



Walk With Me...

Developing Employment Pathways for
Refugees with a Disability

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Working for an Australia free of poverty

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List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADEC	Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities
ASRC	Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
DOES	Disability Open Employment Service
EMC	Ecumenical Migration Centre
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
FLN	Fitzroy Learning Network
GAPCO	Graduate and Professional Career Options program
HDI	Human Development Index
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
n.d.	No date
NEDA	National Ethnic Disability Alliance
NMIT	Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
PPV	Permanent Protection Visa
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Executive Summary

Australia is recognised as having one of the most multicultural populations in the world. Since 1945, Australia has received more than 6 million people as immigrants. In the last decade, research has concluded that over all migrant integration into Australia has been a success. However, refugees are the exception.

Successful resettlement consists of economic, social and physical wellbeing (Department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs [DIMIA], 2003) and on each of these dimensions refugees fare poorly. Employment outcomes, labour market participation levels, income, and physical and mental health of recently arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants are worse than other migrants and earlier waves of refugees (MacDonald, Kyle, Doughney, & Pyke, 2004). Not only are recently arrived refugees more likely to have experienced instability and trauma prior to their arrival, but experiences post arrival are contributing to diminished settlement success.

Although the three elements of settlement success are inter-related, employment is particularly important. Employment enhances individual empowerment and control over economic wellbeing, facilitates social connection and integration and leads to improved mental and physical health. DIMIA (2005) data show that even 18 months after arrival, only 32% of people entering Australia on humanitarian visas are employed compared to 80% of those arriving in the business skills stream. This research examines this problem by evaluating the Brotherhood of St Laurence's (BSL) Graduate and Professional Career Options (GAPCO) program, a specialist employment service for people with a disability.

GAPCO is a Disability Open Employment Service (DOES) and provides services for people with physical, intellectual or sensory impairments, neurological or psychiatric disability, acquired brain injuries, or refugees experiencing anxiety and depression resulting from torture or trauma (GAPCO Client Handbook no date [n.d.]). Two-thirds of GAPCO's clients are refugees arriving in Australia on humanitarian visas or asylum seekers living on temporary protection visas (TPV) or bridging visas.

This research examines refugee experiences in the labour market, the contextual factors shaping employment outcomes, and the key elements of good practice for DOES. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 service providers and 20 GAPCO service users and form the main data of this research. A quantitative analysis of all GAPCO service users between January 2002 and June 2005, and a brief survey completed by the 20 GAPCO service users interviewed, supplement the qualitative data. Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee approved the research as did the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Ethics Committee. All names used in this report are pseudonyms to protect the identity of research participants.

In addition to the more generic vocational and non-vocation employment barriers faced by other job seekers, refugees experience specific issues which reduce their employability. Traumatic and disruptive experiences in home countries, in refugee camps, on journeys to Australia and circumstances post arrival, including the impact of the Australian government's asylum seeker policy, exacerbate settlement

difficulties. Time spent in detention, the denial of asylum seekers' right to basic settlement services including health care, housing, English language and other Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) services delays the process of settlement and heightens feelings of instability and powerlessness in an already vulnerable population. This systematic exclusion of asylum seekers, 83% of whom are later deemed to be 'genuine refugees' (DIMIA, 2006),¹ from settlement services because of their mode of arrival contravenes Australia's commitment to the 1951 Convention relating to the protection of refugees.

The poor human capital resources of refugees, as reflected in limited English language, social and communication skills, lack of local experience, limited and/or non-transferable skills, poor knowledge of the labour market and the process of job searching, diminishes their competitiveness in the labour market. As a consequence refugees are likely to work in blue-collar occupations and manufacturing industries, often in insecure, part-time, casual semi-skilled and unskilled positions. Socially, this type of employment can be associated with a drop in status which impacts on self confidence and wellbeing. For those out of the labour market altogether, unemployment is accompanied by changed family roles, distress, poverty and a reduced ability to fulfil obligations to financially support family living overseas.

Employment success is not just about an employees' capacity to perform work tasks proficiently. Research has shown that gaining admission to the culture of a work setting and becoming a member of the social group is just as important to success (Hagner & Dileo, 1993). Refugees need to be taught the social and cultural skills to enable them to fit into the social world of the workplace. Employers are reluctant to employ refugees without their having had previous work experience because they are concerned about their ability to work as team members. Hiring decisions are frequently based on age, gender and cultural stereotypes, which add additional layers of disadvantage when refugees try to enter the labour market.

Assessment, development of career pathways and response to priority non-employment and employment related issues will only be appropriate and effective if they build upon ongoing supportive relationships with clients, and are based on trust, respect and understanding. Sustainable interventions must engage with the dreams and aspirations of refugees and assist them to achieve their career goals. These are the keys to good practice identified by service providers and refugees.

The challenge then is to provide policy and systemic support which enables service providers to work with refugees in an empowering and strength-based approach that simultaneously facilitates skill development and feelings of control, safety and security. These feelings underpin refugees' capacity to acquire the skills, knowledge, networks and confidence that lead to employment and settlement success downstream. Building bridges and ongoing supportive relationships with community members through initiatives such as mentoring has been shown to enhance these

¹ In the year 2004-2005, 13,178 visas were granted under the Humanitarian Program. Some 12096 visa were granted to people overseas and 1082 visas were granted to people in Australia. Of the later, 895 were initial protection visas. A total of 170 visas were granted under Ministerial discretion, pursuant to Section 417 of the Migration Act. A further 17 temporary humanitarian concern visas were also granted (DIMIA, 2006).

feelings and hasten the improvement of refugees' economic, social and physical wellbeing. Furthermore, case managers need to be aware of the structure of labour markets and to adopt specific strategies to ensure refugees do not become trapped in insecure, semi skilled and unskilled positions but are assisted to advance into professional employment.

The structure of service provision is making it increasingly challenging to provide culturally appropriate and effective employment services. Service providers were concerned about a number of factors impacting on service quality: large workloads; limited time; inadequate funding; and the limited knowledge mainstream services have of refugee settlement issues. These service level issues are particularly potent when dealing with clients such as refugees who face multiple and complex barriers to employment which require greater time to respond to appropriately and effectively.

DOES agencies are funded to assist job seekers with a disability to obtain and retain paid mainstream employment and while the complexity of working with various client types is factored into the funding model it cannot recognise the comprehensive needs of many clients and the additional time investment required by service providers. One consequence of this may be that the amount of unfunded time invested into clients shifts the focus from career pathway development and 'quality jobs' to achieving the minimal outcome requirements as defined by the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), and now by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). A pathways approach that addresses not only DEWR funded job placement requirements but recognises the concomitant impact of 'refugee experience' on a client's ability to integrate socially, culturally and economically would be appropriate. Additionally, diversifying funding sources, partnerships and networking would enable GAPCO to reduce their unfunded time and provide more integrated services. These systemic issues and strategies are relevant to all DOES providers.

In its formative years, GAPCO's aim was to cater to the needs of people with a disability who were graduates and/or professionally qualified. However, GAPCO recognised that they were geographically strategically well placed to meet the vocational needs of other socially and economically marginalised groups of jobseekers, in particular refugees, and GAPCO expanded their service eligibility criteria. Since 2002, the majority of clients have not been graduates and professionals. Employment outcomes for GAPCO's clients reflect their current Australian recognised qualifications and work experience and employment is largely in entry level jobs. GAPCO is currently revising their mission statement and corporate objectives to include vocational support for graduates, professionals, semi-skilled and unskilled jobseekers with a disability, with a special commitment to assisting refugees and asylum seekers who have suffered torture and trauma.

DOES agencies are increasingly being oriented around the key performance indicators of efficiency, quality and effectiveness with the restructuring of DOES from FaCS to DEWR. Whilst job seekers and service providers want to achieve successful employment placements, time, flexible service provision and the development of career pathways are critical. The impact of the DOES restructure on these key aspects of service provision needs to be evaluated throughout the transition of DOES to the DEWR management system. Refugees are already in a disadvantaged position in the

labour market and the DOES restructure must be monitored to ensure that employment outcomes for refugees improve. To achieve this goal this research has three key recommendations in regard to policy, cultural competence and strategic linkages:

- An enabling policy framework would ensure adequate funding and ready access to appropriate settlement and other services including disability open and other employment services. Australia's asylum seeker policy must be changed. Refugee settlement and employment policy must support a strengths-based approach to enhance refugees' employability and career development by building their human capital, social, physical and mental wellbeing including feelings of empowerment, safety and control over their daily lives.
- Enhanced cultural competence would enable cultural sensitivity and awareness of differences to be translated into greater capacity to adequately understand and respond to priority issues identified by refugees. Assessments need to gain relevant employment and non-employment information as well as cultural insights from listening to clients. Cultural competency needs to be strengthened across the service system including mainstream social welfare services, employers and community members. Greater understanding of clients would strengthen service responsiveness, client ownership, maximise client choice and career development.
- Strengthened linkages between employers, employees, services and the community would ensure that employment assistance is tailored to the specific needs and career aspirations of individuals. Greater networks would expand opportunities for refugees to move into a range of employment, volunteer and training options whilst simultaneously enhancing understanding and the capacity of workplaces, services and the community more generally, to respond appropriately to diversity management and career development issues.

1. Introduction: Research background

Australia is recognised as having one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world (Commonwealth of Australia 2003, 2004; Jupp, 2001; Omeri & Atkins, 2002; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). Since 1945 almost 6 million people from around the world have arrived in Australia as immigrants (Department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs [DIMIA], 2005). The Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] (2001a) data show that 30% of Australians identified as having a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) ancestry. Furthermore, two and a half million Australians were born in countries where English is not the primary language and 15% of the population speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2001a). Taking second generation immigrants into account means that one in every three Australians is either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant (McAllister, 1995).

Employment is a key component of successful resettlement (DIMIA, 2003; Khoo & McDonald, 2001; Kyle, MacDonald, Doughney, & Pyke, 2004; Richardson, Robertson, & Ilsley, 2001), but as McAllister (1995) noted, the act of migration itself involves major economic dislocation, changes in social relationships and culture. The disadvantage associated with migration and resettlement varies within immigrant groups and with visa type with refugees being the exception to the successful settlement and integration of migrants in Australia (Leach & Mansouri, 2004). The task of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a disability employment service, the Graduate and Professional Career Options program (hereon GAPCO), in placing refugees living in metropolitan Melbourne into employment.

GAPCO is a specialist employment service within the BSL that assists people with a disability into paid employment. Disability criteria include people with physical, intellectual or sensory impairments, neurological or psychiatric disability, acquired brain injuries or refugees experiencing anxiety and depression resulting from torture or trauma (GAPCO Client Handbook, n.d.). GAPCO provides an individualised case-based approach including preparation of resumes, job matching, post-placement support and workplace modification. Two-thirds of GAPCO's clients are refugees arriving in Australia on humanitarian visas or asylum seekers applying for refugee status and living on temporary protection visas (TPV). Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities (ADEC) states that even defining a disability for people who are survivors of trauma and torture is a particularly sensitive issue because of different cultural experiences and understandings of disability that are commonly very negative and not openly discussed (ADEC, 2005).

Literature on the labour market position of refugees suggests that they encounter specific issues in addition to the more generic barriers faced by people with a disability and migrants, such as limited education, skills and training, low labour market knowledge and poor provision of advice (Kyle et al., 2004; Leach & Mansouri, 2004; Waxman, 2001). Not only are refugees more likely to have experienced greater instability and disruption prior to migrating to Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), post-arrival experiences exacerbate ongoing feelings of instability, powerlessness, vulnerability and trauma (Hosking, 1990; Kyle et al.; Langer, 1990; Leach & Mansouri; Mansouri, 2002; Steel & Silove, 2001;

Sultan & O'Sullivan, 2001). Refugees have a qualitatively different settlement experience from other migrant groups and face the greatest risk of social exclusion (Leach & Mansouri). The difficulties refugees encounter when seeking employment, and accessing services to enhance their employability, such as English language classes and tertiary education and training, not only cause economic hardship and poverty but can result in social isolation and mental health problems (Leach & Mansouri). As DIMIA (2003) noted, social, economic and physical wellbeing are inter-related components of successful settlement and policy must be directed toward each to achieve the best possible outcomes. The lack of comprehensive and specific refugee settlement policy has undoubtedly contributed to poor settlement outcomes (Refugee Resettlement Working Group, 1994). The findings in this research support Waxman's (1998) view that a first step toward meeting refugees' specific settlement needs would be the creation of a refugee settlement policy administered by federal and all state government departments.

Research objectives

The aim of this research was to:

- enhance understanding of the multiple layers of disadvantage faced by people with a disability from refugee backgrounds;
- provide an ecological analysis of the contextual factors shaping the position of people with a disability from refugee backgrounds in the labour market;
- identify models of 'best' and recommended practice for employment services working with this client group; and
- contribute to the literature on this marginalised group.

This research examined the facilitators and barriers to the successful employment placement for people with a disability from refugee backgrounds who are currently seeking specialist employment services with the BSL's GAPCO program. The research objectives were to:

- document the GAPCO program processes in terms of how it works with clients from refugee backgrounds;
- explore how specific issues are addressed by GAPCO, including psychological stress, English language proficiency, systematic discrimination, other non-program support and service needs, client expectations, and ongoing support/assistance needs of refugee clients;
- evaluate GAPCO employment outcomes and trends for refugee clients; and
- examine the socio-economic and cultural processes relevant to the effective management and support of refugee clients.

This study used multiple methods including a comprehensive review of the labour market, refugee and migrant literatures, a quantitative analysis of GAPCO's client database (n=258), and in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 service users and 18 service providers. Interviews examined barriers and facilitators to the employment of GAPCO job seekers in five key spheres: the individual; family; community; workplace; and service system factors. Findings are presented in Sections 4 through to

Section 9. All service users participated in this study voluntarily. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure participants' anonymity.

Definitions

This report uses the following definitions:

'Refugee'

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) define a refugee as a person who "owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, United Nations 1951).

Australia is a signatory to this Convention which also articulates refugee rights such as protection from being sent back to their country against their will, access to employment, education, the legal system and civil rights.

Refugees arrive in Australia in one of two ways. Firstly, under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program refugees enter Australia on a humanitarian visa which entitles them to permanent residency. This group of refugees are mostly referred from the UNHCR. The second group apply for asylum once in Australia. When they are determined to be refugees they are either granted the same rights and entitlements as to refugees entering under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program or they are granted a three year TPV.

In this report, the term 'refugee', rather than people from CALD backgrounds with a disability, is used, except where specified, to describe the GAPCO job seekers interviewed because their status as refugees was more important in shaping employment success than ethnic identity or disability status.

'Asylum seeker'

Asylum seekers enter Australia on student, visitors or other temporary visa or arrive with no documentation or with false documents (Refugee Council of Australia, 2006). If people entering Australia legally apply for asylum within 45 days of arrival, they are granted a bridging visa entitling them to apply for a work permit and to receive Medicare. They are not eligible for other welfare assistance or state government support programs. Once they have been determined to be a refugee they are granted permanent residence and have the same rights as refugees entering under the Humanitarian program.

If a person arrives without documentation they are placed in detention whilst their refugee status is determined. If they arrived after October 20, 1999 they are ineligible for permanent residence and they are granted a three year TPV which severely restricts their rights to access social and welfare services. They have the following entitlements:

- access to school education but full fees are charged for tertiary education;
- access only to Special Benefits through Centrelink;

- no family reunion rights (including reunion of spouse and children);
- limited access to DIMIA funded settlement services;
- permission to work; and
- no automatic right to return to Australia if they leave the country.

In this report the term ‘asylum seeker’ includes people living on TPVs and bridging visas A and E.

‘Disability’

In this report disability is considered to be a social construction resulting from societal failure to ensure that all citizens, regardless of capacity or impairment, participate fully in society. From this perspective it is the social and physical infrastructure that implicitly or explicitly excludes people with a disability, and not their physical status, from equal access to opportunities (Fulcher 1989; National Ethnic Disability Alliance [NEDA], 2005). This report adopts a social model of disability and by doing so challenges deficit models of disability which explain the social exclusion of people with a disability as a function of their physical status, for example the medical model. This report recognises disability as the inter-relation between physical impairment and social oppression.

The report refers to ‘people with a disability’ rather than ‘people with disabilities’ to highlight that disability is not a characteristic of the individual but a consequence of social processes. Furthermore, the terminology people from CALD backgrounds with a disability, rather than people with a disability from CALD background, is used because the researchers consider cultural background, and not disability, as the more important means of developing social identity (NEDA, 2005).

‘Work’

Like disability, definitions of ‘work’ are contested and vary with institutional and political context. In the context of Disability Open Employment Services (DOES), the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) articulate that as a part of DOES contractual and funding requirements, providers must place job seekers into ‘work’ for at least 8 hours a week to achieve an employment outcome. At a minimum ‘work’ means 8 hours of employment per week. There are three levels of employment outcomes or milestones:

- A four (4) week employment outcome is achieved when a worker has worked for a period of four weeks and has accumulated at least 32 hours of work;
- A thirteen (13) week employment outcome is achieved with a worker has worked for a period of thirteen weeks and accumulated at least 104 hours of work (8 hours a week); and
- A twenty-six (26) week employment outcome is achieved when a worker has worked for a period of twenty-six weeks and accumulated at least 208 hours of work.

These employment milestones are achieved once a person has worked for the requisite number of weeks and hours, a minimum of 8 hours per week (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). This minimalist definition of work reflects the relative decline in full-time employment, particularly strong among men, and the increase in non-standard (part-time and casual) forms of employment over the last decade (Fincher & Saunders, 2001). These changes impact on different social groups in varying ways. This study contextualises the experiences of men and women from refugee backgrounds with a disability in the changing Australian labour market.

2 Migration, refugees and resettlement

Immigration

Since the Second World War, the Australian government has used immigration to increase population growth, the workforce and economic growth (McAllister, 1995; Miller & Leo, 1997). Migration to Australia was initially dominated by people from the British Isles and continental Europe who were offered assisted passage to Australia (Armit, Larkin, Godfrey, & Benjamin, 1988). With increasing economic prosperity in Britain and Western Europe, emigration became less attractive and during the late 1960s and early 1970s Australia's immigration policy changed (Hugo, 1986). Overtly discriminatory aspects were removed and the White Australia Policy was abolished. Immigration was opened up to people meeting the skill and qualification requirements, or other non labour force criteria, regardless of race or ethnicity (Jupp, 1991). In the 1970s, significant numbers of South-East Asian immigrants, largely refugees from Indochina, began to arrive signalling the beginning of non-European immigration to Australia.

In the 1980s further policy changes took place, reflecting the restructuring of the Australian economy, and resulted in the expansion of the skilled migration programme (Armit et al., 1988, Hawthorne, 1997). Emphasis was placed on attracting skilled labour and business migrants, particularly those with professional and technical training (Forrest & Johnston, 2000). There was a simultaneous increase in entry under family reunion, refugee and special humanitarian programmes (Jones & McAllister, 1991), which often meant setting aside skills requirements (Forrest & Johnston). A pattern emerged whereby immigrants with education, vocational qualifications and English language skills were absorbed into the growing tertiary sectors of the economy (business services and information), whilst those lacking qualifications and English proficiency were disproportionately employed in the manufacturing sector. Many immigrants arriving after the mid 1970s found it difficult to achieve occupational parity with the host society (Forrest & Johnston).

Between 1992 and 2002 Australia has received more than 100,000 migrants as refugees or humanitarian entrants (Kyle et al., 2004). During this time, and up until the present, the regional focus of Australia's refugee and humanitarian intake has become increasingly diverse and shifted from South-East Asia, Central America and Europe (excluding the former Yugoslavia), to Africa, the Middle East and South-West Asia. In the decade finishing 2002, refugees arriving from Sudan were the largest group (20%), followed by the former Yugoslavia (16%), Iraq (12%), Croatia (9.3%), Iran (8.5%) and Afghanistan (6.7%) (Kyle et al.).

Immigrants to Australia are not a homogenous group (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004, see Table 1). As described above, over the past sixty years large numbers of people have arrived initially from the United Kingdom, Holland, Italy, Greece and other parts of Southern Europe, in more recent decades from South-East Asia, eastern Europe, the Middle East, and most recently from the Horn of Africa. Over two hundred languages are spoken and most of the world's religions are practiced in Australia. As several authors have noted (see for example, Bevan, 2000; Langer, 1990; McAllister, 1995; Kyle et al., 2004), it is important these differences are not

Table 1: Birthplace of Australians

Birthplace by region and country	Persons	Percentage
Australian born	13,929,685	71.8
English speaking		
Canada	27,289	0.14
Ireland	50,235	0.26
New Zealand	355,765	1.88
South Africa	79,425	0.42
United Kingdom	1,036,245	5.46
United States of America	53,694	0.28
Total	1,602,653	8.44
European		
Croatia	51,909	0.18
France	17,268	0.09
Germany	108,220	0.57
Greece	116,431	0.61
Italy	218,718	1.15
Macedonia	43,527	0.24
Malta	46,998	0.25
Netherlands	83,324	0.44
Poland	58,110	0.31
Turkey	29,821	0.16
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic Of	55,365	0.29
Total	829,691	4.29
Asia		
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	142,780	0.75
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	67,122	0.35
India	95,452	0.50
Indonesia	47,158	0.24
Korea, Republic of (South)	38,900	0.20
Malaysia	78,858	0.41
Philippines	103,942	0.54
Singapore	33,485	0.17
Sri Lanka	53,461	0.28
Viet Nam	154,831	0.82
Total	815,989	4.27
Pacific		
Fiji	44,261	0.23
Total	44,261	0.23
Africa		
Egypt	33,432	0.17
Total	33,432	0.17
Middle East		
Lebanon	71,349	0.37
Total	71,349	0.37
Born elsewhere overseas	708,069	3.73
Not stated	1,034,120	5.45
Overseas visitors	203,101	1.07

SAR is an abbreviation of 'Special Administrative Region'. SARs comprise Hong Kong (SAR of China) and Macau (SAR of China).

Source: ABS (2001a) Census of Population and Housing.

glossed over through the use of terminology such as 'CALD', 'non-English speaking background' and 'refugee'. In addition to country of origin, new arrivals to Australia come from a range of family, educational and economic, rural and urban backgrounds, which shape their employability and settlement needs in various ways.

The experience of being a refugee also varies depending on whether a person is young or old, male or female, married and arriving with family or alone (Langer).

Furthermore, Australia's commitment to refugee and humanitarian immigration increases the likelihood that new arrivals have spent time in dangerous and unstable environments and have experienced trauma and torture either in their countries of origin, refugee camps and/or on their journey to Australia (Kyle et al., 2004; Leach & Mansouri, 2004; Mansouri, 2002; Waxman, 2001). Refugees may have had little or no choice in migrating or country of resettlement, both of which contribute to feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness in relation to settlement and employment (Mansouri; Kyle et al.). Refugees' pre-migration experiences bring a layer of complexity to the process of resettlement.

Successful economic adjustment is a central principle of immigrant and refugee settlement policy in Australia, as in the United States and Canada (Waxman, 2001). The success of immigrant settlement can thus be judged, in part, by employment experience (Kyle et al., 2004; Richardson et al., 2001). Consequently, research has been undertaken to identify the major predictors of immigrant and refugee economic adjustment (Potocky, 1997). In Australia, immigrant employment outcomes have been the focus of much research in the 1980s and 1990s and an almost universal finding is that immigrants fare more poorly economically than individuals born in the host country (see for example, Porter, 1965 writing on Canada; Chiswick, 1979 and Tienda & Lii, 1987 writing on the US; and Evans & Kelley, 1991 writing on Australia). This is particularly the case for immigrants from CALD backgrounds even in countries maintaining government funded programs to assist immigrant settlement with minimal economic disruption, such as Australia and Israel (McAllister, 1995). Economic disadvantage typically endures throughout immigrants' working lives (Miller & Neo, 1997), suggesting the persistence of employment barriers for immigrants, particularly refugees (Kyle et al.; Waxman).

