

**Submission  
No 89**

**INQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT FOR DISADVANTAGED  
JOBSEEKERS**

**Organisation:** Centre for Multicultural Youth

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# CMY Submission to the Inquiry into Sustainable Employment for Disadvantaged Jobseekers

Legislative Assembly, Economy and Infrastructure Committee,  
Parliament of Victoria





## About CMY

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) is a not-for-profit organisation based in Victoria, providing specialist knowledge and support to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Our vision is that young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are connected, empowered and influential Australians.

In 2017/18, CMY directly supported more than 4,300 young people across more than 25 targeted programs and services throughout Victoria.

[www.cmy.net.au](http://www.cmy.net.au)

## Introduction

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds contribute to an increasingly diverse Victorian community. Despite making up almost half of the population and being essential to Victoria's economic and social success, many young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds continue to experience significant barriers that hinder their full and equal participation in economic life.<sup>1</sup>

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are among the many refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia who are overrepresented among the ranks of underemployed, lowly-paid, low-skilled, precariously employed and casualised members of Australia's labour force.<sup>2</sup> This is despite young people often reporting high aspirations for work and study.

CMY welcomes the Victorian Government's commitment to "supporting the participation of young people from culturally diverse communities in economic, social and civic life."<sup>3</sup> In order to uphold this commitment, it is critical that we address the barriers that young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds' face in relation to employment, and invest in initiatives that build on their strengths and harness their potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the 2016 Census of Population and Housing reveals that almost half of Victoria's youth population were either born overseas or have parents who have migrated from other countries, and they identify with various cultures and religions. See CMY (2019 forthcoming) *A Young and Multicultural Victoria: The 2016 Census*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth; Kellock (2017).

<sup>2</sup> Hugo, G. (2013). The Economic Contribution of Humanitarian Settlers in Australia. *International Migration* (2013), IOM. Available from [https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/the\\_economic\\_contribution\\_of\\_humanitarian\\_settlers\\_in\\_australia.pdf](https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/the_economic_contribution_of_humanitarian_settlers_in_australia.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Victoria State Government (2016), *Youth Policy: Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria*, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne. Retrieved 15 July 2017: <https://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/get-involved/youth-programs-and-events/victorian-government-youth-policy>



## 1. Recommendations

### 1.1 Recommendations relating to strengthening educational engagement:

1.1.1 Build on the demand for and success of the Navigator program by:

- Expanding the current program (based on regional demand) to reduce waiting lists and strengthen young people's engagement with school;
- Ensuring the Navigator model incorporates culturally relevant responses to particular vulnerable groups of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds as required (as has been done with recent Navigator programs, targeting young people from South Sudanese and Pasifika backgrounds). This flexibility and cultural responsiveness will ensure vulnerable young people are effectively engaged as part of the broader Navigator model.

1.1.2 Invest in early-intervention support in schools for vulnerable young people showing early signs of disengagement through:

- Investing in local education partnership brokers (such as LLENs) to work alongside schools and community organisations to coordinate early-intervention support to strengthen engagement for students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Schools in areas of disadvantage and/or with high numbers of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds to be prioritised.
- Culturally relevant, early-intervention case management support that works holistically with the young person, family and school to address barriers to educational engagement.

1.1.3 Ensure youth-specific EAL classes are available in areas of Victoria with significant numbers of newly arrived young people.

### 1.2 Recommendations relating to the education to work transition:

1.2.1 That educational institutions (including schools, training providers and higher education) be required and supported to embed a strong education-to-work strategy in the curriculum, to better support young people's transition to employment. This could include developing strong industry partnerships, work placements, access to mentoring and professional networks.

1.2.2 Resource schools with high numbers of students from migrant and refugee backgrounds to broker work experience opportunities and part-time work opportunities for students who need support, through partnerships with community organisations who can support this process.

1.2.3 Integrate family engagement as a key component of the Victorian government's commitment to comprehensive career planning in schools. This should include adequately resourcing and skilling schools to effectively engage families from migrant and refugee backgrounds in career discussions concerning their children.



### 1.3 Recommendations relating to brokering employment opportunities for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds:

1.3.1 Invest in private, public and community sector partnerships to create employment opportunities for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds across all sectors. This includes:

- Paid internships and traineeships;
- Entry-level positions within state and local government for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds; and
- Programs that work with employers to broker opportunities (both full-time and part-time) and support inclusive work practices; prepare and support young people; and provide professional mentors.

1.3.2 Resource initiatives that support young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and their families to develop small businesses and entrepreneurial activity.

1.3.3 Take leadership to promote the benefits and value of diversity to employers, including offering support to Victorian workplaces to develop diversity and inclusion policies and practices.

1.3.4 Work with local councils in disadvantaged areas to invest in place-based, collaborative approaches to addressing unemployment amongst young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Such approaches require a long-term investment, co-designed, and build upon strong engagement with the young people and communities concerned.

1.3.5 Build a stronger evidence base and understanding of educational and employment outcomes for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Victoria, by

- Collecting and analysing longitudinal data related to education and employment outcomes for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds (including country of birth, ethnicity, parent's country of birth, language spoken at home) to inform effective responses;
- Researching barriers and enablers for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds (particularly for groups such as young women) in accessing VET;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs in supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to transition to sustainable employment to inform future responses and improve outcomes.



## 2. Victoria's disadvantaged jobseekers and the future of sustainable employment

### 2.1 Young people as disadvantage jobseekers

Young people today are faced with a rapidly changing world of work. Advances in digital technology and globalisation are breaking down traditional barriers, increasing connectedness and changing the way organisations, societies, governance structures and individuals operate. While negotiating these changes, young people are faced with a more competitive jobs market, driven by rising skills and education levels. Successfully negotiating these changes, and securing sustainable employment, requires that young people master a range of new and emerging skills necessary to compete in the new economy. Young people are required to navigate this rapidly changing space while also overcoming persistent barriers to employment.

How are young Australians faring?

- Young people are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than older Australians.<sup>4</sup>
- Almost one in five young people are long term unemployed.<sup>5</sup>
- There are fewer full-time jobs available now than just a decade ago and underemployment has become “an entrenched feature” of Australia’s youth labour market.<sup>6</sup>
- A high number of young Australian’s are in part-time work in occupations with some of the highest rates of casualisation – such as hospitality (65%) and retail trade (40%).<sup>7</sup>
- Low wage growth has made some traditional pathways to work less financially viable, as has a lack of entry-level job opportunities.<sup>8</sup>
- Fewer young people are commencing and completing apprenticeships and traineeships.<sup>9</sup>
- More young people are undertaking post-compulsory education<sup>10</sup> but are taking longer to transition between education and employment.<sup>11</sup>
- Work experience is increasingly required to gain meaningful work in today’s labour market, which is reflected in the rapid rise in internship, work experience and traineeship models and programs in recent years.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> As of December 2018, Australia’s unemployment rate of 11.4% for young people aged 15-24 years of age was over twice the broader unemployment rate of 5%. Brotherhood of St Lawrence, (2019), *Smashing the avocado debate: Australia’s youth unemployment hotspots – March 2019*. Accessed 15 July 2019:

[http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/11134/2/BSL\\_Smashing\\_the\\_avocado\\_debate\\_youth\\_unemployment\\_hotspots\\_Mar2019.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/11134/2/BSL_Smashing_the_avocado_debate_youth_unemployment_hotspots_Mar2019.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> In 2017, 18.4 per cent of unemployed young people had been out of work for 12 months or more. Department of Employment (2017) Australian Jobs 2017,

<https://docs.jobs.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australianjobs2017.pdf>, accessed 30 January 2018.

<sup>6</sup> In 2017, 18 per cent of young Australians were underemployed. BSL (2017a) Reality bites.

