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# Community **conversations:** Talking about finding work in Australia

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## About the Community Conversations project

We talked to twenty young people and women from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Melbourne’s west.

### THEY SHARED THEIR THOUGHTS AND IDEAS ABOUT:

1.

What it means to have a job that they are happy with

2.

The things that help or make it hard to get a job

3.

What they would like to see done so there are more job opportunities

## “ Talking about finding work...

Almost everyone we talked to said communicating well in English was important in finding and keeping a job. This also included knowing how to communicate appropriately in specific Australian contexts.

*My English language and communication skills make it harder for me to find work. Not making more friends, developing relationships or getting involved in the community has made it challenging for me to find work. Language is the most significant barrier.*

Elaine

*I have a Masters degree and the jobs that I apply to are relevant to my degree. I have the right experience and the right qualifications for the jobs I apply to, so I think the one thing that has definitely made finding a job most difficult is my abilities with English.*

Amanda

*It is hard for me to find a job because although I can read, write and speak English, sometimes you have to formulate sentences like the locals do.*

Michelle

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## Talking about bad jobs...



Several people shared their experiences at work.

*At the worst job that I've ever had, it was a very bad environment. I was working in a small office in a warehouse. My colleagues were always smoking in the warehouse and swearing a lot when speaking to each other. They were often racist and disrespectful towards me. The other employees working there were born in Australia but they were of migrant background. They know that I'm a migrant and would often make fun of my accent. This made me feel really bad.*

Amanda



## Talking about unfair treatment & discrimination...



Almost all people we talked to shared stories of unfair treatment to themselves or others they know in the job searching process and the workplace.

*When I first came to Australia, my English was only okay. My [employers] knew it was hard for me to find a job and that I needed the money... so they tried to rip me off and only paid me \$6 per hour. They made me clean the whole shop and the toilets.*

Michelle



*The worst job that I've ever had was when I was working as a waitress. The owner had me come in for a trial. I didn't enjoy the trial day and I called to let her know my reasons. Then she refused to pay me for the trial day. My English was really bad at the time so I couldn't argue with her and stayed silent. Then she just hung up on me. I didn't know that the law could protect me if she refused to pay me for my trial day. I didn't report this incident because I didn't know someone would listen to me.*

Ellen



## What decisions makers should know and do

Many people said decision makers need to better understand the specific experiences, challenges and barriers faced by people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

### **Recognising migrants' strengths**

Some talked about the need to change the way migrants are seen.

*People from migrant and refugee backgrounds who are highly educated, hold degrees and have a wealth of overseas experience. [Migrants] are rich in knowledge. Overseas degrees are not easy to get and these people work very hard. There are people who have suffered because of the economy or because of the war. There are people who have been traumatised by their experiences, but this doesn't mean that they are victims. They are victorious. They took initiative in coming to a new country. Don't underestimate the newly arrived.*

Laura



*It's really important for decision-makers to know that people from refugee backgrounds experience a lot of language barriers. They have to see the positive things that refugees bring too. For example, in my community, people are very compassionate and work very hard. Most people in my community working in aged care receive great feedback. Refugee people need more recognition for their strengths. People are not recognising others for their inner values.*

Tara

### **Acknowledge and address discrimination**

Many of the young people and women spoke about the need to acknowledge discrimination and the need for change.



*There is discrimination based on colour. There is a negative stigma around multicultural people. People assume you will rob them. So I would like them to know there is a discrimination. They need to change the way society views us.*

Elisabeth



### Mentors from similar cultural backgrounds

*Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds would benefit from guidance from someone who has been in a similar situation to them before. A lot of guidance counsellors... can't relate to the young people. It's important to them to have a mentor who can relate to them and inspire them.*

Ethan



### Support at schools

*People who were born and grew up here it's easier for them and got more help. For newly arrivals it was not fair – got less help ... Help mainly people who born here but not refugees. [New arrivals] who don't know English need more support that is not just schools. Need more outside support. Need to know that they need help with computers and resume. Not to be racist and support everyone equally. [Schools] need to know they don't know much, compare to students who grew up here. They need to support students equally. They need help with resumes and cover letters and look for jobs. They need to know we came here to change our lives.*

Mina



### Tailored recruitment pathways

*I feel like if there was a specific organisation that targets their support towards women then it would be easier for me to express what would be suitable for me. I know there are jobs that are looking for someone with bilingual skills but there is no one platform which specifically advertises those opportunities for us to be able to find. Seek.com is really general. There's no similar job platform specifically for women of migrant backgrounds. If there was a job agent that contacts organisations needing bilingual employees and connects them with migrant or refugee women like me, that would be very helpful.*

Ellen



## Project background

The Community Conversations project is part of HealthWest Partnership's longer term work in promoting Economic Inclusion for Health. We recognise that:

- The **rates of unemployment** for people from **migrant backgrounds are generally higher** than people born in Australia.
- **COVID-19 has also had a greater impact on Melbourne's west**, not only in terms of infection rates but **job losses**.

### Find out more

Read the full Community Conversations report:

[www.healthwest.org.au/projects/economic-inclusion-for-health/](http://www.healthwest.org.au/projects/economic-inclusion-for-health/)

HealthWest Partnership  
[healthwest.org.au](http://healthwest.org.au)

