

## Submission

Inquiry into job security and the impact of insecure or precarious employment on the economy, wages, social cohesion and workplace rights and conditions.

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# Executive Summary

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (the Commission) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Select Committee's inquiry into:

- a. the extent and nature of insecure or precarious employment exposed or exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis;
- b. the risk of insecure or precarious work exposed or exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis;

The Commission is in a unique position to gather intelligence and inform relevant government and agencies on critical employment issues exacerbated by COVID-19 crisis in Victoria's multicultural communities.

There are several critical factors that underpin the Commission's submission:

- Australia has one of the most culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse societies in the world.
- Australia's diversity is increasing.
- Our multicultural diversity has been overwhelmingly positive delivering social, cultural, and economic benefits to all Australians.
- To maintain the benefits, and ideally enhance them, we must fully acknowledge and embrace our diversity, requiring intellectual and financial investment.
- With any social or economic objective, there are opportunities and challenges.
- As a nation, we haven't yet fully embraced the opportunities that our multicultural diversity provides nor fully acknowledged or addressed its challenges.
- To ensure genuine access and equity, a positive reframe of the design and delivery of our policies and services is required; one that acknowledges our diversity as a reality and strength; and one that ensures employment and economic participation of all Australians.

## Context

### About the Victorian Multicultural Commission

The Commission is an independent statutory body, established in 1983 and now constituted under the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, that strengthens cultural diversity in Victoria through consultation, advocacy, celebration, and promotion.


As the main link between communities and government, the Commission holds consultations, forums, and roundtables with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities to understand the issues they face. We then work together to identify and recommend potential solutions to government, to make laws, policies, and public services more inclusive and accessible.

The Commission is informed by its eight Regional Advisory Councils across Victoria – three metropolitan councils and five regional councils. Each Council comprises up to 50 members drawn from the local area to represent their community. Members are local residents, local government councillors and officers, local business and service providers from non-government organisations.

## COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on us all affecting our health, livelihoods, job and financial security, as well as mental health and wellbeing.

As the pandemic unfolded, the Commission conducted extensive consultations with multicultural and multi-faith communities. These included consultations with or through:

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- The Commission's Regional Advisory Councils.
  - multicultural business community and Chambers of Commerce.
  - Employment Working Groups.
  - the Multifaith Advisory Groups
  - young people from multicultural communities.
  - key stakeholders to learn about the complexities of intersectionality.

The Commission was particularly interested in hearing about:

1. The availability and access to employment support information.
2. Positive experiences that have come from COVID-19 crisis and
3. Suggestions to help support recovery phase.

Common issues raised include:

- Higher unemployment rates experienced by multicultural communities, particularly Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities due to a number of barriers exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Multicultural community members were some of the first in line to be affected. They were either made redundant or their working hours significantly reduced due to COVID-19 crisis.
- Young CALD community members who are in the workplace but in insecure jobs or underemployed faced job loss at a higher rate due to COVID-19 impact on economy.
- Recent Migrants, Temporary Visa holders, International Students and people seeking asylum face added barriers to obtaining meaningful employment post COVID-19 crisis.

Consultation feedback received speaks to the success of State and Australian Governments' swift response to the pandemic and coordinated efforts of different departments and agencies. The Australian community welcomed the commitment to collaborate and coordinate responses in facing the challenges and threat of the pandemic. In addition, the allocation of additional funding and resources, both to address specific issues as well as economic interventions to support employment were most welcomed.

As is the case with Australian community, some segments within our multicultural communities have and are facing disproportionate challenges as a result of COVID-19. In many instances, these challenges are pre-existing, but COVID-19 has brought them to the fore, exacerbated or magnified their impacts.

While there is an anticipation of an economic recovery post COVID-19, unemployment has historically and disproportionately impacted particular cohorts, including those recently arrived migrants and refugees and those with low English proficiency. Historical economic downturns have also generated reduced support for immigration and multiculturalism. COVID-19 has made this challenge even more serious, especially for newer arrivals and more vulnerable elements of the multicultural community.

Although the adverse impacts have disproportionately affected some cohorts more than others, there have also been some incredible altruistic community led initiatives that have provided support to those most in need, including many multicultural and faith communities. The Commission has heard numerous stories of community/peak organisations, faith organisations, migrant resource centres, community health organisations, grassroots organisations, and local businesses in stepping up and filling the void to support vulnerable members of the multicultural community.




