

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia)

Submission to Department of Jobs and Small Business on: 'The next generation of employment services: Discussion paper'

August 2018

Table of Contents

About MYAN.....	3
About this submission	3
Recommendations	4
1. General Statements.....	7
1.1 Profile of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia.....	9
2. Unique challenges for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds	10
2.1 Impact of settlement and learning a new language on young people	10
2.2 Lack of knowledge and supports to prepare for professional life in Australia.....	13
a) Lack of knowledge around employment services and work place rules.....	13
b) Lack of individualised supports to prepare for employment in Australia	14
c) Concerns around understanding of meeting mutual obligations	16
2.3 Limited access to suitable work experience opportunities.....	17
2.4 Limited social capital and networks	19
2.5 Racism and discrimination in accessing employment for young people	22
2.6 Lack of recognition of skills, qualifications and experiences obtained overseas	27
3. Experiences of young people with Jobactive providers.....	29
4. Specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds	34
5. Proposed online employment services and digital literacy of young people	38

About MYAN

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure that the particular rights and needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised, and to support a coherent and consistent approach to addressing these in policy and service delivery. MYAN undertakes a range of policy and sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills to influence the national and international agenda.

MYAN believes that children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have enormous potential to be active participants in and contributors to Australian society, but need targeted support to realise this.

MYAN has developed the *National Youth Settlement Framework* to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the rights and needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

About this submission

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Jobs and Small Business’ consultation process on the next generation of employment services. This submission highlights the particular concerns of and recommendations from young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia in relation to current employment services and proposed changes for the next generation. It has a focus on the views and experiences of young people (12 to 24 year olds). Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds make up 45% of Australia’s youth population¹ and should no longer be considered a marginal group but part of the ‘mainstream’ youth population – reflecting Australia’s diverse and multicultural community.

This submission provides a national perspective, drawing on the MYAN’s breadth of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors across Australia. This includes MYAN’s national support role with *Youth Transitions Support services*.

This submission has been informed by MYAN’s expertise in this field as well as by the views of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and others working with them. MYAN conducted consultations with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the first half of 2018 to hear from young people on how they experience job-seeking processes and their experiences with employment service providers. Face-to-face consultations were held in Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania with 97 young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. MYAN also held a national teleconference in

¹ VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 6.

July 2018 with six service providers supporting young people in their journey to employment, located in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland to inform this submission.

This submission comments on the proposed changes for future of employment services, especially around eligibility for enhanced employment services and online employment services and is structured around the views of young people. As such, the submission does not address individual questions posed in the discussion paper.

The submission includes the voices of young people as well as select case studies to highlight examples of good practice in employment services.

Recommendations

These recommendations are designed to respond to the particular circumstances/needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The recommendations are for the Department of Jobs and Small Business and/or *jobactive* providers to consider while designing and delivering the future employment services.

A. Unique challenges for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

- **Young people, settlement and learning a new language**
 1. Provide young people with supports to develop their language skills to meet the expectations of professional life in Australia, while ensuring information is provided and services are delivered in plain and simple English to make sure they are not excluded from the services delivered by *jobactive* providers, using interpreters as needed.
 2. Train employment services staff to ensure they understand the settlement journey for young people, as well as the language acquisition process, to ensure they deliver services which meet the unique challenges young people face while also supporting them to reach their potential in accessing jobs.

- **Lack of knowledge and supports to prepare for professional life in Australia**
 3. Increase awareness among young people of employment services and what they can deliver through targeted campaigns.
 4. Translate materials into relevant languages to make sure young people understand the services provided by employment services and their rights (as well as the type of services/activities they are entitled to) and obligations.
 5. Have a flexible approach in relation to eligible activities which contribute to young people’s employment readiness
 6. Expand eligibility to organisations/services that already deliver such specific and tailored programs which support young people’s access to employment.

7. Adopt an individualised support model for delivery by employment service providers, including a case planning approach, to ensure the support young people receive from the employment services is tailored to and meets their needs.
- **Limited access to suitable work experience opportunities**
 8. Provide young people with more work experience (as well as internship and volunteer) opportunities in different fields of employment based on their aspirations and interests.
 9. Understand the limitations of some young people around undertaking unpaid work experiences and provide them with paid internships and opportunities depending on their individual circumstances.
 10. Implement recommendations of the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* by the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training on government-led work experience programs.
 - **Limited social capital and networks**
 11. Provide young people with regular and structured opportunities to network and interact with employers while introducing young people to different fields and sectors of employment and professions (such as employment/jobs fairs, forums, networking events, etc.).
 12. Provide employers with the opportunity to meet and better understand the capabilities, aspirations and assets of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
 - **Racism and discrimination in accessing employment for young people**
 13. Initiate a national conversation about racism and discrimination in the employment of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through hosting panels with young people and/or employers who have hired young people speaking with employers in different sectors and the broader community about their experiences.
 14. Department of Jobs and Small Business invest in training for employers and businesses that utilise government employment programs on policies and procedures in relation to addressing discrimination in recruitment and throughout employment, including through engaging with Fair Work Ombudsman.²
 15. Department of Jobs and Small Business to work with the Department of Social Services to develop tools and resources developing tools Promote and encourage recruitment initiatives that aim to address unconscious bias and discrimination in recruitment processes.
 16. Initiate campaigns at the local, regional and national levels to educate employers and the broader Australian community about the skills and benefits of a cultural, linguistic and faith diverse workforce, including the benefits of hiring young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

² Fair Work Ombudsman materials addressing the issue of workplace discrimination as well as an online course on ‘Diversity and Discrimination’ targeting employers and business owners. For more see, <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/online-training/online-learning-centre/diversity-and-discrimination>.

17. Support businesses to employ young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through specific incentives.
18. Invest in training and professional development for employment services to address issues of discrimination/unconscious bias and stereotyping that young people face, in order to eradicate this in *jobactive* providers.

- **Lack of recognition of skills, qualifications and experiences obtained overseas**

19. Ensure recognition of overseas obtained qualifications, skills and experiences in job seeking processes through the provision of bridging courses/programs.
20. Pilot a coordination mechanism at the federal level with relevant assessment bodies, to introduce fast-track qualification recognition schemes in different professions to ensure faster integration into the Australian work-force.
21. Engage employers to increase their awareness about overseas obtained qualifications and their validity in Australia.
22. Advocate with employers to increase their recognition of previously obtained skills and experience.

B. Experiences of young people with Jobactive providers

23. Introduce automatic referral to enhanced/specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds without any additional eligibility criteria and set self-servicing periods through the online system.
24. Develop a flexible business model to ensure individual support can be provided to young people, with lower caseload allocation to *jobactive* staff.
25. Develop/update quality standards for employment service provider staff, ensuring it includes cultural responsiveness, as well as good customer service principles.
26. Develop an individualised funding model for the Employment Fund that is tailored to individual situation, needs and strengths of young people - similar to the Disability Employment Services delivered by the Department of Social Services.
27. Deliver training to employment services staff on cultural competency and cultural responsiveness, and ensure *jobactive* providers are up-to-date with current job market expectations as well as employment fields and opportunities.

C. Specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

28. Introduce automatic referral to enhanced/specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
29. Introduce specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that provide individual support to meet their needs and aspirations through a culturally responsive lense.
30. Implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism and The Joint Standing Committee on Migration with a focus on designing specialised services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

31. Incorporate feedback from young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds into the services delivered by employment services to ensure quality and responsive services.
32. Employ young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to deliver specialised employment services, as well as bicultural workers, to increase accessibility of employment services to young people.
33. Expand eligibility of activities provided by different services that support young people’s job seeking process (including mentorship programs) in line with their diverse needs and aspirations.
34. Pilot a mentoring component as part of specialised employment services delivered for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, facilitating the employment services’ established links with employers and businesses. This includes: making new connections with and encourage/support professional organisations initiated by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who could be mentors for young people.

D. Proposed online employment services and digital literacy of young people

35. Ensure direct access to employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, without any conditions or eligibility criteria to use online employment services first.
36. Ensure employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are tailored to increase their digital literacy skills.

1. General Statements

Employment is recognised as a key indicator of migrants’ economic integration.³ However Australia ranks low on migrant labour market mobility compared to other similar settlement countries.⁴ According to the Productivity Commission, the labour market outcomes of migrants “depend critically on their age, education, skills — including English-language proficiency — and time spent in Australia. Domestic policies, such as recognition of qualifications and occupational licensing, and the efficiency of labour markets more broadly, also influence these outcomes.”⁵ Equally as important as human capital and structural factors is a young person’s social capital – or the quality and diversity of their social networks and connections.⁶

In the absence of a national employment strategy focusing on refugee and migrant young people, employment assistance for young job seekers is through generalist or ‘mainstream’ service providers.⁷ Studies suggest that mainstream employment services are not responsive to the specific needs of refugee and migrant communities impacting refugee and migrant community utilisation of these key services.⁸ The *jobactive* system in particular has been criticised for being unable to provide the

³ OECD (2015), *Indicators of immigration integration: Settling in*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

⁴ Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPI) cited in Productivity Commission (2016), p. 8.

