



## **Given the Chance**

### **Employment and education program for refugees and migrants**

*Additional information for Multiculturalism in Australia inquiry*

#### **Program overview**

*Given the Chance (GtC)* is an adaptable employment program that was developed in 2002 by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (the Brotherhood) to generate employment pathways for refugees. The program has remained flexible, being developed over a number of years, to remain most responsive to employer and industry recruitment requirements, as well as the needs of jobseekers. Critically, the program has been tested with a variety of key partner employers over consecutive years – from blue collar jobs through to corporate level hirers. It is now recognised, amongst several industries, to be a successful approach to recruiting highly motivated staff, and a means for creating diverse workplaces that reflect the communities in which they operate their businesses.

#### **Employer partners**

GtC partners with employers to develop pre-employment training for jobseekers, in line with business and industry need, to prepare new workers for paid work placement opportunities. Over the past 10 years, the GtC program has worked with 124 employers across a variety of industries to provide paid employment and work placements for refugees.

#### **Key Employer partners since 2005**

Abigroup, Allens Arthur Robinson, ANZ, Avteq, Cattani Australia, City of Yarra, City of Melbourne, Coles, Crown, Grocon, IOOF, KPMG, Melbourne University, Monash Uni, SJB Architects, Spotless, St Vincent's & Mercy Private Hospitals & Woolworths.

#### **Key Employer Partner examples**

##### ***ANZ – Finance Industry***

A tailored *GtC* program has been operating at ANZ since 2007 and is, by far, the most developed *GtC* program partnership to date. ANZ offers four and six month paid work placement opportunities for refugees in a range of areas across their business, including back office operations, customer service positions and retail branches across greater Melbourne. Placements are provided with a view to ongoing employment. Of the 52 individuals who have participated in ANZ's *GtC* program, 76% of these participants have successfully gained ongoing employment with the corporation. The success of the program is testament to ANZ's commitment to developing and tailoring the program to best match both their business requirements and to drive their commitment to the communities in which they operate.

##### ***Abigroup Contractors - Construction Industry***

The Brotherhood formed a relationship with Abigroup Construction to work in partnership with the Department of Human Services and to help Abigroup fulfil a social procurement clause on the Atherton Gardens Public

housing construction project. The GtC program was used to train, recruit and support local public housing tenants on the site, many of whom are from refugee backgrounds. The tailored pre-employment program included trade tasters, literacy and numeracy for the construction industry, OH&S, provision of a white card, and prevocational work preparation including appropriate workplace behaviours in the construction industry. Successful participants have been placed in a variety of roles including labouring, cadetships and reception.

### City of Yarra - Local Council

City of Yarra first approached the Brotherhood to partner in developing an employment program, when a council cleaning contract was under review. The City of Yarra wanted improved quality of street cleaning and an opportunity to diversify their labour sources. The first street cleaning project started in late 2006 and in the first year employed one supervisor and eight part-time trainees. It targeted disadvantaged people in the City of Yarra, with a strong focus on public housing residents, mainly refugees. A four-week pre-employment course was conducted, followed by the delivery of a Certificate III in Asset Maintenance as part of a traineeship model of employment. Additional training including Red Card, First Aid, Weed Spraying, Motorbike, Traffic Management, Chainsaw, Sweeper Driver, Truck License. Today the arrangement between the City of Yarra and the Brotherhood has developed into a GtC model, with more targeted training and employment support. City of Yarra continues to employ up to 15 local residents annually in roles to deliver services in road maintenance, graffiti removal, cleaning and recycling. The program has been recognised as increasing community cohesion for the Yarra municipality with residents and businesses seeing a positive contribution from newly arrived community members and public housing residents.

### Program outcomes

GtC was piloted from 2002-2004 and transitioned into full program delivery in 2005. Since then it has supported a range of jobseekers of varying skill capacity and education levels, and with varying degrees of employment barriers. Since it commenced full program delivery in 2005, the program has achieved employment placements for 61% of its total client intake.

*Fig 2: Key program outcomes since 2005*

Year	Jobseekers assisted through <i>Given the Chance</i>	No. of employment placements achieved
<b>*2005-2007</b>	220	121 (55% of all assisted)
<b>2008</b>	58	40 (69% of intake)
<b>2009</b>	60	40 (67%)
<b>2010</b>	83	60 (69%)
<b>2011</b> <small>Oct 2011</small>	66	35 (53%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>296 (61%)</b>

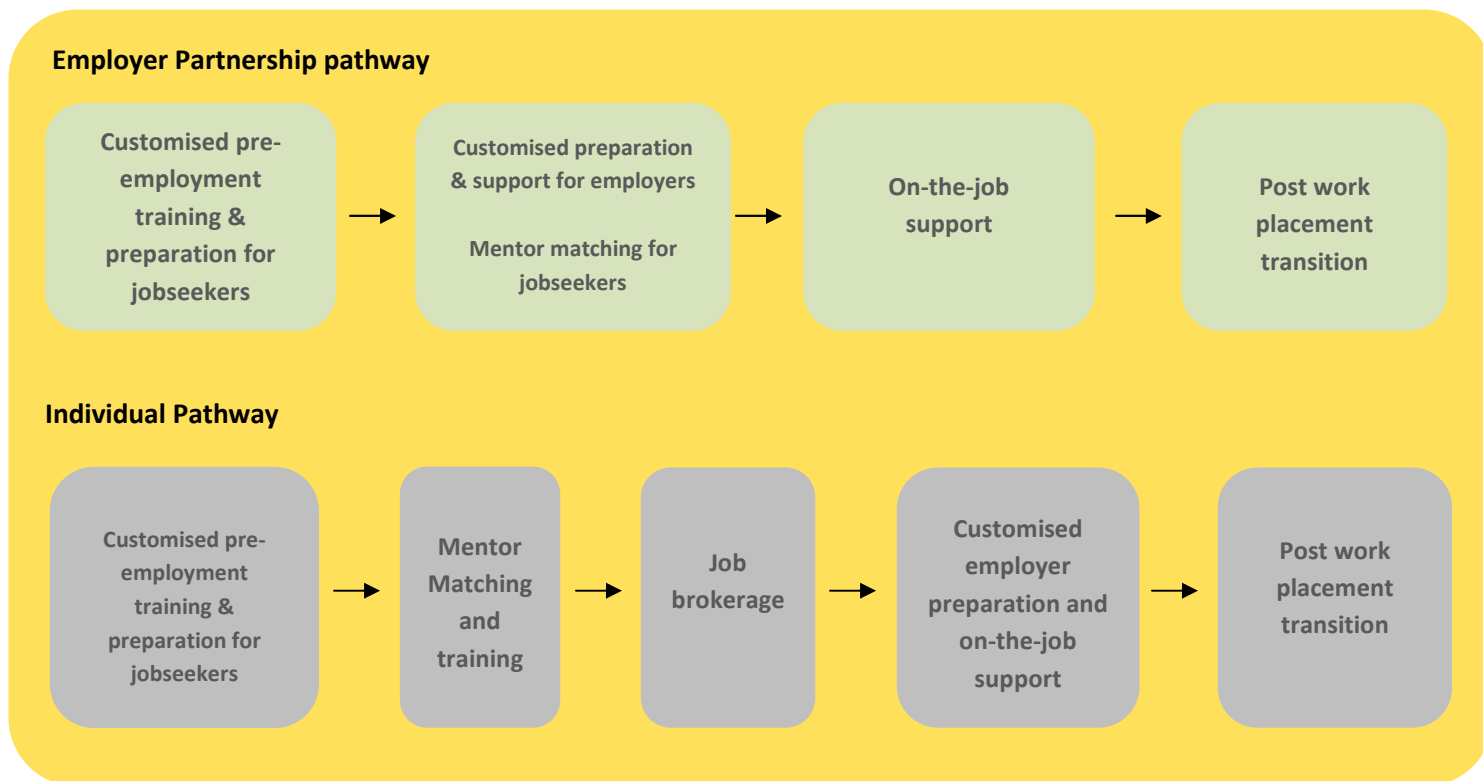
\*Note: 2005-2007 aggregate data available only

### Program model – pathway core elements

The GtC program combines a set of key support elements including tailored training for both employers and jobseekers and brokered employment opportunities. Though the program elements largely remain the same, there are two distinct program pathways for participants; an *Employer Partnerships* and an *Individual Pathway*. The combination and flexibility of the two pathways underpins the success of the program and is essential to the adequate response to both jobseeker and employer’s specific needs. As aspirations, skills, experience and qualifications are established at intake and throughout the first stage of the program, the appropriate model is selected for each jobseeker during this phase.

In the first option, a jobseeker is matched to an existing key partner employer program. This pathway is largely driven by business and industry, both responding to skills shortage and high-need industry areas, as well as responding to businesses’ community investment agendas. Conversely, the Individual Pathway provides one-to-one brokerage where jobseeker career aspirations, skills and/or experience do not fit the needs of existing employer partnership recruiters.

Fig 3: Given the Chance program comprises of both Employer Partnership & Individual pathways



## Key program elements

### Customised pre-employment training and preparation for jobseekers

To prepare the jobseeker for employment and for the full GtC program, a Work and Learning Advisor (WLA) from the Brotherhood's Centre for Work and Learning is allocated to support the program participant throughout his/her journey – regardless of the working model. The WLA acts as a consistent support mechanism throughout the job search process and continue to support the client as they transition into work.

GtC participants placed into employment are offered access to a purpose-designed training curriculum called **Crossing Bridges**. This tailored pre-vocational training has been mapped to accredited training units and, therefore, to critical industry skills council-determined employability skills. The training is also customised and delivered based on the specific needs of both the jobseeker and the employer's recruitment environment. Learners tackle issues such as goal setting, Australian workplace culture, computer and administration skills, job search skills and the many spoken and unspoken expectations of taking part in the Australian workforce. This is a critical element of the Given the Chance program for refugee and migrant learners, who gain key understandings of workplace expectations which employers might usually assume to be minimum skill levels in all potential employees. Importantly, these are learned behaviours and are not indicative of current worker capacity or future employability potential.

### Mentor Matching & Training

Program participants, based on their individual career aspirations, are carefully matched to a Brotherhood- brokered mentor with relevant business knowledge - in particular in the individual pathway. Mentors provide guidance and support throughout the job search process as well as valuable insights into accessing and entering desired industries. Importantly, they also provide important connections and access to networks; a barrier widely acknowledged for many refugees. These contacts quite often lead to work experience and/or employment outcomes.

The Brotherhood provides important training both for mentors and for the jobseekers. Through a facilitated workshop, Mentors gain insight into the vast array of refugee experiences as well as learning important dos and

### Mentor Case Study Example:

## Paul & Abdi

When Paul\*, a Senior Project Manager working for IBM, was matched with a Somalian refugee, Abdi\*, an IT graduate, he discovered that Abdi had been applying for up to 100 IT jobs per day. Some quick investigation uncovered the fact that, despite his IT capability, Abdi had not learnt to filter his profile, which meant that in fact he was applying for the same jobs over and over again. His CV also needed work, so Paul and Abdi set to work customising his experience to highlight areas that Paul knew were of interest to IT employers.

Paul knew of a scholarship program at his workplace with Monash University that he thought might help Abdi, so he invited him to meet the organisers at his workplace. During the visit, Abdi was introduced to another manager who identified a match between Abdi's skills in fixing computer problems and a help desk account that IBM had with a large banking customer. As there happened to be an urgent need for skilled labour for this account, Abdi was invited to an interview. Paul attended all the meetings with Abdi and also spent some time preparing him for the interview.

The manager involved had a cohesive team and after the interview and some discussion with Paul, was prepared to take a chance on Abdi. During his first few months on the job, Abdi and Paul exchanged emails and phone calls in which Abdi asked a range of questions about coffee break etiquette, staff behaviour that he found difficult to understand, and other matters until eventually he felt settled in the job. Abdi went on to win an IBM award for being the worker who was able to solve the highest volume of computer problems in the Southern Region. Abdi is currently still permanently employed with IBM.

*\*Names have been changed*

don'ts of being a mentor. Participants are also trained on what to expect from mentors and what their responsibilities are throughout the relationship too.

### Job brokerage

Whether the employment opportunity secured for GtC jobseekers is negotiated through an employer-led or individual pathway model, the Brotherhood offers the same rigorous, considered approach. Job matching is assessed according to jobseeker aspiration, experience and qualification and, where volume recruitment options are inappropriate, the organisation will exhaust organisational, mentoring and industry networks to source individual opportunities that best match a jobseeker's pathway plan. Once an appropriate workplace match has been identified, the Brotherhood turns its attention to ensuring the **Crossing Bridges** and **Building Bridges** training offered is tailored to best support the jobseeker's and employer's needs for the pending employment placement.

Successful individual brokered opportunities often lead to expanded commitment and employer partnerships over time.

### Customised preparation and support for employers

Employment is a supply/demand equation and the Brotherhood has achieved a high level of success in providing appropriate support levels to its partner employers for the GtC program. With a thorough understanding of staffing needs, candidates are screened prior to a standard recruitment process. Those jobseekers who are tracking well for employment are put forward as potential employees, while others who require more time and preparation continue with case management and pre-employment assistance through the Brotherhood's Centre for Work and Learning.

**Building Bridges** is a workplace support and preparation training program that is offered to participating employers to prepare supervisors and allocated "buddies" with the knowledge and tools they need to ensure a successful experience for both the employer and the jobseeker. Employers and supervisors are taught about cultural difference, managing expectations and how to get the best out of their new workers.

### On-the-job support

A Brotherhood relationship manager supports both employers and new employees throughout their work placement. Case management continues throughout the employment placement, which includes on-site support visits to employees and on-call access for any extra support or clarification of job requirements when on the job. Assistance is provided to the employer in setting up internal support structures, including mentors/and or buddies as well as any necessary processes, in line with existing organisational culture.

### Post work placement transition

Where a program participant opts out, ongoing employment is not available, or the candidate is deemed unsuitable, extensive transition support is provided by the Brotherhood, capitalising on the skills learnt throughout the placement experience. In these instances, the WLA provides consistency; once again working with the participant and offering appropriate support to problem solve the participant's workplace experience and design a plan for future employment.

## Scope for replication and expansion

The Brotherhood endorses a national rollout for GtC. The organisation believes the program may have the potential for future expansion of scope, to encompass a more diverse range of marginalised jobseekers. It is the Brotherhood's view that the program's rigorous approach to capacity building – working with partner employers as much as jobseekers – is a winning formula, particularly for those industries experiencing skills shortages who are already considering new and evolved recruitment methods. Key partner employers have already raised the possibility of further geographical program expansion.

The Brotherhood envisages a successful rollout would involve partnerships between business and NGOs, across Australia, with program governance being maintained by the Brotherhood to ensure integrity of the model. Potential NGO's who may be suitable to running a GtC model would include those already involved in the employment sector; organisations already working with refugees where possible and in particular those already demonstrating experience with maintaining employer partnerships.

The Brotherhood has had extensive experience partnering with NGO's around Australia, and has gained learning's from the national replication of both the HIPPY (Home Interaction for Program for Parents & Youngsters) model and the Saver Plus program across Australia, as well as the current Centre for Work and Learning replication across Victoria, all of which would help inform a successful national roll out.

The Brotherhood already has extensive existing GtC resources including a range of industry specific *Building Bridges* and *Crossing Bridges* training manuals. Extensive business planning has also been conducted on what national replication of the GtC program, would involve. A 'how to' manual for replication would need to be developed to ensure both integrity and success of the model as well as the creation of training resources for implementation.

**For further information or to discuss this submission, please contact:**

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## Mentor Testimony

### Mentoring Mahmud (2010)

Mahmud is friendly, but on the shy and reserved side of the interpersonal spectrum. During his training he had to write down what he would like to achieve from being mentored. He wrote: *"Improve writing; Improve computer skills; improve my job interview technique; improve how to manage yourself in doing many tasks at once; Increase self-confidence."*

I discussed with him what I could do and what I couldn't and where we should start. He had been told that there was a job with the Red Cross and wanted my help on how to apply also. This led us to set some objectives for the next meeting. As it turned out Mahmud's C.V. needed some work before we could send it anywhere and we focussed on that in the first place.

After a couple of sessions it became clear to me that Mahmud needed work on organising himself and on prioritising his tasks, hence his earlier statement *'how to do many tasks at once'*. Time management also became an issue, and after being late for our session a couple of times I asked him what he thought was a reasonable time for me to wait for him, before leaving to go home. He got the message and nominated 15 minutes, but he was never late again.

Once Mahmud got some interviews I got him to bring course notes from when he studied to be a laboratory assistant and asked him some technical questions, when I discovered he had some pronunciation problems and we drilled him on the correct way to speak about his profession. I also asked him to read for at least 15 to 20 minutes every day and watch the news on TV.

In order to prepare for interviews we role-played, me being the interviewer and throwing in some variations on both questions and better answers. I also gave him some questions to ask especially about Australian Industrial Relations practices, of which he knew little.

Of course each time he was not selected for the job he would be very disappointed and his morale would dive deep. I saw improvement in both his attitude and conversational skills so I would tell him that each rejection was a step closer to getting a job. One thing that gave him a morale boost was obtaining his Australian Citizenship, and he promptly invited me to the ceremony.

Finally, after about eight months Mahmud did get a job with no less than one of the largest companies in Australia who has its laboratories within the compound of Latrobe University. We were both very pleased with our work together and Mahmud expressed his gratitude clearly and sincerely. I felt that it had been worthwhile and I was glad I took on mentoring, and will continue doing so.

*Mentor*

*\*Names have been changed*