[http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/10341/1/BSL\\_Reality\\_bites\\_Australias\\_youth\\_unemployment\\_Dec2017.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/10341/1/BSL_Reality_bites_Australias_youth_unemployment_Dec2017.pdf) p. 1. BSL research suggests this is not explained away by the number of young people who combine studies with employment. See BSL (2017) Generation stalled: Young, underemployed and living precariously in Australia,

[http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9409/1/BSL\\_Generation\\_stalled\\_young\\_underemployed\\_2017.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9409/1/BSL_Generation_stalled_young_underemployed_2017.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2017) Connecting people with jobs: Key issues for raising labour market participation in Australia, [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/employment/connecting-people-with-jobs-key-issues-for-raising-labour-market-participation-in-australia\\_9789264269637-en#WmALz66WaJA#page5](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/employment/connecting-people-with-jobs-key-issues-for-raising-labour-market-participation-in-australia_9789264269637-en#WmALz66WaJA#page5); see also BSL (2017) Generation stalled, p. 6

<sup>8</sup> For example, fewer young people are turning their part-time jobs during their teenage years (such as at supermarkets and fast food chains) into full time jobs post-high school.

<sup>9</sup> Between 2014 and 2018 the percentage change for apprenticeship and traineeship commencements was -5.8% for those 19 years and younger and -16.1% for those 20 to 24 years, while the percentage change for apprenticeship and traineeship completions was -24.6% for those 19 years and younger and -27.5% for those 20 to 24 years. See NCVER (2019) *Apprentices and trainees 2018: December quarter – Australia*. Available from <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/apprentices-and-trainees-2018-december-quarter-australia>, Table: Australian demographic overview (12 months ending 31 December 2014 to 2018)

<sup>10</sup> VicHealth & CSIRO (2015).

<sup>11</sup> AWPA 2014 cited in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017), p. 12



- Disadvantaged young people continue to face additional barriers in their effort to secure work.

## 2.2 Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds as disadvantaged jobseekers

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds bring to the workforce a range of diverse skills, strengths and qualities that make them assets to employers and the broader Victorian economy. Notably, they “tend to be globally oriented and are motivated to develop broad social and professional networks”, while their bicultural and bilingual skills are an indispensable asset in a global economy and their international networks and global citizenry serve as potential pathways into new and exciting roles and opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

Despite their potential, there are considerable inequalities related to socio-economic factors and ethnic background when it comes to accessing employment for people who are not only from migrant and refugee backgrounds, but who are also young.<sup>14</sup>

How are young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds faring?

- Young Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds are more likely to be unemployed compared with other young Victorians.<sup>15</sup>
- Recently arrived migrants have been identified as a disadvantaged jobseeker group in Victoria.<sup>16</sup>
- The unemployment rate for migrants from NESB is higher than for migrants who are from ESB and those who are Australian-born<sup>17</sup>
- Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are more likely than their Anglo-Celtic Australian-born peers to be engaged in a technical, tertiary or other form of further education institution<sup>18</sup> but their skills and qualifications are underutilised in the current Australian labour market.<sup>19</sup>
- Migrants are more likely than Australian-born peers to be overqualified for the work they do.<sup>20</sup>
- The unemployment rate of migrants is “relatively higher” in periods of economic slowdown compared to Australian-born peers.<sup>21</sup>
- Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are more likely than Australian-born peers to be engaged in a technical, tertiary or other form of further education institution,<sup>22</sup> however graduates from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) (53.9 per cent) take longer to find full-time employment compared with graduates from an English-speaking background (72.3 per cent).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Brotherhood of St Lawrence, (2019, p. 1

<sup>13</sup> Mansouri & Mikola (2014) cited in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017), p. 11

<sup>14</sup> Verhaeghe et al., 2015 cited in Kellock 2016

<sup>15</sup> MYAN (2014). *The CALD Youth Census*, Carlton: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Employment, 2014 and Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2010) cited in AMES (2017), p. 6 [https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987\\_ames\\_aust\\_vocational\\_reporta4final.pdf?la=en](https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987_ames_aust_vocational_reporta4final.pdf?la=en).

<sup>17</sup> Department of Employment, 2014 and Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2010) cited in AMES (2017), p. 6 [https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987\\_ames\\_aust\\_vocational\\_reporta4final.pdf?la=en](https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987_ames_aust_vocational_reporta4final.pdf?la=en).

<sup>18</sup> ABS (2016c) cited in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) p. 7

<sup>19</sup> VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017), p. 9

<sup>20</sup> PC <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/migrant-intake/report/migrant-intake-report-overview.pdf>, pp. 8-9

<sup>21</sup> PC <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/migrant-intake/report/migrant-intake-report-overview.pdf>, pp. 8-9

<sup>22</sup> ABS (2016c) cited in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) p. 7

<sup>23</sup> Graduate Careers Australia, 2017, Employment and salary outcomes of higher education graduates from 2017, GCA. <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/GradStats-2017-3.pdf>



- The percentage of NESB migrants with tertiary qualifications working in low skilled occupations is substantially higher (22%) than those who were from ESB (7%) and Australian born (8%).<sup>24</sup>
- There are notable differences in rates of youth non-engagement in employment, education and training (NEET) in Victoria based on country of birth and main language spoken at home.<sup>25</sup>
- Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are underrepresented in Victoria's vocational training sector;<sup>26</sup> are identified by the VET sector as 'disadvantaged learners' for whom "opportunities have traditionally been poorer" and for whom multiple factors often intersect to compound disadvantage.<sup>27</sup>
- In areas where high numbers of ethnic minorities live, youth unemployment can be as high as three times the national average, and twice as high in terms of youth unemployment overall.<sup>28</sup>

Length of time in Australia, humanitarian status and main language spoken at home all appear to impact upon economic participation. However, despite some evidence of broader trends, economic participation is influenced by a complex range of factors and that cannot be attributed to particular groups or characteristics of migrants. This demonstrates the need for strengths-based approaches and flexible models of support that understand and respond to individual needs. Developing effective, sustainable solutions requires gaining a deep understanding of the complex and intersecting factors impacting upon the employment outcomes of this growing group of young Victorians.

### 2.3 The social and economic benefits of employment for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Addressing barriers to the full and equal participation of young Victorian's from migrant and refugee backgrounds benefits all Victorian's.

A significant component of social inclusion is labour force participation. Employment creates not only an income, but strengthens social connections and a sense of belonging, and enhances social cohesion overall.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from the social benefits of economic participation, successive Australian governments have also recognised the advantages to the wider Australian economy of utilising the education, language and cultural skills and knowledge of migrants.<sup>30</sup> This is based upon evidence that shows that:

<sup>24</sup> Department of Employment, 2014 and Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2010) cited in AMES (2017), p. 6 [https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987\\_ames\\_aust\\_vocational\\_reporta4final.pdf?la=en](https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987_ames_aust_vocational_reporta4final.pdf?la=en).

<sup>25</sup> See Table 1 and 2 in Appendix.

