

30 January 2018

Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Submitted via: [futureofwork.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:futureofwork.sen@aph.gov.au)

### **Submission to the Inquiry on the Future of Work and Workers**

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations. FECCA provides advocacy, develops policy and promotes issues on behalf of its constituency to Government and the broader community. FECCA strives to ensure that the needs and aspirations of Australians from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds are given proper recognition in public policy.

FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society. FECCA's policies are developed around the concepts of empowerment and inclusion and are formulated with the common good of all Australians in mind.

FECCA welcomes the invitation to contribute to the inquiry and commends the Select Committee for seeking community advice through numerous stakeholder consultations. FECCA would be glad to contribute in more detail on matters relating to culturally and linguistically diverse communities as part of a discussion of the future of work and workers. For further information please contact FECCA Director Dr Emma Campbell [emma@fecca.org.au](mailto:emma@fecca.org.au) or 02 6282 5755.

### **Key recommendations**

FECCA recommends the following:

- the collection of data on CALD insecure workers. This needs to be disaggregated by country of birth, cultural background, language, gender and whether an individual is living with disability.
- research into the specific challenges and barriers which contribute to keeping CALD employees in insecure employment as well as into effective or good practice pathways for individuals to find sustainable, safe and secure employment.
- culturally and linguistically sensitive information provision regarding worker rights within CALD communities.
- targeted pathway programs which assist those vulnerable to or currently employed in insecure work conditions to access training and skills development.

- Australia to become a signatory to the *Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.
- greater implementation of cultural competence training for employers. This training should also seek to promote and build systemic changes in organisations and industries.
- quantitative and qualitative research into the numbers of migrants and people from CALD backgrounds involved in black market activities (without punitive outcomes and leading to support and coaching).
- reduction in administrative red tape and assistance in navigating regulations for migrants and refugees starting their own business, in different languages and through a variety of appropriate channels.
- review the barriers for CALD Australians to accessing finance through Australia's financial institutions.
- adequate plans should be made for the increasing need for bilingual aged care workers to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing and increasingly CALD population.

## **Background**

FECCA believes that meaningful, legal and sustainable employment is one of the most effective ways of ensuring refugees and migrants to Australia are empowered and included in the community. Beyond the obvious financial and economic benefits, employment helps to improve and develop a person's dignity, self-confidence and social stability and benefits the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals and families. These positive outcomes from meaningful employment, support and encourage the participation and inclusion of CALD communities from the immediate settlement period and throughout their life in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

At June 30, 2016, 28.5 per cent of Australian population was born overseas and nearly 50 per cent of Australians have one or more parent born overseas.<sup>2</sup> Australia's economy and future prosperity is heavily reliant upon the skills that migrants bring to this country through temporary and permanent migration streams and our migration system is designed to attract appropriate skills for the needs of Australia's economy. This is reflected in the figures: 65 per cent of recent migrants held tertiary qualifications before arriving in Australia and many more obtained tertiary qualifications after arriving in Australia; and migrants with Australian citizenship have an unemployment rate of 3.3 per cent versus 5.4 per cent for people born in Australia.<sup>3</sup>

However, for some individuals and communities of CALD background, there are greater challenges in securing employment. In particular, for a small, but significant number of individuals, the informal sector – as either an employee or as a business owner or sole trader – may be the only opportunity available as a means of income generation and support for their family.

CALD Australians, in particular those recently arrived as migrants, from new and emerging communities or refugees, face a number of barriers to obtaining employment. FECCA's own research has highlighted some key challenges including:

- difficulties obtaining recognition of skills and qualifications earned overseas or lack of Australian qualifications.
- English language proficiency. This includes employer discrimination with regards to accent.
- experiences of discrimination, prejudice or racism.
- lack of networks for seeking and securing employment.

<sup>1</sup> FECCA 2011, *Settlement is a Life-Long Process*, Submission to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on Achieving social inclusion and participation for new and emerging communities beyond the immediate settlement period, FECCA, Canberra p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3412.0>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6250.0>

- limited familiarity with the Australian workforce, employment systems and culture.
- pre-migration experience, including experiences of torture and trauma.

FECCA's own understandings are supported by the latest census data where, around one third (31 per cent) of recent migrants who have had a job in Australia reported experiencing some difficulty finding their first job. The most common difficulties were:

- a lack of Australian work experience or references (65 per cent).
- a lack of local contacts or networks (31 per cent).
- language difficulties (25 per cent)<sup>4</sup>.

