as a direct outcome.

Resources have not been available for longitudinal tracking but anecdotally we know that participants have had high levels of success in gaining employment – an average of 94% into professional employment over the last 4 years.

Countries of origin reflect the Skilled Migration intake with the largest numbers currently coming from India, China and Sri Lanka.

¹⁰ Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) Skills Survey 2006

Many of those enrolling in the course have backgrounds in the skills shortage sectors: IT, accounting, engineering, health professionals. For skilled migrants who are unemployed and / or under-employed the program has provided the opportunity to make the break into the first job in Australia which recognises and utilises their skills and experience.

Ideally this intervention should happen as soon as possible after arrival in Australia.

Employer involvement, liaison and support

AMES experience suggests that support for both the skilled migrant and the employer is pivotal to achieving successful and mutually beneficial outcomes. Working with employers and professional bodies is extremely important and requires more concerted effort to raise awareness of this source of skilled workers. For example, AMES conducted a targeted SPMP course for engineers in conjunction with the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia. APESMA found the work placements for the course and had input into the job preparation components to make them "engineer specific". This may be an area where the government could offer incentives to take on skilled migrants.

Mentoring

The third key learning concerns the key role of mentoring. Mentors provide very important support for skilled migrants in the process of cultural transition particularly where it relates to

understanding and making the transition to Australian workplaces.

Formally integrating mentoring into training programs can make training more effective and significantly increase the chance of successful outcomes, retention in employment and high levels of satisfaction for employers.

An NCVER research project also highlights the need for greater emphasis on a mentoring process, suggesting this as being the best way to model workplace practices and create a positive learning environment in which English language and literacy skills and other competencies could be developed.¹¹

Expansion of this skilled migrant program model as an early intervention would provide support to:

- fast track new arrivals with professional skills into employment
- set these new arrivals up for successful employment experiences
- effectively utilise skills to meet skill gaps
- increase the awareness of employers of this untapped labour resource.

It would make sound economic sense – investing early to get the benefit of skills into the economy and making savings in social welfare expenditure. Benefits to individuals and the contribution to successful settlement, social and economic participation are also significant.

RECOMMENDATION:

8A: *AMES recommends that the skilled migrant program model be implemented as an early intervention for clients facing barriers to entry to their profession.*

8B: *AMES recommends that a similar program for new arrivals with para-professional and trade skills be piloted.*

8C: *AMES recommends that recognition and incentives be provided where appropriate to actively encourage employer involvement.*

Policy Implications: Refer Policy Recommendation 2

¹¹ Apprentices and trainee's English language and literacy skills in workplace learning and performance NCVER Nr 9017

2. Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) Program

Program description

AMES is implementing an ILM approach as one entry to employment strategy. The intention is to increase this approach in 2008 by offering up to 50 full and part-time employment opportunities to support refugee and newly arrived migrants' transition to employment by providing this first workplace opportunity as early as possible post arrival.

These employees will receive training whilst working at AMES. Augmenting existing skills on the job will provide capacity for refugees and migrants with skills and competence but no recognised credential to demonstrate competence. This is an alternative way to deliver training and test current competence.

This model has been used in AMES in the delivery of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Service (IHSS) since October 2005 when AMES and consortia partners began delivering this contract on behalf of DIAC. It has provided opportunities for 160 Community Guides to use and demonstrate their skills in delivering settlement services to refugees. Most Community Guides are relatively recently arrived Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants themselves.

Successful features

The most successful features of the AMES ILM program are:

- paid work opportunity for newly arrived refugees and migrants that uses their skills
- Australian workplace experience
- Australian employer referees
- awareness and first hand experience of Australian workplace culture
- increased confidence in seeking employment

This model has also allowed AMES to assess competency in the workplace and provide pathways to more senior positions without formal qualifications. It has also provided entry for 40 of these people to other sectors where bilingual and bicultural skills are important.

A number of Community Guides have gone on to other employment, for example, as bilingual teacher aides in schools, office administration roles and customer service roles in agencies such as Centrelink following the initial opportunity for casual employment with AMES IHSS.

