



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Refugees in the labour market

Looking for cost-effective models of assistance

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September 2004

Acknowledgments

The researchers would like to acknowledge the contributions of the service providers and representatives of community organisations and government bodies who gave their time in interviews and discussions and provided information for this paper. Thanks are also due to the Ecumenical Migration Centre and other Brotherhood of St Laurence staff who assisted with this project, in particular Ainslie Hannan and Jill Carr. Any errors are the responsibility of the authors.

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ISBN 0 947119 96 5

Research report prepared by the Equity Research Centre Inc.

www.equityresearch.org.au

and

the Work and Economic Policy Unit, Victoria University

www.businessandlaw.vu.edu.au/wepru/default.htm

Published September 2004 by

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List of abbreviations

BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
CMYI	Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
DEWR	Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DEWRSB	Commonwealth Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business, later renamed DEWR
DIMIA	Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
EMC	Ecumenical Migration Centre
FaCS	Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services
JPET	Jobs Placement Employment and Training
JSCI	Job Seeker Classification Index
LSIA	Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Australia

Executive summary

This paper

The Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC) at the Brotherhood of St Laurence commissioned the authors to investigate employment and training assistance available to refugees. At the time the EMC had been providing labour market assistance to refugees for over a year through its independently funded Given the Chance program.

The broad aims of the research were to identify the extent to which refugees'¹ needs are being met through current government-funded labour market programs and employment services, and to consider the costs and benefits of providing appropriate labour market assistance to this group of recent arrivals through targeted programs such as Given the Chance.

Consideration of the Given the Chance program and its outcomes was included to support the EMC's thinking about future development and funding options, as well as to provide a basis for measuring the program's efficacy compared with alternative assistance available for refugees.

The research included a scan of state and Commonwealth government programs; a literature review focussing on labour market programs and the labour market experiences of recent immigrants; interviews with a small number of community providers of education, training and employment programs for refugee groups; examination of program and outcome data from the EMC's Given the Chance program; and comparison of costs and outcomes of programs providing labour market assistance to refugees.

Employment and successful resettlement

Support for effective resettlement is part of Australia's responsibility to new settlers, and for many refugees and other new arrivals employment is central to resettlement. Engagement in employment post-arrival in Australia is not only necessary for economic well-being following resettlement, but can also be crucial for establishing an identity and a place in a new society:

To have no fear, to reach for your dreams. To be able to do this is particularly important for me as a refugee. For everyone deserves to find a job, to have enough financial security, and caring so that they can expand themselves. A job is one basic building block that you need in order to get your rights.

(Serbian refugee quoted in Hannan unpub., p.101)

Between 1992 and 2002, Australia received more than 100,000 migrants as refugees or humanitarian entrants. From August 2000 to July 2003, 11,669 people with 'recognised' refugee status were resettled in Australia, with 10 to 29-year-olds making up 42 per cent of this group (DIMIA Settlement database).

Over the last decade or so settlement outcomes for refugees (at least in the short term) appear to have deteriorated. Recent studies have shown that, in regard to employment – a

¹ In this paper the term 'refugee' is used to refer to people who have been recognised as having a legitimate claim of protection as either refugees or humanitarian entrants under Australia's Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program.

key indicator of successful resettlement – refugees arriving in recent years are faring particularly poorly. For example:

- Six months after arrival, the labour force participation rate for the most recently arrived humanitarian entrants was 15 per cent compared with 41 per cent for those arriving in the early to mid 1990s.
- Eighteen months after arrival, while the participation rate of the recently arrived group had increased to 28 per cent, their unemployment rate was 43 per cent (DIMIA 2003a, p. 67).

These poor labour market outcomes have occurred despite an improvement in the labour market in more recent years with national unemployment falling to around six per cent.

More recent refugee and humanitarian arrivals are likely to have experienced greater instability and disruption in their lives before migrating to Australia. They are more likely than earlier arrivals to have spent more time in dangerous and disruptive environments before arriving in Australia, they are less likely to have worked in the year before arrival and less likely to have worked in skilled occupations in their former country. All these factors work against refugees' chances of labour market success.

Labour market barriers

Research has identified barriers to successful participation in the labour market for recent immigrants as including: language skills, education and training, labour market knowledge, access to formal and informal employment networks, poor provision of advice (including guidance and training), cultural transition issues and pre-arrival experiences.

Due to their lack of possessions and community networks and sometimes the experience of torture and trauma, refugees' needs can be much greater than those of non-refugee immigrants. Family reunion issues, discrimination in the labour market, child-care issues, lack of relevant skills or unrecognised qualifications, lack of transport and low self-confidence contribute to barriers to employment.

Refugees may have had little or no choice in migrating, had no choice in their country of resettlement and have little or no understanding of employment opportunities in the Australian context: all of these are likely to contribute to individuals' feelings of vulnerability and disempowerment in relation to employment.

The need to gain employment quickly, especially important for refugees as they attempt to achieve some security, can lead to accepting less desirable jobs or to foregoing opportunities to learn English. Such experiences – combined with a pre-migration experience of interrupted employment – can have negative impacts on labour market prospects in the long term.

For the vast majority of recent refugees, unemployment means low income, which in turn can exacerbate health issues and present a barrier to well-being in a range of other ways. The ability to secure decent housing, for example, is dependent on income and in turn, sustainable employment.

Examination of the range and target groups of employment services and programs suggests there is some recognition of the particular needs of refugees in the labour market but that

these are not consistently addressed despite Australia's responsibility to refugees in regard to settlement.

Employment assistance available to refugees

In general, settlement services funded by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) explicitly stop short of providing employment assistance apart from information about and referral to mainstream services. This approach has been reaffirmed in the recent Commonwealth Review of Settlement Services (DIMIA 2003a). Refugees who are eligible for assistance are reliant on Job Network employment services. In addition, some young people may be eligible to receive assistance through the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS)-funded Jobs Placement Education and Training (JPET) program. Refugees who are on Temporary Protection Visas are not eligible for any federally funded employment assistance services.

Under Job Network arrangements, specialist providers are contracted to provide Intensive Support Services to the more disadvantaged job seekers, including those from 'other than English-speaking countries'. In theory these services are available to refugees with special needs such as limited English language and personal characteristics such as experience of torture or trauma.

Jobs, Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) is the only federally funded form of employment assistance that specifically recognises the needs of refugees within the program's target group of 'at risk' young people. JPET provides assistance to young people up to 21 years of age who face multiple barriers to participation in education or vocational training, or to gaining and maintaining employment. JPET can provide support to young people over an extended period. In Melbourne, one JPET service specifically targets refugee young people: the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) provides the *JPET Refugee Youth Pathways Project* in the city's north.

How effective is available employment assistance?

Information regarding refugee and migrant status is often not collected in program data, making outcomes evaluation very difficult. A 2002 Job Network evaluation reports that job seekers from non-English speaking backgrounds fared similarly to other equity groups, but overall those who obtained work after participating in intensive assistance would have got jobs anyway. The evaluation also noted that the service tended to be used by the less disadvantaged job seekers.

