

# Employment Empowers

When employment is much more than a job.



Centre For Multicultural Youth (CMY) was established in 1988 and was the first organisation in Australia to work exclusively with migrant and refugee young people. Young people are at the centre of what we do. What we learn from them helps us to develop stronger communities, support other community organisations, and lead positive change at local, state, and national levels.

CMY aims to ensure that young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have every opportunity to succeed in Australia. We believe diversity is the cornerstone of Australia's success, that respect for everyone's human rights is essential, and that everyone should be able to feel like they belong and can participate fully in society.

For many migrant and refugee young people the first step to feeling that sense of belonging comes from securing a job. Finding work is often the number one priority of the young people we work with; employment enables them to achieve economic security and contributes to building a positive sense of identity. To support young people on this journey, CMY has developed the *Employment Empowers* program.

*Employment Empowers* is a response to the need for a better understanding of the requirements of both young, culturally diverse jobseekers and employers. In addition to working with young people experiencing barriers to finding work, *Employment Empowers* partners with employers who believe business can be a force for good and who are passionate about developing an inclusive and diverse workforce.

The purpose of this publication is to give an overview of the challenges that refugee and migrant young people face when looking for employment in Australia, and to provide you with information on how you can be part of a growing number of people using the power of business to build a more welcoming Australia.











One in four Australian young people are from a refugee or migrant background. For this group of young people, accessing the labour market can be particularly difficult. They are faced with the challenge of navigating a new culture, often learning a new language, building professional networks, and obtaining qualifications, all whilst trying to negotiate the tricky transition to adulthood. For many young people from refugee backgrounds in Australia, these challenges are compounded by grappling with the loss of one's culture and established social networks, as well as the psychological impact of forced migration.

**“There’s a lot of challenges, especially coming from a refugee background – there’s a lack of language, lack of networks and connections, lack of job searching skills and other issues, such as discrimination.”**

AREF RAMAZANI, HAZARA REFUGEE  
FILM PRODUCTION ASSISTANT INTERN

Young refugees and migrants come to Australia with skills, experience and ambition, and finding work is often a top priority. However, despite their best efforts, many face great difficulties in trying to secure a job. Barriers include language difficulties, a lack of work experience, limited connections beyond their immediate community, unfamiliarity with the Australian workplace, and discrimination.

Young migrants and refugees also face difficulty navigating and understanding the job market. Skills such as writing a resume, interview skills, and how to find the right kind of job, are often lacking in new arrivals. What seems common knowledge to many Australians born here, for example, the need to “sell oneself” in an interview, may be completely unfamiliar to young people from different cultural backgrounds. The complexities of the Australian workplace culture, made even more difficult to negotiate by the rapidly changing nature of work, means that many young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are being left behind.

**“Some young people just don’t have the information they need to succeed. They have no networks or contacts... this program helps you build those networks and the confidence to put yourself out there.”**

BEZA BAYEW, ETHIOPIAN AUSTRALIAN  
ADMINISTRATION INTERN AT MOONEE VALLEY LOCAL LEARNING





CMY believes that one of the best ways to support young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to build prosperous lives is to help them to find work.





Securing decent housing, health care, and education is very difficult without a job. Employment is therefore the linchpin of successful settlement, enabling young refugees and migrants to build the foundation for their lives as adults and to be active members of Australian society.

In addition to the paycheck that comes with employment, a job helps young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to improve their self-confidence, enabling them to build a sense of belonging to their new home country. By connecting program participants to partner employers, our *Employment Empowers* program is supporting young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to build invaluable networks and form the building blocks for their working life.

**“I work with my manager to complete admin-related tasks for hiring and interviewing mentors; training them and then evaluating their work... I was very nervous on my first day. But I have so much more confidence now after a few weeks. Now, I’m like, I got this!”**

BEZA BAYEW, ETHIOPIAN AUSTRALIAN  
ADMINISTRATION INTERN AT MOONEE VALLEY LOCAL LEARNING

OMY’s employer partners use their position as leaders to change lives, and see both the financial and social benefits of being a purpose-led business. *Employment Empowers* works closely with business owners and HR managers who are aware that it is becoming increasingly crucial for business to communicate their purpose, the reason why they exist, not simply just what they do.

It is well known that millennials are most likely to seek-out employers that are purpose-driven, and whose values

match their own. However, it is not only millennials who are attracted to purpose-driven businesses. Employees of all ages who find meaning in their jobs describe feeling more motivated, productive, and satisfied overall with their work.

