Improving Outcomes for New and Emerging Communities

**Fact Sheet 1: Introduction to New and Emerging Communities**

*Better Beginnings. Better Futures* is a series of factsheets that aims to provide a community perspective on some of the most pressing issues affecting new and emerging communities in Australia.

**Aim and purpose of the factsheets**

Developed on the basis of community feedback and perspectives, the factsheets identify key issues and present strategies for the improvement of service and program delivery for new and emerging communities in Australia. They aim to highlight that new and emerging communities, and their associated needs, are not always included, nor adequately considered in the planning, funding and development of programs and policies at local, state and federal levels.

By their very nature, ‘new’ and ‘emerging’ communities often have limited ability to self-advocate as a result of limited systems knowledge or understanding of the existing platforms and mechanisms available to assist with the settlement process. This means that their needs often remain overlooked and go unaddressed.

As such, the core objective of this series of factsheets is to assist the development of effective strategies to improve the social, economic and political prospects of new and emerging communities in Australia.

In so doing, the factsheets propose a working description of ‘new and emerging communities’ to provide greater clarity on the issues that they face and opportunities that exist to improve the design and delivery of policies, programs and services to meet their needs.

The intended target audience of the factsheets is deliberately broad in order to facilitate greater awareness and responsiveness to issues discussed.

The anticipated readership encompasses policy and decision makers from local, state and federal levels of government, as well as funding bodies, service providers and community groups that work with people from new and emerging communities and play a significant role in their settlement journey.

**The factsheets - an overview**

**Factsheet 1 – Introduction to New and Emerging Communities**

An introduction to new and emerging communities, including a working description, and specific characteristics of such communities.

**Factsheet 2 – Support for Post-Compulsory School Education for Students from New and Emerging Communities**

A discussion of the main barriers to achieving positive educational outcomes, including the educational needs of people from new and emerging communities, support available to them, gaps in service delivery and availability, as well as tips on how to address them.

**Factsheet 3 – Youth Employment in New and Emerging Communities**

An overview of key barriers to gaining and retaining meaningful employment for youth from new and emerging communities, including support programs available, gaps in services and programs and tips on how to address them.

**Factsheet 4 – Access to Funding for New and Emerging Community Organisations**

An analysis of the funding programs accessible to new and emerging community organisations and how to access them, challenges to effective management of funds, as well as gaps in services and programs and tips on how to address them.
The information provided in these factsheets is based on reports developed by relevant community, academic and government organisations, in addition to the perspectives of community members, obtained through consultations. The factsheets also draw on the advice and expertise of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) and its New and Emerging Communities Advisory Committee. In addition, they draw on insights from FECCA’s membership and extended networks across Australia, incorporating service providers, case workers, healthcare professionals and volunteers.

**New and emerging communities - a working description**

In its 1999 *New Country, New Stories* report, the then Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission described new and emerging communities as:

*Communities with less than 20,000 people in Australia, most of whom had been in Australia for less than ten years*.

In terms of provision of settlement support, the Australian Government considers an initial period of up to five years for the provision of services for new arrivals to facilitate their successful settlement in Australia. Despite this initial support period, it is important to acknowledge that this does not render such communities as being ‘established’, given that they continue to face specific challenges associated with the short duration of their settlement journey in Australia and their pre-migration experiences.

**Top Countries of Origin for Offshore and Onshore Humanitarian Visas (2007-13)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visa Program</th>
<th>Countries of Origin (2007-13)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (offshore)</td>
<td>Burma, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Liberia, Bhutan, DR Congo, Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onshore Protection</td>
<td>Sri Lanka, China, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Stateless</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Significantly, new and emerging communities largely consist, albeit not exclusively, of recent refugees and other humanitarian entrants. This is predominately the case as Australia is one of the top three countries to resettle refugees from around the world.

In the period 2012-13 alone, the Australian immigration authorities granted a total of 20,019 Humanitarian Program visas, mainly to people from the Middle East, Southwest Asia, Central Asia and Africa. In addition to stateless persons, some of the most common countries of origin include Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, and many other African nations.

**For the purpose of these factsheets, new and emerging communities refer to those people of shared background who have arrived in Australia within the last five to ten years.**

Whilst new and emerging community members come from a wide range of backgrounds, many share...
similar experiences, often having fled conflicts in their countries of origin or having experienced other difficult circumstances resulting in their displacement outside of their homeland. Many people from new and emerging communities now settled in Australia have spent time in situations of protracted displacement, in which they have endured limited access to health, education or other services and support mechanisms, as well as limited employment opportunities.

The demographic characteristics of people requesting humanitarian entrance have changed over recent years, and applicants will have different needs to those from previous times. People from these groups are very likely to have experienced high degrees of trauma, and possibly even torture, and instances of rape, murder and disappearance, as well as arbitrary detention.

The majority of the members in new and emerging communities fall into the age group of 18-30 years, as outlined in the graphic below.

### Protection Visa Applications Lodged by Age Group 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17 Years</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 Years</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34 Years</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44 Years</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-54 Years</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-64 Years</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-74 Years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-84 Years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 85 Years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key features of new and emerging communities - an overview

The following characteristics have been identified as broadly applying to new and emerging communities in Australia:

- They are typically small in number and most of their members are new arrivals to Australia. There has been a significant increase in the number of people arriving from countries of origin designated as ‘new and emerging communities’ in Australia over the past ten years.

