



RESEARCH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY UNIT

SUBMISSION

**Australian Council of Trade Unions:
Independent inquiry into insecure work in Australia**

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For further information, contact:

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About Jesuit Social Services

Our Vision

Building a Just Society

Our Mission

Standing in solidarity with those in need, expressing a faith that promotes justice.

Our Purpose

We work to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential - by partnering with community to support those most in need and working to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion.

Our Values

- Welcoming – forming strong, faithful relationships
- Discerning – being strategic about where we can have the greatest impact
- Courageous – standing up boldly to effect change.

Who we work with

We are part of and work with:

- Those most in need - individuals, families and communities
- The broader communities in which we live and
- The decision-makers, service providers and institutions that affect us.

What we do

We strengthen and build respectful, constructive relationships for:

- Effective services - by partnering with people most in need and those who support them to address disadvantage
- Education – by providing access to lifelong learning and development
- Capacity building – by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact
- Leadership development – by partnering across sectors to build expertise and commitment for justice
- Advocacy – by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research.

Jesuit Social Services works in the following areas:

- Justice & Crime Prevention - People involved with the justice system;
- Settlement & Community Building - Recently arrived immigrants and refugees and disadvantaged communities
- Mental Health & Wellbeing - People with multiple and complex needs, and

Providing access to education, life-long learning and development underpins all that we do.

Our Programs

Currently our direct services and volunteer programs are located in: Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory. Services include:

- ***Brosnan Youth Services***: supporting young people and adults in the justice system, and assisting them to make a successful transition from custody back into the community. Brosnan Youth Services includes: the *Konnect* program which provides pre-release assessment and planning, and post release support to Aboriginal men and women; and the African mentoring program providing support to men from African backgrounds who have been imprisoned in Victoria.
- ***Jesuit Community College***: increasing opportunities for people constrained by social and economic disadvantage to participate in education, work and community life and reach their full potential.
- ***Connexions***: delivering intensive support and counselling for young people with co-occurring mental health, substance and alcohol misuse problems.
- ***Artful Dodgers Studios***: providing pathways to education, training and employment for young people with multiple and complex needs associated with mental health, substance abuse and homelessness.
- ***Support After Suicide***: supporting people bereaved by suicide, including children and young people.
- ***The Outdoor Experience***: offering an alternative treatment service through a range of outdoor intervention programs for young people aged 15 – 25 years, who have or have had issues with alcohol and/or other drugs.
- ***Just Leadership***: Working in partnership with community and corporate enterprises to foster leadership for a just society.
- ***Community Programs***: Working with people, including the African Australian and Vietnamese communities, on public housing estates across metropolitan Melbourne.
- ***Community Detention Services***: delivering case management support to unaccompanied asylum seeking minors in community detention.
- ***Just Leadership***: Working in partnership with community and corporate enterprises to foster leadership for a just society.
- ***Community development***: delivering social enterprise and other activities in the area of Mount Druitt, Western Sydney.
- ***Capacity building*** activities in Alice Springs.
- ***Jesuit Social Services volunteers***: provides the opportunity for individuals to make a difference in the community through a range of opportunities.

Research, advocacy and policy are advanced through our Policy Unit, coordinating across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services.

Summary of Recommendations

ONE: THAT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES THAT SUPPORT MARGINALISED GROUPS SUCH AS EX-OFFENDERS, OR PEOPLE WHOSE CAPACITY IS IMPACTED BY MENTAL ILLNESS, DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL USE, AND/OR INTELLECTUAL OR PHYSICAL DISABILITY CONTINUE TO RECEIVE A LOADING ATTACHED TO TARGETS IN THESE COHORTS, AND ARE REQUIRED TO ENABLE PROVISION OF SUPPORT, MENTORING AND GUIDANCE TO ENABLE THEIR SUSTAINED EMPLOYMENT.

TWO: THAT TRAINING SERVICES THAT SUPPORT MARGINALISED GROUPS SUCH AS EX-OFFENDERS, OR PEOPLE WHOSE CAPACITY IS IMPACTED BY MENTAL ILLNESS, DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL USE, AND/OR INTELLECTUAL OR PHYSICAL DISABILITY RECEIVE A LOADING ATTACHED TO TARGETS IN THESE COHORTS TO ENABLE PROVISION OF SUPPORT, MENTORING AND GUIDANCE TO ENABLE THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THEIR TRAINING PROGRAM.

THREE: THAT JOB SERVICES AUSTRALIA AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDERS ARE REWARDED FOR CONTINUING TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING MENTORING AND SUPPORT BEYOND 13 AND 26 WEEKS FOR PEOPLE WITH HIGH SUPPORT NEEDS.