Learnings and policy implications

The Allen Consulting Group and the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL)¹² have undertaken a study based on the ILM experience at the BSL. This provides a useful reference for applying this model as an alternative way of training participants requiring supported on the job training as well as support to transition to "mainstream" employment. Lessons noted in this report from international and the BSL experience show that characteristics of success include (among others):

- Replicating conventional workplace in terms of application processes, wages, workplace protocols and employee rights
- Encouraging practical work experience as early as possible
- Providing on-the-job training as participants typically struggle with classroom based training
- Providing skills that are in demand in today's labour market
- Offering a combination of accredited training and development of workplace skills
- Integrating training, work experience and job search assistance in one model
- Addressing both demand and supply side issues (for example, the ILM program helped jobseekers find employment, and also worked with employers to fill skill shortages)

Other research carried out in England, Scotland and Wales into 65 Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) programs¹³ as a means of transitioning people into employment concluded that ILM projects can play a significant role in enabling long term unemployed people to obtain the motivation, skills and work experience in order to

¹² Investing in People BSL and Allen Consulting Group September 2007

¹³ Bob Marshall and Richard Macfarlane 2000 The intermediate labour market: A tool for tackling long term unemployment. Published by YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK

work their way permanently out of welfare and into employment.

The ILM programs need to be well targeted and focus on durability of employment. Setting up and managing ILMs takes strong local partnerships, a robust delivery infrastructure and skilled managers. There is a need to recognise that the capacity to deliver well can take time to develop, and that resources to build this capacity in local organisations should be incorporated in funding of labour market programs.

Whilst the UK ILM programs targeted the very long term unemployed, the idea of the ILM as an employment option during the early settlement

¹⁴

period for migrants and refugees can provide the step into workforce participation and social inclusion that would prevent newly arrived families entering the welfare dependency cycle.

Recognition and support for employers offering intermediate labour market opportunities to new and recently arrived migrants and refugees is recommended along the lines suggested for employers offering work to people with disabilities.¹⁴ Similarly the “work trial” options suggested for this group (job sampling, job training for skills development and job auditioning) could well provide another option for the newly arrived migrant and refugee group.

RECOMMENDATION:

9A: *AMES recommends that employers offering intermediate labour market opportunities to new and recently arrived migrants and refugees are recognised and supported along the lines suggested for employers offering work to people with disabilities.*

Policy Implications: Refer Policy Recommendations 2 and 3

3. Werribee Harvest Labour Project

Program description

The Werribee Harvest Labour Project is a partnership between the Australian Karen Organisation (AKO) and AMES, working with four market gardeners in Werribee. It addresses the urgent settlement issues facing many newly arrived refugees who need to:

- learn English as quickly as possible
- balance learning English with finding entry level work opportunities in a relatively unskilled area that can be successfully undertaken with limited English
- move between English and work or undertake both concurrently

AMES in partnership with the AKO has organised a Labour Hire arrangement for newly arrived refugees from Burma to pick vegetables in local market gardens. Refugees can start working early in their settlement and combine learning English in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) with some casual or part-time work. Karen refugees come from Burma where more than half the population works in the agricultural sector.

The community themselves identified the opportunity for employment in the market gardens because their members are from rural backgrounds and they are very motivated to work. The project draws on this motivation and the strengths and skills in the existing Karen community.

The AKO provides an excellent channel of communication with the Karen community. The work opportunities are now communicated to the wider Karen community, having commenced with members of the AKO. The importance of relationships with these communities to encourage newly arrived refugees to begin work, even if in a transitional manner, is extremely important in ensuring that refugees understand the short term role of intensive timed social security support as a transition rather than a long term option to settle and become independent.

¹⁴ Reward for Effort: Meeting the Participation Challenge P Wong November 2006 p 83

Successful features

The successful features are:

- facilitating successful settlement for families in the area
- providing employment and work experience opportunities for adults very soon after arrival
- providing a practical context for English language learning
- delivering a customised AMEP on-the-job to fit in with employment arrangements
- supporting AMEP clients who have expressed a need for employment early in the settlement period to access both English and employment
- direct communication with refugees through their community organisation
- provision of support to understand Centrelink requirements and impacts on benefits

Learnings and policy implications

AMES initially worked with Australian Karen Organisation to establish links with growers. On a practical level AMES negotiated with the growers to ensure award wages and employment conditions were in place and to establish labour hire arrangements.

