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RESEARCH & POLICYCENTRE

Humanitarian migrants, work and economic security in the urban fringe

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Overview

- Project aims
- Definitions
- Methods and sample
- Overview of research location
- Preliminary findings
- Discussion

Project aims

- The project aims to identify the **local influences on the employment and economic security of recently-arrived humanitarian migrants**. Drawing on examination of the perspectives of local government, business and service providers in peri-urban sites in the City of Hume, this study aims to identify place-sensitive factors that enable or inhibit economic security for newly arrived humanitarian migrants.
- **Research questions:**
 - What place-based and broader political and regulatory factors shape economic security of humanitarian entrants and in what ways?
 - Which of these factors are currently being addressed locally, and how?
 - Which organisations or key stakeholders are active in addressing these factors and in what ways?

Defining 'economic security'

- **Economic security underpinned and enabled by basic social security and social infrastructure e.g. health, education, housing/accommodation, information and social representation** (ILO, 2004).
- **secure employment** - through safeguarding of workplace rights, worker representation and collective bargaining, and protections against work-related discrimination or exploitation;
- **security of income** - through protected (minimum and determined) wages, income support (or 'replacement incomes'), progressive taxation measures;
- **access to financial products and services** - such as credit, loans, insurance and other income protections (Bowman and van Kooy, 2016).

Methods and sample

Methods:

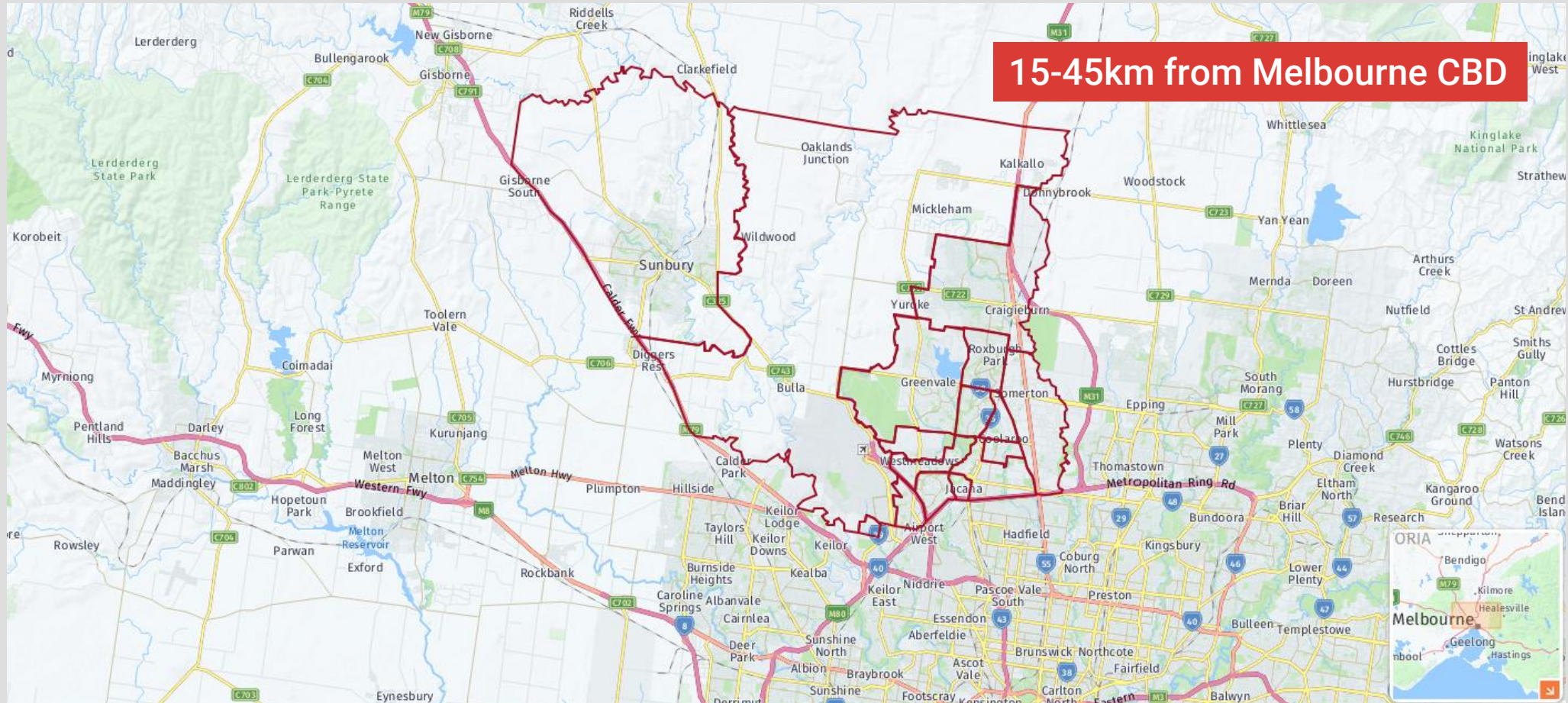
- Qualitative interviews with local government, service and business stakeholders in Hume including training providers and not-for-profit organisations
- Secondary analysis of humanitarian/refugee protection visa policies and conditions and local labour force data

