

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers

Melbourne—Wednesday, 4 September 2019

MEMBERS

Mr John Eren—Chair

Mr Gary Blackwood—Deputy Chair

Ms Juliana Addison

Ms Sarah Connolly

Mr Brad Rowswell

Ms Steph Ryan

Ms Kat Theophanous

WITNESSES

Mr Luke Whinney, Senior Manager, Education and Employment, AMES Australia;

Mr Josef Szwarc, General Manager, Community and Sector Development, Foundation House—The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture;

Cr Kris Pavlidis, Chair, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria;

Ms Erika Jones, Employment Case Coordinator, National Immigration Support Scheme, Life Without Barriers;
and

Ms Tina Hosseini, Commissioner, Victorian Multicultural Commission.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearings for the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers. If you can switch all your mobile telephones to silent, that would be good. All evidence taken by this Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, including on social media, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. Rebroadcast of the hearings is only permitted in accordance with Legislative Assembly standing order 234. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript for you to check. Verified transcripts, PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the Committee's website as soon as possible.

This forum will run as a question and answer session. Due to the number of participants and that obviously our time is limited, it will not be possible for everyone to answer each question. We will hear two or three responses and then move to the next question, if we can. The Committee is keen to make sure that all participants have a chance to have their say. If you wish to respond to a question, please raise your hand and wait to be invited to speak. And please state your name each time you speak to assist Hansard reporters.

If there are any important points that you do not have an opportunity to make at this forum, you are invited to provide the Committee with your additional comments in writing after the hearing, which we will treat as a supplementary submission. Thank you for attending today.

Ms CONNOLLY: What areas in the Jobs Victoria Employment Network, JVEN, are working well, in your opinion, for jobseekers from CALD backgrounds, and where is the room for improvement?

Mr WHINNEY: The additional links that they provide to education providers, jobactive providers, settlement providers—the links to additional employers that we may not have as an organisation, or as a partnership group with someone else—are providing good outcomes. However, the disparity in the levels of jobs that they are actually sourcing through these employers may not often meet the needs of that cohort. So whilst it is a benefit and a bonus in one sense, that we are opening up doors, sometimes it is not the right door.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: When you say the 'levels of jobs', what do you mean by that? Can you be more explicit?

Mr WHINNEY: So talking from, obviously, an AMES perspective, we are specialists in the CALD space, working with both humanitarian and skilled refugees and migrants. So our cohort often presents with lower levels of English, lower levels of education and lower levels of knowledge of the Australian workforce—less skilled—but sometimes the level of job does require a level of English, a level of reputable work experience within Australia or a level of qualification that the cohort does not meet.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Thanks for the opportunity. I think there is the systemic level and then the individual level, and how they impact differently and how we can negotiate both ends of the spectrum in order to have the outcomes that the Government is looking for but also that the community is looking for. So we are talking about the new and emerging cohort in particular, and we cannot assume—or we do not assume—that these people do know how to navigate the system, because often they do not. They are bringing a whole lot of issues with them, the baggage that they are carrying, which is real, intense settlement issues kind of baggage. So we are saying that we need to put a little bit more attention into what we call the soft skills, things that we take for granted in terms of employment preparation, things like résumé and job applications, how do you write a letter, things that we take for granted. You know, what does it mean? How do you read a job ad. So we look at job ads and we can read them quite confidently. We know what 'PT' stands for, part-time, et cetera—so those kinds of soft skills that sometimes are not given the attention that they require, particularly for this cohort of people. That is at the individual level.