## Recommendations

The Commissions has formulated the following recommendations based on feedback on employment issues impacting Victoria's multicultural communities as a result of COVID-19 crisis:

1. Given Australia's changing demographics, that governments and agencies fully embrace our multicultural diversity when designing employment policies and programs to ensure genuine equality of employment opportunity and access for all.
2. That in the context that "we're in this together" that Government establish employment targets for migrant and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) within Victorian Government, LGA and Federal Government. This would also include the establishment of inclusion benchmarks that would apply to all procurement and grants programs attached to each Department. The Government and community stakeholders could champion the introduction of these benchmarks to their own employment, procurement, and community employment support programs.
3. That inclusive and equitable employment support/investment be provided to multicultural communities in economy recovery phase, including temporary visa holders, international students, asylum seekers and refugees as contributors to the Australian economy and our diverse society. The recovery response would include:
  - Creating more awareness about employment rights and responsibilities to protect temporary Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from precarious work conditions.
  - Ensuring that temporary migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers have adequate social protections from precarious work conditions, including underpayments in the workplace, exploitation and racism and discrimination.
  - Amending definitions in legislation covering casual/contract work and superannuation entitlements to reduce casualisation of workforce and improve job and long-term financial security. Multicultural and seasonal workers in hospitality, retail, early childhood education and beauty have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. They lack access to secure jobs and have limited or no access to leave or redundancy entitlements and superannuation benefits.
  - Developing an Online Platform for Information Sharing, particularly how to obtain recognition of overseas skills or qualifications, and for connecting funders and mentors to refugee entrepreneurs.
  - Promotion of retraining and job readiness for the long term unemployed – help in building networks and social innovation and entrepreneurship.
  - investigating trends in labour market to determine where skilled migrants can meet demands and fill skill shortages post COVID-19.
  - Focusing on local manufacturing and essential goods. Devise a plan to go back to manufacturing and training, especially in the North and Western suburbs of Victoria.
  - Supporting small business to survive and stay afloat during the worst time for the economy.
  - Training businesses without IT experience to sell products online and conduct deliveries.
  - Targeting small business support - to start small businesses, expand existing businesses - advice/mentoring.
4. There needs to be a strong emphasis for policies that reflect and empower multicultural women and youth to re-enter or enter the workforce. This will reflect on workforce diversity policies supported by the Gender Equality Bill.
5. Establishment of local employment taskforces to identify areas of employment growth within local communities (including regional Victoria) and disseminate this information to youth and relevant multicultural communities in a timely manner. These taskforces must include some relevant industry representation, Vocational Education Training (VET) and tertiary education providers, as well as employment services providers.
6. Ensure that multicultural/multifaith organisations form part of the recovery system response to communicate insecure or precarious employment experienced by CALD communities, as well as



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- provide feedback on job seeker/employment readiness/support programs that provide low (or high) levels of relevance amongst participants from multicultural communities.
7. Ensure that that job employment service providers, in the context of COVID-19 recovery response, provide tailored help to eligible job seekers-thus providing meaningful employment that match job seeker assessed needs/qualifications.
  8. Transport continues to be a barrier for young people from multicultural backgrounds that are seeking employment. Transport costs, as well as a lack of infrastructure connecting industrial and residential areas in some of Melbourne's fringe areas and parts of regional Victoria all contribute to insecure precarious employment, as do the access to driving practice for many young people from migrant backgrounds seeking to obtain a drivers licence. Targeted investment in programs that build the capability of young people to travel to and from work could be highly beneficial in piloting innovative solutions to tackle this issue.
  9. Conscious and unconscious biases still exist within many recruitment processes. Increased reporting of racism and discrimination against people of CALD backgrounds, including Australian-Chinese has led to compromised sense of safety, belonging and economic participation. Multicultural/multifaith organisations with relevant Federal and State government departments can work together to launch a structured awareness campaign targeting unconscious bias and racism as it relates to the employment of CALD and young people. Evidence suggests (through campaigns targeting issues such as mental health and domestic violence for example) that when coupled with ground level activity (which is already being delivered by a number of community organisations) such broad marketing campaigns can be effective in reducing negative behaviours within the broader Victorian community significantly.
  10. There are a number of existing incubators, accelerators and funders that could be leveraged to support CALD entrepreneurs to respond to COVID-19 impacts.