<sup>26</sup> Less than one in ten Victorian apprentices and trainees were born overseas (9.2%) - 22% of Victoria's youth population are overseas-born.ABS, Victoria, [May 2018](#)

<sup>27</sup> Lamb, S, Maire, Q, Walstab, A, Newman, G, Doecke, E & Davies, M 2018, Improving participation and success in VET for disadvantaged learners, NCVET, Adelaide citing a NVEAC 2009 study that originally identified learners from a culturally and linguistically diverse background as 'disadvantaged learners', p. 12 < [https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/2096175/Improving-participation-and-success-in-VET-for-disadvantaged-learners.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/2096175/Improving-participation-and-success-in-VET-for-disadvantaged-learners.pdf)>

<sup>28</sup> BSL cited in Jakubowicz, A., Collins, J., Reid, C., & Chafic, W. (2014). Minority Youth and Social Transformation in Australia: Identities, Belonging and Cultural Capital. *Social Inclusion*, 2(4): 5-16. Place-based disadvantage means young people living in Victoria's 'youth unemployment hotspots' face an even greater challenge finding sustainable employment. Almost one in every five (18.3%) young people are unemployed in Bendigo, this figure is 17.5% in Shepparton and 15.5% in Melbourne's West, which includes the suburbs of Sunshine, St Albans, Footscray and Melton. (BSL, <http://www.bsl.org.au/media/media-releases/australias-latest-20-youth-unemployment-hotspots-ranked/>) These are all suburbs or towns located in LGAs settling high numbers of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. (Based on settlement data from DSS, provided 4.5.19)

<sup>29</sup> Nilan, P., Samarayi, I. & Lovat, T. (2012), Female Muslim Jobseekers in Australia: Liminality, Obstacles and Resilience, *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, Vol.2, No.4, pp. 682-692.; Centre for Policy Development (2017), *Settling better*, Centre for Policy Development.





- “Cultural diversity can lead to higher levels of productivity and innovation because there are more resources in terms of skills and views to draw upon when problem solving”.<sup>31</sup>
- Migrants from diverse backgrounds and with a range of skills can “stimulate new ideas and generate new business, jobs and economic growth”.<sup>32</sup>
- The language skills and country-specific knowledge of migrants can be particularly valuable for businesses seeking to enter into new export markets.<sup>33</sup>

Evidence shows that migrants and refugees make substantial contributions directly to Australia’s economy.<sup>34</sup> However, recent research has revealed there are further “strong fiscal benefits” to be made from proactively working to promote the economic participation of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.<sup>35</sup> For example, analysis from the Centre for Policy Development shows that:

*“Improving employment outcomes by 25 per cent for just one annual intake of humanitarian migrants (compared to average jobseekers) would deliver a ‘triple dividend’ for Australia. It is worth \$465 million in direct annual value to those migrants, \$165 million to the Federal Government budget and significant social cohesion dividends.”<sup>36</sup>*

## 2.4 The future of work

Understanding the future of work, and how potential changes will impact upon particular jobseekers, is essential to fostering sustainable employment outcomes. Technological, social and economic shifts are beginning to radically change job opportunities. Addressing barriers to economic participation for young Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds, not only in employment and business, but education and social and civic life, is an overdue and critical step towards preparing Victoria and all Victorians for the future of work. Below are some of the key changes to the future of work and workers in Australia that will impact upon young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Victoria.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> AMES (2017), p. 6 [https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987\\_ames\\_aust\\_vocational\\_reporta4final.pdf?la=en](https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987_ames_aust_vocational_reporta4final.pdf?la=en) .

<sup>31</sup> Deloitte Australia & Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), 2012 cited in AMES AMES (2017), p. 6 [https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987\\_ames\\_aust\\_vocational\\_reporta4final.pdf?la=en](https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987_ames_aust_vocational_reporta4final.pdf?la=en) ., pp. 6-7; see also Nathan and Lee 2011 cited in Morris and H (2019), p. 4

<sup>32</sup> Office of Multicultural Interests Western Australia, 2012 cited in AMES (2017), p. 6 [https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987\\_ames\\_aust\\_vocational\\_reporta4final.pdf?la=en](https://www.ames.net.au/-/media/files/research/ams116987_ames_aust_vocational_reporta4final.pdf?la=en) .

<sup>33</sup> Morris and H (2019), p. 4

<sup>34</sup> Australian Survey Research Group (2011). *Settlement outcomes of new arrivals: Study for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship*. Available from [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01\\_2014/settlement-outcomes-new-arrival\\_access.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/settlement-outcomes-new-arrival_access.pdf). Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2011). *A significant contribution: The economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants*. Available from [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01\\_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Centre for Policy Development (2017), *Settling Better*, Centre for Policy Development.

<sup>36</sup> Centre for Policy and Development, (2018), *Submission: Future of Employment Services*, 10 August 2018.

<sup>37</sup> CMY have provided a more detailed response on this particular issue in our submission to the Parliament of Australia’s Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers inquiry. Available from [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Future\\_of\\_Work\\_and\\_Workers/FutureofWork/Submissions](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Future_of_Work_and_Workers/FutureofWork/Submissions).



### 2.4.1 Changing skill demands

Along with changes to the range of skills young people will need in the future, rising skill and educational levels across the population will create a more competitive jobs market where educated workers will need to supplement their formal education with new and emerging proficiencies and knowledge to get ahead.

Despite being more likely than their Australia-born peers to engage in further education, young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are one group of Australians whose skills and qualifications are underutilised in the current Australian labour market.<sup>38</sup> Getting the most out of this highly educated and growing group of young Victorian workers requires systems and structures that promote full and equal participation in education and training that provides up-to-date and emerging skills, and workplaces that recognise the value of diversity through inclusive recruitment strategies and merits-based employment practices.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.4.2 New employment models

In the future of work, freelancing and other ‘non-standard’ forms of work will be enabled by the peer-to-peer economy. This will create greater flexibility, variety and autonomy for workers.

In addition to greater flexibility and autonomy, some of the new employment models will also mean less job security (than is found in more traditional permanent full-time roles). This may place more onus on the individual to negotiate reasonable pay, hours, conditions, etc. In order to benefit from these new work models, young people will need ‘soft’ skills that allow them to confidently navigate potential risks and pitfalls of these new models and structures, they will also need to be equipped with knowledge about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace, as well as with supports to exercise their rights.

### 2.4.3 A more global marketplace

In the future, employment will not necessarily be tied to a geographical place. Globalisation and technology will continue to dramatically re-shape the nature of education and work.

“Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds tend to be globally oriented and are motivated to develop broad social and professional networks.”<sup>40</sup> Their bicultural and bilingual skills are an indispensable asset in a global economy, while their international networks and global citizenry serve as potential crucial pathways into new and exciting roles and opportunities in the future of work.

### 2.4.4 Inequality in the future of work

Inequality has been identified as one of the greatest risks facing young people in the future of work.<sup>41</sup> Many migrant and refugee background communities in Australia experience significant social and economic disadvantage, which, when not addressed, can result in intergenerational experiences of poverty and

<sup>38</sup> VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017), p. 9

<sup>39</sup> ‘Inclusive employment’ is defined “as all efforts that promote fair and equitable access to decent employment, ensuring satisfactory pay and conditions, career prospects and opportunities for social integration”. Ibid. p. v. (van Kooy’s report also highlights the critical importance of labour market intermediaries (LMIs), particularly not-for-profit and community-based organisations, in helping jobseekers who are disadvantaged by their race, education or experience and in supporting employers with employee retention.)

<sup>40</sup> Mansouri & Mikola (2014) cited in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017), p. 11

<sup>41</sup> FYA (2015) p. 7



exclusion. International research shows that disadvantage, and the social isolation and marginalisation that this experience engenders, place greater risks to social cohesion than new migration.<sup>42</sup>

Directly addressing barriers to participation and inclusion in economic and social life is essential to getting ahead of this challenge. This requires understanding and addressing the range of barriers known to negatively impact upon the employment outcomes of certain groups of Australians, including young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

### 3. What are the barriers for young jobseekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds?

Despite being critical to Australia's economic and social success as a nation, many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds continue to experience significant systemic and structural barriers that prevent their full and equal participation in economic life.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, some young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds also face significant personal barriers that can impact on their ability to secure work.

#### 3.1 Systemic barriers

##### 3.1.1 Racism and discrimination

Regardless of their educational attainment, racism and discrimination present as very real barriers to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds' attempts to securing relevant work. Human resource practices have been associated with creating barriers for disadvantaged job seekers;<sup>44</sup> unconscious bias in recruitment processes is one such example, which impacts on both entry level job seekers and tertiary educated young people.