Experiencing these barriers, often in combination, mean that many people from CALD backgrounds find themselves in lower-skilled and low-paid jobs. For example, research has demonstrated how a 'lack of mainstream networks' can contribute to directing new arrivals into undesirable employment within 'secondary labour-market niches' often characterised by unhealthy work environments, including long hours, relatively high occupational health and safety risks, and limited job security'.<sup>5</sup> An inability to have one's overseas qualifications recognised or to find acceptance in the Australian job market means that many migrants take jobs below their skill level – a phenomenon termed 'occupational skidding' by the renowned demographer the late Professor Graeme Hugo of the University of Adelaide.<sup>6</sup>

These barriers mean that for some CALD Australians, their employment options are focused on the retail, hospitality, aged care, hygiene, construction and fast food sectors. The Black Economy Taskforce Interim Report identified the high-risk sectors for black-market economy to be 'building and construction, restaurants and cafes and hair and beauty salons'.<sup>7</sup> As noted above, these are sectors that employ a high percentage of migrant and refugee workers.

### **CALD Australians as employers / entrepreneurs**

Barriers to employment in the Australian workforce lead many CALD Australians, including recent migrants and refugees, to establish their own business or operate as sole traders. For example, research has demonstrated that, on average, individuals who come to Australia as refugees 'have lower rates of workforce participation, higher rates of unemployment and lower average earning than other migrants in Australia' and are also 'more vulnerable to long-term unemployment'.<sup>8</sup> This is believed to be one of the reasons that Australians of refugee background 'have the highest rates of entrepreneurship of all categories of entry of immigrants' yet 'face the greatest barriers to entrepreneurship'.<sup>9</sup>

FECCA also notes how 'census data shows that some immigrant groups, such as the Koreans, Taiwanese, Greeks and Italians have at least a 50 per cent higher presence as entrepreneurs compared to the Australian-born. Korean-born women exhibit a presence among the female self-employed that is almost three times that of Australian-born women'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6250.0>

<sup>5</sup> Barraket, Jo 2007, Pathways to Employment for Migrants and Refugees? The case of social enterprise in Curtis, B, McIntosh, T, & Matthewman, S (Eds.) *Proceedings of the Australian Sociological Association (TASA) and the Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (SAANZ) Joint Conference, 2007*, The Sociological Association of Australia (TASA).

<sup>6</sup> Hugo, Graeme, May 2011, Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second generation Humanitarian Entrants, First Report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

<sup>7</sup> Black Economy Taskforce, Interim Report March 2017, Commonwealth of Australia, p.51.

<sup>8</sup> Kooy, John van 2016, Refugee women as entrepreneurs in Australia, *Forced Migration Review* issue 53.

<sup>9</sup> Collins, Jock 2016, Refugee Entrepreneurship in Australia: One Strategy to overcome refugees blocked labour market mobility paper to Brotherhood of St Laurence Research forum: From Surviving to Thriving: Inclusive work and economic security for refugees and people seeking asylum

<sup>10</sup> Collins, Jock 2016, Refugee Entrepreneurship in Australia: One Strategy to overcome refugees blocked labour market mobility paper to Brotherhood of St Laurence Research forum: From Surviving to Thriving: Inclusive work and economic security for refugees and people seeking asylum

The recently published report *CGU Migrant Small Business Report (2018)* presents evidence that ‘migrants contribute more in taxes than they consume in benefits and government goods and services’<sup>11</sup>, that 1.41 million people are provided employment by migrant business owners in Australia<sup>12</sup>, 1 in 3 of all Australian small businesses are owned by migrants, and that 25% of migrant business owners provide training opportunities to young Australians as compared to 19% of non-migrant business owners<sup>13</sup>.

Many of these small business owners came to Australia on family visas or humanitarian visas and 83% of them did not previously own or run a small business prior to migration<sup>14</sup> which demonstrates an impressive degree of entrepreneurialism and zeal for making unique and significant contributions not only to their personal and family prosperity, but also economically and socially to the broader Australian community.

### **Participation in the informal (black) economy**

The challenges experienced by CALD Australians in accessing meaningful employment may result in outcomes for migrant and CALD Australians that involve engagement with the informal Economy, for example, working in the cash economy on the behest of an employer in order to secure employment. For people from CALD backgrounds, including migrants and refugees, involvement in the informal economy can sometimes be the only possible way of securing a measure of financial stability. As a result, migrant workers are disproportionately impacted by underpayment and other exploitation.

Secondly, a lack of job opportunities, and other ‘pushes’ into entrepreneurship and business-ownership such as discrimination in employment or language barriers, encourage many Australians from migrant backgrounds to establish their own businesses or enterprises. The characteristics of resilience and risk taking developed by refugees and migrants through the migrant journey also explains the overrepresentations of refugees and migrants in the entrepreneurial sector. In these cases, individuals may find themselves engaged with the black economy because of an inability to navigate bureaucratic and regulatory requirements due to language difficulties around institutional literacy and access to appropriate support, for example finance and advice.