AMES spoke to the growers regarding the English language requirements for the job and as a result delivered a short Occupational Health and Safety program, with first language support, as part of AMEP and Job Network training prior to the workers commencing on the job. Picking work at the market gardens is then coordinated with part time AMEP delivery, thus allowing for a gradual transition to employment.

The casual nature of the work means that increased flexibility must be factored into AMEP delivery. Participants in this program are concerned that they do not lose AMEP hours when they are called at short notice to work on the farms. This is very important as it will:

- remove one barrier that discourages new arrivals from entering the workforce as soon as possible
- allow new arrivals to combine English and transition to work
- keep a strong link with the AMEP and continued English language learning
- provide an opportunity for much needed work experience early in the settlement journey

RECOMMENDATION:

Policy Implication: AMEP: Refer Policy Recommendation 4.

Policy Implication: Part time work: Refer Policy Recommendation 2

Policy Implication: Hours worked to meet Mutual Obligation: Refer Policy Recommendation 2

AMES Programs: Alternative training models

1. Work training enterprises

The AMES work training enterprise program is an intervention aimed at addressing existing unemployment within new and emerging CALD communities. The enterprises aim to assist migrants and refugees who have a low base of human and/or social capital and few recognised employment skills to move into work through highly contextualised, practical training. Although the model is resource intensive in relation to time, funds and energy it is appropriate and effective for people with multiple barriers to workforce participation and

significant barriers to social inclusion within the broader community.

Training activities are provided in an active industry context (such as a commercial kitchen) coupled with sustained culturally sensitive social support. The learning activities aim to assist participants acquire personal and competitive labour skills through hands on practical work and work experience. The programs include pre vocational and entry level vocational courses which may be full certificate courses, targeted

short course training, and long term training support programs.

Currently there are four AMES Enterprises in catering operating from kitchens located in local schools, two cleaning enterprises, a community newspaper as well as a wood working enterprise and an organic mushroom growing enterprise. The training offered through these enterprises includes safe food handling, hospitality, occupational health and safety, basic cleaning skills, basic woodworking skills and horticulture.

AMES acknowledges the government's intention to tag 90% of vocational training at Certificate III and above as the necessary entry level to build a skilled workforce in industry. Whilst the courses offered through the AMES Enterprise model are all entry level and very basic training courses they do

provide a manageable first step into work and or work experience for this particular group. As an indication of the transitions required for this particular group a Certificate 3 in Business Administration was attempted at the Newspaper focussing on written media production, marketing, editing and article writing but this proved to be too challenging for the participants.

To date the enterprises have been funded through Victorian Government grants and AMES own investment in communities.

AMES experience is that a staged approach to training delivered in a practical context, which starts at a very basic level and acknowledges the additional time required for trainees with the profile described above can result in effective workforce participation for this group.

RECOMMENDATION:

10A: *AMES recommends funding to support the establishment of work training enterprises.*

10B: *AMES recommends training at Certificate II level where this is appropriate.*

2. Vocational Training using first language

A further option may be to provide vocational training for migrants and refugees with very low levels of English can readily access. The amount of time required to acquire enough English to undertake a TAFE or similar vocational training program would be significant if starting from scratch, and for people with skills, experience, motivation and the need to work this can be very de-motivating.

By providing training in the person's first language lengthy delays in joining the workforce can be avoided. This option would be particularly appropriate for people with existing vocational

skills and experience who need to upgrade or do additional training relevant to the Australian workplace in order to start work, or for people with no vocational skills needing a very basic entry level course rather than people wishing to undertake an entire vocational certificate course of study.

The training in first language would cover technical or conceptual content, including local regulations and OH&S. Communication skills would be in English.

