# Challenges to Employment in Newly-Emerging African Communities in Australia: A Review and Analysis of the Literature

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### Abstract

*Newly emerging African communities (NEAC) in Australia face challenges in accessing employment, with consequences for both the immigrant and Australian host communities. This article presents a systematic review of literature on challenges to employment for NEAC in Australia. It gathers together, synthesises and analyses previously fragmented evidence that should be used to inform social policy change and social program improvement. It focuses on African refugees and immigrants from the Horn of Africa region (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan) who have settled in Australia in the past ten years. The review documents the challenges to employment for this group and highlights policy and practice implications including: streamlining the qualification recognition process; introducing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) specialised job networks; resisting anti-NEAC sentiments, challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity; introducing incentives to undertake volunteer work; revitalizing existing English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy; empowering CALD specialised counselling services; and establishing CALD-specialised research and advocacy entities.*

*Key words: Unemployment; Emerging African communities; Refugee re-settlement*

### Background

In Australia, immigration issues including the integration of immigrants into the labour market are often contentious. In unfavourable economic conditions such as the recent global financial crisis, the issue of unemployment in Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) migrant communities becomes a matter of political and public concern. When economic crises strike, they threaten subordinate groups and visible minorities more than any other segment of society:

> During periods of economic recession when competition for jobs gets worse so discrimination and racism often become more explicit ... national origin become the focus for stereotyping ... The practice of blaming the victim is extended to include all members of a particular ethnic group. (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1984, p. 3)

This was a prescient warning. During the economic recessions of the 1980s and 1990–92, many immigrants were made redundant and suffered the brunt of the economic downturn (Pearce, 2004; Bertone & Stephens, 1995). This vulnerability means that 'some immigrant groups require particular attention and assistance' (Whiteford, 1991, p.6). Recent reports and submissions have reiterated this concern (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, 2009b; Office of Multicultural Interests, 2009)

The global economic crisis has not hit Australia as hard as other nations (Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, 2009). However, any economic tightening

1

can be detrimental to fledgling migrant communities such as the newly emerging African communities (NEAC). These communities experience considerable social and economic disempowerment. In particular, a disconcerting proportion of their members have already been identified as facing compounding levels of disadvantage and formidable hurdles to gainful employment. These people risk being caught up in chronic unemployment and underemployment (see, for example, African Think Tank, 2007).

Jamrozik (2009, p.159) stresses: 'in a democratic society access to employment means access to social participation'. The importance and complexity of social participation through employment is highlighted by Calma:

> Human rights is the missing dimension of multiculturalism as it has been recently articulated in Australian policy. For example the economic participation of skilled immigrants, and the recognition of their qualifications, language retention, and inclusion in government decision-making - these are issues where there is clear intersection of social inclusion, of human and cultural rights and of multicultural principles. (Calma 2008, p.1)

Tilbury and Colic-Peisker (2007, p.x) warn that: 'new and emerging African migrant communities may develop into marginalized minorities where social problems may crystallize over time, unless more decisive measures are introduced by policymakers'. Similarly, the Western Australian Office of Multicultural Interests submission to the *African Australians Report* states: 'In the current environment, high unemployment and the accompanying feelings of marginalization and exclusion increase the risk that some members of the community will become vulnerable to political and ideological radicalization' (OMI 2009, p.23). While far from some terrible European scenarios, such as the 2005 street riots in France, if the trend of unemployment among NEAC persists over a long period of time, it could be devastating to the communities, Australia's peace and harmony and to Australia's international standing.

Empirical research literature pertaining to unemployment among the NEAC is limited. One recent example in relation to refugees and humanitarian entrants in general, rather than NEAC in particular, is the study by the Refugee Council of Australia (2010). This simplified systematic review is the first of its kind to gather together existing evidence regarding challenges to employment in NEAC in Australia. The overriding objective is to produce findings that can inform future research and policy pertinent to the challenges to employment in NEAC.

## Who are NEAC?

 NEAC, Newly Emerging African Communities, is an acronym employed within this review. There is no unanimously agreed definition of 'newly emerging'. As a study by Multicultural Affairs Queensland (2000) notes, it all depends on the 'successful settlement' of the communities, a term that is open to different interpretations and not easily defined. Migrant groups are generally deemed small and emerging if they are 'characterized by weakness of support structures and difficulty in accessing mainstream services' (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2003, p.100). This review is focused only on a group that clearly meets these criteria, the African communities from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, countries that are referred to as the Horn of Africa.

The majority of NEAC come to Australia under the refugee and special humanitarian scheme as refugees and through the family reunion program (Dimock & Nsubug-Kyobe, 2002). A refugee, as Article 1 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines, is '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' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011). On the other hand, 'immigrant' is a broader term which encompasses various visa classes and sub-classes. Yet, very often, in the immigration literature the terms are used interchangeably.