Ms HOSSEINI: To add to that, in terms of when JVEN has engaged broker services to support specific communities, so in cases where they have worked with NAB or JSS or the Brotherhood of St Laurence, they have actually been able to provide more tailored support to more vulnerable members of the cohort that we are discussing, people that are very newly arrived, obviously we know that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach and

being able to tailor that to make sure that they actually do get more of a wraparound case management support service is really quite important. Ensuring that if these brokers are working with communities, they should have a smaller group of people they are working with so they can provide that intense level of support that is required, but there are not enough resources available to them because they do not just need the pre and during employment support but also the post-employment support. I know that when the Brotherhood of St Laurence has—I think it is called—the Given the Chance program, they also provide support once someone is actually employed. So if there are issues in terms of navigating misunderstandings or understanding social norms around workplace-related issues, they can work through those things to make sure that not only is someone placed in a job, but they can maintain this as well.

Cr PAVLIDIS: In terms of the payment at the 26 point and the implications of that, it might be better for providers to receive milestone payments, so within the 26-week period, say at 13 weeks, with funding available for post-placement support beyond the 26 weeks. So that is at a systemic level, they are ticking it off, they will get their money so they can forward it on and so on, but what happens to that person post-26 weeks? They usually fall through the cracks, and that is the main concern that our research has identified.

Mr SZWARC: I want to support some of the comments that have been made. We work with a particular cohort within the refugee group, and what is clear is—we work with some of the providers, the specialist JVEN providers—you do need to be able to work with an individual and say, ‘What are the things that individual needs to prepare them to look for work and then to support them when they do find a job?’. I know that is going to be one of your other questions about supporting people once they have found employment so they can keep it. So that individual preparation and working with and being able to identify there are health issues here or there are other issues here, to prepare the person and maintain them in the work is why you need specialist services.

That was very well demonstrated in the Commonwealth review of jobactive, and a number of us had had problems with clients who were in jobactive, which was very generalist in its approach and not able to provide—some of the providers were not good—that tailored assistance. So complementing what the Commonwealth does at a general level, I think we can do really well at a state level—do that individual tailoring, and the reward is for the individual, for the society.

Ms JONES: I am based in Dandenong, and I work with asylum seekers through the NISS program, National Immigration Support Scheme program. A lot of the asylum seekers that I am seeing have not got SRSS payments, so they are actually destitute, and there is a high level of homelessness amongst them. In addition to that, they have got a number of other barriers. The biggest one is the English language. I have got clients coming in to see me who have got virtually no English; they have got maybe 20 words of English. So there is a huge challenge in trying to help them find work. However, there are opportunities for them. There are opportunities in industries such as the meat processing industries and farms, and we have helped them relocate to these places. We actually work closely with the Brotherhood of St Laurence. But what that particular JVEN does is not work with people with very low levels of English. So there is a gap. Who is helping people with virtually no English but still need to have a means to survive to avert social problems, health problems and a whole myriad of other things.

Also a lot of JVEN providers will only work with certain CALD cohorts. For example, young people, youth under 25 or offenders and so on. There are some JVENs who will work with adults.

The other problem is the long waitlist. At the moment in Dandenong the Brotherhood of St Laurence has got four people assisting people with employment, but they have got 80 people on their waitlist, so it could be a whole month to wait. Now, if you have got no income, that is a long time to wait. How do you pay your bills? You are at risk of losing your home.

Ms CONNOLLY: Can I just clarify there: is that because you have got providers only taking on particular cohorts? So for some cohorts there is a gap?

Ms JONES: Yes. Look, as far as I know, the only JVEN provider that is able to assist our clients is perhaps the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Dandenong. We have also got Bridge Employment, and we have got Whitelion nearby, but they work with specific cohorts, and they will not work with people on bridging visas. So

there are issues around that. The other thing is that JVEN providers, the one in Dandenong at least—the Brotherhood of St Laurence—will not assist a client if they are already in 12 hours or more of employment. Twelve hours of employment is not going to allow you to pay your bills. That is a huge gap in what service they are able to offer.

Also, if a client has actually had substantial work within the last six months, a JVEN provider will not work with them. They have said, ‘Look, we only work with people who have been unemployed for six months or more’. Now, if a client has actually just lost their job recently, that is the best time for them to go and get another job. They have still got their skills that are current, they have got their confidence level up—all those things that we work so hard to address.