Sample:

- 22 interviews to date
- 1 pending

n	Type of stakeholder
5	Settlement service provider
6	Employment service provider
2	Cultural/ ethnic community organisation
2	Other local non-government stakeholder
3(4)	Local, State and federal government representatives
4	Employers

Hume LGA overview



Hume LGA (2016 Census data)

- **Population:** 197,376
 - Australian citizen – 81%
- **Birthplace:** Overseas – 42% (Vic. 35%, Aus. 33%)
 - Top responses: Iraq (5%), India (4%), Turkey (3%), Lebanon (2%), New Zealand (2%)
- **Both parents born overseas:** 54% (Vic. 39%, Aus. 34%)
- **Language spoken at home:**
 - English only – 50%
 - Other language – 46%
 - Top responses: Arabic (8%), Turkish (7%), Chaldean (3%), Italian (3%), Assyrian (3%)

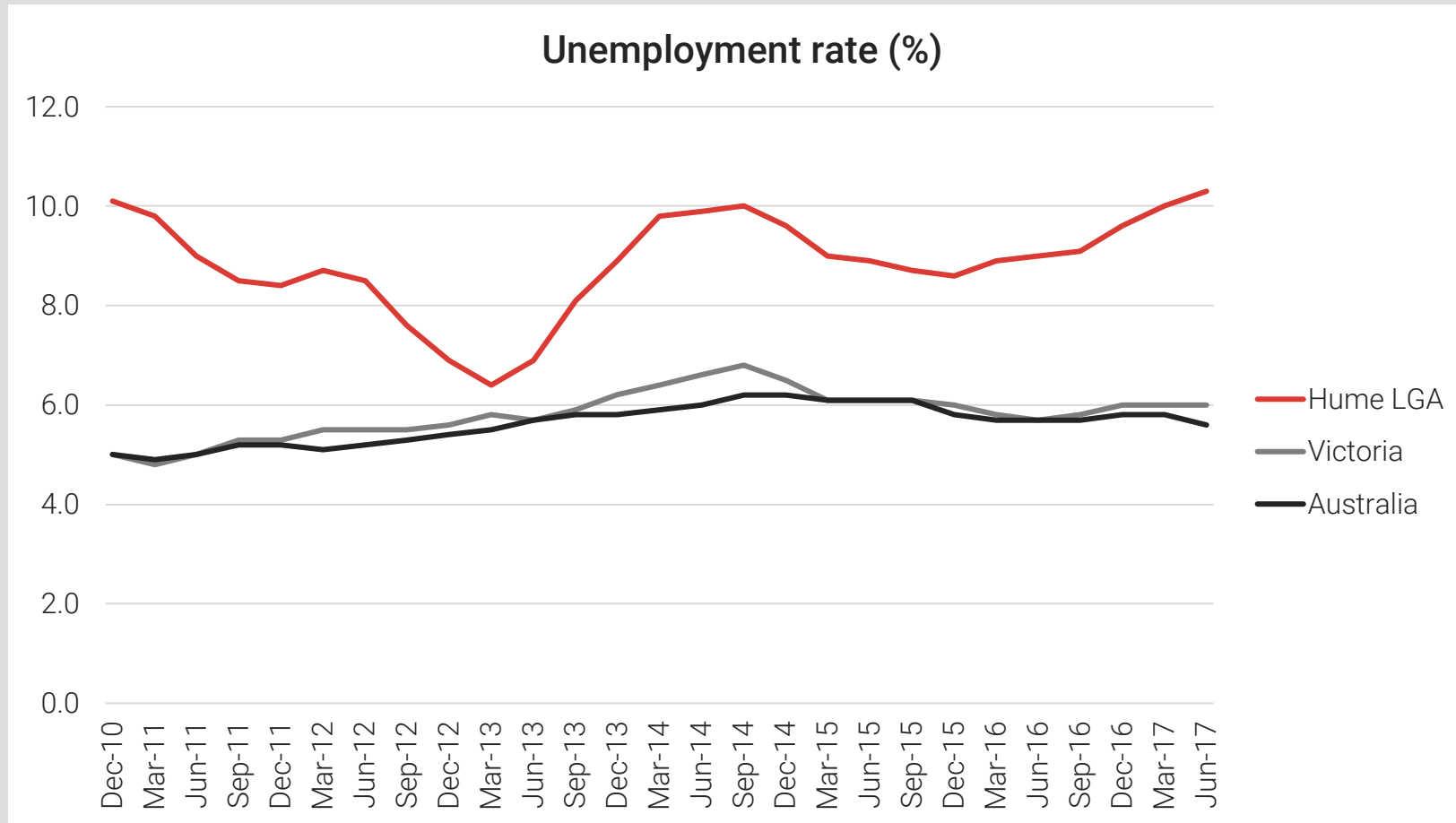
Source: [ABS 2016](#)

Settlement by Migration Stream – Hume LGA

Time period	Humanitarian	Family	Skilled	Total
Oct 09–Sept 14	3,680 (31%)	4,110	3,944	11,740
Jul 15–Jun 16	666 (26%)	810	1,114	2,590
Jul 16–Jun 17	3,121 (59%)	772	1,376	5,269

Source: [DSS Settlement Reports](#)

Overall unemployment – Hume LGA (2010-17)

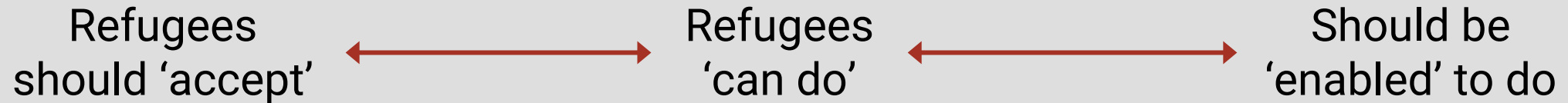


Source: [Department of Employment LGA data tables, ABS 6202.0](#)

Preliminary findings

Discourses on humanitarian migrants and work

Perspectives on jobs exist on a spectrum:



Shaped by particular understandings/representations of:

- Refugees, individually and in relation to their newly-arrived status
- How the labour market (local and broader) is perceived to operate

These perspectives reflect broader discourses (on work, participation, immigration) and sometimes challenge them in subtle ways.

'Unrealistic' expectations and ambitions?

"...you have something like this Nepalese people who are in Bhutan in a refugee camp for 15, 20 years, and they come here, and they just want a job. It doesn't matter what it is. **They just will do it, because for them the whole idea is their kids. And also, a job for them as a cleaner is perfectly fine because it's better than being in the refugee camp.**"
[Int1, pathways coordinator]

"Like some times when people come to Australia, **they may have an unrealistic expectation of what will happen.** So they'll think, 'well, I'll come here, I'll get a house, I'll get a job,' and then they'll kind of think maybe Centrelink's job is to find me a job, whereas the reality is it's not. It doesn't really work like that. You kind of have to put yourself out there and find a job, and there's a bit of a disconnect sometimes with the expectations."
[Int1, pathways coordinator]

"...some people are very ambitious and they look for high-level positions. And then **you need to tell them slowly to bring them down a bit and you say to them, "Look, if you are aiming that high, you will never have a chance because it's not possible unfortunately." Let's face it....** For example, someone who was a pilot and end up working as a taxi driver. I give them examples like that. Unfortunately that's how the system is."
[Int4, community worker]

Impacts and limited opportunities/support

“It has a psychological impact, so I've seen cases where people have come very motivated, and **within a few months, they kind of think, ah, you know, what's the point? Like there's no point in even trying.** Like adjusting their expectations to maybe taking on a job that's not in their field of study, or the job that they may consider to be, you know, demeaning or you lower class work or something like that.”

[Int2, team leader, employment services]

“Also the client always feel ... **they kind of lost their dignity in a way** because maybe back home they were wealthy or well off or like they had a really good career then when they come to Australia they have to start from zero or from scratch. **The recognition of overseas qualification it takes a long time and there is not real pathway, it doesn't really give you any...** what can I do with it after I get recognised, what do I do with it.”

[Int7, case worker]

“You know the jobs are more part-time and more casual ... **in some ways it's about the resilience of the family. If you got that resilience and that determination you might overcome that adversity.** Because there are still a whole host of jobs you could do. But if you don't have those connection points and you don't know where to go and find them then potentially the barriers are greater now.”

[Int5, employment network representative]

Stakeholder understandings of economic security

Differences related to the nature and significance of economic security

- a primary aim of service provision for some, an after-thought for others
- an objective measure for some, a matter of perception for others
- universal or particular to different groups (humanitarian vs skilled migrants)

Variations in scope:

- Financial independence through employment vs Financial security through sufficient income (not necessarily wages)
- Sufficient income to 'put food on the table' vs Saving money for 'building a future'

Variations and differences partly reflective of discourses on HM and work

Economic security as minimal, subjective and particular

“Obviously when they first come they'll need a couple of years to establish themselves. As long as they can pay their bills, put food on the table, I think that's, they'll be happy with that for now, until they can slowly build themselves up. As soon as they get past that barrier where they're at school, English, and then they can get a job just to be able to put food ... **Their main purpose is, to put food on the table for the family, to make sure they're clothed and attending school, and then everything after that will come. A lot of them said will say, we're happy we just want to settle down, we just want to get back on our feet, pretty much.** As long as they can be paying their bills, they don't want to do extravagant things they just want to be able to get by to start with and then slowly build up.”

[Int18, settlement worker]

“I think, this is also why it's so **important where people are sailing from.** If they have been in refugee camp for 20 years, or if they come from a war-torn country, **even those conditions are for us really unacceptable, for them can be quite acceptable because they think, "Okay, well it's better.** This a good place where I can raise my kids.”

[Int1, pathways coordinator]

→ ***Approach: any job will suffice for that initial covering of basic needs and be deemed 'acceptable'***

Economic security as future-oriented, objective and/or universal

“well it is **being safe and secure and having work. You know, I think it's ... we all want that.** I don't think newly arrived families are any different. They just got a whole lot of extra barriers and potential a whole lot of trauma they're overcoming.”
[Int5, training provider]

“Well ... they are secure economically here but it's to a basic level. .. So they can have their rent paid and their food provided as well, their bills paid as well, but not extra, not thinking of saving, and saving always **it's something very important for a family unit to have thinking of the future as well.** So if they are thinking to have something to buy a family home or something, so that make it very hard for them”
[Int 11, community liaison worker]

“being embedded within the community. You know, feeling as though there are networks and their building their skills and capabilities and being able to share with their local community their talents. And in return for that, you know, have job security as well within their community to assist them to be able to settle more easily”
[Int 17, employment service provider]

→ ***Approach: Matching skills and aspirations with sustainable pathways, investing in long-term outcomes***

Key points

- Provision of support to HM shaped not only by set policies and programs but also by discourses evident in the narratives of local stakeholders
- A spectrum of discourses ranging from jobs HM 'should accept' to jobs they 'can do' and those they 'should be enabled to do'
- Discourses are shaped by particular understandings of HM and of the ways in which the labour market operates
- Discourses also shape understandings of economic security as minimal, subjective and particular
- Raising questions about:
 - The governance of employment support at a local level
 - The effects of these discourses on the employment pathways and futures of HMs

Thank you.

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Appendices

Country of Birth by Year of Arrival in Australia (since 2011 Census)

	Year of arrival							Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016(c)	Not stated	
Iraq	633	376	994	571	372	426	227	10,637
India	349	367	439	545	456	345	283	8,625
Turkey	101	66	65	48	48	38	226	6,204
United Kingdom	66	62	33	19	33	12	109	3,679
Lebanon	66	74	90	71	65	40	183	3,469
New Zealand	198	194	215	187	160	81	157	3,343
Italy	4	8	12	3	11	3	136	3,213
Sri Lanka	101	195	109	104	87	74	87	3,104
Philippines	78	83	96	85	99	49	52	2,630
Pakistan	133	208	177	277	219	160	51	2,069
Vietnam	22	31	33	30	17	16	48	1,322
Malta	3	0	4	0	3	0	46	1,165
Greece	10	19	9	9	0	7	42	1,095

Source: [ABS 2016](#)

Employment distribution (%), Aug 2017

Northwest Melbourne employment region

Industry	NW	
	Melbourne	Australia
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0.5	2.6
Mining	0.2	1.9
Manufacturing	10.3	7.5
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1.1	1.1
Construction	9.6	9.1
Wholesale Trade	3.4	3.1
Retail Trade	10.7	10.2
Accommodation and Food Services	5.7	7.2
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	9.1	5.1
Information Media and Telecommunications	1.3	1.7
Financial and Insurance Services	3.9	3.5
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1.6	1.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	7.9	8.4
Administrative and Support Services	1.6	3.5
Public Administration and Safety	6.3	6.5
Education and Training	10.2	8.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	11.2	13.0
Arts and Recreation Services	2.1	1.8
Other Services	3.5	4.0

Source: [Department of Employment, Employment Region data](#)