The literature also illustrates disparities between the economic well-being of immigrants entering on different visa types, with those arriving as skilled migrants faring the best and humanitarian entrants the worst (Forrest & Johnston, 2000; Leach & Mansouri, 2004; Richardson et al., 2001, Waxman, 2001; Wooden 1990). Richardson et al. analysed the early settlement experience of two different cohorts of migrants to Australia (those arriving between September 1993 and August 1995, and between September 1999 and August 2000), followed over three years and found improved employment outcomes for the second cohort six months after arrival. They suggest that these improved outcomes are partly related to changes in immigration policy that has resulted in a higher proportion of migrants entering under the Independent, Business Skills and Employer Nomination Scheme and a smaller proportion arriving under the Humanitarian and Preferential Family/Family Stream. The second cohort had better English and educational qualifications and fewer individuals with low levels of these attributes, were likely to be of higher employability and to have more actively sought jobs soon after arrival. Additionally, there was an overall improvement in the Australian labour market (Richardson et al.).

Refugees remain the exception to the picture of settlement success in long term studies of migrant integration (Leach & Mansouri, 2004). In the decade 1992–2002, settlement outcomes for refugees appear to have deteriorated, at least in the short term

(Kyle et al., 2004). Six months after arrival only 18% of humanitarian entrants are participating in the labour force, compared to 53% of family entrants and 54% of those arriving in the business skills stream. The figures increase to 32% of humanitarian entrants and 80% for those arriving in the business skills stream 18 months after arrival. These poor outcomes for humanitarian entrants are despite improvements in the labour market with unemployment rates falling from 9% to 6.5% (Richardson et al., 2001), see Table 2.

Table 2: Labour Force Participation Rates

Migrant Categories	6 months after arrival	18 months after arrival
Skill stream		
Business skills	54%	80%
Employer nomination scheme	99%	100%
Independent	89%	92%
Skilled Australia Sponsored	85%	87%
Other Streams		
Family	53%	62%
Humanitarian	18%	32%

Source: DIMIA (2005) *Australian Immigration Fact Sheet: 14. Migrant Labour Market Outcomes*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Theoretical models of immigrant employment profiles

There are two major explanations of immigrant economic disadvantage (McAllister, 1995). The first suggests that immigrants have lower human capital available, weakening their competitiveness and causing economic disparities. Proponents of this perspective argue that lower status family backgrounds, poor educational qualifications and skills, limited language skills, less experience in the host society and limited cultural knowledge combine to weaken the position of immigrants in the labour market. For example, much research has found English language difficulties to be the major reason for unemployment (Cox, 1996; Khoo, 1994; Kipp, Clyne, & Pauwels, 1995; Waxman, 2001). Other research has found that poor English language proficiency together with educational attainment and length of residence in Australia are the major determinants of immigrant labour market success, with refugees having greater problems securing employment than other groups of immigrants (Forrest & Johnston, 2000).

The second explanation poses that employer discrimination and preference for employees from host societies over equally qualified and experienced immigrants entrenches economic disadvantage. For example, Hawthorne (1997) examined skilled migrants' access to employment in Australia and found significant evidence of employer discrimination by region of origin in favour of English-speaking background and European origin engineers, compared with those of Asian or Middle Eastern origin. Other researchers posit that economic disadvantage is a combination of poor human capital and discrimination, see for example Miller and Neo (1997).

A possible third explanation is proposed by McAllister (1995) who suggests that the act of migration itself has significant consequences for working careers. He identifies research conducted in Canada (Boyd, Goyder, & Jones, 1985; Richmond, 1967.), the

United States (Chiswick, 1979) and Australia (Chiswick, Liang Lee, & Miller, 2003) which shows that the economic status of immigrants drops following migration and only improves slowly. Chiswick et al. (2003) has developed a model showing a 'U' shaped pattern of occupational change with migration where the U is shallower for immigrants from countries more similar to Australia and deeper for refugees than family and economic migrants.

McAllister (1995) goes onto describe the disruptions in social relationships and shift in culture accompanying global migration and the far reaching implications for individuals' working lives. Multiple practical problems are encountered by immigrants, including the lack of family and social networks in the host society, few educational qualifications with difficulties gaining formal recognition for qualifications already possessed, no local labour force experience, lack of familiarity with local customs and poor language skills. Immigrants may face one or several of these problems placing them in varying degrees of disadvantage in the labour market. Furthermore, discrimination and poor labour market conditions in host societies can exacerbate the impact of migration which McAllister argues often results in lifelong disadvantage for immigrants (see also Miller & Neo, 1997).

Migration

A decade of literature supports the view that migration can be a stressful experience, although the consequent disruption varies widely depending on individual and family situation (Bashir, 2000; Bashir & Bennett, 2000; Hosking, 1990). The circumstances of immigrants on arrival to Australia vary widely, particularly between visa categories. Immigrants arriving on humanitarian visas tend to lack assets, social networks, English language proficiency, prearranged employment and housing. Immigrants arriving on family visas have family already resident in Australia and are likely to have accommodation organised prior to arrival and those arriving on skilled visas usually bring more assets, assured employment and more marketable skills (ABS, 1998a). Those arriving on humanitarian visas or as asylum seekers are the least equipped to settle into a new country and to secure employment.

For refugees, the factors shaping the decision to migrate, pre-migration experiences, such as economic and political hardship, torture and trauma, the social status of individuals and families in country of origin together with the response of the new host society following resettlement, all contribute to the psychosocial adjustment and resettlement (Bashir, 2000). As Hosking (1990) described, adjusting to different values, culture and ways of relating is difficult. Unfamiliar language and the shock of relocation to an urban, industrialised, consumer and individualistic culture are major stressors. People have to cope with disappointed expectations, low economic status, social discrimination, bad news from home, intrusive memories of the past, role changes and major family disruptions. Separated from family and with no hope for reunification, refugees can feel utterly alone as they face the future.

The acceptance of greater numbers of refugee and humanitarian arrivals to Australia has increased the likelihood that new arrivals may have experienced instability and disruption prior to migration. Many have spent time in dangerous, insecure environments (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Kyle et al., 2004). Hosking (1990)

argues that deprivation in the source country and during escape or in camps, underemployment, poor English, isolation in the local community or from their ethnic group are predictors of difficult adjustment of refugees. Together these factors mean that refugee settlement experiences are distinct from other migrant groups (Leach & Mansouri, 2004).

Refugee health: 1 - Physical health

Refugees' pre-arrival experiences significantly impact on physical and mental health (Harris & Telfer, 2001). A study of refugee health needs in the UK by Connelly and Schweiger (2000), found that one in six refugees had a physical health problem severe enough to prevent them from going about their daily life and two-thirds had experienced anxiety or depression. Not surprisingly a past history of torture and feelings of insecurity experienced by refugees, amplify and extend the duration of their illnesses. In addition, post migration factors such as discrimination, lack of social support and unemployment were identified as major contributors to anxiety and depression in refugees. Children, in particular, appear to suffer prolonged psychological distress after resettlement (Minas & Sawyer, 2002).

Refugees who have experienced torture and trauma may have multiple physical and mental health needs on arrival to Australia: "physical injuries may require orthopaedic, plastic or reconstructive surgery. A physiotherapy evaluation is often helpful where people have suffered joint dislocations and neck injuries....[a] podiatrist, dentist, gynaecological assessment may also be needed....usually a psychological assessment is desired....frequently people may want to contact a priest or monk for their spiritual needs" (Hosking, 1990, p. 21). Harris and Telfer (2001) observe that asylum seekers often present with physical ailments directly attributable to torture and trauma which may not have received adequate attention in the country of origin, for example malunited fractures, osteomyelitis, epilepsy or deafness from head injuries, non-specific musculoskeletal pain or weakness. For example, in a study of 40 asylum seekers in Sydney (see Sinnerbrink, Silove, Manicavasagar, Steel, & Field, 1996), 30 reported exposure to pre-migration trauma, 10 had been subjected to torture, 10 reported gastrointestinal disease, 9 musculoskeletal complaints, 6 gynaecological problems and 1 had an infectious disease (hepatitis). Additionally, people may require very practical help with daily tasks such as shopping, using public transport, finding suitable housing, completing forms and learning English (Hosking).

Asylum seekers not only experience a greater burden of ill health, but their lower socio-economic status and the problems they encounter accessing affordable and appropriate health care magnify their health problems. The outcome of these system-based shortcomings is that many asylum seekers end up requiring hospitalisation for conditions which could have been easily treated at an earlier stage (Harris & Telfer, 2001).

Refugee Health: 2 - Mental health: Torture, trauma and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

It has been found that the rate of psychiatric illnesses is proportionate to the severity of war in the home country, the degree of trauma experienced during escape and stress in refugee camps (Hosking, 1990; Steel, Silove, Phan, & Bauman, 2002). A higher incidence of schizophrenia, suicide and depression has been shown among resettled refugees than in the general population (Hosking). For example, over 30% of Indochinese adolescents and young people arriving in Australia in the early 1980s had symptoms of depression, anxiety and anti-social behaviour, which declined to 7% over a two year period (Krupinski & Burrows, 1986). Within two years, they were coping with their post-traumatic experiences, satisfied with life in Australia and performing adequately at school or in stable, unskilled employment. These data demonstrate the relationship between economic, social and mental wellbeing (DIMIA, 2003).

Much of the literature on settlement experiences of refugees tends to be weighted toward mental health issues which individualise and pathologize complex settlement processes (Cassity & Gow, 2005). Muecke (1992) argues that refugee-related policy, program development and research has been so preoccupied with disease and the medical definition of the refugee that medical problems became the primary route for refugee recourse when in any kind of pain, whether medical, social or emotional. The focus of refugee health care on post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), problems and pathology, rather than on strength and resilience, is an example of this trend. PTSD gives health and other professionals a way of responding to, and labelling the distress experienced by refugees, whilst simultaneously reducing their social suffering to a psychiatric category. As Muecke argued, medicine and psychiatry can not remove this suffering because they treat the individual as patient and not environments which constrain refugees.

The settlement difficulties experienced by refugees have too often been responded to as mental health issues, suggesting that the problem lies within the individual rather than in their situation (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Langer, 1990). Langer clearly argues that it is likely refugees are suffering from trauma and do need help in coming to terms with it, but until they can negotiate their daily lives with a degree of confidence it is difficult to separate symptoms of refugee trauma from symptoms with more immediate structural causes such as unemployment, social isolation, financial insecurity, and inability to communicate in English. These difficulties create considerable daily anxiety as refugees go about their lives (Langer). Furthermore, to define their situation as one of 'refugee trauma' requiring psychological intervention ignores the fact that many problems compounding grief and undermining their capacity to deal with it, are systematic and structural. No amount of counselling is going to help settlement whilst refugees continue to have problems accessing affordable housing, gaining employment and training and learning English (Pittaway, 1990).

Research in Australia is increasingly documenting the impact of post-arrival experiences on refugee mental health status. For example, Sultan and O'Sullivan (2001) and Steel and Silove (2001) have studied the relationship between the Australian government's policy of mandatory detention, physical and mental health

status within a human rights framework. Their research demonstrates that trauma can not be conceptualised as confined to experiences in the country of origin, refugee camps and other pre-migration experiences. Receptions by host country, including government policies and programs and public opinion, have significant implications for refugee mental health and wellbeing (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre [ASRC], 2005a; Kipp et al., 1995; Leach & Mansouri, 2004; Mansouri, 2002; Waxman, 2001). Sultan and O'Sullivan found that confinement in immigration detention centres for extended and undefined periods of time can have severe, psychologically disabling effects on asylum seekers (see also Leach & Mansouri; Mansouri). Even where detainees are granted refugee status these administrative decisions should not be grounds for inflicting ongoing psychological injury (Sultan & O'Sullivan). Additionally, many people held in detention are already at a high risk of PTSD reactions given their histories of oppressive government regimes with poor human rights records, torture and trauma. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the mandatory detention of asylum seekers is leading to serious psychological harm (Sultan & O'Sullivan). Steel and Silove found that 85% of refugees held in detention are found to be genuine refugees and are granted refugee status.

The diagnosis of refugees with PTSD also raises a set of cultural issues most clearly articulated by critical medical anthropologists who question the appropriateness of western medical and psychiatric categories when applied to non-western cultures (Good, 1977; Good & Good, 1982; Kleinman & Good, 1985; Obeyesekere, 1977; Scheper-Hughes 1992). Kleinman (1987, p. 452) refers to this as a 'category fallacy': where the illness categories developed for a particular cultural group are applied to members of another culture for whom they lack coherence and validity. Obeyesekere observes in Sri Lanka that Western psychiatric idioms are inappropriate and often implausible when applied to contexts where physiology and psychology are understood and experienced in fundamentally different ways. Adopting etic labels ignores the meaning and experiential frameworks of local emic models.² It is insufficient to apply western, etic categories of PTSD, depression and anxiety because they ignore the meaning of the symptoms to those experiencing them.

Research on refugee mental health has examined the interface between western and non-western disease categories. Studies tend to adopt an ethnoscientific approach, focusing on the relationship between disease categories, such as PTSD, depression and anxiety disorder, and non-western classificatory systems (see Hinton, Um, & Ba, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c on Cambodian refugees for example). These psychiatric taxonomies focus on diagnosis rather than the meaning and experience of illness (Kuoch, Miller, & Scully, 1992; Kuoch & Scully, 1984; see also Good, 1977).³ In the case of Cambodian refugees living in the United States, Ong (1995) argues that western doctors have appropriated local expressions, such as sore neck, hotness in the body, pressure on the heart, and total body weakness, to refer to clinical depression defined by biomedicine. Ong states that "in practice... 'cultural sensitivity' becomes a strategy that uses cultural difference not so much to understand particular experiences

² Anthropologists use the distinction between etic and emic models as an analogy: an etic model is based on criteria derived from outside a particular culture. An emic model explains behaviour of members of a culture based on indigenous definitions.

³ Here the distinction drawn by Kleinman (1980, p. 72) between disease and illness, where the former refers to a malfunctioning biological and/or psychological processes, whilst illness is the psychosocial experience and meaning of perceived disease, is followed.

of illness (but) to read symptoms that confirm universalised states of biomedicine" (p. 1249). Ong's work fits into a broader critique of the application of western models of disease to non-western contexts (see for example Good, 1977; Kleinman 1980; Kleinman & Good, 1985; Marsella & White, 1982).

Some refugees may not understand what 'psychiatry' and 'mental health' mean and for many refugees, the core realms of society, such as religion, medicine, family, morality, mental health and education, are inter-connected. Healing and wellbeing means more than prescribing pharmacological medications which may successfully ameliorate symptoms, but not necessarily ease the broader suffering associated with the cultural significance and social impacts of distress. For example, participation in religious ceremonies and rituals assist in redressing distress and are of demonstrable therapeutic value for many South-East Asians (see Eisenbruch, 1992). Harry (1992) documents how spiritual rather than medical interventions are appropriate for people from non-Western societies. Refugee experiences of bodily symptoms and emotions must be understood within their culturally specific meaning and symbolic context (see for example Eisenbruch, 1990, 1991, 1992 and his research with Cambodian refugee communities).

Key points

- Annually, Australia accepts 12,000 refugee and humanitarian entrants.
- The regional focus of Australia's refugee and humanitarian intake has shifted toward Africa, the Middle East and South-West Asia (Kyle et al., 2004).
- Refugees and humanitarian entrants to Australia have the poorest employment outcomes when compared to other migrant categories, such as skilled and business migrants.
- Refugee and humanitarian entrants are the least equipped to settle into a new country.
- Refugees encounter particular issues in addition to the more generic barriers faced by other migrants, including poor physical and mental health status, past and ongoing trauma, instability and vulnerability.
- PTSD can result in settlement difficulties such as accessing affordable housing, employment and English language training, being responded to as mental health problems of the individual rather than their situation.

3 Disability and the labour market

The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) found that in Australia one in five people (20% or 3,958,300) had a reported disability, defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities (ABS, 2003). Incidence by gender differed slightly, with 19.8% of men and 20.1% of women reporting a disability. Educational attainment and labour force participation rates are significantly lower for people with a disability when compared to those without disability. In 1998, only 53% of people with a disability were in the labour force (76% for people without a disability) and 12% were unemployed (8% for people without a disability) (ABS, 2001b). Income was also lower for people with a disability and decreased with disability severity, reaching a median of \$200 per week for those with the most profound core-activity limitations (ABS, 2003). These data illustrate that disability is a key determinant of socio-economic status and that when compared with the able bodied, people with a disability face additional barriers to employment (Gleeson, 1998; Hall, 1999). Other key axes of social difference, such as gender and ethnicity compound these disability related disadvantages (Asch & Fine, 1992; Meekosha & Dowse, 1997).

Racial and ethnic minorities have significantly higher rates of disability than people with English speaking backgrounds (Asbury, Walker, Maholmes, Rackely, & White, 1991; Kundu, 1995; McNeil, 1993; Smart & Smart, 1997; and Stoddard, Jans, & Kraus, 1998 on the US). SDAC provides the only Australian data recording disability by country of birth (see Table 3). There are some interesting data to note: the Profound/Core-Activity Limitation disability rate for women from North Africa and the Middle East is almost double the rate for Australian women (11.8% compared with 6.6%). Further, rates of profound disability for women are higher than men for the majority of countries, excluding 'Other Northern and Western Europe', Italy and Sub-Saharan Africa. There are no more comprehensive data available on the incidence of disability by country of birth. The ABS census (2001a) neglected to ask about disability, despite asking about language, country of birth, religion and heritage (identity) (Jakubowicz & Meekosha, 2003). As a result, there are no precise statistics available regarding the number of people with a disability who are non-English speaking (Hickson & D'aegher, 2003). However, the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (2000) have extrapolated data from SDAC (ABS, 1998b) and estimate that if 24% of the NSW population are people with a disability, then 3.5% of this population - 217,396 people - are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Men and women with a disability from CALD backgrounds face considerable barriers to securing employment in Australia. They experience multiple disadvantages in the labour market arising from their individual characteristics as job seekers, social, structural and institutional barriers. There is very little research documenting the position of people from CALD backgrounds with a disability in the community generally (Hickson & D'aegher, 2003) and more specifically in the labour market. Research that does examine the overlap between disability, CALD background (ethnicity) and employment illustrates the extreme disadvantage, invisibility and loss of voice that this group experience (Jakubowicz & Meekosha, 2003). People with a disability continue to experience discrimination in Australian society, the epitome of

which is the Australian Migration Act (1958) which continues to exclude people deemed unfit, namely those with physical and mental disability, from migrating to Australia (Meekosha & Dowse, 1997).

Table 3: Disability by country of birth

Country of Birth	Profound/Severe Core-Activity Limitation Rate*			Disability Rate			All Persons		
	Males %	Female %	Total %	Males %	Female %	Total %	Males '000	Females '000	Total '000
Oceania									
Australia	6.1	6.6	6.5	21.9	20.2	21.0	7,618.2	7,633.4	15,251.6
New Zealand	7.2	5.9	6.5	20.6	18.3	19.3	192.0	186.6	378.7
Other Oceania	0.9	5.0	3.7	9.5	15.4	13.0	56.3	62.2	118.5
Northern and Western Europe (N & WE)									
England	4.9	6.0	5.3	17.8	17.4	17.5	461.3	463.4	924.6
Scotland	2.0	7.9	5.3	14.2	20.9	18.6	63.7	63.3	127.0
Other UK	5.4	8.7	9.9	21.0	20.4	22.9	67.7	65.7	133.4
Germany	4.8	4.8	4.7	18.2	13.8	17.1	65.7	62.2	127.9
Netherlands	3.2	6.7	4.9	15.5	17.3	16.0	48.0	45.9	93.9
Other N & WE	5.4	4.8	4.7	11.8	18.6	14.7	36.1	36.3	72.4
Southern and Eastern Europe (S & EE)									
Italy	6.3	6.0	6.1	17.4	17.2	17.3	118.7	108.0	226.7
Greece	4.9	4.9	4.9	21.1	14.5	21.9	63.8	60.0	123.8
Other S & EE	5.3	6.8	6.0	17.3	20.3	18.8	226.7	216.6	443.3
North Africa and the Middle East									
South East Asia	3.8	4.0	4.1	13.5	10.1	11.9	224.5	315.2	559.7
North East Asia	2.0	4.8	3.0	5.7	8.5	6.6	152.6	173.3	325.9
Southern and Central Asia	2.4	6.7	4.6	15.3	14.0	14.3	135.2	130.3	265.5
Americas									
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.2	6.1	5.0	11.4	15.3	14.6	66.7	81.8	148.5
Not known	6.3	4.7	4.8	12.8	12.9	12.9	94.7	107.8	202.5
Total	5.8	6.6	6.3	20.6	19.3	20.0	9862.3	9948.8	19,811.1

* Core activities comprise communication, mobility and self care.

Source: ABS (2003) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Access to Services

The Commonwealth Disability Services Act (1986), various Australian state disability service and anti-discrimination acts recognise that support services and funding programs should be designed and implemented to meet the needs of people who may experience disadvantages because of their indigenous or other cultural background, gender or geographic location (Carlson & van Kooten Prasad, 2001). Despite this

legislation however, people from indigenous and CALD backgrounds continue to face significant barriers to services, over and above those faced by people with a disability from English speaking backgrounds (Dunn, Thompson, Hanna, Murphy, & Burnely, 2001).

At June 30, 2002 overseas born residents in Australia comprised 4.6 million people, 23% of the total estimated resident population (19.6 million) (ABS, 2004, see Table 2.1 for population by birthplace). However, the majority (89%) of consumers of disability service outlets in 2002–2003 were born in Australia, 2.6% were born in other English speaking countries and 7% were born in non-English speaking countries (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). In light of these population figures, it would be reasonable to expect a greater proportion of disability service consumers to be from CALD backgrounds. In regard to DOES, data from Disability Services Census (1998) shows that 6% of consumers were born in a country where languages other than English are spoken and 5.1% speak a language other than English (Hickson & D'aegher, 2003).

NEDA estimate that three out of four people from a CALD background with a disability miss out on receiving a Commonwealth funded disability service, in addition to the current unmet need for people with a disability generally (NEDA, 2001). NEDA argue the fact that so many Anglo-Australians and so few people from CALD backgrounds utilise disability services clearly illustrates that ethnicity does matter and is clearly a determinant of access to services.

People from CALD backgrounds face many barriers to disability services including: lack of accessible information and knowledge about essential services; lack of culturally appropriate services; discrimination in service provision; service providers relegating this client group to the 'too hard basket'; myths, misconceptions and negative stereotypes about disability and ethnicity in the general community; prejudice against people with a disability from members of their own communities; and government emphasis on rationalist economics and competition principles rather than social cohesion (NEDA, 2001). In addition, disability service delivery may be incongruent with the values of some cultural groups, for example the emphasis on independence in Western disability services may be inappropriate for clients from societies which honour social and familial membership (Carlson & van Kooten Prasad, 2001).

Findings from the Australian Law Review Commission (1996, cited in Carlson & van Kooten Prasad, 2001) into Commonwealth Disability Services reiterate the limited capacity of the disability service system to address the multiple needs of the diverse population living with a disability. The Commission concluded that "strategies to improve access for people of non-English speaking backgrounds were inadequate" and that "submissions stated that people of non-English speaking background with a disability continued to experience discrimination based on their ethnicity, their religion and their disability" (Carlson & van Kooten Prasad, p. 4). They face multiple layers of disadvantage.

Minority ethnic groups, people with a disability and carers (as distinct groups) have also criticised the state and welfare services for not recognising their needs, locating their needs in their own presumed failings and placing barriers to their access to

substantive citizenship (Ahmed, 2000; Meekosha & Dowse, 1997). These groups identify the unwillingness of services to reach out to non-English speakers, the use of stereotypes of 'caring extended families' and arguments about 'low numbers' to marginalise their needs. Men and women from CALD backgrounds are rarely well informed about their rights, and even when they are, can be unfamiliar with asserting them. However, as Ahmed concluded, neither ethnicity nor ethnic cultures deterministically structure the experiences of people with a disability and their differential position in the labour market. Research suggests that structural factors such as racial discrimination and socio-economic status are more potent; nonetheless cultural factors do influence patterns of participation in the workforce (Szymanski et al., 1996). Multiple socio-economic and political processes together with cultural factors shape the broader context in which disability is experienced and negotiated.

The experience of people with a disability varies as much in families as it does within a culture (ADEC, 2005). ADEC identified several key factors affecting family responses to disability across various cultures including: lack of education; lack of access to information in community languages; socio-economic status; rural or urban upbringing; length of residence; access to medical information; cultural factors such as questions of blame, honour, shame, status, marriageability and religious beliefs resulting in acceptance or guilt and the expectation of extended family rather than institutional support (ADEC). Women with a disability also face barriers arising from both societal expectations of women's abilities and general societal attitudes towards people with a disability (Lavarche, 1992).

The attitudes of staff toward people with a disability are consistently cited in the disability literature as critically important to quality service delivery (West & Parent, 1992). West and Parent, who studied consumer empowerment issues in supported employment, suggest that the powerlessness and lack of self direction that many people with significant disability experience has less to do with their limitations and impairments and more to do with the attitudes and practices of care-givers, service providers, funding agencies and social institutions. However, there is no evidence of attitudes and values training in any of the studies investigating training in employment services.

However, as NEDA (2001) noted, the issue of accessing government funded services is perhaps one of the primary issues facing people from CALD backgrounds with a disability. There are very few specialist services for this group (Brough, Gorman, Ramirez, & Westoby, 2003). Few mainstream disability services have been able to cope with cultural differences among their clients. As a result, CALD clients often receive the poorest services and the least attention (Jakubowicz & Meekosha, 2003).

In research conducted on disability services, Hickson and D'aegher (2003) found that service providers perceived English language fluency to be the major cultural issue affecting women's participation. Service providers assumed that once language barriers were addressed, cultural issues would disappear. There was little understanding or awareness that many cultural barriers are far more subtle and influential on an individual's behaviour and decision-making than the ability to speak and understand English (Hickson & D'aegher). For example, issues relating to religious and/or cultural practices, parental expectations and its impact on an

employee with a disability strongly influence participation in the workforce. Mostly these issues were viewed as problems rather than differences in belief systems.

The literature on disability and ethnicity identifies the need for education and training of health professionals and other service providers (Pane, 1994; Stone, 2005). Pane observes that in particular, service organisations show a lack of understanding of the cultural issues relating to women from CALD backgrounds with a disability. In common with other Quality Assurance systems, the disability service standards focus on generic processes and there is little incentive for services to tailor their services to be fully responsive to the expressed individual needs and wants of service users.

Disability, migration and labour market literatures

In the disability, migration and labour market literatures a tension exists between approaches explaining disadvantaged socio-economic status as a result of an individual's characteristics, as in the medical model of disability as personal tragedy, career development theory or human capital perspectives on labour market status, or as a result of social, structural and/or institutional disadvantage and oppression. The second perspective is taken up in social models of disability and segregationist perspectives on employment status (Hagner, 2000; O'Laughlin & Watson, 1997). The following section reviews each of these bodies of literature in turn.

Disability and the labour market

Worldwide, people with a disability are disadvantaged in the labour market as reported by writers such as Abberley (1996), Hall (1999), and Oliver (1991) on the United Kingdom; Asch and Fine (1992) on the United States; and Gleeson (1998, 1999) on Australia. However, as Hall observes, the multiple processes excluding people with a disability are unclear. Hall suggests that there are two main ways of understanding the disadvantaged position of people with a disability in the labour market, paralleling the individual and social models of disability. The first explanation poses that impairment limits employee capability, which in combination with discriminatory employer attitudes excludes people with a disability (see for example Unger, 2002). The 'solution' is to improve the qualifications of people with a disability, to enhance their skills and education and to raise awareness of disability issues among employers. Many non-government and government rehabilitation programs operate within this paradigm, providing vocational training and other supply side interventions to enhance the employability of people with a disability. Career development theory arose in this context. Hall's alternative reading of the individualised model of disadvantage in the labour market suggests accepting people with a disability's limited ability to work and ensuring secure social welfare payments. Such a social policy strategy institutionalises dependency and low living standards by poverty level pensions (Wendell, 1996), trapping people with a disability in disempowering relationships with the state and other service providers and excluding them from the labour market altogether. Each perspective is discussed in turn.

Career development theory

Career development theory originated as a part of the professional rehabilitation of people with a disability. Rehabilitation counselling and special education aimed to combat the attitudinal, environmental, and other barriers faced by individuals with a disability in education, work, and related settings (Szymanski & Parker, 1996). As Hartung (2002) observed, career development theory and practice have long emphasized personal variables (abilities, needs and interests) to the neglect of environmental variables (ethnicity, gender and social status) limiting its applicability to people other than able bodied, white men. The emphasis on the attributes of individuals has led to many aspects of career development theory linking to cognitive factors (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) to the neglect of factors in the socio-cultural context such as educational attainment. The relevance of these theories for members of racial and ethnic minority groups living with a disability remains a concern (Szymanski, Hershenson, Enright, & Ettinger, 1996).

Contemporary career counselling continues to be based on Frank Parsons' original conceptualisation of career processes (1909, cited in Szymanski et al., 1996). He proposed that three steps are involved in vocational choice: firstly, collecting information about the person; secondly, collecting information about work; and thirdly, matching these two to ascertain a suitable career choice for an individual. However, career development is not a one-off event as presented in Parsons' model but an ongoing process continually revisited throughout an individual's working life (Szymanski et al.).

Parsons' theoretical framework builds upon several assumptions inappropriate to large sections of increasingly diverse workforces, such as people with a disability and those from CALD backgrounds (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994). The experiences of people with a disability fail to affirm the assumptions of career development theory, and Osipow (1976) suggests that this is the reason for their omission. Rather than following a systematic, progressive and stress free career trajectory, the working lives of people with a disability are characterised by discontinuity, stagnation and stress.

Career development theory fails to accommodate socio-cultural differences and structural inequalities (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994), and has not responded to the increasing recognition of the ways in which race, culture, ability and gender impact on employment trajectories (Szymanski et al., 1996). It was not until the mid 1960s that career development theory recognised the specific career development needs of people with a disability (Szymanski et al.), despite the fact there is little debate that cultural background and socio-economic status, of which disability is a key determinant, shapes expectations, aspirations and values regarding career development. Not all individuals have the luxury of making career choices, and for many people living on low incomes having a job is a necessity that often involves no choice of career path. In this context, poverty becomes a salient influence on working lives (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002) and needs to be incorporated into any theoretical model of labour market participation.

Cook et al. (2002) propose an ecological model of career counselling which embraces diversity, individual, interpersonal and broader socio-cultural influences on labour force participation. Their critique identifies key assumptions of career counselling:

firstly, not all clients are white, heterosexual, able bodied males with western European experiences and worldviews; secondly, work and family roles are not always distinct in people's lives; thirdly, individualism and autonomy are not universal phenomena; fourthly, work is not always the central activity of people's lives; and fifthly, career development can be random and seemingly irrational. Career development theory assumes the individual's knowledge, traits and preferences are paramount and that with hard work they will be able to achieve their occupational goals and dreams. However, self sufficiency and freedom of choice are not universally applicable and accessible resources. Contextual barriers, such as racial and gender discrimination, create social, psychological, institutional, political and economic barriers eroding the control individuals have over their career choice and satisfaction.

In contrast to career development theory, many people from CALD backgrounds have a relational understanding of life which conceptualises individuals as enmeshed in responsibilities to family and extended kin networks. In this context, employment choices are based upon collective not simply individual wishes. Furthermore, commitments outside of paid work may be valued more strongly than a singular focus on career success. For example, women's role at home and in the family, in paid and unpaid work in and outside of the home illustrates their multiple commitments and the interdependencies between these spheres. This is the context in which women make decisions about career. Home and family roles and responsibilities are invisible in career development theory and must be brought into view if decision making in the labour market is to be understood. Cook et al. (2002) ecological model is a reminder that career development does not exist in a vacuum but rather, emerges from the dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment. Adopting such a theoretical stance shifts attention from interventions targeting the individual, such as increasing individual abilities and skills, to social and environmental barriers, such as policy change, child care or creating supportive social networks.

Socio-structural perspectives

It has long been acknowledged that labour markets are hierarchical social structures based upon, and reinforcing, key axes of social difference such as class, gender, ethnicity and physical ability (Abberley, 1996; Oliver, 1991). In Australia, people with a disability face considerable barriers to accessing employment, educational and training opportunities resulting in lower mean incomes which in turn shape quality of life and general wellbeing. Theoretical perspectives focusing on the individual as their unit of analysis, such as career development theory, fail to fully explain these broader structural processes underlying labour market participation patterns. Academic attention has shifted away from human capital accumulated by individuals in classical labour market theory toward social and cultural capital. These concepts illuminate the networks and flows of personal contacts, information, norms and values within which individuals are enmeshed, and economic practices are configured. Importantly, they conceptually link the individual with their socio-cultural context, and the economic and social realms of life.

Robert Putnam's (1993, 2000) notion of social capital is one useful tool for elucidating disabling social relations and the varying capacities of individuals and

households to negotiate change in their lives. Putnam (2000) defined social capital as referring to connections among individuals, in particular social networks, norms of reciprocity and the trustworthiness arising from them. Social capital is about the ways in which people relate to one another and the value of these social networks, which Dekker and Uslaner (2001) articulated in idealistic terms, as bringing together similar and bridging diverse people, with norms of reciprocity.⁴ Putnam's work calls for greater attention to patterns of trust, participation and social connections as they occur at the micro-scale of people's daily lives (Dekker & Uslaner). In the context of this research, it means a closer examination of the social aspects of client's lives, in particular, the relationships between service providers and clients and clients and the community. These theoretical developments flag the necessity of examining how social interactions and networks affect access, production and receipt of social capital and other resources.

Identity clearly plays a role in the social capital produced by the group of white, middle class suburbanites studied by Putnam (1993), but he does not unpack the difference identity makes to social capital (Gittell, 2003; Servon, 2003). In line with critical and postmodern commentators, Servon contended that identity plays a large role in determining the kind of resources, including social capital that individuals can access. There has been little concern, however, with this question or with how identity inhibits participation in the production of social capital (Gittell). The kind and quality of social capital produced by different groups is distinguished in very few studies; Manderson (2003) and McMichael and Manderson (2004) are exceptions. The social homogeneity on which Putnam's (1993, 2000) work, and the production of social capital rests, is exclusionary (Portes & Landolt, 1996), and as Servon suggested, it is likely that marginalised social groups participate in different ways.

Manderson (2003) argued that Putnam's analysis is a narrow understanding of social capital and community. His painting of social capital as neutral and equally enjoyed by all, distorts the political dimensions of exclusive social structures, and his use of individual social activities — membership of community organisations, reading the newspaper and voting — as indicators of sociality, is simplistic. Manderson's work draws our attention back to the institutional settings that inhibit people's ability to act, such as: gender; age; area of residence; and class and away from individual agency issues as the determinant of life choices. Whilst Putnam's work focused on social relations to the neglect of the social structures that configure them, Manderson reminds us that together, social structures, the inequalities embedded within them, and social relations shape individual lives and choices. Social capital is thus not observable in the same way in different places; it varies according to social, cultural, economic and political context (Edmondson, 2003).

Oliver (1991), in his review of disability and labour market participation in the United Kingdom, observed that those unable to work face greater difficulties sustaining life physically and initiating meaningful social relationships. Oliver's assertion illustrates the inseparability of the economic and socio-cultural realms of life, and these connections are increasingly being examined (see for example Fenton & Bradley, 2002; Granovetter, 1985; Jackson, 2000, 2002; Lee & Wills, 1997; Massey, 1997;

⁴ Servon (2003) calls this bridging social capital, which she articulates as structures aiding the creation of social capital across groups rather than simply within groups. She asks what conditions bring people together, when and why?

McDowell & Court, 1994; Zukin & DiMaggio, 1990). As Massey noted, the economic is the socio-cultural and they can not be analysed in isolation of one another. She proposes that all economic actions take place within the social and cultural norms, standards, conventions and meanings of any given society — the economic is the socio-cultural (McDowell, 2000). Furthermore Hanson and Pratt (1995) argued that an individual's physical and social location determines the type and quality of resources that social networks command and which shape labour market inequalities.

Characteristics of the labour market itself are also critical in shaping employment status. Hagner (2000) described how the labour market is segregated into two tiers or sectors. In the primary sector workers enjoy relatively high wages, fringe benefits, satisfactory working conditions, a degree of autonomy and employment security. In this sector, workers receive raises and promotions to more desirable positions as their skills are enhanced. In contrast, the secondary sector is characterised by low wages, minimal or non-existent benefits, employment insecurity and minimal worker autonomy. Hagner argues that workers tend to get stuck in the secondary labour market over time and are unable to make the transition into the primary sector even as they gain experience. Labour market segmentation thus plays an important role in shaping employment outcomes.

Pathways approach

More recently, research on barriers to employment has moved beyond focusing on individual barriers linked to human capital, demographic characteristics or structural barriers and has turned to focus on the role of personal barriers to labour market participation (Perkins, 2005). Researchers, such as Seefeldt and Orzol (2004), have argued that the combination of personal barriers and human capital are more important predictors of welfare status than demographic attributes. Personal barriers impacting on employment include: physical disability and/or health limitations; mental health problems; health or behavioural problems of children; substance abuse problems; domestic violence; involvement with child welfare system; housing instability; low basic skills and learning disability (Olsen & Pavetti, 1996; Perkins & Nelms, 2004). Danziger et al. (1999) found that incorporating personal barriers improved the predictability of a model of the likelihood of welfare recipients moving into employment. The advantage of a personal barriers approach is that it identifies non-vocational needs and issues which can then be addressed (Perkins). There is some support for the development of programs to address personal barriers as a simpler and more cost effective approach than addressing human capital barriers. The danger however, is that focusing on personal barriers may divert attention away from structural causes of disadvantage and reinforce a 'deficit' model of the unemployment (Perkins).

Mental health problems have been shown to be a significant personal barrier to employment and are associated with the greatest level of disability and impairment than any other type of disorder (Butterworth, Crosier, & Rodgers, 2004). People with mental health problems are more likely to receive welfare payments, have higher levels of unemployment, lower earnings and reduced work hours (Waghorn & Lloyd, 2005). Long term welfare recipients are more likely to experience PTSD, major depression and generalised anxiety disorders (Derr, Hill, & Pavetti, 2000). Depression

has also been shown to increase during periods of unemployment (Zimmerman et al., 2004). The Department of Family and Community Services ([FaCS], 2002) surveyed 3000 job seekers in disability employment services and concluded that those with psychological and psychiatric disability had the poorest employment outcomes when compared to all other types of disability. Furthermore, the number of personal barriers faced by individuals also affects employment outcomes, with those with multiple barriers the least likely to enter the workforce (Danziger et al., 1999; Perkins, 2005).

The European Union (n.d.) advocates a pathways approach to integration into the labour market. They describe the concept of 'pathways to integration' as a multistage process taking place at economic, social and cultural levels. The approach draws on different types of expertise and involves a process of co-ordinating and managing the input of relevant services, agencies and employers (European Union. n.d.). 'Progression routes' are customised to meet individual needs. According to the European Union successful employment integration rests upon four key components:

- a flexible approach combining guidance, training and job placement actions matching individual needs and interests with labour market needs;
- a partnership approach with the target group as active and responsible in decision-making processes, empowering the individual to identify and take steps toward achieving their goals;
- an environment which supports and encourages partnerships and inter-agency working, involving formal and informal actors; and
- access to appropriate, affordable care facilities during and after participation in pathways schemes to enable entry or return to the labour market.

A pathways approach to conceptualising the position of people from CALD backgrounds with a disability in the labour market provides a more dynamic picture of the personal issues individuals must address before they can enhance their human and social capital. However, the structural disadvantages associated with migration, ethnicity, gender and area of residence, discrimination and employer preferences shape the strategies, formal and informal resources which job seekers draw upon to gain entry to the labour market. Additionally, labour markets themselves are segregated and transition between secondary and primary sectors can be difficult.

Key points

- One in five Australians has a disability (ABS, 2003). There are no precise data on the incidence of disability in people with CALD backgrounds.
- People with a disability have lower labour force participation rates than the people without disability.
- People from CALD backgrounds with a disability face considerable barriers to services over and above those faced by people with a disability from English speaking backgrounds. Cultural barriers are frequently reframed as an issue of limited English language skills.

- Individual, family, social, cultural and institutional factors together operate to marginalise the position of people from CALD backgrounds with a disability in the labour market.
- A pathways approach is a useful tool to map strategies to enhance employability.

4 Methodology

This section outlines the mixed methodological approach used in this research. The main data is qualitative and based on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and job seekers. These data were supplemented by a quantitative analysis of data collected on all job seekers who have received services with GAPCO between January 2002 and June 2005. The quantitative data analysis enabled a model of employment likelihood to be developed, whilst the qualitative data gave a richer understanding of the position of job seekers in the labour market. Together these data sources enabled theoretical and methodological triangulation to be achieved. Prior to the commencement of this study, the research proposal was submitted to and approved by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee.

A steering committee was established when the research commenced and consisted of representatives from key local organisations including the Ecumenical Migration Centre [EMC], Fitzroy Learning Network [FLN], the ASRC, GAPCO staff representatives and the researchers from Deakin University. This committee met regularly throughout the research period and provided an opportunity for input into the research design, process and progression. The meetings helped the researchers to think about the data being collected in different ways and to identify key issues to investigate further in future interviews. Data collection and analysis was an iterative process.

Data sources

The quantitative analysis involved extracting client data from the GEMMA database used by GAPCO. The database stores clients' demographic information, details regarding disability type, work placement history, progress and employment outcomes. All job seekers receiving services from GAPCO in the three year period January 2002 to June 2005 were included in the analysis, a total of 258 cases. Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS. Descriptive univariate analysis was initially run on the data to provide a demographic and attribute overview and summary of job seekers. Analysis of employment placement, type of positions gained, length of employment, average hours and wages was also conducted. Where specified, GEMMA reports have been included in the analysis. Finally, a multivariate logistical regression analysis was run to model the likelihood of employment for job seekers with different sets of attributes. These data are presented in Section 5.

The qualitative analysis involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with service providers (19) and job seekers (20) who had received services with GAPCO. The Manager of GAPCO selected the key service providers to be interviewed and several others, including a local priest and former employee of Red Cross, were recruited during the interview process. Services interviewed include:

- ADEC (1)
- FLN (3)
- ASRC (3)

- North Yarra Community Health Centre (1)
- The Victorian Arabic Social Service (1)
- Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) (1)
- GAPCO (4) and BSL (3) staff.

Service providers described social support and welfare services to refugees and CALD communities as poorly funded and many service providers were extremely busy. Consequently, recruitment took longer than expected as some interviews had to be booked several weeks in advance. Service providers were initially recruited by one of two Deakin University staff members conducting the interviews. The research aims and objectives, privacy and confidentiality arrangements and the requirements of participation were explained to interviewees. With their agreement to participate, a letter more fully explaining the research was sent out including the consent forms which were signed prior to commencing interviews. Interviews were conducted in the workplaces of service providers at the convenience of interviewees. Interviews typically lasted 60 minutes and were tape recorded if the interviewee agreed. Only one interviewee did not agree to be tape recorded and detailed notes were taken throughout the interview. A theme list was used to give structure to interviews whilst following interviewee leads (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the theme list).

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 GAPCO job seekers. Letters were initially sent to 40 randomly selected job seekers inviting them to participate in the research. The letters explained the aims and objectives of the research and what participation entailed. They were also given \$35 for their time and to cover any costs incurred by participating and were sent a double pass to the movies. Even with these incentives, response to the letters was poor with only a few people calling GAPCO case managers to express their interest. Given the poor response a further 120 letters were sent out and again the response was poor but our target of twenty interviewees was achieved. Even though the letters were written in plain English, it is likely that those with better English skills and education responded because they were more likely to see the value of research. Some expressed a desire to share their stories and express their thanks to GAPCO.

Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to interviewees, typically at the BSL or in interviewees' homes. Prior to commencing interviews, the confidentiality agreement was explained and the job seeker's consent gained. Interviews typically lasted for 60 minutes, although some extended to several hours. Only one interviewee was not comfortable with having the interview recorded and extensive notes were taken during the interview and the report written up immediately following. A theme guide was used to give structure to the interviews but the focus was on following job seekers' leads to unravel their stories and experiences from their perspective (see Appendix 2). Basic demographics of the job seekers interviewed are described in Section 5. Interviewees had the following disability: torture trauma issues (psychiatric disability) (16); back injuries (3); and a long term hand injury (1).

All service provider and job seekers' interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVIVO, a qualitative data manager and analysis program. All pieces of

text were then coded as pieces of data. A thematic and content analysis was conducted and the key issues identified.

All GAPCO job seekers interviewed also completed a short survey asking them to rank different services components they may have received from GAPCO along a seven point scale (0-6) (see Appendix 3). These results are discussed in Section 6. Throughout the report pseudonyms are used to ensure the anonymity of interviewees.

The United Nations Development Programmes' (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2004) has been used to classify GAPCO job seekers' country of origin. The HDI measures a country's level of human development based on three basic dimensions:

- a long and healthy life as measured by life expectancy at birth;
- knowledge, as measured by adult literacy rate (with two thirds weight) and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (with one third weight); and
- a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita expressed in US\$).

Table 4 presents GAPCO job seekers by HDI, visa type and illustrates a relationship between visa type on arrival and the development status of country of origin. The table shows that job seekers from countries with a high HDI entered Australia on migrant visas; the majority of job seekers from countries with a medium HDI entered Australia on humanitarian visas (66%); and job seekers from countries with a low HDI entered Australia on humanitarian visas or as asylum seekers.

Table 4: Interviewee characteristics by HDI and visa type

HDI*	Number	Visa type
1	3	1 resident 2 migrants
2	12	8 humanitarian 3 asylum seekers 1 tourist (later applied for refugee status)
3	4	2 humanitarian 2 asylum seekers
No HDI	1	Asylum seeker

*Category 1= High Australia, NZ, England, USA, Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Poland, Singapore.

Category 2 =Medium: Fiji, Russian Federation, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Algeria, Sudan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, South Africa.

Category 1= Low: Pakistan, Congo, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, East Timor.

No HDI There was no HDI for these nations: Iraq, Yugoslavia, Taiwan, Afghanistan, Somalia.

5 GAPCO employment outcomes

This section describes GAPCO's employment outcomes for the period January 2002 to June 2005. Firstly, the demographic characteristics of GAPCO clients are presented; secondly, employment outcomes; and finally, a model of employment likelihood. GAPCO client records, as documented on the GEMMA database, contain considerable missing data. As a result the number of cases in particular analysis varies and points to the need for a more methodical approach to record keeping. Incomplete client data makes the task of placing job seekers more difficult but it must be noted that GAPCO are not funded to collect data and whilst they endeavour to do so, gaps exist. Furthermore, the GEMMA database on which this analysis is based is currently used only for case notes as DEWR has introduced a new system — the EA3000.

However, the findings are none the less insightful and demonstrate that GAPCO employment services are most likely to place women, younger people, those preferring to speak a language other than English, from countries with a low HDI and living with spouse/family in inner city Melbourne. GAPCO typically places people into semi skilled and unskilled positions and is thus more likely to succeed with job seekers with the aforementioned attributes. These findings support national statistics that demonstrate refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia experience enduring economic disadvantage and are less likely than other migrant groups (e.g., skilled migrants) to achieve parity with their occupational status prior to migration (DIMIA, 2003; Kyle et al., 2004; McAllister, 1995; Miller & Neo, 1997; Waxman, 2001).

The BSL website states that GAPCO is a specialist employment service that assists people with a disability, including torture and trauma, into work, and caters specifically to the needs of professionally qualified candidates. However, analysis of client demographics found that educational qualifications were documented for only 30% of clients registered with GAPCO between January 2002 and June 2005. Of these, only 34% had graduate or post-graduate qualifications, and a further 16% had diplomas. Additionally, only 15% had undertaken further education in Australia, with 60% acquiring one or more certificate level qualifications. These data illustrate that the majority of GAPCO's clients are not professionally qualified and helps to explain why GAPCO clients tend to be employed at the lower end of the labour market. The data suggest the need for greater emphasis to be placed on developing career pathways, education and training but also to addressing the persistent service system, employer, structural and personal barriers refugees face to gaining employment. Although GAPCO placed 59% of clients into employment over the three year period analysed, greater attention needs to be given to securing professional opportunities for refugees.

Client demographics

Analysis of all GAPCO clients between January 1, 2002 and June 30, 2005 identified the following demographic characteristics:

- 68% of clients are male and 32% female.

- The greatest number of GAPCO clients were born in Australia (22.5%), followed by clients coming from East Timor (11.6%), Sudan (8.1%), Somalia (7.7%), Ethiopia (5%), Iraq (4.6%), and Afghanistan (3.9%) (see Table 5). Table 5 demonstrates the cultural diversity of GAPCO clients.

Table 5: GAPCO clients' country of birth by gender

Country of Birth	Males	Females	Total (%)
New Zealand	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Fiji	1	1	2 (0.7%)
England	3	1	4 (1.5%)
Greece	2	1	3 (1.1%)
Italy	2	0	2 (0.7%)
Spain	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Yugoslavia	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Germany	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Switzerland	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Denmark	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Poland	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Russian Federation	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Iran	4	1	5 (1.9%)
Iraq	11	1	12 (4.6%)
Lebanon	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Syria	2	0	2 (0.7%)
Turkey	2	1	3 (1.1%)
Algeria	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Sudan	18	3	21 (8.1%)
Cambodia	0	1	1 (0.3%)
Indonesia	2	2	4 (1.5%)
Malaysia	1	1	2 (0.7%)
Singapore	0	1	1 (0.3%)
Vietnam	3	0	3 (1.1%)
Taiwan	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Afghanistan	10	0	10 (3.9%)
Bangladesh	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Bhutan	1	0	1 (0.3%)
India	2	3	5 (1.9%)
Pakistan	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Sri Lanka	3	1	4 (1.4%)
USA	0	1	1 (0.3%)
Congo	3	0	3 (1.1%)
Nigeria	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Ethiopia	5	8	13 (5%)
Somalia	9	11	20 (7.7%)
South Africa	0	1	1 (0.3%)
Tanzania	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Uganda	1	0	1 (0.3%)
Australia	37	21	58 (22.5%)
East Timor	14	16	30 (11.6%)
Missing	25	6	31 (12%)
Total	176	82	258

- When 'country of birth' is categorised based on the United Nations HDI, 31.4% of clients are from countries with a 'high' HDI, 23.6% are from countries with a

‘medium’ HDI, 20.4% are from countries with a ‘low’ HDI and 24.6% are from countries without a HDI. Over 40% of GAPCO clients are from countries with low or no HDI and thus come from contexts of significant socio-economic disadvantage and poverty.

- Since March 2002 the proportion of GAPCO clients with psychiatric disability has increased from 44% to 79% in 2005 (see Table 6). This pattern does not vary by gender: from 2002 to 2005, 69% of male clients and 67% of females had a psychiatric disability.

Table 6: GAPCO clients by disability type

GAPCO Clients by Disability Type (%)					
Disability type	March 2002	January 2003	January 2004	January 2005	Total 2002-2005
ABI*	6	5	5	1	17
ID**	7	6	5	5	3
Neurological	1	1	1	3	6
Physical	20 (13%)	23 (15%)	22 (8%)	16 (12%)	81 (14%)
Psychiatric	68 (44%)	91 (58%)	101 (72%)	110 (79%)	370 (63%)
Vision	8	8	3	2	21
ADD***	2	2	0	0	4
Hearing	2	2	1	0	5
Missing	40	20	2	1	63

*Acquired brain injury

** Intellectual disability

***Attention deficit disorder

- Since March 2002 the number of people in the 22–30 age bracket has increased from 25% to 40% in 2005; 31–40 year olds have decreased slightly from 33% to 26.6% and clients over 40 years of age have decreased from 40% to 25.8% in 2005 (see Table 7).

Table 7: GAPCO clients by age

GAPCO Clients by Age (%)					
Age bracket	March 2002	January 2003	January 2004	January 2005	Total 2002-2005
Under 15	1	2	4	4	11
15 – 21	0	1	2	6	9
22 – 30	40 (25%)	48 (30%)	51 (36%)	56 (40%)	195
31 – 40	51 (33%)	53 (34%)	42 (30%)	37 (27%)	183
40 plus	62 (40%)	54 (34%)	41 (29%)	36 (26%)	193

- Most of GAPCO clients (43.4%) live with family (39% of men and 52.4% of women); just under a fifth live with others (19% of men and 16% of women); and 17% of men and 15.8% of women live alone.
- Over half (58.8%) GAPCO clients live in a private residential setting (56% of men, 64% of women).

- Almost half (47.6%) of GAPCO clients were living on welfare payments at intake (11.5% on the disability support pension, 27.5% on Newstart/Youth Allowance and 8.6% on other pensions/benefits). There are no significant gender differences. Red Cross supported 11% of clients and 9.3% had no income (10.5% of men and 6.8% of women) (see Table 8).
- At intake, 11.3% of women were in paid employment compared to only 3.5% of men. Women's experience in the labour market is likely to make it easier for them to gain another job, as the model of employment likelihood, presented at the end of this Section, proposes.
- Centrelink support office registrations suggest a clustered pattern of residential location of GAPCO clients: 27% of clients are supported by the Fitzroy office; 9.7% by Newmarket; 8.2% by Darebin; 7% by Moreland; 5.7% by Richmond; and 5% by Windsor.
- Half of GAPCO clients were either self referred or referred to GAPCO by friends or relatives, flagging the importance of informal social networks as a source of information about services. Only 19.6% of clients were referred to GAPCO by another welfare/community organisation.

Table 8: Principal income source at intake by gender

Principal Income Source	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total
Disability Support Pension	22 (11.5)	10 (11.3%)	32 (11.5%)
Newstart/Youth Allowance	44 (23%)	21 (23.8%)	65 (27.5%)
Other Pension/Benefit	15 (8%)	9 (10.2%)	24 (8.6%)
Paid Employment	7 (3.5%)	10 (11.3%)	17 (6.1%)
Compensation Income	0	1 (1%)	1 (0.3%)
Other Income	5 (2.5%)	7 (7.9%)	12 (4.3%)
Nil Income	20 (10.5%)	6 (6.8%)	26 (9.3%)
Not Known	15 (7.8%)	6 (6.8%)	21 (7.5%)
Red Cross	22 (11.5%)	10 (11.3%)	32 (11.5%)
Special Benefit - TPV	12 (6.3%)	0	12 (4.3%)
Missing	28 (14.7%)	8 (9%)	36 (12.9%)

- Data on educational status was available for 30% (79) of GAPCO clients.⁵ Analysis showed that 7.5% had post-graduate qualifications; 26.5% had a bachelor degree; 15.1% have a diploma; 1% had certificate level qualifications; 26.5% had completed the equivalent of Year 12; 11.3% had completed Year 10 or 11 and 11.2% had some high school but the level was not specified (see Table 9).

Table 9: Educational attainment of GAPCO clients

Highest level of education	Post-graduate	Bachelor degree	Diploma	Year 12	Years 10 and 11	Year 7	General high school
N = 79	6 (7.5%)	21 (26.5%)	13 (16.1%)	21 (26.5%)	9 (11.3%)	3 (3.7%)	6 (7.5%)

⁵ Educational attainment data was gathered by checking curriculum vitae which GAPCO case managers produce in liaison with clients. Occupational status data was collected simultaneously.

- Only 15% (40) of those for whom data on education was available, undertook further education and/or training in Australia. Of these, 60% (24) acquired one or more certificates, for example, in business administration, food preparation, human resources, dental nursing, community services and transport and distribution. A further 7.5% (3) enrolled in high school, 12.5% (5) in diplomas, 5% (2) in bachelor degrees, 5% (2) in post-graduate studies and a further 5% (2) completed various vocational courses and acquired licences, for example, taxi or forklift licences.

Employment summary

- GAPCO has placed 152 (59%) clients into employment between 2002 and 2005.
- GAPCO has placed an average of 52% of active clients into employment, although the percentage of active clients placed has ranged between 38% and 66%.
- The average age of placed employees has declined from 35 years in 2002 to 33 years in 2005 (see Table 5.6).
- Although 152 clients have been placed into employment, data on wages and hours worked was only available for 84 cases (55% of all cases of employment).
- The average number of hours in a placed position has remained fairly consistent, averaging 26 hours.
- Just over a third of clients (34.5%) were employed in positions of between 8 and 16 hours a week; 20% were in jobs of 16-30 hours a week and 36% were working more than 30 hours a week.
- Data on job tenure is unclear. Based on the GEMMA report 'Current Job Summary', the average tenure has declined from 20 weeks in 2002 to 11 weeks in 2005 (see Table 10).
- Analysis of Current Job Summary reports from 2002 to 2005 shows only 18 job placements of less than 26 weeks and 26 placements of between 26 and 52 weeks. All other job placements exceeded 12 months (see Table 11).
- In contrast, the GEMMA report 'Completed Jobs Summary - Tenure of Jobs' tells a different story. Analysis of this report shows that between 2002 and 2005 GAPCO placed 27 people for between 0–13 weeks, 25 people for between 13–26 weeks and 20 for between 26–52 weeks.
- When the raw data was extracted from GEMMA and analysed, the data shows that 23 people were placed in jobs of between 0–13 weeks; 9 were placed into jobs of 13–26 weeks and 11 into jobs between 26–52 weeks. It must be noted that of the 152 job placements between 2002 and 2005, data on job tenure was only available for 43 (28%) cases of employment.
- These data illustrate the need for GAPCO to systematise data collection and the production of outcome statistics to provide a clear picture of employment outcomes.

Table 10: Summary of job placements, 2002 - 2005

	March 2002 – Dec 2002	Jan 2003 – Dec 2003	Jan 2004 – Dec 2004	Jan 2005 – May 2005	Total March 2002 – May 2005
Total Placements	54	49	32	17	152
Total Finishes	15	10	8	2	35
Average Age	35	33	28	33	33
Average Hours*	28.40	24.27	24.43	28.04	26.25
Average Tenure**	20.42	20.58	18.82	11.83	54.88

*Hours per week.

**Weeks of employment.

Table 11: Tenure of jobs, 2002-2005

Tenure of Jobs					
March 2002 – January 2005					
Tenure of Jobs	March 2002	Jan 2003	Jan 2004	Jan 2005	May 2005
6 months and under	0	0	0	2	16
7- 12 months	0	0	0	14	12
1 – 2 years	0	0	23	26	20
2 – 3 years	0	32	33	19	10
3 – 4 years	29	33	26	11	2
4 – 5 years	14	10	6	2	2
5 – 6 years	3	3	2	2	2
6 years and over	4	4	4	4	0
Total	50	82	94	80	64

- The average wage between January 2002 and June 2005 was \$342. This was calculated based on 84 cases of employment for which there was wage data (55% of all cases of employment).
- Of the clients for whom there is wage data available, 40% were earning less than \$300 a week, 56% had a wage of between \$300 and \$599 and only 3.5% were earning more than \$600 a week (see Table 12).
- Of the 84 instances of employment, there was only educational data available for 5 clients (3 had completed Year 12, one had completed Year 10 and one had a Bachelor of Arts degree). It was not possible to draw any conclusions on the relationship between educational attainment and employability.

Table 12: Wage distribution*

Wage bracket	\$100 or less	\$101 – 199	\$200-299	\$300-399	\$400-499	\$500-599	\$600 and over
N = 84	5	12	17	15	19	13	3
(%)	(6%)	(14.2%)	(20.2%)	(17.8%)	(22.6%)	(15.4%)	(3.5%)
Women	2	5	6	8	7	4	1
(32)	(2%)	(6%)	(7%)	(9.5%)	(8%)	(5%)	(1%)

*Wage data was only available for 84 GAPCO clients.

- GAPCO clients were typically placed into the following types of positions: receptionists, sales assistants, trades assistants, factory hands, cleaners, storemen, kitchen hands and a variety of other semi and unskilled work.

- Of the clients who held professional positions, such as nurses, engineers, business analysts, electricians and teachers, in their countries of origin (n=13), only three managed to achieve occupational parity post migration.⁶
- It is also difficult to make any clear statements regarding client's reasons for leaving the GAPCO service because 'no reason' was recorded for just under a third of all clients (see Table13).

Table 13: Deregistered clients, 2002–2005.

Reason for deregistering*	March 2002 – Dec 2002	Jan 2003 – Dec 2003	Jan 2004 – Dec 2004	Jan 2005 – May 2005	Total March 2002 – May 2005
No reason recorded	9	40	36	18	103
Left service	15	30	12	7	64
Moved interstate	1	0	0	0	1
Moved overseas	4	0	0	0	4
Not suitable for agency	14	6	14	4	38
Relocated with Victoria	1	5	2	0	8
Transferred to another service	4	10	7	3	24
Deceased	0	1	1	0	2
Working, no longer needs service	0	2	3	18	23
Total	48	94	75	50	267

*Categories are from the GEMMA database.

- GAPCO's performance has been strong but variable against the employment targets set by FaCS (see Table 14). Whilst GAPCO has consistently over achieved their targets set by FaCS, by an average of 152%, the targets are low and with the move from block grants to case based funding, effective on July 1, 2005, implications for GAPCO's cash flow need to be considered.

Table 14: New Workers who received Employment Assistance from the service outlet*

Reporting period	Target	Result	Met
July 2002 – Dec 2002	12	32	266%
Jan 2003 – June 2003	12	15	125%
July 2003 – Dec 2003	12	12	100%
Jan 2004 – June 2004	12	16	133%
July 2004 – Dec 2004	12	13	108%
Jan 2005 – June 2005	12	22	183%

*This table is based on service outlet performance report, outcomes against targets report produced by GEMMA and reports new employment placements only.

- Of the 152 cases of employment, data on the date employment commenced is available for 115 cases. This data was analysed to determine the length of time between registering with GAPCO and employment placement. Over half (69.5%)

⁶ These three cases were an engineer from India, a Danish business analyst/programmer and a teacher from South Africa. It is possible others managed to maintain their occupational status but data was only present for these 13 cases.

of GAPCO clients were placed into employment within 6 months of intake (see Table 15). There are no significant gender differences.

- It is possible that the 6% of clients placed into employment prior to registration (those classified as ‘negative time’), found jobs independently. There is no data to support this.

Table 15: Time between registration and employment placement

Time between intake and placement (months)	Negative time*	Less than 1 month**	1 – 6 months	6 - 12 months	13 - 18 months	Greater than 18 months
N = 115	7	12	61	22	10	3
(%)	(6%)	(10.5%)	(53%)	(19%)	(8.6%)	(2.6%)
Women (35.6%)	2	4	21	10	3	1
	(1.7%)	(3.5%)	(18.2%)	(9%)	(2.6%)	(0.8)

*‘Negative time’ refers to clients who were placed into employment prior to registration with GAPCO.

** The majority of clients in this category were placed within two weeks of registration.

A model of the employment likelihood

The multivariate analysis (logistical regression) found that the employment services provided by GAPCO were most likely to place the following job seekers:

- women;
- younger clients, as age increases the likelihood of getting a job decreases;
- clients from ‘medium’, ‘low’ HDI countries, and from countries for which there was no HDI, rather than clients from ‘high’ HDI’s;
- clients already earning an income from paid employment and not on welfare;
- clients preferring to speak a language other than English;
- clients referred to GAPCO via personal networks, rather than professional networks;
- clients living in Fitzroy, Darebin, Moreland, Windsor, Newmarket and Richmond; and
- clients living with their spouse/family.

These findings illustrate the specialist ability of GAPCO employment services for particular job seekers: women; young people; those with limited English skills; and from poorly developed countries of origin (low and medium HDI’s). It is important to note that these findings present a model of likelihood of employability of GAPCO clients and the model does not necessarily equate with broader employment trends. For example, the GAPCO model shows that job seekers preferring to speak a language other than English are more likely to get a job. This finding must be understood within the context of GAPCO’s tendency to place job seekers into unskilled and semi-skilled positions, sectors of the labour market in which migrants

are typically concentrated. The qualitative data supports this finding and provides evidence of the lack of success job seekers had finding skilled and professional positions through GAPCO. The data suggests that GAPCO needs to develop linkages with employers and organisations providing skilled and professional employment opportunities so as to broaden the range of employment options available to suitably qualified jobseekers.

The important role of informal networks to service access and as a predictor of employment likelihood is demonstrated by the employability model. The qualitative data extends this finding and shows that these networks are a valuable source of information regarding employment opportunities and frequently lead to employment. The correlation between living with family and employment likelihood is indicative of the role family support and familial responsibilities plays as a facilitator of employment. Finally, the model shows that GAPCO provides services to job seekers living in geographical pockets in inner city Melbourne.

Of those who got jobs with GAPCO, 40.5% were on a wage less than \$300 a week and thus living below the poverty line. This data shows that this population continue to live in circumstances of considerable social and economic disadvantage even when employed.

Key points

- Two thirds of GAPCO clients are men but women are more likely to be in paid employment, probably because 11.3% of women were in the workforce and already had local experience at the time of intake.
- The proportion of GAPCO clients with psychiatric disability has increased from 44% in 2002 to 79% in 2005.
- At intake, almost half (47.6%) GAPCO clients were living on welfare payments.
- Just over a third (34%) of GAPCO clients are graduates or have post-graduate qualifications.
- Just under half (45%) of GAPCO clients are from countries of origin with significant poverty and disadvantage as measured by the United Nations HDI (those from countries with low or no HDI).
- GAPCO typically placed clients into semi skilled and unskilled positions such as factory hands, kitchen hands, cleaners and trades assistants. Great attention needs to be given to developing career pathways.
- Data collection needs to be systematised.
- Family support and informal networks were facilitators of service access and employment.

6 Toward good practice

This section examines the employment placement services provided by GAPCO and flags the elements identified by service providers and job seekers as critical for good practice in DOES. Whilst core components of service provision, such as accurate assessment, developing career pathways and addressing non-employment and employment issues featured in providers' discussion of good practice, the core theme emerging from the data is the importance of building ongoing supportive relationships with clients. Job seekers with GAPCO valued the practical and personal support provided by case managers but also identified several areas requiring improvement, in particular improved access to skilled employment opportunities. Service providers noted the challenge of providing culturally appropriate and effective support services in the context of increasing workloads, time pressure, inadequate funding and the broader service network's poor understanding of refugee issues. These systemic issues are relevant not just to GAPCO but to all DOES providers.

Couch (2005) identifies three key principles of good practice when working with refugees:

- **Understanding:** service providers learning what is important to refugees and the meanings they attach to their experiences. This means acknowledging refugees as cultural experts and service providers as learners, and recognising that clients' culture, providers' own values and those of the service impact on refugee service users;
- **Trust:** services providing a social and physical environment that engenders trust in and builds rapport with refugees; and
- **Social justice and access:** ensuring inclusive principles guide service provision and facilitate refugee participation in Australian society.

Couch (2005) argues that these principles need to be incorporated into a human rights based model of social policy and service provision, not a service model based on needs. Needs based approaches can imply an inability of service recipients to improve their own circumstances, rendering them passive rather than proactive in reshaping their futures. As a service provider observed about the notion of 'special needs':

Special needs is like they are not quite fitting in, they need a hand, as if they need you to get them up (provider, 2005).

A philosophy of 'needs' fails to acknowledge the right of refugees to appropriate resettlement services that are flexible, responsive and based on cultural knowledge (Couch, 2005). This section draws on the principles of understanding, trust, social justice and access to guide the analysis of client and service provider insights into good practice for DOES.

Accessing GAPCO services

Readily accessible and equitable services are the first step to achieving good practice. Access to GAPCO was ad hoc and data showed that equal numbers of job seekers accessed GAPCO services via their own informal networks of friends and relatives

(‘word of mouth’) and via referral from local organisations. Broader marketing of GAPCO has the potential to diversify and systematise access pathways strengthening the equity of service access. The message for DOES is to utilise formal service networks and informal social and community networks to promote awareness of services and thus ready access. Informal social networks are a particularly important source of service information for marginal social groups such as refugees.

Of the 20 GAPCO clients interviewed, 8 (40%) were referred by friends and relatives, 8 (40%) from local organisations (Red Cross, ASRC, FLN, EMC and Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service), 3 (15%) from Centrelink and 1 (5%) person saw a local advertisement for GAPCO. The quantitative analysis of clients receiving services with GAPCO showed a similar pattern with 29% self referred or referred by friends, 23% referred by welfare/counselling services and 15% by Centrelink. The remaining 33% were referred by a variety of community, educational and health centres.

BLS-GAPCO’s location opposite the housing commission flats in Fitzroy facilitated ready access to GAPCO employment services at a time when there were few other services available for refugees:

We’re not limited to our geographical area...but [clients] are predominately from across the road [the housing commission flats]. It’s just easy for them to come here and we’ve got the skills and expertise to help them, so that’s why they come here (provider, 2005).

Not all clients interviewed were living in the housing commission flats or in the local area. Some had to travel considerable distances on public transport to reach GAPCO, from Ringwood for example, and initially at least, job seekers carried the cost incurred. Once registered with GAPCO, clients were provided with transport assistance in the form of Metcards.

Pathways to GAPCO must be understood within the context of job seekers’ social circumstances (see also Commonwealth of Australia, 2004). For asylum seekers in particular, but also refugees arriving on humanitarian visas, seeking employment services was a secondary priority to securing basic living arrangements, such as housing and food, as discussed in Section 7, and as the following quote illustrates:

They often go to other places first because they’ve got more immediate needs like housing, clothing, food.... those sorts of things. So they go to the community centres and then they say ‘well what about a job?’ and they get sent to us (provider, 2005).

Of the eight people accessing GAPCO via community organisations, six were asylum seekers on TPV’s or bridging visas. These data indicate the importance of GAPCO’s networks with specialist agencies working with asylum seekers and refugees. Community organisations recognise the key role played by GAPCO in providing employment services:

The best thing that can happen to people is that they get referred to GAPCO because they have got money to spend on people, they have got contacts, they have got networks, they have got full-time people,...I think it is the best thing if they get referred to GAPCO...it is the best they can get (provider, 2005).

The relatively low rate of Centrelink referrals was identified as potentially problematic with the restructuring of DOES from the FACS to the DEWR. Under DEWR, all job seekers eligible for job search assistance are to be assessed by Centrelink, who will then refer job seekers to the most appropriate employment service. At present, referrals to GAPCO from Centrelink are inconsistent and depend on GAPCO staff networking and educating Centrelink staff about refugee mental health issues, in particular PTSD. Greater awareness and understanding of these issues by Centrelink staff would be beneficial and enhance the likelihood of referral of refugees to GAPCO.

Accessing GAPCO and other services is also about refugees learning what services and supports are available in the community. Service providers explained that creating this awareness gives refugees a place to go when they need to:

At least if they know that it is there, then if and when the time is right, they can go and tap into it. It doesn't matter who we are or what background we have, we need to know that there is support in some form or other when you feel low or you feel ready enough to go out there and access it. Some people are reluctant to go and seek assistance or just not aware that it is there (provider, 2005).

Refugees often leave behind their support network of families and neighbours and can have very little, or no support at all. Even if they do have family in Australia, their capacity to provide support is likely to be limited by unemployment, mental health problems and other settlement issues. In this context, refugee awareness of services is critical.

Relationship building

Respectful relationships between case managers and clients are critical to ensuring all stages of employment service provision are appropriate, equitable and accessible. To achieve this, providers emphasised the importance of responding to clients as people, rather than emphasising cultural and other differences, and time. The current DEWR model of DOES provision however, is based on minimising the time between intake and employment placement which can create difficulties for providers who are acutely aware that building relationships is a process which can not be rushed. Establishing rapport and trust takes time:

Breaking through the politeness barrier and getting to know the person, takes a gift ...and it takes time, a lot of listening and observation (provider, 2005).

Many refugees, especially if they have experienced interrogation, have learnt to say what they believe the interviewer wants to hear. Breaking through these communication patterns is a slow process and means establishing a relational dynamic where refugees feel comfortable to talk naturally and in this way, providers can learn about their clients' values and priorities:

We need to be accepting and to respect that refugees can contribute...and that we can learn from them (provider, 2005).

[We] need to be interested too, to listen to whatever comments they have got, to invite comments...there are some people who are very quiet and hesitant to speak up, it can feel to us that they can't know anything or maybe that nothing is going on there and that is a trap. Others can come over as quite

hard and arrogant but maybe that's the manner they address things...and it is just cultural. Some people can put that on as a protective defence mechanism...because that is what happens in their culture, so it can be hard getting through that (provider, 2005).

Spending time listening to clients and learning about what matters to them is vital and providers explained that employment placements often fail when client goals and aspirations are incorrectly assessed. As a provider explained:

We think we have understood what we think they want but actually we haven't...so [we] put them into something [a job] and they move onto something else because that is not actually what they want and we haven't spent the time listening to them (provider, 2005).

Service providers lose their credibility with employers when placements are not successful and clients only last in a job for a day or two. Clients can be anxious to commence work, earn an income, start repaying debts and/or sending money to family living overseas and have not always thought about their longer term aspirations and goals. In Australia and in refugees' countries of origin poverty restricts people's opportunities and choices regarding the type of work they engage in. Consequently, refugees can be unfamiliar with planning their working lives let alone careers, as the following quote illustrates:

We sit them down and try to get them to think logically about what's going to happen. I could get you a job in a factory....but you've got to spend some time thinking about the fact that you don't want to work in a factory forever, you've got all these other good skills, so how about we try and find you a job in this or give you some training instead. It can take time just getting to know them to sort out their issues (provider, 2005).

Listening to clients is one part of accurate assessments and the other component is ensuring clients feel sufficiently comfortable to express themselves and their aspirations with their case workers without fear of negative ramifications. The cultural norms of social relations and communication pattern the way clients interact with their case managers. For example, social relations are governed by hierarchy in South-East Asia where older people and those with greater status are given respect and deferred to for advice. Challenging an older person is looked down upon. These rules of etiquette can lead to misguided employment placements, for example Chanda from South-east Asia described how he did not want to refuse a job GAPCO offered him, even though he did not want the job, for fear of upsetting his case manager and foregoing future assistance:

I didn't like that job but I didn't want to refuse because they helped me....if I refuse they will be upset and they are less likely to help me in the future. That is why I kept on working (client, 2005).

Another example of poor communication leading to inappropriate pre-employment assistance is the case of James, a 31 year old man from Central Africa. James was referred to GAPCO by a Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) and when interviewed for this study, he had been in Australia 6 weeks. He told us he wanted to work in community-based rehabilitation in the disability sector, work he had done in the refugee camp he lived in for ten years. Several weeks later GAPCO referred him to a training program in which he enrolled and his teacher arranged for him to commence a carpentry apprenticeship, the career goal listed on his out of date curriculum vitae. Discrepancies such as these suggest the need to clearly focus pre-employment

assistance on taking time to build relationships with refugees so that they feel comfortable expressing themselves and their aspirations as a first step to ensuring appropriate interventions.

The experience of being a refugee can leave people feeling vulnerable, powerless and out of control. The following comments by a man living on a bridging visa are indicative of his passive acceptance of whatever opportunities are presented to him:

I am a victim of terror....I am not demanding, I am grateful for the help that I get (client, 2005).

When refugees passively receive 'help', feelings of disempowerment can be amplified:

Everybody is trying to help and it doesn't really help...it is disempowering. People think they know what is good for them [refugees] and they make decisions for them (provider, 2005).

Service providers described the importance of empowering refugees to regain a sense of power and control over their lives. Over time the role of case managers change as clients become increasingly competent and ideally, employed and settled into Australian society:

I put a lot of the responsibility back onto them [refugees]....not hold their hands through things but actually teaching them how to do it (provider, 2005).

Over a period of time when you get to know them and depending on what they need, you would slowly withdraw from the picture and get them to do more and more....and they become more and more confident, and they understand more of how things work then you do less for them (provider, 2005).

A lot of what we do is asking 'what do you think?' and 'What do you want to do?' (provider, 2005).

Enhancing refugees' feelings of control and empowerment is an important dimension of good practice and begins with minimising power differences in one-on-one interactions between clients and case managers. Whilst empowerment is not an explicit goal of employment assistance, it is a critical element and services use different approaches to facilitate empowerment. For example, a case worker considers her clients in terms of their skills rather than refugee status:

As far as I know you are a welder you are not a refugee and I think a part of building trust is around that as well and....trying to move away from any disempowerment they might have felt (provider, 2005).

Another service focused on the maintenance of client dignity:

The dignity of the person needs to be upheld. What I mean by that is that in any interaction within our organisation, we have to continually know that we can not strip this person of anymore dignity or confidence than what they have already experienced...this is critical for us (provider, 2005).

While other services focused on promoting feelings of psychological wellbeing:

Making them [refugees] feel that they are accepted...that they are valued and that they have got something to contribute to the community, even if they say

they haven't worked and they haven't got experience, to then turn around and think of something positive (provider, 2005).

Security, safety and meaningful involvement with other people is a very important underpinning to have I think for relief from the psychological stress...you know, to find a safe place where they can be with other people, who are happy, and it is safe and accepting (provider, 2005).

Not all service providers are equally aware of the psychological needs and the socio-economic and political context from which refugees have come, for example clients being asked if they had a car whilst living in refugee camps. Providers need to understand clients' backgrounds and be able to work with them in a flexible manner. However, some service providers have particular expectations of job seekers and when these are not met case managers can find it difficult to work with them. For example, a case manager explained the difficulties of working with clients who do not search for work themselves and depend on their managers who do not have enough time to do lengthy job searches for all clients. Another provider explained that refugees do not understand the services they are engaged with, their responsibilities as job seekers and the rationale behind attending many appointments but not necessarily getting a job. Frequently, refugees have other issues going on in their lives and are only interested in contacting GAPCO when they have a job. Clients are not always interested in developing a relationship with their case manager and maintaining relationships with clients between jobs can be challenging for case managers (provider, 2005).

Refugees were described as difficult to work with when they came for an appointment but did not talk. From the perspective of service providers, clients who are confident, articulate and proactive are easier to work with and tend to be more successful:

It's a lot about confidence and the ability to speak up for themselves...because if people are confident and more outgoing, they are more likely to succeed (provider, 2005).

Refugees have to learn these skills:

A lot of it is about those personal skills that we take for granted...you know like confidence, self esteem, communication skills, basically if we can get those sort of very generic basic, human people skills embedded in people, I think their ability to succeed is pretty good...negotiation skills, conflict resolution skills and all of those sorts of things that enable them to fit in and work in a team (provider, 2005).

These personal, social and cultural skills can be taught but real learning and understanding is gained through experience, as the following comments illustrate:

It's not learning in the classroom situation, they are learning in real life, and those people [who have mentors], have gone from being on a plateau, not being able to attain any language, lacking confidence, especially in speaking, and you will notice after three or four months of having a weekly visit with someone, an Australian, who is a volunteer and cares about them, that all of a sudden their English will just start shooting up (provider, 2005).

Service providers observed that refugees with Australian friends and/or mentors benefit in terms of the personal support they receive, the social and cultural capital they acquire and ultimately their enhanced employability. These insights into refugee

learning demonstrate the importance of social relations with Australians and broader links with the communities in which they live. Friends and mentors provide the support refugees' communities often can not because of their own trauma and settlement issues:

They have got somebody in Australia who can be their champion, to help them through the tough times,...their Australian friend will listen to them, have them over for meals, take them out, take them to the footy, to try and relieve the depression, and that means that when people come back to school, their stress is reduced a bit and then they are able to learn better (provider, 2005).

Clark (2005) argues that critical to employment and settlement success is the ability of refugees to regain a sense of power and control over their lives, as well as a sense of self worth and purpose. These data demonstrate the multiple benefits of a situated learning approach, such as with mentoring, to empowering refugees by enhancing their personal, social and cultural skills and thus their employability. Additionally, Clark argues the need to empower service agencies.

Job seekers' experience of receiving services with GAPCO

In the brief survey completed by all GAPCO clients interviewed (n=20), all stages of employment assistance received were positively assessed (assessment, training, job search, resume, interviewing, employers, on-the-job and continuing assistance, see Appendix 3). However, in-depth interviews revealed that clients had mixed experiences of receiving services with GAPCO. At one extreme, clients were extremely happy with the personal support and employment assistance received with some describing their case worker as an ever present supportive friend. Dara, a 40 year old man from the Middle East, gained employment as a personal carer through GAPCO and was very satisfied with the services he received and has stayed in contact with GAPCO for the past five years:

Whatever support it is that I need, GAPCO always gave me, like initially they advised me; they are not just case managers, they have become friends really. If I need something I just call them....what ever it is, a support letter or help with paying...they are happy to help me, they are very kind, I am much supported (client, 2005).

Another client commented:

[Name of GAPCO case manager] has helped me very much, because I go there, I have problems and I am helped...money for school books, to find a job, train tickets and they go through my application and they always ask how I am going (client, 2005).

GAPCO are more helpful and have a less structured way of working than Job Network....they have taught me a lot (client, 2005).

They go out of their way to help you...they are in regular contact and have provided me with two short term jobs (client, 2005).

GAPCO helped clients by "bringing good things" (client, 2005) into their new lives in Australia such as teaching them how to get a job, helping them into training, university and job interviews. A total of five clients however, were dissatisfied with

GAPCO. Chanda for example, a trained doctor from South East Asia, was disappointed at GAPCO's lack of success in securing him a higher level job than that he was already doing:

The main reason I went to GAPCO is that I wanted them to find a job for me...sending my resume or application letter or sending me to training if I needed it...I said I prefer to work in pathology or as a personal carer but I couldn't get a job. GAPCO only gave me cleaning jobs and I can find cleaning jobs myself. I used to work as a cleaner; I can read the newspaper and get a job like this. I was disappointed because I was hoping to get a little bit of a good job with good money (client, 2005).

Varying degrees of satisfaction with GAPCO must be understood within the context of clients' work history and aspirations, where the fulfilment of aspirations was directly related to satisfaction. Dara was a physiotherapist in his home country and wanted to utilise these skills and work in a related area which GAPCO helped him to do, whereas Chanda's aspirations for a better job were not met by GAPCO. Four other clients interviewed expressed similar sentiments to Chanda explaining that they were not interested in accepting jobs offered by GAPCO as carpenters, factory workers, cleaners and packers after having working in tourism, information technology and accounting in their home countries. Three of these four decided to enrol in further study instead:

GAPCO said I had to do a traineeship in furniture....to be a carpenter but I don't want to be a carpenter, that is not a career I want. I also don't want to work in a factory. I don't want this to be part of my work experience, labouring and things, I don't enjoy it. That is why I don't push myself to do this and why I decided to go to school, to uni if I can get in (client, 2005).

These clients demonstrate confidence and aspirations to be more than unskilled workers. Additionally, these data flag the need for GAPCO to develop greater links with a broader range of employers to broaden the spectrum of employment options they can offer clients:

Maybe they could develop some corporate relationships so that these employers would prefer to employ disadvantaged people. If GAPCO and employers link and have very strong ties, then we can get a job....but I think GAPCO doesn't have this kind of power or influence or links...they only have odd jobs like cleaning or kitchen hand or something and foreigners or disadvantaged people are hard working and will do these types of jobs. GAPCO can not get higher level jobs (client, 2005).

If you don't have industry contacts and it doesn't matter what the industry is, I don't believe GAPCO do, they may with selling bread and gardening, landscaping type work, but not jobs for intellectual people, they only have contacts for low level jobs (client, 2005).

I couldn't say GAPCO didn't help me because they did, but they are not the factory manager, they are not the person who makes the decisions about employment (client, 2005).

Interviews with service providers confirmed these data:

We don't tend to get jobs in the more skilled areas, so it's not an area I am familiar with (provider, 2005).

Providers also agreed with client observations that marketing, developing relationships with employers and advocating on behalf of job seekers increases the likelihood of gaining employment for clients. Close relationships with employers also enhances the longevity of employment by ensuring any issues are addressed as they arise.

Even though GAPCO was unable to help these clients secure the type of work they were hoping for, clients were appreciative of GAPCO's encouragement and help with other problems. GAPCO provided clients with a wide variety of material support such as tram tickets, arranging interpreting services, paying for text books for study and work boots, linking clients to training programs such as BSL's Scheme for Training and Educating People (STEP) program and the EMC, arranging for interviews, regular phone calls and follow up, giving personal references and assistance with other issues, such as advice on Work Cover, obtaining drivers licences and assistance with children's clothing. Access to this material assistance and personal support was not consistent however and two of the four clients dissatisfied with GAPCO, as described above, felt GAPCO provided them with minimal services:

There were no services. I think they forgot me. I did my own resume and took it to them. They will support you if you have got a job, like with work clothes and transport and other things, but if you have not got a job they can't provide anything...so that is a problem...if I had a job they may be able to help me with tickets and clothes. There is no need to spend time with them if they can't help you (client, 2005).

I received no support to help me study and they did not job search for me because I was studying (client, 2005).

It is important for service providers to assist clients to develop career pathways and not simply place them in a job or consider them 'too hard' and not follow up. Frequently, refugees are not aware of the career avenues open to them because they do not have any information regarding training, educational and other opportunities, and in some cases do not know how to get it. In this sense, case managers are advocates for refugees linking them into opportunities and teaching them about Australian society whilst simultaneously educating mainstream providers about refugee settlement issues. Case managers and other providers must carefully consider where the services they provide fit into refugees' lives and avoid the easy tendency to just think about getting them into employment. This is not only an issue of achieving outcomes, but of recognising refugees' capacity, ensuring their dignity and that they fulfil their potential. As a provider explained:

I think that, you know, they just have to be patient, they have to get their language skills up and they have to get their work skills honed so that they will be successful, and also they can not only get a job, but then they can also be promoted through that job, or change to another job, or be able to study part time and improve things, because really having a factory job for the rest of their lives is not the outcome that we want for them, because they are far more capable than that, and have so much more to offer (provider, 2005).

This section has identified areas where GAPCO could strengthen their performance on the three facets of good practice: understanding; trust and social justice; and access. Good practice for DOES providers means working effectively with clients, other services and with the community more generally to ensure refugees' rights to

citizenship in Australian society are met. GAPCO needs to pay greater attention to enhancing service access, building strong and honest relationships with clients and to developing links with professional employment opportunities. Career pathways need to be the goal of DOES and not just one off employment placements. The next three sections describe the multiple personal, systemic and structural barriers refugees face to achieving their career goals in the labour market and goes some way to explaining why placing refugees into professional positions is a difficult and long term process. It is difficult to take the time required to address refugees' complex and dynamic needs within the context of DOES funding arrangements.

Key points

- The majority of clients access GAPCO via informal social networks of friends, family and a variety of community services, particularly asylum seekers. Few clients are referred to GAPCO from Centrelink.
- DOES need to utilise informal networks more fully and to work more closely with Centrelink.
- Community organisations recognise the key role played by GAPCO in providing employment services to refugees.
- Relationships based on trust, respect and acceptance is critical to all stages of employment assistance.
- Empowering refugees and building their feelings of control, safety and security facilitates settlement and employability.
- Situated learning, in initiatives such as mentoring and through developing social networks with communities, enhances employability.
- DOES need to establish links with a broad range of employers, particularly those who can provide skilled and professional job opportunities.

7 Systemic barriers to employment

Daniel is a 33 year old man from West Africa. He lives alone in a small room with basic cooking facilities and a shared bathroom located at the end of the hall. His rent is paid for by Hotham Mission which also provides him with \$100 a month on which he lives. Daniel supplements this with income earned from casual work which he fits in around his studies. He lost both of his parents in the civil war in his home country and does not know where his siblings are. He didn't like to talk about all that he has lost – his parents, his siblings and his home. Daniel's church congregation have become his new family.

Daniel arrived in Australia on June 15, 2000 seeking asylum. He was granted a Bridging Visa A. Initially Daniel found full-time work as a window cleaner through an Australian woman he met at church. At this time, he was able to rent a house and support himself. In September last year, his application for permanent protection was rejected and with the help of volunteers at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, he lodged an appeal with the Refugee Review Tribunal, and when this was rejected, directly with the Minister for Immigration. Whilst waiting for a decision to be made regarding his visa status, he was unable to work. In April, he found out his application was rejected. Daniel is currently living on a Bridging Visa E which allows him to work and study but must be renewed every three months.⁷

Even though Daniel is grateful for the help GAPCO, Hotham Mission and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre have given him, Daniel feels that he can not be demanding. He has to simply receive whatever help they give him and be happy with that. They can not help him to get what he really wants: a visa to stay in Australia. This is most important thing for Daniel; he has nowhere else to go. Daniel explained that he is a victim of terror in search of a safe place. Working helps to take his mind off his difficulties; it makes him feel good because it allows him to forget his situation. When Daniel finishes studying English (Certificate 3 and 4), he would like to enrol in a small business management course and explained that 'nothing in this world is easy, but we must have faith and determination'.

This section describes the systemic and personal barriers faced by refugees receiving GAPCO services and highlights lessons relevant to other DOES and community support agencies. Daniel and Roseanna's stories illustrate the multiple issues which new arrivals, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, face when they migrate to Australia. This research supports the finding in immigrant and refugee literatures that visa type on arrival is a key determinant of settlement success and employment outcomes (DIMIA, 2003; McAllister, 1995). Data collected in this research demonstrates that visa type shapes access to the basic requirements of daily life including: housing; health care; income/income support; English language courses; social relations; feelings of safety and security and their associated wellbeing. The data shows that arriving as a refugee is associated with particular settlement issues, including: poor mental and physical health; separation from family; accumulated debt; lack of social networks; difficulty meeting daily needs; and for asylum seekers

⁷ People on Bridging Visa E are normally not allowed to work but there are some rare exceptions.

ongoing uncertainty regarding their future right to permanent residency in Australia. These issues impact on employment and settlement outcomes and long term physical and mental wellbeing. GAPCO service users developed social networks, both within their own ethnic communities and the local community, to access opportunities, social and material resources.

Roseanna is a 45 year old mother of three who arrived in Australia in June 2000 as a sponsored refugee on a humanitarian visa. She lives with her three children in a housing commission flat in inner city Melbourne. Roseanna is currently living on Centrelink payments. Although Roseanna has relatives in Melbourne, she does not feel close to them.

Roseanna and her children reluctantly left their home country as the civil war became increasingly dangerous. She worried that on turning sixteen her son would be taken to be a soldier and feared he would return badly maimed. They had a good standard of living and were happy; for the past 16 years she had a well paid and satisfying job as a senior accountant. Her father was a high court judge, and she and all her siblings were university educated. On leaving her home, she and her children lived in another country for 2 years before coming to Australia. She found this extremely difficult because they did not speak that country's language.

Roseanna is reluctant to accept less skilled jobs and has turned down a cleaning position because she feels it is better for her to study. However, she is tired of studying and despite having completed several courses here in Australia (at EMC and NMIT), she feels they were a waste of time because she was 'busy for nothing and never got a job'. Roseanna is reluctant to return to either the EMC or GAPCO because she never finished a third course that the staff at EMC advised her to do at RMIT. Roseanna no longer knows the GAPCO staff as her Case Manager has left. She feels everything in her life is going backwards and that her unemployment is her fault. This makes her feel very low. Work would help to erase these feelings: 'If I had a job, if someone helped me when I arrived, things would be different. Finding a job is very important.'

Visa status on arrival

The visa status of refugees and asylum seekers is the most critical determinant of access to the basic elements of citizenship in Australian society, including the right to work (Leach & Mansouri, 2004; Mares, 2003). The data clearly demonstrate the socio-economic and psychosocial impacts of the current Australian Government policy of mandatory detention and the lengthy process of application for permanent protection. As O'Neil argues, much of the distress impacting on migrants "has less to do with change per se and more to do with the political and economic structures which constrain individual and community attempts to construct meaningful and rewarding social environments" (O'Neil, 1986, p. 250).

Of the 20 job seekers interviewed, 50% entered Australia as offshore refugees on humanitarian visas, 30% sought asylum in Australia (onshore refugees), 10% arrived

as skilled migrants, 5% as tourists who later sought refugee status and the remaining 5% were long term residents with a CALD background. Visa category at time of arrival shaped interviewees' right to work in Australia, their access to basic health, social welfare and employment services and had a significant and ongoing impact on their psychological wellbeing.

a) Asylum seekers living on temporary protection visas (TPV)

Asylum seekers and people living on bridging visas experienced the most marked disadvantage in the labour market, and more broadly in terms of access to housing, health care, social and community support structures. As the ASRC (2006) note, 90% of all asylum seekers in the community receive no support of any kind from the Federal Government. This research supports the ASRC view that non-government organisations, churches, community groups and concerned individuals provide the safety net for asylum seekers.

All asylum seekers receiving services from GAPCO had the right to work in Australia. Asylum seekers live in limbo as their applications for protection are processed and this fundamental uncertainty negatively impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing. When asylum seekers arriving in Australia without a valid visa are found to be refugees they are granted a three year TPV.⁸ Most TPV holders have been in detention centres for periods ranging from 6 months to 6 years and when they are released and living in the community they have work and study rights. Although TPV holders have the right to work and study, they are only given a Job Seeker ID and resume, the right to use the Job Search website and access 'Job Match' services. They do not have access to training, funds or New Apprenticeship schemes that Centrelink offers to job seekers. If they want to commence tertiary study they must pay full fees and most do not have access to English classes offered by the Commonwealth Government that onshore refugees are entitled to (ASRC, 2006). They face considerable structural barriers to enhancing their employability and gaining employment.

A Bridging Visa, Category A or E is granted if a person arriving with a valid visa applies for protection in Australia (ASRC, 2005b; see also Leach & Mansouri, 2004; Mares, 2003). Bridging visas come with a range of conditions and people living on these visas may have different restrictions placed on them; some bridging visas prohibit employment and study whilst others do not (ASRC, 2005a, 2005b). Bridging Visa E holders are generally not allowed to work, study, do volunteer work or receive any financial support including Medicare. Service providers interviewed in this study observed that people on bridging visas tend to be socially isolated, and if unable to work they live in considerable poverty reliant on the goodwill of individuals, NGOs and churches to support them.

⁸ A person who is on a TPV is an asylum seeker who came to Australia without a valid visa or passport by boat or plane, was immediately placed in detention and was then found to be a refugee and released onto a three year TPV. If they want to try and obtain a permanent protection visa (PPV) they must apply again for Protection (ASRC, 2005).

The TPV acts as a major disincentive to commencing study or courses in Australia. Planning career pathways is not a priority because there is no guarantee they will be granted permanent residency in Australia. The following observations from a service provider demonstrate the fundamental insecurity people on TPVs and bridging visas live with:

They have often been waiting for years, and they will continue to have to wait for years before they know whether they are allowed to stay, so there is this incredible instability and insecurity and no sense of future (provider, 2005).

This lack of certainty impacts on asylum seekers' wellbeing and their capacity to engage in activities to enhance their employability and job readiness:

They are stressed,...they get very upset when there is a hearing, or they have to go to a lawyer, and they might, I mean they will be upset for days before hand, and perhaps days after, which would affect their concentration and study, and perhaps their attendance (at school) and their general mood. The students just talk of feeling that it is not worthwhile to make plans, it's not worthwhile to do very much, because they may not be able to stay here....it is very disruptive and very distressing for them (provider, 2005).

Furthermore, data showed that employment is one of many priorities of people living on TPVs or bridging visas. Their legal and health status are more important priorities and these shape decision-making and attitudes regarding employment. Data gained in interviews with service provider revealed that TPV holders attend appointments with lawyers and doctors ahead of work commitments. Despite the large debts incurred travelling to Australia, employment is a third priority whilst their immigration status is in limbo. Additionally, the holders of TPVs are not eligible for family reunion and many are men, separated from with their wives and children living in war torn countries (provider, 2005). Assisting families to migrate to Australia was a longer term priority of four of the six TPV holders interviewed because their visa precluded family reunion; the remaining two were husband and wife.

The TPV and bridging visa holders experienced high levels of stress, depression and had poorer general wellbeing than interviewees in other visa categories. Daniel, for example, had a very flat affect, was withdrawn and appeared listless. One of the six asylum seekers interviewed described the period in detention, and the time immediately following his release, as more traumatic than anything he had experienced in his home country. When he was granted a TPV and released from detention, he was ineligible for full Centrelink payments and family reunification but had the right to work. He received Special Benefits (89% of Newstart allowance). Six weeks prior to being interviewed, his application for a permanent protection visa (PPV) was granted. On reflection, he recognised the impact of the six months he spent in detention and the uncertainty of the TPV on his physical and mental health. Service providers reiterated the fragility of many TPV and bridging visa holders:

I can talk specifically about one young man from Nauru who like many of them, not long after he arrived....really crashed....and became quite depressed,...suicidal and needed to be seen very quickly by an appropriate doctor. They gave him medication, it was necessary, and over a six month period, he slowly started to stabilise. Toward the end of the six months he was quite employable, he had a trade. Now, he is working full-time and he makes really good money. He's a totally different person. He is still quite fragile because of the conditions of his TPV (provider, 2005).

Tomic is another example. He is a fit, strong 23 year old who was working as a packer in his home country and was living on a bridging visa A. He is receiving no support other than that provided by friends, GAPCO and the ASRC. He has no money and is living with friends temporarily. These issues are worrying him greatly.

All the TPV holders interviewed described the problems they faced finding appropriate housing, adequate food and medical care, even with access to Medicare. All TPV and bridging visa holders interviewed had trouble finding appropriate accommodation and had lived in a variety of temporary arrangements including staying with friends, hotels paid for by Australian Red Cross, Buddhist temples, rental properties funded by Hotham Mission and short term supported accommodation for the homeless. With uncertainties as fundamental as housing in the lives of TPVs, it is difficult to focus on finding employment. Additionally, it is very difficult for TPV holders to engage with Centrelink and real estate agents to secure housing. Even service providers assisting them describe the complexities and systemic barriers to gaining assistance. For example:

We go to an agent, finally get a house, the woman's disabled, she needs a house at the ground floor level. They have come out of detention, but because they are staying in someone's house, a supporter has put them up, they are sleeping on mattresses on the floor, so they only get \$120 for the fortnight as a couple because they are getting free board and lodging according to Centrelink. In actual fact, if they came out and were sitting on the street, they would be entitled to \$720 for the fortnight. So we are saving the government \$600 by putting them up on the floor and they are losing that money. So now they have to go into a house. We have got one, \$739 a month. It's suitable rent, they qualify, it's not more than 55% of their income, all the rest of it, but they don't have a bond, they've been in detention. So then we have to find that, and I know, that you can get bonds for TPVs. But a lot of people around here have paid bonds themselves, to get people into houses, why isn't it advertised? Why isn't it available? Why haven't we got documentation to say this is what you do?... Centrelink says 'um, they can't have a proper income, until they have moved into their own home', but I say 'they can't move into a flat, until they have got an income. Could you give me an income statement?' and they want to get an income statement, they are on \$120 a fortnight, not too many agents going to rent you a flat if that's all you are getting. You know, there are so many barriers (provider, 2005).

Even when basic living arrangements are in place, such as the case with Daniel (his rent is being paid for by Hotham Mission), TPV and bridging visa holders face a range of other difficulties establishing the basic elements of daily life, such as bank accounts. A service provider described the experience of helping a couple living on a bridging visa:

Even the simple thing of going into the bank, having a bank account opened, receiving their cards in the mail and wanting to get a PIN number and you hand the card to the bank employee, and say 'we have come to get a PIN number' and she says 'I need a passport, a driver's licence....and this couple have only just arrived...they do not have these things (provider, 2005).

Even with assistance the process is complex and confusing. Access to medical care is similarly difficult. Even for TPVs who do qualify for Medicare, the issuing of cards can be slow. This leaves new arrivals, and those recently released from detention,

without vital, and costly, medications. The only way TPV holders get their medication is with the financial and practical help of NGOs, an issue discussed more fully below.

The ongoing insecurity of their daily lives places an enormous strain on families and anybody else they turn to for assistance, including community members and their local ethnic communities which significantly impacts on their wellbeing:

Relationships deteriorate terribly, even at Red Cross,...a number of East Timorese families, they were sort of breaking down...the way that the family had been havelled together was breaking them down under the strain, as well as you know, the different life stages [of the family members]. They were overcrowded in their accommodation, they were living on 85% of your basic social security Centrelink payments, and some of them weren't getting any income and were being supported by people on Centrelink payments or less than Centrelink payments. Some people might have been working. So it was incredibly stressed and terribly insecure and terribly unstable. And that has got to have a negative impact on people's ability to do anything about thinking about, well they are desperate to work. It can also totally destabilise you, you know, it can just really foul things up (provider, 2005).

In contrast, once people are granted a PPV they are entitled to access a range of federally funded services such as those offered by MRCs, Centrelink, Medicare and employment services. Once permanent protection is gained, both service providers and PPV holders described the dramatic changes they witnessed and experienced. Being granted permanent protection affords people the opportunity to plan a future and brings feelings of greater personal and familial security as well as relief.

b) Refugees arriving on humanitarian visas

The data shows a clear delineation between the experiences of people on TPVs and bridging visas and those arriving on humanitarian visas. Most notable was the contrast in wellbeing, in particular symptoms of anxiety and depression (such as flat affect, problems sleeping and concentration), available social support and the ease in which basic living arrangements were met. People arriving on humanitarian visas all had friends or relatives with whom they stayed on arrival. They had social networks in Australia; all had been sponsored by family or friends to come to Australia. Consequently, they had varying levels of support, ranging from a place to stay in the short term, access to information regarding the workings of Australian society including employment opportunities and services, to broader social and community networks on arrival. These social connections meant that people on humanitarian visas were better resourced to establish themselves in a new country and did so more promptly than those without networks, such as people on TPVs. For example, Darren, a 31 year old Sudanese man who had arrived in Australia five weeks prior to being interviewed, had already linked into a volunteer position with a MRC, commenced a three month course with the EMC and had had several meetings with his GAPCO case manager. He was anxious to find more permanent rental accommodation, commence work, begin paying off the debt he acquired getting to Australia and to commence further education. Darren's sponsor, who he was currently living with, linked him in with the MRC, whose staff then referred him to the EMC and onto GAPCO.

Physical and mental health issues

Brough et al. (2003) observe that refugees arriving in Australia face not only the stresses of migration relating to the sudden change in language and culture, but also contend with a past that is often filled with traumatic experiences. As Leach and Mansouri (2004) note, it is not accurate to discuss PTSD as a bounded, distant and complete set of experiences located solely in countries of origin and/or refugee camps. They suggest that trauma may be ongoing for refugees and asylum seekers, particularly for those on bridging visas without work and study rights. Brough et al. (2003) go on to describe how “trauma emerges as the past mixes with both painful experiences of the present and anxieties about the future” (p. 195). They warn against focusing solely on issues of acculturation and PTSD because these distort refugees’ lives to periods of transition rather than whole lives, to victims rather than survivors and to illness rather than health.

People living on TPVs and bridging visa holders face particular physical and mental health issues, partly relating to accessing services, as described above, partly to do with poor general health, (in particular outstanding dental and eye care), and most importantly to do with the stress and anxiety accompanying the uncertain process of applying for permanent protection. Chris describes the impact of living on a bridging visa on his mental health:

When I went to GAPCO I didn’t have any benefits, I was living from Red Cross and as a father of four children.....you feel stressed....you think that you are going crazy because you don’t have anything....the thing is rent....people don’t care, if you don’t pay the rent they will kick you out, because I don’t have any benefits, they stopped everything...you go crazy,....it was very lucky that I came to GAPCO (Chris, 2005).

Maintaining physical health in the context of unemployment, low or no income, and the stress of the application process, is challenging (provider, 2005). Many asylum seekers have sleeping problems because they are worried about their future and service providers have noted the increasing presentation of TPV and bridging visa holders with stress-related diabetes – a consequence of time spent in detention and on bridging visas in the community. Back problems, gastric and other stomach problems are also common. Physical and mental health is inseparable.

Accessing adequate food and nutrition is also difficult, particularly for asylum seekers, and this compounds the impact of stress and people’s capacity to deal with it. Without a balanced diet, the stamina and energy required to work full-time is not forthcoming:

If you’re on a bridging visa and don’t have any income, where are you going to get your food from? And we can’t supply the food for a family of nine to get them through the week. Protein, iron,...we get a hundred and fifty dozen eggs a month and we provide three hundred food parcels a month. So, think about that, it’s only about a dozen eggs per food parcel, no, not even a dozen, half a dozen eggs and that’s got to feed either a family of one or a family of nine (provider, 2005).

The state of limbo in which asylum seekers live in Australia, together with the traumatic events they are likely to have experienced prior to arriving, underlie ongoing PTSD, depression, sleep problems and associated physical health complaints.

Long periods of time spent in detention strips people of their dignity and feelings of safety and trust. The label of PTSD can render these feelings and emotions invisible, silencing the ongoing suffering of refugees. For example, service providers find the invisibility of PTSD challenging:

The torture and trauma thing it's very abstract, while it's very real [for the sufferer], in one sense it is very abstract, because it is not something that you can see. What we often see, when you get these people coming through the doors looking for work, is a fit, able bodied person, who looks like they can do the job physically without any problems at all, it's only a matter of training them (provider, 2005).

The thing is when they present to us they are quite different to the way they would be in a normal situation because they want to put their best face forward and show that they're eager to get a job and when they get to know you they tell you a few things along the way and obviously we have some information from them because we need to write reports, Centrelink reports and justify why they're actually a client with us. We do get some of those details but then ultimately we're not a counselling service. So if they do need help with that we have to refer them elsewhere...and they would not be considered job ready (provider, 2005).

Service providers were reticent to ask refugees and asylum seekers about their past, particularly their experiences of torture and trauma. Case workers felt that dealing with mental health issues was not their responsibility or area of expertise and referred clients onto other organisations for counselling as required. Several raised the issue of upsetting refugees by making them re-visit traumatic events and concluded the best approach is to develop trust over time and wait until they are ready to talk about it:

You can't ask them about these things, but they will tell you at some stage or other when they are ready (provider, 2005).

Additionally, refugees themselves do not necessarily identify having a problem, let alone a mental health issue, and consequently, just get on with things as best they can. They do not perceive mental health issues in the same way as westerners, and as a result do not seek out support in community and other services as may be expected: "the idea of going to speak to a stranger is as weird as going to live with a stranger" (provider, 2005). If they do need to talk with someone, they tend to confide in a family or respected community member, not a professional. Problems arise for people without these networks.

A further difficulty is the unpredictable nature of trauma. For example:

Things will be going right, and then suddenly they'd snap. Something might just trigger off things that they have experienced, they would have seen people killed and brutalised (provider, 2005).

So you are going to have somebody who is in a job, everything is going really hunky dory, they've been in the job for a long time, everything is going great. Something can happen to their family overseas or something, there could be visa change here, or something could happen that all of a sudden they relive some of their trauma and they hit the wall. And so, when that happens, if you've got somebody who has been placed by an organisation like GAPCO then GAPCO, because they have got a relationship with the employer, then there is a team approach to try and resolve the situation. But if they haven't got that support when things go badly, they can just walk out the door and

never go back. And then, the employer can say, 'well you can't trust those people', and the person thinks 'I've failed', so then that adds to the stress. So, that makes such a big difference, and people are under terrible pressure, especially, not just especially, but single men, who have got families overseas...it can be very, very hard for them and so they go up and down, they can be happy as a lark, they can be terribly depressed (provider, 2005).

Physical and mental health problems impact on other areas of refugee and asylum seekers' lives, for example, they can have poor concentration, be slow learners of English and other skills, have low self esteem, feel disorientated, worthless, suspicious and anxious. Some service providers described how these issues must be managed before employment can be commenced. However, several interviewees described the positive impact of work and making a positive contribution, on their mental health because it takes their mind off their difficulties. Work is therapeutic: "If I don't work, I'm not a nice person. I worry, I get anxious" (client, 2005).

As Hosking (1990) argues, when basic survival needs have not been met, not only is deeper psychological and spiritual healing delayed, but trauma increases.

Separation from family and lack of social networks

Stone (2005) describes that for many recent immigrants from CALD backgrounds, including refugees, they are first and foremost members of families and extended networks of kin. Families act as a unit and the individual is subordinate to the family; identity is thus relational as opposed to centrality of the individual in western nations such as Australia. Many refugees, and particularly TPV holders who have been released from detention, are men who have left their families behind in Iran, Iraq or Afghanistan. Many do not know the whereabouts of their families, if they are alive or dead. As Daniel described above, this loss is associated with loneliness, grief and depression, and for those with family living overseas, assisting them to migrate to Australia is a priority:

I had a guy yesterday, he came, he was so happy. 'I just rang my son this morning, he was 10 years old. And he said it was seven o'clock in the morning and he was just going off to his school.' And my heart went out to him, he was so excited about it, just that he was able to talk to his son but you know what does that do to a person who goes home and has to sit at home without his family being around (provider, 2005).

It is well documented that having social capital is an advantage when in, and out, of the labour market. A person's family and social networks provide various types of support in periods of unemployment (Danziger, Corcoran, Danziger, & Heflin, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 2004). Refugees and asylum seekers may not have social networks outside of their immediate family because people experiencing trauma may not have the trust and confidence in other people necessary to sustain relationships. Time is required to build trust as the following example shows:

They were asylum seekers and it took them a while for them to build up the trust. They have nothing to do with any other people from their own cultural or social network and the only family they have is the mother, father and the three daughters and that's all they have. So something that constrains them is that they only have that base family unit and the fear of them saying that

they're an asylum seeker and what repercussions that might have if they come to the resource centre, it took them three years to come to the resource centre. If they register here [with social welfare service] they thought the government might come here and get all the records of all the people and then go and, and be with them in their homes and say to them well you're not meant to be in this country and we would like you to leave (provider, 2005).

Many refugees do not have established networks of friends and neighbours when they arrive, and even if they do, it is likely they are refugees or asylum seekers also and thus have limited capacity to support newer arrivals. Lack of social networks impacts on access to information regarding settlement services, on education, training and employment opportunities, and these factors all adversely impact employability:

Most of the jobs in Australia, if you, you have connections....you can go somewhere and apply but they don't trust you because nobody knows you (provider, 2005).

Added to this, is the pressure many feel to pay off debts accrued on journeys to Australia and to build financial resources to assist other family members to migrate:

They've got that big debt even to start with. Some of them have concerns about getting other family members to Australia. So that's their motivation for getting work because they just need money so they're not, they don't really care what they do. They may not have the skills to go straight into work, so I guess it's a catch 22, they've got all these disadvantages right from the start to hinder them from getting work (provider, 2005).

In this context of broken families, supporting family living overseas and wanting to re-unite with family, getting work is critical:

They just forget about their worries. Once people have got money coming in, that seems to make a difference. If they are earning money and they have got money that they can send back to their families overseas so that it reduces some of the stress on the families there that makes a big difference. But if somebody gets sick, and they lose their job, and all of a sudden you know that they have got all these repayment, then people just go [down] (provider, 2005).

Refugee resilience and healing

Holistic models of resilience have been promoted by several researchers (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Myers & Witmer, 2000). These models focus on strengths in an individual's story which may be characterised by problems (Clay n.d). Focusing on strengths, both personal and environmental, can enable a re-framing of problems into strategies that can or are being used to deal with current difficulties. Refugees and asylum seekers interviewed identified several coping strategies they used to deal with the uncertainty of their visa status and learning the skills to be able to operate competently in a new place were critical:

It affected me....I thought this is the country I have been dreaming of coming to....I was very upset, even after leaving Woomera for five or six months....because when they asked me if I was in Woomera, and I said yes, they were very kind to me....this feeling has gone now really, this is something in memory...it never touches me anymore. It (trauma) affected me at the first time but my English was a bigger problem....not because I was a

refugee or something...the language was the most difficult thing,...so I went to TAFE to study for a little bit (client, 2005).

It has been observed in the literature that people who have spent longer periods of time in detention, and who experienced greater exposure to torture in home countries, are more likely to be experiencing greater mental health problems and difficulties settling. Due to the small sample size, our data did not shed any light on this pattern. However, our data does suggest that the longer the application process for residency, the greater the distress and uncertainty.

Service providers noted, and refugees described the positive impact on wellbeing of close personal relationships, refugees sharing their stories and being listened to and validated. For example:

Secure, safe, accepting meaningful involvement with other people is a very important underpinning to have I think, for relief from the psychological stress. It may be that if somebody is in a fairly acute state, that needs to be smaller groupings, but to find a safe place where they can be with other people, who are happy, and it is safe and accepting (provider, 2005).

People gain psychologically by being warmly welcomed, into a comfortable environment, and being made to feel that they are part of it and that they are important....and they certainly gain in that sense (provider, 2005).

In terms of those sorts of emotional issues it is really important to build a good relationship with the clients, so if anything comes up then they have got someone to talk to if they need to (provider, 2005).

Rebuilding trust and feelings of safety is a slow and ongoing process often best facilitated by the ordinary encounters of daily life which help to ground people often more effectively than counselling (Hosking, 1990). A patient listener who is sensitive and affirming, who takes time to establish trust and rapport by being gentle, confident and faithful is required (Hosking, 1990). Refugees need ongoing support, advice and choices rather than being advised, rescued and controlled. As Brough et al. (2003) argue:

Rather than conceptualise their lives in terms of illness boundaries, young people were far more likely to talk of their degree of connectedness within their family, their own ethnic community, their friends, and within Australian society at large. This exemplifies the importance of promoting supportive social environments within public health approaches to refugee health. Biomedical dominance tends to highlight individual dysfunction in our understanding of health (p. 2–6).

What is needed therefore are community development strategies which connect refugees to both their ethnic communities, but more importantly, to the broader 'mainstream' community. The staff from several services described the social function they play in connecting refugees and asylum seekers to one another and to the community. For example:

We encourage our students who live alone to join groups, I mean a lot of them make friendships within the classes here and then start going out to each other's places, so that the isolated ones are meeting up with other isolated ones (provider, 2005).

The Fitzroy Learning Network is a very social place, and they have a very diverse range of people who access services there and they put on lunches, have a magnificent array of food from different cultures, and they'll have dances and outings and things like that...and they are for people who are very culturally isolated (provider, 2005).

People in the community are a fantastic support and they would be able to get involved and teach the new family English or help them finding out which is the best supermarket to go to or which is the best doctor....so people in the community are very supportive....many [asylum seekers] fear even anybody knowing about them...but they have been able to trust just a few people in the community who encourage them and who can walk beside them and support them (provider, 2005).

As Langer (1990) argues “until daily life can be negotiated with a degree of confidence it is difficult to separate the symptoms of refugee trauma from symptoms with more immediate structural causes such as unemployment, social isolation, financial insecurity, and inability to communicate in English, which creates considerable anxiety about every transaction conducted outside the home, from catching the bus to seeking medical help” (p. 80). Giving people access to English is a critical requirement for social functioning, working and communicating (Langer 1990). Alleviating refugee trauma and settlement problems means addressing the structural barriers which systematically undermine their capacity to gain and meet their daily needs and to seek employment.

Key points

- Refugees and asylum seekers face significant systemic and personal barriers to gaining employment.
- Visa status at time of arrival to Australia is a critical determinant of access to refugee settlement and other services, including Medicare, Centrelink, MRCs, public housing, education, English language classes and access to Job Network and DOES.
- Refugees, and particularly people living on TPVs and bridging visas, face considerable disadvantages in meeting the basic requirements for living, including maintaining physical and mental health and getting adequate nutrition. These issues are both associated with unemployment and reduce employability.
- Refugees and asylum seekers lack support social networks of family and friends and frequently have family living overseas in refugee camps or in their home countries which can be a source of distress, financial strain and pressure.
- Traumatic experiences in home countries, refugee camps, on the journey to Australia and post arrival experiences have eroded trust, feelings of safety and can enhance ongoing trauma. Strategies to connect refugees to their local communities would be beneficial.
- The issues DOES service users face in their daily lives shape employability in many ways and must be addressed as a key part of comprehensive placement service provision.

8 Competitiveness in the labour market

Service providers had a good understanding of the vocational and skill gaps affecting the employability of refugees and this section describes the key issues identified by them. The views of job seekers are also included. The limited human capital resources of refugees, reflected in poor English language skills, lack of local experience, limited and/or non-transferable skills, poor labour market knowledge, poor understanding of Australian workplace culture and length of residence, together with the personal barriers they face, resulted in a decline in status following arrival, as noted in the literature (Miller & Neo, 1997). All job seekers interviewed experienced this decline. Refugees are responsible for enhancing their labour market competitiveness, which is ultimately the result of historical and structural conditions in their home countries, and yet they are least able to carry the costs of doing so. Refugees thus require targeted assistance and GAPCO case workers maintain a range of networks with local services and refer job seekers to those appropriate to individual vocational needs. Employer commitment and actions to enhance and support diversity in the workplace would also be desirable.

English language skills

Poor English language and communication skills were identified by job seekers and service providers as one of the biggest barriers to employment. English language skills are the first priority for new arrivals to Australia. English competency is critical for settlement, employment and all interactions, as the following comments illustrate:

It was difficult when I first arrived here.....I didn't speak English properly, so it was hard to communicate with people and so how can I get a job....and if I get a job how can I communicate with people.....it was hard (client, 2005).

Learning English means more than fluency; it is also the social and cultural linguistics, rhythm and tone:

English is of critical importance and not just in terms of being able to speak and understand but also the rhythm of the language and the nuances of speech. Social linguistics and cultural literacy are also important....and the reasons (people don't get jobs) could be poor communication skills, wobbly English, a very strong accent which makes the person difficult to understand, and because interviews are only half an hour and it's a bit difficult to understand accents that you are not familiar with, but over three days you would get used to it (provider, 2005).

An Iraqi man described the contrast in communication style, tone and volume between his home country and Australia. His comments show that effective communication is not just about language but also style:

You have to learn...to speak quietly and you have to speak confidently....you have to understand how people speak and how to speak to them (client, 2005).

English language skills open doors for new arrivals:

Australians are helpful people...if you communicate well with them they will respond because everyone is busy, they don't want to stop here and try to understand...sometimes they speak quickly and you can't get it (client, 2005).

Service providers identified the difficulties refugees have with specialist language, such as filling in government forms and industry specific vocabulary. A lack of English, particularly reading and writing skills, is a major barrier to gaining skilled and professional positions:

Often their speaking and listening will be good, but their reading and writing won't be....and that will hold them back, and sometimes students do get jobs...and we find that they go into a factory type job, and they will often come back to see us, or come back into class again, because they say 'I am not going to get anywhere, I am just going to be doing that job forever', so they actually identify that their English language skills are holding them back from any sort of promotion or moving onto any greater responsibility within the workplace (provider, 2005).

English is their main priority, so that has been one of the biggest barriers, to achieve knowledge of the language to the level that they can actually find employment particularly in professional areas (provider, 2005).

Learning English is not as straight forward as might be expected because of the characteristics of refugee job seekers. Disrupted education backgrounds, poor physical and mental health status impinge on their capacity to learn and thus adapt to Australian society. For example, many people coming to Australia have limited formal schooling and may be illiterate in their own language. Ongoing trauma related to pre and post migration experiences can limit concentration and consequently, achieving English competency takes longer and means people may initially have to accept low or unskilled employment. Additionally, poor English affects social relations in the workplace and increases the likelihood of isolation, withdrawal and feelings of powerlessness:

For an engineer who's been an engineer in their own country, who's got qualifications in an area, to be an engineer in this country where the language would be at a different level would be very difficult for them (provider, 2005).

Some asylum seekers are highly skilled people who are very traumatised, whose confidence level is very low...and whose English is very, sometimes nonexistent, particularly in their skilled area. To move back into that skilled area would be perfect for them but it is all those other things that impinge against them (provider, 2005).

It is the responsibility of refugees to learn these language and social proficiencies, often with minimal support from service providers and the broader community:

The individual is responsible for fitting into the workplace culture and into work teams. Everyone has to demonstrate their capacity to be able to fit into the team because employers want this (provider, 2005).

Limited English competency also has implications for occupational health and safety. Training in occupational health and safety is not being addressed by any of the services interviewed partly because of work load issues but also because some considered it the responsibility of employers.

Lack of local experience

Service providers identified the importance of job seekers getting their first job in Australia, with some stating that lack of local experience is the biggest barrier:

The biggest barrier is to try and get them that first job, and once they have some employment on Australian soil, the second and third jobs are easier to get...because there is hopefully a referee who can act on their behalf, speak on their behalf and recommend them for further work. When an employer sees that someone has already given them work, then they may employ them with a little bit more confidence rather than employing someone who is totally new to employment in Australia...and perhaps they are unsure what to expect (provider, 2005).

Job seekers expressed the view that employers make business decisions when they decide whether to employ them or not. Employers want employees who know what is required of them rather than having to train them:

They don't want to lose money...income lost from business is the first thing...they don't want to spend time teaching people...thirdly, they want people to be able to start work and make money immediately...and if someone doesn't understand and makes mistakes, the machines have to start and stop...and it is dangerous (client, 2005).

Job seekers found employers' reluctance to give them a chance frustrating, but as several service providers recognised, eventually employers do give them a chance. For job seekers, waiting for that initial opportunity has associated financial, personal and social costs:

It doesn't matter if I have a diploma or degree because I still have to find a job...and when employers see me...they question my competence. I know everything in accounting but now I am in a new place, I have become like I know nothing and this feels bad. If I had experience here I would get a job (client, 2005).

Job seekers also felt that employers did not recognise their work experience from their home countries and/or refugee camps. Consequently, employers treat them like they have just finished their courses which interviewees, particularly those in older age groups, found patronising and frustrating. Job seekers reported employers telling them they lack local experience and are thus not offered jobs. As a service provider noted:

Technically, if someone is told that they are unsuitable for a position because they have no local experience, it is discriminatory...because it is unfair (provider, 2005).

To gain local experience interviewees accepted semi or low skilled positions which were typically part-time or casual. Volunteer placements, such as those offered as a part of the EMC's Given the Chance program, work placements linked with TAFE courses, and in-house BSL courses linked to employment opportunities within the BSL, enabled job seekers to gain their first jobs. For example, several interviewees had participated in BSL cleaning and maintenance courses and later gained 12 month cleaning positions with the BSL.

Limited and/or non-transferable skills

The relevance of skills gained in previous employment, either in home countries or in refugee camps, do not always readily translate into the Australian labour market. For example:

It is difficult for someone who started working in the family business and has 25 years experience as a watch maker or jeweller which just doesn't translate here at all...and if you have a typical one that would be it. They have got this incredible attention to detail and they come here and nobody wants it. I think they often come from countries where everybody is selling something or making something or has got a small business or might be a street vendor and has no training what so ever...or they are public servants and they don't speak English...so there is a thing with skills (provider, 2005).

Consequently, many job seekers need to up skill or complete tertiary courses to gain Australian qualifications, for example:

When I came here I couldn't get a job in nursing because I don't have any qualifications and they don't recognise my overseas qualifications as being equivalent to Australian qualifications, so they said you have to go the university and do a Bachelor of Nursing (client, 2005).

Despite this young man's skills and experience in nursing, he had no evidence or certification to give to employers to prove his competence. Service providers frequently see people in these circumstances:

I think a lot of the time people are actually very skilled but they have nothing to show for it. They are skilled on all the machinery, (for example) even the ones that are here, transferring skills is a problem (provider, 2005).

It's a real gap in the legislation and is something that comes up time and again, people who are qualified in their country of origin who come here and can't get their qualifications recognised. We had a guy who was a highly qualified refrigeration mechanic. He couldn't get his ticket, because he was a TPV holder. Under the legislation, only permanent residents can get the ticket, which meant he couldn't get a job, because he couldn't get insurance....So we have got people on TPVs who are qualified and skilled but can't get jobs, because they can't get the ticket and the company can't get insurance (provider, 2005).

The successful transfer of skills is related to social characteristics of the job seeker, such as age, and the economic structure and skills match between different labour markets. All interviewees had experiences and skills but they had varying degrees of transferability to the Australian labour market. Interviewees adopted several strategies to strengthen their chances of gaining desirable employment which utilised their skill sets. Accepting positions at lower levels than they had previously been employed at and working in similar industries was a strategy used by several interviewees, such as a physiotherapist and a medical doctor who gained positions as personal care attendants in the aged care and disability sectors. For example:

I understand that most foreign migrants can't get a suitable job, maybe it's the language barriers or they are not matched with the Australian system or something, so they couldn't get a job. But I understand that that is why I have to do low profile work, work in poor conditions, so I am happy to do this but I am not stopping in this position (client, 2005).

The financial cost of gaining Australian qualifications are substantial and a barrier to entering professional employment. Some interviewees were simply tired and did not have the inclination to study for qualifications they had already gained in their home countries. They were consequently unwilling to accept lower status jobs preferring to remain unemployed, at least temporarily:

I'm not working at the moment because I haven't found any jobs good for my career...I have got other jobs but I am lazy....because I'm not really interested in factory jobs...I don't want to work in that area (client, 2005).

Interviewees in the younger age cohort, particularly those in their early twenties, had decided to gain professional qualifications which built on their previous work experience, such as the nurse mentioned above, and a child care worker who had decided to gain formal training and qualifications. Interviewees realised they were not competitive in the Australian job market and without further training would have to do factory work:

If you want a good job, like the job I was doing in Egypt [working in information technology], you need to have more skills and certificates, qualifications because there are too many people here who are qualified and everyone of course knows English not like in Egypt...so I can't compete...maybe that is one of the differences...but in Egypt not everyone knows English, only a few (client, 2005).

Interviewees who worked in semi or low skilled positions in their countries of origin had more difficulty applying their experience to the Australian work context. For example, a man with over a decade of experience as a security guard in his home country completed a security guard course here, however employers refused to give him a position telling him that he lacked local experience. He feels his age (51) was the real barrier.⁹ Subsequently, this man has held a variety of short term positions in a range of occupations from making pizza dough to a variety of factory positions in the food and manufacturing industries. Other interviewees worked in industries not relevant to Australia, such as a soldier from Vietnam who became a real estate agent and community worker, and a construction worker who realised the technological and mechanical differences between his country of birth and Australia were too great. He nominated to retrain and is currently employed as a cleaner. Skills transfer is thus contextual and shaped by the nature of the skills and the demographic attributes of the job seeker.

Poor labour market knowledge

When refugees and asylum seekers arrive in Australia they are unfamiliar with the process of finding employment, have little knowledge of the labour market and how to achieve their employment aspirations. The GAPCO clients interviewed did not know where to look for work and how to approach potential employers. A service provider explained:

⁹ Service providers interviewed suggested that employers are more comfortable telling job applicants that they lack local experience rather than giving them other reasons for not employing them, such as their age.

They don't know where to go to look for jobs or what they should do to find jobs. Sometimes they don't have any idea what it is they could do. They should have somebody to lead them, to tell them they could do this or that. If you finish this course you could do this, if you finish that course you could do that. So they should have some kind of understanding of what their possibilities are and how could they use their skills (provider, 2005).

These problems were exacerbated when job seekers did not have social networks:

The problem is that they don't know anyone. They don't have network and they often don't have any understanding of how the system works and what kind of jobs are available...what they have to do to get one...or what kind of education or what kind of development they have to do to get skills which would help them to get to some kind of work. So it's really hard for some people (provider, 2005).

Interviews with job seekers showed how information about the process of job seeking and employment opportunities is typically gained via informal social networks. In most cases, these networks were established prior to arrival in Australia, either in countries of origin or refugee camps. Data showed that networks tended to be with other recent arrivals, many of whom had only been in the country several months longer than interviewees. Whilst these networks are valuable, the lack of linkages outside particular ethnic communities can restrict the type of knowledge and resources flowing through these networks. In this context, linkages with employment services such as GAPCO were critical. For example:

People don't know how to do a CV...and who is going to help them do that? They don't know the correct way, or who to ask for when they ring a company to find out if they have work. Who is going to help them do that? They don't know the correct clothing to wear sometimes,...they get lost on the way to offices, and they don't know who to ask for in an office (provider, 2005).

Curriculum vitae, job applications and the interview process varies from country to country and service providers identified that job seekers must learn the subtleties of this process:

The problem that I have had with some of the applications from CALD communities is the wording is sometimes very different and so is the way they express themselves. There's a lot of, like they are very grateful, some people use religious words in expressing themselves. Like we may say, 'hopefully you look favourably upon my application' which is very English and cold. Our people may wish the company prosperity (provider, 2005).

They really do need some very good communication skills, and that ability to actually present well at an interview. I mean every program we do we always interview people, so just thinking about that experience and being familiar with that experience. It is interesting how seriously some people will take that, but also like, it's always nerves, it's always that's the sort of thing you can really see with people is the amount of nervousness that they have taken into them into any sort of interview, so that is one of the biggest hurdles (provider, 2005).

Refugee job seekers are not familiar with the process of selling themselves in job interviews, a skill requiring self confidence. For refugees and other new arrivals retaining personal dignity is challenging, particularly if they have been in detention.

Rates of trauma and depression tend to be very high in these population groups, as discussed. Furthermore, establishing oneself and family in a new country is a disorientating, stressful process and difficulties can further diminish feelings of pride and self worth. A service provider observed:

There are barriers, you come out of detention and you come into a world of barriers....and you need somebody to help you through them. If people are lucky, and they have got supporters, who have got a lot of time, they might be able to negotiate those faster, but what I'm seeing is people just getting lost (provider, 2005).

Poor understanding of Australian workplace culture

Refugees' limited understanding of the culture of the workplace was considered by service providers to be of varying importance. Some providers felt that the lack of understanding of workplace norms and values was the most significant barrier to employment whilst others barely mentioned the role of these cultural issues. These data illustrates that the role of cultural factors, particularly as they play out in the workplace, need to be understood more fully by service providers. It is clear however, that cultural factors are a barrier to employment and that unless employers can be convinced that refugee job seekers can be trustworthy employees these barriers will persist. For example:

Not everyone is tolerant of others who are different to themselves...and that's another reason that when you employ someone, you employ someone that fits in with the culture of your place (provider, 2005).

Following on from this, service provider comments suggest that employers make judgements about the suitability of job seekers based on their first impressions and cultural stereotypes. Changing a job seeker's name from Mohammed to Michael was reported to make a difference between gaining a job interview and being told a position has already been filled:

If you stop to think about the surname you would think of a Muslim background....I wouldn't be surprised if people were a little bit concerned about whether their English would be good enough, or things like that, um, how they might present and interact socially, their religious beliefs (provider, 2005).

In contrast, employment service providers think of job seekers first and foremost as individuals seeking employment rather than having a particular cultural background:

We don't get involved too much in their cultural issues, because we are pretty much employment focused, we tend to deal with everything on an employment focused level,...when we see them, they come to us and they are looking for work, and they want to be here, they want employment, and you don't get too much involved in cultural diversification. I tend to see them as job seekers first and their background second, so you tend to focus on what is going to get them into work rather than the differences (provider, 2005).

Providers identified the dangers of stereotyping the characteristics of different cultural groups and the importance of responding to people as individuals. Whilst focusing on the individual, rather than their cultural background, is critical to addressing specific needs and circumstances, Australian workplaces do have particular cultural norms

which must be recognised and taught to job seekers. In this context, service providers repeatedly raised the issue of time:

[job seekers] have just got to learn that time is important and if they're expecting to get a job then they are going to have to deal with that and make sure they're punctual (provider, 2005).

They need to know that when the employer says that you start at nine, that you are actually there for nine, not nine fifteen, nine thirty. It's like the mind set that you can ask questions, and if you see that something is wrong you can ask somebody, and whether they come back to us,... whether they talk to the employer...that's about understanding of rights and responsibility, that yes you might have to go to the dentist in work time for whatever reason, but you must talk to the employer about it...to your boss. You don't just not turn up, not ring, and say 'oh, you know, I had a dentist appointment at 12.30, so I didn't come'. It's more around that stuff that we have issues (provider, 2005).

Expectations of employers and job seekers regarding employment also vary:

The work ethic is generally there but the culture of work is very different...trying to help them assimilate into the workplace can be quite difficult because perhaps they have never worked or they are not quite sure what is expected of them and so there needs to be education there...understanding things like award wages, superannuation, overtime, training, all the different things that go into making up employment (provider, 2005).

And they [employees] say 'why didn't someone tell me?' They are used to getting instant feedback about the way they behave whereas we would tend in workplaces to make judgements about people on the way they behave rather than giving instant feedback....so they [employees] expect to be told if they are not performing (provider, 2005).

Misunderstanding the norms of the workplace can cause considerable anxiety and lead to inappropriate behaviour which can cost employees their jobs. The failure to inform employers when they are not able to go to work was a common problem and was underpinned by employees not fully understanding the cultural norms of the workplace. For example:

We have had people that have gone and got jobs off their own back and they lasted two days and then they leave, because something happens and they don't understand it, they are too afraid to ask, because a lot of it is...it's the butterflies in the stomach, and they go there and they are feeling sick most of the time with the anxiety that, they might be offered something that they don't understand, to eat, or requested to do something that might not be culturally appropriate for them. So I think that is a problem....so I think anything that can be done to explain the cultures...the cross-cultural stuff is really important (provider, 2005).

We're assuming a certain level of understanding but sometimes it is not there. Sometimes even after time in the workplace and there hasn't been any questions and they do something so alien that you realise that they don't have any understanding of Australian workplace culture, yet for years, or at least for a couple of years they've done quite well but then suddenly they do something so alien that obviously they haven't understood workplace culture (provider, 2005).

Culturally appropriate communication and conflict resolution is another facet job seekers need to learn:

Here everyone is treated as equal and in harmony....in my culture it is very hard to talk to you and to look directly at you....younger people talking to older people must not look directly at you...but if I do it like that here, they think that you are a dishonest man or something....so different kinds of things.... (client, 2005).

It is important to ask questions if they [employees] don't understand...to ask for directions, to have instructions repeated...all of these things that we take for granted (provider, 2005).

Some [people/cultures] really face conflict head on whereas we would be saying to use negotiation skills and all the rest of that....so that's a huge cultural shift for them....it just really has to be dealt with and taught (provider, 2005).

Only four of the job seekers interviewed identified having problems in the workplace; three were cultural misunderstandings and two of these led to employees leaving their place of employment. The following example shows how taken for granted work place practices can be misinterpreted and potentially culturally offensive:

You know Australian people they write down the lists, like check lists, and they want to see that we have done this and that, but in my cultural point of view this is like...a commander commanding their soldier....like I need this done....but I fled away from my country and the lists and now it is like this...I didn't understand the culture initially but later on I understood. This is because it is the job, the business....like our supervisor says we want to do this one, we want to finish this. Before I was thinking what kind of place is this, they are ordering like a commander....but then I understood because they wanted to finish this job because if we don't finish their business will be lost (client, 2005).

This second example further illustrates the importance of employees understanding workplace culture:

The colleagues of a woman with cerebral palsy became very angry when she didn't pass the plate of biscuits around the group at morning tea time. The normal practice was for the plate to be passed around the group but this woman held onto the plate. For this reason her colleagues wanted her to leave.....she didn't pick up on the social and cultural cues in the workplace (provider, 2005).

Learning cultural and social norms takes time and is essentially about acquiring an understanding of a place. This is acquired with experience rather than skills based learning:

It is not so much about learning a set of skills but developing an understanding and hope that from this comes absorption (provider, 2005).

Discrimination was reported in the workplace. The first example reflects historical tensions between nations (in this case Turkey and Greece) and intolerance to difference:

If there is four or five people working in a place....the one who is from a different nation, they face discrimination....I haven't had any problems with Australian people but other nations [Greeks]. These people gave me a hard

time, I never complained to my bosses, I just said to these people straight, you do your job and I do my job (client, 2005).

In the second example, Chanda ended up leaving his job because he felt discriminated against, he explains:

I clashed with the supervisor and it was also discrimination and I didn't like this....I left the job because of the discrimination....it was not my fault, it was other people's fault. [My colleague] used abusive language to me, like 'fuck' or something like this he said...and he used this language...and you know how I am feeling? I am working....what kind of person is this man? He shouldn't have said it to me, because human beings are human beings....but if he abuses me, I left the job (client, 2005).

In the final example, Ishmal was racially abused by an elderly woman for whom he was caring. After going through workplace mediation, he stayed in the position for some months, but eventually a back injury and a new manager who wanted him to again work with this woman, eventually made him decide to leave. GAPCO played a critical educational and negotiation role in conflicts such as these by mediating between employees and employers.

These findings support Hickson and D'aegher's (2003) observation that language barriers are typically identified as critical but cultural barriers are less obvious but potentially more significant. They found that "there was a general lack of awareness that many cultural barriers are far more subtle and influential on an individual's participation than the ability to speak and understand English" (p. 22). The cultural skills of service providers interviewed in this study could be enhanced.

Length of residence

The labour market literature documents that over time the employment position of refugees and migrants improves but does not match that of Australian born residents (Miller & Neo, 1997). Our data show a link between visa status on arrival and employment status, as reported by interviewees, over time. Of those arriving on humanitarian visas, 60% were unemployed at the time of interview compared to 83% of people living on TPVs and bridging visas. Table 16 shows employment patterns over time, and whilst the numbers in each category are not sufficient to make any clear conclusions, the high rate of unemployment for new arrivals and the general decline over time broadly equates with trends in DIMIA (2005) data. DIMIA research shows that employment outcomes improve as length of residence increases (DIMIA 2005) but that there are marked differences between people on humanitarian visas and those in the skilled migrant stream. In our sample, five people (three humanitarian entrants and two asylum seekers) had been living in Australia for less than 12 months, and only one (20%) had found part-time employment. This is only just higher than DIMIA six monthly statistics which found 18% of humanitarian entrants employed. A further eight people (three asylum seekers and five humanitarian entrants) have been in Australia for four to five years and only 50% of these are employed (three full-time and one part-time), which as one would expect, compares favourably with DIMIA 18 month statistics which show 32% of humanitarian refugees are employed. In our sample, the migrants and long term residents interviewed were all unemployed, but because of the small numbers no conclusions can be drawn from these data.

Table 16: Length of residence and employment status

Length of residence in Australia	Number of interviewees	Percentage employed
One year or less	5	20% (n=1)
Between 1 and 5 years	8	50% (n=4)
Between 6 and 10 years	2	0%
Between 11 and 20 years	2*	50% (n=1)
More than 21 years	3**	33% (n=1)

* These cases are a migrant and a refugee, where the refugee was employed.

** These cases include 1 migrant, 1 refugee and one long term resident, where the refugee was employed.

Status drop

Typically, migrants experience a drop in status when they resettle into a new country. This research supports this finding. As the following comments by a service provider demonstrate, people are affected by and respond to a decline in their status differently:

I think when you migrate to a different country, particularly if you are not white and especially if you are not western, you take a step back professionally...and I think for men particularly there is a great loss of role...and they often lose the role as the father...like if they have left their family behind. So I think that loss of social status is what happens when you are not migrating for a job that is lined up for you because you don't know how things work, you don't know where to go, you need to find your feet, your experience is not recognised...it is very nice that you know Sudanese law but it doesn't help you with Australian law (provider, 2005).

It is important for job seekers to be supported to identify a pathway to achieve their long term goals. Service providers explained that often this entails accepting a lower level position in the short term as a stepping stone to longer term goals. This is not always understood by job seekers and can be a source of conflict and disillusionment:

I suppose sometimes it's getting people to accept things on a lower level so that they can actually improve their English skills. In my experience it has been more so people coming into a program and they have those qualifications, which is fantastic, but because they can't communicate, there is no way that they can actually sort of attain anything of a higher level, so it's sometimes about convincing people that ok, a cleaning job is a really great place to start, and getting people to see it as a stepping stone...this is one way that you can improve your language skills. Then we can think about what that next step is and what it is that you really want to do. So again some people will pick that up, and others, like are pretty much in denial about where their English language skills are and don't see that the complexities and the nuances in language skills and what they can actually do. So you get a number of people who want to do something that is office based, paper based but would just be totally beyond their English language level...but they don't understand that (provider, 2005).

The willingness of refugees to accept lower jobs varied depending on their work histories and social status in their countries of origin:

It depends on their status,...if you lived in Iraq and you worked and you were the head engineer of a department, and then you were here and you were working in a bakery, or in an abattoir, or with fruit, it's a real drop in status.

That is very hard for those people to deal with. Whereas the Afghans didn't have a drop in status, their status has actually improved (provider, 2005).

I've had men that have had great opportunities, but they have, I wouldn't say sense of arrogance, that's a hard word, but there is a behaviour, an attitude, that is misunderstood. And that sometimes could make it difficult for them. To work in, like you know, here is a fifty year old man that's got a lot of experience, was in charge of a big department, and there's a young person, and they've got this feeling of like, they don't look the same, when they speak English it doesn't sound the same, so, it's a slightly inferior complex that they have got. So one way of overcoming that, it's like the little dog sort of theory, you know, where you bark louder, where you come across more aggressive, or you don't take instructions. I know, I can do that, I don't need you to tell me, so that sometimes can be conflicting, very much. It can cause some problems with employment (provider, 2005).

Like the Iraqis, most of them are tertiary educated. Now if you don't have the language, you can't get a white collar job and they didn't want to do blue collar jobs. They found it really hard and they continued to find it hard (provider, 2005).

Increasingly, the emphasis is being placed on getting people into a job rather than on job satisfaction, meeting job seekers' expectations, maintaining their confidence and dignity:

What are your expectations of the kind of work you will receive? Some jobs are just demeaning and how does doing those jobs sit with your dignity? (provider, 2005).

Just because they have got a job, as a cleaner or a factory hand or something, we feel that we have done our bit, and we leave them....there needs to be an interest in helping them get a better job (provider, 2005).

These qualitative aspects of employment can be neglected as service providers have achieved their outcomes and job seekers for a variety of economic and social issues get trapped in semi and unskilled positions. As Hagner (2000) argues it is easy for people to get trapped in the secondary labour market with little prospect of gaining employment in the primary sector. DOES providers must develop specific strategies to assist with this transition.

Key points

- Refugees have poor human capital resources limiting their competitiveness in the labour market. This can be associated with a drop in status and changed social role.
- Limited English language, social and communication skills severely restrict employment opportunities.
- Employers are reticent to give refugees a start if they have no previous work local experience.

- Refugees have limited understanding of the Australian labour market, may not know how to job search and may need to retrain or enhance their skills.
- Employers are concerned about the capacity of refugees to work as members of teams.
- Great attention needs to be given by DOES providers to teaching refugees and other job seekers the social and cultural norms of Australian workplaces.

9 Socio-structural barriers

This section describes how labour market participation is based upon, and reinforces, the key axes of social difference - age, gender and ethnicity. Stereotypes regarding the characteristics of these social groups structure employer preferences and underpin employment decisions. Service providers explained that employers need to be convinced that refugees can be good employees without considerable effort and that they can fit into work place teams and culture. Success in a job consists of being able to perform a particular set of tasks, but more importantly it involves entering or gaining admission to the culture of the work setting and becoming a member of the social group (Hagner & Dileo, 1993). This research shows that service providers are aware of cultural differences in refugees' approach to work, but not enough is being done to address these issues. Service providers and employers need to give greater attention to the social and cultural skills of refugees to ensure their chances of employment success are maximised. Social integration is the key and this means educating not only job seekers, but employers, work colleagues and DOES providers.

Workplace culture revolves around shared values and attitudes. As Hagner and Dileo (1993) argue work is essentially an interdependent social activity. Management theorists' recognise the importance of informal social interaction and relationships at work, with studies showing that workers spend between 35% and 90% of their time interacting with one another. Workplace culture is embedded within the broader community and reflects expectations and stereotypes about where people 'fit' into society. This section discusses how age, gender and cultural differences play out in the workplace, labour market and service provision.

Age and the labour market

The data illustrate that stage of life is a critical determinant of employment priorities, decision-making and employer preferences. The data has been divided into three age groups to demonstrate these differences: older interviewees (over 50 years of age); middle aged (40 to 50 years of age); and younger interviewees (those less than 40 years). Age was discussed as a barrier to employment by all five (male) interviewees over 50 years of age. Three key issues were raised by these older workers: aged-based discrimination; the impact of age on decision-making; and anxiety about fitting into work teams as an older worker. Each is discussed in turn.

- Age-based discrimination: Interviewees described the unwillingness of employers to employ them, despite qualifications and experience, because of their age. For example:

I tried to get some clerical and sales work, nothing happened. No one gave me an interview. I think age was a disadvantage. If I stuck with my field and had all my qualifications I thought this would put me in a better position. I have the qualifications which a lot of younger people don't have....qualifications didn't do anything....age and disability put me at a disadvantage (63 year old client, 2005).

They say they have a job available and when you go and they see you, and because of your age, they give you a form and say if a job is available we will inform you....it is very embarrassing (55 year old client, 2005).

Disability compounds age-based discrimination, as the man above explains:

Employers seem to be more interested in my problems rather than whether I can do the job. Basically the fact is that with the disability I can't fit the job requirements to an employer's satisfaction, that is the hours and fitting in with the other staff. It's a bit of a problem. When I say I've got a disability, then they are more interested in my disability than in the actual job. I feel my disability is the problem (63 year old client, 2005).

National and international research documents the increasing need to support older workers to stay in the workforce and the need to address employer discrimination (Constable, 2003).

- Decision making and age: Older, semi-skilled workers with limited English identified age as a factor compounding their feelings of vulnerability in the labour market because they felt their choices were narrowing. Interviewees were not confident in their ability to gain more desirable, or at the very least, alternative employment. Consequently, decision making regarding employment was conservative and pragmatic with interviewees nominating to remain in their current positions until retirement. Security of livelihood took precedence over type of employment.
- Fitting into the workplace as an older employee: The older men interviewed were concerned about fitting into workplaces and teams dominated by younger people: How do you think you'll fit into a team where there is young people? 'How do you feel you'll fit?' I say, 'I know my job, they'll do their work and I won't be interfering except for meetings.' So that's the problem...fitting in with young people (63 year old client, 2005).

Employer a concern regarding the social fit of older workers in the workplace was not examined in this research but as Hagner and Dileo (1993) note it would be a fruitful area for further research.

The second age-based grouping consisted of three interviewees in the 40-50 year age bracket (two men and one woman) and they each expressed concern regarding their employability. All three felt they had lost their careers and needed to re-skill, and this transition was causing considerable anxiety. The two men were both injured at work, had ongoing back problems which limited their capacity to work in their previous positions and had/were receiving Work Cover payments. GAPCO linked one of the men into a Business Administration course and later he found a traineeship which he is hoping will lead to employment in a new career. The other man continues to be supported by Work Cover and is planning to set up his own business. For the woman, the loss of career, work-based social status and confidence was the result of having to leave her home country. At present, she is reluctant to re-train unless in ongoing employment. She and her three children are currently living on welfare payments. These data suggest that training opportunities for people in this age bracket need to be closely tailored to employment.

Younger interviewees, those under 40 years of age, spoke of their career plans and were ready to engage in tertiary education, such as university, TAFE and other courses. They were keenly aware of the educational opportunities they have in Australia, and for many, particularly men, gaining an education and professional qualification was their main goal. The single young men in their 20s, were willing to forgo shorter term goals of supporting their families to migrate to Australia to achieve their medium to longer term career aspirations whilst sending money to family. Migration assistance for family was a medium rather than short term goal. Furthermore, these young men preferred to pursue their studies than to take semi and un-skilled factory work, particularly if they had previously worked in skilled or socially prestigious positions, such as in IT, nursing and tourism, before coming to Australia.

Whilst young people were acutely aware of the responsibility they have to siblings and parents living overseas, the career aspirations of male interviewees in their early twenties were more influential in their employment decision making. Although interviewees found living on welfare payments, and living on the even lower Aus Study payments whilst studying difficult, they valued education and professional career development more highly than short term financial gain.

Interviewees in their thirties were increasingly aware of the tensions between supporting families to migrate to Australia and their career aspirations. For example, for a male interviewee in his thirties, reuniting with his wife and children took precedence over his primary career aspiration. Although he wanted to get his medical qualifications gained overseas recognised in Australia, he realised it would cost him several thousand dollars which he did not have, would require a considerable amount of study time and associated reduced income. He pragmatically decided to embark on postgraduate studies for which he has gained financial support from the university.

Service providers observed that young people are more able to adjust to living in Australia and to acquire new skills, as the following comments show:

Young people have much better English and I guess in some ways are more able and better equipped to cope in a new country, because they're not so used to the old country (provider, 2005).

I'm thinking of older people.... they're saying 'Oh no it's much easier for you and other people to learn English'They've just got that mind set that 'Oh no it's more difficult for older people to pick up the skills required to live in a new country (provider, 2005).

Conversely however, young people may have never been employed in their home country and from the perspective of Australian employers, have not developed a work ethic. The data suggests that refugees do not always understand Australian workplaces and thus find it difficult to fit in. For example:

That's one thing I am starting to notice with the Africans and especially the African women, they haven't had any work experience in their own environment, let alone in an Australian environment. So that's a huge issue, that's like you know, getting to learn about work in another culture, and what's acceptable behaviour and what's not acceptable behaviour in the workplace. How you communicate with each other and how you communicate with your supervisors (provider, 2005).

Case managers noted that older workers integrate into workplaces more readily because they have previously experienced employment and have families, either here or overseas, whom they are directly responsible for and thus have greater pressure on them to earn an income.

Gender and the labour market

It is difficult to draw any solid conclusions on gendered patterns of labour force participation from our data because only six women were interviewed. Of these, two were employed as cleaners, one was a personal care attendant and three were unemployed - two because they were primary carers for their children and did not have access to affordable child care. Notable however, was the gendering of social roles and notions of appropriate work for men and women with service providers observing variations between families, cultures and social status in country of origin. For example:

I'm noticing with gender that there are certain jobs, that women would do and that men would do and [we need to] overcome these sorts of barriers. So that's probably a family, as well as a community perception of gender roles (provider, 2005).

I think women's ability to access employment is very different to men, culturally, I suppose...traditionally the male has been the breadwinner, so it's not the norm for women to get into employment. Some may have worked as teachers or they have worked in office type environments and it would be a bit difficult to find employment in those areas [here] and they many have not been able to translate their skills to Australia (provider, 2005).

The key gender issue raised was the change in social roles and status of men and women in their families. Although an over simplification and generalisation, the expectation remains that women stay home with the children and the male is the breadwinner. Service providers noted however, that women tended to get jobs before their husbands because they were more willing to do a broader range of jobs. As a consequence men lose part of their social identity and status as head of the household, feel frustrated and depressed which in turn, negatively impacts on their families. Gender roles are also changing with new economic circumstances and exposure to Australian culture. Women have greater opportunities.

Men and women also encountered different problems in the workplace. One man described how different attitudes toward women in Australia, when compared to his home country (Iraq), had caused him considerable distress:

In Arabic culture the man takes what he wants and that is the way things are. Women do not have rights and choice, whereas here women do. I found myself in conflict with a woman, which made me feel very small....it was very difficult learning how to relate to women (client, 2005).

As Hagner and Dileo (1993) note the tone of interactions helps to define workplace 'atmosphere' and learning to read this and to fit in with the accepted communicated style influences successful work inclusion. Workplaces also have social customs about what people wear and women wearing hijab (covering of the head and body)

confronted these norms. Only one woman in our sample wore hijab and her current workplace accepted this without question.

Ethnicity and cultural differences in the workplace

Men and women leaving their countries as refugees do not aim to have what one man, Chanda, called “a refugee life”. Chanda explained that he applied for refugee status, was granted a bridging visa and got what he calls a ‘refugee name.’ Chanda was referring to the structural disadvantages he now faces and the stigma he carries within his own community because he gained permanent residence in Australia as a refugee and not as a skilled migrant. He is looked down upon in his ethnic community and finds that his friends are not members of this community, but are other refugees and asylum seekers. Service providers note that some refugees embody this disadvantage and carry it with them into the labour market:

The refugee experience, the disadvantage and the life they have had to adjust to here as asylum seekers is powerful. For example, Georgina’s mother went to a boarding school, so they were from the upper class and when they came here they were plunged into poverty and I think that disadvantage makes a difference. That kind of poverty and social disadvantage affects everything. At interviews she would make these very awkward remarks and she just lacked that sophistication that comes with a particular social background I feel and you know how there are generations of successful business people, and there are generations of people who...will never be able to walk that walk or talk that talk. So because this Vietnamese student Georgina, had come here as a refugee with that disadvantage, it gets into the next generation...that lack of confidence (provider, 2005).

Workplaces can draw on these differences as a rationale for excluding ‘non-regular’ staff (casuals or part-timers) from particular places at work. For example, Louise explained that because she is working as a personal care attendant with an agency she is not considered ‘regular’ staff by her employer. All ‘non-regular’ staff were not allowed to enter the staff kitchen, leaving them without facilities to make tea or prepare their food for lunch, because management feared they would bring infection into the kitchen. Louise recounted that her employer feels they are not qualified like the regular staff who have done a Division 2 course. None-the-less they all perform the same work tasks. Women like Louise are vulnerable to this sort of discrimination and segregation in the workplace because they have few qualifications, limited English and like Louise, maybe the sole income earner in the family. They value their employment and do not feel they are in a position to say anything, as a service provider observed:

They never complain actually...they are always happy with their jobs I think (provider, 2005).

Chanda feels that he can only get jobs that Australians do not want to do and that cultural and social barriers prevent him from getting better jobs:

We are working in these jobs because other people don’t want to work in these jobs. I work as a personal carer. My job is picking up after the clients and taking them to do the shopping and these kinds of things....we have to clean their faeces, urine, showering, and dressing. Other people they don’t want to work in this job and so I got this job...this is why I got this job...this

is my feeling...If I got a little bit of a good job, maybe some people will be making some problems or something (client, 2005).

Refugees tend to keep to themselves in the workplace, working quietly and conscientiously, however generalisations are difficult to make and more on-site research needs to be done. Service providers explained the difficulty of understanding their withdrawn behaviour and speculated it is a consequence of fear and a lack of trust. Some groups, such as Afghani's, particularly the Hazaras, are used to being treated appallingly, keeping their heads down and keeping quiet. In contrast, many Iraq's are well educated and middle class and can get frustrated with the problems they encounter. These differences are cultural and service providers and refugees stressed the importance of responding to people as people.

Refugees want to conform to the social and cultural norms of the workplace. For example, Noona, an African woman, asked her case worker to show her how to make sandwiches because she wanted to be like her colleagues. Religious beliefs around food are very important, particularly for Muslims, and social functions at work can be stressful for refugees because they can draw attention to differences which can make employers and colleagues uneasy:

If there is a social function and if you don't fit in with the social and cultural practices of your work place, you do become, not a problem, but you are going to be confronted with situations that normally you don't. So if you want your breaks differently, if you are not eating with them, if they go out to a restaurant and it's not Halal food, if it's hot weather and people are wearing summer clothes, and you are covered up, you are confronting them. You are making a statement that you are different. Difference doesn't mean a negative form, but people generally employ people that are the same as them. You may be an employer who is tolerable but do you know if the rest of your staff are? All you need is one or two to rock the boat and you find that there is a slight division happening within your workforce (provider, 2005).

Not everyone is tolerant of everyone that is different to themselves and that's another reason when you employ someone, you employ someone that is going to fit in with the culture of your workplace (provider, 2005).

Religious beliefs also draw attention to the predominant Christian values structuring Australian society and workplaces and not all employees are willing to conform. For example:

Australia is a Christian country and I suppose our country runs on the weekend being on Saturday and Sunday and most Australian's say Sunday is a day of rest or you know a day that we go to the football. With Muslims in our country, Friday is Sabbath. So it's very difficult for them and for the Muslims they wouldn't give that away for the sake of conforming. It's difficult because most jobs are nine to five except factory jobs and shift work and so it's difficult for them if they do have the lower skilled job and shift work to attend their Mosque. And I don't think that they can try to conform in terms of religious beliefs (provider, 2005).

Employers vary in their willingness to accommodate the cultural needs of their employees. Service providers noted that employers often expressed that reluctance in terms of the pressure of costs and time to make suitable workplace accommodations:

We did a lot of training on people management and cultural diversity but it's a fine line, because ultimately it is money that drives things, and if it means you are wasting one hour in the morning doing your basic greetings and hello...that your CALD staff expect...If you are driven by the dollar and by time, which most businesses are, I'm sorry, that becomes a low priority,...because getting up with your email, getting your phone calls done, you just want outcomes. These warm up things happen, they are essential, but maybe only once a week (provider, 2005).

When employing Muslims, employers must respect that they do pray four times a day and expect to have breaks from work in order to do that...I don't know whether there is work code for this. Production lines can't wait for someone to pray (provider, 2005).

Services also commented that they have less time available to find employment for people with multiple barriers who require more support and more time to be successfully placed in work. Additionally, responding to cultural and social barriers that employers' consciously or unconsciously construct, such as suspicion, takes time and requires ongoing education and awareness raising. Employers want evidence that a potential employee is good and expect them to be able to walk into the job, understand the language, social norms and be competent at performing the required work tasks instantaneously. This is unrealistic.

Service providers unanimously agreed that employers continue to put up many barriers:

Employers complain that they can't find people for their jobs and they still put up a lot of barriers. I was talking to a Job Network agency and they are looking for people to work in meat factory, meat packing, which is really not brain surgery, \$16 an hour, which is pretty crap money. The employer says he wants people who can read and write and speak good English, who have really good customer service skills, and will fit into the workplace really well...he wants them to have done processing work before, and to have food handling knowledge. I was thinking anyone with half a brain will learn in one day and she said yes, but that is what the employer wants. So you have employers who say they can't find anyone to pack meat, which is really the bottom of the, you know, packing meat is pretty low, meat packing and waste recycling are the lowest (provider, 2005).

Furthermore, refugees' lack of private transport was cited by service providers as a common reason employers give for rejecting applicants. It would seem that employers do not trust the public transport system. Even if an employee lives in the local area, unless the tram or train stops at the door of the workplace, providers reported that employers say employees need a car. The above comments suggest however, that underlying this rationale for failing to employ refugees, is a lack of trust in refugees' capacity to be reliable employees.

Employment success is not just about employees' capacity to perform their work tasks proficiently. As this section has highlighted, employees need to be taught social and cultural skills to enable them to fit into the social context of the workplace and to be able to negotiate differences in religious beliefs, food and dress for example, in a proactive manner or with the help of case managers. Greater attention needs to be given to building cultural skills and awareness of employers and colleagues, but also

to understanding and being able to respond appropriately to the needs of diverse employees. As Groce (2005) observes, one can be sensitive to cultural differences, knowing that they exist and noting their presence when encountered and still not be able to competently address the issues of real importance to these individuals.

Key points

- Age-based discrimination reinforces the personal and systemic barriers refugees face in the labour market.
- Older workers in career transitions experience considerable anxiety and stress.
- Refugees in their twenties prioritise education and training over semi and unskilled employment.
- Employment patterns in Australia are impacting on men and women's social roles and status within their families and communities.
- Refugees confront cultural and social barriers in the workplace which can lead to employees leaving jobs and feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability if they stay in workplaces insensitive to diversity.

10 Conclusions

Settlement success is about economic, social and physical wellbeing (DIMIA, 2003). These three are intimately connected and it is difficult to have one without the other. Employment is a particularly important component of settlement (Kyle et al., 2004) and is not just an economic issue. Employment, and unemployment, exist in a social context and have social consequences, such as poor living standards and poverty, ill physical and mental health and social exclusion (Saunders & Taylor, 2002). The associated costs of unemployment are self reinforcing and affect individuals, families and the broader community. Likewise, the benefits of employment have a ripple effect. However, these costs and benefits are not evenly distributed across the population (Saunders & Taylor, 2002); some groups, such as refugees, face particular barriers to employment.

This research has demonstrated that refugees face multiple human capital, systemic and structural barriers to gaining employment. Visa category on arrival, poor physical and mental health, limited human capital resources, age and ethnicity based discrimination, employer preferences and difficulties accessing appropriate services, together disadvantage refugees in the labour market.

Furthermore, being a refugee is a disempowering experience where life choices are taken away from the individual. War and political upheaval force people to leave their home countries; foreign government's and international bodies, such as the UNHCR, make decisions regarding destination countries, and government policy in host countries govern refugee citizenship and rights to settlement and other services. These political and institutional processes shape refugee's ability to act and remove agency from the individual as determinant of life choices. For refugees, feelings of powerlessness, vulnerability and a passive acceptance of one's fate are common. Some refugees however, relish the opportunity they have to start life a fresh.

Refugees' capacity and employability is built through ongoing supportive relationships based on trust and understanding. Effective service provision entails identifying refugees' aspirations and connecting them with the appropriate opportunities to achieve these whilst addressing issues as they arise along the way. In this sense, service providers 'walk with clients' as they negotiate and proactively respond to the barriers keeping them out of employment.

Addressing employment and non-employment related issues is a process of learning new vocational skills and knowledge, social and cultural competencies and stabilising the circumstances of daily living, such as housing, physical and mental health. This research has shown that success in the workplace is not just about proficiently performing work tasks, but is also about fitting into the social and cultural life of the workplace as a team member. Greater attention needs to be given to these socio-cultural and relational issues as part of a broader strategy to build bridges between social groups, service providers, employers, employees and the community.

GAPCO's website states that it provides specialist employment services for professionally qualified candidates with a disability. As our data have shown however, just over a third (34%) of GAPCO candidates are graduates and only a

further 15% undertook further education and/or training. The majority of GAPCO clients therefore, are not within GAPCO's target group. Furthermore, GAPCO tends to place clients into unskilled and semi-skilled positions which do not always meet clients' career aspirations. These data would suggest it is timely for GAPCO to evaluate its mission statement particularly within the context of the shift to DEWR and case based funding.

The role of services such as GAPCO is to facilitate sustainable employment pathways for refugees with issues of torture and trauma. Processes which enhance refugees' ownership of service provision, choice and control over their lives have been shown to be effective. However, to restrict interventions to working only with refugees' vocational needs would be to miss the point. To address personal, systemic and structural issues, including employer biases, requires translating a policy framework that embraces diversity into strategies and actions that are multi-sectoral and engage all stakeholders: service providers; government; employers; employees; and community members. Addressing refugees' basic daily needs must be done in tandem with enhancing their employability.

Refugees face particular systematic and structural barriers to entering the labour market. Addressing these requires a policy framework and service system that is supportive of flexibility and allows time to build ongoing relationships because it is these that form the basis of effective and appropriate service provision. Furthermore, interventions to assist refugees to transit from unskilled and semi skilled employment into skilled and professional positions is urgently required.

GAPCO's experience of placing refugees into employment demonstrates the multiple barriers faced by job seekers and the systemic difficulties DOES providers encounter. Job seekers with complex and dynamic support needs require a greater investment of time to obtain and retain employment, whilst DEWR funding aims to minimise the time between intake and placement. Diversifying funding sources, building partnerships and networks with a range of community service providers including education and training institutions, would enable the provision of more integrated employment services. Furthermore, such a strategy would enhance service viability and effectiveness whilst managing increasingly stringent funding arrangements.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Stakeholder interviews

1. We are examining the barriers and opportunities people from CALD backgrounds with disability confront in different areas when they seek employment.
2. Could you please comment on the factors promoting and constraining success in the following areas:
 - The person him/herself
 - Their family and social network
 - The local community
 - The service network or system (specific issues for your organisation)
 - The work place (social/cultural environment)
3. Please comment on providing services for people with a disability from CALD backgrounds. What are the critical components of supporting clients into employment?
4. Please comment on the key differences among CALD jobseekers or employees.
 - How do these differences impact on the likelihood of employment?
5. Please comment on the typical characteristics of CALD jobseekers or employees.
 - How do these factors impact on the likelihood of employment?
6. Please comment on the various employment and non-employment support needs of CALD jobseekers or employees (particularly those with a disability, refugees with torture/trauma issues)
7. Please comment on how issues of special relevance to CALD persons such as psychological stress, physical and mental health, social isolation, English proficiency, ect impact on their success in employment and in community integration.
 - 7a. What are you doing to address these issues?
 - 7b. What else would you like to be doing? (possibilities versus reality)
8. What does the term cultural competence mean to you and your service?
 - What particular skills do you think are needed to provide culturally competent service?
 - What is effective service delivery?
9. What issues do you face when co-ordinating services with other organisations? Do they facilitate or obstruct effective service provision?

Appendix 2: Interview guide for BSL Clients

- Finding work: barriers and opportunities

Tell me about how you are trying to get work.

What problems have you had?

How have you dealt with these problems?

Has anyone in particular helped you? Who? How? (social networks with family/community/services)

- Capacity to work

Is there any specific issues affecting your capacity to work? – physical /mental/emotional (functional / social impairment)

Client definition of their problems

What do you normally do about this problem? Coping / solution

Have you had this problem in previous jobs/before?

- Accessing services - GAPCO

Tell me about finding services to help you get work?

How did you hear about GAPCO?

How long have you been with GAPCO?

Services received – what? When? Why?

How useful?

Suggested improvements?

- Work aspirations / hopes for the future: barriers and opportunities

What type of work would you like to do in the future?

What do you need to achieve this?

Would that require further education/training?

- Education / skills

Tell me about your schooling/education

Have you had any training after school?

Employment history – what types of work have you done in the past?

Where did/do you study English? Level of competency

- Housing

What are you current living arrangements?

Who do you live with?

Rent?

Did you have any difficulty finding a place to live?

- Migration experience

What circumstances lead you to come to Australia?

Visa category

Are there any particular issues from your country of origin that affect your daily life?
Torture/ trauma/ post-traumatic stress

- The workplace

What people or things help you to do well in the work place?

What people or things do you think might help you do well in the work place?

What people or things do you think might help you to do well finding and keeping a job / career?

What people or things do you think help you do well in your life overall?

Have you had any bad experiences with people making fun of you or disliking you for who you are or for something about you? Could you tell me about this. What helped you to deal with this experience?

What people or things do you think could get in the way or keep you from doing as well as you might do at work? In your life overall?

Appendix 3: GAPCO / Deakin Client Survey

Date:

Client Code:

Please 'circle' Yes or No next to each of the services that you have received from GAPCO.

Next to each of the services that you have 'ticked', please rate the quality of the service that you received (how well that service met your needs). For your ratings please use the following guide:

0 = 'not at all helpful'

1 = 'very poor'

2 = 'poor'

3 = 'fair'

4 = 'good'

5 = 'very good'

6 = 'excellent'.

Assessment	Yes / No	The quality of the service received has been
Training	Yes / No	The quality of the services received has been
Job Search	Yes / No	The quality of the services received has been
Resume writing	Yes / No	The quality of the services received has been
Interviewing	Yes / No	The quality of the services received has been
Meeting employers	Yes / No	The quality of the services received has been
On-the-job assistance	Yes / No	The quality of the services received has been
Continuing Assistance has been	Yes / No	The quality of the services received

Assessment

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	1	5.3
Fair	1	5.3
Good	6	31.6
Very good	2	10.5
Excellent	6	31.6
Not applicable	3	15.8
Total	19	100.0

Training

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very good	4	21.1
Excellent	4	21.1
Not applicable	11	57.9
Total	19	100.0

Job Search

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Fair	2	10.5
Good	6	31.6
Very good	4	21.1
Excellent	3	15.8
Not applicable	4	21.1
Total	19	100.0

Resume

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	1	5.3
Good	3	15.8
Very good	4	21.1
Excellent	7	36.8
Not applicable	4	21.1
Total	19	100.0

Interviewing

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Fair	1	5.3
Good	3	15.8
Very good	3	15.8
Excellent	6	31.6
Not applicable	6	31.6
Total	19	100

Employers

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Fair	1	5.3
Good	3	15.8
Very good	3	15.8
Excellent	5	26.3
Not applicable	7	36.8
Total	19	100.0

On-the-job assistance

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Good	2	10.5
Very good	2	10.5
Excellent	6	31.6
Not applicable	9	47.4
Total	19	100.0

Continuing assistance

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Good	2	10.5
Very good	5	26.3
Excellent	3	15.8
Not applicable	9	47.4
Total	19	100.0