- New and emerging communities often lack established family networks in Australia, support systems, community structures and the necessary social and economic resources to facilitate effective settlement.

- Individuals from new and emerging community backgrounds can be more vulnerable than immigrants from established communities, to the extent that they often come from refugee backgrounds and have experienced such challenges as displacement, trauma and torture.

- New and emerging communities often comprise individuals with low levels of education and formal training. This is often the result of having spent significant periods of time in situations of protracted displacement with limited access to education and training opportunities.

- New and emerging community members often possess limited or no English language skills.

- New and emerging communities often comprise individuals who are unfamiliar with Western systems of government and services available to assist them as they have no prior lack of experience with such structures in their countries of origin.

- New and emerging community members may be dislocated from family members as a result of their displacement. They may subsequently lack the ability to draw on collective resources for support, and may not know of existing services, programs and other mechanisms at their disposal.

- Despite their members often having common needs, new and emerging communities are diverse in terms of their culture, religion, languages spoken, levels of education, skills, social and political backgrounds.

- Individuals from new and emerging communities are more prone to becoming victims of discrimination and racism due to their apparent differences, as well as their cultural and religious backgrounds, and lack of familiarity with systems and processes in their new settlement location.
Specific issues concerning new and emerging communities

Although the needs of new and emerging communities vary, they are generally related to:

- accommodation/housing;
- education and training;
- employment;
- English language skills;
- health;
- youth;
- family and relationships;
- the legal system and justice;
- social participation; and
- community development.

A roadmap for success

Successful settlement of new and emerging communities is dependent on the quality and level of support that such communities receive during and beyond the primary stages of their settlement in Australia. Appropriate, informed and adequately resourced, early intervention measures in the areas of health, education, employment and capacity building are all vital to ensure that members of new and emerging communities can become independent participants of, and contributors to, the overall wellbeing and cohesiveness of their broader community.

To be successful, settlement support services need to be coordinated, comprehensive and tailored to meet the specific needs of people from new and emerging communities. With regard to their planning, development and implementation, programs and policies servicing new and emerging communities must recognise their diversity and cater to this accordingly. Successful settlement of new and emerging community groups in Australia requires an effective whole-of-government approach, and a clear focus in all relevant government agencies on effective service provision that addresses the diverse needs of new and emerging communities.

In addition, the availability and provision of settlement support programs must also be supplemented to match the changing demographics of Australia and the increasing proportion of new and emerging communities alongside Australia’s other culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In this context, and as discussed further in these factsheets, it is imperative to encourage new and emerging community groups to self-advocate and be supported to develop their own mechanisms and strategies to facilitate effective settlement in Australia. In this regard, capacity building is key to empowering new and emerging communities to develop and prosper.

References

6. Ibid.
Education plays an important role in the successful settlement of young people from new and emerging communities. It fosters a sense of belonging, develops language, literacy and numeracy skills, facilitates social interactions and improves employment prospects.

This factsheet aims to provide a snapshot of some of the key issues regarding access to, and support for, young people from new and emerging communities studying in Australian secondary schools.

**Education and empowerment**

For many young people and their families, education is seen as a pathway out of poverty and an affirmation of their social status. Conversely, lack of access to education and appropriate support mechanisms can have negative effects on the confidence, social inclusion prospects and wellbeing of young people. Some of these negative effects can include disengagement and isolation, as well as experiences of stigma and depression.

**Challenges with the Australian education system**

The contemporary Australian compulsory schooling system is structured to correlate with student age and is premised on the assumption that young people progress systematically through years of education, in accordance with their age. For students from new and emerging community backgrounds, this structure often proves to be overly-rigid and fails to adequately respond to differing levels of individual educational attainment and competency. Many such students come from humanitarian or refugee backgrounds and, particularly those between the ages of 18 to 21, face difficulties in accessing post-compulsory education in a school-based environment as a result of having no, or very limited, prior experience of a formal education system¹. Specific issues routinely faced include lack of financial support for schooling and limited cultural awareness amongst school and teaching staff to provide adequate support for students from new and emerging community backgrounds².

**Perspectives on positive education**

The following excerpts provide an indication of what is considered to constitute a ‘positive educational experience’:

“Education should be a life-long process of intellectual, physical, emotional, ethical and cultural development, taking place in a variety of formal and informal settings. Education must empower people to live purposeful and satisfying lives and enable people to constructively contribute to society.” ³

“Education involves a range of factors that go beyond the content of a school curriculum. It should provide opportunities for social engagement and pursuit of extracurricular activities. This should occur through informal and formal dialogue encompassing teachers, students, families and communities, and through sports training sessions, music and artistic activities.” ⁴

“Any transformative approach to multicultural education must consider the many dimensions that make up a student’s educational experience.” ⁵
The importance of post-compulsory education

Appropriate educational support for young people from new and emerging community backgrounds is vital as young new arrivals have often had vastly different schooling experiences in comparison to what they will experience in Australia. They may therefore require extra assistance in adjusting to the latter.

“As well as adjusting to resettlement in a new country, recovering from trauma, navigating education, employment and complex bureaucratic systems, refugee young people must also negotiate family, peer, individual and community expectations within the context of adolescence.”