FECCA emphasises that we do not endorse the participation by individuals in the informal economy. However, we do encourage the Government and relevant authorities to reflect upon and show understanding of the circumstances that lead vulnerable people to become involved in the black economy in an effort to remedy these challenges and create accessible opportunities for CALD Australians.

### **CALD Australians as participants in the informal economy**

People from CALD backgrounds, including migrants and refugees, are disproportionately represented among victims of exploitative workplace practices. One reason is in balance of power between a CALD employee and their employer where that employee has struggled to find employment. Compounding this and contributing to the likelihood of a CALD Australian finding themselves engaged with the black economy include:

- a limited knowledge of the Australian workplace including obligations, rights and entitlements.
- lack of support networks and social isolation.
- language barriers.
- visa limitations.

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<sup>11</sup> *CGU Migrant Small Business Report (2018)*, p5

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p6

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p7

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p9

These barriers to employment mean that some CALD Australians, and particularly women with caring responsibilities and young people who may have fewer employment options, are pressured to accept cash-in-hand work as it may be the only option available to them when facing immediate financial demands including rent, transportation costs and childcare costs. Working in the cash economy leaves individuals vulnerable to exploitation and can lead to long-term exclusion from government services, further educational opportunities and long-term, meaningful employment.

For migrants who find themselves involved in the informal sector as a means of becoming involved in 'economic activities that can be relied on to provide both adequate and secure alternatives to unemployment'<sup>15</sup> an individual may not be equipped (because of language, inadequate access to information and advice etc.) to understand the obligations and requirements to operate as a business or sole trader in Australia.

Even for those with a proficient standard of English, other barriers exist including the inability to secure finance (because of limited financial literacy in Australia or lack of Australian credit history or documentation), a lack of networks and limited bureaucratic/institutional literacy that may lead to situations where business owners and small traders find themselves operating outside of regulatory requirements.

It should not be assumed that all individuals operating in the informal economy are driven by the intention to 'cheat' the system or avoid financial or regulatory obligations. '[P]eople may also operate outside the formal economy because they don't have adequate knowledge about the tax and regulatory system. This inadvertent participation is particularly true in the case of migrants who come from countries with different legal traditions than Australia's.'<sup>16</sup>

For many CALD workers, they may be unaware of that their employment would be classed as part of the informal economy. FECCA welcomes the Migrant Worker Taskforce initiative which aims to identify 'proposals for improvement in law, law enforcement and investigation, and other practical measure to more quickly identify and rectify and cases of migrant worker exploitation'.<sup>17</sup> FECCA in particular welcomes initiatives by the Migrant Worker Taskforce including the establishment of a variety of online tools in a multitude of languages including: [In language resources](#); [Record My Hours App](#); [Anonymous Report Form](#); and [language storyboards](#).<sup>18</sup> FECCA emphasises the need to provide training and education for employers, employers' representatives (accountants, lawyers, peak bodies) as well as employees on workplace rights and responsibilities.

### **Insecure work**

Many people from a CALD background are employed in insecure work, which is often low paid, unsustainable, dangerous and isolating. FECCA believes that employment is an effective way of empowering individuals and assists in creating dignity, self-confidence and stability. It also benefits the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals and families. These positive consequences are integral for CALD community participation and social inclusion beyond the immediate settlement period and throughout the life course.<sup>19</sup>

### **The extent, nature and consequences of insecure work**

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) states 'around 40% of workers are engaged in insecure work arrangements such as casual work, fixed term work, contracting or labour

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<sup>15</sup> African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services 2017, News Bulletin no 2.

<sup>16</sup> Black Economy Taskforce, Interim Report March 2017, Commonwealth of Australia, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Black Economy Taskforce, Interim Report March 2017, Commonwealth of Australia, p.60.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/language-help>

<sup>19</sup> FECCA 2011, *Settlement is a Life-Long Process*, Submission to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on Achieving social inclusion and participation for new and emerging communities beyond the immediate settlement period, FECCA, Canberra, p. 13.

hire.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear how many of these workers are from a CALD background although it is likely that CALD Australians are overrepresented in insecure employment.

This gap in research is predominantly due to limited disaggregation of statistics, such as country of birth and linguistic background. These factors are crucial to identifying and understanding intersectional social determinants which contribute to participation in insecure working arrangements. Including these factors in data collection is also integral to revealing not only the extent of CALD workers in this area but also fostering a deeper understanding of the unique challenges migrants and refugees face in participating in more sustainable and better quality employment. This is the case at both the federal, state and territory level.

The ACTU reports how there has been a 'dramatic decline in permanent work, and corresponding growth of insecure forms of employment, such as, casual, contract work and labour hire.'<sup>21</sup>

### **The workers who are most at risk of insecure work and why**

FECCA's Access and Equity consultations support the literature that argues migrant and refugee communities are generally more vulnerable to insecure employment conditions due to a range of intersectional and systemic barriers and challenges.