⁵ Productivity Commission (2016). *Migrant Intake into Australia*. (Inquiry Report No. 77). Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 8.

⁶ Kellock (2016), *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY.

⁷ Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY; RCOA (2012), *Job Services Australia: Refugee community and service provider views*. Sydney: Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

⁸ FECCA (2016), *Submission on Employability Skills Training*. Available at <http://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Employability-Skills-Training.pdf>; FECCA (2016). *Digital access and equity for multicultural communities*. (Digital Transformation Office). Available at <http://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/feccadigitalconsultationreport.pdf>.

necessary level of assistance required by people from refugee or migrant backgrounds and for a lack of cultural sensitivity.⁹ Reports suggest *jobactive* has sought to avoid ‘difficult cases’, while seeking to prioritise assistance for clients who are easier to place.¹⁰ Both refugee and migrant communities and community or non-government organisations providing services to refugees and migrants have also expressed frustration at the lack of targeted support offered by employment services and the poor outcomes experienced by refugee and humanitarian entrants in particular.¹¹

A significant factor contributing to employment disadvantage for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is their lack of social and professional networks beyond their own (cultural or ethnic) community.¹² Community feedback has consistently shown that mainstream employment services fail to address the complex needs of young jobseekers from diverse backgrounds, noting they lack targeted and tailored programs or strategies to identify and address their specific needs.¹³

Many young refugees and migrants seek employment within their own (cultural or ethnic) communities, often as a response to a lack of access or support from mainstream services. While seeking employment through one’s own family or ethnic community may have positive employment outcomes in the short-term, the lack of systematic settlement support for employment seeking does not support wider integration into the Australian community.¹⁴ Lack of employment opportunities in the wider community can undermine active citizenship and social cohesion and as such, it is not in the interests of young people or the broader Australian community.

In a 2016, MYAN conducted consultations with 550 young people from across Australia as part of the *Global Refugee Youth Consultations*). Issues raised in relation to the difficulty young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face when navigating employment in Australia included;

- poor understanding of rights and laws, resulting in young people experiencing workplace harassment;
- exploitation and discrimination;
- lack of recognition of qualifications;
- English language skill level;
- difficulties in maintaining employment;
- familiarity with technology for those cut off from technology for significant periods;
- the need to adjust to expectations regarding work in Australia.¹⁵

Programs that include a focus on supporting young people to establish networks into the wider community (for example through mentoring and work placement opportunities) are known to foster

⁹ RCOA (2016), *Jobactive: Refugee community and service provider concerns*. Melbourne: Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

¹⁰ RCOA (2012), *Job Services Australia: Refugee community and service provider views*. Sydney: Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA); MDA (2010), *Employment and Training Advocacy Position Paper*. Brisbane: Advocacy and Social Policy Unit, Multicultural Development Association (MDA); Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY.

¹¹ RCOA (2016), *Jobactive: Refugee community and service provider concerns*. Melbourne: Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

¹² Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY; Kellock (2016), *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY.

¹³ FECCA (2014). *Fact Sheet 3: Youth Employment in New and Emerging Communities*. Canberra: FECCA; RCOA (2016), *Jobactive: Refugee community and service provider concerns*. Melbourne: Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

¹⁴ Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY; Kellock (2016), *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY; Colic-Peisker (2003). “Active” and “passive” resettlement: the influence of support services and refugees’ own resources on resettlement style. *International Migration*, 41: 61-91; 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.

¹⁵ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia) and Refugee Council of Australia (2016), *Speaking Up: the Global Refugee Youth Consultations in Australia Report*. Available at: http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/GRYC%20Report_NOV2016.pdf, p. 16.

better community relationships and understanding and increase young people’s social capital with regard to employment.¹⁶ Programs that have made a concerted effort to include the wider community (e.g. local businesses and volunteers) have reported benefits not just for the young participants but to the community as well.¹⁷

In addition to targeted approaches and the provision of specialist services, there is a need to work directly with employers to build their knowledge and skills in employing young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds - to reinforce the value of workforce diversity and open up pathways to opportunity for young people from diverse communities.¹⁸ In light of growing evidence of labour market discrimination and unconscious bias in employment practice in Australia, there is much work to be done.¹⁹ Working with local business and other employers in community-based programs has been shown to be a strategic first step.²⁰

1.1 Profile of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia

In the 2016/17 financial year, 17,446 young people aged 12 to 24 years settled permanently in Australia.²¹ Young people, aged 12 to 24 years, represented 15% of all permanent arrivals to Australia in 2016/17.²² 41% of all youth arrivals to Australia in 2016/17 were of school age (aged between 12 and 17 years).²³ In the 2016/17 financial year, young people continued to make up an important portion of arrivals under the Humanitarian Programme (23%), and Family stream (21%) and Skill stream (16%) of the Migration Programme.²⁴ Young people from refugee-like backgrounds also arrived in Australia under the Migration Programme, which is utilised widely for young people to unify with their family members in Australia.²⁵ In addition to new arrivals, in 2016, 45% of young people in Australia were either first or second-generation migrants.²⁶

¹⁶ Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY; Kellock (2016), *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY.

¹⁷ Beadle (2014), *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY.

¹⁸ Olliff (2010a). *What works: employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*. Melbourne: RCOA.

¹⁹ Booth, Leigh & Varganova (2012). Does Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence from a Field Experiment. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 74(4): 547-573; Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan & Taouk (2009). *The impact of racism on the health and wellbeing of young Australians*. (For the Foundation for Young Australians). Melbourne: The Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University; Olliff (2010a); CMY (2014).

²⁰ Olliff (2010a). *What works: employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*. Melbourne: RCOA.

²¹ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 9. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

²² MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 6. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

²³ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 10. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

²⁴ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 6. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

²⁵ MYAN (2018) *Submission to the Department of Home Affairs on ‘Managing Australia’s Migrant Intake’*. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Australia%20Submission%20for%20Discussion%20Paper%20on%20Managing%20Australias%20Migrant%20Intake\(1\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Australia%20Submission%20for%20Discussion%20Paper%20on%20Managing%20Australias%20Migrant%20Intake(1).pdf), p. 5.

²⁶ VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 6.

2. Unique challenges for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

2.1 Impact of settlement and learning a new language on young people

Young Australians from refugee and migrant backgrounds are a diverse population group who commonly display immense resilience. They come to Australia with an array of strengths and capabilities and are often highly motivated to succeed in education and embrace the opportunities available to them.²⁷ However, they also face particular challenges in accessing the support and opportunities they need to navigate the demands of building a new life in a new country.

Their settlement needs are distinct from adults (due to their age, developmental stage, position within the family and role they often play in supporting the settlement of family members) and they commonly face additional and more complex transitions than their Australian-born counterparts. The challenges young people face navigating the settlement journey are compounded by the developmental tasks of adolescence and include:

- Learning a new language and negotiating unfamiliar education and employment pathways (sometimes with a history of disrupted or no formal education)
- Understanding and negotiating a new culture/cultures and cultural values
- Establishing new peer networks; navigating unfamiliar and relatively complex social systems and laws, including new rights and responsibilities
- Negotiating new or changed family structures, roles, responsibilities and relationships in the context of new concepts of independence, autonomy, freedom and child and youth rights
- Negotiating (multicultural) identity
- Juggling family and community expectations;
- Managing grief and loss associated with separation from peers or family, and
- Building social capital as a young person in their new context.²⁸

These factors were commonly raised by young people in MYAN’s recent consultations on employment.

“Migrant and refugee young people feel constant pressure to achieve higher and do better in order to be on the same level as young people who weren’t from a refugee and migrant background.”

“We have concerns around settling into Australia and have a lot of areas to focus on especially those with families struggle with juggling multiple tasks and on top of settling we have to learn English language and this can be a big barrier for us to find a job.”

“We struggle getting any support in regards to career choices or employment support because as a young person from refugee or migrant backgrounds we don’t have the push other young people receive, we have to be adults from a young age so need a lot of positive support to assist us.”

“We want key decision makers to consider the experiences of migrant and refugee young people and their families before making them go through employment services that don’t meet their needs.”

²⁷ See 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, p, 15

²⁸ MYAN (2017), *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 12.

“Fitting into the community, gaining employment and drivers license all at the same time is very difficult and young people need one on one assistance in this area.”

Young people from Western Australia

“Young people still have so many things going on in their lives at the same time.”

Young person from New South Wales

In addition to developing an understanding around the impact of settlement, employment services also need to develop an understanding on the impact of learning a new language and its impact on young people’s access to employment opportunities.

Language acquisition is an important part of settlement for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and a factor which may hinder their access to employment. The importance and challenges of learning English has been raised in recent inquiries undertaken by the Australian Parliament looking into multiculturalism, migrant settlement and school to work transitions.