An extensive body of research now documents how 'ethnicity' can disadvantage job seekers in Australia, such as having a name that indicates you may be from a non-English speaking background.<sup>45</sup> In addition to being underutilised in the labour market, more than one in ten migrant business owners report "being impacted by racism or discrimination due to their cultural background" – with those who are younger or arrived in Australia more recently, more likely to report this.<sup>46</sup>

##### 3.1.2 Lack of bridging social capital

Gaining employment requires an understanding of how the job market works, time, digital access and helpful networks.<sup>47</sup> Previous studies highlight the importance of informal knowledge about post-secondary educational system and career pathways, accessed through the knowledge of parents, family members,

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<sup>42</sup> Saggar, Sommerville, Ford & Sobolewska (2012).

<sup>43</sup> Kellock (2017).

<sup>44</sup> van Kooy (2015) p. 1

<sup>45</sup> VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO and MYAN (2017), *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>46</sup> CGU (2018) p. 23 (

<sup>47</sup> Van Kooy, 2017 in VicHealth et al. (2017).



peers or other informal mentors.<sup>48</sup> However many young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds frequently lack both information, work experience and access to the support and social capital they need to find work.<sup>49</sup> Parents frequently lack understanding of the options and employment pathways available in the Australian context, and have limited bridging social capital that may help their children ‘get ahead’ in the world of work.

This unequal access to social capital “has the potential to reinforce inequality of life opportunities and create an ‘ethnic penalty’, particularly in terms of access to professional careers”.<sup>50</sup> This also constitutes a significant loss for broader society, in terms of knowledge, skills, and economic contributions.

*“There was a really bright boy in the community – on the Dean’s list at [University] – who did a double major. He went for 33 jobs, and now is smoking shisha in [suburb]. His mother is devastated” – mother of Somali/Australian young man<sup>51</sup>*

### 3.2 Individual barriers

Research highlights a number of barriers that young people from refugee backgrounds face when transitioning successfully to employment. These may include:

- limited English proficiency;
- ongoing impact of trauma and dislocation;
- lack of family support;
- disrupted education (as a result of the refugee experience);
- lack of knowledge about the Australian system or labour market;
- limited understanding of employment pathways, Australian workplace culture and systems;
- limited work experience;
- limited vocational skills; and
- negative experiences in seeking employment.<sup>52</sup>

## 4. What’s needed?

Sustainable employment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who are disadvantaged jobseekers requires strengthening engagement with education and training; responding flexibly to individual needs and challenges; taking a whole-of-community, partnership approach; increasing the cultural responsiveness of employers and services; and involves long term investment and an evidence-base.

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<sup>48</sup> Graham, J., Shier, M., & Eisenstat, M. (2015). Young Adult Social Networks and Labour Market Attachment: Interpersonal Dynamics that Shape Perspectives on Job Attainment. *Journal of Social Policy*, June 2015, 1 – 18.

<sup>49</sup> Beadle (2014); Kellock (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY).

<sup>50</sup> Hasmath, 2013 cited in Kellock (2016), p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Kellock (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth.

<sup>52</sup> Beadle, S. (2014), *Facilitating the transition to employment for refugee young people*, Carlton: CMY.



## 4.1 Responses in education and training

Education and training play a fundamental role in preparing people to have the skills required to successfully enter the workforce and maintain employment.<sup>53</sup> ABS data demonstrates that non-school qualifications increase both the chances of being employed and the average weekly income.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, the employment related needs of many young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are not being sufficiently addressed by the education, training and employment service system. Ongoing issues include inadequate English language support, failure to understand and meet social and emotional needs, racism, discrimination and a lack of cultural sensitivity.<sup>55</sup>

### 4.1.1 Youth-specific EAL classes

Strong English language skills are foundational to supporting newly arrived young people's successful transition to education, employment and economic participation in Victoria.<sup>56</sup> People from refugee and migrant backgrounds with good levels of English are 70% more likely to have a job after 18 months in Australia than those with poor English.<sup>57</sup> Although federally, Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) funding supports English language acquisition, the suitability of delivery for young people across Victoria is inconsistent.<sup>58</sup>

Young people who arrive in Australia at an older age (such as those aged between 15-25 years) are particularly vulnerable group due to frequent experiences of disrupted education and/or being too old to enter the school system. Some AMEP providers offer youth-specific classes for those under the age of 25. Youth specific classes have been shown to provide a supportive, peer-based learning environment where young people's social and educational needs are met, and provide an important point of partnership for community, youth and recreational services and VET providers.<sup>59</sup>

However, the availability of youth-specific AMEP classes in Victoria is ad hoc. Some young people find it difficult to remain engaged in an all-age class, as it is not tailored to their developmental and learning needs. There is currently no consistent approach or funding imperative to meet the needs of this specific cohort of young people in terms of youth-specific English and educational support. Widespread access to youth specific AMEP classes in Victoria is needed to better support their learning needs.

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4235.0>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4235.0>

<sup>55</sup> MYAN (2019), Submission to the Independent Panel for Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants, Carlton: MYAN. <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/myan-australia-independent-review.pdf>; Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson (2009), Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre.

<sup>56</sup> MYAN (2018) *Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive*. Melbourne: MYAN.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Education and Training (2018) English classes for eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants in Australia. Available at: [https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/amep\\_factsheet\\_-\\_updated\\_31\\_july\\_2018.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/amep_factsheet_-_updated_31_july_2018.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to help them learn foundation English language and settlement skills to enable them to participate socially and economically in Australian society. It sits alongside the broader EAL offerings provided by states and territories.

<sup>59</sup> Olliff (2010), Finding the right time and place: Exploring post-compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW. Sydney: Refugee Council of Australia.



#### 4.1.2 A well-resourced, culturally responsive Navigator program

The state funded Navigator program is a much-needed intervention to support 12 to 17 year olds who are disengaged or at high-risk of disengaging from school, in recognition of the complexity of factors that can interfere with a young person’s educational journey.<sup>60</sup> CMY welcomes the expansion of the program across the state.

Feedback from multicultural youth workers and school welfare workers indicate that there is a strong demand for the kind of support Navigator offers. School welfare workers in some regions with high numbers of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds report having approximately six months waiting lists for students to see a Navigator case worker, reaffirming evaluation findings that less than 24 months after Navigator was launched there were substantial waiting lists for the service.<sup>61</sup> Long-wait times obstruct the potential effectiveness of the program, as the longer young people are disconnected from the school system, the more challenging it is to help them re-engage.

*“You end up losing them from school, because we just don’t have the time it takes to reach out” – school welfare coordinator in a school with high numbers of students from migrant and refugee backgrounds.<sup>62</sup>*

CMY strongly supports the Victorian government’s recognition that there are certain groups of young people, such as particular cohorts from migrant and refugee backgrounds, who may require culturally relevant interventions – demonstrated through the Navigator program having a specific focus on supporting young people from Pasifika and South Sudanese backgrounds in the south east of Melbourne. Bicultural workers and organisations with strong engagement with cultural communities bring trust and engagement with vulnerable young people and families that may be lacking with the mainstream service system. Place-based partnerships such as those between community services, Local Learning and Employment Networks, communities and schools are important for identifying groups of young people who may require culturally tailored approaches, in combination with school disengagement data.

Increasing the resourcing for Navigator to ensure the service is able to respond to strong community demand, and ensuring there is flexibility to develop culturally targeted responses for vulnerable groups would help strengthen young people from migrant and refugee background’s connection to education.

#### 4.1.3 ‘Earlier and younger’- an early intervention approach

Strong feedback from multicultural youth workers and school welfare staff highlights the need for an approach that targets vulnerable young people ‘earlier and younger’. CMY’s experience working with migrant and refugee communities suggests that many young people at risk of disengaging from school are not receiving support early enough. Similarly, the transition from primary to secondary appears to be a critical point where some students begin slipping through the cracks.