The Horn of Africa, more than any other part of Africa, has been a morass of violence, famine and turbulent political crises, leaving millions of people stateless. Their lives are torn apart. Every day, thousands leave their homes in a quest for peace and stability (see, for example, Lohrentz 2004, also Woodward 2003). Australia is one of the few countries that are embracing thousands of refugees from this region every year.

**Method**

Epistemologically, this review falls within the critical social research paradigm. Within an overall critical approach incorporating a strong political intention to contribute to change that will make life better for a disadvantaged group, this research adopts a literature review methodology. A systematic review methodology was chosen because of the usefulness of this approach for guiding policy and making a contribution to informed debate of social issues. Torgerson (2003, p. 12) states that one of the defining features of the systematic review is its ability to 'inform the development of a dynamic relationship between research, policy and practice'. The systematic review is a comprehensive and rigorous review of literature on an area of study following a clear, comprehensive, explicit, 'systematic', 'exhaustive' and 'transparent' methodology (Torgerson 2003, p. 5; Greenhalgh et al., 2004, p.582). Systematic reviews encompass a number of clearly defined stages including: defining the review question; searching and screening; scoping or mapping the research; developing inclusion and exclusion criteria; appraising; synthesizing and reporting key findings (Torgerson, 2003). High-quality systematic reviews are usually conducted by two or more experienced researchers, with the help of statisticians and special computer software. For instance, the screening stage of strict systematic reviews is conducted by at least two independent reviewers. This study, however, while systematic in its approach, follows a less stringent and less detailed systematic literature review methodology. It was carried out by one person, part time, over a period of 12 months. It was systematic, in that it followed the clearly defined stages of a systematic review, but less rigorous, in that only one person conducted the study. Within the resources available, every effort was made to undertake an exhaustive review; however it may not be as comprehensive as a fully resourced systematic review. As described below, the inclusion criteria were less stringent than in a more rigorous systematic review, because of the shortage of suitable material. These limitations are balanced by the cultural expertise of the person conducting the review, in that he is a member of a NEAC.

A scoping review of the literature found no relevant systematic reviews on issues related to NEAC. Within our review, by examining previous studies, we take a fresh look at the challenges

to employment in NEAC, develop a better understanding of the current situation of NEAC, and enable policy-makers, practitioners and scholars to make better use of existing evidence to inform future policy, practice, and research.

## Literature Search: Scoping and Mapping

Electronic data bases, reputable websites, and specific journals were searched, including Scopus, Factiva, Gateway, Government websites, Journal of African Studies, Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, Australian Journal of Social Issues, International Migration Review, Journal of Sociology, Journal of Work and Occupations, the Journal of immigrants and Minorities and Google/Google Scholar. The review included journal articles, conference papers, special and general reports on NESB refugees and migrant communities, relevant doctorial theses and newspaper articles. The research questions guiding the review were: What are the personal, structural, migration-related and non-migration related challenges to employment in NEAC? What are the policy and practical implications of the documented challenges to employment in NEAC?

The following key terms were found to be responsive when used in combination with the country names of Australia, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea: African communities employ* and barriers; African immigra* resettle*/settle* barriers; CALD African employ*; CALD unemploy*; African refugees/immigra* employ*; Ethnic minority unemploy*/employ*/labour market; African communities Australia; NESB employ*/unemploy*; NESB settlement problems/difficulties; African Australians; Refugee resettlement barriers; Recession immigrants unemploy*; Economic/social integration of migrants.

In total, sixty studies - local and international - regarding immigrants and the labour market were identified. The studies ranged from large empirical, qualitative and quantitative studies to small narrative reviews, submissions and reports. Studies that focused on African communities in general in Australia were, in most cases, specific to one or two groups of NEAC. In particular, studies that explored the challenges to employment for NEAC women were brief and some were unobtainable.

Studies varied in terms of year of conduct and publication. Hence, making comparisons across studies was not easy. However, most of the included studies were undertaken in the past ten years and some submissions and reports were fairly recent. The most appealing, thorough and conclusive local studies included in the review were recent submissions made to the National Race Discrimination Commissioner and reports from the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia and Refugee Council of Australia (see, for example, RCOA 2010; FECCA 2009c).

## Selection Criteria/Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Traditionally, systematic reviewers follow strict inclusionary criteria to include relevant studies. Due to the scarce review resources on this subject, however, following strict inclusion criteria, such as the Cochrane Collaboration method, would have eliminated almost all of the available material. In order to be as inclusive as possible a less strict criterion was applied. Generally, studies were included in the review if they directly addressed or intimated at least one employment challenge in NEAC. This included qualitative and quantitative studies, reports, literature reviews, academic theses, conference proceedings and plenary presentations.

