

**Submission to the:**

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia**

**Submission from:**

**Service to Youth Council Incorporated  
(Job Prospects)**

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SYC, trading as “Job Prospects”, operates a Job Services Australia (JSA) employment services contract in the South East Employment Services Area (ESA), South Australia. JSA services are provided under contract with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Job Prospects operates from a full time site in Mt Gambier and operates part time outreach services throughout the ESA.

This Job Prospects submission is written from the point of view of a local employment service dedicated to supporting job seekers in the South East to gain and maintain sustainable employment. Job Prospects concentrates on addressing and overcoming the barriers to employment job seekers may have, and takes a very practical approach.

The Mt Gambier site supports over 1,000 job seekers at any point in time, including numerous job seekers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) non-English speaking backgrounds as well as refugee communities.

The Job Prospects submission has been jointly prepared on behalf of SYC by the Manager of the Mt Gambier Job Prospects site, Ms Fiona Hetherington, and the Operations Manager, Job Prospects, Mr Andrew Gardiner.

## **SUBMISSION**

### **BACKGROUND**

Mt. Gambier Job Prospects has significant migrant caseloads consisting of the Karenni (from Burma), Afghan and Congolese communities.

The Karenni and Congolese communities predominately reside in the Mt. Gambier region and the Afghan community in Naracoorte.

Each community experiences numerous barriers which need to be addressed before sustainable local employment can be achieved, and those barriers vary within each community.

Job Prospects has endeavoured to address these barriers with various degrees of success. As a result of these efforts Job Prospects offers the following experience and recommendations. Job Prospects is committed to assisting the integration of both migrant populations and individuals within those groups into the local community through sustainable employment.

## **MAJOR BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT**

- Language
- Physical issues
- Driver's Licences and transport
- Workplace Training
- Qualification recognition
- Attitude to employment

### **Language:**

- Karenni

When the migrant job seekers became eligible for JSA services, Job Prospects found they had significant language barriers. There were a few members of each community who could act as interpreters, particularly in the Karenni community, but unfortunately they were not accredited in the initial stages.

Telephone interpreting services are available to JSA, however when trying to conduct work in groups this presented an issue. Also, Job Prospects has found that communicating through a telephone interpreter, rather than communicating directly 'face to face', is not a satisfactory or particularly effective means of case management when attempting to individualise an employment pathway.

Many CALD job seekers have completed the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) without effectively being able to speak, read or understand English which leaves them with on-going serious barriers to training and employment. Those still enrolled in AMEP are unable to commit to both employment and English lessons at the same time due to time constraints.

A member of the Karenni community was eventually accredited as an interpreter, and has been used effectively to interpret for group activities, individual appointments, training and employment. Unfortunately, he is not always available being in great demand.

Job Prospects has used the services of a mentor for Karenni job seekers, attending interviews with the interpreter, and on location for training and employment purposes. This mentor, a familiar and supportive person to the Karenni people, was able to identify and relay areas of concern to Job Prospects and so assist individual job seekers.

To assist with training in the workplace, Job Prospects created manuals for Karenni job seekers. Manuals consisted of coloured pictures and relevant English and translated words and training was delivered to the job seeker by the mentor and interpreter.

The Karenni mentor and interpreter spent a considerable amount of time in the initial stages of training in the actual employment locations to ensure the job was being completed effectively and OH&S was being addressed.

- Congolese

The Congolese group are very supportive of each other and many members are able to speak and interpret. Generally they will have an English speaking family member or friend who is able to attend appointments with them.

- Afghan

Job Prospects uses a telephone interpreting service for the Afghani group. They predominantly work in the vineyards and an Afghan resident has commenced a business contracting job seekers to vineyards. This is a very innovative idea and he is able to train and interpret for his own staff. Some Afghani people are working or have worked in the local meatworks, however language has proven to be a major barrier to communication and training and thus to the sustainability of employment.

### **Physical Issues:**

Job Prospects was alerted early on that the Karenni community may have physical injuries through torture and trauma.

Job Prospects had been approached by employers in the dairy industry, one of the largest industries in the region. Two Karenni job seekers began work in the industry and after a successful six month completion Job Prospects created a training program for a group of Karenni job seekers. A physio therapist organised a program of stretching exercises and taught the job seekers how to look after themselves. This training was relayed by an interpreter.

Training for the dairy industry was delivered by Tafe SA with the Karenni interpreter and mentor at Tafe and on location at various dairy farms. Individual appointments were arranged with the physio therapist at the request of an individual once work experience followed by employment commenced. These services were arranged by Job Prospects using the JSA Employment Pathway Fund (EPF) resources.

Employers were happy to make modifications where required to address any issues, such as making adjustments to equipment to take into account the height of many Karenni workers.

Unfortunately the apparent success of the program was undermined by cultural issues, whereby the entire Karenni community was expected to support any job seeker who did not like the work. Ten job seekers resigned on the same day, including the original two who had been there for seven months, and to my knowledge there are no Karenni job seekers working in this industry now. Unfortunately, in a regional community word quickly gets around, and local employers are now wary.

### **Driver's Licences and transport:**

Karenni job seekers were the first migrant group to commence Driver's licence training. Training had initially commenced through the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC). A number of job seekers' log book hours varied between 20 - 50 hours. Job Prospects arranged for Transport Training Centre (TTC – Regency Park/ SA) to come down from Adelaide to assess each individual, fine tune their driving and assess them for their probationary licence. The assessment of the TTC was that for the large amount of driving time their capability was still poor.

After two visits from TTC only two job seekers were awarded their probationary licence. Details of results were raised with the local SAPOL officer. He has been working with the migrant community to help address this issue along with the MRC, and we believe this follow up has been successful.

### **Workplace Training:**

Language issues have proven to be the greatest barrier to success in the workplace. Language problems have led to difficulties in successful on-the-job training, OH&S and communication with employers and other employees.

Migrant job seekers come through to JSA in various streams, but some major barriers specific to migrant communities do not appear to be fully recognised in the criteria used to determine an appropriately high stream. This is especially the case with significant language barriers. Many migrants are thus placed in Streams 1 or 2, rather than in the appropriate higher Streams 3 or 4 which allow for a greater level of servicing.

### **Qualification Recognition:**

The Congolese community is quite highly educated and have higher expectations with regard to employment opportunities. Some have qualifications in their own Country which they would like recognised in Australia. However the process is somewhat difficult due to the limitations of the regional location. They are required to travel to Adelaide to undertake the relevant assessments to transfer qualifications.

Another issue is that if migrants or refugees don't arrive in Australia with the relevant paperwork for their qualification there are difficulties in them ever gaining the qualification in Australia.

Some are willing to undertake study for new qualifications, but once again the language barrier presents a major issue. Nevertheless, Job Prospects is committed to assisting job seekers with their studies through the use of the EPF. Aged Care training has proven successful in a number of cases. However, one employer in this region will not hire people who do not have at least a Level 5 in English competency, regardless of their previous qualifications.

### **Attitude to employment:**

It has become apparent that there is a culture within some sectors of migrant job seekers that Centrelink payments are a way of life to which they are entitled. This particularly seems to be the case with the Karenni and Afghani communities. Many appear to favour seasonal work with breaks in between to rest, which is made possible by the availability of Centrelink benefits. This presents difficulties in developing sustainable employment opportunities.

Job Prospects was advised by the MRC that the Karenni community 'sticks together' due to their experiences in refugee camps. It seems that this attitude was the basis of the mass resignation from the dairy industry. It appears that because one or two of the workers did not want to continue with the employment it was "one out - all out".

Some of the Karenni community were disappointed at leaving their employment, but advised Job Prospects that they had to support their family and friends. This attitude has had a

negative impact amongst local employers who are no longer confident to employ members of the community.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Language:**

Language problems are the major barrier migrant and refugee communities face to finding and sustaining employment, and especially to career advancement.

Job Prospects strongly recommends that additional funding is provided for migrants to attain proficiency in English; that English courses are longer and more intense and that emphasis is placed on English in the workplace and English needed to gain licences.

We recommend that the AMEP program undergoes a review as many migrants complete this course but are still not able to communicate effectively in the workplace, undertake further training or prepared for sustainable employment.

### **Physical issues:**

Information on the job seeker physical and medical issues that may impact upon their employment opportunities needs to be made available to Centrelink and Providers of JSA.

Ensure that when it is planned to integrate migrant communities into regional areas that the communities are willing and physically able to undertake employment in the major industries available in the area, and that there are no cultural barriers which may prevent successful integration and employment.

### **Licence and Transport:**

Increase emphasis and resourcing of Driver Training programs designed specifically for migrant communities, and the extension of these programs into regional areas where migrant groups are to be settled.

### **Workplace Training:**

In Job Services Australia, funding and levels of support are greatest for the most disadvantaged, who are allocated to Stream 3 or 4.

New migrants and refugees, should invariably be referred to Job Services Australia at Stream 3 or 4 level (not Stream 1 or 2 which is quite common). The work, time and cost needed to appropriately assist these job seekers requires that the greatest level of resources available under the JSA services is made available to JSA Providers and new migrants, including refugees.

### **Qualification Recognition:**

The whole process of Qualification Recognition for new migrants and refugees needs to be reviewed as it is a source of extreme frustration for many who are well educated and skilled.

**Attitude to Employment:**

The attitude seen in some new migrants and refugee groups, whereby they are content to rely on Centrelink benefits, needs to be re-dressed through greater cultural awareness of Australian values of independence through work.

As early as possible, new migrants and refugees should be educated about employment expectations in Australia, and the emphasis on welfare payments should be that they are purely an interim measure.

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