Students who apply for, and gain access to, secondary education with funding support through the Commonwealth Government’s New Arrivals Programme do not always receive the necessary support to remain in school and subsequently benefit from sustained education. In addition, many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds are at a stage in their lives where they require emotional support and career advice. They often lack parental advice with regard to their education, frequently as a result of their parents not having formal educational experience, or them being unfamiliar with the Australian system. Moreover, adolescence, combined with the migration experience, often creates additional emotional and social challenges for young people to overcome.

Post-compulsory education in school is accessed by a large number of new arrivals, given that most young humanitarian entrants fall into the age group of 16 to 21 years. According to data from the Centre for Multicultural Youth, a significant proportion of refugees and humanitarian entrants fit within conventional definitions of adolescents and youth, resulting in a large proportion of young people who are at greater risk of leaving the educational system earlier than other young Australians. Factors contributing to this trend are covered in greater detail below.

Issue 1: Educational background and illiteracy

Many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds have had limited, disrupted or no previous formal education experience. Those with limited or no previous formal education are very often illiterate in their own language. Upon entering the Australian schooling system, they are subsequently unfamiliar with the teaching methods and schooling requirements in Australia. This is often a consequence of young refugees and humanitarian entrants having literacy and educational attainment levels well below those of their peers of equivalent age who are accustomed to Western schooling systems.

English language curriculum requirements also make learning English more difficult for those students who are not familiar with formal schooling systems. Feedback received by FECCA notes that there is a need, for example, to tailor conversational classes and create more informal teaching environments to cater for the needs of these students.

“Young people who arrive in Australia are usually confused. They’ve never been to school back home. They come here and are put in a level of English that is too advanced and they struggle.”

- FECCA Community Consultation Participant
"There is not enough support for [young people from new and emerging communities]. For example, from Afghanistan most of the refugees come from a non-English speaking background. They’ve never been in a school. They’ve never seen a school building. How can they learn as fast as other people who come with a very good educational background? My suggestion is make extra English classes and further support available for refugees.”

- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Issue 3: Educational needs

Students without prior experiences of formal education generally require a greater amount of support with regard to understanding appropriate school behaviour, expectations and requirements of the secondary and post-compulsory schooling system in Australia.

Due to their immigration experiences (often including experiences of torture and trauma), and lack of familiarity with formal education systems, some young refugees may have low levels of concentration, and struggle with the acquisition of language skills. As a result, they require a larger amount of time and additional support to ‘catch-up’ to their peers in terms of developing their numeracy and literacy skills to an equivalent standard.

In addition, students in the post-compulsory school age bracket often have further pressure placed on them as a result of time limitations imposed through the requirement to enrol in secondary school and complete a High School Certificate (or equivalent) before the stipulated age limit.

Another challenge often relates to the lack of a study space at home, or the absence of a suitable environment to facilitate education and learning in after-school hours. It is therefore often the case that young people from new and emerging community backgrounds will struggle to complete their homework or tasks required outside of the classroom. This is coupled with issues regarding the greater need for additional educational support outside of school hours in cases where parents are unable to provide sufficient support with homework and assignments due to their own limited language skills and education. In addition, FECCA has received feedback concerning the limited provision of practical materials and use of alternative teaching methods that may be more effective in addressing the learning difficulties of young refugees.

Issue 4: Compatibility with the Australian schooling and education system

The Australian education system is often inflexible and rigidly structured, precluding its ability to effectively recognise and cater to the needs of young people from new and emerging community backgrounds.

That Australia’s schooling system is broadly structured around student age as opposed to their ability or level of educational attainment, is incompatible with the needs of young people from new and emerging community backgrounds, whose levels of education and literacy are often well below Australian standards. Community feedback received by FECCA has highlighted this issue, raising concerns with regard to young people from refugee backgrounds being placed in mainstream schools at a level appropriate for their age but not for their abilities or educational needs. This situation often leads to individuals having feelings of frustration, failure, loss of confidence, isolation, and disengagement from the schooling system.

In addition, issues have been highlighted concerning students who are over the age limit of 18 years with limited prior education who wish to continue their education. In such cases, they are typically denied access to secondary education in school and are instead directed towards vocational education or other education forms that are not always suitable in addressing their educational needs. This is often compounded by the fact that the age cut-off imposed by government means that schools who accept students beyond the age of 18 do not receive funding to support them, and therefore, have less of an incentive to provide quality options for students.

Issue 5: Managing family expectations and pressure

Some young refugee students fail to acquire an appropriate level of English skills and education prior to entering secondary schooling as a result of being pressured by family members to enter mainstream education as soon as possible. This is often the direct result of the family’s lack of understanding regarding
the requirements of the Australian system. In addition, many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families often have unrealistic expectations concerning the educational progress of their children, which puts pressure on students to pursue courses that might be beyond their academic level or language abilities.

Further to this, CALD families do not always fully comprehend the impact that disruptive education, cultural differences, and varying literacy and language skill levels may have on their children’s ability to achieve positive educational outcomes. If they are themselves uneducated, they will also often fail to understand the learning process and the educational needs of their children. The result is often that families fail to support their children in making appropriate decisions about which educational and career pathways to pursue.

Issue 6: Dealing with trauma, culture shock and emotional challenges associated with the adolescence

Young people form refugee backgrounds may have experienced torture and trauma or may have spent long periods of time in situations of displacement and subsequently suffer from mental or physical health issues. Many such individuals may have arrived in Australia unaccompanied, and thereby lack the emotional support of their families. By extension, the trauma of family dislocation or breakdown exacerbates their mental health issues.