Within these diverse groups, certain jobseekers and workers from CALD backgrounds are particularly at risk of insecure employment. These include:

#### *Refugee and humanitarian entrants*

Refugee and humanitarian entrants, particularly during the initial years of settlement, are highly vulnerable to insecure employment conditions. This is often a result of extended periods spent in refugee camps where education is often interrupted. This factor may also be perpetuated by financial and housing insecurity, as well as limited recognition of skills and qualifications gained overseas. Low levels of English language and literacy also contribute to exclusion from sustainable employment options, as do recruitment and workplace discrimination and racism.

#### *Women*

At FECCA's National Multicultural Women's Conference, held in 2016, employment was a key concern, with the acknowledgement that employment is an important part of the settlement process, providing migrant and refugee women with access to economic security and interaction with the broader community.

The casualisation of the workforce was a particularly salient concern. Women are more likely to be low paid employees – that is earning below, at, or just above the minimum wage. Women from CALD backgrounds are overrepresented in insecure employment fields, which include industries such as manufacturing, accommodation, food services, cleaning and labouring. They are more likely to be employed on a casual basis and to be at a disadvantage negotiating terms of employment. The negative impacts of insecure employment on CALD women not only affect individuals and their workplaces, but on a much larger scale, impacts Australia's productivity, welfare system and social cohesion.

Support to return to work after having children was also an important issue raised by delegates. Child care reform has the potential to achieve the two key objectives of the child care system – increasing labour force participation and improving individual child development. Child care needs to be accessible for families where one or both parents work in insecure work and/or work with variable hours. Paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements are also important aspects of policy affecting CALD women when they have children and are planning their return to work.

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<sup>20</sup> See [https://www.australianunions.org.au/about\\_actu](https://www.australianunions.org.au/about_actu)

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.actu.org.au/our-work/submissions/2017/independent-inquiry-into-insecure-work-in-australia>

Difficulties with obtaining recognition of skills and qualifications earned overseas are among the key barriers to accessing employment in Australia. Limited information on the process to have overseas qualifications recognised, along with the costs of obtaining the recognition, pose major challenges for migrants and refugees (with the latter facing an additional complexity of providing documentation from their countries of origin). Without access to this recognition, migrant and refugee women find it difficult to access employment that is commensurate with their skills.

### *Older migrants*

Older migrants may be more vulnerable to insecure work environments. In some cases this is a result of long term employment in insecure conditions, which can create career stagnation and limits upskilling opportunities. This susceptibility can also be a consequence of cultural attitudes towards ageing and new skill acquisition which discourage older migrants from actively pursuing upskilling opportunities. These have knock-on effects once older migrants decide to no longer participate in the paid workforce.

A report from the Women's Economic Policy Analysis Unit argued that "migrants from non-English speaking countries and indigenous people earn significantly lower wages and thus accumulate significantly lower superannuation than their non-indigenous Australian born counterparts."<sup>22</sup> There are a number of reasons for this. For example, migrants who arrive in Australia as adults often accumulate less superannuation than their non-migrant counterparts because the total time they spend working in Australia before they retire is less. Where a non-migrant Australian is able to accumulate more superannuation over their lifetime because they started working (for example) in their 20s, a migrant who started working in the same job in their 30s will ultimately earn less. In addition, "periods of workforce absence have a disproportionately negative impact on superannuation saving (and) part-time employment reduces superannuation accumulation."<sup>23</sup> The type of work carried out by an individual and the wages they earn for it, will also have an impact on superannuation – higher paid jobs result in more savings while lower paid jobs result in less. Cumulatively this has the effect of reducing the savings/income older CALD Australians have to support themselves during their retirement years.

### *Youth*

Young people from a refugee and migrant background make up a significant proportion of the Australian youth population. Their engagement as active citizens in Australian society, including their meaningful economic participation, has significant and long-term benefits for them, their families and communities, and for a diverse, socially cohesive Australia.

The research and the community engagement that our organisation undertakes across Australia indicate that many young migrants and refugees face multiple levels of disadvantage, especially in relation to economic participation. The design of government employment programs needs to consider and address the multiple levels of this disadvantage.

Concern over young CALD jobseekers being channelled into insecure employment by employment services is frequently expressed by CALD community members in FECCA's Access and Equity consultations. This was a particular issue for new and emerging community (NEC) members, who felt that this process is isolating for youth and could limit their future professional development opportunities. One solution to this challenge could be to ensure improved cultural competency of job service providers who understand the complexities of seeking employment as a young person from a CALD background, and who are therefore better equipped to assist CALD unemployed youth to successfully negotiate the employment sector.

