



Refugee Council of Australia

The Honourable Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Employment Participation
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

14 February 2008

Dear Minister O'Connor,

SUBMISSION TO THE GENERAL REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) welcomes the opportunity to share with you our views, as well as those of our member organisations and refugee communities, on the operation of employment services in Australia, especially as they impact on the lives of refugee and humanitarian migrants.

BACKGROUND TO RCOA AND OUR INTEREST IN EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVISION

RCOA is a peak representative organisation providing information on and advocacy for refugees and humanitarian entrants in Australia on behalf of its more than 100 organisational and 150 individual members. We work closely with refugee communities, our member organisations and various branches of State and Federal Governments to develop and implement policies to improve refugee and humanitarian migration and settlement outcomes and ensure that they are consistent with Australia's international obligations.

Each year the Council conducts a series of community consultations across Australia to assist us in putting together our report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on the future directions for the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. This year, these consultations took place in over 40 locations and involved representatives of over 160 organisations and community groups. One of the main foci of the consultations for 2008 was the experiences of refugees and humanitarian migrants in the Australian labour market. The following comments by the Council draw on the views raised in the consultations and the more detailed final report.

Obtaining stable, adequately-remunerated, fulfilling employment is an unquestionably significant contributor towards (as well as being an important measure of) successful resettlement for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Upon arriving in Australia, it is fair to say that new entrants have an expectation that they will be able to move swiftly into some form of employment because:

- a) they have been socialised into viewing work as a personal obligation to family and community;

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world

- b) they derive personal satisfaction from engaging in productive work; and
- c) they believe that work is a way in which they can express their gratitude, “repay” and contribute positively to the new country in which they have been resettled.

However, despite refugees’ eagerness to participate in the Australian workforce, the current low official rate of unemployment, and the range of skills and qualifications refugees possess that match the local shortages, they continue to confront significant difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. These problems and concerns are not new, but have been raised with and by the Council for a number of years. While the fundamental issues may not have changed, in some respects refugees are arguably finding different, additional structural barriers to employment associated with changes to employment and settlement service provision, and compounded by other settlement challenges.

This review of employment service provision by your office is therefore timely, in that it supports the ongoing work of in the refugee and humanitarian entrants’ services sector to improve employment pathways and overall measures of social inclusion for this group of Australians.

REFUGEES FINDING JOBS: A MORE COMPLEX ISSUE THAN DEMAND vs SUPPLY

Before addressing the terms of reference of this consultation, it should be noted that assisting refugee and humanitarian migrants into employment is not as simple as tweaking the contracts for Job Network providers – although this would be an important aspect of any proposed reforms. Like all Australians attempting to secure stable, decently-remunerated employment, refugees and humanitarian migrants are confronting a domestic employment landscape that is markedly different from that of previous generations. These changes include an increase in precariousness of employment due, among other things, to growing casualisation, the demise of collective bargaining, reduced award conditions, and less protection against unfair dismissal. These shifts have been coupled with a heavier emphasis in state income support structures on compliance and “mutual obligation”, as well as stricter conditions on and time limited access to income support.

While it is true that many refugees, especially within the early years of their settlement in Australia, face comparatively higher levels of unemployment and underemployment than the general Australian population, the general barriers to employment are compounded by the additional obstacles refugees face that arise as a direct result of their migration experience. These include:

- Limited access to affordable housing proximate to workplaces and not serviced by appropriate public transport;
- Problems having overseas skills, training, qualifications and experience recognised;
- Delays and difficulties obtaining Australian citizenship restricting job opportunities;
- Difficulties obtaining a driver’s licence narrowing employment opportunities;
- Overt workplace discrimination on account of refugees’ visible difference;
- The effects of torture and trauma – for women, the impact of gendered and sexual violence is particularly acute;
- The need to adjust to life in a highly industrialised society after long periods spent in a refugee camp;
- Pressure to manage domestic responsibilities for family members who themselves are trying to cope with resettlement;
- Health problems;
- Absence of an already established ethnic community to draw on for employment opportunities and networks; and
- In some cases, a lack of fluent English.