Feedback that FECCA has received through community consultations has indicated that schools are crucial ‘sites of information’, helping young people to learn about their identity. Conversely however, the schooling experience often exacerbates feelings of dislocation, and highlights the belief held by many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds, that ‘they do not belong’.

Culture shock and having to enter an educational system that is entirely different from anything previously experienced is a also major burden for many young refugees. This, in addition to coping with past trauma, as well as adapting to a new culture and dealing with the emotional challenges of adolescence, learning a new language, entering the education system and lacking family support, are some of the diverse and complex challenges that face many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds.

Gaps and opportunities for improved service provision

“[Young CALD people] may never be able to compensate for their lack of educational background...the Australian school system is geared towards age groups...a two or three year gap is significant enough for kids not to be able to [bridge] it...”

“Support mechanisms are usually insufficient ... a bit of extra tutoring for an hour or half an hour once a week is often not enough ... Plus support tends to be centred only on the level the young person is placed in ... it doesn't address the problem of gaps. Accordingly young people find themselves unable to cope. At home, their parents don’t have the English to follow up ... and the process of decay starts. Loss of self-esteem kicks in around Year 9.”

Support programs – key issues

FECCA identifies a number of key issues concerning the design and delivery of educational support program, including:

- The general lack, or limited availability, of support programs to assist students in the transition from intensive English language schools or centres into mainstream secondary schools. In addition, the language support received in these centres does not always adequately equip students with a level of English appropriate for mainstream secondary schooling.

- As a result of secondary education beyond the age of 18 years not being compulsory, governments do not provide any support or incentive for the retention of young adult refugee students in the schooling system.

- The inflexibility of Australian education systems, coupled with the lack of funding for support programs often results in services failing to prepare students to successfully enter mainstream secondary schools at the assigned level and equip them with the appropriate learning skills.

- There is a often a lack of flexibility with regard to resourcing and teaching approaches in schools to
address the complex educational needs of young refugees.

• The concept of after-hours school work is often new for many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds, as learning has previously only occurred during school hours. Due to the scarcity of out-of-school programs this issue remains unaddressed and there are only limited programs available to provide learning support.

• There is broadly a lack of peer mentoring and tutoring programs available to assist young refugees in school to overcome the challenges of adapting to their new schooling environment. This includes programs to promote better understanding of educational requirements, assist students in coping with complex schooling demands, build and maintain confidence, as well as offer support to remain engaged in school for those at risk of disengagement.

• Many educational support programs fail to acknowledge the difference between young immigrants, on the one hand, and refugees and humanitarian entrants, on the other, and subsequently cater for their associated educational needs.

Cultural competence of teachers - addressing and identifying the needs

Feedback that FECCA has received from community members has noted that, in the context of a lack of specific support programs and staff, mainstream teachers need to be more responsive to the complex and diverse needs of students from new and emerging community backgrounds. This includes developing their cultural competency skills and enhancing their understanding of the broader connections between educational background (and often previously limited education experiences) and the subsequent adverse impact on a student’s ability to effectively participate in school.

In this context, teachers need to ensure that their teaching methods are sensitive to the needs of their students who may have learning difficulties, low levels of concentration or no previous experience of a formal learning environment. FECCA’s community feedback has suggested that, as a result of conforming to a rigid curriculum, teachers often fail to begin with the basics in their teaching methods, and instead assume previous knowledge that most refugees, or students from new and emerging community backgrounds, would not have.

Funding for targeted programs and allocation of funding

Some of the key issues relating to funding for programs to support students from new and emerging communities include:

• Issues associated with the lack of consistent and adequate support programs and staff in schools are largely due to funding pressure created through what is considered to be ‘non-compulsory’ education.

• There is currently no national framework to coordinate or guide the allocation of government funding for English as a Second Language support, with each state and territory holding the responsibility to decide where to direct these resources.

• There are disparities amongst different states and territories regarding the strategies adopted to support young refugees in school. The current approach in educational support funding follows a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model and does not include a tailored strategy for students from refugee backgrounds.

Making it work

The following recommendations may serve as strategies to improve educational outcomes for young people from new and emerging community backgrounds in Australian secondary schools:

• introduction of mentoring and peer mentoring programs, in addition to homework tutoring, to provide vital support for CALD students;

• additional tailored support for young CALD people with literacy or learning problems, which must be separately identified and delivered as distinct from needs associated with English being a second language;

• implementation of well-funded, more flexible English language, literacy and numeracy tuition programs that cater to a variety of learning styles;
Improving Outcomes for New and Emerging Communities

- use of flexible teaching methods and a more intuitive educational system based on the educational needs of the students and their level of educational attainment, as opposed to age alone;
- cultural awareness training implemented across the school system in order to enable staff to identify, and cater for, the needs of young people from new and emerging community backgrounds, including the specific needs related to illiteracy in their own language, low literacy in English and incidents of past trauma;
- a national strategy and guidelines for the appropriate allocation of funding to ensure that those students and schools who would most benefit from English as a Second Language programs have access to them;
- development and introduction of provisions to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for the acquisition of English language skills, developed to a level sufficient to cope with the requirements of secondary education in Australia; and
- additional funding allocated to schools and community organisations to facilitate the development of extra-curricular activities to ensure that students from new and emerging community backgrounds are able to better engage with their schooling community and socialise with their peers.