**“The young people we’ve worked with have brought a fresh perspective to our organisation.”**

ALICIA COPPOLA, NATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR  
AT MAURICE BLACKBURN LAWYERS

One piece of feedback that we hear repeatedly is that our business partners are surprised to find their employees so eager to get on board and mentor young talent from diverse cultural backgrounds. Working with young people is a genuinely meaningful and rewarding experience for employees, improving soft skills and also contributing to a culture of inclusion, diversity, and innovation in the workplace.

Creating a diverse and inclusive culture should be a key part of every business’ vision and values. Our employer partners see the value, both to the business and to the work environment, in bringing together individuals who have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ways of thinking.

**“It’s been a really fantastic experience having Aref on board, he has a different set of experiences to the rest of our team, and a lot of insight that other people aren’t able to bring to the projects we work on.”**

MICHAEL JOHNSON  
FOUNDER, MOMENTARY FILM



“Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose... To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society.”

LARRY FINK, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF BLACKROCK, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST EQUITY FUND MANAGER







# *Employment Empowers* creates life-changing opportunities and builds workforces reflective of the modern Australian landscape.

CMY's *Employment Empowers* program partners with employers who are looking to find the right staff for their business and build diversity in their workforce. Whilst all of our program participants experience barriers to securing employment in some form – this is where the similarity ends. We work with a hugely diverse group of young people, each have varied skills, cultural backgrounds, and distinct dreams for the future.

## How it works

When screening potential applicants, we firstly consider your business needs, taking a personalised approach to ensure we are putting forward the most qualified and suitable candidates. We approach the employers we work with as genuine partners in the recruitment process and we take pride in referring to you a strong group of candidates that best meet the requirements.

We begin by asking questions to develop a good understanding of staffing needs. It is important for us to not only understand the nature of the role, but more generally, have an insight in to the workplace culture and what kind of candidate would be a good fit.

Once we have generated a clear picture, we send a succinct shortlist of candidates presenting the best fit for the organisation and role. It is entirely up to the business to determine how many applicants they choose to meet with and we can provide as much or as little support as required in scheduling interviews.

“If you’re not sure if this program will work for your organisation, I would just get in touch with CMY and ask the question. This program was fantastic in providing guidance for us. I didn’t know what payment of wages would look like, or what the structure would be, and we also wanted to make sure that person felt like they belonged and enjoyed their experience. So I would get in touch with CMY, ask about their programs, and find out what’s best for you.”

MICHAEL JOHNSON, FOUNDER  
MOMENTARY FILM



## What businesses can expect

All of the young people we work with have been interviewed by our team to determine work readiness and possession of full work rights in Australia. The program is highly sought after and there is a competitive entry process. Whilst our number one aim is to provide life-changing opportunities and support to the young people we work with, we only accept applicants in to the program with an impressive work ethic and solid commitment to work and learn.

Upon admission to the program, young people are matched with a volunteer mentor who has undergone specific training for the role and who has a minimum of three years of professional work experience in the Australian workforce.

Mentors meet one-to-one with their mentee, at minimum once a month. Mentors provide vital support, helping to build resume writing and interview skills; they are a trusted confidant, acting as a role model to the young people, and helping to expand their social and professional networks and inspire their career aspirations.

The mentors' role is integral in preparing young people for employment. However, where it proves of particular value to employers is in the transition phase. We have learnt that extra support is vital in those first few weeks, when everyone is getting to know one another and a new employee is adjusting to the workplace. Mentors regularly check in with their mentees during this stage and are ready to provide support and guidance if any challenges arise or additional help is needed.

*Employment Empowers* also provides post placement support to employers. If challenges arise, we are here to help. We continue to check in for a minimum of six months, providing mentoring services to the new recruit if required, and any support that is needed. CMY also provides cultural competency training for workplaces across Victoria; this provides many businesses with the tools needed to promote a culturally aware and inclusive workplace.

**“Pratima’s been fantastic...  
she’s fit straight in, always has a  
smile on her face and is ready for  
a laugh. I’ve got to ask her to leave  
at 5pm sometimes. She tends to  
stay back and wants to do more.”**

JACKSON TAYLOR  
DIVERSITY PROJECTS COORDINATOR AT AFL VICTORIA

To get involved in our  
*Employment Empowers*  
program, please see  
our contact details  
on the following page.  
We would love to hear  
from you.