It is also worth emphasising that the need to find a job is often so acute for refugees that they have admitted settling for employment contracts with working conditions bordering on exploitative. Like other marginalised groups in the labour market, including young people, older Australians whose

skills have become redundant, people with mental illness, sole parents, and the low-skilled, refugees do not have the bargaining power in the workplace to challenge these conditions themselves. The fear of losing their job also outweighs the perceived benefit of seeking external sanction, advice or support.

Any discussion regarding potential adjustments to employment service provision with a view to improving the employment outcomes for refugee and humanitarian migrants must therefore be alive to the intersections between and compounded effects of the particular experiences of these migrants prior to their arrival in Australia, during resettlement and within the domestic labour market.

RELEVANT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Since the establishment of the Job Network (JN) in 1998, there are no longer migrant-specific employment service providers, let alone service providers catering specially for refugees and humanitarian entrants (although some JN providers claim to have particular expertise in assisting migrants). All refugees participating in RCOA's consultations who spoke about using the services of JN providers were highly critical of their experience. While refugees appreciated the fact that the government was clearly interested in assisting them into paid employment, they felt that there were significant shortcomings in the JN model that prevented it from operating as efficiently and effectively as it potentially could. These criticisms included:

- **A lack of appreciation of the particular needs of refugee clients and their employment histories.** Many refugees reported encounters with JN officers who did not show an understanding of the refugee experience and how these circumstances – for example, broken work history, lack of formal qualifications, health problems and lack of documentation – may have impacted on refugees' engagement with the Australian labour market. Some refugees were made to feel personally responsible for their disadvantage.
- **Inadequate emphasis on finding work that is appropriate to refugees' skill levels, interest and experience.** The primary focus for JN providers is placing clients in work. It is a secondary consideration (if it is a consideration at all) as to whether or not that work is sustainable or represents a step along the path towards longer-term job prospects. This is understandable because JN providers are remunerated based on the numbers of clients they place as opposed to the quality or sustainability of those placements. However, the lack of an incentive to focus on job quality is especially problematic for refugees who are highly skilled, who also have an expectation that they will be assisted into jobs that are more closely matched to their skills and experience. Further, JN providers are not as specialised in particular sectors of the Australian labour market as professional recruitment agencies, and as such their knowledge of the Australian job market has proved to be lacking when dealing with clients who already have substantial skills and experience.
- **Focus on quantitative performance indicators.** Job Network providers have complained of being under pressure to meet numerical placement targets, both to remain financially viable and to boost the agency's "star rating" for contract renewal purposes. Even though job seekers that remain on the books for longer periods of time may attract additional funding in recognition of the greater challenge involved in finding them work, JN workers still feel that they are pressured to concentrate on those job seekers who were more likely to obtain employment, rather than the more intensive cases involving those who were most in need of tailored job placement assistance.¹ This is matched by the experiences of refugee clients who feel frustrated by the comparative lack of interest in their case
- **A misapprehension of the abilities of refugees.** Some refugees felt that their JN provider presumed that they should only apply for and be content with employment in low-

¹Louise Kyle, Fiona Macdonald, James Doughney and Joanne Pyke (2004) *Refugees in the Labour Market: Looking for Cost-Effective Models of Assistance*. Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne. p. 10

skilled occupations simply on account of their status as a newly arrived refugee. In these cases it was clear that there was a flawed assumption on the part of JN providers about the homogeneity of refugees.