FOUR: FURTHER WORK SHOULD BE DONE BY EMPLOYERS, THE UNION MOVEMENT AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS TO ENCOURAGE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMS TO INCREASE AUSTRALIAN WORK EXPERIENCE. THE JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES-NAB AFRICAN AUSTRALIAN INCLUSION PROGRAM PROVIDES A TEMPLATE FOR EXCELLENCE IN THIS REGARD.

FIVE: IN RELATION TO INCREASING RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS, THE CREATION OF A DOSSIER ON THE INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS THAT ARE ACCREDITED BY AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES SHOULD BE EXPLORED. THIS QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE SHOULD BE MADE WIDELY ACCESSIBLE TO EMPLOYERS OF ALL SIZES, PARTICULARLY SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES.

Introduction

Jesuit Social Services' work in the employment sector is largely focused on preparing those who for a variety of reasons have been excluded from the employment market for the challenges of gaining employment. The issue of insecure work is very relevant to the work we do with some of the most marginalised people in our community. We welcome, therefore, the opportunity to make a contribution to the Australian Council of Trade Unions: Independent inquiry into insecure work in Australia.

Jesuit Community College

Relevant Terms of Reference:

- *The workers that are most at risk of insecure work and why;*

Jesuit Community College provides its students with skills for life, learning and work to help them, their families and their communities reach their full potential.

The College is a Registered Training Organisation offering nationally recognised vocational education and training, non-accredited training, professional and personal development programs and community development programs. Education and training activity is built around three key areas - Skills for Learning, Skills for Earning and Skills for Volunteering. The College places high priority on helping people whose education has been interrupted develop foundation skills - basic literacy, numeracy and communication skills – as a key to social and economic inclusion

It offers education and training, personal and community development in an integrated framework, increasing options and opportunities for people constrained by social and economic disadvantage to participate in training, work and community life. For people facing barriers to learning, it sparks hope, aspiration and interest in education, provides a solid foundation for further study and connection to a 'community of learning'.

Enrolment priority is given to people with low job skills facing barriers to participating in education, training and employment. These are likely to include people involved in or exiting the justice system, young people exiting protective care, indigenous Australians, recent arrivals and refugees, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with multiple and complex needs, people at risk of homelessness, early school leavers and the long term unemployed.

For many of the College target group, as well as the wider population of Jesuit Social Services program participants, the formal and structured requirements of even entry level programs within the education, training and employment sectors pose barriers to secure participation. Specifically, our program participants, who are primarily ex-offenders from both the youth and adult correction systems, or other young adults experiencing debilitating consequences of mental health, drug and/or alcohol or childhood trauma, have often been disengaged from education at an early age.

This group often lacks the foundational skills, motivation and self-belief to provide themselves with the psychosocial and environmental stability required to meet the training course or workplace expectations. Their capacity, therefore to sustain workforce participation is tenuous and insecure.

The Job Services Australia (JSA) program, and the Disability Employment program (DEP), provide both a contractual and a financial incentive for service providers to work with this group of job seekers. For example, the JSA providers are paid higher service fees and receive higher outcome fees for assisting and placing into employment people with significant barriers to employment. JSA providers also receive brokerage funding to support highly disadvantaged job seekers. DES providers also receive funding for supporting high needs clients over a longer period with mentoring support in the workplace.

The resources available to assist high needs job seekers, for example the people assisted by Jesuit Social Services, need to be maintained and extended. Support which is effective for this target group which is unique to one or the other of the JSA and DES systems, should also be available to the other.

For example, DES providers should be able to access an 'employment and mentoring pathway fund' as is available to job seekers engaged in the JSA system.

JSA providers should be able and if needs be required, to ensure that on the job mentoring support is available to high needs job seekers, such as the Jesuit Social Services clients, over a longer period than simply the current 13 week and the 26 JSA outcome payment period on which the JSAs are focused (in order to achieve both their outcomes payments and their performance stars recognition). To support this added flexibility and requirement, JSAs should be recognized for this performance and achievement in placing a very highly disadvantaged job seeker into supported and mentored employment over a longer period than six months, where this is required to support the individual build a portfolio of employment placement experiences.

The impact of the welfare benefits requirements in terms of an individual's 'tentative and transitional' engagement in work must also be monitored to ensure that these (Centrelink) requirements do not create the perverse incentive effects for the individual and cause them to leave employment (despite the changes which have recently been introduced in respect of hours of work while on Centrelink benefits).