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<sup>22</sup> Women's Economic Policy Analysis Unit (WEPAU), Curtin University of Technology, Submission into the "Superannuation and standards of living in retirement inquiry", 2002 pg. iii

<sup>23</sup> Women's Economic Policy Analysis Unit (WEPAU), Curtin University of Technology, Submission into the "Superannuation and standards of living in retirement inquiry", 2002 pg. iv

For all the above-mentioned group, insecure work has a significant effect on:

- their financial security due to low wages, fluctuating working hours and limited paid leave entitlements. Keeping up with the costs of day-to-day living and affording basic necessities such as housing, groceries and transport can be difficult to manage with an unreliable income. This financial insecurity can also have a detrimental effect on social connectedness and inclusion, which is also important to sustaining mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- occupational health and safety of workers and workplaces due to limited knowledge and limited access to information because of workload intensification, bullying on the part of employers, and threats to employment security.
- wellbeing and health of workers outside the workplace, including impact on family and other relationships due to demanding work hours, stress, physical injury and financial insecurity. This inhibit the capacity for employees to engage, contribute and build family and community relationships both within and outside their workspaces.
- training and skills development leading to career stagnation, skills reduction and inability to enter more sustainable work opportunities.
- career progression and opportunities due to many workers in insecure jobs are considered expendable and there is little recognition of the skills needed and acquired in such employment.
- social inclusion due to isolation, racism, bullying, instability and low pay that do not create feelings of belonging nor do they foster trust and feelings of security.

### **Conduct and regulation of insecure work**

Australia is not yet a signatory to the *Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*. As a signatory to this Convention Australia would have to report and implement measures that seek to improve the human rights of migrant workers and their families. FECCA recommends that Australia becomes a signatory to the *Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*.

Further, in previous consultations that FECCA has made with the community, attendees have expressed an eagerness to engage with unions and speak about insecure work environments and instances of bullying and discrimination. Insecure work environments are not facilitating this engagement due to a variety of reasons, including intensive workloads, bullying and fear of loss of job. Not being able to influence workplace standards, report illegal practices, or engage in dialogue is fundamentally antithetical to the government's Social Inclusion agenda which stipulates that all Australians should be able to contribute and have their voices heard.<sup>24</sup>

FECCA recommends that unions continue to work to provide accessible and equitable pathways to membership, information and events for CALD Australians. This could be conducted through the provision of culturally competent and linguistically sensitive forms of information provision. FECCA further recommends that the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) continue to foster strong connections with CALD communities, organisations and individuals, particularly those involved in insecure work. This may include engaging with community leaders to discuss specific barriers and challenges their community faces in regards to employment in and standards of insecure work.

### **Pathways from school to work for youth**

FECCA understands that there are challenges for most young people when entering the labour market. This includes a general shortage of entry-level jobs, limited work experience, lower

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<sup>24</sup> Australian Government 2011, *The Social Inclusion Agenda*, website, Australian Government, Canberra, accessed 14/12/22: <<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/>>.

levels of confidence and a lack of understanding of workplace norms. These challenges are exacerbated for CALD youth.

FECCA conducted a youth employment survey in 2014 and found that CALD youth identify the key barriers to finding sustainable employment as:

- English language proficiency. This includes employer discrimination with regards to 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 for seeking and securing employment.
- 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.
- pre-migration experience, including experiences of torture and trauma.

Recent figures in Australia show an increase in both youth unemployment and youth underemployment.<sup>25</sup> Unemployment is a significant issue for young people from CALD backgrounds, and more so for those from new and emerging communities. A report released by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *The CALD Youth Census Report 2014*, which analysed census data with regards to young people from migrant backgrounds, noted that this cohort had generally lower rates of employment compared to the Australian born youth.<sup>26</sup> The report further noted that the rates vary across different state and territories, with the highest rates of employment for CALD youth being in Northern Territory, and the lowest rates in Tasmania.<sup>27</sup> Employment is linked not only to financial stability, but also to social cohesion, self-esteem, independence, stable housing, the development and maintenance of English language skills, community belonging and personal wellbeing. Consequently, unemployment often results in increased risk of depression, poor health, and social and economic exclusion.<sup>28</sup>

The need for sustainable opportunities for young migrants is key to ensuring successful settlement outcomes. Despite this, research has indicated that there are a significant number of young people whose needs are not being adequately met in the school to work transition.<sup>29</sup>

Determining 'what works' for CALD youth in the education to employment transition is difficult due to patchy evidence and lack of systematic and longitudinal analysis. Additionally, 'youth transition programs tend to be funded on a short-term basis and lack rigorous evaluation'.<sup>30</sup> Increased funding and detailed research is necessary in order to reach a holistic view of the needs of CALD youth in this transition period.