- **A “one-size-fits-all” approach to employment assistance.** Many refugees were frustrated by the lack of differentiation in the services that they were able to access through their JN provider. It is felt that these services are developed primarily for Australian-born job seekers and are thus inappropriate to be applied without modification to the situation of refugees and humanitarian entrants looking for work. Some of the services provided, such as the use of computer job kiosks, require computer skills that may be outside of refugees’ experience but with which they are provided with no assistance by JN staff. Refugees felt they could benefit more from assistance that had a longer time horizon for employment pathways and allowed for assistance to upgrade or transfer skills and qualifications.
- **JN providers benefiting under contracts despite failing to provide concrete outcomes for refugee clients.** Refugees who managed to find work through their own resourcefulness and without the assistance of their JN provider suspected that their provider took credit for the resolution of their case.
- **Adverse impact on refugees’ capacity to attend English classes.** A number of refugees reported pressure from their JN provider to exit AMEP before the completion of their allotted English classes in order to take up employment. These refugees were left with the impression that JN staff did not appreciate the importance of improving English proficiency and/or considered finding a job, no matter what, to be the highest priority in a refugee’s life. Because compliance with JN requirements is a condition of receiving Centrelink support, but attendance at AMEP is voluntary, refugees feel that that they have no choice but to adhere to JN demands, even if doing so may compromise their longer term settlement outcomes.
- **Difficulty obtaining work experience due to lack of insurance.** Refugees and settlement workers have reported problems convincing employers to take refugees on in a work experience capacity because it has been claimed that insurance cannot be obtained to cover the actions of refugees. Community organisations have arranged insurance at their own expense to support work experience for these refugees.

Although there is little doubt that refugees and humanitarian entrants can benefit from assistance to negotiate the job market, the JN is currently ill-equipped to address the specific needs of this client group. Consequently, if refugees are able to find work that is occupationally matched or even any work at all, it is often despite their involvement with the JN.

TRAINING INCENTIVES

Contrary to popular belief, a significant proportion of refugees arrive in Australia already in possession of extensive work experience, qualifications and training in skilled occupations. However, barriers to accessing and competing in the labour market often result in skilled refugees obtaining and remaining in occupations well below their ability level.² The financial stress

² Results from the 2006 Australian Census show, for example, that 38.8% of Sudanese, 36.9% of Iraqis and 33.7% of Afghans held post-high-school-level qualifications (as compared with 52.5% of the general Australian population) [DIAC (2007) *Community Information Summaries: Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan* Available: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summ-summary.htm>] In their qualitative study of 150 refugees and 40 employers, Val Colic-Peisker and Farida Tilbury demonstrate high levels of employment of refugees in home countries, often at professional and para-professional levels. For instance, 62% of refugees with African backgrounds had work experience in trades, para-professions and professional occupations. 88% of refugees from the Middle-East also fit in this category. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury’s report further indicates that as many as 49.3% of refugees in their sample were employed in occupations below their skill level. [Val Colic-Peisker and Farida Tilbury (2007) *Refugees and Employment: The Effect of Visible Difference on Discrimination. Final Report*. Murdoch University, Western Australia] See also, Janis Constable et.al (2004) *Doctors become Taxi-drivers: Recognising Skills – Not as Easy as it Sounds*. Office of Employment, Equity and Diversity, Premiers Department, NSW. Available: www.eeo.nsw.gov.au

associated with the necessity of finding immediate employment upon arrival in Australia, compounded by the structural shortcomings of the JN and employment service provision, frequently results in skilled refugees accepting low-skilled work. This high level of downward occupational mobility experienced by refugees represents not only a cost to the individual in terms of self-esteem and deterioration of skills, but also a major loss to the Australian economy. This is not a new situation – historically all skilled migrants arriving in Australia from CALD backgrounds have confronted difficulties in finding comparable work. That said, for skilled refugees, for whom migration to Australia is not a choice, this lack of transferability is additionally frustrating. For these individuals, then, the real issue regarding training is not necessarily how to obtain fresh training or develop new skills, but how to expedite conversion and recognition of existing qualifications and experience to the Australian context.

Some of the persistent challenges that compromise the capacity of refugees to obtain and maintain occupationally matched employment include:

- **Lack of information provided at the pre-embarkation stage** regarding the assessment of qualifications process in Australia leaving many refugees assuming that their qualifications will be automatically recognised, especially where these qualifications are obtained from prestigious institutions;
- **Professional recognition bodies are more likely to recognise qualifications from Europe and Oceania** and not from developing countries.
- **Prohibitive costs for bridging courses and supplementary examinations.** Many refugees could have their qualifications recognised through a simple completion of additional course or examinations, but the cost of undertaking these processes can be very expensive placing them beyond the reach of new entrants coping with other financial burdens. Given securing employment was the main priority, upgrading qualifications were often delayed in favour of securing a better financial position by entering the low-skilled labour market, from which most never re-emerge.
- **Limitations on translation services.** As highlighted earlier in this report, refugees only receive a limited number of free document translations. Not uncommonly, documents evidencing qualifications exceed this number and require full translation to be useful, not the partial translations generally provided.
- **No recognition of overseas experience.** Refugees are placed in a situation where they are required to demonstrate Australian workplace experience before being considered eligible for employment, but are unable to obtain the jobs that will provide them with that experience. The way through this Gordian knot is through recognition and crediting of overseas employment experience. Australian workplaces are not such alien environments that refugees with experience in other countries will not be able to adjust accordingly. Indeed in some cases, such as doctors who have worked in under-resourced hospitals located in war zones, or lecturers who have worked in cross-cultural institutions, overseas experience should be considered an asset in the Australian labour market.
- **Failure by employers to appreciate the value of a diverse workplace.** Anecdotal evidence and qualitative research of employer attitudes to employees with refugee backgrounds suggest that a perception that a culturally diverse workplace is unimportant may impact adversely on the willingness to hire individuals who clearly manifest those differences. As noted by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, “Some [employers] suggested that the visibly and culturally different simply did not have the job relevant characteristics including communication abilities, or ‘cultural knowledge’, or that they would not ‘fit in’ with other staff...This was often framed within a discourse of cultural superiority – alternative skills and ways of interacting were represented as inferior, leaving employees from non-mainstream backgrounds obligated to learn ‘our’ ways of doing things.”
- **Overt workplace discrimination.** Refugees across the country have recounted stories of:

- Employers insisting that they could not employ women who wear the hijab who, despite their qualifications, experience and communication skills, would not be “viewed favourably” by customers or clients;
- Anglicising Islamic names on job applications to improve prospects of obtaining a job interview;
- Immediate dismissal of applications upon sight or during a telephone conversation indicating discrimination on the basis of visible difference or accent;
- Employers exclaiming or implying that they did not expect a black person to have applied for the job vacancy because of the skill and qualification requirements of the position;
- Incorrect assumptions by interviewers about an applicant’s background, skills and qualification based solely on their refugee status;
- Interviewers and employers asserting that refugees from Africa for whom English is a primary language could not be understood; and
- Nursing homes reluctant to employ Australian-qualified refugee women from Africa with refugee backgrounds because residents were not prepared to be cared for by black women.

Such experiences of direct discrimination were disturbingly not as isolated as may be anticipated and contributed to refugees’ (sometimes incorrect) assumptions about incidents of indirect discrimination also occurring in the employment context.

While providing opportunities for training are important, emphasis also needs to be placed on developing strategies for overcoming the barriers outlined above. For skilled refugees, at least, this will be a cost-effective way of helping ensure both a higher degree of occupational matching and filling some of the skill shortages currently being experienced in the Australian economy.