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<sup>60</sup> <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/navigator.aspx>; Navigator pilot – evaluation snapshot, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/navigator.aspx>

<sup>61</sup> Navigator pilot – evaluation snapshot, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/navigator.aspx>

<sup>62</sup> Interview with School Welfare Coordinator in a secondary school in NW metropolitan Melbourne, with high numbers of students from migrant and refugee backgrounds.



There is a gap of culturally relevant, family inclusive case-work support for young people who are showing signs of disengaging from school. Investing in an early intervention approach to school engagement would both complement and reduce the high demand for Navigator program.

There is a strong need for coordinated approach to early intervention support for young people at risk of disengaging from education. Culturally relevant case management that works alongside a young person, their family and their school to strengthen educational engagement is an important part of this. Coordinated partnerships between Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENS), local government, schools, School Focused Youth Services and community organisations are also an integral prevention and early-intervention approach to school engagement. Projects such as [Joining the Dots](#) – highlight the strength that partnerships can play in supporting these transitions.

#### 4.1.4 Strengthening the education to work transition

Developing work-related skills and networks should start in education and training settings. Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds frequently report that it is only after having finished studying that they realise how difficult it can be to find work. It is much more difficult to obtain access to career counselling, information relevant to specific industries, and relevant work experience after leaving an education setting.

There is a strong need for education-industry based partnerships that facilitate employment outcomes, in school, TAFE, vocational training providers and university. These can include career counselling, work placements, mentoring, and developing professional networks.

##### **Humanitarian Internship Program – Griffith University and Department of Social Services**

Partnerships between universities and government departments can also provide important work experience and entry points for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. One example is the Humanitarian Internships Program at Griffiths University and the federal Department of Social Services – a 6 week hands-on internship at DSS for students from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds, with the aim of improving their chance of gaining employment post-study. Interns gain public service work experience across multiple teams in Queensland’s State Office of the DSS, receive mentoring, training and the possibility of further work. Embedding work experience opportunities in education is a critical step in supporting young people from refugee backgrounds secure relevant work.

For more information, see [here](#).

#### 4.1.5 Part-time work

Research shows that Australian students have an increased chance of being in full-time work upon school completion and have greater employability skills if they have engaged in part-time work while studying.<sup>63</sup> Part-time work and work experience opportunities are also critical for gaining work place skills, establishing broader social networks, referees and a history of employment.

<sup>63</sup> Patton, Wendy A. and Smith, Erica (2009) ‘Part-time work of school students: Impact on employability, employment outcomes and career development’. QUT Digital Repository, Brisbane.



However, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds repeatedly report barriers to part-time work, which may significantly impact their employment prospects post-education. Census data for Victoria indicates that young people born overseas are more likely to be unemployed and looking for part-time work compared with other young Victorians.<sup>64</sup> Supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to secure part-time work while still engaged in education is an important part of addressing this gap.

#### 4.1.6 Work experience

An external review of Victorian government schools identified a strong need to support greater access to meaningful work experience and industry connections.<sup>65</sup> CMY has found that many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds struggle to gain relevant work experience and are frequently unsure how or where to gain this experience, who to approach, or lack confidence to broker this themselves due to limited social and professional networks.<sup>66</sup> Schools frequently require students to find their own work experience placements, and may lack the capacity to support students in the process, resulting in many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds missing out.

Bridging relationships, whether through individual contacts or services, is essential to addressing this. While there is a role here for brokers, such as community organisations or services, this also requires stronger links between education providers and industry/employers, as well as greater incentives for both education providers and employers to recognise their responsibility for providing this important opportunity to future workers. Partnerships between educational institutions, community organisations, Local Learning and Employment Networks, local government and businesses are critical to addressing this gap.

#### 4.1.7 Vocational Education and Training

CMY strongly welcomes the Victorian government's \$50 million investment in Head Start Apprenticeships and Traineeships in 100 government schools and \$25.9 million in improving access to VET in schools. Recent research highlights the importance of VET in facilitating school-to-work transitions, particularly for those who pursue an early entry to full time work pathway.<sup>67</sup> However young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are underrepresented in Victoria's VET system.<sup>68</sup>

CMY's experience is that many young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds lack awareness around the strength of apprenticeships and traineeships as a pathway to employment, or may not view VET as a desirable option. Low literacy levels can make application processes prohibitive. Additionally, no or low pay and a lack of networks and knowledge of industries present barriers for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds into the job market through this well-established pathway.

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<sup>64</sup> CMY, (2019 forthcoming). *A young and multicultural Victoria: The 2016 Census*, Carlton: CMY.

<sup>65</sup> Department of Education and Training,

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Transforming\\_Career\\_Education.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Transforming_Career_Education.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Kellock (2016), p. 23

<sup>67</sup> Ranasinghe, R. Chew, E. Knight, G. & Siekmann, G. (2019), School-to-work pathways, NCVER.

[https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/6547412/School\\_to\\_work\\_pathways.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/6547412/School_to_work_pathways.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Data from 2018 suggests that only approximately 15% of VET students aged 15-24 speak a language other than English in the home, yet more than one in four young Victorians (26%) speak a language other than English in the home. Less than one in ten Victorian apprentices and trainees were born overseas (9.2%) - 22% of Victoria's youth population are overseas-born .ABS, Victoria, *May 2018*) - NCVER, 2018, Government funded students and courses 2018: data slicer. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/all-data/government-funded-students-and-courses-2018-data-slicer>; CMY, (2019 forthcoming). *A young and multicultural Victoria: The 2016 Census*, Carlton: CMY.





Strong industry-education partnerships, with a focus on apprenticeships and traineeships, could help increase understanding of available pathways and employment options for young people. A review of existing barriers to refugee and migrant young people's participation in apprenticeship and VET-like schemes is also needed.

#### 4.1.8 Career education and family engagement

CMY welcomes the Victorian government's significant investment in career education and VET in schools, with a focus on career education starting early, connecting to work and being a priority in schools.<sup>69</sup> Informed career guidance and support is especially important for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, given they often lack the knowledge and contacts within their immediate networks (family and friends) to provide guidance and support around education and employment pathways in Australia.

Families of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds frequently lack understanding and knowledge around career options and avenues, engagement with their child's school, and may lack English literacy. At the same time, parents of migrant and refugee backgrounds frequently hold high or specific career aspirations for their children.

*"There's literally no one [educated people in family], and being the oldest child it was like 'Oh my god' – I had to kind of navigate that all by myself and it was hard... I'd be in a different place now if I had a bit of advice, because I just didn't have that kind of support" – young woman, Ethiopian background<sup>70</sup>*

CMY is encouraged that the government acknowledges that family is "vital in supporting the career development of young people",<sup>71</sup> however it is critical that family engagement in career planning is adequately resourced. The government's current commitment to sending Career Action Plans home is an important first step, yet far greater engagement is required to involve families from refugee and migrant background's in their young person's career pathway.

Both educational institutions and services to take a family centred approach with regards to career education and employment support. Schools and other education settings must be adequately supported and resourced to engage with families from migrant and refugee backgrounds around their children's career planning and pathways.

## 4.2 Youth-specific, individualised responses

Youth-specific services and responses that draw on youth work frameworks and approaches are one critical element to effectively addressing young peoples' economic participation.<sup>72</sup> Research also shows that, for at risk or disadvantaged young people, "(h)olistic, individualised and wraparound services are critical. This means identifying and responding to all the person's barriers, both personal and work/learning related,

<sup>69</sup> [https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Transforming\\_Career\\_Education.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Transforming_Career_Education.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Kellock (2016), p. 17.