In defining a successful process of transition from school to employment, the focus should not only be on the securing of employment, but on the securing of *meaningful* employment with future prospects for advancement. The Brotherhood of St Laurence refers to the ILO (2009) definition of the transition from school to work where

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<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-27/youth-underemployment-at-highest-level-since/8389904>

<sup>26</sup> Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, 2014, *The CALD Youth Census Report 2014*, Available at [http://cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/CALD%20Census%20Report\\_Digital.pdf](http://cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/CALD%20Census%20Report_Digital.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria. 2014. *Work Solutions: Improving Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace*. Available at:

[http://eccv.org.au/library/FULL\\_REPORT\\_ECCV\\_Work\\_Solutions\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_Feb\\_2014.pdf](http://eccv.org.au/library/FULL_REPORT_ECCV_Work_Solutions_Discussion_Paper_Feb_2014.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Centre for Multicultural Youth. 2014. *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*.

Available at: <http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/Transitions%20to%20Employment%20Report.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

'the desired result: regular and satisfactory work. It starts: from the premise that a person has not 'transited' until settled in a job that meets a very basic criteria of 'decency', namely a permanency that can provide the worker with a sense of security (e.g. a permanent contract), or a job that the worker feels personally satisfied with' (OECD 2009, p. 7).<sup>31</sup>

Too often, for CALD youth, that basic criterion of 'decency' is not achieved in their first experiences of employment. FECCA suggests that evidence-based programs involving schools, tertiary education providers, community organisations and employers should be established to support CALD youth making the transition from school to tertiary education to meaningful employment that provide satisfaction, financial security and opportunity for further development.

### **Supporting students to prepare for post-school education and training**

Poor educational results, post-school unemployment rates and lower levels of entry to tertiary education demonstrate that the needs of many young migrants – and especially those from new and emerging communities – are not being addressed in schools. The African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services (AAMEYS) notes that African migrant youth in particular 'have had limited, if any, education before reaching safety in Australia. The education of many has been hampered by lack of schooling opportunities and, for some, disrupted by forced displacement. So many African Australians of school age are starting from well behind scratch at Australian schools.'<sup>32</sup>

AAMEYS further notes that because of this interrupted education, many African youth believe they are not encouraged by schools to 'learn their full potential; rather they are encouraged to leave school and get a job'.<sup>33</sup> This may be because schools do not have the resources or capacity to meet the additional education and social needs of these young people. However, CALD Australian young people can also be held back by stereotypes and low expectations of education providers. It is therefore critical that schools and teachers are resourced and trained to support CALD Australians achieve their individual goals, whether it is further education or employment.

FECCA encourages the implementation of evidence-based programs in schools and with support from government for the transition period, targeted at young people less familiar with Australian culture, workplace systems, and structures who are likely to need greater assistance. This may involve internships or training at schools to help CALD young people understand Australian workplaces regulations, Australian workers' rights as well as social norms and expectations.

FECCA's consultations with youth across Australia illustrated that a major obstacle to employment is the inability to obtain a driver's licence.<sup>34</sup> Having a driver's licence is a key requirement for apprenticeships and employment in many small businesses. There are numerous job opportunities in remote parts of Australia where public transport is scarce or travel times are excessively long. The process of obtaining a driver's licence, including driving lessons and licence costs, can be prohibitive for young people. In Queensland, a local organisation with the support of Commonwealth and Queensland governments introduced 'Breaking the Cycle', a program where youth between 16-25 years of age are provided with free driving lessons to obtain a valid licence. FECCA believes that support in obtaining driver's licence at school could be a tangible way of supporting youth in getting ready for post-school employment.

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<sup>31</sup> Bowman, Dina, Joseph Borlagdan and Sharon Bond 2015, *Making sense of youth transitions from education to work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence report

<sup>32</sup> Ahmed, Dr Berhan, Investment in education pays best interest, in *Australian Mosaic* issue 46, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australian (FECCA).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> FECCA Access and Equity consultation, Logan, 19 March 2015.

## **Information and support to students in relation to post-school education and training**

As noted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth, in a report discussing employment pathways, there is a need for holistic initiatives that address education and employment pathways for young CALD Australians. Employment should not be regarded as separate from other areas of well-being. FECCA emphasises the importance of the relationship between sustainable employment and other elements including access to housing, transport, health services, child care and community support.

Many participants at FECCA's consultations with CALD youth were concerned about the pressure to accept cash-in-hand work as it was the only option available to them when facing immediate financial demands including rent, transportation costs and childcare costs. Working in the cash economy leaves young people vulnerable to exploitation and can lead to long-term exclusion from government services, further educational opportunities and long-term, meaningful employment.

More generally, many young people from CALD backgrounds are unaware of their rights at work, or do not feel confident demanding them for fear of losing their job. Community organisations play an important role in providing information, support and advice to CALD young people during the transition from school to work, move away from the family home and become independent. They require resources and funding to fulfil this role.

Mentoring has been identified in FECCA's consultations with communities as an effective way 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 culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to develop professional networks, boost their confidence in their skills, and improve their prospects in terms of finding jobs to match their qualifications.<sup>35</sup> FECCA encourages the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to review the evidence and experience from other mentoring programs and consider opportunities for such programs to support CALD young people in this important transition.

Efforts are also required on the part of employers in the private and public sector to reach out to CALD youth and ensure that they have an equitable access to post-school and post-higher education employment options. Programs to encourage hiring of CALD youth – particularly from new and emerging communities – and to address racism and discrimination in hiring practices are also needed.

A diverse workforce enables organisations to connect with customers and community, foster greater innovation, improve employee engagement and increase overall business performance.<sup>36</sup> CALD youth, including migrants and refugees, are a tremendous resource and present exciting opportunities for organisations to diversify and develop their workforce. However, young people from migrant backgrounds often experience a variety of barriers in the transition from school to work. A holistic approach is needed at schools to ensure Australia's diverse young people are supported in the transition from school to work or further education.

## **Settlement issues for rural and regional workers**

FECCA believes that the refinement of a policy platform for promoting growth in rural and regional Australia should recognise and tap into the cultural diversity of the regions, and explore the opportunities generated by the talents and the skills offered by people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

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<sup>35</sup> FECCA Access and Equity consultation, Logan, 19 March 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Jauncey, Lauren, CALD workers and Australia Post, in *Australian Mosaic* issue 38, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA).

Encouraging more international students, skilled migrants and humanitarian entrants to move to rural and regional Australia is dependent on the ability of the regions to cater for their specific needs, and facilitate their settlement in an environment free of discrimination or racism. Adequate settlement services, access to culturally appropriate support mechanisms, and improved infrastructure are just a few of the key issues to be factored into the policy design and planning process.

Targeted migration programs can address issues such as sparse population and skill shortages by encouraging and assisting settlement in the region of immigrants and refugees who can contribute with the much needed experience and skills. The Australian government has a history of regionalising immigration policy through various initiatives and visa pathways, as well as by focusing on the relocation of unemployed workers from areas of high unemployment to areas experiencing skills shortages. This is beneficial to rural and regional communities where settlement services and the appropriate infrastructure and support systems are in place.

Refugees and humanitarian entrants often live most of their lives in rural or inland communities that are similar to the environment in rural Australia. Encouraging their settlement in rural areas may therefore not only provide suitable settlement options to them, but would also benefit the rural society and economy in which they settle, help to maintain populations and economies, and foster innovation. The international experience that migrant workers bring is valuable to regions that seek to develop ties with markets beyond Australian borders. To develop the agriculture sector in regional Australia, migrants and refugees can contribute new ideas and methods of operation to revitalise agriculture while also contributing to other industries.

Migrant groups in the agriculture industry have been identified as a significant part of the seasonal agricultural workforce. Temporary skilled migrants could also contribute to the further development of the agriculture industry, contributing expertise and diverse skills. Most often, temporary skilled migrants will go on to become permanent residents and citizens. The skills that they bring subsequently remain in Australia and can further contribute to the industries that they are working in. Ensuring that all visas have a pathway to permanency is crucial in attracting migrants to rural and regional Australia.

Dating back to major programs such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the Australian Government has encouraged new immigrants to settle in regional and rural Australia through a number of initiatives. This regionalisation of immigration policy has been implemented through a range of visa pathways which aim to attract immigrants with a range of skills of particular value to regional and rural Australia. It seeks to help ameliorate and address population and labour shortages outside of the capital cities. However, retaining as well as attracting new immigrants to regional centres and rural communities has been identified as a key challenge.

Many regional areas rely on the influx of new people to maintain job supply and to rejuvenate or maintain certain industries. Well planned and thoughtful regional development relies on the ability to meet the needs of employers seeking to fill positions with qualified overseas skilled migrants. ABS data shows that 75% of all recent skilled migrants were employed as at November 2016 and of the recent skilled migrants who were the main visa applicant, 82% were employed<sup>37</sup>.

One area where skilled migration programs particularly affect Australians of CALD background is in the area of ageing. The ageing population of Australia is increasingly diverse and many elderly people, as a result of dementia and other illnesses, lose their acquired languages (of

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6250.0>

concern is the loss of English language skills). There is a high, and increasing, need for aged care workers who are able to care for CALD elderly in cultural sensitive ways and in their preferred language. Overseas migrants are the only way that Australia will be able to meet the needs of our growing elderly populations from CALD backgrounds. This is a particular concern in regional communities where the ageing post World War II migrant populations require increasing culturally appropriate and in-language care but where there is difficulty recruiting and retaining trained staff.

Rural and regional areas can derive enormous benefit from well-managed migrant and humanitarian settlement. However, some of the specific challenges faced by people from CALD backgrounds, that will need to be addressed to encourage settlement in rural and regional Australia include:

- Limited knowledge about services available
- Limited information on how to access services
- Settlement and other services poorly structured to cater to the diversity of migrants
- Limited education opportunities
- Unemployment (particularly of young people) and underemployment
- Difficulty accessing housing especially in the private rental market
- Racism and discrimination.

Family connections, job opportunities and life style are three major reasons given by immigrants for settling in regional and rural areas. However, it is critical that regional settlement for migrants is underpinned by adequate planning and funding for rural development. Some immigrants who initially settle in regional and rural areas are not obtaining adequate support and settlement services. As a result, after a brief period in a rural location, these immigrants move to metropolitan areas where they can access a greater range of services and support including larger communities of people with whom they share a language or cultural heritage.

#### *Case study: Nhill, Victoria*

In 2015 AMES Australia and Deloitte Access Economics published a case study on the resettlement of Karen community members in Nhill, Victoria (Small towns, Big returns, March 2015). The report provides insights into the economic and social value that can flow from the resettlement of migrants and refugees in regional Australia, and identifies the factors that contribute to the success of such resettlement. The case study identifies the following factors as contributors to regional resettlement success:

- Employment – jobs available for the new settlers
- Initial (short term) accommodation for new settlers
- Settling and providing support for families
- Host community prepared for new settlers
- Strong leadership in the host community
- Potential settlers well prepared
- Strong leadership within the settling community
- Degree and complexity of 'cultural adjustment' on both sides considered and managed.

#### *Case Study: Shepparton, Victoria*

FECCA published 'Community perspectives on settlement issues affecting new and emerging communities in rural and regional Australia: A case study of the Iraqi, Afghan, Congolese and Sudanese communities in Shepparton, Victoria' in June 2015. The settlement of new and emerging communities in Shepparton is regarded as a success story and the benefits it generated for both the local communities and those settled in the area are widely recognised.

FECCA's report highlights the need to create adequate support infrastructure, developing targeted policies and strengthening social cohesion in the region. The report can be accessed [online](#).

The correlation between skilled migrants, employment and associated benefits such as economic development and community prosperity is clear and has been reflected historically.

### **The Aged Care workforce**

Aged Care is part of the Australian Healthcare and Social Assistance sector, where it is predicted to be the strongest growing industry in the Australian workforce over the next four years, growing by 250,000.<sup>38</sup> The Aged Care workforce will be required to grow to 980,000 by 2050 to meet projected demand.<sup>39</sup> The Aged Care workforce is increasingly drawing on migrant labour and the diversity of the aged care workforce is reflected in the 2016 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey Report (NACWCS) which states that 32 per cent of residential care workers and 23 per cent of community care workers were born overseas.<sup>40</sup> This demonstrates a significant portion of the sector comprised of workers from overseas. It is imperative that to meet future demands placed on the aged care sector due to an increasing older population that the sector continues to attract and support workers from migrant backgrounds. The increasing casualisation of this sector means that opportunities in this sector are less attractive. Efforts must be made to ensure that this sector offers rewarding and meaningful jobs, appropriately compensated and secure and with prospects for promotion and development.

In response to the challenges faced by the aged care sector, The Minister for Ageing, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, has recently appointed an Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce which will oversee and steer the development of an industry driven workforce strategy. FECCA welcomes the establishment of the Taskforce and is keen to ensure that the specific needs and aspirations of CALD aged care workers and CALD aged care consumers are reflected in its work. Systemic and systematic advocacy is required to bring the changes necessary for improvements and sustainability of this workforce sector and to address the specific issues which face migrant workers in aged care environments.

It is important that migrant staff are well oriented in workplaces to understand the Australian aged care system, the Australian aged care consumer and the reforms which have enabled a greater level of choice for the consumer. It is increasingly important that migrant cohorts of aged care workers are introduced to the nuances of Australian language and culture which they will need to be aware of once they are working in the aged care system. Migrant workers are entitled to work in an inclusive and respectful workplace where they can achieve outcomes which are equitable and non-discriminatory.

A secure, steady and sustainable bilingual and bicultural aged care workforce is vital as the ageing population of CALD Australians continues to increase. Older CALD Australians have particular language and cultural needs which are often best met by bilingual and bicultural aged care workers, as well as general staff proficient in culturally competent service provision.

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<sup>38</sup> Australian Government, Department of Employment, *Industry Employment Projections 2016 Report*, <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/EmploymentProjections>, 2017 Industry Employment Projections Report.

<sup>39</sup> Department of Health (2017), *2016 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey – The Aged Care Workforce 2016*, pp. xviii.

<sup>40</sup> Department of Health (2017), *2016 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey – The Aged Care Workforce 2016*. Pp. xv-xviii.