The CHAIR: Just on that, in terms of skills assessment, do you think we need a more comprehensive skill assessment individually for those migrants that come here and then recognition of their prior qualifications?

Ms JONES: Absolutely.

Mr SZWARC: I think the point that comes out of that presentation that is very real is that CALD is kind of regarded as a group, but the diversity within it is as diverse as the rest of the community, if not more so in certain respects. It is not only the language and culture but, certainly within the refugee cohort, people’s level of English proficiency. Have they had formal education, or was it so disrupted that some did not have any real experience of formal education? Have they previously worked? What is their visa status, and what are the implications? I think Victoria does need a comprehensive approach that recognises the diversity of impediments that people may face. I know we will have a session on gender, and that raises all sorts of other things. So with that understanding I think we can tailor the variety of strategies that we have to more successfully address the barriers that people face, because they are keen to work, for all sorts of reasons.

The CHAIR: And it is also about tap into that skill base and making full use of it. Kris?

Cr PAVLIDIS: Yes, thank you. I will not reiterate what you said, and I totally concur with that, but in terms of looking at this cohort again, we know, we acknowledge, we accept it is not a homogenous group of people. What is it that renders them disadvantaged? It is often as basic as they do not know how to navigate the system that we take for granted. They do not know that this program is there as a model that they can access. I think priority is given to people who are already referred through other government services. In my view that assumes a lot of this cohort of people. So what do we do to take it out to them, to open up the accessibility? I think we need to look at the real grassroots level here and say, well, how do we target these people in a way that they are not being targeted necessarily or certainly are not being captured? And they are being lost. So we are need to go to where their life is everyday. Go to the schools, go to the maternal and child health centres, go to the libraries, go to the settlement services that are out there that they frequent on a regular basis for support and access them through there. It is a reciprocal kind of process, you know, that end of the spectrum to that end of the spectrum.

Ms JONES: So we have actually identified in our asylum seeker cohort that there does need to be a skills audit for clients who are coming into the country: ‘What is it that you can do?’, and demonstrate that, because sometimes people will say they can do certain things, but to what extent, to what degree is, to what level? So that is a huge gap that nobody seems to be addressing. In addition at the moment in the south-east we have actually started doing a language assessment. What I have found is that a lot of JVENs will say, ‘This person has got low English’, but how low is low? So we need to establish what exactly is their language, literacy and numeracy level, because numeracy is actually more important in many unskilled or low-skilled positions. So we are starting to roll that out to try to get a better understanding of their needs and to try to help them match with the jobs that are available to someone with very, very low English, with not much education or zero education and to people who cannot use a ruler, as simple as that.

Mr WHINNEY: Quite often the English language proficiency tests across a suite of education programs, either state or federally, do not necessarily match up to the levels of language proficiency required in the workplace. So that often provides that big disparity in terms of, okay, they might be deemed a certain level to study in an English class or different type of program, but it is completely not anywhere near the employer’s needs and quite often then leaves the jobseeker or the migrant to be a bit displaced.

Ms HOSSEINI: I wanted to highlight the youth justice clients, particularly from CALD backgrounds. In terms of the JVEN stats 26-week employment outcomes, we are only seeing 66 of these young people actually getting through and succeeding in getting employment opportunities out of the 693 people registering within the system. I think that just really highlights the need for a more holistic approach when it comes to supporting young people, particularly from CALD backgrounds, who are in the youth justice system. They are often coming back to families and communities, and because of the stigma associated with everything that has happened to them, they do not necessarily have that social network to come back to and that family support. So if their point of contact with services is through something like JVEN or an employment provider, they really need to be more holistic in terms of providing them access to social support, health support, sport or a form of engagement in something else to give them that additional support they need to reintegrate into 'normal' ways of working and living. I guess more broadly, related to that, is the fact that we do have media sensationalism and the stereotyping that exists. I guess a way to address that through programs like JVEN would be to actually promote success stories on the government website and talk about and show people that look visibly different in terms of being CALD or from migrant or refugee backgrounds who are succeeding, who are taking on these opportunities.

