

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security

March, 2021

About Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)

MYAN is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia, and those who work with them. Our vision is that all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are supported, valued and thriving in Australia.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government, and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure that the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised and addressed in policy and service delivery.

MYAN provides expert policy advice, undertakes a range of sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills. MYAN has developed the National Youth Settlement Framework to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

About this submission

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security. This submission provides a national perspective; drawing on MYAN's breadth of experience working with young people aged 12-24 from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and multicultural sectors across Australia. Throughout 2020/21, MYAN consulted broadly with young people and various sector organisations across Australia about the impacts of COVID-19 on young people. Those findings have also informed this submission.

The submission responds to the following Terms of Reference: *the risks of insecure or precarious work exposed or exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.*

1. Introduction

MYAN welcomes this Inquiry into Job Security. The risks associated with insecure work remain a pressing issue for the young people we work with, and more investigation is needed into the impact of insecure work on young people who face persistent barriers into meaningful employment.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed how vulnerable young people in insecure work are to sudden economic and health shocks—with significant and potentially long-term impacts on their economic, social and civic participation, health and wellbeing, and capacity for robust recovery. The crisis has both exposed, and exacerbated the critical, social, economic and health impacts experienced by young people in insecure work, particularly for more disadvantaged groups, including young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

We remain particularly concerned for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who were engaged in insecure work and excluded from social welfare safety nets during the crisis—those who were most likely to lose employment and be pushed into poverty, or face increased risk of labour exploitation and exposure to ill health.

The COVID-19 crisis highlights the urgent need for a strong, targeted, and coordinated response to address not only the shortage of meaningful employment for young people in Australia and the prevalence of insecure and precarious employment, but the need to address the systemic barriers that lead to these issues. Solutions need to take an intersectional lens to the inequalities that exacerbated impacts of COVID-19, and recognise how different forms of disadvantage (such as age, migration status and socio-economic status) perpetuate socio-economic and employment inequities.

2. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and economic participation

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of everyone in the Australian community in acute and unpredictable ways, and disproportionately so the lives of those most disadvantaged in our community - including young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing disadvantage faced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds across all aspects of their lives – including in employment.

Young people already faced multiple challenges in entering and maintaining secure employment before the pandemic, and the intersection of being both young and from a refugee or migrant background means that this group of young people face additional barriers than their Australian-born, non-immigrant peers, leaving them particularly vulnerable to labour market exclusion and economic shock.¹

These barriers include:

- Lack of social capital, including social networks to help them 'get ahead'
- Experiences of racism and discrimination, including unconscious bias and discriminatory hiring practices
- Unfamiliarity with Australian workplace laws and greater risk of workplace exploitation
- Unfamiliarity with employment options, pathways and the labour market in Australia
- Lack of recognition of qualifications obtained overseas
- Lack of local work experience
- Interrupted education, and
- Low/no-English language skills.²

Many of the employment challenges faced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have been exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These pre-existing and longstanding structural barriers to economic, social and civic participation, and personal wellbeing have been magnified by COVID-19 with more acute implications in the immediate and longer term.

¹ Centre for Multicultural Youth (2020), *Locked down and locked out? The impact of COVID-19 on employment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria*, Melbourne, CMY

² MYAN (2020) *COVID-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds* Available at: <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf>

2. Young people and insecure work

For young people in Australia, employment is a crucial step towards adulthood. Secure and stable employment enables ongoing economic security and is a key driver to broader social inclusion, increased empowerment, personal agency and improved wellbeing.³ The transition into paid employment is an important milestone into adulthood. As well as improving their financial circumstances and quality of living, employment improves the independence, self-confidence and sense of purpose of young people and broadens their social connections in the Australian community.

Over the past 25 years however, the nature of the working environment that young people experience has changed significantly. Pathways into the labour market have become more complex and difficult to navigate, and entry-level opportunities for young people in Australia have narrowed significantly.⁴ Not only are there fewer full-time jobs available to young people, in recent decades short-term and casual contracts have increased markedly, leading to a rise in underemployment and insecure work amongst young people, and those in long-term unemployment remains higher than among the rest of the population.⁵

For young people in Australia who are seeking to enter the labour market, particularly those combining employment and study, insecure employment has become the norm.⁶ Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, young Australians were disproportionately represented in insecure work⁷, including casual work, independent contracting, private employment agency work, fixed term contracting, and the 'gig' economy. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that as at August 2019, just several months before the crisis hit, **73.9 per cent of 15-19 year olds were employed in insecure work** across Australia, with **43.1 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds** in the same position.⁸

This is alarming, as typical characteristics of insecure work include:

- Working excessive hours that return a very low wage
- Working hours that are incompatible with a stable family life or employment aspirations
- Limited employment protection, collective bargaining, and
- Lack of job security and underemployment due to a lack of guaranteed hours

³ Health West Partnership (2021), *Community Conversations: Talking about Finding Work in Australia*. Health West Partnership: Footscray, Victoria.

⁴ The Foundation for Young Australians (2018) *The New Work Reality* Available at: https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FYA_TheNewWorkReality_sml.pdf

⁵ Commonwealth of Australia (2004) *A hand up not a hand out: Renewing the fight against poverty (Report on poverty and financial hardship)*. Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/senate/community_affairs/completed_inquiries/2002-04/poverty/report/index

⁶ Chesters, J. and Cuervo, H (2019) *Adjusting to new employment landscapes: Consequences of precarious employment for young Australians*. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 30(2), pp. 222-240.

⁷ Dimov, S. King, T. Shields, M. and Kavanagh, A (2020) *The young Australians hit hard during COVID-19* University of Melbourne. Available at: <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-young-australians-hit-hard-during-covid-19>

⁸ Blackham, A (2020) *Discrimination in a pandemic* University of Melbourne. Available at: <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/discrimination-in-a-pandemic>

- Lack of employment conditions like superannuation, paid holidays, sick leave and parental leave.⁹

The economic, social, and health consequences of insecure work are significant. Insecure work affects the ability of young people to plan for their future, and engage in civic life to the fullest extent,¹⁰ and can result in:

- Poor living conditions (in terms of housing, nutrition, physical safety).
- Isolation from the community and exclusion from social life, unable to enjoy cultural and recreational activities.
- Obstacles to accessing health care and social services when needed.
- Negative impacts on emotional and psychological well-being.¹¹
- Unpredictable earnings and being underpaid.
- An increased likelihood to be in debt.¹²
- Inferior work rights and entitlements, and a lack of a voice at work leading to increased risk of workplace exploitation.
- Increased risk of losing one's home due to serious rent arrears¹³.
- Reduced access to resources, such as housing and food, which are essential for a meaningful participation in the community.¹⁴

This is a critical social and economic issue. The costs associated with poor employment outcomes for young people include low income and poverty with reliance on Government income support payments, health care costs, feelings of exclusion, and the loss of social and community integration.¹⁵ Research has shown that insecure employment and a lack of stable earnings is associated with lower levels of autonomy and less confidence in one's ability to adapt to changes in circumstances and to recover from negative life events such as involuntary job loss and economic hardship, such as young people experienced rapidly during the COVID-19 crisis.¹⁶

⁹ Australian Council of Trade Unions (2018) *The rise of insecure work in Australia* Available at: https://www.actu.org.au/media/1385243/d88-a4_the-rise-of-insecure-work_fa.pdf

¹⁰ The Foundation for Young Australians (2018) *The New Work Reality* Available at: https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FYA_TheNewWorkReality_sml.pdf

¹¹ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (2013) *Youth Social Exclusion and Lessons from Youth Work* Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/eurydice-study-social-exclusion-2013.pdf>

¹² Beyond Blue (2011) *Submission into the Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia* Available at: https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/policy-submissions/bw0088-policy-submission---insecure-work-in-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=ab4fa9e9_4

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kyle L, Macdonald F, Doughney J and Pyke J (2004), *Refugees in the labour market: Looking for cost effective models of assistance*, Research report prepared by the Equity Research Centre Inc. and the Work and Economic Policy Unit, Victoria University

¹⁶ Chesters, J. and Cuervo, H (2019) *Adjusting to new employment landscapes: Consequences of precarious employment for young Australians. The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 30(2), pp. 222-240.

Young people are also more likely to take longer to recover from a recession. Research from the Australian Institute has found that while workers over 35 have fully recovered pre-pandemic employment levels, younger workers are still experiencing major job losses¹⁷. As of December 2020, younger workers in Australia were bearing *all* of the burden of job loss remaining from the pandemic. Past financial downturns have shown that young people take far longer than other age groups to recover in terms of employment outcomes, particularly those without a degree.¹⁸ The COVID-19 crisis will result in economic scarring that will affect this generation of young people for their entire lives.¹⁹ They will experience worse employment prospects for a significant period of time and those who do find work will still experience less job security, fewer hours and lower wages.²⁰ This is consistent with past experiences of recessions for young people.²¹

We know that the implications of the COVID-19 crisis for young people engaged in insecure work are significant, and that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are at increased risk of short-term social and economic exclusion and longer-term entrenched disadvantage, given pre-existing access and equity barriers.²²

Additionally, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are likely to be further compounded for specific subgroups of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, including: those more newly arrived in Australia, young people experiencing homelessness, LGBTIQ youth, those on temporary visas, young women, those living with a disability, those with existing health issues, and young people living in regional/rural areas. They are facing increased stressors, including additional challenges in accessing resources, networks, and supports.²³

3. Impact of COVID-19

With many in the casualised labour force, the gig economy, and other precarious employment situations, younger Australians have been affected disproportionately by COVID-19-related job losses and reductions in hours, and lost work far more severely than those in standard, permanent positions.²⁴ For example, in 2020 casual workers lost employment 8 times faster than those in

¹⁷ Nahum, D, and Stanford, J. (2020) *2020 Year-End Labour Market Review: Insecure Work and the Covid-19 Pandemic* Briefing Paper Available at: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Labour-Force-2020-Briefing-Note.pdf>

¹⁸ Social Ventures Australia (2016) *Fundamental Principles for Youth Unemployment* Available at: <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Fundamental-principles-for-youthemployment-report-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁹ Chesters, J. (2020) *Recessions scar young people their entire lives, even into retirement*. The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/recessions-scar-young-people-their-entire-lives-even-into-retirement-137236>

²⁰ Borland, J. (2020). *Labour market snapshot, April 2020*. The University of Melbourne.

²¹ YACVIC (2020) *A COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Young People* Available at: <https://www.yacvic.org.au/assets/Documents/COVID-19-Recovery-Plan-For-Young-People-Youth-Affairs-Council-Victoria-FINAL.pdf>

²² MYAN (2020) *COVID-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds* Available at: <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Nahum, D. and Stanford, J. (2020) *2020 year-end labour market review: insecure work and the COVID-19 pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv:89536>

permanent jobs,²⁵ and a study by the Centre for Social Research and Methods at the Australian National University found that Australians born overseas in a non-English speaking country lost more hours than their Australian born counterparts.²⁶ Many more young people have also had apprenticeships, work placements, or pending job offers withdrawn indefinitely.²⁷

The impacts of COVID-19 on employment exacerbated disadvantage, particularly for young people living on low incomes or with insecure work, including casual employees and migrant workers on temporary visas, and others who were not eligible for income support. The crisis exposed the real social, economic and health risks associated with insecure work, unpredictable pay, and inferior work rights and entitlements and exposed weaknesses in Australia's labour market and health and welfare systems.

3.1 Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and insecure work

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds engaged in insecure work were hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 crisis, particularly those who experienced sudden job loss and were excluded from accessing vital social welfare safety nets, which compounded disadvantage and exclusion. For those who remained engaged in some form of insecure work, they still had no income guarantees and were at risk of increased labour exploitation for fear of losing much needed employment during a pandemic.

MYAN consulted broadly with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and youth and settlement sector organisations throughout the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. What we know from these consultations is that job insecurity is on the rise due to the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, we have seen the following impacts in terms of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds due to the confluence of COVID-19 and insecure work.

3.2 Financial insecurity

For those young people who lost their jobs, lost hours or were unable to work due to ill health, they **faced acute financial hardship** resulting in poor living conditions (in terms of housing, nutrition, physical safety) isolation from the community, barriers to accessing health care and social services and negative impacts on emotional and psychological well-being.

"Before the coronavirus, we could pay all the bills... Now we're just scraping by. The landlords are still expecting us to pay rent. We got an email from the agent saying the landlord couldn't afford to give us a discount because they have a mortgage. Both my brothers were working in a

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Biddle, N. and Gray, M. (2020) *Tracking outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic (October 2020)* – Reconvergence ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods

²⁷ MYAN (2020) *COVID-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds* Available at: <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf>

warehouse and now they don't get any shifts.... I'm worried we won't be able to pay rent." - Young man²⁸

Although the Commonwealth government responded relatively quickly by introducing economic stimulus packages, including new and increased income support payments, these responses failed to adequately address pre-existing issues and left many young workers exposed to losing their employment, going to work sick, or becoming sick at work.²⁹

For example, more than one million Australian casual workers – a large proportion of whom are young people - were not eligible for JobKeeper due to their visa status or did not qualify for this support as they had been engaged as a casual worker less than 12 months. Temporary visa holders, including migrant workers, international students, Bridging visa holders, and asylum seekers living in the community were ineligible for any form of income support, or access to Medicare, leaving them critically vulnerable to the health and socio-economic fallout from the pandemic including food insecurity, homelessness, ill health, and destitution. When financial hardship is unexpected or protracted, people are at immediate risk of:

- Homelessness, with secondary homelessness common
- Insecure and unsafe housing
- Exclusion from vital crisis supports due to their temporary visa status
- Falling below the poverty line
- Accumulating debt
- Declining mental and physical health, and
- Long-term dependency on emergency relief and charitable support.³⁰

"I haven't applied for Centrelink because I'm Kiwi so I'm not eligible. My sister has been trying to find Centrelink or other government support for us. She was working casually but isn't getting shifts anymore." – Young woman³¹

For those excluded from income support, they needed to draw on savings if they had any, access superannuation if they could, sell their possessions, or rely on charity to meet their basic needs. Of the more than 1.3 million workers who have accessed their superannuation throughout the crisis,

²⁸ Centre for Multicultural Youth (2020), *Locked down and locked out? The impact of COVID-19 on employment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria*, Melbourne, CMY.

²⁹ Australian Trade Union (2020) *Responding to the COVID-19 crisis* Available at: <https://www.actu.org.au/our-work/policies-publications-submissions/2020/responding-to-the-covid-19-crisis>

³⁰ MYAN (2020) *COVID-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds* Available at: <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf>

³¹ Centre for Multicultural Youth (2020) *Locked down and locked out? The impact of COVID-19 on employment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria*, Melbourne, CMY.

more than a third are under the age of 30. According to Industry Super Australia, young workers stand to lose the most by retirement as a result.³²

3.3 Concerns about looming reductions to income support

For those young people who were eligible for income support during the crisis, they are increasingly concerned about the reduction in rates of JobSeeker, end of JobKeeper and the moratorium on evictions. There will be many who are unable to meet their basic needs including the costs of housing and utilities.

3.4 New groups of young people are experiencing insecure work, resulting in increased stress, widespread reduction in household income, and increased family responsibilities- requiring them to put on hold their own education or employment aspirations.

Case Study: N is an 18 year old young person, who has lived across multiple countries during their settlement experience. Since finishing year 12 in Melbourne, N has struggled to find casual employment to support their family. N is wanting to go to University, but is unable to afford the associated costs due to their visa status – N hopes that through finding work, they will be able to save enough to pay for their degree. N completed year 12 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and experienced social isolation and family violence during this period. There is increased pressure to find work to ensure financial security for themselves and their family. N is a very out-going, hardworking and proactive young person – through reaching out to multiple services, they were able to access appropriate support to find work. They are currently engaged in precarious employment, but are looking into finding more sustainable options.

3.5 Increased risks of exploitative work practices.

Scarcity and insecure work creates real risks of young people being paid under award wages, being encouraged to take pay cuts, and feeling that advocating for physical health, safety and their rights at work risks losing much needed employment.

*“All the employees feel unsafe [due to COVID-19 and lack of health & safety measures] and management is not helping us... I’d rather not be working there but I need the income.” - Young man*³³

The rise in financial insecurity due to the COVID-19 crisis has increased concerns about the exposure of young people to exploitative labour practices and the impact on their health and safety at work, including wage violations and pay cuts, lax health standards and discrimination in the workplace. We

³² Grieve, C (2020) *Young people are most at risk of locking in super losses*. The Age, March 29, 2020 Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/business/banking-and-finance/young-people-are-most-at-risk-of-locking-in-super-losses-20200326-p54ebh.html>

³³ Centre for Multicultural Youth (2020) *Locked down and locked out? The impact of COVID-19 on employment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria*, Melbourne, CMY.

have heard about young people being paid under award wages, being encouraged to take pay cuts, and concerns from young people about their physical health, safety and rights at work and lacking the confidence to exercise their work rights for fear of losing much needed employment. Young people have also shared concerns about the lack of flexibility in relation to hours of work. For example, feeling unable to refuse more shifts (impacting studies and other opportunities like volunteering), and also having hours cut dramatically and unexpectedly, finding themselves underemployed.

The heightened precariousness of employment may make young people (particularly those ineligible for income support who are anxious about losing what work they do have) reluctant to exercise their work rights, ask for help, or seek employment elsewhere.

3.6 A reduction in meaningful work experience opportunities.

The indefinite postponement of work experience placements and internships, and a lack of real world opportunities such as networking, are presenting additional employment challenges.

Case study: Recruitment agencies seeking to bring casual workers on their ‘books’ / registers (for pick-packing work, working as kitchen hands in restaurants, etc) are maintaining often-unrealistic requirement, including the requirement of a referee needing to be a current supervisor at a current workplace. It seems this has not been made clear to candidates until after they have completed the interview stage of recruitment. Many newly-arrived young people, unemployed young people, and young people with *little to no work experience* are not able to fulfil this requirement. (Young people have been told that their mentors are not suitable referees- this has been a stressful experience).

Case study: B is a 22 young old young person, from a migrant background. B has been linked into multiple youth and work supports prior to COVID-19, and was supported with finding work. B was completing a certificate IV in a health care degree, however was unable to complete their placement due to the pandemic. B’s TAFE institution were unable to provide B with another placement, and they are now expected to find a placement independently. Due to limited personal networks in the healthcare sector, B has been unable to find a placement for over a year – as a result, they are unable to formally complete their qualification. Despite being linked in with multiple supports for finding work, B has struggled to find any employment – despite having applied for many roles across retail, hospitality, and supermarkets. Despite fine-tuning their resume, job applications and interview skills, B believes that their lack of ‘local’ work experience is the only thing prohibiting them from getting a job in Melbourne. B has recently found a job as a part time kitchen hand, and is hoping to build their local work experience through this role.

3.7 Increased health and well-being risks

Young people who remained engaged in insecure work were at risk of heightened health-related hazards because they typically cannot work remotely,³⁴ and often lack access to paid sick leave. Faced

³⁴ United Nations (2020) *Special Issues on COVID-19 and Youth* Program on Youth Unit, Division for Inclusive Social Development and Department of Economic and Social Affairs & United Nations Youth Flash.

with the impossible choice of either staying home and forfeiting much needed income, or going to work sick or increasing their exposure to COVID-19 at work to avoid losing critical income and employment.

Young people have also been reporting reduced confidence, motivation and career/employment aspirations. The lack of job availability or the lack of secure work for young people **delays typical milestones of adulthood**, impacting on young people's transition to adulthood and potential to become independent. This includes the need to delay moving out of home, taking on more debt than previous generations by staying in school longer, and being less likely to secure home loans than previous generations.³⁵

4. Recommendations

Steps to rebuild a competitive economy and flourishing society post COVID-19 is dependent on a skilled and capable workforce. Targeted support for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is the most effective way for this group of young people to access and remain engaged in meaningful, secure employment. Interventions are needed to maintain and boost workforce skills and capabilities in order to secure their future employability, physical and mental well-being, and current and future socioeconomic contributions to Australian society.

We already know of key elements of good practice in employment programs that can assist young people from refugee backgrounds into employment, including:

- Individualised, holistic support/case management
- Education initiatives that help young people & families to understand career options, pathways and expose young people to a variety of opportunities
- Targeted programs that support a young person's transition from education to employment
- Access to paid work experience and internships
- Providing support in the workplace (to both young people and employers)
- Mentoring programs with an employment focus
- Programs that build 'bridging' social capital (links with industry, employers, professional mentors), and
- Cultural competency amongst services/employers.³⁶

We call on the Federal Government to design socio-economic responses to this crisis with an intentional focus on the experiences and futures of young people, who will bear the economic brunt of COVID-19 into the future.

³⁵ Roxburgh, N (2018) *It's bad for everyone: Low wages and Insecure Jobs Among Young People* Available at: <https://nycinquiry.org.au/its-bad-for-everyone-low-wages-and-insecure-employment-among-young-people/>

³⁶ MYAN (2020) *COVID-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds* Available at: <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf>

We encourage the government to account for pre-existing barriers and disadvantages in these responses to avoid further entrenchment of longstanding inequalities and disadvantage for particular groups of young people. We believe that failing to invest in young people will result in substantial economic, social, and political costs, and risks individual long-term exclusion and disadvantage.

Supporting young people's meaningful engagement with work has substantial benefits in terms of their future employability, current and future contribution to Australia's economy, and positive social and wellbeing outcomes for the individual, family and broader community.

MYAN recommends that the Federal Government:

1. Invest in a national Youth Employment Strategy that provides meaningful and secure work for all young people.
2. Invest in labour market reforms that ensure that all workers are protected with adequate job contracts, employment security, and sick leave benefits.
3. Invest in community-based employment programs that include a mentoring component to help young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds build employability skills, gain work experience, and connect with employment opportunities.
4. Ensure that wage subsidy programs that incentivise businesses to employ those who face disadvantage in the job market are tailored to meet the specific needs of particular groups of young people-including those from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
5. Explore opportunities to fund paid 6-12 month internships for more marginalised young people, including those who are not engaged in employment or training (NEET), in a variety of industries, to prepare them for job-readiness in the absence of jobs – including a targeted focus on young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.