The Final Report of the *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes* by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration mentioned that the current system of English language teaching contains problems in relation to language education through AMEP as well as English language schools. This is why the Joint Standing Committee had recommended in its report to extend the window of registration for AMEP programs from one to two years, while recommending flexibility in AMEP programs to enable all newly arrived migrants to access AMEP.²⁹ It was also recommended that there be a shift in focus from limiting the AMEP program with certain hours of English tuition to measuring English competency for better social and labour market integration prospects in Australia.³⁰ The Joint Standing Committee had recognized in its report that there is lack of accountability of schools around language learning, and therefore had recommended production of annual reports on outcomes of the National Settlement Framework (NSF) to deliver better coordinated education services, especially around English language learning at schools³¹, and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to have an oversight over the NSF.³²

The Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism had also recognized in its final report that the ‘one-size-fits-all’ model may not suit to all new arrivals³³ and a number of migrants and refugees that arrive may not be literate in their own language due to moving from country to country, with disrupted schooling.³⁴

²⁹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 56.

³⁰ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 57.

³¹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 62.

³² Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 63.

³³ Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 17.

³⁴ Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 19.

The Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training has also recognized in the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* the challenges for migrant and refugee families to navigate unfamiliar education systems, obtaining English language skills appropriate to their work, in addition to conversational skills, as well as culturally-aware learning environments.³⁵

As part of MYAN’s consultations many young people were concerned that they may not have adequate English skills to navigate employment processes in Australia and may need additional support to have English skills commensurate to expectations of professional life. Furthermore, many young people mentioned limited English skills as a barrier to full utilization of employment services. There was mention of the need to train employment services to provide services in simple English, as well as the need to effectively use interpreters to help young people understand better employment processes.

“There is not enough language support or opportunities for young people who have intermediate English. You need to have a really high level of English to get a foot in the door.”

Young person from Tasmania

“Language (whether it be limited English or just an accent) limit our employment opportunities. We experience comments regarding our language capacity from potential employers, like; ‘I don’t understand you’, ‘your accent is hard to understand’, ‘I am not sure if customers will understand you’. People are not able to see through language barriers and see our motivation and enthusiasm”

“Jobactives need to provide interpreters and assistance with skills such as ‘using a computer’.”

Young person from Queensland

“Employment service should be able to support young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and should have translators/interpreters.”

Young person from New South Wales

Both of these issues have also been raised as part of MYAN’s consultations with the sector, as areas where employment services should develop an understanding on. There was consensus that flexibility and understanding are needed by the *jobactive* service providers – with a specific understanding of the impact of learning a new language, impact of settlement on young people as well as the pressures they face as compared to Australian young people. Thus making sure young people are provided with opportunities to access activities which suits their needs through different employment support programs – hence the need to interpret application of eligibility criteria more flexibility when it comes to meeting mutual obligations. For some young people this may mean specific English language programs tailored to occupations or for others it may mean access to driving license programs.

³⁵ Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (2018) *Unique individuals, broad skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 70.

Especially the language aspect has been raised in MYAN’s consultations with the sector and the need to use interpreters when appropriate has been reiterated. According to the views from the sector young people are being provided with so much information which they can not understand, and even when this information is being given in simplified English, it is very complex to understand, leading to the conclusion of having some materials translated would also be useful for young people.

Recommendations:

1. Provide young people with supports to develop their language skills to meet the expectations of professional life in Australia, while ensuring information is provided and services are delivered in plain and simple English to make sure they are not excluded from the services delivered by *jobactive* providers, using interpreters as needed.
2. Train employment services staff to ensure they understand the settlement journey for young people, as well as the language acquisition process, to ensure they deliver services which meet the unique challenges young people face while also supporting them to reach their potential in accessing jobs.

2.2 Lack of knowledge and supports to prepare for professional life in Australia

a) Lack of knowledge around employment services and work place rules

Young people need support in many aspects, which includes but not limited to information provision on how they can access employment services and what employment services can offer to them; and work rights in Australia as well as complaint mechanisms.

In consultations with MYAN, young people reported having very limited information about employment services, noting that there is insufficient information readily accessible in the community about Jobactive providers. Young people accessing services are not aware of what support they should be receiving and what support they could request. Some of the young people mentioned they found out the eligibility for certain types of support (driving lessons, funding for uniforms etc.) through their family, friends and communities.

<p><i>“It’s hard to find information on support services. You have to do your own research.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Young person from Australian Capital Territory</p>
<p><i>“I don’t know what an employment service is.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Young person from New South Wales</p>
<p><i>“I didn’t even know that there was support available.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s hard to take the services up if information is lacking, if you don’t know where to start or if English is not your first language”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Young people from Victoria</p>

“We do not have enough information about employment services and what they do, and what help we could receive.”

Young person from Tasmania

“There is not enough information is available for young people to access employment services, many of us weren’t aware of employment services and only a few of us accessed support services provided at universities.”

Young person from Western Australia

“You need to know what to ask for when going in...you find out from your community what they can offer you.”

“You get minor attention from them and don’t know what you can get from them.”

Young person from Queensland

Young people also mentioned their lack of knowledge around their rights are when it comes to employment in Australia. The Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training had also recognized this issue in the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* referring to a lack of familiarity with Australian social norms and workplace laws, resulting in young people from recently-arrived families more vulnerable to exploitation at work, which can undermine the success of school to work transitions.³⁶

“We are not sure who to report discrimination; we have never heard of Fair Work Ombudsman and knew that we could seek advice on our rights or report discrimination anonymously.”

Young people from Australian Capital Territory

“There is a lack of knowledge about how to talk to employers when not being paid properly, particularly for young people who are newly arrived making us vulnerable to exploitation by their employers.”

Young person from Victoria

b) Lack of individualised supports to prepare for employment in Australia

Young people also reported that they need supports to prepare them for seeking employment in the Australian context. Young people often referred to the need to receive support to boost their confidence and prepare them for each step of the job application process (such as resume writing support, practice interviews, how to dress for an interview, etc.) as well as post-employment support - to make sure they understand and meet expectations in Australian work places and work place

³⁶ Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (2018) *Unique individuals, broad skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 70.

culture, and to ensure they hold on to their jobs longer. These types of supports require individualised support for young people for gaining employment and increasing their employability skills. These issues were also raised in MYAN’s sector consultations as a key area when supporting and preparing young people for the workforce.

The Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism in its final report mentioned that employment assistance should ensure that new migrants and refugees are prepared for work in the Australian context, including support for resume writing, preparation for interviews and assistance in navigating the jobs market.³⁷

“Young people need more support and practical job search training; learn how to strengthen resume; advice around workplace culture and expectations and soft skills required to get a job, as well as assistance in learning how to recover from rejection and failure.”

Young people from Tasmania

“We need to know what to put into the resume, so more emphasis on how to put together a resume rather than fixing a resume, and need one on one support”

“I felt that I had more support in my local library accessing the resume workshops and was more of a success in less than a weeks time period, rather than a few months with the centrelink referred employment services and successfully found two jobs after leaving the employment service.”

“There is no commitment from the service, the young people felt as though there was no long term goal when put through the employment service.”

Young people from Western Australia

“There is a need to cater for individual needs and aspirations. For any job for someone in their 20s, they may need more specific support tailored to their individual situation, answering the question of ‘what do I want to do, not what should I do’.”

Young person from New South Wales

“We should have people supporting us to write resumes, because our English is not perfect and we need someone to edit our resume because if our English is not good they won’t give us the job.”

Young person from Northern Territory

“They need to provide opportunities to teach us the rules and basics of work, i.e. if you get sick, what do you do, how to take leave/breaks, work rights, understanding contracts, etc.”

Young person from Victoria

Jobactive providers need to better understand young people’s capabilities, what they bring to Australia, their needs and barriers as well as their strengths and aspirations, in order to better and more actively support them. This includes through the job seeking process and in advocacy on their behalf with employers. This more individualised support model has been voiced by many young

³⁷ Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 28.

people as a way to best support young people to access employment, but that this requires moving away from what several described as a ‘cookie cutter’ model. This includes, for example, the option of longer appointments with young people who require more intensive support.

“Employment service should have a long term and holistic approach when working with young people and not just focus on barriers but also look at enablers.”

Young person from New South Wales

“Ensure consistency for young clients, allocate the same case worker for 6 months for building rapport and ongoing relationship between clients and case workers.”

Young person from Victoria

This means job services model needs to incorporate case planning model, hence introducing limits to the number of people that job brokers can support, in order to make sure they can support each individual young person meaningfully. In consultations with MYAN, the sector mentioned this as a vital issue to make sure young people receive the support they need. There was also a recommendation to adopt a compliance framework to ensure meaningful employment, i.e. to deliver employment services starting with the needs of the clients, rather than to get them into employment without a long term view of future employment outcomes.

c) Concerns around understanding of meeting mutual obligations

In addition to individualised supports, the feedback from the sector point to the need to flexibility by the *jobactive* providers when it comes to eligible activities for job readiness.

There have been concerns that the services and programs offered for job readiness by different providers in the sector are not accredited programs by *jobactive*, and therefore are not counted by *jobactive* towards meeting mutual obligations. There was a strong view to recognise such activities that young people engage with for employment as eligible activities, as other wise young people are pulled out of these programs to complete the tasks that the *jobactive* wants them to do, which can prevent them from attending programs that can actually support their employability and increase their skills.