RECOMMENDATION:

11A: *AMES recommends that funding be available to deliver training in first language to newly arrived Humanitarian Entrants.*

3. UCan2: Youth “work and study” project

In the past 6 years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of young people arriving in Australia with educational histories which have been severely disrupted by war, flight and civil unrest – the refugee experience. The average years of schooling prior to arrival for young refugee background young people have fallen from 7.2 years in 2001-02 to 2.5 years in 2005-06 (DIAC 2006). The impact of this has been an increase in the number of older adolescents/young adults from refugee backgrounds who are struggling to maintain a presence in education and training pathways after they have completed an initial English language program.

This project combines work and study by developing ways in which the context of education for this target group can be broadened using part time work. Critical success factors include social support, curriculum support and mentoring support as well as the involvement of a large employer willing to provide part time work and training to these particular young people whilst they continue their schooling.

This combined “school plus part time work” program requires strong supports to the individual young people. The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture is the lead agent with the Coles Group, AMES, Noble Park Language Centre and Centre for Multicultural Youth Affairs as partners.

As well as developing specific skills through their part time jobs, the young people are supported to continue at school so that potential for future work force participation is enhanced. The goal is also to achieve the more immediate impacts of broader social inclusion for the young refugees involved.

Funding is currently provided by a philanthropic foundation. The project is in a trial phase and will be taken to scale over 2008 and 2009.

RECOMMENDATION:

12A: *AMES recommends that funding for further projects based on this model be considered based on monitoring, development and evaluation of the UCan2 model.*

4. Alternative mature age apprenticeships

Where migrants and refugees have vocational skills and experience but are not able to have these formally recognised an alternative apprenticeship system may be worthy of consideration. A reduced duration and capacity to assess and recognise pre-existing competence could fast track a group of employees into trades.

The VECCI report recommends encouraging adults into apprenticeships / traineeships by offering

financial incentives to make up the balance of lower training wages and reduce the duration of the traineeships through competency based assessments and Recognition of Prior Learning. Where newly arrived refugees or migrants have trade skills this may provide an appropriate way to gain a recognised qualification.

RECOMMENDATION:

13A: *AMES recommends that alternatives to current apprenticeship arrangements be further explored and implemented for migrants and refugees.*

5. Practice credentials for tradespeople working under supervision

Another option may be to provide on the job training and practice in Australian conditions that allows newly arrived refugees or migrants to practise their trade without full formal trade recognition under the Trades Recognition Australia processes. This would allow existing skills to be utilised, new skills, where required, to be acquired but would avoid the lengthy apprenticeship pathway to employment in the trade.

An NCVER research paper¹⁵ notes that there is only a loose match between the qualifications

that people have and the jobs they do. Many people work in jobs for which they have no formal qualification and one third of people working as *tradespersons and related workers* have no post school qualification.

A formal system developed that allows for some alternative to current Trades Recognition Australia processes and capacity to work under the supervision of a registered tradesperson may be appropriate. This could be supported by on the job training where required to comply with Australian conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

14A: *AMES recommends that alternative ways of recognising trade skills on the job be further explored and implemented for migrants and refugees who have skills but no recognised credentials.*

¹⁵ NCVER Forecasting future demands: What we can and cannot know

SECTION 5 - Brief overview of relevant International practice

The following brief overview provides some approaches that may be applicable. Canada and a number of European countries have well supported programs to assist with the settlement of migrants and refugees. Approaches validate that a number of programs that Victoria has trialled or implemented also work elsewhere. These examples also identify other possible approaches. Skills utilisation is commonly identified as an area for which solutions are sought.

Canada

Like Australia, Canada is increasingly reliant on immigration for population and labour market growth. One report¹⁶ notes that it is imperative to ensure that “newcomers are able to utilise the skills and resources they bring with them – for economic gain, for humanitarian reasons, and to continue enriching Canadian culture and society.” Research has been undertaken to better understand these issues and their possible solutions.