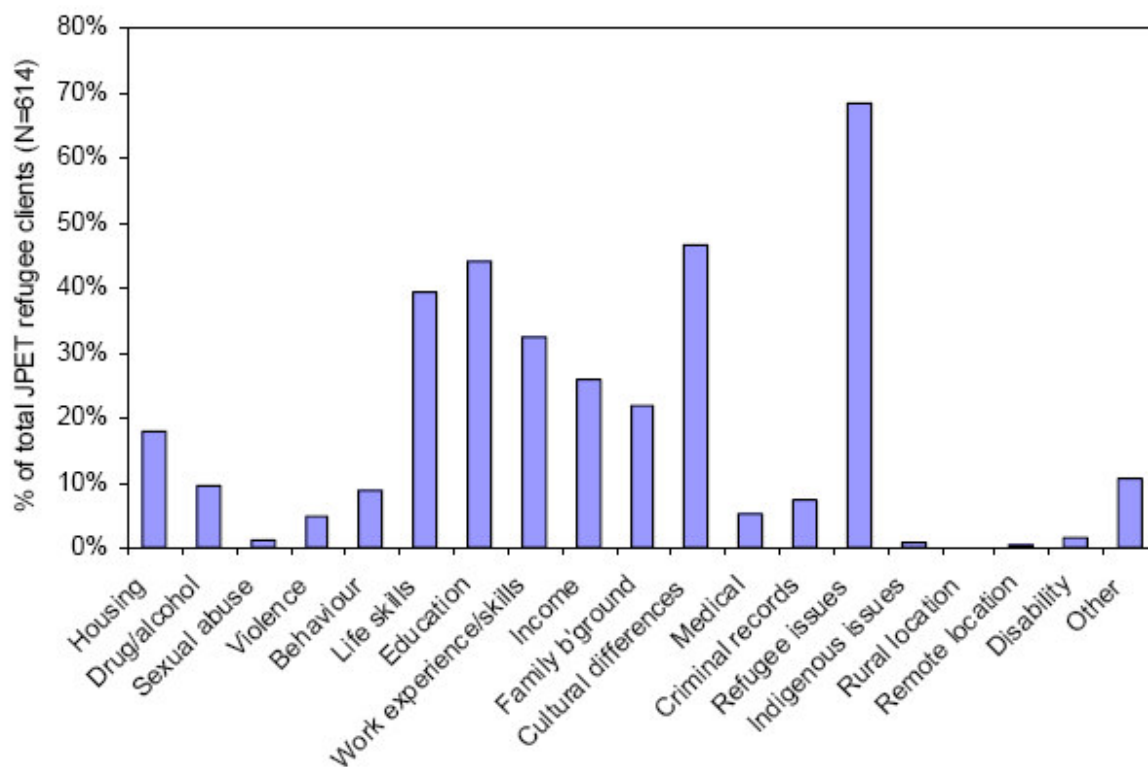
INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR DISADVANTAGED JOB SEEKERS

Not all refugees and humanitarian entrants are fortunate enough to have existing skills. Many are considered low-skilled on account of being born or spending extended periods of time in refugee camps, having been detained, constantly transiting between countries of residence, and/or not being presented with opportunities to undertake formal education and training of the variety that is considered useful in the Australian job market. This category of particularly disadvantaged job seekers is among those that has been especially hard-hit by the decommissioning of migrant-specific employment assistance services.

Jobs, Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) is the is the only federally-funded form of employment assistance that specifically recognises the needs of refugees in that refugees are identified within the program’s target group of “at risk” young people.³ In a 2002 JPET evaluation, employment assistance for refugees provided by JPET was less successful than assistance for other groups, such as those who have been released from prison and the homeless. While there are a number of common barriers that exist for refugees and other JPET clients, the most prevalent barriers are those issues specific to refugees with 68 per cent of all JPET refugee clients between 1999 and 2000 identifying these barriers.⁴

³ “Intensive assistance” is available from JN providers three months after a refugee has arrived in Australia, however, apart from the anecdotal evidence of refugee clients indicating that they are overwhelmingly unhappy with the level and quality of assistance they received, there is no indication

⁴ Louise Kyle, Fiona Macdonald, James Doughney and Joanne Pyke (2004) *Refugees in the Labour Market: Looking for Cost-Effective Models of Assistance*. Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne p. 10



The difficulties encountered by refugees and humanitarian entrants in relying on mainstream services to provide them with the assistance they require to obtain the employment outcomes they want has led refugee community groups and settlement agencies to developing their own initiatives to better respond to the needs of refugees. However, because of the emphasis on mainstreaming, very few of these programs are funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship or the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Nevertheless, they provide some good practical models for alternatives or supplements to the general services already on offer:

- **Skilled migrant placement programs.** One Migrant Resource Centre in NSW has obtained SGP funding to employ a skilled migrant placement officer to provide targeted assistance to skilled migrants to enable them to upgrade their skills, gain skills recognition, and/or tap into appropriate job markets.
- **Employer education programs.** Migrant Resource Centres and some Legal Aid offices are providing training to employers on their obligations under anti-discrimination legislation and the refugee experience in an effort to encourage them to avoid discriminatory employment practices.
- **Professional mentoring programs.** These team members of the general Australian community with refugees to provide them with direct assistance to find appropriate employment.
- **Vocational education programs linked to language skills.** These have proved especially useful for women who may be pre-literate and/or have experience working in the informal sector in their home countries.