The feedback from young people and the sector indicate to the need to recognize different types of activities which contribute to gaining meaningful employment for young people;

Case Study: The Pathways Programs

Centre for Multicultural Youth, Victoria

In 2014, CMY and the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation produced a report titled Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People which identified the key elements for service delivery to assist young people into employment. These included: individualised support; support in the workplace; work experience or placements; mentoring; and cultural awareness training to service providers.

CMY partnered with AFL Sportsready (AFLSR) to seek partnerships with employers. The project has had 57 clients so far – referred largely by schools and community representatives. During the August-November 2016 period, most referrals came through schools, largely Year 12 school leavers. In 2017, more referrals came through community connections.

Fifteen mentors have been successfully recruited into the program having completed required training and screening. Over 2016-2017 financial year, participating young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds attended a series of work readiness workshops covering: career aspirations, job search skills, applying for a job – resume writing, job ad analysis, cover letter writing, interview skills and work rights. The young people reported improved skills and more confidence as a result of attending the workshops. Following the workshop series, these young people were matched with volunteer mentors.

CMY continues to work with existing and new employer networks to source direct employment opportunities for the young people we work with. “I would recommend the program to other young people,” says a young participant of the programme: “It helped me a lot and I’m sure it will help other young people who’ve newly arrived from their home countries.”³⁸

Recommendations:

3. Increase awareness among young people of employment services and what they can deliver through targeted campaigns.
4. Translate materials into relevant languages to make sure young people understand the services provided by employment services and their rights (as well as the type of services/activities they are entitled to) and obligations.
5. Have a flexible approach in relation to eligible activities which contribute to young people’s employment readiness
6. Expand eligibility to organisations/services that already deliver such specific and tailored programs which support young people’s access to employment.
7. Adopt an individualised support model for delivery by employment service providers, including a case planning approach, to ensure the support young people receive from the employment services is tailored to and meets their needs.

2.3 Limited access to suitable work experience opportunities

Young people need access to work experience, as well as other opportunities that help them gain other professional experiences in the Australian job market, such as internships and volunteer opportunities. These are essential in Australia where local work experience is highly valued.

The final report of the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* by the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training had made important recommendations related to government-led work experience programs, which we believe should be reflected when planning for the future of employment services. The Committee recommended work experience programs to;

³⁸ Centre for Multicultural Youth (2017) 2016-2017 Annual Report. Available at: http://www.cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/CMY%20Annual%20Report%202016-2017_DIGITAL.pdf, p.21.

- incorporate defined training components which are directly connected with specific planned and agreed work-experience component(s);
- require employment service providers to ensure that employers within the current “Jobactive” system are engaged with government-led work-experience programs; and
- ensure program design takes into account the importance of promoting secure employment, compliance with industrial relations laws, the avoidance of exploitation, value-for-money in respect of any publicly-funded incentives, and ongoing accountability for employment outcomes.³⁹

Young people often mentioned lack of work experience as a significant barrier that they could not overcome in accessing meaningful employment and is an aspect they need structured support with. Many young people expressed the need to gain relevant work experience (including volunteer experience) as very important to facilitate their access to employment market and provide them with references;

“Having experience is important but this is hard to get.”

“They need to provide more short term work experience opportunities.”

Young person from Tasmania

“Employers are asking for experience but the young people have none, or have no referee in Perth but are willing to give the job their all.”

“Volunteering is extremely vital for young people to create and experience different fields, but some of us find it difficult to even find volunteering opportunities.”

Young people from Western Australia

“We have no experience. Every place asks for experience – how do we get job if we don’t have experience. I think that’s why employment services should supply training to get experience.”

“If you don’t have experience to present to the manager, it’s really hard. You need a lot of prior work experience.”

Young people from Victoria

“Help develop skills and confidence of young people as well as provide them with experiences.”

“Acknowledge that young people just popped out of high school and may not have work experience.”

Young people from New South Wales

“They could give us a chance to volunteer so that then we know how to do it and then we get offered a job.”

Young person from Northern Territory

³⁹ Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (2018) *Unique individuals, broad skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, pp. 70-71.

“They don’t even help us to get a volunteer job, which would give us the experience that we need. Even volunteering, someone has to refer you, so how can I do that if no-one gives me experience.”

Young person from Australian Capital Territory

While young people referred to the importance of volunteer or internship opportunities to gain experience which could help them in professional life, some young people also raised concerns that they are not in a position to work for free due to financial constraints and having internships/volunteering is a luxury that not everyone can have.

“Internships are an enabler when finding jobs as you gain experience on hand, however it is also a barrier. A lot of courses require an internship made up of lots of hours/days for extended period of time and that may hinder access to jobs as during this time you work for free, but need money.”

Young person from New South Wales

“Not every young person has the capacity to volunteer.”

Young person from Western Australia

Recommendations:

8. Provide young people with more work experience (as well as internship and volunteer) opportunities in different fields of employment based on their aspirations and interests.
9. Understand the limitations of some young people around undertaking unpaid work experiences and provide them with paid internships and opportunities depending on their individual circumstances.
10. Implement recommendations of the *School to Work Transition Inquiry* by the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training on government-led work experience programs.

2.4 Limited social capital⁴⁰ and networks

‘The next generation of employment services: Discussion paper’ notes that 1 in 3 people getting employment know the person who hiring them. This reflects the disadvantage of the young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that don’t know anyone in Australia.

While connections are referred to as the most useful method to find employment by young people, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds has limited social capital in Australia which limits their opportunities. While they refer to their friends and own social networks for finding jobs, this may actually limit their opportunities as most often the family, friends and social networks referred to by young people are themselves new to Australia and have limited social capital - which

⁴⁰ Social capital is defined as a person’s ability to access and mobilise resources within social relationships. See Lin, 2000; Coleman, 1990 in Graham, Shier and Eisenstat, 2015: 3 in Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 7.

they can pass on to young people to help access professional networks and/or jobs.⁴¹ This may lead to young people being stuck in employment fields that they do not desire and below their qualifications and capabilities.⁴²

While overtime young people establish connections with people from other cultural backgrounds and diversify their networks, it takes time to build these bridging networks and young people may still primarily depend on social networks that are made up of people (mostly peers) from similar cultural backgrounds. A recent research summary of the Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA)⁴³ looking into settlement outcomes of young humanitarian migrants in Australia supports this argument. According to BNLA findings, over time the proportion of young people reporting ‘a mixture’ of friends from their own and other ethnic/religious communities increased significantly, from 34% to 50%; and the proportion reporting having friends mostly from their own communities decreased significantly. However, a large proportion of young people (39%) were still relying mainly on networks from their own communities two-and-a-half years after arrival to Australia.⁴⁴

In MYAN’s consultations, young people often mentioned the importance of ‘knowing someone to get a job’ or ‘get ahead’. They also raised concerns about nepotism which works against young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds because they have no or more limited connections or networks, especially if they have newly arrived.

“There is no paid work or a network to access paid work for people from my background in areas I want to specialise in. I want to become a [profession] but the only paid jobs immediately available to me are waitressing in a Chinese restaurant. Private firms in my profession always rely on the internal network to hire students for their work, which I have no idea how to access. Whenever I apply for a private firm’s entry level position (in the rare event they are made public), my lack of previous experience in the private practice always cost me the position in the interview round. I have heard multiple times from the potential employers’ feedback that ‘your writing is good, but we are looking for someone who has done work with a private firm prior to the application’. But there is no indication on how to get that first break. The system disproportionately favours those who have access to the internal network, who knows someone in the private practice, because they can have the luxury of getting that first job. I have constantly felt like I’m waving through a window or banging on a glass ceiling because of my lack of access to these internal opportunities.”

Young person from Australian Capital Territory

“We do not have the same social networks as people born in Australia, lack of these networks means that finding our first jobs is even harder for multicultural young people. I can’t get a job like in other states... it is easier to get job when there are more people from your culture”.

⁴¹ Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 9.

⁴² Tomlinson and Egan, 2002 in Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and transitions to employment*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 10.

⁴³ Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) is an ongoing longitudinal study about how humanitarian migrants settle into a new life in Australia. Data is collected annually starting in 2013 with participants’ early months in Australia. For more on BNLA see <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programmes-services/building-a-new-life-in-australia-bnla-the-longitudinal-study-of-humanitarian-migrants>.

⁴⁴ Rioseco, P & Liddy, N (2018) *Settlement outcomes of humanitarian youth and active citizenship Economic participation, social participation and personal wellbeing*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1804_bnla_settlement_outcomes_of_humanitarian_youth_research_summary.pdf, p. 4.