References
2. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

FECCA would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the members of FECCA’s New and Emerging Communities Advisory Committee and its extended network in developing this series of factsheets.

For further information regarding the Better Beginnings. Better Futures. factsheets, please contact the FECCA Office on (02) 6282 5755 or email admin@fecca.org.au.
Employment plays a foundational role in the successful settlement of new and emerging communities and contributes to fostering social cohesion, independence, individual self-esteem and wellbeing.

This factsheet aims to provide information on some of the key issues identified by newly-arrived youth as the main barriers to employment. The information it provides is based on community views presented to FECCA through community consultations and surveys.

Youth employment in context

Australian Bureau of Statistics data from 2013 reveals that the unemployment rate for youth between the ages of 15-24 years reached a concerning 12.4% percent in November 2013. This trend is substantiated by academic reports that have noted that humanitarian entrants face additional challenges in gaining and maintaining employment, and have significantly higher rates of unemployment compared with immigrants in other visa categories.

In addition to the challenges faced by all Australian youth in entering the labour market, such as lack of previous working experience and an overall reduction in the number of available entry-level jobs, young people from new and emerging community backgrounds face a series of additional intersectional disadvantages. These relate to their varying language proficiency and literacy levels, levels of educational attainment, incidence of pre-migration trauma, lack of local experience, lack of referees and often limited knowledge of the Australian workforce systems and cultures. In addition, they often face the challenge of having no networks to use in seeking out employment, and the potential to face discrimination, both through recruitment and on-the-job, on the basis of their cultural, religious or linguistic backgrounds.

The common employment requirement in Australia, that most roles expect an individual to have prior experience in a designated or related area, also presents a significant challenge for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in finding work. A large number of young people arriving in Australia and looking for employment have had a disrupted educational history, or sometimes have received no formal education, which significantly impedes their ability to find work, particularly in an area of their choice.

These barriers are often exacerbated by structural gaps in employment service provision, lack of, or delays associated with, recognition of overseas qualifications, limited mentoring programs and adequate career pathways, as well as limited available government funding targeted at specifically improving employment outcomes for youth from new and emerging community backgrounds.

What are the issues?

In a recent youth employment survey undertaken by FECCA that attracted a significant proportion of responses from young people of humanitarian or refugee backgrounds, participants were asked for their views on the key barriers preventing them from finding sustainable employment. The most common responses included:

- limited language proficiency, including accent;
- lack of experience as a result of their age;
- lack of local experience in Australia;
- experiences of discrimination, prejudice or racism;
• lack of Australian qualifications, or limited recognition of overseas qualifications;
• lack of networks to use in seeking out and securing a job;
• limited familiarity with the Australian workforce, employment systems and culture;
• lack of confidence and/or fear of non-acceptance;
• lack of tailored employment services;
• pressure from families to prioritise obtaining a tertiary qualification over finding short-term employment; and
• pre-migration experiences, including experiences of torture and trauma.

“have tried so many times to find a job, but I haven’t been able to do so. It has been seven months that I have been submitting my resume to different places, such as fast food chains, cafes and shopping centres. I came to Australia by boat, I have no work experience in this country, nor do I have the connections to help me find a job.”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Language barriers

Language barriers often present a particularly significant challenge for many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds, who come to Australia with very limited or no English skills. Many come from countries in Africa, the Middle East or Asia, where languages are less similar to English, and education systems diverge more from the structure and delivery of those in the Australian system. In addition, limited experience of, or lack of previous access to, education, as well as disrupted schooling experiences and low literacy levels make learning English a much more challenging process for many young people from new and emerging community backgrounds. This often required more time to learn functional English, as well as necessitating the provision of additional assistance and support to better enable language learning.

Gaps in language service delivery

Services and courses available for learning English do not always meet the specific needs of new arrivals. For instance, the 510 hours of English language classes provided to new arrivals through the Adult Migrant English Program is often insufficient for many young refugees and humanitarian entrants, to bring their English to an adequate level to assist them in securing employment.

“Our people who come here, they’re confused. They’ve never been to school back home. They come here, they put him in a high level of English.”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Making it work

Improvements to English language programs, to ensure that they are adequately designed to cater for a client’s specific needs are important for more effective service delivery. This includes a focus on more tailored service delivery, to meet the specific needs of an individual, for example, through the provision of additional, or fewer, hours of English classes depending on the client’s proficiency. Improvements can also be made in ensuring that industry-specific English language programs are more focused on strengthening employment prospects, and equipping young people from new and emerging community backgrounds with the requisite skills to attain employment more efficiently.

“I haven’t come across a migrant saying that the English courses they have taken in Australia have been very beneficial for them. Employing professional English teachers who speak the migrant’s language can really develop efficacy of these courses.”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Lack of local experience, networks, knowledge and skills

Many young new immigrants arrive in Australia with no prior formal education, training or qualifications or with skills that are not recognised in Australia. Those fortunate enough to arrive with previous education, qualifications or skills often face difficulties in having them formally recognised, or face challenges on the
basis of skills recognition being an often lengthy and costly process. Moreover, as many employers in Australia do not recognise overseas experience and typically require job candidates to demonstrate that they have local experience, new arrivals who have spent only a short period of time in Australia face significant challenges in securing employment.