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY AND MINIMISING ADMINISTRATION COSTS

Refugee job seekers' experiences accessing employment services and engaging with the Australian labour market cannot be separated from their interactions with Centrelink and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Consequently, any efforts to improve the operation of the JN and employment service provision, especially insofar as these efforts are focused on minimising administration costs, must take into account the impact on other costs to refugees and the broader Australian community.

In particular, the "breaching" regime, as administered by both JN providers and Centrelink has had a severe impact on the livelihoods of refugees (and other marginalised individuals receiving income support) who may inadvertently fall subject to its inflexible requirements and are penalised by the loss of up to eight weeks of income support. While it is sometimes argued that removing income support benefits for those not strictly adhering to the requirements of the mutual obligation regime results in savings for the Federal Government, a closer analysis reveals that the breaching regime actually results in simply shifting expenditure from income support to emergency relief funding and other charities. The Salvation Army, a provider of emergency relief, found that while there has been an estimated "saving" of \$258.8 million by Centrelink through the penalty regime, this figure ignores the fact that large numbers of unemployed people affected by breaching are turning up to Salvation Army and other community welfare agencies to seek assistance to survive.⁵ Numerous studies indicate that the breaching regime has resulted in:

- Being unable to afford food and vital medication;
- Inability to meet utilities payments resulting in some instances in a discontinuation of these services and additional reconnection costs;
- Homelessness because of inability to meet rental costs;
- Criminal activity to obtain money to pay for essentials such as food and rent;
- Difficulty in supporting dependents, especially children, who also rely on this income support.⁶

Administration of the breaching regime has also given rise to significant haemorrhaging of compliance costs by Centrelink and JN agencies who must lodge a "participation report" each time it is believed that a client has breached one of 68 income support eligibility criteria. Between 2001 and 2003, almost 130,000 such participation reports were lodged of which around one in five were revoked through the client appeal process, but only after breached clients had already forfeited part of their income support.⁷ There is little specific research demonstrating the extent to which refugee clients are represented among those who are breached, however the experiences outlined in these general studies are matched by the anecdotal evidence provided to the Council during our community consultations. Given that refugees and humanitarian migrants are among the most disadvantaged Australians who rely on income support payments while they are recovering from the effects of trauma and attempting to resettle in a completely new environment, often without substantial community or family support networks, the breaching regime can hit them particularly hard. Any ostensible savings achieved by Centrelink simply reappear as costs in homelessness and health sectors as well as the criminal justice system.

As highlighted above, adhering to Centrelink and JN obligations also often compromises refugees' capacity to undertake English classes through the Adult Migrant English Program. While there is

⁵ The Salvation Army Southern Territory (2001) *Stepping into the Breach: A Report on Centrelink Breaching and Emergency Relief*. The Salvation Army, Victoria.

⁶ See for instance, Sue Lackner and Greg Marston (2003) *System Error: An Analysis of Centrelink Penalties and Job Network Participation Reports*. Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT, Melbourne; National Welfare Rights Network and ACOSS (2000) *Doling out Punishment: The Rise and Rise of Social Security Penalties*. ACOSS Info 220, ACOSS, Sydney; The Salvation Army Southern Territory (2001) *Stepping into the Breach: A Report on Centrelink Breaching and Emergency Relief*. The Salvation Army, Victoria.

⁷ Sue Lackner and Greg Marston (2003) *System Error: An Analysis of Centrelink Penalties and Job Network Participation Reports*. Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT, Melbourne.

clearly a link between English proficiency and the capacity of a new migrant to obtain stable, sustainable employment, many refugees have reported that obligations to Centrelink and their JN provider have forced them to discontinue language classes well before they have completed their minimum requirements or even attained a satisfactory level of English. AMEP providers have also experienced difficulty convincing students that they should persist with English classes when it is a challenge to fit these classes in between paid work obligations. The ability of refugees to recommence English classes is often limited because of the restrictions on enrolment and completion of AMEP (students must enrol within three months of arrival in Australia and complete their designated hours of free tuition within 12 months). In addition, the types of jobs that refugees tend to feel pressured to accept, especially within the early years of settlement in Australia, tend to be located in industries with long, atypical business hours, that make consistent attendance at English classes almost impossible to sustain. Deferral is often difficult or not an option with many new arrivals tending to drop out of classes and frequently unable to re-enter AMEP at a later date.