## Cultural Diversity in Victoria

Victoria is home to one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world and Australia's fastest growing state at an annual increase of 2.1 per cent (Australia's population grew by 1.6 per cent), with a population of 6,566,2000 as at 31 March 2019. Migration to Victoria has resulted in increasing diversity. Net overseas migration was the major contributor to the state's population change and net interstate migration gains for Victoria were the second highest recorded in the year ending 31 March 2019<sup>1</sup>.

At the 2016 Census, 49.1 per cent of Victorians were either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas. In 2018, Victorian Government schools' population included 197,742 students with a language background other than English, with the main languages identified as Arabic, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Chinese<sup>2</sup>


## Cultural Diversity in Australia

Australia is known to be a vibrant and multicultural nation – our cultural diversity embodies our national identity and social fabric. With 28% of Australia's population born overseas and net overseas migration accounting for 64% of population growth to March 2019, Australia has much to gain from

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (March 2019). 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, Mar 2019. Retrieved from ABS: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Government Department of Education and Training. (July 2019). Summary Statistics for Victorian Schools, July 2019. Retrieved 10 October 2019: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/brochurejuly.pdf>



migration both economically and socially. Migrants play a vital role in generating business activity and economic growth in Australia, bringing innovation, skills and dynamic workforce to the labour market and particularly in regional and rural areas. Regarding attitudes to multiculturalism, The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Survey 2019 found that 85% of respondents agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia and 64% respondents believe that migrants make Australia stronger.<sup>3</sup>

## Multicultural Lens – Success and Potential

Victoria is regarded as one of the most diverse, socially cohesive, and successful multicultural societies in the world. This outcome has arisen not by chance but through collaborative government and community leadership and through dedicated legislation, policies and programs designed to facilitate genuine access and equity.

Victoria's multicultural community infrastructure comprises of more than 4,000 ethno-specific, faith-specific and multicultural community organisations, some of whom are peak bodies and subject matter experts. These organisations provide a myriad of benefits particularly in the context of facilitating successful settlement but are often inadequately utilised.

It is widely acknowledged that our diversity delivers substantive social, cultural and economic benefits for all; whether it be through people to people links delivering trade and tourism benefits to the bringing in of skills and entrepreneurship to infusing creativity into the areas of arts and culture. Researchers have reported that Australia's projected population will be 38 million by 2050 and migration will be contributing \$1,625 billion (1.6 trillion) to Australia's GDP. Moreover, migration will have added

- 15.7 per cent to our workforce participation rate,
- 21.9 per cent to after tax real wages for low, skilled workers,
- 5.9 per cent in GDP per capita growth.


Overall, by 2050, each individual migrant will on average be contributing approximately 10 per cent more to Australia's economy than existing residents. The economic impact of migration flows through into every aspect of the economy. It has a profound positive impact not just on population growth, but also on labour participation and employment, on wages and incomes, on our national skills base and on net productivity. Set out in terms of the three 'Ps' — participation, productivity and population — migration is a significant factor.

Obviously, there are associated challenges and the need to address these if we are to ensure genuine inclusion and equality. But if done well these challenges and costs are relatively small when compared to the real and potential benefits, particularly over the longer term. Australia has undertaken this comparatively well and as the Scanlon Foundation's annual Social Cohesion survey has shown, support for a multicultural society has remained exceptionally high at 85 per cent (2019). However, we cannot rest on our laurels and given what has been occurring elsewhere in the world, where division and polarisation within societies have increased, we need to further invest our efforts towards building a socially inclusive and resilient nation; one that can show the way to the rest of the globe.

To maintain and enhance up on our success to date requires a genuine acknowledgment and embracement of our cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Our nation's history has shown that this

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<sup>3</sup> <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/report2019>



embracement has taken time, transitioning from assimilation to integration to multiculturalism. Our predecessors came to the realisation that the former two frameworks were failing, and we must be vigilant in ensuring that we not only do not regress but also to take up the opportunity to genuinely address the disadvantages that exist.