“They ask if you have local experience, and it’s impossible when you’ve only just arrived in Australia!”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Due to these circumstances, youth from new and emerging community backgrounds face multiple disadvantages on the basis of non-recognition of their skills, and the obvious practical challenges in attaining local experience immediately after their arrival. Community feedback that FECCA has received has noted that even graduates of Australian tertiary education institutions from new and emerging community backgrounds find it difficult to enter the workforce when they finish their studies as a result of limited local experience and skills.

“Even when we go to school here, even when you are re-trained here, even when you get your qualifications from here, they will still not give you the job.”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

In addition, young people who have spent many years in situations of protracted displacement and have not had the opportunity to gain formal qualifications or experience are at risk of long term unemployment. Further to this, youth from new and emerging community backgrounds who have recently arrived in Australia generally lack established professional networks that they would have otherwise developed through their education, training or previous employment experience, and subsequently use to secure a job.

“For recent immigrants, it is very difficult to find a job as the competition is high and the job will often be given to the person with more Australian-based experience and qualifications.”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Compounding the challenges that they face young people from new and emerging community backgrounds also typically lack familiarity with the Australian labour market, the culture and expectations around developing and submitting a resume, responding to selection criteria, gaining on-the-job experience and attaining appropriate qualifications. In addition, they often experience difficulties in navigating the complex workforce system and require additional assistance to develop an understanding of the workforce culture and, if appropriate, seek out career guidance.

Making it work

Feedback received by FECCA through community consultations has suggested that training programs attended by young students should include a practical experience component. Facilitating opportunities to gain such experience has been advocated as being extremely useful. For example, Australian university degree programs that include an industry experience component have been commended to the extent that they assist young CALD job-seekers in entering the workforce more rapidly after graduation.

Further to this, there is also a need to extend apprenticeship opportunities beyond the traditional manufacturing industries in order to meet both Australia’s workforce shortages, as well as the employment preferences of young people with regard to their interests and skills.

Community feedback received by the Refugee Council of Australia has highlighted the need for accessible apprenticeships, internships and volunteering programs for young refugees or humanitarian entrants that will enable them to acquire local experience and knowledge of the Australian workplace systems and culture. In this context, it is recommended that, as a national framework, an incentive scheme for employers could be developed to encourage and support young refugees and humanitarian entrants through providing traineeships and internships.

It is also very important to help employers understand the benefits of having a culturally diverse workforce for improving productivity, innovation and growth. To facilitate this, training programs could be initiated to assist employers in understanding the needs of CALD employees and subsequently provide tips on creating
Improving Outcomes for New and Emerging Communities

a welcoming, inclusive and culturally appropriate workplace, free from racism and discrimination.

Discrimination

“I have been applying for job and at few places I was called for interview but when they saw me in person they simply said that the place was taken.”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Experiences of discrimination are often reported to FECCA in community consultations as a significant barrier to gaining employment. Young people from new and emerging community backgrounds are particularly affected in relation to this, as victims of discrimination on the basis of their age and their more distinctive appearance, names, accent and cultural or religious backgrounds. Anecdotal evidence, for example, reveals that young job seekers and employees from a Muslim background appear to be more prone to discriminatory treatment. In addition, reports have also revealed that young people who are visibly racially or culturally diverse are more likely to be placed in low level skill groups, or receive unattractive jobs, regardless of their qualifications.

“There is still some hesitation (racism?) with regard to employing people from overseas. People assume that I don’t speak and understand English well. Also, many are just not prepared to give me a go!”
- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Making it work

Promoting the benefits of having a young, culturally diverse workforce through a nationwide campaign targeting employers is proposed as an effective way to eliminate experiences of racism and discrimination with regard to employment. This entails also encouraging employers to develop and implement workplace anti-discrimination policies and multicultural action plans.

Employment services

Some of the barriers faced by young people from new and emerging community backgrounds are exacerbated by gaps in the provision of employment services and programs that should address their needs and assist them to overcome some of the most common challenges that they face.

Responses received through FECCA’s Youth Employment survey with regard to the utility of employment services highlighted the following comments and suggestions:

- CALD-specific employment services should include a youth-specific stream;
- cultural diversity training should be provided to all employers and their staff;
- services should be developed to assist youth in attaining local experience, including paid internships;
- a CALD youth-specific career counsellor and job advertiser website should be developed;
- more grass-root level services for young people and services that will attend to and provide guidance on already-running community services such as youth groups should be provided; and
- mentoring programs should be developed and implemented.
Gaps in employment service design and delivery

Community feedback received by FECCA has shown that mainstream employment services fail to address the complex needs of young jobseekers from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds as they lack targeted and tailored programs or strategies to address their specific needs.

Community feedback has also revealed that often, employment service agencies provide inadequate support and/or fail to provide full information about the process of seeking employment. CALD clients have even reported feeling that the focus of such service providers appears to be ‘getting the clients off the list’ of job applicants, as opposed to acknowledging or addressing specific CALD concerns.

Other issues have been identified as:

- failure of service providers to understand the implications of clients coming from a refugee background, such as disruptive education, spending time in a refugee camp without having access to employment, trauma and other mental health issues;
- service providers lacking cultural competency and embracing a one-size-fits-all approach that ignores and fails to cater for the specific needs of newly arrived youth;
- very limited support from service providers in providing necessary assistance to prepare for job interviews, address selection criteria and prepare a resume.