In respect of the support provided to training providers working with these groups of highly disadvantaged people, and particularly where these people are not also engaged in the JSA or DES systems, training programs do not include within their funding for the delivery of training, provision to provide the type of support, mentoring or guidance that these people require to bridge the gap between their fragile capabilities and mainstream training requirements. For these people, the availability of resources to provide this support is crucial to their successful completion of training and thus their ability to progress along a pathway to employment. The provision of more flexible and more highly supported pathways will ensure that their employment opportunities can be built into a sound portfolio of employment experience which can lead to more sustainable employment in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ONE: THAT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES THAT SUPPORT MARGINALISED GROUPS SUCH AS EX-OFFENDERS, OR PEOPLE WHOSE CAPACITY IS IMPACTED BY MENTAL ILLNESS, DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL USE, AND/OR INTELLECTUAL OR PHYSICAL DISABILITY CONTINUE TO RECEIVE A LOADING ATTACHED TO TARGETS IN THESE

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The African-Australian Inclusion Program

Relevant Terms of Reference:

- *The workers that are most at risk of insecure work and why;*
- *The effect of insecure work on...:*
- *Additional measures that can be taken by;*
 - *Unions,*
 - *Employers,*
 - *Government.*

Jesuit Social Services is currently involved in a highly successful program in conjunction with the National Australia Bank (NAB) that is a professional bridging and training program for qualified African-Australians, providing six months paid workplace experience. The program aims to provide commercial experience and learning opportunities for participants, including enhancing their business networks.

The need for the program was identified by the African-Australian community who noted that lack of local experience in the Australian business sector was a significant barrier to employment for qualified African-Australians.

Since its inception in 2009, NAB has provided six month, paid workplace experience to 54 African Australians; 17 are still completing their 6 month placement, while 26 have progressed to ongoing employment within NAB. A case example is provided on the following page.

Case Study - Adeela (*name changed for privacy*)

Adeela is an immaculately presented and well spoken young woman who wears a head scarf reflecting her commitment to her faith as a Muslim. Adeela's CV is well laid out and highlights her excellent qualifications and relevant work experience. Why was Adeela applying for a workplace experience program?

Arriving in Australia in the mid 1990s from the Horn of Africa Adeela speaks fluent English and Arabic. Adeela undertook studies in Melbourne and completed a Degree in 2002 and Masters in 2003, believing that an excellent education would be the pathway to building a career in her adopted country.

After graduating Adeela worked for two years as a casual University tutor while searching for permanent work in Australia in her chosen professional field. However after two years of not finding a role Adeela felt frustrated, sad and perplexed as to why she could not gain full time work in a country that was lamenting a skills shortage. Adeela was struggling to gain interviews; some of the feedback she received was that she did not have relevant work experience. How could she get work experience if no one will give her the opportunity to gain that experience?

In 2006 Adeela took an opportunity, due to personal circumstances, to work in Cairo for a year and then moved to Dubai. Adeela found work and had a number of roles including a role as a Business Development Manager. Living and working in these countries was made possible as Adeela stayed with family.

In late 2010 Adeela returned to Australia and confidently started searching for work. Adeela was now equipped with the work experience and qualifications that she had been previously told she lacked to secure a professional skilled job in Australia.

However despite Australian qualifications and practical work experience a new barrier began to emerge. Adeela now was looking for a job in a tighter work market post the onset of the Global Financial Crisis and was competing against people who had Australian work experience.

Adeela heard about the African Australian Inclusion Program and attended an information session in December of 2010. Adeela submitted an application and was selected for an interview. The interview panel met with Adeela and was impressed by her qualifications, work experience and ability to confidently present herself in an interview. Upon reviewing all the applicants for the position Adeela was considered suitable, however in comparison with another candidate, it was believed that Adeela would be able to independently access employment in Australia over the coming months as she had only been back in Australia for about three months at that time. The role was given to another candidate. Adeela was provided constructive feedback from a member of the panel to assist in future interviews.

Six months later Adeela again applied to the program. Adeela's application form demonstrates a common attitude from applicants about the opportunity the African Australian Inclusion Program provides: *"I see this as a tremendous opportunity in Australia that will allow me to utilise the knowledge and experience I have gained through my studies and previous employments."*

Adeela was again successful in gaining an interview on her second application. The interview panel comprised some new members who were not familiar with Adeela, however a NAB and Jesuit Social Services panel member recalled Adeela from the previous intake interviews. The African Australian Inclusion Program interview questions allow for an open discussion. Often interviewees will openly share their personal journey and challenges that have led them to the program. Adeela was comfortable to tell more of her story and the panel asked her what she had experienced in her search for work over the previous six months. By taking the time to listen and understand the challenges and obstacles being experienced by Adeela the panel was able to fully understand what barriers were being experienced and the impact on Adeela's confidence. As in the first interview, Adeela impressed the panel and demonstrated clearly the reason why the program was developed. Adeela was successful in gaining a placement onto the program.

Adeela is currently working in her work placement role at NAB and is a valued contributing member of her team. Adeela brings with her enthusiasm and willingness to learn and grow in the workplace.