The CHAIR: Good-news stories.

Ms HOSSEINI: Good-news stories, because there are so many but we are not seeing them in campaigns, in government promotional material, and seeing that I think will help these young people as well in terms of employers being more receptive to hiring them.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: Just on a slightly different tack, we know that refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants do not just have trouble getting into work, but when they do get into work they are also particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the workforce. We held a wage theft forum in Northcote recently, and some of the things that they commented on were that it is not just because they lack a certain level of knowledge about our workplace laws but also because in some cases it is around the exploitation of their visa status in relation to their employees. How can government assist in raising awareness, both about worker rights for employers and for them, but also how can we bolster protections for them in relation to visa status? Is there anything in particular you want to see come out of the legislation that we are drafting in relation to wage theft?

Mr SZWARC: Here I would like to pick up on something I know was mentioned in the last session. We have got a program called Ucan2, which works with young people, and a critical element of the program is mentoring. We mentor young people with people who are very experienced in work issues. I know ASRC does the same. I have got a friend who is a mentor. He was a former senior public servant. A mentoring relationship will provide whoever it is—I am not only talking about young people but other people as well—with someone to say, 'Hey, I'm feeling unhappy about what's happening to me at work'. A skilled mentor will be able to say, 'I'll find out about that; I'll link you up with a service'.

I think that is a good opportunity for the Victorian Government, and particularly as we have a lot of retired highly skilled Victorians who would be looking for opportunities to contribute. Linking up would offer protection. This is one means. Advertising can go only so far, particularly if people are not literate or not proficient in English and not watching the advertisement about wage theft. We need to build in stronger understanding of wage laws et cetera, and ethnic communities have a big role to play in providing that. So they are just some ideas.

Ms JONES: I agree with what you have said, Josef. I would also add supporting their education within their own communities. So we need to identify community leaders who can take on that role of educating the community about work rights and the laws. What I have noticed is that a lot of the exploitation is actually happening within their own communities. So somebody from a particular ethnic background is employed because they are on a bridging visa A. They have got no income whatsoever, and they are employed within their own community and paid \$9 an hour. We have referred them to services to help them with the legal side of it, but they are reluctant to rock that boat because that is their only way of surviving and putting food on the table for their families.

It is a very big problem when you do not have that Centrelink money to fall back on for a lot of asylum seekers who are no longer receiving SRSS. But I think definitely education from within the community—because a lot

of the time, if they do not speak good English, they will be able to understand the education, the lessons. It is culturally translated as well. It is not just the words that are translated; they will explain to them the implications and lots of other cultural things that we probably are not even aware of.

Cr PAVLIDIS: I think that is a crucial point you make, Kat, and that underpins a lot of the success of these kinds of programs. When we look at certain sectors and the people they attract—if we look particularly at hospitality, where that is rife—they tend to attract younger people and women. And if we also look at the other sector, the ‘caring professions’, again it is women who tend to be extremely vulnerable, and how that is linked to family violence and all the issues associated with that. It is an extremely vulnerable cohort; I agree with you totally. I do not know if there is an easy fix, John, because I had a question down about that. How does this get monitored? How does it get regulated? What kind of watchdog processes can be put in place in the workplace and also in the community? Relying on the community, the ethno-specific community, for that particular cohort sometimes creates other problems within the community.

The CHAIR: Tensions.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Absolutely—the small ‘p’ politics of that community and what that does for people. So I do not know. I have given it a bit of thought because obviously it is a real issue, and we know people who are—well, I will say ‘abused’ in that respect every day. I was looking for you guys as to ideas for how we can address that, because obviously we have got to work within a legal framework, and it is a fine line, isn’t it, between people’s privacy and people’s rights—workplace rights, human rights, and so on. It is a crucial issue.

Ms ADDISON: In a number of the submissions you talked about the obstacles for recently arrived jobseekers to gain recognition for their overseas qualifications. We had a young person earlier taking about his parents both being teachers in Afghanistan but not having worked at all in Australia. I note that the ECCV has talked about that we need to adequately resource the Victorian overseas qualification unit, and also the VMC talked about rapid recognition for these skills. How big an issue is this for members of our community, Kris?

Cr PAVLIDIS: Thanks again for that question, Juliana, because again that is not a new phenomenon. It has been happening for years, and we have struggled at the Fed level and with the different government departments to give it the attention that it deserves and requires. It is so overdue. For me it falls back within the Government’s domain, to work closely though with community and see what the issue is all about. Do we have bridging courses—and that is happening. People have got huge qualifications from wherever they are coming from. They are encouraged to take up little bridging courses, which often do not get them very far. They might get them into these hospitality kinds of jobs that we were talking about or the caring professions that they do not really want. But they doing them because they have to. They need—

The CHAIR: To survive.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Yes, exactly. I mean, we all know, I think, ad hoc examples of people who have got maybe PhDs or they have done their Masters or whatever and they are driving taxis or they are doing other stuff.

Ms JONES: Can I just add to that that the cost is sometimes prohibitive. It can be thousands of dollars to have your skills recognised, and there could be additional costs in having to undertake courses to fill the gaps in your knowledge so that it becomes equivalent to Australian qualifications. So in my experience it is the prohibitive cost and the time pressure that they are feeling and having to provide—

The CHAIR: And added to that are the legal fees that they have got to contend with with the migration agents. It is constant application after application, so they have got work to pay for that. So they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. They have got to work in order to get an outcome for their bridging visa, so it is a very complicated issue.

Mr SZWARC: I think it is an area where there should be a Commonwealth-State commissioned investigation or a report looking at taking evidence about what the barriers are to qualifications, because it cuts across both jurisdictions. We know a bit about it, but a lot of the evidence is anecdotal.

Ms JONES: Just one more thing to add to that is that often people do not actually have the piece of paper to say, ‘This is the course that I’ve done in my country’, and a lot of the time they have learned on the job rather than in a college of sorts—so like the good old days here.

Mr ROWSWELL: We had some evidence from the Victorian department for jobs yesterday in relation to the Jobs Victoria program, which measures success by having a disadvantaged person in employment for 26 weeks continuously, with a minimum 15 hours per week of that 26 weeks. I am pleased to let you know they are getting back to us on the data around that and the continuity of employment opportunity after that. My question, though, is: is that 26 weeks in your view sufficient, and are there any improvements that you think could be made to that existing program?

Mr WHINNEY: Sometimes it is not sufficient, because if you marry that up with the Disability Employment Services sector and that program, they actually have 52-week outcomes as well, so it looks like more sustainable opportunities. But it also can come back to the exploitation of the employee around what is linked to that 26-week attachment, and quite often it can be the federal incentives such as wage subsidies to keep the person employed—

The CHAIR: So the churn.

Mr WHINNEY: Yes. And the Department is quite good at identifying some of those employers that may be exploiting jobseekers and churning over jobseekers. But the way the model sets up it actually fosters that a little bit. So in terms of what sort of time frame and dates do you put on wage subsidies, I do not have the complete answer to that. But I know it works for Disability Employment Services where you have got a milestone set at 52 weeks, which is one year. Obviously that is six months more, so naturally you are going to have more sustainable opportunities for these types of people looking for work and a long sustainable career rather than short-term career.

Mr SZWARC: I will be very interested to actually look at the data. Working mainly in the health field, the paucity of data on certain disadvantaged groups, and in particular CALD refugee, it is an area that the Victorian Auditor-General has written some highly critical reports that the data that has been collected, analysed and published is not actually telling us about some of the key groups. I do not know what the particular indicators are that they are going to be collecting and reporting on; I can only tell you that it will require a closer look and we will be keen to see if it is actually picking up groups like people from a refugee background et cetera. I will look forward with interest to actually look at it.

Mr ROWSWELL: I think that is one of the reasons why we asked the question and why we asked for the data, because we would equally be interested in that as well.

Mr BLACKWOOD: I note in your submissions there has been some success with getting some of your clients to actually set themselves up in their own small business, which is great news. But how could the Government do more to help migrants and refugees in that space—in actually setting up their own small business?

Cr PAVLIDIS: Some of the feedback that has come to the ECCV, because we know that approximately one-third of small businesses are driven or run by people from a CALD background, so how do we get the new cohort engaged there? They come here with skills; they come here with business experience. However, the red tape that is associated in setting up your own business, again it assumes that people know how to navigate that system. I mean, I do not like it and I am Australian born—and then looking at all the requirements of it. So how do we make that a little bit more user-friendly in terms of accessibility, but also in terms of engaging and encouraging people to want to set up a business.

Another thing is: we often talk about mentoring. There are a lot of successful examples in the community. How about getting some of the more established small business people, CALD background or not, to buddy up, if you like, or to have some kind of engagement with these people, all the new and emerging communities who have an interest in setting up a business, and talking them through some of these obstacles. That is another way of doing it.

Mr WHINNEY: We also know that there is a large portion of new businesses that take a while to get in front in time. You cannot hit the ground from day one making millions and millions of dollars. And then it gets right back to the first point about these people need to put food on the table for their families and their communities and are really struggling to survive. So it is closing that gap between actually getting a decent income from day one in starting their own business to be able to sustainably live and survive in a house with families and children. What could that be? Could that be concessions in tax? Could it be concessions in red tape? I am not too sure. But there needs to be something looked at so that there is a better steady income from day one.

Ms HOSSEINI: We obviously all agree that it is an important area. I guess the newly arrived refugees, in terms of their ability to be entrepreneurs, is such an untapped sort of area. The Centre for Policy Development and Open Political Economy Network's research shows that if we support refugees in Australia to launch new businesses it could result in nearly \$1 billion a year to the economy in 10 years. I think a way to support them would really be again to highlight success stories and provide access to capital via government-supported loans. The lack of funding, that initial start-up funding, is probably the biggest challenge that communities are facing, but also support in terms of, I guess, aid while they are trying to start. It is such a big risk, and when you are someone that has come from such a difficult circumstance, to take that initial risk is much harder. You are not sure whether it is going to be worth it in the end, so having that support initially is quite important. But they need more tools, training and opportunities to bring successful refugee entrepreneurs together under, maybe, a community of practice model to share those learnings.

I know the Government does have, through Small Business Victoria, modules and trainings and small grants, but the problem is that a lot of people are unaware of these and they assume that you have a level of English that is highly proficient. Also having opportunities to have people from Small Business Victoria go out to communities and have informal information sessions—they happen very ad hoc in certain areas in Victoria. I would like to see that happening in more of a planned and targeted way more broadly.

The CHAIR: So the Adult Migrant English Program—how can that be better improved or better supported in relation to that program?

Cr PAVLIDIS: In relation to small business?

The CHAIR: Generally in relation to employment opportunities.

Ms JONES: Can I just say something about that? I have actually taught in that program, and there are a number of vocational programs that are run alongside it. For example, there are aged care, child care and hospitality classes that are run. There are certificate courses that are run almost under the umbrella of the AMEP program. I think that is a really good opportunity to capture those AMEP clients who may be interested in setting up their own businesses and give them that qualification at the same time.

Mr SZWARC: I think there is a list that the Centre for Policy Development and its affiliates have provided of about 21 recommendations for supporting small business, and I support that strongly. I think they gave evidence here. There is a recent report of theirs that outlines the recommendations. I wanted to support another one—and I know it is part of this—and that is procurement. We often think about the big projects—'You must provide X number of jobs'. I know in our field and in other fields sometimes, if we are catering a function or whatever, we might say, 'Is there a refugee-based new venture that's catering?'.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Social enterprises.