According to a recent JPET evaluation report, employment assistance for refugees was less successful than employment assistance for other groups, such as 'offenders' and 'homeless' young people. Also of interest in the JPET report is that the most common issues for JPET clients who are refugees are specific to refugees. High also are the barriers associated with education, training, life and work skills and cultural difference.

Our interviews and other reports we examined suggest Job Network employment services for refugees are not adequate. A common concern was that information provision by employment services was inadequate, leading to refugees having a poor understanding of the division between Centrelink and Job Network services. It also meant that many refugees have a poor understanding of their rights and obligations and the appeal mechanisms available to them. The consequences of these problems are reported to include that individuals do not get effective assistance and that unwitting administrative breaches of income support payment conditions are common.

There were also concerns that many refugee and humanitarian entrants receive little or no assistance as efforts are concentrated on clients who are easier to place in employment. Another concern was that the Job Network's focus on assistance with résumé writing was redundant when clients had limited or no education and no Australian work experience to record in résumés. It has also been reported that providers were not using interpreter services for clients when necessary (DIMIA 2003a).

Elements of effective programs & models of assistance

The literature identifies the Job Club model of intensive supervised training and job hunting experience as having great potential for assisting recent immigrants entering the workforce. Work experience is also seen as an important element of employment assistance for recent arrivals, and the combination of work experience flexibly with language tuition and other training options has been suggested.

Among those we consulted, and in submissions to the DIMIA review, there were strong calls for more provision by specialist services. Benefits of specialist providers are seen to be that they understand the differences between refugee groups, their cultures, and needs; employ workers who speak a number of different languages; work closely with ethnic employers; have much closer relationships with employers generally; provide information in the appropriate form about industrial relations in Australia, income support, taxation etc; and are able to link up with services such as local settlement services.

Other common conditions for an 'ideal service' emerged in our interviews, including that the service:

- has partnerships with other agencies and/or link with other service providers (English tuition, counselling, other training) to support refugees using an 'holistic' approach
- takes enough time to understand each individual's needs (and to enable establishment of trust)
- is able to provide a long-term service
- has good relationships with employers, and offers work experience and support in the workplace.

Targeted employment assistance programs for refugees

The research identified very few targeted settlement programs and services that included provision of employment assistance. One example was the Goulburn Valley New Settlers Network, established in a Victorian regional area to improve the coordination of services to recent immigrants including employment pathway support. The CMYI JPET program for young people, the Migrant and Refugee Employment Program in Queensland and the Ecumenical Migration Centre's (EMC) Given the Chance program were the only labour market assistance programs identified as specifically targeting assistance to refugees.

Established in October 2002, Given the Chance has received funding from the Victorian Department of Human Services, the Victorian Women's Trust and the Invergowrie Foundation. The program provides assistance to refugees and asylum seekers including those who are not eligible to receive assistance through Commonwealth-funded programs and, by early 2004, had assisted 63 refugees from its inner Melbourne location.

The program aims to address the specific needs of recent refugees who are seeking employment in the context of resettling in a new country. As such, it draws heavily on the participants' own experiences as refugees. It explicitly acknowledges refugee issues and strengths arising from each individual's experience as a refugee. Goals for the program include securing enduring connections between the refugees and the world of work, providing varied experience of workplaces, developing networking skills and confidence and ensuring opportunities to put learning into practice.

Adopting a case management model, Given the Chance combines pathways planning with job skills training, work experience, mentoring and other support (e.g. counselling) as required. Support and assistance are provided for up to a year, and there is a great deal of flexibility in the program, with various elements provided in different combinations based on the case manager's assessment of each individual's needs.

Improved labour market assistance for refugees: costs and benefits

Using the Commonwealth Government's 'Productive Diversity' policy (DIMIA 2000) as a framework, significant opportunity costs associated with failure to understand, value and use the talents and skills of people from diverse backgrounds can be identified (Cope & Kalantzis 1997, Cox 2001).

Unemployment and underemployment represent both direct and indirect costs to the community through a range of actual and potential factors. These include low income and poverty, health care costs and loss of social and community integration. Potential economic benefits from increasing employment participation include reduction in the provision of income support payments and reliance on community services, increased long-term earnings and expenditure, increased business development, improved community health, and greater community capital.

The likely costs of investing in more effective employment assistance for refugees are difficult to gauge. A rough comparison of the cost effectiveness of the Given the Chance program with the Job Network intensive assistance shows positive work and/or education and training outcomes can be achieved without significantly increasing investment in services.

Our responsibility to provide refugees with appropriate employment assistance stems from our responsibility to support their effective resettlement in Australia. Yet, at present, the provision of settlement services and employment assistance is not integrated and there is little evidence of explicit recognition of the needs of refugees in the framework for employment assistance. The experience of Given the Chance suggests we can do better in regard to resettlement, enabling refugees and their families to gain independence and to establish themselves in our communities.

1. The research

Background

In 2003 the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC) at the Brotherhood of St Laurence commissioned the researchers to investigate employment and training assistance available to refugees. At the time the EMC had been providing labour market assistance to refugees for over a year through its independently funded Given the Chance program. The broad aims of the research were to identify the extent to which refugees' needs are being met through current government-funded labour market programs and employment services, and to consider the costs and benefits of providing appropriate labour market assistance to this group of recent arrivals through targeted programs such as Given the Chance.

Research aims

The particular areas of investigation were:

- employment prospects for refugees in the Australian labour market
- settlement and employment policy rationales providing the bases for labour market assistance to refugees
- the effectiveness of labour market programs and services for refugees
- refugees' access to appropriate labour market assistance
- the costs and benefits of providing targeted labour market assistance to recent refugees.

An additional focus for the research was the EMC's Given the Chance program. Consideration of the program and its outcomes was included to support the EMC's thinking about future development and funding options, as well as to provide a basis for measuring the program's efficacy compared with alternative assistance available for refugees.

Key research questions included:

- How do refugees fare in the labour market?
- What are the public policy bases for provision of labour market assistance to refugees?
- What targeted labour market programs for refugees exist and how effective are they?
- What is known about effective models of labour market assistance for refugees?
- What are the costs and benefits of providing labour market assistance for refugees?
- What do the learnings from the Given the Chance program experience and outcomes suggest for labour market assistance to refugees in the future?

Research methods

Research methods included:

- a search of State and Commonwealth government websites, policy and program documents. and follow up interviews with a small number of staff of government departments
- a literature search and review focussing on labour market experiences of recent migrants and on evaluations of labour market programs for this diverse group, with a particular focus on refugees
- interviews with representatives of community organisations and providers of education and training programs and employment assistance to refugee groups
- examination of program and outcome data from the EMC Given the Chance program
- comparison of costs and outcomes of programs providing labour market assistance to refugees.