<sup>71</sup> Department of Education and Training, Engaging parents in career conversations. Accessed 26 July 2019:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/parentsframe/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>

<sup>72</sup> Couldrey (2014) *Issues in labour force participation: Youth at risk and lower skilled mature-age people* (a report commissioned by the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency), <<http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A63059>>, pp. 41-42, accessed 30 January 2018: See also Osborg Ose & Jensen (2017).



working often not just with the individual but also their family, and navigating and connecting them to relevant support services.”<sup>73</sup>

The report, *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*, identifies key elements for effective service delivery to assist young people from refugee backgrounds into employment. These include:

- Individualised, holistic support/case management;
- Education initiatives that help young people & families to understand career options, pathways and expose young people to variety of opportunities;
- Programs that support young person’s transition from education to employment;
- Access to paid work experience and internships;
- Providing support in the workplace (to both young people and employers);
- Mentoring programs with an employment focus;
- Programs that build ‘bridging’ social capital (links with industry, employers, professional mentors);
- Cultural competency amongst services/employers.<sup>74</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Outreach

Highly disengaged young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds need culturally-relevant, assertive outreach in order to engage them back into some future education or employment pathway. Such programs need to be resourced in a way that recognises the time it takes to build engagement with the young person, and the partnerships that support their re-engagement with education and/or employment.

##### **CMY: Youth Learning Pathways Program**

The NorthWest Youth Learning Pathways Program (YLP) targets young people aged 17 to 25 years from Melbourne’s NorthWest metropolitan region who are identified as involved with or at high risk of entering the justice system. The project supports young people to develop tailored training and employment pathway plans in conjunction with wrap around services to achieve their career goals.

Working in partnership with Youthnow, a youth training and employment organisation, the program co-designs pathways with participants. Young people have access to individualised career coaching, a range of training options, work readiness and pathway planning, as well as holistic wrap around services to promote participation and success in education.

A unique element and strength of the program is the partnership approach between the generalist youth worker who provides broader case management and support, and the career coach who has specialised knowledge of education and training pathways. These workers collaborate to support both the young person’s practical and support needs, and their educational/training aspirations.

<sup>73</sup> Couldrey (2014) p. 41

<sup>74</sup> Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*, Carlton: CMY.



#### 4.2.2 Flexible models

There is a strong need for tailored, flexible and individualised support that works with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to assist them in their employment journey. Young people from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds in particular require significant assistance around employment, including understanding and navigating complex and unfamiliar education and employment systems; preparing resumes and developing interview skills; understanding Australian workplace culture; and accessing traineeships and apprenticeships.<sup>75</sup>

##### CMY and Foundation House: UCan2

UCan2 is a partnership program between Foundation House, CMY and AMES. It provides individual case management, employment-focussed curriculum, psycho-social support, social connections and part-time employment opportunities to participants who are concurrently undertaking the standard twelve month English language program offered to newly arrived migrants. Ucan2 is designed to provide appropriate levels of support during early settlement to enable young people from refugee backgrounds to negotiate challenging education, training and employment pathways successfully.

A significant number of students have undertaken part-time work experience in a local retail store as part of the program. This experience provides valuable skills for those young people who are newly arrived and have not had the opportunity of working in Australia. With each Ucan2 program delivered, a number of students are successful in gaining employment directly through their work experience placement. A majority of students have successfully transitioned to further education, training and employment opportunities after completing the Ucan2 program.

For more details, see: <http://cmy.net.au/ucan2>

#### 4.2.3 Paid internships

Paid internships are opportunities to practice these skills and see these rights in action and are increasingly essential for employment. However, there are equity issues associated with a jobs market that requires young people to undertake unpaid work in order to gain requisite experience for employment. Requiring young people to work for free in order to gain work experience unfairly disadvantages those who lack financial support, are carers, or who are strongly reliant on income from part-time work. The intersection between settlement, economic disadvantage and unemployment requires greater attention.

The rise of unpaid internships could actually exacerbate inequality – unfairly impacting on those from low socio-economic backgrounds, who hold family-related responsibilities, and who lack the social and cultural capital within their immediate networks to link them to such opportunities.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Centre for Multicultural Youth (2014) *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People: A data update and review of recent literature with a focus on 'what works'*. CMY, Melbourne

<sup>76</sup> McDonald, Oliver & Grant-Smith, 2016 cited in Kellock (2016).



*“Sometimes I feel ‘white people’ have it easier by being able to do internships or work for free to get a foot in the door while people I know from migrant backgrounds are working three jobs to help support their families, especially if their parents have limited English and are struggling to find work... the playing field is not even. Having a system where you need to work for free to get experience means only the wealthy can afford to get ahead” – young person from migrant/refugee background.<sup>77</sup>*

This highlights the importance of providing paid internship opportunities that recognise young people’s contributions, whilst also providing the opportunity for learning and skill development in the workplace.

### **CMY: Mary Danckert Youth Internship Program**

This program provides paid opportunities to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Victoria to gain work experience in the not-for-profit sector.

CMY are committed to ensuring young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are empowered to access opportunities and actively shape their own futures. The program has a focus on nurturing and supporting the development of young people’s skills, capacity and understanding in their field of interest, building young people’s professional networks and preparing them for future employment. Through the program interns also gain access to useful connections to improve their employment outcomes.

Since, 2013 CMY have supported five young people in this program. All those completing the internship have left CMY for paid employment.

“I have been able to gain a wealth of invaluable skills and knowledge that will help me in my future career. This internship enabled me to utilise my own potential as well as equipped me with required skills and experience to comfortably undertake any work in an organisation.” - Arif Hazara

“The role provided me with a good balance of structure and flexibility and equipped me with the confidence to challenge myself and go outside of my comfort zone.” - Yusra Hasan

See: <https://www.cmy.net.au/news-media/news/meet-cmy%E2%80%99s-mary-danckert-youth-intern-2017-18>

### **CareerSeekers**

CareerSeekers is a non-profit organisation that supports University students and professionals from humanitarian backgrounds to gain paid internships in their area of study. The model was built upon the success of a program that supported pre-professional Indigenous university students. Paid internships provide students with industry experience, a professional network and an insight into career pathways.

Full time university students are supported to undertake 12 week paid internships over university breaks to gain valuable work experience in industries such as Science, Engineering, Law, IT, Business/Commerce, Mathematics and Arts.

See: <http://careerseekers.org.au/>

<sup>77</sup> Kellock (2016), p. 24.



#### 4.2.4 Mentoring

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds identify mentors as an effective ‘bridge’ to the knowledge and contacts necessary to navigate employment pathways. These relationships are particularly necessary for young people no longer in a full-time education context, and for those who lack the social and cultural capital in their networks to support their job search. Establishing mentoring relationships for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds has the potential to open up access to greater social capital in the world of work.

Mentors provide critical guidance and advice to young people to assist them in navigating education and employment – from looking over their resumes and giving them tips related to their industry, to being that first critical link to broader support, networks and opportunities.

##### **CMY: Employment Empowers**

This unique program, run by the Centre for Multicultural Youth, aims to increase employment opportunities for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds while also responding to the needs of businesses looking to find the right staff and build a diverse workforce.

The program partners with young jobseekers, employers and volunteer mentors. Employers and volunteer mentors who believe young people from diverse backgrounds have much to contribute, that business can be a force for good, and who are passionate about developing an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Young jobseekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds engaged in tertiary studies and those undertaking or who have completed certificate level courses, undergo an intake and assessment process to determine their employment needs, goals and aspirations. The mentoring relationship is critical to the program’s success.