Mr SZWARC: Social enterprises. And there are some very good ones. That is not a matter of preferencing in the sense of—

The CHAIR: And great food too, by the way.

Mr SZWARC: That is my point. They are actually highly competitive in terms of quality and price. But it is a matter of those people saying, 'We need someone to provide food or some other service to a function. Does the list of our providers include that?'. Now, I know that is happening. We are looking for Indigenous

businesses to be able to compete. So sometimes you do a little bit more work, seeing who is available, you find some very good providers, and you say, 'Hey, there's a bonus there without a cost'.

Ms ADDISON: A social dividend.

Mr SZWARC: There is a big social dividend, yes.

Ms ADDISON: I am really interested to hear about the Jesuit Social Services-National Australia Bank program, the African-Australian Inclusion Program; that sounds like a great partnership between social services and the corporate world. I am just wondering: as a Government, what could we be doing to encourage more corporates to engage with social services to be involved in programs like this?

Cr PAVLIDIS: I am trying to think of corporate examples. The Commonwealth Bank comes to mind, and so does NAB. It is all about incentives. It often, unfortunately, does come down to the fiscal equation, and people are not going to engage, particularly in the corporate sector, unless there is very obvious—

The CHAIR: Some incentive for them.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Yes, and that is what drives it really. I do not know how the Government can come on board in order to work in the corporate space with the corporates and use really good, positive examples of how they are doing it really well and the good outcomes they are having. Again it is about show-and-tell; there is a lot of good stuff happening at the grassroots level and out there in the community. Let us learn from it. We do not need to be creating new stuff; it is happening, but how do we package it? How do we institutionalise it in a sense so that everyone benefits?

Mr WHINNEY: I think you could tick a few boxes there around that incentive factor. We spoke before about sustainable employment and that six-month mark. Could you incorporate corporates to have a milestone set around 12 months, 24 months, 36 months that is quite attractive and appealing? That incentivised system might attract corporates to not only engage more in that space but also provide greater incentives to provide those sustainable opportunities.

Ms JONES: Can I just add to that that educating employers about the benefits of hiring members of the CALD community as fitting in with their diversity. It might be on their agenda anyway, so basically providing financial support to produce educational materials to distribute to organisations could be useful.

Ms HOSSEINI: I think also just highlighting training around unconscious biases that employers, recruitment agencies and HR staff may not be aware of in terms of how to address it, how to actually unleash the fact that everyone has unconscious biases and how to deal with that and make sure they are not missing out on incredible diversity within workplaces because of that.

Cr PAVLIDIS: We know that quotas have worked well in terms of the gender issue, and the State Government is an excellent example of that in the way it is leading. I think a similar kind of reward system could be set up in the corporate space, the private business space and so on in order to take on the issue with confidence. Some people shy away from it. They do not understand it, they have not delved into the CALD community, whatever that means—even though it is the mainstream, we keep hearing. I think there need to be strong encouragements for the organisations that are hesitating.

The CHAIR: Did you want to say anything further about anything?

Ms HOSSEINI: I just wanted to add: I know you mentioned the AMEP program; that program is particularly important for women who have been out of the workplace or women who have come from migrant and refugee backgrounds or are very newly arrived refugee women. For them, that additional barrier becomes the English language because of caring responsibilities that they have had or the gender roles that they have been a part of that have prevented them from actually accessing those services earlier on.

Some communities, through our Regional Advisory Councils have told us about the home tutor program that seems to have worked quite well in those cases where women have not been able to access the English language services early on when they arrived in Australia, but they have been able to have a home tutor that has

come to their house and has made sure that they had access to those services. It has also prevented things like isolation, social isolation. So thinking about more resourcing for that program would be quite useful.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Can I just have a last question. Is this opportunity being made available in any shape or form out into the community?

The CHAIR: We will be doing hearings out in the community, in regional areas particularly, so we will be travelling a fair bit.

Cr PAVLIDIS: Okay. Thank you for the opportunity.

The CHAIR: It is our pleasure. Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.