Making it work

Developing more flexible mechanisms that allow client differences and needs to be identified on a case-by-case basis is suggested as an effective way through which to improve the design and delivery of employment services for young people from new and emerging community backgrounds. In addition, it is proposed that introducing a refugee stream that will ensure that the specific needs of CALD job-seekers are catered for and addressed in a culturally responsive way, would also prove effective.

Mentoring programs

A recurring theme regarding employment issues that FECCA has identified through its engagement with young people from new and emerging community backgrounds, is the need for an established and targeted mentoring program. Due to the varied intersectional barriers they face, young people from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds require additional support to identify and pursue education and employment opportunities and to navigate the Australian employment system.

Mentoring has been identified as an effective way through which to provide young job seekers with practical knowledge of workplace practices, expectations, culture and systems, and enable them to overcome some of the barriers that they face in gaining and retaining employment. Mentoring programs also help job seekers from CALD backgrounds to develop professional networks, boost their confidence in their skills, and improve their prospects in terms of finding jobs to match their qualifications.

“Services that provide greater support and specifically target CALD and new migrant youth with one-on-one counselling and advice would be very useful, as well as identifying employers who are prepared to Mentor. A mentor program would be fantastic.”

- FECCA Community Consultation Participant

Career pathways

Students from new and emerging community backgrounds who complete tertiary education in Australia are often still unable to find employment in their field due to a lack of sustainable and appropriate career pathways. Lack of a career pathway has the subsequent effect of disengaging young people from education and training through creating a sense of
hopelessness that there are no real possibilities of finding meaningful employment. It is therefore important that employment services provide mechanisms through which to offer pathways to jobs that are stable, facilitate career advancement, and match the skills or interests of the job-seeker.

**Lack of funding for targeted programs**

There is a need for more targeted funding for community organisations that run grass-root programs that are geared towards improving employment outcomes for young people from new and emerging community backgrounds.

The cessation of programs such as the Commonwealth Government’s Multicultural Communities Employment Fund, whose core objective was to support innovative and sustainable projects that addressed unemployment issues for migrants and refugees, has been identified as particularly problematic in this context. The program’s defunding has had a detrimental impact on community organisations’ ability to assist young job seekers and the communities they represent.

Due to the complex and specific needs of newly arrived refugees and migrants, community organisations require additional funding to develop tailored and local employment assistance programs such as mentoring, English language classes or internships.

**Making it work**

Strategies to improve program delivery to assist young people from new and emerging community backgrounds in seeking employment include:

- directing funding to complement and enhance the broader and mainstream programs that already assist refugee and migrant job seekers; and
- replacing the Multicultural Communities Employment Fund with a similar initiative that encourages innovative, community-based initiatives and strategies to improve employment prospects.

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**References**


5. Ibid.
Ethno-specific community organisations play a significant role in delivering settlement support, as well as meeting and advocating for the needs of new and emerging communities.

This factsheet aims to highlight some of the key issues affecting new and emerging community organisations and their ability to successfully apply for funding, develop and manage projects, build networks and ensure sustainability.

The value of community funding

Small community organisations make a significant contribution towards facilitating successful settlement for new and emerging communities through:

• complementing mainstream services;
• providing advocacy support for communities;
• strengthening social participation;
• facilitating economic wellbeing through employment, education, and language skills programs;
• providing volunteering opportunities;
• providing settlement support and community education; and
• providing conflict mediation and community connectedness services

New and emerging community organisations have increasingly adopted more responsibility for the delivery of services to their communities. Significantly, they often do so on the basis of limited funding, relying largely on volunteers and on one-off, short-term and small grants to manage their operations. This often results in programs that they offer having limited sustainability, necessitating an ongoing reinvestment in resources and time to prepare new funding applications and pursue new opportunities.

What are the issues?

Availability of funding programs

Broadly, the number of funding programs available to, and accessible by, new and emerging community organisations is limited. In addition, that organisations have been established for different purposes, play different roles, are structured in different ways and representing different interests, is often not reflected in available funding programs.

Specific issues regarding the availability of funding programs are identified as follows:

• Many ethno-specific groups feel that they are discriminated against compared with organisations that have a broader agenda and target larger groups and sections of the community.
• There is a notable absence of grant initiatives that are specific to new and emerging communities.
• Grass-root organisations are typically excluded from consultations regarding funding planning, resulting in them having limited ability to communicate their knowledge of community issues and needs.
• Many current funding strategies and policies are reactive and ignore the importance of preventative work. For example, organisations pursuing proactive activities are often challenged in terms of funding criteria requiring applicants to provide evidence of an existing issue in their community.
Former and current Australian Government grants relevant to new and emerging community organisations

Volunteer Grants
Provided by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS), the grants are a good practice example of an accessible funding opportunity. Community organisations have said the application forms are simple to complete. Many community organisations have benefitted from the grants.

Diversity and Social Cohesion Programs
Recently rolled into the DSS Strengthening Communities Program, it provides crucial funding for community organisations for capacity building and fostering social cohesion projects.

Settlement Grants Program
The grants are becoming less accessible to small ethnic organisations despite the fact that many of these organisations provide settlement services and complement government programs.

Migrant Communities Employment Fund (MCEF)
No longer funded.
MCEF provided crucial support for for grass-root community organisations working towards improving employment outcomes for their communities.

Building Multicultural Communities Fund (BMCF)
No longer funded.
BMCF was targeted at grass-root organisations to foster social inclusion.