*“There is something inherent in the mentoring relationship that increases young people’s chances of success (in employment)... the mentors are important role models for the young people and they do much more than supporting them with the practical stuff like resumes. Young people are building skills in the mentoring relationship that can be transferred to the workplace. Mentors also hear young people out, support them to achieve their goals, introduce them to contacts and friends in relevant industries and help young people understand pathways to achieving their long term goals.” – Employment Empowers Team member*

With the mentoring relationship in place the program then matches the young person to employment opportunities, including paid internships and other work placement opportunities, and provides ongoing support and monitoring to the young jobseeker, employer and volunteer mentor.

In 2017/18, CMY recruited and trained 65 new volunteer mentors with professional Australian work experience, matching them to young people to provide one-on-one support. The mentors’ role was integral in preparing young people for employment, as well as supporting them as they adjusted to a new workplace. In addition to working with young people experiencing barriers to finding work, CMY partnered with 14 employers who were eager to provide a life-changing opportunity to a young person, and were passionate about building an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Mary (not her real name) was referred to a research internship through the Employment Empowers program, which she prepared for and applied to with the support of her mentor. She was successful in progressing to secure a paid role.

*“The program definitely has pushed me to put my goals and plans into practice. My mentor helped me a lot fixing, writing cover letter & CV and preparing for interviews. She helped me with application when applying for the research internship role. I am now a casual Project Assistant. I am grateful to have Carmel as my mentor and working with me. Thank you for the opportunity” – Mary (Employment Empowers participant)*

See: <https://www.cmy.net.au/employment-empowers>



#### 4.2.5 Supporting young entrepreneurs

High rates of entrepreneurialism are another asset migrant and refugee communities bring to Victoria in the globalised future of work.<sup>78</sup> CMY welcome the Victorian government investment in supporting entrepreneurship through establishing independent bodies such as LaunchVic, and having focused funding rounds to support those from migrant and refugee backgrounds.<sup>79</sup>

Recent research from the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) highlights that people from refugee backgrounds are almost twice as likely to be entrepreneurs compared with the broader Australian population.<sup>80</sup> CPD's research into effective programs supporting refugee entrepreneurs highlights the need for a strategic approach that incorporates upskilling, connections, capital, an enabling environment, specific support and spotlighting success.<sup>81</sup> These are all elements captured within CMY's Enterprising Communities program, which focuses on building the capacity of emerging entrepreneurs from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Victoria.

##### CMY: Enterprising Communities

The Enterprising Communities Program is a community strengthening and employment generation project that stimulates and nourishes the start-up environment.

The program unearths business talent, targeting residents with business ideas or existing early-stage businesses. The Enterprising Program offers emerging entrepreneurs the opportunity to participate in a 14-week Business Start-up Intensive (BSI) designed to instil practical business skills, knowledge, networks and confidence.

Each participant is also matched with a volunteer mentor from the local business community who provides advice and support and helps connect them into the business community.

The program is designed to promote social inclusion and cohesion in the local area and to have a positive impact on economic and social development at the local level.

Over three years, nearly 60 Wyndham residents spent 14 weeks learning the fundamentals of business. Participants represented the diversity of the community and gave people who wouldn't normally meet, a chance to develop strong and lasting bonds. Through their participation in the program they were connected to local business people as mentors to guide their journey in starting a business. In the first 2 years alone 19 jobs were created as a result of the budding businesses in the Enterprising Wyndham programs.

See: <https://www.cmy.net.au/enterprise>

#### 4.3 'Whole of community' responses – underpinned by partnerships

A key issue repeatedly identified by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is the challenges they face engaging with a service system that doesn't understand and respond to their needs. Young people continually tell us that they want more meaningful participation and engagement, not consultation that

<sup>78</sup> Morris and H (2019), p. 4

<sup>79</sup> <https://launchvic.org/rounds/round-3>

<sup>80</sup> Legrain, P. & Burridge, A. (2019), *Seven steps to success: Enabling refugee entrepreneurs to flourish*, Centre for Policy Development.

<sup>81</sup> Legrain & Burridge (2019).



tends towards tokenism, but real opportunities to influence decision making and inform how services for them are planned for, funded, designed, delivered and evaluated.

For young people from a migrant or refugee background an employment service system that works well would adopt a 'whole of community' approach that actively engages government and employment service providers in partnerships with young people, their families and communities, their schools, and the community organisations and services they frequent and trust.

Partnerships can do more than open up employment opportunities, they can address issues resulting from lack of or limited social capital by building networks that provide young people with access to employment or career advice and contacts, work experience opportunities, as well as information on career options and workplace culture and expectations. Partnerships may also work to address issues such as discrimination in employment by promoting culturally inclusive workplaces and policies. However, adequate time and resourcing must be allocated to create sustainable partnerships in order to effectively support young people in their transition into the labour market.

The shift towards large, generalist employment services providers (especially for youth and for diverse community groups) has been flagged as of concern for its very real potential to result in complex cases being placed in the 'too hard' basket.<sup>82</sup> Employment service providers have an important role to play in partnering with industry not only to open up opportunities, but also in building cultural responsiveness and understanding of the refugee and migrant experience in the workplace. Partnerships between employers, employment service providers and community services and organisations have been found to be critical to supporting and sustaining employment placements for 'at-risk' youth in Australia, particularly for those who are disadvantaged by their race, education or experience.<sup>83</sup> CMY's engagement with the Job's Victoria Employment Network provides an example.

#### **CMY: A specialist JVEN approach**

CMY welcomes approaches such as the Victorian Government's JVEN focus on young people from African and Pasifika backgrounds. This model leverages the particular expertise of partners to achieve improved outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This is achieved by adopting a partnership model that recognises community organisations' (including settlement, multicultural and youth organisations) strong relationships and trusted role in communities means workers can identify eligible young people and introduce them to the program. Young people are then linked to employment services partners, who have established relationships with industry and employers and can identify appropriate pathways and link young people with employment opportunities. Young people are supported in their placements by both partners, who continue to work collaboratively to ensure the young person is engaged and supported in the work, increasing the likelihood that the employment is sustainable.

Schools are a critical site for supporting a pathway from education to employment. There is an important need, however, for a coordinated approach to early intervention support for young people at risk of disengaging from education. This involves both a coordinated approach between schools, community services and LLENs, and culturally relevant case management that can work alongside a young person in the school setting, their family and their school to strengthen educational engagement. The model adopted by

<sup>82</sup> Youth-specific see YACVIC (2014); refugee-/migrant-specific see, Fairfield Multicultural Interagency & RCOA (2017).

<sup>83</sup> Couldrey (2014) pp. 41-42; van Kooy (2015) Employer toolkits: Building more inclusive workplaces? Available from [http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/7109/1/VanKooy\\_Employer\\_toolkits\\_towards\\_inclusive\\_employment\\_2015.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/7109/1/VanKooy_Employer_toolkits_towards_inclusive_employment_2015.pdf) (accessed 30 January 2018).



William Ruthven Secondary School demonstrates the value of such partnerships to intervening early and preventing disengagement.

### **William Ruthven Secondary College SCAT**

William Ruthven Secondary College in Reservoir has implemented a whole-school approach to supporting student transition and engagement in learning by creating a dedicated School Community Action Team (SCAT).

The SCAT is a response to the identified need to support students to strengthen their engagement in learning and career pathways and has a particular focus on supporting students vulnerable to disengagement

Led by the School and supported by the Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network (INLLEN), the other SCAT partners include key community service organisations and local Council. With a focus on early intervention and strengthening capability of staff, families and students, together they have developed strategic responses to improving education and pathways outcomes for all students, especially those vulnerable to disengagement.

The William Ruthven Secondary College SCAT is currently comprised of representatives from: Apprenticeships Plus, Arabic Welfare, Berry Street / School Focused Youth Service, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Darebin City Council, Headspace Glenroy, Inner Northern LLEN (INLLEN), Lookout / Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET), William Ruthven Secondary College and Your Community Health.