The experiences of refugees as clients of a range of government service providers, often with competing and conflicting requirements, highlight the necessity of an approach to employment service delivery that is integrated with income support and settlement services. Such a whole-of-government approach will not only result in better employment outcomes for refugees, but a more efficient use of government resources in this sector.

CONCLUSION

As some of the newest members of the Australian community, refugees and humanitarian migrants feel passionately about participating in the labour market to the full extent of their abilities and notwithstanding the intensely traumatic situations from which they have fled. However, even the most diligent and skilled of refugees frequently finds it immensely difficult to secure a job to which they are not only occupationally matched, but that is stable, has appropriate conditions and is adequately remunerated. A combination of the impact of the refugee experience, undifferentiated employment service provision, lack of recognition of existing skills and experience, discrimination, and the competing obligations to various government service providers, all work to exclude refugees from full participation in the labour market. Removing some of these barriers and developing services modelled on those already operated by community groups that respond directly to the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants can help ensure that sound employment pathways are part of securing successful settlement outcomes.

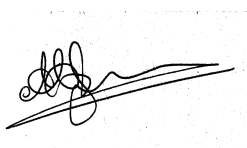
RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. RCOA recommends that Job Network providers ensure all refugee job seekers are given the opportunity to complete a skills audit where all previous tasks, activities, responsibilities and qualifications are identified and then translated into competencies for use by Job Network staff to ensure successful career pathways into suitable long-term employment for skilled refugees. RCOA recommends that DIAC explore ways in which information gathered from refugees and humanitarian entrants during the protection application process regarding their qualifications and employment history can be used to assist.**
- 2. RCOA recommends that DIAC and DEEWR establish a fund to provide subsidies to assist humanitarian entrants undertaking bridging courses to have overseas qualifications and experience recognised in Australia.**
- 3. RCOA recommends that in view of the extended residency requirements and application procedures for Australian citizenship, the Federal Government review the mandatory requirement of Australian citizenship for public sector employment.**

4. RCOA recommends that DIAC, Centrelink and DEEWR explore the re-establishment of specialist migrant employment agencies.
5. RCOA recommends that the job seeker classification instrument that is used to assess whether a client is eligible for intensive assistance by a JN provider needs to be more nuanced, recognising that, while refugees may be “highly disadvantaged” upon arrival in Australia, this disadvantage need not be long-term.
6. RCOA recommends that performance management provisions for JN contracts match quantitative indicators with appropriate incentives to place disadvantaged job seekers, including refugees and humanitarian migrants, in occupationally matched, stable employment.
7. RCOA believes the basic minimum income support safety net should be a right that cannot be withdrawn as a punitive measure to ensure compliance to, or used as a means to test the legitimacy of, those requiring assistance in seeking employment. In an effort to minimise the time and money dedicated to administering the mutual obligation regime, RCOA recommends that a new system of incentives for participation should be considered that do not threaten the security of the basic income support benefit, particularly for refugees and special humanitarian entrants and those at risk from losing the basic necessities of life.
8. To begin to work towards the elimination of the structural barriers that discrimination in the Australian labour market poses to refugees, RCOA recommends that:
 - (a) Employers be encouraged to adopt recruitment procedures that are transparent and clearly identify the reasons individuals are unsuccessful;
 - (b) DEEWR launch an education campaign for employers focusing on the elements of workplace discrimination, their legal obligations and the value of a diverse workplace; and
 - (c) JN providers liaise with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to ensure the provision of employment rights and discrimination information to clients as well as assist in avenues.

The Refugee Council of Australia is able to provide you with additional information about any aspect of this submission, should you require it. Further information about the work of the Council is available on our website: www.refugeecouncil.org.au Our report to DIAC mentioned above, *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program: Community Views on Future Directions*, has been submitted to DIAC but is not yet available for public circulation. We are, however, happy to supply your office with a copy of the report upon request. It will be available to download from our website on 1 March 2008.

Yours faithfully,



Anna Samson
National Policy Director