Access to information, networks and collaboration opportunities

Many small new and emerging community organisations have limited social and professional networks, often resulting in family networks becoming a substitute for formal organisational structures. This subsequently limits knowledge and understanding of funding programs that are accessible. In addition, by not being part of existing funding and professional networks, many community organisations do not benefit from the information that would otherwise be distributed by a professional network, including mailing lists, newsletters and other communication mechanisms.

Furthermore, many new and emerging community organisations are unfamiliar with submission-based government funding processes and have limited ability to influence political processes and attract funding. Challenges may also arise as a result of different organisations representing the same ethnic group and failing to collaborate as a result of personal interests, commonly as a result of differing political or religious views.

Moreover, an emphasis on partnerships may conversely have the unintended result of nurturing competition between ethnic groups. In this context, smaller organisations express concern that they could be overtaken by larger organisations if they enter a partnership, or others may become worried that if their specific group is not seen as a priority by the partnership or the funding body, then they could miss out on funding opportunities in the future.

Preparing funding applications and meeting the eligibility and selection criteria
Feedback received by FECCA through community consultations has noted that, broadly, new and emerging community organisations face difficulties in applying for funding to support community activities. Specific challenges include:

• understanding and responding to funding criteria that are often highly complex and rigorous;
• keeping up-to-date with changes in the funding
processes including new guidelines, revised forms and new procedures;

- overcoming language barriers, particularly related to limited familiarity with bureaucratic jargon;
- limited capacity to write comprehensive funding proposals due to the lack of previous experience, and/or financial resources;
- framing issues in funding applications to support proactive community-building activities, as opposed to portraying communities as vulnerable and at risk of social problems (‘talking down’ their communities);
- substantiating claims in funding applications with evidence in the absence of prior experience of case studies to demonstrate how an issue may impact on a community that is new and emerging;
- finding the requisite financial, personal and time resources to conduct research, develop case studies and write reports; and
- preparing a funding application that satisfies a need to deliver on tangible outcomes – funding strategies will generally focus on statistics and targets to measure the outcomes of the organisations instead of the quality of the service delivered.

Managing the grant and the project

Many community organisations lack the knowledge or skills to effectively manage funds they receive, and work within the requirements and constraints associated with spending public money. They often experience difficulty in meeting the conditions of the grant and using funding in accordance with the timeline and budget allocated.

In addition, they often face challenges with regard to keeping accurate and up-to-date financial records to track spending and the progress of the project. This is compounded by difficulties often experienced in effectively liaising with funders, reporting on projects and managing staff and volunteers.

The amount of administrative work required to manage the funds and the limited resources means that organisations need to invest time to attract volunteers with administrative and management skills. Due to limited financial resources, these organisations have to almost entirely rely on volunteers. As a result, difficulties associated with maintaining a volunteer staff for administrative tasks often threaten the stability of an organisation and its capacity to effectively deliver on longer-term projects. In many cases most of the funding is spent on logistics and staffing instead of being invested in projects addressing the needs of the communities.

“Sometimes, groups are simply set up to help people, but running projects requires a lot of other types of skills that don’t necessarily involve helping on the frontline.”

Managing community needs and expectations

Many community organisations apply for funding on the basis that they represent a particular ethnic or vulnerable group. Often, however, this is done without initially consulting the community group in question about their needs. The result is that communities often complain that the process is not inclusive enough and that their vulnerabilities and needs are exploited as a tool for pursuing funding without being consulted.

Further to this, there are challenges for community leaders to ensure that the complex needs of their communities are reflected in the management of funding and the implementation of the projects. Many organisations need to invest a significant amount of time and resources in pursuing and securing funding while also having to continuously provide services to their community members. Also, changing government funding priorities can negatively impact on the way community organisations address the needs of their members. In their pursuit of funding, many organisations have to reinvent themselves and adjust their community’s priorities and organisational objectives to match the requirement of the funding available.

“Leaders who are best at attracting funding may not always be the best at getting things done or rallying the community.”
Making it work

Some strategies that could improve access to funding and the operational capacity of new and emerging organisations might include:

- recognising the important role that such organisations play in fostering social inclusion and in providing settlement support and making adequate funding available;
- relaxing stringent language requirements for applications to make funding rounds more accessible;
- developing more flexible funding criteria to provide new and emerging communities with more equitable access to funding, and allowing them to compete with more established communities;
- ensuring that communities whose needs are to be addressed are involved in the design and implementation of the project for which the funds are sought or were granted;
- organising training programs for organisations to develop their skills in funding applications and fundraising, project and financial management, marketing, forming partnerships, campaigning and volunteer recruitment;
- developing the capacity for funding opportunities between new and emerging community groups and mainstream community organisations (for example, through mentoring programs between more mature organisations and the newly established ones to serve as a mechanism to build capacity of the latter);
- encouraging partnerships between smaller organisations and the development of joint community networks and structures to maximise their capacities and impact; and
- improving engagement and facilitating stronger communication between funding bodies and community organisations to enable better understanding of the processes used by funding bodies in allocating grants.

References

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

FECCA would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the members of FECCA’s New and Emerging Communities Advisory Committee and its extended network in developing this series of factsheets.

For further information regarding the Better Beginnings. Better Futures factsheets, please contact the FECCA Office on (02) 6282 5755 or email admin@fecca.org.au.