As indicated earlier, our diversity has often been positively touted and championed in the areas of trade, tourism, skills, and cuisine, yet the benefits and strengths haven't been fully considered or embraced within the context of public sector service delivery.

The debate of mainstream versus ethno-specific/multicultural is misplaced; rather it should be seen as complementary. Reframing the multicultural community infrastructure as a complementary component to service delivery in a society that is increasingly diverse is critically important, not only in facilitating inclusion, access and equity but in the longer term will deliver reduced costs and improve productive participation, a sense of inclusion and belonging and enhance social cohesion.

This is not about developing dual or multiple track employment services or duplication but rather supporting complementary and transitional services that facilitate inclusive sustainable employment pathways.

While the VMC's focus is on the needs and aspirations of Victoria's migrant and refugee communities, it is also critically important to note that, through practically all indicators of employment inclusion and exclusion, that those faced by Australia's Indigenous communities is most glaring.

## Government Responses

The Commission received positive community feedback on the Federal and State Governments and National Cabinet's leadership, collaborative and coordinated response in facing and containing the pandemic. Consultation feedback speaks to the success of the leadership in assisting communities navigate the crisis and allocating funding and resources to address specific issues, as well as economic interventions to support businesses and employment. However, community feedback also called for government interventions be more targeted, and needs based.

## Victorian Government interventions

The Victorian Government introduced a range of unprecedented interventions and programs to support all Victorians through the devastating impacts of COVID-19, with combined support for businesses, workers and the community exceeding \$3 billion. Some key initiatives include:

- Victorian Economic Survival Package (\$1.7 billion)
  - o Working for Victoria Fund (\$500 million) to help the Victorian community through COVID-19
  - o Business Support Fund (\$500 million) providing one-off grants of \$10,000 to support affected businesses in the hardest hit sectors
  - o Payroll Tax Refund
  - o Rent relief for tenants in Government buildings
  - o Land Tax Deferral
  - o Freezing Fees and Fines
- Temporary laws to Support tenants and landlords (both commercial and residential)
- \$59.4 million in surge funding for increased demand for mental health services and an additional
- \$19.5 million to fast track the delivery of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's
- Mental Health System's interim report.
- International Student Emergency Relief Fund (\$45 million)



- Rent relief grants through DHHS
- Victorian Government's COVID-19 Response Package for Multicultural Communities (\$11.3 million):
  - o \$500,000 in small grants funding to support multicultural media outlets with new equipment and technology
  - o Almost \$2 million to support community wellbeing and connection and deliver practical supports through existing networks and community organisations
  - o Nearly \$5 million to deliver initiatives to support at-risk families, promote youth wellbeing and address youth disengagement
  - o \$2.2 million to support asylum seekers and refugees facing financial hardship through basic needs assistance packages that provide practical support to buy food, clothing and other essential items
  - o \$1.1 million to support multicultural and ethno-specific organisations to deliver culturally appropriate family violence prevention and early intervention
  - o \$1 million in additional funding to ensure that those who need interpreters can access them
  - o \$50,000 for the Victorian Multicultural Commission to work with community leaders to respond combat racism and work with community leaders to respond appropriately to racism incidents.

## Victorian Multicultural Commission supporting communities

Since the beginning of COVID-19, the Commission has played a key role in supporting Victoria's multicultural communities. The Commission conducted a round of consultations with key stakeholders, multicultural and multifaith community groups, young people, people with disabilities, multicultural business community and service providers to learn about the critical issues impacting multicultural communities during COVID-19, and provide advice to the Victorian Government and agencies on how to better support multicultural communities during this particular time of need.


The Commission also facilitated messaging and shared information and resources on COVID-19 restrictions and supports available to multicultural communities. In supporting the Premier of Victoria's commitment to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, the Commission provided a submission to respond to the increased COVID-19 related issues, particularly affecting multicultural communities, including young people of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

## Community Responses

The community response to COVID-19 has been compassionate and overwhelming. The Commission has received numerous reports on multicultural community groups and organisations who have mobilised support for vulnerable cohorts – some examples include:

- regularly checking in with isolated individuals who are without extended family supports;
- food drops and delivery of essential goods for vulnerable community members;
- establishing a donation line or service to support asylum seekers, temporary visa holders and international students; and
- churches offering small financial assistance for vulnerable community members.