Young person from Queensland
<i>“Best thing is friends, if you have friends working, you can find work”</i>
Young person from Victoria
<i>“We experience nepotism. I have lost a job due to another person hiring their family or friend, or being in positions where I had to prove myself even though I am certified for the job.”</i>
<i>“I lost a paid internship because the head of the company gave the internship to his nephew.”</i>
Young people from Western Australia

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration also referred to this issue (in relation to effectiveness of *jobactive*) as part of their final report on *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes*, mentioning that most migrants use personal and social connections to find work.⁴⁵

Forging work pathways depends on specific knowledge about Australian culture and its business environment, which young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds may need to build over time. This reinforces the importance of bridging networks (connections with those of dissimilar backgrounds)⁴⁶ in facilitating employment opportunities.⁴⁷

MYAN believes employment services have a unique position to help young people overcome such barriers as they can enable young people to access professional networks through professional networking opportunities, employment fairs and forums. This has been a strong recommendation made by many as part of MYAN’s consultations. It is a way for employment services to support young people to overcome barriers by facilitating introductions to professional circles. This also assists in overcoming misconceptions and stereotyping from employers about the capabilities and skills of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

<i>“It might be useful to ask employers what makes people stand out in employment processes.”</i>
Young people from Northern Territory
<i>“We need opportunities to meet and network with employers and show off potential; educate employers about barriers to employment young people are facing.”</i>
Young person from Tasmania
<i>“We need to create multicultural forums around employment.”</i>

⁴⁵ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 77.

⁴⁶ Kellock (2016), *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY, p. 4.

⁴⁷ VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p.11.

<p>“We want job active providers to talk to employers about us”</p>	Young person from Western Australia
<p>“Employment services should provide opportunities young people with non traditional ways of finding employment, not just with tools and papers, but with people networks, such as getting young people to meet others and have them exposed to different sectors in employment market and connect young people with opportunities to find/get opportunities.”</p>	Young person from Queensland
	Young people from New South Wales

While there have been initiatives to link migrants and refugees with employers at the state level (e.g. through some state government funded programs), commonwealth-funded employment services should allocate funding for such opportunities and better ensure national consistency.

Case Study: Refugee Employment Information Expo
Australian Government and New South Wales Government

An employment information expo to connect refugees looking for work with organisations that can assist them was held in October 2017 in Liverpool, NSW.

The Refugee Employment Information Expo was hosted by the Australian Government in partnership with the NSW Department of Industry and Multicultural NSW. The expo gave refugees an opportunity to find out how to get a job in Australia and join workforce, particularly in certain areas of NSW.

Accordingly, participants were able to talk to representatives from support services, government agencies and local employers, and attend various workshops.⁴⁸

Recommendation:

11. Provide young people with regular and structured opportunities to network and interact with employers while introducing young people to different fields and sectors of employment and professions (such as employment/jobs fairs, forums, networking events, etc.).
12. Provide employers with the opportunity to meet and better understand the capabilities, aspirations and assets of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

2.5 Racism and discrimination in accessing employment for young people

According to the initial findings of recent Multicultural Youth Australia Census, racial discrimination was the most common reason why young people had difficulty finding work.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the

⁴⁸ New South Wales Department of Industry (2017) *Employment support for refugees resettling in NSW*. Available at: <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry-in-nsw/news/news/employment-support-for-refugees-resettling-in-nsw>.

findings indicate that more than 11% of the young people reported facing discrimination in the work place with 10% reporting witnessing discrimination in the work place.⁵⁰ BNLA findings on youth also refer to higher levels of discrimination with longer time in Australia.⁵¹

The Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism also referred to discrimination in accessing employment in its final report on multiculturalism, noting that many culturally and linguistically diverse individuals experience labour market discrimination, despite high levels of education and overseas working experience.⁵²

In MYAN’s consultations with young people, discrimination in accessing employment was consistently noted as a key barrier to accessing employment. MYAN believes this is an important aspect of the job seeking process that employment services need to acknowledge and explicitly address in their efforts to help young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds access jobs.

“I applied for a job at retailer store and was told that they aren’t hiring. The manager said to me ‘you have just come from overseas to get a job, and you are begging’. I took my resume back and told him I didn’t want to work there any more. Later, I did work experience at the same retailer and a lady hired me and told me I could get paid work. I told them that I’m studying but can do weekend work. The manager however would request for me to come in when I was in class but never when I was free, even though he had my timetable and knew I was at school. When the lady who gave me the job went on holiday, the manager told me not to come back. The lady was good, but once she was gone I was told I was not allowed to come here.”

Young person from Australian Capital Territory

“I experienced racism on the job because the employer didn’t want someone of an African descent and instead suggested he would prefer someone of an Indian descent.”

“I experienced ongoing questioning from others about my past rather than what I have to offer during the job interviews. We felt discriminated based on our names and so now migrant and refugee communities have been giving their children English names or shortening their name in order to make it easier for them to receive jobs and fit in.”

“Interview stage is very difficult for people of color and Muslim women who wear the hijab. My sister was denied a job because she wore the hijab, she was told during the interview you couldn’t wear a hijab if you work here.”

Young people from Western Australia

“Our resumes not being considered due to CALD looking name, appearance or accent. We feel undervalued and underestimated because we are from a refugee background.”

⁴⁹ Wyn, J, Khan, R & Dadvand, B (2018) *MY Australia Census: Draft Summary report 2017-2018*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Wyn, J, Khan, R & Dadvand, B (2018) *MY Australia Census: Draft Summary report 2017-2018*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, p. 23.

⁵¹ Rioseco, P & Liddy, N (2018) *Settlement outcomes of humanitarian youth and active citizenship Economic participation, social participation and personal wellbeing*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1804_bnla_settlement_outcomes_of_humanitarian_youth_research_summary.pdf, p. 1.

⁵² Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 42

Young people from Tasmania

“Many of us experienced rejection because of “ethnic sounding names”. My sister had never gotten a job applying online because of her more “ethnic” sounding name but I was able to get a job because my name sounded less “ethnic”.”

Young person from Victoria

Young people have also noted that jobactive providers have ‘assumptions’ about them due to their ethnic or religious background and therefore refer them to certain employment fields, rather than asking them about their aspirations and capacity to achieve these (and overcome barriers to do so).

“Jobactive providers can sometimes make assumptions about young people’s cultural background and their capabilities (e.g. assuming that all ‘African’s’ are good at factory work). We do have support but not all the time I feel respected.”

Young person from Queensland

This is an issue which employment services need to consider in their communication with employers, to ensure that young people do not feel discriminated against or stereotyped and to ensure they make meaningful connections which could lead to future opportunities in their employment life.

Young people also recommended that employment services work with employers to break their stereotypes around young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to raise their awareness around the hardships that young people experience as part of their settlement, and consequently in their employment journey, as well as their strengths and capabilities. While not youth focused, the *“New Arrivals New Connections - An employer’s guide to working with migrants and refugees”*⁵³ by the Department of Social Services is a good example of engaging employers on this issue. MYAN believes if youth-specific guides are developed and utilised by the Department of Jobs and Small Business in collaboration with Department of Social Services, employers might be more receptive to job applications by young people - recognizing their strengths as well as challenges.

“There is a need for a program for employers to sign up to, that commits them to; giving a young people a chance, doing cultural awareness and plain English training.”

Young person from Tasmania

“Employers make assumptions about our capabilities because we are culturally and linguistically

⁵³ Department of Social Services (2017) *New Arrivals New Connections — An employer’s guide to working with migrants and refugees*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Available at: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2017/new_arrivals_-_new_connections.pdf.

diverse. We feel that employers are not hiring us because we are not ‘Australian’.”

“Coming from another country... they ask where you from...when they realise you are not from Australia they will not give you job. I have experienced this.”

“They think we are lazy or something”

Young people from Queensland

“They need to enforce consequences of discrimination.”

Young person from Australian Capital Territory

This requires employment services working with employers and incentivising work experience/employment for young people. This also requires that places of employment are safe places for young people where they will not experience racism or discrimination.

Young people are also concerned that they feel the need to change their names on resumes in order to get job interviews. This was a dominant theme in the consultations. Young people recommended having job application processes that are ‘blind to age and name’ in order to minimise or eliminate assumptions and discrimination in the early selection stages.

“There is a continuing need for young people having to change their name on their resumes in order to get a job interview. I know friends and relatives changing their names on resumes in order to get jobs.”

Young person from Victoria

“Full names should remain anonymous when judging job applications.”

Young person from Western Australia

“Applications should be blind to age and name of the applicant as to minimise the chance of discrimination.”

Young person from Northern Territory

While there are initiatives to eliminate unconscious bias in job application processes, MYAN believes such initiatives should also be implemented by the Department of Jobs and Small Business federally, as well as with the employers that engage in programs delivered by the employment services funded through the Department.

Case Study: Recruit Smarter

Victorian Government

A Victorian Government initiative is an example of the direct role that government can play in addressing broader societal level barriers to economic participation. Recruit Smarter, is removing personal details from job applications to rule out discrimination or unconscious bias and helping employers to take advantage of the full breadth of skills, experience and talent that exists across the Victorian workforce.⁵⁴

The initiative is based on research that has shown that people from culturally diverse backgrounds with the same qualifications and experience often have to submit many more job applications than people with Anglo-Saxon sounding names.⁵⁵ Major government departments, agencies such as WorkSafe and Victoria Police, and private companies such as Westpac have volunteered to take part.⁵⁶

Future employment services should encourage such initiatives and should advocate with employers to prevent discrimination in accessing employment by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Recommendations:

13. Initiate a national conversation about racism and discrimination in the employment of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through hosting panels with young people and/or employers who have hired young people speaking with employers in different sectors and the broader community about their experiences.
14. Department of Jobs and Small Business invest in training for employers and businesses that utilise government employment programs on policies and procedures in relation to addressing discrimination in recruitment and throughout employment, including through engaging with Fair Work Ombudsman.⁵⁷
15. Department of Jobs and Small Business to work with the Department of Social Services to develop tools and resources developing tools Promote and encourage recruitment initiatives that aim to address unconscious bias and discrimination in recruitment processes.
16. Initiate campaigns at the local, regional and national levels to educate employers and the broader Australian community about the skills and benefits of a cultural, linguistic and faith diverse workforce, including the benefits of hiring young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
17. Support businesses to employ young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through specific incentives.

⁵⁴ See here for more details, <https://www.vic.gov.au/recruit-smarter.html>

⁵⁵ Perkins (2016 May 20). Victorian government trials blind job applications to overcome hiring bias. *The Age*. Accessed online www.theage.com.au

⁵⁶ Perkins (2016).

⁵⁷ Fair Work Ombudsman materials addressing the issue of workplace discrimination as well as an online course on ‘Diversity and Discrimination’ targeting employers and business owners. For more see, <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/online-training/online-learning-centre/diversity-and-discrimination>.

18. Invest in training and professional development for employment services to address issues of discrimination/unconscious bias and stereotyping that young people face, in order to eradicate this in *jobactive* providers.

2.6 Lack of recognition of skills, qualifications and experiences obtained overseas

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey* (November 2016), only one third of recent migrants who had obtained a qualification before arrival had their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia, despite high levels of education amongst recent migrants (65% holding a non-school qualification - 76% of these being a Bachelor degree or higher).⁵⁸

Limited recognition of overseas obtained qualifications has also been among the factors the Productivity Commission focused on in its 2016 report on migrant intake into Australia, recommending Australian governments prioritise improving the recognition of overseas qualifications.⁵⁹ The Joint Standing Committee on Migration also made reference to this in their final report on *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes*, noting that the difficulty in recognising overseas skills and qualifications in Australia results in many new arrivals working in low-skilled roles with limited opportunity to progress.⁶⁰

According to the Productivity Commission's 2016 report, many immigrants seek to have their foreign qualifications recognised at an equivalent level but qualifications acquired overseas may be undervalued, partly because employers have difficulty judging them.⁶¹ MYAN believes while supporting young people to have their overseas obtained qualifications and skills recognized, employment services should also advocate with the employers to increase their awareness around this issue, to ensure that having an overseas obtained qualification/skill does not exclude young people from recruitment processes.

Many young people mentioned lack of recognition of skills and qualifications obtained overseas by *jobactive* providers and employers. Young people noted that employers do not recognise their previous employment history or experience from outside Australia and have employability skills. There was also broad consensus that *jobactive* services need to provide young people with adequate support to make sure their overseas obtained qualifications are recognized in Australia, as well as the skills and experiences they obtained overseas. This issue was also raised in MYAN's consultations with the sector, especially with a focus on the need for skill set recognition by employment services and employer.

“They say they will be help with my resume but they just put things in there from Google - it makes it worse... they took experience off my resume from working overseas. Said not to have that. I worked for 3-4 years overseas, but they took it off my resume.”

Young people from Australian Capital Territory

⁵⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6250.0 – *Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, November 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/E92EA270A32AF8F1CA256953007D9AFA?OpenDocument>.

⁵⁹ Productivity Commission (2016) *Migrant Intake into Australia, Inquiry Report No. 77*. Canberra. p. 9.

⁶⁰ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 83.

⁶¹ Productivity Commission (2016) *Migrant Intake into Australia, Inquiry Report No. 77*. Canberra. p. 178.

“We feel we always miss out because our experience is not acknowledged. The skills gained in home country and work experience outside Australia should be acknowledged.”

Young people from Tasmania

“Some employers don’t understand that we have worked in our home countries.”

“We need more direction on applying for jobs that fit our skills. We are forced to apply for work that we would never get or not right for.”

Young person from Queensland

“They need to acknowledge qualifications and experiences gained before coming to Australia.”

Young person from New South Wales

Case Study: Employment service lead qualification recognition programs

Sweden

The Swedish Government and the Swedish Public Employment Service, in cooperation with industry partners, established fast-track programmes in 2015 to enable migrants to gain faster access to the labour market.

Designed for occupations that experience labour shortages, the programmes currently exist for migrant chefs, social workers and those in regulated occupations such as teachers. The programme participants undergo a qualifications validation process, occupation-specific Swedish language courses, internships and supplementary theoretical courses. Participants take part in these activities simultaneously, thereby reducing the time it takes to get the national licence. Moreover, the programmes provide participants with an institutional framework that sketches out the steps they need to take in order to reach their goal and offers them guidance along the way.

Normally foreign teachers require an estimated five to eight years to obtain a Swedish teaching licence. Some migrants who underwent the long licensing process had reported that the required knowledge tests and supplementary training required often ignored their existing knowledge and experience.

A 26-week long fast-track programme introduced for foreign teachers in Malmö, Sweden was designed to streamline this process. The programme consists of courses in pedagogy and about the Swedish school system that are taught in both Swedish and Arabic (since most participants are Arabic-speaking), an internship at one of the local schools and a Swedish language course that is tailored for teachers. Practical work experience enables the individual to enhance their Swedish language skills and establish the professional contacts necessary for future job seeking. The decision about whether an individual must undergo a programme of supplementary training for foreign teachers in order to obtain their teaching licence – a decision taken by the Swedish National Agency for Education upon a request to validate their qualifications – can be re-evaluated depending on how that individual performs in the fast-track programme.⁶²

⁶² Mozetic, K (2018) *Validating highly educated refugees’ qualifications*. Forced Migration Review. Available at: <http://www.fmreview.org/economies/mozetic.html>.

Recommendation:

19. Ensure recognition of overseas obtained qualifications, skills and experiences in job seeking processes through the provision of bridging courses/programs.
20. Pilot a coordination mechanism at the federal level with relevant assessment bodies, to introduce fast-track qualification recognition schemes in different professions to ensure faster integration into the Australian work-force.
21. Engage employers to increase their awareness about overseas obtained qualifications and their validity in Australia.
22. Advocate with employers to increase their recognition of previously obtained skills and experience.

3. Experiences of young people with Jobactive providers

In MYAN’s consultations, young people often referred to negative experiences with employment seeking process through *jobactive*. These concerns relate to all stages of the process, from initial referral from Centrelink to *jobactive*, to ongoing engagement with *jobactive* providers.

Allocation of young people to streams⁶³ by Centrelink which are not in line with their individual situations and capabilities (in some situations automatic referral to Stream B, rather than Stream C) was raised often in MYAN’s consultations with both young people and the sector. This was considered a barrier for young people to effectively utilise the services due to difficulties around changing allocated streams later on.

“I experienced a wrong assessment of this when I first walked in, and because I spoke English fairly okay they put me with a group that had a much higher level of English and experience.”

Young person from Western Australia

There was also specific concern by the sector in relation to streaming by Centrelink of early school leavers (16 to 18-19 year old) from refugee and migrant backgrounds to employment services, rather than linking them with possible education pathways that they could pursue to achieve better employment outcomes. While research has identified that early school leaving can have a profound

⁶³ Job seekers on income support will have their first contact with Centrelink, who will assess their needs for *jobactive* services. Centrelink will refer a job seeker to a service ‘stream’ depending on their readiness for work. Stream A job seekers are the most job ready. They will receive services to help them understand what employers want and how to navigate the local labour market, build a résumé, look for jobs and learn how to access self-help facilities. Stream B job seekers need their *jobactive* provider to play a greater role to help them become job ready and will be referred for case management support. Stream C job seekers have a combination of work capacity and personal issues that need to be addressed and will get case management support so that they can take up and keep a job. See for more, https://docs.jobs.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/program_fact_sheet_for_jobactive_w_track_changes_aug16_0.pdf

negative effect on an individual’s employment prospects⁶⁴, leaving them at risk of experiencing persistent disadvantage than their peers who have completed Year 12⁶⁵.

Concerns around the use of the Job Seeker Classification Instrument by Centrelink for Employment Services Assessment was also raised, as the instrument’s 5 star rating system is limited in its capacity to deliver culturally competent and youth responsive services.

Almost all young people in different states and territories echoed each other about the *jobactive* service: being not helpful, not tailored to their individual situation and needs, and feels like a tick box exercise rather than meaningful engagement with young people for accessing employment. Some young people also referred to *jobactive* appointments feeling themselves as a burden or inconvenience to the worker. Some young people also stated they felt *jobactive* providers were not accessible and only exist to ‘police’ Centrelink benefits, stating that they do not look forward to attending the *jobactive* appointments because of the poor service given by the staff.

Training of *jobactive* staff and better customer service were also raised in MYAN’s consultations with the sector, citing the need for *jobactive* providers to be much more welcoming and responsive to (culturally, linguistically and faith diverse) people throughout the process.

“They treat you like a statistic, not like an individual who actually needs some help to get a job.”

“It’s been 4 months, the jobactive just give me a piece of paper which says I need to apply for 20 jobs to get financial support. They told me to just apply for any 20, so you get the payment. This really hurts me because I really want to get a job, not just get a centrelink payment. I don’t want to be in this situation.”

Young people from Australian Capital Territory

“The advice from jobactive was limited, with appointments being very brief. We felt like just ticking boxes. It was not helpful if you don’t understand the system. Also no job search tips were offered or useful career advice. We felt our abilities are underestimated due to being from CALD backgrounds.”

Young people from Tasmania

“We were referred to an employment service through Centrelink, and felt that we didn’t receive the help needed to gain employment The employment service went through a list with us which was procedure but finding a job was extremely difficult because there was no one on one support.”

“We are treated unfairly.”

Young people from Western Australia

⁶⁴ McLachlan, Gilfillan & Gordon 2013 in Dommers, E, Myconos, G, Swain, L, Yung, S & Clarke K (2017), *Engaging young early school leavers in vocational training*. Adelaide: NCVER. Available at: https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf, p. 11.

⁶⁵ COAG 2009 and van Alphen 2012 in Dommers, E, Myconos, G, Swain, L, Yung, S & Clarke K (2017), *Engaging young early school leavers in vocational training*. Adelaide: NCVER. Available at: https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf, p. 11.

“They are a ‘check in service’ you go for appointment and told to go home after you arrive.”

“It’s time taking and not helpful.”

Young people from Queensland

“They were just careless, they didn’t really look at the jobs that I was applying.”

“Jobactives are not designed for finding good and suitable jobs but for just finding any jobs that could get you off Centrelink.”

“Sometimes they write your resume and apply for jobs for you but then inform you just two hours before an interview while you aren’t even prepared.”

Young people from New South Wales

“Jobactive services is a big problem: they call you, tell you to sit there and find a job, and tell you to go back home. If you find a job, good, if you don’t, go home and come again tomorrow.”

Young person from Victoria

Similar views were also expressed in MYAN’s sector consultations, also referring to the need for Jobactive providers to receive training around cultural competency and cultural responsiveness; with a view to helping them better understand young people’s experiences during settlement and how best to meet their needs.

“We need support that is for us...someone that understand our culture”

Young person from Queensland

“Employment services contracts are 6 month contracts, at the end of 6 months if you don’t have a job there is no plan B. Employment services employ “cookie cutter” approach; treat everyone the exact same.”

Young person from Victoria

This ‘tick box’ approach has been associated with the current business model of *jobactive* and the high caseloads for staff. It does not allow for individual support to young people or scope to service smaller numbers to ensure more intensive, targeted, and ultimately meaningful work with people in accessing and sustaining employment.

While there was recognition that some employment services have received training and that many *jobactive* providers would like to be more responsive, there was a common view from both young people and the sector that the contractual obligations do not allow the *jobactive* providers to work with people in a more intensive way, with co-designed employment pathways and outcomes consistent with their employment prospects.

“Case managers have too many clients they need to be reduced in order to give clients one on one support.”

Young person from Western Australia

As raised in an earlier section, MYAN’s consultations with the sector revealed a lack of flexibility by *jobactive* providers to recognize activities undertaken by young people to increase their employability skills. Lack of recognition of such activities as eligible activities under the Employment Fund was a common concern. There was a recommendation to adapt the business model to allow young people to have control over the funds to which they are entitled under the Employment Fund, rather than people being directive about what they need to do to get into a job. An individualized funding model similar to the one adopted for Disability Employment Services delivered by the Department of Social Services was considered suitable, or suitable for adapting, for employment services.

Young people in consultations also reported that employment services staff lacked knowledge of the employment market and available jobs, which limited young people’s prospect of finding the right jobs through targeted training opportunities and upskilling;

“We get told to go to training and do certificates...some of us hold too many certificates...but no employment”

Young person from Queensland

“Often it’s where do we even start? The process of looking for a job? Where do we look what’s legitimate. The RTO’s. They ask you for money to get training, saying you’ll get this job, but it doesn’t lead anywhere. We need help with what to do, where to look, what the process is”

Young person from Victoria

“They need to take into account that there are many degrees you can get but it doesn’t mean that it will help you get a job.”

Young person from New South Wales

There were also concerns from the sector that they need to do a lot of advocacy with *jobactive* for young people, even on issues that should not require advocacy but rather flexibility. An example given often was the clash of *jobactive* appointments with AMEP courses, which led young people to miss their English classes in order to avoid being in breach of their mutual obligations with Centrelink and *jobactive*.

Consultations revealed that a consistent approach by the *jobactive* providers on this issue is lacking, as some *jobactive* providers recognize such activities as an eligible job activity, while others do not recognize the same or similar activities. This suggests that there is an element of discretion in decision making in relation to eligible activities.

Both young people and the sector also raised the need for services to understand that not all young people wish to or should move directly into getting a job, but rather need studying and preparation, as well as supports around transportation due to long commuting distances. *Jobactive* providers commonly do not hold this view and do not present flexibility/resources in relation to aspects which would make easier for young people to increase their skills and get employment;

“Everyone – it’s too hard to get around Darwin, the buses are not good and they only come every hour”

Young person from Northern Territory

“A challenge we see is translation of our documents from our country of birth. It is a big issue that some services are not aware of and when dealing with newly arrived migrants and refugees it would be helpful provide service around that.”

Young person from Western Australia

However, there were also examples from young people where they had good experiences with *jobactive* providers.

“Two of us received clothes and boots, and support for receiving Working With Vulnerable People card from jobactive.”

Young person from Tasmania

“I was interested in starting up a business and a teacher referred me to jobactive where I was offered to do a six-week program which assisted in looking at my goals and what the outcomes could be. I felt this helped me because after that program I had an idea of what I wanted to do. I was driven to do the program once it was offered to me because it was a program that met my needs. One on one support has been helpful.”

Young person from Western Australia

While young people’s positive experiences were limited young people consistently identified that what worked for them was individual support designed around their needs and aspirations. In light of this, MYAN strongly believes the proposed eligibility process for enhanced services would effectively block young people’s access to employment services. As demonstrated above, young people need more intensive and one-on-one support, not self-serviced online services, as these would only increase young people’s isolation from the employment market and make it harder for them to access employment support.

Recommendations:

23. Introduce automatic referral to enhanced/specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds without any additional eligibility criteria and set self-servicing periods through the online system.
24. Develop a flexible business model to ensure individual support can be provided to young people, with lower caseload allocation to *jobactive* staff.

25. Develop/update quality standards for employment service provider staff, ensuring it includes cultural responsiveness, as well as good customer service principles.
26. Develop an individualised funding model for the Employment Fund that is tailored to individual situation, needs and strengths of young people - similar to the Disability Employment Services delivered by the Department of Social Services.
27. Deliver training to employment services staff on cultural competency and cultural responsiveness, and ensure *jobactive* providers are up-to-date with current job market expectations as well as employment fields and opportunities.

4. Specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

The Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism had recommended in its final report the need to develop specific migrant-stream employment services under the *jobactive* model, recognizing that employment pathways for migrants and refugees are convoluted and slow, and that there is a need for an integrated employment assistance service that meets the unique needs of migrants and humanitarian entrants.⁶⁶ The Committee’s recommendation included particular details about what the new stream should entail in order to support migrants and refugees, and referred to the need to incorporate;

- *a robust assessment framework that recognises overseas education and qualifications;*
- *stronger coordination with the Adult Migrant English Program;*
- *alternative assessment guidelines under the jobactive star rating performance framework; and*
- *comprehensive cross-cultural training, including torture and trauma training, for all staff.*⁶⁷

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration in its report following the *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes* had recommended a support service under the *jobactive* program designed for newly arrived and longer term migrants, which would include migrant and refugee youth.⁶⁸ The Joint Standing Committee had also recognized the challenges young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face in accessing to employment, including discrimination and unconscious bias.⁶⁹

There is broad consensus among young people and the sector on the need to have specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in order to best achieve employment outcomes (and therefore settlement/integration outcomes). Such services should have interpreter support as well as bicultural workers who are from refugee or migrant backgrounds;

“We need someone from our language and background to speak to us. There is a need to have diverse people in the role of designing programs. People who are planning employment services are not from

⁶⁶ Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 31.

⁶⁷ Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (2017) *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 32.

⁶⁸ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 93.

⁶⁹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 92.

culturally diverse backgrounds themselves.”

Young person from Victoria

“They need to hire jobactive staff that are from our cultural backgrounds because they understand the value of experience we gained in our home countries”

Young person from Queensland

“There is a need to create a group or program to assist migrant and refugee young people to have successful employment pathways - especially for people of color - in their first 5 years of the workforce.”