2. Employment and successful resettlement

Introduction

Between 1992 and 2002, Australia received more than 100,000 migrants as refugees or humanitarian entrants. These new arrivals come from an increasing diversity of ethnic backgrounds and countries of origin; and during the 1990s, the regional focus in Australia's refugee and humanitarian intake shifted from South-East Asia, Central America and Europe, to Africa, the Middle East and South-West Asia.

From August 2000 to July 2003, 11,669 people with 'recognised' refugee status were resettled in Australia with 10 to 29-year-olds making up 42 per cent of this group. The largest group (20%) were from Sudan, followed by the former Yugoslavia (not further defined) (16%), Iraq (12%), Croatia (9.3%), Iran (8.5%) and Afghanistan (6.7%) (DIMIA Settlement database²).

Over this period settlement outcomes for refugees (at least in the short term) appear to have deteriorated. Recent studies, discussed in more detail below, have shown that on at least one key indicator of successful resettlement – employment – refugees arriving in recent years are faring particularly poorly.

In addition to poorer employment outcomes and lower levels of labour force participation, recent refugee and humanitarian entrant arrivals have lower incomes and more health problems than refugees who arrived in the earlier years of the 1990s. These differences have been attributed largely to more recent arrivals experiencing greater instability and disruption in their lives before migrating to Australia (see for example DIMIA 2003a). However, as discussed later, there are indications that lack of appropriate post-arrival support could also be contributing to these deteriorating outcomes.

Refugees in the Australian labour market

While recent research shows improved labour market outcomes for immigrants overall, detailed analyses of immigrant labour market experience based on data from the Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) (see DIMIA 2003a; Richardson, Miller-Lewis, Ngo & Ilsey 2002; Richardson, Robertson & Ilsey 2001) show these improved outcomes have not occurred for all groups. These studies compare the labour market experience of immigrants arriving in Australia between September 1993 and August 1995 with those of immigrants arriving between September 1999 and August 2000. They also consider the experiences of immigrants before arriving in Australia.

These studies show that people arriving in the later years under the humanitarian program are more likely to have spent more time in dangerous and disruptive environments before arriving in Australia. Recent arrivals are less likely to have worked in the year before arrival and less likely to have worked in skilled occupations in their former country (see DIMIA 2003a for an overview of findings). Six months after arrival the labour force participation rate for the most recent cohort of humanitarian entrants in the LSIA study (1999–2000 arrivals) was 15 per cent, compared with 41 percent for the earlier cohort (1993–95 arrivals). Eighteen months after arrival the participation rate of the more recent group had increased to 28 per cent; however, their unemployment rate was 43 per cent

² These data were obtained by request from DIMIA in November 2003.

(DIMIA 2003a, p. 67). This is despite a generally much improved labour market in more recent years and a national unemployment rate of around six per cent.

At the same time, recent research (Richardson 2001) on the wider group of ‘all immigrants’ reveals that their employment rates compare favourably with the Australian-born. It appears that this improved labour market profile is largely due to changes in immigration policy in recent years, including increases in migration intakes under the skilled and business visa categories and a proportionately lower intake within the humanitarian and refugee visa categories. Clear differences in employment outcomes can be found between immigrants according to English speaking ability and visa category. Migrants from English speaking backgrounds (ESB) have, in recent years, experienced lower unemployment than people who are Australian-born. In 2001 people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) had marginally higher unemployment rates than the Australian-born; and those who entered Australia with humanitarian or refugee visa status had significantly higher unemployment rates even three and a half years after arrival (Richardson 2001).

The importance of employment in refugee resettlement

The end result of settlement can therefore be seen in broad terms as the active participation of migrants in Australian society as self-reliant and valued members.
(DIMIA 2003a, p. 63)

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has defined settlement as referring to ‘the period of adjustment migrants and refugees experience before they can fully participate in Australia’s culturally diverse society’ (DIMIA 2003b). Drawing on work by Khoo and McDonald (2001), DIMIA (2003a), in its recent review of settlement services, suggests there are three key dimensions of immigrant settlement: economic participation and well-being; social participation and well-being; and physical well-being. While in reality the three dimensions are closely linked, they can be considered separately in thinking about how well immigrants are faring in the settlement process. The specific dimension of interest in this paper is economic well-being, which is taken to include measures relating to employment, occupation and labour force participation, level of income and housing (DIMIA 2003a, p. 63). At the same time the importance of employment for social participation and well-being is clear:

To have no fear, to reach for your dreams. To be able to do this is particularly important for me as a refugee. For everyone deserves to find a job, to have enough financial security, and caring so that they can expand themselves. A job is one basic building block that you need in order to get your rights.
(Serbian refugee quoted in Hannan unpub., p.101)

Research on the experience of immigrants indicates that recency of arrival, visa category and English language proficiency have a significant impact on settlement success. Along with the ability to speak English well, participation in employment is significantly correlated with positive outcomes as measured by indicators of economic and physical well-being (Khoo & McDonald 2001).

While their refugee experiences are by no means homogeneous, refugees do share the experience of being displaced from their homes and countries in what are often extremely painful circumstances. For many, engagement in employment post-arrival is not only

necessary for economic well-being but also can be crucial for establishing an identity and a place in a new society. As Hannan asserts:

For most, gaining employment provides a vehicle for rebuilding trust in society – a concrete way of moving into action and taking back control of their life again. This involves re-establishing oneself by rebuilding one’s identity, so that it is no longer associated solely with being a refugee and potentially a victim.
(Hannan 2004, p. 27)

Labour market barriers for refugees

Research has identified barriers to successful participation in the labour market for recent immigrants as including: language skills, education and training, labour market knowledge, access to formal and informal employment networks, poor provision of advice (including guidance and training), cultural transition and pre-arrival experiences. For example, work by Iredale (1994) identified a number of reasons for lower rates of recognition of skills and qualifications experienced by skilled refugees than by other skilled migrants, and these contribute to their poorer labour market outcomes.

Important in any discussion of labour market outcomes for refugees is recognition that many skilled immigrants are unable to find work in their chosen occupation. Consequently they accept underemployment³ in order to survive Watson (1998, p. 5). More generally the need to gain employment quickly, especially important for refugees as they attempt to achieve some security, can lead to accepting less desirable jobs or to forgoing opportunities to learn English. The importance of work is clear to this Job Club participant in research undertaken with refugees in the mid 1990s.

What I want in my life, when I think about my life what I hope and dream for my future is for all my family to be reunited. This can only happen if I have a permanent job, any job!
(37-year-old Iraqi refugee, quoted in Hannan unpub., p. 39)

For many who become refugees, such experiences – which can be combined with a pre-migration experience of interrupted employment – can have negative impacts on an individual’s labour market prospects in the long term.

Over many years the disadvantaged situation of refugees received relatively little consideration in the literature concerned with recent immigrants in the labour market. However, recently there has been greater acknowledgement of the needs of refugees as a group who experience considerable barriers to labour force participation. Due to their lack of possessions and community networks and sometimes their experience of torture and trauma, these needs can be much greater than those of non-refugee migrants. Family reunion issues, discrimination in the labour market, child-care issues, lack of relevant skills or unrecognised qualifications, lack of transport and low self-confidence contribute to barriers to employment (see for example Waxman 1998). As Hannan (2004) notes, refugees may have had little or no choice in migrating, had no choice in their country of resettlement and have little or no understanding of employment opportunities in the

³ Underemployment here is defined as employment which is inadequate or non-optimal, including ‘mismatch underemployment’ where an employee’s skills could be better utilised in another job or occupation and relative pay deprivation where earnings are below what would be expected given qualifications and experience)

Australian context: all of these are likely to contribute to individuals' feelings vulnerability and disempowerment in relation to employment.

New waves of refugees are commonly part of very small groups with little access to community resources and information. Such groups have been found to have a tendency to rely on their families and informal support networks for provision or advice and assistance (Waxman 1998). Thus, reliance is on others who are likely to have few spare resources. For the vast majority of recently arrived refugees, unemployment means low income, which in turn can exacerbate health issues and present a barrier to well-being in a range of other ways. The ability to secure decent housing, for example, is dependent on income and in turn, sustainable employment.

Waxman (1998, p. 763) identifies a range of characteristics of refugees that impact on the ability to access services and therefore employment. These include the nature of the pre-arrival experience, the level of English competency, the understanding of services, understanding of the refugees' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the degree to which the ethnic community is already established, the level of orientation received prior to departure and the awareness of and access to non-government organisations.

Trauma associated with an individual's particular refugee experience influences their needs. Depending on individual experiences, many people who are refugees suffer fear, education gaps and health problems. These can combine to make successful entry to the labour market and ongoing employment extremely hard. Young people who are refugees have special needs resulting from the requirement to make the critical life transition from childhood to adulthood at the same time as having to make a major cultural transition, often without parents and family networks to provide support. (See for example Coventry et al. 2002).

Both the labour market outcomes research and other reports suggest that the employment-related needs of refugees – including young people who are making the transition to adult and working life – are not being adequately addressed by available settlement and employment services. A closer look at the range and target groups of employment services and programs suggests there is some recognition of the particular needs of refugees in the labour market but that these needs are not consistently addressed.

3. Employment assistance available to refugees

Commonwealth Government assistance

While some agencies and programs funded under the Commonwealth's Settlement Services program provide some individually based employment support (e.g. some Migrant Resource Centres), this varies in scope. Indeed, in general, DIMIA-funded settlement services explicitly stop short of providing employment assistance other than information about and referral to mainstream services. This approach has been reaffirmed in the recent DIMIA Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants (DIMIA 2003a).

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) integrates refugees into mainstream employment services. Thus, the key services providing employment assistance to refugees (who are eligible) are agencies contracted to provide Job Network services. In addition, young people who are refugees may be eligible to receive assistance through the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS)-funded Jobs Placement Education and Training (JPET) program. Among federally funded employment assistance services, refugees on Temporary Protection Visas are only eligible to access the most basic services, that is, job matching services of Job Network providers.

The Job Network

As the department responsible for employment policy and for the oversight of services to assist job seekers, DEWR has considerable potential to impact on refugees' lives. The macro-system for delivery of employment support services in Australia underwent significant reform, particularly during 1997 and 1998 with the introduction of marketplace competition and privatisation. The Job Network was established as a network of private and community organisations contracted by government to help people find employment. In the first two Job Network contracts (to July 2003), job seekers were able to secure assistance at one of three levels:

- Job Matching: to help unemployed people find a job
- Job Search Training: to help eligible job seekers improve their job search techniques
- Intensive Assistance: which provides individualised assistance to those job seekers who are long-term unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged and who are receiving an income support payment from Centrelink. This assistance was provided at two levels with increased support based on client assessment (DEWRSB 1998).

From July 2003 the Active Participation Model was introduced and the three-tiered system with two levels of Intensive Assistance was replaced by two streams of assistance: Job Search Support Services and Intensive Support Services (O'Neill 2003). At this time the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI), used to determine the level of employment support required by job seekers, was also revised, but the special needs identifiers relevant to refugee status were not altered.

The JSCI is a computer-based tool, on which an individual's score determines eligibility for Job Network services. Refugee status as such is not a factor in the

JSCI; however, country of origin and English language proficiency are included. Further, a secondary process of classification is activated where job seekers are seen to experience a disadvantage requiring specialist or professional judgement. Torture and trauma is given as an example of this kind of disadvantage. As part of its oversight of the implementation of JSCI in 1998, DEWRSB (now DEWR) gave a commitment that refugee and humanitarian visa holders from certain countries specified by DIMIA would be referred to a Migrant Liaison Officer or an occupational psychologist as a matter of course (DEWRSB 1998). In theory, therefore, the JSCI classifies individuals with refugee experiences at the highest levels, thus ensuring access to the most comprehensive array of support services. Again, not all people from refugee backgrounds are eligible for this support.

The Active Participation Model includes specialist providers to deliver Intensive Support Services to the more disadvantaged job seekers including those from 'other than English speaking countries'. In theory these services are available to refugees with special needs such as limited English language and personal characteristics such as experience of torture or trauma. In Victoria in mid 2004, three agencies delivered specialist Job Network Services in 17 locations in metropolitan Melbourne (Australian Job Search 2004).

Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) programs

Jobs, Placement, Employment and Training (JPET)

JPET is the only federally funded form of employment assistance that specifically recognises the needs of refugees in that refugees are identified within the program's target group of 'at risk' young people. The purpose of JPET is to provide assistance to young people 15 to 21 years of age who face multiple barriers to participation in education or vocational training, or to gaining and maintaining employment. Program aims are broader than those of the Job Network services, and JPET can provide ongoing support to service users over an extended period. Refugees are among the five groups targeted. The others are students and young people who are not in regular employment, young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, state wards, and ex-offenders. In 2003 there were 210 JPET programs nation-wide, provided by a range of non-government agencies contracted by FaCS.

In Melbourne, one JPET service has explicitly targeted refugee young people for assistance over a number of years. The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) provides the *JPET Refugee Youth Pathways Project* in the city's north at Noble Park, Westall, Brunswick, Collingwood, Broadmeadows and the Western English Language School (Braybrook). The CMYI has also been funded by FaCS to provide *Reconnect*, an early intervention program for 12 to 18-year-olds. The program for young people who are refugees who have recently left home or are at risk of homelessness aims to improve the level of engagement of young people with family, work, education, training and community.

Personal Support Programme (PSP) and CEPT services

While not an employment program as such, the Personal Support Programme (PSP) may provide assistance to some refugees. Introduced in 2002, the PSP is targeted to those people deemed unable to participate in the labour market. DIMIA (2003) has reported that PSP providers include some specialists working with survivors of torture and trauma and that advice from FaCS indicated that some PSP providers were working with clients from refugee communities. The current extent of provision of PSP services to refugees is not

known. Some survivors of trauma and torture may be eligible for assistance from CEPT (Competitive Employment, Placement and Training) services such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence's GAPCO (Graduate and Professional Career Options) in Fitzroy. CEPT is a FaCS-funded service provided by a range of government and non-government agencies assisting people with a disability to access and maintain employment.

State government employment programs

Several Australian states have in place employment programs to assist recent immigrants. In the main these programs are aimed at meeting the needs of overseas-qualified professionals or 'skilled' migrants including refugees.

Skilled Migrant Placement Program, New South Wales

This program's focus is on the provision of employment assistance to skilled migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. The program includes a work experience placement and support and training in job search, résumé development and Australian workplace culture.

Overseas Qualified Professionals Program (OQPP), Victoria

This program for skilled migrants is part of the Victorian Government's Multicultural Employment Program. The OQPP provides employment assistance and local work experience to skilled immigrants who have their qualifications recognised but are unemployed. The Multicultural Employment Program aims to increase skilled and business migration to Victoria and to enhance the skills base of the Victorian workforce.

4. Effectiveness of the available employment assistance

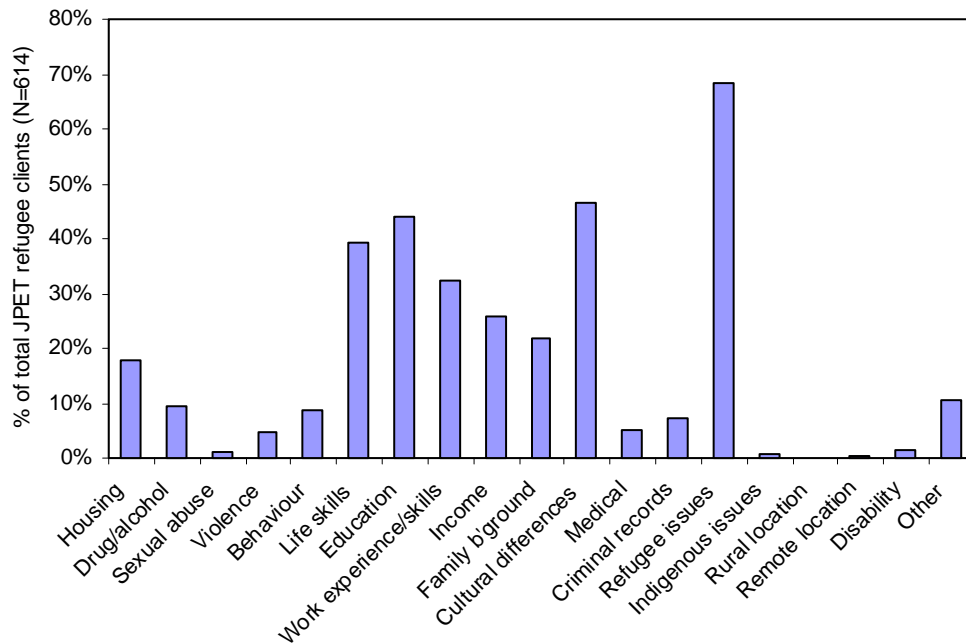
Program evaluations

While the LSIA findings discussed earlier suggest that current provision of employment assistance for refugees is inadequate, information regarding refugee and migrant status is often not collected in program data, making outcomes evaluation very difficult. Although DEWR evaluations of the Job Network report only on outcomes for the category ‘non-English speaking background’, these are informative. A 2002 Job Network evaluation, for example, reports that job seekers from non-English speaking backgrounds fared similarly to other equity groups, but overall those who obtained work after participating in intensive assistance would have found jobs anyway (DEWR 2002, p. 81).

The same evaluation also noted that the services tended to be used by the less disadvantaged job seekers. Job Network providers complained of being under pressure to achieve results, for reasons of financial viability and to boost their ‘star rating’ for contract renewal purposes. Consequently, services that may have wished to assist those most in need – and less likely to obtain an employment outcome – found themselves under pressure to focus on those job seekers who were more likely to obtain employment (DEWR 2002, p. 97).

As noted in the previous section, JPET is the other main Commonwealth-funded employment and training program which has been used by providers to assist refugees. A 2002 JPET evaluation provides information about assistance to refugee young people who access this program. According to this report, employment assistance provided by JPET was less successful than other assistance – that is, employment assistance for refugees was less successful than employment assistance for other groups, such as ‘offenders’ and ‘homeless’. It was also not particularly successful for refugees when compared to other types of assistance for this group (Butlin et al. 2002, p. 25).

Also of interest in the JPET report is that the most common barriers for JPET clients who are refugees are issues specific to refugees. Refugees comprised four per cent only of JPET clients nationally for the period 1998–2000. Chart 1 shows the key barriers for the refugee cases managed by JPET over 1999–2000. As shown special ‘refugee’ issues loom largest, with 68 per cent of all JPET refugee clients identifying these as barriers. High also are the barriers associated with education, training, life and work skills and cultural difference.

Chart 1: Barriers encountered by JPET refugee clients

Data source: Butlin et al. 2002, p. 110

Interviews and published reports

In addition to the published Job Network and JPET evaluations, we drew on a small number of interviews with service providers and others working in the employment services area and/or with recently arrived refugee groups, in order to gain a clearer picture of the issues for refugees seeking assistance to gain employment. The report of, and recent submissions to, the DIMIA Review of Settlement Services (DIMIA 2003a) also provide relevant material from community agencies and service providers.

Brief face-to-face or telephone interviews were held with EMC staff and with several other specialist service providers including a Sydney-based Job Network service, the GAPCO coordinator at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, a CMYI representative, Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE staff involved with the *Changing Cultures* education and training program for newly arrived young people, and Victorian Arabic Social Services. These providers were selected for interview because of their experience working with different refugee groups and their knowledge of employment, education and training needs of these groups. They were asked about their views of the adequacy and effectiveness of the labour market assistance currently available to refugees, and for their views on what models and program elements are required to meet the needs of this diverse group.

The employment and training providers interviewed all commented on problems encountered by refugees in accessing appropriate assistance from Job Network services. A common concern was that information provision by mainstream employment and other service providers was inadequate, leading to refugees having a poor understanding of the division between Centrelink and Job Network services. It also meant that many refugees have a poor understanding of their rights and obligations and the appeal mechanisms available to them. Providers report that the consequences of these problems include that

individuals do not get effective assistance and that unknowing administrative breaches of income support payment conditions are common.

Another common concern was that, in the main, Job Network providers do not have the appropriate experience to work with refugees. It was believed that they are not equipped to provide refugees with the particular assistance they require, including links to traineeships and other education and training options.

Additional concerns raised in consultations and interviews included that:

- the Job Network funding model allocates resources and has key performance indicators that are not appropriate to meeting the different needs of job seekers such as refugees
- there is no workplace support for people once they are placed in employment, but this is needed
- providers are often unable to establish the necessary relationship of trust with their refugee clients
- providers are unable to provide the necessary assistance required by people who have experienced disrupted education and employment.

In commentary to the recent DIMIA review of settlement services, three key concerns relevant to refugees were expressed in relation to the performance of the Job Network. The first of these was the extent to which providers assist clients who may require more time and greater investment to secure employment outcomes. DIMIA (2003) reports that community representatives argue many migrants and humanitarian entrants are ultimately 'parked' in the system, with the term 'parking' referring to providers actually supplying little or no assistance to disadvantaged job seekers while concentrating their efforts on clients who are easier to place in employment.

The other key areas of concerns were related to work experience, language and education. The second was that the Job Network's focus on assistance with resume writing was redundant when clients had limited or no education and no Australian work experience to record in resumes. The third was that providers were not using interpreter services for clients when necessary (DIMIA 2003a, p. 119).

The review commentaries also highlighted the difficulties that some 'migrant and humanitarian entrant' young people face in accessing appropriate assistance from services including settlement, youth, employment and training. DIMIA reports youth advocates as stating that the needs of the newly arrived young migrant and humanitarian entrants are not being met adequately by either DIMIA-funded or other agency programs. This was reported as being due both to the particular barriers to participation these young people face and to the significant gaps in current service provision. The barriers to participation highlighted are:

- gaps between settlement services and youth specific programs and youth workers
- lack of service information to young people, including information in relevant languages

- lack of data collection by agencies to assess migrant and humanitarian entrant youth take-up rates of services
- lack of cultural knowledge on the part of youth workers and other mainstream services about newly arrived young people and how to address their needs
- lack of transitional programs in education and employment (DIMIA 2003a, p. 137).

Again, in relation to employment assistance, DIMIA reports:

The strongest messages from public consultations and submissions have been that new arrivals face considerable difficulty in obtaining employment, are dissatisfied with the assistance provided by current employment services, and see a need for more specialist employment services and more opportunities to gain work experience in the Australian labour market.

(DIMIA 2003a, p.117)

5. Elements of effective programs and models of assistance

The call, expressed during the DIMIA review, for more specialised services to meet the needs of refugees, was echoed in the interviews conducted for this research. The small number of providers we interviewed saw specialist providers as differing from non-specialist providers in a number of ways. For example they:

- understand the differences of refugee groups, their cultures, and needs
- employ workers who speak different languages
- work closely with ethnic employers
- have much closer relationships with employers generally
- provide information in the appropriate form about industrial relations in Australia, income support, taxation, etc.
- link up with other services such as local settlement services.

In recent DEWR research with Job Network members, specialist providers identified employing staff who were aware of cultural sensitivities and developing links with local business people from NES backgrounds as ‘elements of best practice’ in Intensive Assistance. At the same time the DEWR report noted that, in 2000–01, only 13 per cent of job seekers from a NES background who commenced Intensive Assistance did so with a specialist provider (DEWR 2003, p. 119).

Some common conditions for an ‘ideal service’ emerged in our interviews with employment and training providers. Notably the service should:

- support refugees using an ‘holistic’ approach, including through partnerships and/or links with other service providers and agencies (for English tuition, counselling, other training etc.)
- take enough time to understand each individual’s needs (and to enable establishment of trust)
- be able to provide a long-term service
- have good relationships with employers, offer work experience and support in the workplace.

Coventry and colleagues suggest that central to good practice for working with young refugees in particular are a sound cultural understanding of refugees’ issues and a focus on individuals in their socio-economic, cultural and family contexts. In addition, good practice requires:

- a holistic approach to identifying and responding to need
- closely supported and managed referrals as part of an integrated service system
- flexible and integrated service delivery
- active maintenance of cultural appropriateness

- involvement of family members and the development of broad community networks
- commitment by front-line staff to developing their cultural knowledge and skill.
(Coventry et. al. 2002, p. 93)

Labour market program research from more than a decade ago identified the Job Club model of intensive supervised training and job hunting experience (first established in the mid 1980s) as having great potential for assisting migrants entering the workforce (Jones & McAllister 1991, p. 127). This model was successfully adapted and piloted with recent migrants in the mid 1990s (Hannan 1996).

In other literature, work experience is seen as an important element of employment assistance for recent arrivals. In a review of labour market programs research, Petersen (1999) noted that the lack of incentive for Job Network members to provide this local experience through wage subsidies was a problem for job seekers from NES backgrounds who are recent arrivals in Australia. DIMIA has also suggested that an appropriate response for refugee job seekers is to combine work experience flexibly with other language tuition and training options (2003a, p. 123).

6. Targeted employment assistance programs for refugees

At various times small-scale targeted settlement programs and assistance for refugees have been provided in state capital cities and in regional centres by local government and non-government community and ethno-specific organisations, with government and other funding. However, this research identified very few services providing employment assistance. One exception was the Goulburn Valley New Settlers Network, made up of representatives from local government, Centrelink, health services and the Shepparton Ethnic Communities Council to improve the coordination of services to recent immigrants including employment pathway support (CMYI 2001).

Other than the CMYI programs for young people (previously outlined), the only labour market assistance programs identified which specifically target assistance to refugees were the Migrant and Refugee Employment Program in Queensland and the Ecumenical Migration Centre's own Given the Chance program.

The Migrant and Refugee Employment Program, run by the Multicultural Development Association and funded by the Queensland Government, offers specialist employment service to migrant and refugee job seekers. It provides intensive individual support for job search activities, living and training skills, job placement services and post-placement support. Refugees on Temporary Protection Visas are able to access this program.

Through Given the Chance, the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC) provides assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, including those who are not eligible to receive assistance through the Commonwealth-funded programs. Established in October 2002, Given the Chance operates from the EMC's offices in Fitzroy and has received funding from the Victorian Department of Human Services, the Victorian Women's Trust and the Invergowrie Foundation. By early 2004 the program had provided assistance to 63 refugees. The program is described in more detail below.

Given the Chance

The Given the Chance program was developed by EMC staff who drew on their experience and on research and consultations, including with refugees. These highlighted the importance of networks, and exposure to the workplace environment and different workplace cultures.

The goals for the program have been identified as:

- to secure connections which would endure after the end of the course, between the refugees and the real world of work
- to get the refugees into workplaces as much as possible, and into a variety of workplaces, so they could witness the range of cultures and options
- to teach the refugees the art of networking – of introducing themselves to strangers, chatting about their skills and presenting in public
- to provide opportunities to apply as soon as possible what was taught, and then the opportunity to reflect on the practice, improve and have another go.
(Carr 2004, p. 36)

Given the Chance combines jobs skills training, work experience, mentoring and other support (e.g. counselling, tutoring) as required, with support and assistance provided for up to a year after initial training and work experience. Throughout the program, case management and referral services are provided by the program coordinator and through each individual's relationship with a volunteer mentor. There is a great deal of flexibility in the program, with various elements provided in different combinations based on the case manager's assessment of each individual's needs. Staff stress the importance of the program having been designed especially for refugees, and, as a result of this, based on acknowledgement of refugee issues and strengths arising from experiences as refugees.

The program's components are:

- ***Individual pathways planning, case management and referral:*** In addition to career planning, the program coordinator provides ongoing support and case management assistance for up to one year. Participants are referred as necessary to counselling and other services, many of which are provided by the EMC.
- ***Training:*** 'Employment Skills for Refugees', provided over three days (15 hours) a week for 12 weeks. A specific training course was designed to meet the needs of the target group, with, for example, one focus on identifying the skills developed through individuals' experience as refugees. Later, existing modules from the accredited short course 'Workforce re-entry skills' were customised after reviewing the first pilot.
- ***Work experience:*** A work experience placement in a work area relevant to the participant's skills and aspirations is undertaken for two days a week for 12 weeks. This operates concurrently with the training component to maximise effectiveness of training regarding Australian workplace cultures and practices. The program coordinator provides pre- and post-placement briefings.
- ***Mentoring:*** Participants are matched with a volunteer mentor. Matches are based on the skills and employment goals of the participant. Mentoring is regarded as an essential component of the program, providing the refugees with access to relevant industry networks. Mentoring is provided for up to a year and mentors are also provided with ongoing training and support over this time.

7. Improved labour market assistance for refugees: costs and benefits

The economics of migration

We were unable to identify research focussing on the economics of investment in refugee settlement specifically. However, the assessment of the contribution of migrants to economic growth has been the subject of substantial research since the post-war immigration program (Collins 1991). This research has been fuelled by continued controversy that has centred primarily on the issue of employment and whether or not migrants occupy jobs that should be the preserve of Australian-born citizens. An important landmark in this debate was a government-sponsored report, *The economic effects of immigration in Australia* (1985), which concluded that immigration had a positive impact on the economy and that migrants did not take jobs from the Australian-born but in fact contributed to the expansion of the economy and employment generation (Norman & Meikle 1985). This report has contributed significantly to a general consensus that the benefits are positive, in economic terms, in the Australian context (Collins 1991), even though the extent or degree of that benefit continues to be argued (Thomas 1996).

Collins (1991, p. 102) identifies that the main approaches to migration research employed through the human capital perspective as being concerned with econometric modelling or cost-benefit analysis, both of which are fraught with complexity and limitations. Econometric models are reliant on demonstrating relationships between aspects of economic development and migration trends – an approach that is only as good as the models that are used for measurement, can only identify relationships but not causality, and requires reference to historical, social and cultural context. Cost-benefit analysis is concerned with placing a monetary value on all aspects of the migration experience as an economic activity. Future costs and returns are predicted and calculated to identify the ‘rate of return’ of a given migration scenario. As noted by Collins, the clear problem with this approach is, firstly, that there are many aspects of migration that are impossible to quantify numerically – such as diversity in cultural life.

Despite such problems, migration benefits have continued to be analysed with a focus on such measures as un/employment rates, labour market supply and demand, economic growth, productivity and expansion, consumer earnings and spending (Collins 1991). Recent research has been concerned with migration and its impact on various labour market issues including addressing skill shortages, alleviating the costs of training and addressing future labour market shortages due to an ageing workforce (Richardson 2002). The Victorian Government is due to report from a recent inquiry into the impact of new migrants to Victoria including ‘their contribution to the economy’ (Victorian Government 2003).

The costs of unemployment

The current provision of labour market assistance to recent refugees is inadequate. While social justice demands alternative approaches be taken, a narrower economic perspective also suggests there is a need to improve programs and services.

One starting point for thinking about the costs and benefits of labour market assistance for refugees is the Commonwealth Government’s ‘Productive Diversity’ policy (DIMIA

2000). Using this as a framework, there are significant opportunity costs associated with failure to understand, value and use the talents and skills of people from diverse backgrounds (Cope & Kalantzis 1997; Cox 2001). Unemployment or underemployment of refugees represents both direct and indirect costs to the community through a range of actual and potential factors.

As noted in the recent review of settlement services:

‘... the human resources of refugee and humanitarian entrants and their communities generally are under-utilised. Failure to make the most of the skills and experience that people bring with them is not only a missed opportunity for developing individuals’ and communities’ self worth ... but may contribute to the opposite effect of continuing the undermining of people’s capacity to act for themselves and others and therefore successful re-settlement outcomes.
(DIMIA 2003a, p. 14)

As discussed earlier, the evidence suggests that refugees are currently underemployed over time due to a range of labour market barriers. This unemployment or underemployment represents both direct and indirect costs to the community through a range of actual and potential factors. Table 1 summarise these costs and also identifies some of the potential economic benefits to be gained from increasing employment participation through provision of effective employment assistance:

Table 1: Some costs and benefits associated with unemployment & employment

<i>Costs of unemployment</i>	<i>Benefits of employment participation</i>
Low income and poverty with reliance on government income support payments	Reduction in the dependency ratio
Health care costs	Reduction in income support payments and reliance on community services
Loss of social and community integration	Long-term earnings and expenditure Business development Increased potential to reduce skills gaps Improved community health Greater community capital

- **Low income and poverty:** These are the obvious immediate and ongoing costs of unemployment, with severe impacts on individuals and families.
- **Health costs:** The link between low income and poor health is well-established and people who experience long-term unemployment are much more likely to experience poor physical and mental health (Allotey & Reidpath 2002, Brough et al. 2003).
- **Loss of social and community integration:** While difficult to quantify in monetary terms, it is well recognised that employment is the key to successful integration, the chance to learn English, the ability to support oneself and rebuild a future as well as a chance to regain self-esteem and confidence (Waxman, 1998).

Potential benefits of increased employment participation include:

- ***Reduction in the dependency ratio:*** In the context of an ageing workforce, there are considerable benefits in increasing the size of the working age population (Richardson, 2002).
- ***Reduction in income support payments and reliance on community services.***
- ***Long-term earnings and expenditure:*** Over the long term, earnings of refugees are likely to equal that of the Australian-born residents.
- ***Business development:*** The relationship between migrant cultures and entrepreneurial behaviour has been explored and there are some links between the migrant experience and the development of culturally specific business development (Collins, 1995). The support of refugees in employment and training provides opportunities for such entrepreneurial developments.
- ***Increased potential to address identified skills gaps:*** A common experience is that the skills of refugees are mismatched or their qualifications are unrecognised. Specialised support for refugees may provide the impetus to direct refugees into areas of need within the Australian labour market, to the mutual benefit of individual refugees and industry.
- ***Community health:*** In Canada, Kwan (2002) argues that the integration of refugees into employment has a direct benefit to Canadian community services since refugees having a younger age profile than the home population. In turn, with refugees in employment, there is a net transfer of funds to the community through the lower use of community health services.
- ***Community capital:*** Migration studies have demonstrated the contribution of migrants to the community infrastructure through business development, community facilities and diversity in cultural life. For example, Lalich (2003) identifies the considerable resources invested by ethnic communities in Sydney in building places of worship, social and sport clubs, child-care facilities, schools, welfare centres and aged care facilities. Refugees are currently constrained, through unemployment, from contributing fully to community life, to the loss of the whole community.

Outcomes and costs of labour market assistance

The likely costs of investing in more effective employment assistance for refugees are difficult to gauge as the experiences and needs of individuals will vary. However, the Given the Chance program provides one basis for considering the costs of a form of employment assistance for refugees that addresses many of the inadequacies of the non-targeted services of the Job Network.

In terms of outcomes for participants Given the Chance compares favourably with Job Network Intensive Assistance. At the end of its first three-month period of operation, Given the Chance showed positive work and/or education and training outcomes for 11 of the 19 participants in the pilot program's initial intake. Immediately prior to entering the program 13 of the participants were unemployed, the majority of them for at least a year. Sixteen of the 19 were in receipt of income support payments: seven received Newstart payment, two Youth Allowance, another two Parenting Payment and two Sickness Benefit and three accessed the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme. Three months after commencing the program (i.e. immediately after completing 12 weeks' concurrent training and work

experience), 11 (58%) of the participants were in education, training or paid work and a further two were undertaking work experience. At six months, 13 (68%) of the 19 were in paid employment, education or training and at 12 months 14 (73%) were in education, training or paid work.

The DEWR figures for Job Network Intensive Assistance clients show 54% of clients are in positive education, training and employment outcomes three months after leaving assistance (after receiving up to 12 months assistance), with the results for clients who attract funding level B (the most disadvantaged) showing just fewer than 42% positive outcomes (DEWR 2003, table 1.2, p. 4).

If we compare the costs of assistance provided to refugees through Job Network Intensive Assistance with those for Given the Chance, the latter appears to be far more cost-effective. Table 2 provides such a comparison. It also includes JPET. In addition, costs are compared for *successful outcomes* from Given the Chance and Job Network Intensive Assistance three months after leaving the programs.

Table 2: Comparison of some labour market assistance costs and outcomes

	Given the Chance¹	JPET²	Job Network intensive assistance³
	Fixed and variable input costs allocated to participants	Individual per participant total cost to DFACS	Individual per participant costs to DEWR
<i>Total annual fixed and variable costs of program (\$)</i>	67,000.00	n.a.	n.a.
<i>Maximum number of participants per annum given fixed costs</i>	60	n.a.	n.a.
<i>Average total cost per participant (\$ per participant)</i>	1,116.67	1,500.00	1,400.00
<i>Average cost per successful participant (Job Network)</i>	n.a.	n.a.	1,500.00
<i>Average total cost per actual participant (\$ per participant)</i>	1,116.67	1,500.00	2,900.00
<i>Proportion of outcomes which are successful</i>			
<i>At 13 weeks (%)</i>	58%	n.a.	42%
<i>At 26 weeks (%)</i>	68%	n.a.	n.a.
<i>At 52 weeks (%)</i>	73%	n.a.	n.a.
<i>Average cost per successful actual participant</i>			
<i>At 13 weeks (\$ per participant)</i>	1,925.00	n.a.	2,900.00
<i>At 26 weeks (\$ per participant)</i>	1,642.00	n.a.	2,900.00
<i>At 52 weeks (\$ per participant)</i>	1,530.00	n.a.	2,900.00

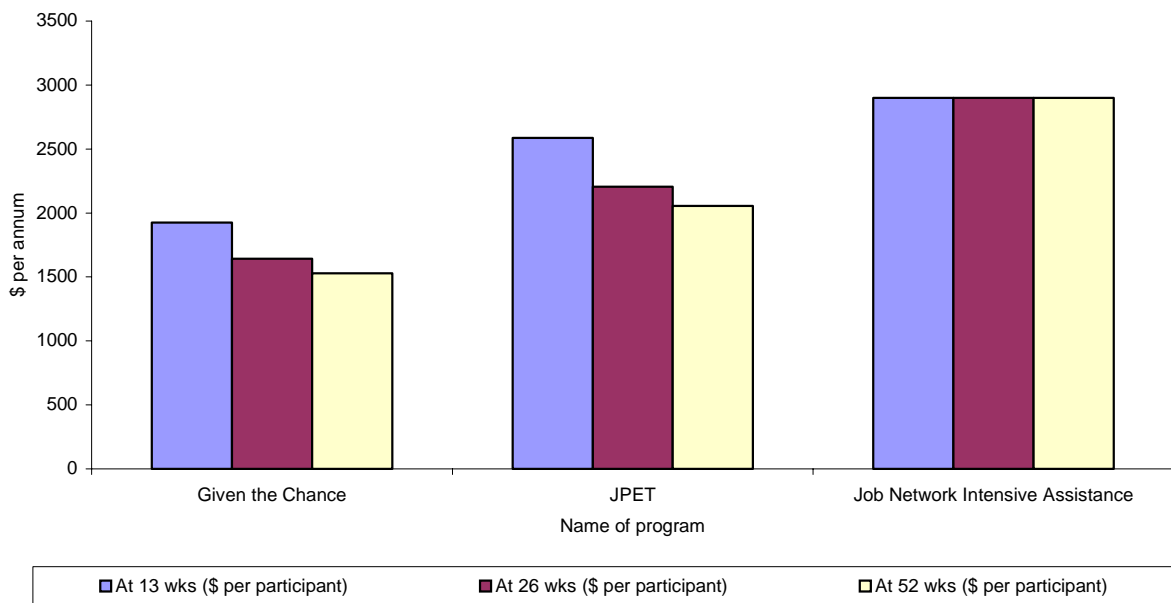
1. The average cost per participant is derived from actual program costs over 2001–03.

2. Costs assume payments for 'highly disadvantaged' clients and are based on current JPET contract costs.

3. Based on outcomes reported in DEWR (2003).

The same comparisons are presented in graphic form in Chart 2 below. As we do not have detailed JPET outcomes data, we have assumed JPET is as successful as Given the Chance.

Chart 2: Comparison of some labour market assistance costs per successful outcome, at different stages



1. In the absence of detailed JPET outcomes data, the program is assumed to have outcomes comparable with Given the Chance.

This very simple comparison does not consider the additional value of the voluntary assistance secured by the Given the Chance program via the significant involvement of community mentors and the work placements. While this in-kind support provided to the program is an investment by community members and by employers, mentor participation and work placements also represent significant benefits in terms of potential to build social capital.

Clearly, positive work and/or education and training outcomes for refugees can be achieved without significantly increasing investment in services.

Our responsibility to provide refugees with appropriate employment assistance stems from our responsibility to support their effective resettlement in Australia. Yet, at present, the provision of settlement services and employment assistance is not integrated and there is little evidence of explicit recognition of the needs of refugees in the framework for employment assistance. The experience of Given the Chance suggests we can do better in regard to resettlement, enabling refugees and their families to gain independence and to establish themselves in our communities.

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