While the aims of the SCAT were initially focused on improving education outcomes for students at William Ruthven SC during the transition period from primary to secondary school (Years 4-9), throughout 2019, and in response to identified need, the objectives were re-evaluated. Six key goals for the partnership now encompass:

1. Better engaging students in their learning and career pathways
2. Initiating student wellbeing strategies that:
3. Improve student mental health awareness and support for all students
4. Enhance social and emotional regulation and positive relationships
5. Support responsible decision making
6. Support an inclusive learning environment
7. Promoting authentic student voice and agency
8. Strengthening partnerships with families and the broader community to ensure continued student engagement in learning
9. Enhancing mental health literacy and trauma sensitivity of staff
10. Effective primary to secondary school transition

The school greatly values the support of its community partners. To ensure the sustainability of the SCAT, members have developed a Terms of Reference, Strategic Action Plan and Evaluation Framework. Membership of the SCAT will continue to change over time to meet the current needs of staff, students and families.





Family plays another important role when it comes to education and employment, in that they can strongly influence the pathways young people take and what they will go on to achieve.<sup>84</sup> Family is also key source of social support for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, yet CMY's experience suggests young people's employment outcomes or choices can lead to conflict in families. It is important that family and community are better supported to be involved as key players in their young people's education and employment journey.

In CMY's experience, a partnership, community development approach where government and community organisations work alongside young people, families and communities to address economic disadvantage is both effective and important. Working alongside migrant and refugee communities (including young people) to identify issues, strengths and co-design responses offers a promising model of how employment opportunities can be brokered and developed. Flemington Works provides a positive example of such an approach.

#### **Flemington Works – Moonee Valley City Council**

Moonee Valley Council has been funded by Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions until June 2020 to support employment outcomes in the Flemington public housing estate, taking a whole of community approach, with a strong emphasis on women and young people. Within 12 months they have achieved 60 employment outcomes (casual, contract, full time, part time) for people living on the housing estate, many of whom are young people.

The program has been co-designed with young people of African backgrounds from the local area, who were paid for their expertise and time. In 12 months, Flemington Works has supported the development of microenterprise catering businesses for women; a 20 week paid internship program for young people from African backgrounds in local council; short-term full time labour hire for young people of African backgrounds within council; and the development of social and sustainable procurement guidelines and policies to ensure that suppliers need to create jobs for social housing residents in order to win Council tenders, which has to date created 35 employment outcomes over 3 years for Councils' cleaning contract.

Funding however is uncertain beyond June 2020, highlighting the need for longer term investment in these kind of initiatives. Effective partnerships and strong community engagement takes time, and a long term view and investment is needed. Short-term funding risks losing valuable capital in terms of the trust, engagement, knowledge and partnerships needed to respond to complex issues of unemployment, potentially costing more in the long run.

## **4.4 A culturally responsive employment system**

### **4.4.1 Culturally responsive services**

There is a strong need to ensure the employment services workforce and system is capable of meeting the diverse needs of Victoria's young people. While not a homogenous group, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have distinct needs that are currently not consistently supported across employment services in Victoria. It requires the following measures:

<sup>84</sup> A 2017 study from NCVET has reported that parents' attitudes to vocational education and training significantly influence the attitudes of young people, with young people noting that "the negative attitudes of parents prevented some young people from enrolling in vocational training" [https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf), p. 23



- Workers who are trained in culturally competency; can recognise and respond to diverse language capabilities; understand the refugee and migration experiences and associated challenges; and, are resourced and supported to engage newly arrived young people across their range of needs and link them to adequate referral pathways.
- Organisations and systems (including systems, processes and policies) that are youth-appropriate and culturally responsive.

#### 4.4.2 Culturally responsive employers

Cultural diversity in the workplace is of increasing value, and new ways of cultivating and managing diversity are in demand. Actively promoting diversity and inclusion has been shown to increase business performance.<sup>85</sup> However recent research from the Diversity Council Australia (DCA) asserts that despite diversity and inclusion being on the agenda for Australian workplaces for several decades, progress has been slow.<sup>86</sup> Diversity Council Australia provides an evidence-based framework for organisational change, but clearly stronger partnerships between private, public and the community sector are needed to drive this kind of cultural change. In CMY's experience, there is a strong need to not only support young people and broker employment opportunities, but to work with employers to increase their ability to attract and maintain employees from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, all levels of government and private enterprises are to be encouraged to engage with the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce. This includes implementing a cultural diversity strategy in recruitment policies, and make tangible commitments to recruiting more staff from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the same way many have done with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Local council has been shown to play a key coordination and brokering role, opening up opportunities through their relationships with local businesses and engagement with the local community.

### 4.5 A sustainable and evidence-based response

#### 4.5.1 Funding stability and long term investment

Defunding and significant re-structuring, including regular changes in funding criteria and eligibility, result in instability within established and niche programs and lead to significant gaps in support measures for young people. While review and program improvement are essential to effective and responsive service delivery, programs funded at the state and local government with good track records are often subject to short-term funding cycles. While other services and organisations often scramble to fill the gaps left behind, placing significant pressures on their workforce and budgets, the dramatic result is that many young people who need support experience significant periods where basic help is unavailable. *The Seed Program* in Moonee Valley City Council provides is an example of a program that folded due to lack of funding despite showing promise for its capacity to successfully engage with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Its successor, *Flemington Works*, is similarly on a short funding cycle of two years.

Sustainable partnerships between government, services, employers and communities are needed to better support young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds' ability to successfully transition to meaningful work.

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<sup>85</sup> Deloitte & Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (2012), Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance, Deloitte, Sydney.

<sup>86</sup> Diversity Council of Australia (2019), Change at work: Designing diversity and inclusion differently to achieve organisational change, DCA.



#### 4.5.2 Data collection

Longitudinal research to capture the employment experiences of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is needed. This will provide a greater understanding of ‘what works’ in meeting the employment needs of this group of young people, improving responsiveness and guiding future policy and programs.<sup>87</sup> The overrepresentation of both migrant and refugee young people in unemployment and underemployment figures highlights the need to capture the experiences for both cohorts.

Longitudinal data on the transitions of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds through the education/training and employment journey would provide much needed evidence as to the challenges, and the potential support, this group of young people need to thrive and contribute to the Victorian community.

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<sup>87</sup> Centre for Multicultural Youth (2014) *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People: A data update and review of recent literature with a focus on ‘what works’*. CMY, Melbourne.



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## 6. Appendix

**Table 1: Engagement in Employment, Education and Training by Country of birth (group) for 15 to 24-year-old Victorians, 2016 Census**

	Australia	Pasifika	Top 10 COB Humanitarian Arrivals	Top 10 COB (All Arrivals)	Main English Speaking Countries	Non-Main English Speaking Countries	Not Stated	ALL (exc. NS)
Fully engaged	79%	70%	72%	86%	77%	67%	10%	80%
Partially engaged	10%	12%	9%	6%	11%	6%	2%	10%
At least partially engaged	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Not Engaged</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Engagement status undetermined/Not Stated	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	20%	85%	1%
Total	547958	14009	20772	87177	28073	194092	44221	725902

\* The Top 10 countries of birth for humanitarian arrivals and all youth arrivals to Victoria are taken from CMY's Fact Sheet on Youth Arrivals 2016/17. The countries of birth included in 'Main English Speaking Country' and 'Non-main English Speaking Country' are taken from VMC Census report 2018.

**Table 2: Engagement in Employment, Education and Training by main Language Spoken at home (group) for 15 to 24-year-old Victorians, 2016 Census**

	English	LOTE	Not stated
Fully engaged	69%	77%	4%
Partially engaged	15%	10%	1%
At least partially engaged	2%	2%	1%
<b>Not Engaged</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Engagement status undetermined/Not Stated	1%	1%	94%
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%
Total	264,185	124,757	24,848