Key features of the Jesuit Social Services - NAB African Australian Inclusion Program are:

- Close collaboration with the African Australian community and capacity to integrate cultural knowledge within all aspects of the program.
- Providing real roles, and entry level market rates, supported on the job by a workplace mentor.
- Providing sufficient time for real development to occur (The program commenced as a three month initiative and was extended to six months).
- Opening up the best of NAB's people and learning resources to participants, to ensure that the opportunity is maximised. This includes invitations to significant NAB social events such as the football, and has provided unique opportunities such as tossing the coin at the start of pre-season matches.
- Direct engagement with the most senior NAB executives (The Deputy CEO, prior to his recent departure, personally hosted morning teas for each new round of participants, and invited families to program finale events).
- Involving NAB staff in creative ways, using the opportunity, where possible, to enhance leadership and team development and build workplace culture.
- Implementing the program in a culturally sensitive way and ensuring that participating business units and teams undergo appropriate cultural training. This includes specific training prior to the three month performance feedback sessions. Numerous instances of cultural sensitivity have been evidenced across the programs, for example, enabling religious practices or family commitments.

- Actively fostering an interest in and understanding of African culture, through team events and activities; catered for by African social enterprise caterers.
- Providing a personal coach to each participant from outside of the business unit, to maximise networking opportunities and identify career paths.
- Providing participants with access to NAB's Job Postings, and allowing them to secure a position prior to the end of the program, if the opportunity arises.
- Designing specific training to meet group and individual needs identified during the program. By way of example the Executive Assistant of a member of NAB's Executive Team, who is ESL trained, coaches participants in making presentations. Opportunities are then provided to make presentations at a senior level. Another example is that a networking program was designed to help build networking skills. It is delivered by trained actors, and senior NAB leaders then join the program for conversation with participants.
- Providing high quality post-program support through a career transition agency.
- Investing in development of an alumni group to support participants and share knowledge. The alumni group is very active and, following the recent recruitment round offered resume and interview assistance at NAB to unsuccessful interviewees, as a way of "giving back" to their community.

The rationale for a project such as African Australian Inclusion Program comes from a number of factors that have been encountered or observed by recent arrivals, either as migrants or refugees such as:

- Recognition of qualifications gained in the country of origin is extremely low.
- Lack of local employment experience.
- Preconceived public opinion of African migrants is based on media sensationalism, distrust at times in an applicant based on race, ethnicity or implied religion of a surname (e.g. a 'Muslim sounding' name).
- Lack of informal networks into the employment market and an inability to access employment opportunities filled through methods other than traditional job advertisements.
- Poor English language skills.
- Lack of understanding of the Australian workplace cultural norms.
- The need to provide financially for the family drives highly qualified African migrants to take low or unskilled positions such as the Taxi industry.

These factors all have a negative impact on these new Australians' ability to obtain employment other than in the types of sectors where insecure work practices are prevalent and contribute to insecure work practices as defined in the terms of reference.

The factors referred to in the terms of reference for the review listed as the effect of insecure work are all relevant to the experience of the cohort that we deal with through the African Australian Inclusion Program. However in order for more broad progress to be made in areas such as skills recognition and development, inclusion of these workers in job sectors that they are qualified in, further work needs to be undertaken in "making it easier" for private sector employers.

Large corporates have the budget and human resources to be able mentor and train new arrivals but in a tight labour market small to medium enterprises (SMEs) are unlikely to have either the money or time to risk taking on migrants with no local job experience. Given the sheer volume of SMEs this is an area that cannot be overlooked.

It is also not uncommon for people to return to study if they have been unsuccessful in their job search. This results in higher qualifications such as a Masters or Postgraduate degree, however the Australian work experience continues to be the barrier. This also contributes to the unhappy position of being considered over qualified but under experienced.

The focus for migrant employment must be on making it easier for business to employ migrants. An Australian business is going to have a natural reluctance to take on an employee with limited written and oral English skills, purely for productivity reasons. In addressing the language difficulty one potential avenue for improving this scenario may lie in an accreditation that could be easily recognized and endorsed by business groups. This approach helps to lower the risk for business.

In terms of the local job experience component, it is difficult to ascertain whether those studying locally (and abroad) are aware of or have taken the opportunity to engage in work placement while they are studying. An opportunity may lie with the union movement given its broad coverage potentially in conjunction with the Universities and TAFE institutions to access work placement programs.

Focusing on the issue of recognition of qualifications one potential avenue of further consideration may lie in approaching an agency such as the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) in Victoria or other relevant bodies with a National focus to explore the possibility of the creation of compiling a dossier on the international qualifications that are accredited (and can therefore be trusted) by Australian businesses. Having the participation or endorsement of employer groups such as relevant chambers of commerce or industry associations as well as the union or AIG would make it an easily accessible tool for business aimed at making it easier to employ highly skilled workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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