The increased reports of community volunteerism and collaboration amongst community leaders in reaching out and supporting their communities has been an exemplary form of social capital and building community resilience in times of need. In addition, faith leaders have played a significant role



in supporting communities spiritually and keeping them connected via live streaming of religious practices throughout the lockdown period.

## VMC's feedback to insecure or precarious work exposed or exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

### Multicultural job seekers face multiple and complex barriers due to the pandemic

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Australians, in particular those who are recently arrived, from new and emerging communities or refugees, often face multiple and complex barriers to employment. These are often pre-existing systemic and structural issues but have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. These barriers include:

- job seekers are often underemployed or placed in casual positions and they have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19.
- Multicultural workers in industries such as hospitality, retail, early childhood education, beauty, food services and seasonal workers have been disproportionately impacted due to COVID-19. These workers generally lack access to job security, guaranteed hours, limited or no access to leave or redundancy entitlements and superannuation benefits.
- Difficulties obtaining recognition of skills and qualifications earned overseas or existing employment barriers related to cost of transferring overseas qualification, status of visas (Temporary visas vs Permanent Visas/Citizenship) and employment sponsorship eligibility criteria.
- Experiences of discrimination, prejudice or racism or unconscious bias on the part of employers after recruitment.
- Lack of networks for seeking and securing employment.
- Limited familiarity with the Australian workforce, and lack of support systems to adopt workforce setting.
- Lack of English proficiency and/or lack of Australian work experience.
- lack of recognition of overseas referees.

Settlement agencies play a key role. A multitude of other programs and initiatives, exist such as:

- The Adult Migrant English Program.
- Overseas Qualification Assessments (for general employment).
- Incubators.
- Smaller, place-based initiatives to support particular cohorts into the workforce.


### The Employment Market is likely to be more difficult to break into for multicultural young people

Due to the pandemic, the Victorian economy has taken a huge hit and this has significantly impacted the number of vacancies in a large number of occupations, as well as driven unemployment up, with predictions that the State's unemployment figure will exceed 11%, once restrictions are lifted.<sup>4</sup>

Young people have been hit the hardest by job loss due to the pandemic. Young people are overwhelmingly employed in precarious or casualised industries and this disproportionately negatively impacts their job security. As the economy stabilises, young multicultural people will be competing against more mature aged and experienced candidates for a number of roles.

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Victoria-to-record-budget-deficit-coronavirus-economic-impact, link: [www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-23/victoria-to-record-budget-deficit-coronavirus-economic-impact/12483036](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-23/victoria-to-record-budget-deficit-coronavirus-economic-impact/12483036)



Due to the pandemic, young people are also experiencing a reduction in meaningful work experience opportunities and a lack of real-world opportunities such as networking. This leads to a risk of long-term unemployment. There are also implications for young people's wellbeing, with young people reporting reduced confidence, motivation, and employment aspirations.

There are a variety of programs and initiatives to help overcome unemployment, insecure or risk of precarious work, exacerbated by the pandemic. These include:

- Youth Transition Support (YTS); a holistic program designed to improve workplace readiness, provide access to vocational opportunities, and create strong social connections through education and sports engagement.
- Transition to Work provides intensive pre-employment support to improve the work readiness of young people and help them into work or further education.
- A new Foundation Skills for Your Future program will support workers who are currently employed, or recently unemployed, to identify any literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and where appropriate, access training.
- Leverage already existing entities like Jobs Victoria (JV) and Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN), linking National Careers Institute & Labours Market Information Portal.
- Incentives for businesses to employ people made unemployed by COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strategic partnerships program within Department of Premier & Cabinet (DPC) that can work with VMC to help.
- Use platforms such as VMC as the link between government and community and business and identifier of opportunities.
- Employment-focused social enterprises that focus on creating meaningful employment for CALD communities.
- Provide a platform for young people to learn an apprenticeship/trade.
- Devise a strategy which includes training, retraining, job matching, incentives, support options to employ youth.
- Collaborate and find (creating) specific job opportunities - develop a collaboration model with local Councils, and also establish a partnership with some of the Vic Regional Partnerships groups.
- Identify needs at a grass roots level in regional and metro areas.
  - Look at success stories

### Recent migrant, temporary visa holders and people seeking asylum are critically impacted due to the pandemic


People seeking asylum, recent migrants and temporary visa holders contribute to the Australian economy and our diverse society. CEDA has reported that recent migrants have not adversely impacted the wages or participation rates of Australian-born workers. On the contrary, results show that migrants have boosted wages and employment conditions in Australia. These findings are consistent with those of the Productivity Commission by The Australian National University where they have found that there is no evidence that migrants have a negative impact on the Australian-born local labour market.<sup>5</sup>

Due to COVID-19 crisis, recent migrants, temporary visa holders, refugees and people seeking asylum are experiencing higher unemployment rates. Many have reported:

- either a reduction in work hours or loss of job and financial stress (accumulated debt and housing instability).
- a reduction in family income impacting on their own education, employment opportunities and emotional well-being.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ceda.com.au/NewsAndResources/Opinion/Population/Migration-must-play-a-role-in-Australia-s-post-COV>



Compared to other jurisdictions, Victoria generally has more recent migrants and temporary residents not in the workforce, and – of those in the workforce – fewer are in casualised work or underemployed. Those from North-East Asia have reported the lowest level of workforce participation, followed by North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>6</sup>

### CALD entrepreneurs and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs are seen as the primary engine room for employment growth for multicultural communities. Multicultural businesses were seen as more likely to hire multicultural employees. Start-up ecosystems significantly contribute to generating economic value. Globally, the top 25 start-up ecosystems contribute an average of \$10 billion to their local economies. Victoria’s start-up ecosystem is currently sitting outside the top 30 start-up ecosystems around the world with a valuation of around \$2 billion (Start-up Genome Report, 2019)<sup>7</sup>. However, with significant and growing investment from LaunchVic and other stakeholders, the ecosystem is beginning to flourish, with one in three founders born overseas and one-third of founders being female.

Despite such high proportions of diversity amongst founders, the Victorian start-up ecosystem has struggled to tap into the refugee community. Given the entrepreneurial mindset of many refugees and the large number of successful refugee entrepreneurs globally, this can be seen as a missed opportunity to Victoria’s economy. A key factor in promoting Victoria’s start-up growth will be through leveraging this demographic. There are several existing incubators, accelerators, and funders that could be leveraged to support CALD entrepreneurs.

Priority Actions could focus on:

- Establishing special funding in existing incubators for multicultural entrepreneurs.
- Many of the migrants are entrepreneurial and strongly need to be empowered and fully embraced in our multicultural diversity when designing employment policies and programs to ensure equality of employment opportunity and access to funding.

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<sup>6</sup> Victorian Multicultural Commission, ‘Meet me in the Middle Report: Facilitating the Employment of Young Multicultural people in post COVID-19 Victoria’. 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Computer Society, ACS Australia’s Digital Pulse 2020



# Appendices

## Feedback received from VMC consultation sessions: Employment Breakout Discussions.

### Round 1- breakout discussion

#### **What do we mean by 'employment'?**

Immigrants and refugees often face significant barriers when seeking employment. These have been exacerbated by COVID-19 impacts.

The focus for this session was to identify a few key initiatives that mainstream players could take to address the priority issues and gaps in the overall system to help ease the search for employment among those in CALD communities in the context of COVID-19 recovery. For example:

- Translated material should be offered on government websites and apps in the same way that Facebook and Instagram allow users to change their interface language.
- Provide a platform for young people to enter an apprenticeship.
- Devise a strategy which includes training, retraining, job matching, incentives, options for SME support to employ youth.
- Develop a collaboration model with local Councils, and also establish a partnership with some of the Vic Regional Partnerships groups.
- Addressing unconscious bias/racism, strength-based approach of multi diversity and immigration towards economic growth.

The employment breakout group identified many similar themes to the advocacy and multiple barriers groups, including a need for ambassadors and mentors to support and advocate for CALD communities, and the need for diverse employment targets. Moreover, the working group spoke at length about the youth demographic within these communities in particular. A need for strengthened apprenticeship programs that impart broader skills and employability to support this demographic, on top of any other prospective programs to transition youth to 'the world of work' were suggested as a priority. Finally, the changing shape of the workforce, particularly post-COVID-19, suggests a greater need than ever for retraining and upskilling programs to help CALD communities adapt to the 'future of work', particularly youth just entering the workforce in the midst of the present pandemic, and older people who need training to transition out of a threatened but established career.

#### **What do we mean by 'multiple barriers'?**


CALD Australians, in particular those recently arrived migrants, from new and emerging communities or refugees, face multiple and complex barriers to obtaining employment.

The focus for this session was to identify a few key initiatives that mainstream players could take to address the priority issues and gaps in the overall system to help overcome multiple barriers facing CALD job seekers in the context of COVID-19 recovery. For example:

- The type of employment-focused social enterprises that are likely to work for CALD with multiple barriers
- Public sector employment targets - for example in 2016, the NSW Government committed to employ at least 100 recently arrived refugees across the NSW Public Sector.
- Leverage existing entities like JV, JVEN, NYCA, linking National Careers Institute & Labour's Market Information Portal to avoid reinventing the wheel.
- Strategic partnerships program within DPC can work with VMC to identify needs at a grassroots level in regional and metro areas (refugees, asylum seekers and other CALD communities).

The breakout discussion focussed on four main points. Firstly, there was discussion around a strategic partnerships program designed to identify issues in new and emerging CALD communities, and design





programs to tackle them. Secondly, the working group suggested existing entities like Infosys could be leveraged for training programs, and various national business councils, and the Multicultural Chamber of Commerce could both connect with the VMC to help CALD communities. Thirdly, social enterprises were identified as a powerful tool for assisting in the development of soft skills, vocational training, literacy and so on.

Finally, the Working Group identified CALD employment targets in the public sector as an excellent tool for combatting the obstacles faced by these communities.

### Round 2- breakout discussion

#### **What do we mean by 'Advocacy'?**

Initiatives that can influence the actions of mainstream government, NGO, and business in terms of filling gaps, or adopting best practice approaches for multicultural employment and COVID-19 recovery.

The focus of this session was to further develop the advocacy strategy for these ideas so that they can have maximum impact, including:

- **Strategy** - what is the most effective advocacy approach?
- **Launch and media** - What is the best way to launch the report including through media and social media?
- **Targeted communication** - How do we best target the ideas to key groups we want to influence - mainstream agencies, CALD communities and major corporations?
- **Champions and networks** - what champions and networks can we use for advocacy, for example business chambers? How can we use the VMC Ambassadors (being developed in another breakout)?
- **Government** - how do we leverage key Ministers and bureaucrats? Can we establish a Friends of Multicultural Victoria parliamentary group?

The advocacy breakout group identified advocacy as an especially prospective area for action for the VMC, since it is possible to create significant impact even with resource limitations. The working group also identified a need for champions and mentors, both from within the community to lend the mentors context for engaging with the members of those communities, as well as from outside of the community to be able to introduce mentees to wider networks and practices.

### **Multi-language websites**

Very few key websites come in multiple languages. The English proficiency of CALD people varies; in New South Wales, 28% of Vietnamese and Korean-speaking people indicated that they did not speak English well, or at all. This is followed by the Thai-speaking population with 20% who had low English proficiency and the Lao and Burmese-speaking population with 19% who could not speak English well or at all.

This amounts to tens of thousands of residents in Australia who are unable to access essential information on public services. Google Translate can be inaccurate and not culturally sensitive.

**Translated material** should be offered on government websites and apps in the same way that popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram allow users to change their interface language. There should also be multilingual live chat.

### **Access to services & reporting**

VAGO in 2014 undertook an audit on service delivery departments (health, education, and human services) and central agencies. VAGO found:

- examples of good practice by departments and service providers but these are not sufficiently embedded within or shared across departments.
- Migrants with low proficiency in English, refugees and asylum seekers continue to face barriers to access.

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- It is not enough for whole-of-government agencies to coordinate isolated activities or support departments in developing their cultural diversity plans. There needs to be genuine accountability for performance in this area, with public monitoring and reporting of how department initiatives are leading to improved access.

Amongst other things, VAGO recommended:

the departments develop and report annually on their cultural diversity plans—or equivalent—in consultation with DPC/VMC

- The departments include in their reporting of progress on cultural diversity plans explicit reference to:
  - How culturally appropriate training for staff has been incorporated into the delivery of services for CALD communities
  - How information/data has been used to increase accessibility of services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities
  - The effectiveness of service delivery to culturally and linguistically diverse communities as an integral part of program evaluation.

VMC and DPC could monitor/report on overall departmental performance in relation to the provision of accessible, responsive and effective services.

### Round 3- breakout discussion

#### **What do we mean by ‘People’?**

initiatives that help develop and connect multicultural community members into roles of influence in mainstream government, Non-Governmental Organisations, and business to improve multicultural employment and COVID-19 recovery outcomes

The focus of this session was to further develop and refine the priority “people” idea generated in the last workshop - a VMC Ambassadors Program. Key aspects to discuss included:

- Purpose - to developing a panel of ambassadors that can advise and connect both mainstream agencies delivering employment programs and CALD communities?
- Selection - what characteristics should ambassadors have? Need to include diversity in terms of different ethnic groups, gender, and age balance? What approach should we use for selection?
- Training and support - what induction, support materials or training would be useful for ambassadors?
- Connecting - what is the best method of promoting and connecting the panel to mainstream agencies, are there some priority areas to target?

The people breakout discussion also identified the Multicultural Chamber of Commerce as an excellent disinterested conduit for engagement with CALD communities, thanks to its non-political, non-religious status. Moreover, multicultural media organisations were suggested to be a highly prospective pool for community ambassadors. These ambassadors could play several different roles, including mentoring and youth leadership, as well as providing role models to inspire others to pursue their own careers.

### **Recruit smarter rollout**

Recruit Smarter was a multi-sector initiative of the Victorian Government to develop inclusive recruitment practices and address unconscious bias in recruitment. It conducted real-world trials of innovative ways to address unconscious bias in recruitment, including CV de-identification, unconscious bias training, and strategic use of language in job advertising.

Recruit Smarter ran over 2 years (2016-18) around 3 priorities:

- trialling new approaches
- designing best practice

- sharing knowledge

ECCV has previously recommended that the Victorian Government allocates funding to support the rollout of the Recruit Smarter Guidelines for Inclusive Recruitment across the whole of government and public service, and encourages their use in the private sector by making their adoption one of the selection criteria by which social procurement tenders are evaluated.

#### Round 4- breakout discussion

##### **What do we mean by 'Platform'?**

Initiatives that can leverage digital technologies to make mainstream employment and COVID-19 recovery opportunities and programs more accessible to the multicultural community.

The focus of this session was to further develop and refine the ideas generated in the last workshop on a digital platform including:

- Functionality - exactly what are we seeking, for example.
  - o mapping jobseekers' needs, skills, and job expectations to referral pathways & emerging employment,
  - o providing tailored advice on reskilling and upskilling
  - o surfacing available Victorian Government jobs
  - o managing multiple languages, etc?
- Timing and phasing - How would we stage the development and what is the likely timing needed fairly quickly?
- Funding and partnerships - How much would it roughly cost? How would we fund such a platform? Are there partners we could use to develop the platform, especially pro bono?
- Operation and development - who would operate the platform? How would the ongoing maintenance and development of the platform be managed?

The platform breakout discussion suggested a need for partnerships with industry or government for a potential revenue stream, as well as key points to consider regarding the functionality of the platform itself as well as potential next steps in setting such a platform up:

##### **Functionality**

- Can they create a profile and use it?
- Research into what already exists rather than start from scratch.
- Diagnostic tool - provide background information and then tool to assess, gaps in skill set if there is a target job, you're after.
- Capture - where they wound up re jobs and how long stayed there. Incentive to provide closed loop info back to Gov.
- Link to mentoring - apprenticeship programs. Link to what jobs are coming up.

##### **Next steps**

- VMC owned - build it outside but house in VMC to avoid challenges and give trust.
- Who? Government backed independent not for profit led partnership.
- Should be a partnership outside government - industry partnership.
- Run it as a private commercial operation - give it goals and metrics and funding.
- Potential - do it as EOI process - put a tender out and see what comes back.
- Holy grail to achieve this - digital solution is a proxy that happens behind the scenes.



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