Skills utilisation

As in Australia, newcomers cited difficulties finding employment, especially employment in their own field, to be the principal barrier to settlement. Programs proposed by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) provide examples of how newcomers are supported into employment. They also confirm that approaches already being taken in Victoria are successful and form a basis for further investment to achieve maximum uptake of migrant skills. Programs include:

- Career Bridge: a 4 month internship for skilled migrants
- Mentor Partnerships: matching skilled migrants with Canadian counterparts in the same profession
- Occupation and Licensing Bridge: sector based bridging programs

- Employer Promising Practices: a toolkit to assist employers in recruitment, training and promotion of skilled migrants

It is important to note that success is dependant on recruiting willing employers to participate in giving newcomers employment opportunities and the degree to which are supported, encouraged and recognised in these programs.

Skills recognition

Canada is also facing the same challenges in recognising professional and trade skills and is trialing competency based rather than paper based assessment for some professions. One report¹⁷ notes that community colleges are well placed to undertake this as they are focused on education that leads to work, often have strong ESL programs and strong links with community and settlement agencies. There may be learnings that could apply to new ways of assessing competence for newly arrived migrants and refugees in Australia.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands has established Emplooi – an employment agency for refugees.¹⁸ The agency was set up by the Refugee Council and became independent in 2004. It uses a national network of 100 retired executives who work 2 days a week to mentor case loads of refugees. It is very effective placing refugees into jobs, and generates 500 to 600 jobs each year. Since the founding of the agency in 1990, Emplooi has helped 10,000 refugees find jobs.

Finland

Creating preconditions for an active, employment-based immigration policy is one of the main strategic guidelines of Finnish labour policy as well as the Government’s Employment Policy Programme. There is a lot of development work going on in Finland concerning the personalisation of the preparatory training and testing competencies especially for adult

¹⁶ Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada Sarah V Wayland 2006

¹⁷ Try Another Way: Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Accreditation of Foreign Training and Experience Davis A and Wihak C 2006

¹⁸ www.emplooi.net

immigrants. Career guidance services for immigrants are seen as central in ensuring the availability of skilled labour as well as reducing unemployment and preventing exclusion.

Scotland

The Bridges Program¹⁹ operates for refugees and asylum seekers and offers work shadow placements.

Companies are invited to offer suitable placements and asylum seekers and refugees apply for a work shadow placement in their respective profession or employment sphere. Placements are usually made for one day a week over three months. The Bridges Project is promoted to companies as an opportunity to make an investment in people who in turn may be in a position to contribute to Scotland, or give back to the company in the future.

Norway

An Introductory Program²⁰ is provided for refugees and immigrants. The course is delivered within three months after settlement and municipalities must also provide extra tuition, up to a total of 3000 hours, if it is required. Workplace practice is often combined with the introductory courses and employers are subsidised to do this.

In addition, all employers, whether state, municipal or private, are actively encouraged to employ persons with immigrant backgrounds. In the state administration, employers are obliged to call in at least one applicant with an immigrant background for interviews when hiring personnel, provided that the applicant is qualified. Senior managers of all wholly state-owned enterprises are urged to introduce the same scheme. The Government has also focused on large private companies as major employers.

This approach is similar to the current Australian Government policy option for employment of people with a disability whereby the government will “lead by example” by increasing employment of people with a disability in the public service. This approach could equally well be applied to employment of suitably skilled migrants and refugees as an initial employment opportunity.

United Kingdom

Research carried out in England, Scotland and Wales into 65 Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) programs²¹ as a means of transitioning people into employment concluded that ILM projects can play a significant role in enabling long term unemployed people to obtain the motivation, skills and work experience in order to work their way permanently out of welfare and into employment.

The ILM programs need to be well targeted and focus on durability of employment. Setting up and managing ILMs takes strong local partnerships, a robust delivery infrastructure and skilled managers. There is a need to recognise that the capacity to deliver well can take time to develop and that resources to build capacity in local organisations should be incorporated in funding of labour market programs.

Whilst the UK ILM programs targeted the very long term unemployed, the idea of the ILM as an employment option during the early settlement period for migrants and refugees could well provide the step into workforce participation and social inclusion that would prevent newly arrived families entering the welfare dependency cycle.

¹⁹ www.diverseroutes.co.uk/professional-qualifications.htm

²⁰ www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=2609

²¹ Bob Marshall and Richard Macfarlane 2000 The intermediate labour market: A tool for tackling long term unemployment. Published by YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK