



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

## Employment Issues for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

Discussion Paper February 2010

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) is committed to consulting with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities to improve decision making processes, policies and programs.<sup>1</sup> OMI has commenced a state-wide community consultation process to engage OMI stakeholders, provide input to the design and delivery of State Government policies and services and remove barriers to participation.

Employment is one of the most important aspects of migrant and refugee settlement. It is vital for the economic and social wellbeing of the individual and the broader community. It is for this reason that the first of OMI's consultations will focus on barriers to employment and ways to overcome these.

The employment consultation to be held at the Herb Graham Recreation Centre, Mirrabooka, on 23 March 2010 has two main purposes:

1. To provide information about possible career pathways to people from migrant and refugee backgrounds;
2. To hear about the issues affecting employment of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The consultation will also include guest speakers who will provide information on how migrants and refugees can access jobs and training:

- Gordon Duffy, Department of Training and Workforce Development, will discuss what services are offered by the State Government Career Centre and state-wide network of Workforce and Training Development Centres and how they can help you find work and plan your career.
- Anne Stannard, Apprenticentre, will speak about Traineeships and Apprenticeships.
- Peter Ridge, Public Sector Commission, will speak about working for the Western Australian Government.

The issues and comments raised in this consultation will be compiled in a report and provided to the State Government departments who deliver the relevant services and programs. OMI will follow up on key issues and report back to community members on the outcomes of the consultation and will provide ongoing updates on progress through OMI's website.



## **2. EMPLOYMENT ISSUES**

Factors such as English proficiency, age, gender, length of residence in Australia, educational qualifications, skill levels and visa type all impact on employment outcomes for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

New migrants and refugees face many similar issues in seeking employment such as language difficulties, lack of information about employment and career options, lack of local work experience and difficulties having their overseas qualifications, experience and skills recognised.

People from refugee backgrounds, even if highly skilled, often find it more difficult to secure employment in Australia compared with skilled migrants. In Western Australia, unemployment among recently arrived refugees is much higher than for skilled migrants or the general population. Further, many refugees and migrants hold jobs which do not fully use their skills and experience.

The following issues and questions relate to the presentations by each of the speakers and are the suggested focus for discussions. Other issues are listed which, due to time constraints, may not be discussed at this consultation session. However, feedback on these issues either before or after the consultation will be welcome and can be made up to Friday 9 April 2010.

Please note that the questions in this Discussion Paper are a guide for discussion. If you believe other issues are more important please raise them.

### **2.1 LACK OF INFORMATION AND LOCAL EXPERIENCE**

Knowledge of employment options and links to employers and industries are vital in securing employment.<sup>2</sup>

The State Government Career Centre and Workforce Development Centres provide information and guidance about training and employment options. Job expos are another way to provide information about jobs and also offer an opportunity to develop links with employers.

Work experience programs and internships are an effective way to helping refugees gain the local work references and experience that employers often seek. Facilitated, structured work experience also provides opportunities for participants to improve their English through interaction and has the potential to improve employer and community attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

1. What are the most effective ways that information about employment options could be provided to members of your community, including options such as apprenticeships and traineeships and jobs in the Western Australian public sector?
2. What information or assistance would help you gain local experience and contacts? For example, would you find it useful to attend a jobs expo to find out about employment options and meet employers? If so, what kind of information do you think should be provided?
3. Would you and/or members of your community be willing to do unpaid work experience placement to get local experience?

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education and Training (2005), Government of Western Australia, *Pathways to Apprenticeships and Traineeships for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, p.85

## 2.2 ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

Both Apprenticeships and Traineeships are pathways to employment that combine training with on-the-job paid work.

Apprentices receive both practical experience and on the job training from their employer, and theoretical and practical training with a registered training organisation (RTO). Apprentices are indentured to individual employers for the term of their training for between three and five years, depending on the industry and occupation. Apprenticeships are generally available in traditional trade areas, for example, plumbing, electricity, metal fabrication, hairdressing, jewellery making, commercial cookery and bricklaying.

Traineeships involve a shorter period of indenture (usually 12 months, but this may vary across industries and qualifications). Traineeships are more flexible than apprenticeships in terms of hours worked and modes of training delivery. Traineeships are available in a range of areas including business, retail, aged care, cleaning, hospitality, tourism and transport.

In WA, only 5.2% of all apprentices and trainees in 2007 were people who speak a language other than English at home<sup>3</sup>. This contrasts with the representation of the WA population who were born in a non-main English speaking background country (13.8%).<sup>4</sup> The current skills shortage suggests that the growth in apprenticeships and traineeships will continue.

A 2005 Murdoch University study found that barriers to apprenticeships and traineeship amongst people from CaLD backgrounds included:

- Lack of knowledge about Australian workplaces and opportunities for employment in areas such as apprenticeships and traineeships and difficulty accessing information.
- Perceived lower status of trades occupations and preference for professional employment particularly amongst parents, who influenced the career decisions of their children.

4. What would help raise awareness about apprenticeships and traineeships amongst your community?
5. What other cultural or other issues might need to be addressed to encourage people from CaLD backgrounds to enter an apprenticeship or traineeship?
6. What would help make apprenticeships and traineeships a more attractive career Option? (For example, would knowledge about pay scales in trades occupations improve perceptions?)

## 2.3 SKILLS RECOGNITION

In the last decade, there has been more emphasis on skilled and professional migrants in Australia's migration program. In 2008-09, just over half of all people who came to Australia permanently were skilled migrants. With ongoing skill shortages in a number of occupations, the demand for skilled migrants will continue.

Many people from refugee backgrounds hold tertiary qualifications and have extensive experience in professional occupations. However, research has shown that many refugees experience high levels of unemployment, underemployment and occupational downgrading.<sup>5</sup>

Recognising the skills and prior learning of migrants and refugees has become increasingly important given current and expected future skill shortages in Australia.<sup>6</sup> While skills recognition processes have improved in Australia, further streamlining of assessment processes could benefit employers and migrants and refugees.

3 WA Department of Education and Training, Apprenticeships and Traineeships Unit Data (2007)

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census

5 Refugee Council of Australia (2008), Submission to the General Review of Employment Services, p.18

6 Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2006), *Negotiating the Maze – Review of arrangements for overseas skills recognition, upgrading and licensing*, p.4. In its definition of "skills", the Committee included qualifications gained overseas (educational attainment as a measure of skill), English language skills, work experience (local and offshore) and qualifications gained in Australia (p.9).

7. What has been your experience of having your skills recognised?
8. What would help improve recognition of skills and qualifications gained overseas?
9. Have you ever used the services of the Overseas Qualifications Unit? If so, describe the assistance you received.

## **2.4 CROSS CULTURAL ISSUES AND DISCRIMINATION**

Employer attitudes to migrants and refugees can present a barrier to employment. Some employers hold stereotypical and prejudiced views about 'visibly different' migrants and refugees, and engage in discriminatory practices.<sup>7</sup>

This is supported by studies which show that previous refugee intakes, such as people from the former Yugoslavia, have better employment outcomes than other more 'visible' refugee groups, such as African and Middle Eastern refugees, whose religious customs, appearance, name and accent are perceived to be the main bases for discrimination.

Other issues include:

- reluctance by employers to hire new migrants seen as requiring 'more work'<sup>8</sup> and racial discrimination in hiring and firing practices;<sup>9</sup>
- perception that overseas qualifications are inferior to Australian qualifications or a lack of perceived cultural or organisational fit<sup>10</sup>; and
- lack of cross-cultural awareness by employment agencies.

10. If you have experienced discrimination or prejudice from employers or employment agencies, when and how did you experience that discrimination?
11. Did you make a complaint to anyone about it? If so, to whom did you complain and what was the outcome?
12. Do employment agencies provide culturally appropriate services to migrants and refugees? How could these services be improved?

## **2.5 OTHER ISSUES**

Other factors that affect success in finding work include:

### **2.5.1 ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

The Commonwealth Government's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides 510 hours of English language support for new arrivals. The AMEP has recently been restructured to provide two streams of English language training: one focusing on social participation and the other focusing on English for Employment purposes.

Refugees with minimal or no English and limited literacy and schooling can access additional support under a Special Preparation Program. Further support is available through programs such as Centrelink's Language, Literacy and Numeracy Training (LLNP) program.

Other organisations, including non-government agencies such as the Edmund Rice Centre, have developed additional programs to improve client's language skills for employment purposes.

7 Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007) *Refugees and Employment - The effects of visible difference on discrimination* p.8; Department of Education and Training (2005), Government of Western Australia, *Pathways to Apprenticeships and Traineeships for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds* pp.70, 86

8 Department of Education and Training, Government of Western Australia, *Pathways to Apprenticeships and Traineeships for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, 2005, p.iv.

9 Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2005); Tan-Quigley A and Sankaran R (2005). "Some are more equal than others: experiences of racism in new and emerging communities." Ethnic Communities Council of WA.

10 Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (2007), *Recognition of Experience and Upgrading of Overseas Qualification: Final Report*, p.14. Available from [www.cciwa.com/Past\\_Projects.aspx#15138](http://www.cciwa.com/Past_Projects.aspx#15138) accessed 19 May 2008.

However, despite these programs some migrants and refugees experience ongoing difficulties communicating in English which affects their employability.

13. What more could be done to assist migrant and refugees learn English for employment?
14. What is the best way to raise awareness amongst your community about these programs?

### **2.5.2 TRANSPORT**

The next major OMI consultation will be on the subject of transport. However, transport has been identified as a major obstacle for new migrants and their children, in being able to access work and training. As many are on very low incomes or benefits, or have difficulty obtaining a driver's licence, they rely on public transport. This makes it difficult to get to workplaces that are not close to existing public transport routes.<sup>11</sup>

15. In what ways have transport difficulties affected your job search efforts? (For example, getting a driver's licence; understanding how the public transport system works)
16. What information would be helpful to you or your community to help overcome these difficulties?
17. What information would it be helpful to translate into other languages?

### **3 OTHER FACTORS**

There may be other factors that influence success in gaining work.

18. What other factors have influenced your capacity to find meaningful work? (For example, financial strain, access to childcare facilities)

To provide feedback:

1. Attend the consultation
2. Email feedback to OMI at [harmony@omi.wa.gov.au](mailto:harmony@omi.wa.gov.au)
3. Visit the community consultation page on the OMI website:  
[www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi\\_consultations.asp](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_consultations.asp)
4. Suggest a consultation or be involved in future consultations. Visit the OMI website for details.

If you need this information translated, please contact:

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<sup>11</sup> Department of Education and Training, Government of Western Australia (2005) *Pathways to Apprenticeships and Traineeships for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, p. 75



THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

***EMPLOYMENT ISSUES FOR CULTURALLY AND  
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES***

TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2010  
6:00pm-9:00pm

HERB GRAHAM RECREATION CENTRE  
27 CHESTERFIELD ROAD, MIRRABOOKA WA

