



16th August, 2022

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

MYAN appreciates the opportunity to respond to the provisions of *the Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 and the Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022*.

About MYAN

MYAN is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people (12 to 24 year olds) from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia, and those who work with them. MYAN provides expert policy advice, undertakes a range of sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills.

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

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

Our vision is that all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are supported, valued, and thriving in Australia.

MYAN would like to acknowledge the young people in our networks, especially those with lived experience of forced migration, who generously share their experiences and their insights with MYAN and help to inform our policy work.

MYAN is pleased to see the outline of Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 (the Bill) purpose. We welcome the broad functions of Jobs and Skills Australia including advisory role, lead of research and analysis and the establishment of extensive consultation on a permanent model for Jobs and Skills Australia. We strongly recommend inclusion of young people from refugee and migrant background from early stages of this establishment.

Employment and Young People from refugee and migrants in Australia

MYAN has delivered expansive research and evidence based policy advice on education and employment pathway experiences of young people's from refugee and migrant background through the years. Enclosed please find [MYAN/Deloitte's joint report on impact of COVID-19](#) and young migrants including some innovative economic models. Below please find a highlight of our findings through this research piece.



Prior to the pandemic, young people aged between 15-24 in Australia were already **three times more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than adults aged 25 and over.**

The Labour Force Survey has consistently shown a disparity in the youth employment participation rate between young people born overseas and those born in Australia. Over the last 20 years, the gap between these two groups has been as large as 17%.

We know from our work that the intersection of being both young and also more newly arrived from **a refugee or migrant background means that this group of young people face additional barriers and challenges to meaningful employment than their Australian-born, non-migrant peers** - leaving them particularly vulnerable to long term labour market exclusion and economic shock.

These barriers include things like:

- Lack of social/professional networks
- No/limited local work experience
- Lack of recognition of qualifications obtained overseas
- Lack of experience and knowledge in how to apply for jobs
- experiences of racism and discrimination/unconscious bias,
- Digital literacy/access
- English language proficiency (e.g. workplace communication)
- Minimal or disrupted schooling as a result of their migration journey
- Reluctance of employers to hire newly arrived young people.
- unfamiliarity with Australian workplace laws and greater risk of workplace exploitation,

Many of the challenges faced by young migrants to Australia have been exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's important that **Jobs and Skills Australia** understand and respond to these barriers because young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds make up a significant subsection of the Australian population. E.g. a significant proportion of new arrivals into Australia each year via the migration program are aged between 15 and 29 years. In 2019, this group accounted for 50% of migrant arrivals.

The costs of long-term unemployment are significant, and the longer people are unemployed the harder it is to then re-engage later on. We know from our work with young people that exclusion from the labour market impacts on the security, and physical and mental wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and limits their ability to fully engage, participate and contribute to the broader community.

Investment in supports and services that addresses the employment barriers faced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and facilitates their economic participation benefits has positive implications for the whole of society.

To do this we need better data. MYAN wanted to respond to this gap in employment data and see what the impact of the pandemic has had on the employment outcomes for young people from



migrant backgrounds. To do this, we engaged Deloitte Access Economics to contribute an evidence base to this area.

The report they produced focuses on this data gap and provides analysis on the economic performance of **young people who are recent migrants and refugees** through a time of recession due to COVID-19.

The purpose of this report is to illustrate the impact of the pandemic on migrant youth and, really importantly, demonstrate the potential **broader economic consequences of providing additional support to this cohort.**

Key findings from Deloitte Report

(Important to note that this does not apply to migrants who generally achieve higher labour market participation and lower unemployment than those born in Australia)

Policies that successfully create parity of labour force participation between young migrants and the Australian born population could increase the size of the Australian economy by \$44 billion from 2022-23 to 2031-32 and create 54,000 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs. *At present this is a hypothetical economic benefit. But policies and programs that aim to address some of the disparities between young people born in Australia and those born overseas can help to turn this hypothetical benefit into a reality.*

- The economic downturn and the impact on employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic were disproportionately observed for young migrants.
- Young migrants felt a more severe initial impact from COVID-19, evidenced by reduced employment, fewer hours of work and lower participation rates than Australian born young people.
- Relative to pre-COVID 19 levels, by December 2020 employment was 8% lower for young people born overseas, while only 1% lower for those born in Australia.
- A larger immediate rise in unemployment was observed at the onset of the crisis for younger people born overseas than for those born in Australia.
- Those who were born overseas in a non-English speaking country experienced a loss of 104 hours of employment and those born in a main English-speaking country lost 46.9 hours compared to those born in Australia.ⁱ
- This finding was particularly interesting-by modelling parity in labour force participation, Deloitte were able to predict that

The gap in labour force participation for many young migrants represents **a significant source of untapped potential.**

Targeted support for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is the most effective way for this group of young people to access and remain engaged in employment.

Working to remove- or at least reduce- barriers to meaningful employment will **create improved social and economic benefits for young people and the broader Australian community.**



Initiatives that facilitate better access to employment and address the employment challenges faced by this group of young people typically include elements such as:

- Targeted programs that support a young person's transition from education to employment
- Education initiatives that help young people & families to understand career options, pathways and expose young people to a variety of opportunities
- Access to paid work experience and internships
- Mentoring opportunities with an employment focus
- Programs that build social/professional networks and links to industry
- Targeted support for employers
- Improving cultural competency amongst services/employer

Yours faithfully,

Rana Ebrahimi

MYAN National Manager

ⁱ Australian National University, Centre for social Research and Methods, *Tracking outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic (Octobers 2020) – reconvergence*, https://csrcm.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/11/Tracking_wellbeing_outcomes_during_the_COVID-19_pandemic_October_2020_PDF.pdf, accessed 22 January 2021.