“Create an organisation which works specifically in the area of migrant and refugee young people to gain and maintain employment.”

Young people from Western Australia

Young people also raised other shortcomings to be considered in future employment services, including: lack of engagement with young people in the planning and design processes of employment services and lack of accountability and feedback mechanisms (that work both ways);

“Young people want those in government and those delivering services to be listening to young people getting their input and improving services.”

Young person from Western Australia

“Acknowledge our contribution to Australia and not make us feel inferior. Ask us where we come from and our goals, and give us feedback about issues and successes.”

Young person from Tasmania

“There is a need for greater accountability from service providers, i.e. evaluations (who is evaluating the service provided and clients’ progress?).”

Young person from Victoria

Views from the sector echoed those of young people, calling for specialised services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, given their distinct needs and particular (and sometimes complex) disadvantages. A single unified service would not be in a position to offer the support that young people require given the particular challenges and disadvantage they face, as elaborated throughout this submission.

As a good example, one important Government initiative through Department of Social Services, the Youth Transition Support services (YTS) focuses on providing targeted support to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to transition into training and employment.

Case study: Youth Transitions Support services

Department of Social Services

Youth Transition Support (YTS) services have been funded \$42.8 million over 4 years to help young humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants aged 15 to 25 to participate in work and education.

YTS services improve workplace readiness, provide access to vocational opportunities, and create strong social connections through education and sports engagement. Service providers deliver a range of projects and activities for participants, including connections with local employment services and jobs, and vocational or other further education opportunities.

Service locations and providers

YTS services are delivered by six providers in 16 Local Government Areas in the following select locations:

- Access Community Services and MDA Ltd - Brisbane and Logan, Queensland.
- The Community Migrant Resource Centre (Parramatta) and the Lebanese Muslim Association - Sydney, New South Wales; and
- Foundation House and the Brotherhood of St Laurence - Melbourne, Victoria.

The areas selected for YTS services have high numbers of humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants and each provider is partnering with other settlement services, employers, schools, TAFEs, universities and other community and sporting organisations in their local area.

Through partnerships developed both to provide local services and to facilitate referrals, or build on existing initiatives, providers are taking innovative measures to improve participant’s job seeking opportunities as well as using sports programs as pathways to employment and stronger social engagement through strengthening networks.

The YTS is demonstrating the value of having trained youth support workers planning and providing services in partnership with employment and settlement service specialists. It is also highlighting the ways in which government funded employment services fail to respond to the needs of refugee and migrant young people.

MYAN Australia plays a national support role with the YTS, including overseeing the independent evaluation and coordinating the YTS Community of Practice (COP).

Specialised services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that have an understanding around disadvantage, age, gender and culture, as well as mental health and wellbeing concerns for young people, including the impact of trauma, is essential. As elaborated in an earlier section, a specialised service that understands the impact of settlement and various transformations that young people go through is essential to support young people to succeed in life in Australia, including in their transition to employment. Such a service would need to be visible and accessible to young people, and operate in a flexible and dynamic mode to be able to respond to different needs of young people at different ages and from different cultural groups.

“Should all people in refugee/migrant backgrounds get looped together? Do they have the same barriers? (such as APEX stigma). Not a one size fits all answer. Important to recognise everyone have different barriers and support networks, and that they need to be treated first and foremost as individuals.”

Young person from Victoria

Young people often referred to the importance of mentors their recommendations on the future employment services who could support and guide them throughout the employment process, including mentors from their own communities that they could look up to ; ;

“It would be wonderful if I can find a mentor from a similar background with me, and who knows how difficult it is to find secure jobs for people like us. I want someone who has experienced what I have experienced to tell me things will work out eventually because things did for them. I do not have a model who can inspire me. Sometimes that makes me feel quite lonely.”

Young person from Australian Capital Territory

“They should teach young people not only on how to find a job but how to maintain it, like a mentoring approach giving them one on one time.”

“We need mentoring programs for young people especially those who have recently arrived in Australia to help guide them in their education and employment pathway.”

Young people from Western Australia

“Need opportunities to access mentorship. It’s important to have access to industry specific mentors, for the career you want to get into.”

“It would be good to have mentors support and guide us through the process of not only getting a job, but also the things and processes that come after that.”

Young people from Victoria

It is important for employment services to recognise activities by services that deliver mentorship programmes among the eligible activities – as mentioned earlier. MYAN also believes incorporating a mentoring aspect to employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds would be a significant improvement, as employment services could link them to various industries and sectors through already established links with employers and businesses. Employment services could also establish connections with and encourage/support professional organisations initiated by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who could be mentors for young people.

Case Study: The Society of South Sudanese Professionals-Australia

The Society of South Sudanese Professionals-Australia (SSSP-A) was established by South Sudanese Australian professionals as a response to high unemployment rates of South Sudanese Australians,

despite having university and college qualifications in Australia, recognizing that they remain isolated jobs seekers due to lack of work place experiences, networking skills and professional development opportunities.

SSSP-A aims to engage South Sudanese Australian professionals to advance their knowledge and promote professionalism, leadership and advocacy skills in order to be competitive and productive members of society. It assists members through a strengths based approach, recognising their potential and promoting best practices. SSSP-A provides learning and networking opportunities to develop skills and competencies to assist people advance in a variety of career paths.⁷⁰

Recommendations:

28. Introduce automatic referral to enhanced/specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
29. Introduce specialised employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that provide individual support to meet their needs and aspirations through a culturally responsive lense.
30. Implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism and The Joint Standing Committee on Migration with a focus on designing specialised services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
31. Incorporate feedback from young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds into the services delivered by employment services to ensure quality and responsive services.
32. Employ young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to deliver specialised employment services, as well as bicultural workers, to increase accessibility of employment services to young people.
33. Expand eligibility of activities provided by different services that support young people’s job seeking process (including mentorship programs) in line with their diverse needs and aspirations.
34. Pilot a mentoring component as part of specialised employment services delivered for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, facilitating the employment services’ established links with employers and businesses. This includes: making new connections with and encourage/support professional organisations initiated by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who could be mentors for young people.

5. Proposed online employment services and digital literacy of young people

Digital literacy of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds varies depending on a range of factors, including: age, education, year of arrival, migration history as well as family education and financial circumstances. In addition to demographic differences, refugee and migrant communities face a range of unique and additional barriers to digital participation, including limited English

⁷⁰ See SSSP-A website for more, <https://www.ssspa.org/> and see <https://www.facebook.com/SSSPA.org/> for recent consultation and networking activities.

language proficiency and prior (or lack of) formal digital skills learning.⁷¹ Issues with being online for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are partly characterised by underexposure, rather than overexposure. Some are very technology-savvy and digitally literate but may struggle to access or afford internet services, while others may have limited skills in using digital technologies.⁷² A lack of digital connectivity can limit young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds from accessing employment.⁷³ According to a study conducted by CMY in 2016, a lack of awareness of and access to employment related resources and opportunities online are the most commonly cited factors by young people impacting on their use of internet looking for information about employment.⁷⁴ In addition, the study referred to poor quality of internet and limited public access to digital technology by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.⁷⁵

The majority of the young people who attended consultations with MYAN noted their lack of digital skills and limited use of online sources. Some young people mentioned that they are often placed in front of computers and told to apply for jobs, when they don’t necessarily know how to use computers and are unable to complete the tasks asked of them by *jobactive* providers. Some young people however referred using online tools (such as apps, interactive websites) for looking jobs and understanding career pathways as a useful way of getting information around employment.

Consultations with the sector resonated with these views, with some service providers raised concerns about ongoing lack of or limited digital literacy skills for young people 18 months after their arrival to Australia, which prevented them from making online applications for work experience opportunities.

“Some of us don’t know how to use computers, so it’s really hard for us to apply for job online.”

Young person from Queensland

“It is easier to go to youth services and work one on one, rather than through websites. Applying to jobs online are hard, compared to going through the application process with a person you know.”

Young person from Victoria

“We need to support with online job applications.”

Young person from Tasmania

“Learning to find information on internet or from an app would be very useful.”

Young person from New South Wales

⁷¹ Caidi and Dillard, 2005; Bowles, 2013; Llyod, 2010 in Eynon and Geniets, 2012 in Kenny, Edmee (2016). Settlement in the digital age: Digital inclusion and newly arrived young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 12.

⁷² Alam & Imran 2015 in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 15.

⁷³ Alam & Imran 2015 in VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 15.

⁷⁴ Kenny, Edmee (2016). Settlement in the digital age: Digital inclusion and newly arrived young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 29.

⁷⁵ Kenny, Edmee (2016). Settlement in the digital age: Digital inclusion and newly arrived young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), p. 6.

Given the varying degree of digital skills and online engagement levels of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, MYAN is concerned about the suggestion in the Discussion paper about expectations of employment services on young people to look for jobs primarily through online platforms.

Recommendations:

35. Ensure direct access to employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, without any conditions or eligibility criteria to use online employment services first.
36. Ensure employment services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are tailored to increase their digital literacy skills.