Some members of NEAC fall under the umbrella of both African and Arabic communities. Hence, it was necessary to look at the literature surrounding the Arabic community in Australia. Similarly, other members of NEAC also fall under the category of the Muslim community, and so it was necessary to research pertinent literature on the Muslim community. Since the experience of migrants is remarkably similar around the world, relevant studies undertaken on immigrants from the Horn of Africa outside Australia were also included. Some studies undertaken in the UK, Canada, USA and New Zealand were found to be particularly relevant. Relevant studies undertaken on NEAC were pursued with no specific age of participants or year of the study. Yet, some **exclusion** criteria were applied. The search was restricted to English language literature and studies that included no direct reference to employment challenges were excluded.

### Appraising Selected Studies/Study Quality Review

Appraisal of the items selected for inclusion in the review aimed to identify the most relevant and methodologically rigorous studies in order to give more weight to evidence from these items in the synthesis that followed this stage of the review (Torgerson 2003). While space does not permit inclusion of detail of all fifty studies included in this review, ratings of high, medium or low were assigned, depending on the quality of the study and the relevance of its findings for the research questions. Items with high or medium relevance to the study were included (50 items) and these with law relevance were excluded.

# Data Synthesis and Findings

In total, 50 local and international studies were included in the review. A matrix was created, detailing the challenges identified by the different studies, and what each reviewed study said in relation to each identified challenge. Particular research findings, confirmation of those findings across the different studies, commonalities across the different studies, as well as differences were documented in the matrix in preparation for the synthesis.

This synthesis of the evidence in the items included in this review found that the challenges to employment in NEAC are many, varied and deep-seated. Some members of NEAC who fit into two or more categories can face multiple challenges to employment. NEAC women, in particular, face more compounding challenges to employment than their male counterparts. Overall, the synthesis of the evidence identifies ten challenges and barriers to employment in NEAC: Lack of English proficiency; Discrimination; Pre- and post-migration trauma; Refutation of previous qualifications; Lack of local knowledge of employment context and lack of local work experience; Lack of specialist employment services; Lack of transport; Familial

responsibility; Lack of access to childcare; and Cultural norms. Table 1 indicates the proportion of items that identified each of the challenges.

**Table 1** Key Findings Emerging From the Review

| Challenges to employment in NEAC | Percentage |
|---|---|
| 1. Lack of English proficiency | 74% |
| 2. Discrimination | 62% |
| 3. Pre- and post-migration trauma | 44% |
| 4. Refutation of Previous Qualifications | 42% |
| 5. Lack of knowledge of the local employment context and lack of local work experience | 34% |
| 6. Lack of specialist employment services | 16% |
| 7. Lack of transport- mainly for new arrivals | 10% |
| **Extra Barriers for NEAC women** | |
| 8. Familial responsibility | 14% |
| 9. Lack of access to childcare | 10% |
| 10. Cultural norms:  the role of a women in NEAC | 8% |

**Discussion**

The review identified poor English proficiency as one of the main constraints to employment in NEAC, as well as for NESB immigrants in general. Liu's 2007 study on English proficiency and labour supply of recent immigrants in Australia, for example, found that those who spoke English poorly upon arrival were working up to 6.5 hours per week while those who spoke 'very well' accumulated 27.5 hours per week. Similarly, an earlier study by Jones and McAllister (1991) found that those NESB speaking English 'not well' or 'not at all' had their chances of obtaining employment reduced by up to three times as a result of their poor English skills.

Some studies were critical of the existing English language teaching pedagogy in Australia. According to the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC 2006, p.25), '510 hours of English classes provided for new arrivals is not sufficient, particularly for those who arrive from situations where they have not been provided with the opportunity to be literate in their own language'. In addition to the insufficiency of English hours, the literature stresses the absence of culturally and pedagogically appropriate education models in English as Second Language (ESL) teaching (for example Miller et al.,2005, 2006; Queensland Council Social Service 2008, p. x). The FECCA (2009a) identified poor outcomes of the existing Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), with some people still being unable to write their names even after completing 510 or 610 hours of English language tuition.

The literature identifies discrimination against members of NEAC as a barrier to employment. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007) in their qualitative study that included some members from NEAC, found that members of the community are unable to find sustainable employment due to their visibility. STEPS (2007, p.x) notes that 'there is a cultural view that tends to deviate people away from employing Africans'. Psychologically, discrimination has injurious effects on the victims. In terms of their employability, it can be especially detrimental. One of its debilitating effects, Tan-Quigley (2004) notes, is that it changes immigrants into 'discouraged job seekers'.

Several reports have recognized the damaging role media have played in recent times (see, for example, FECCA, 2009a; African Think Tank, 2007). In addition to a generally racist public discourse, the perception of an inability to assimilate, as erroneous as it is, depicts NEAC as inassimilable and complicates their settlement process. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2004) report on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians warns:

> Increased hostility towards particular groups produces a dynamic of exclusion that encompasses a range of vulnerable groups – attacking the very principle of respect for diversity has an alarming ripple effect. Protecting the core multicultural values of our society is good reason for action (HREOC, 2004, p.v).

Pre- and post-migration trauma and a lack of emotional stability are major obstacles to employment for significantly large numbers of NEAC. Having good health is conducive to gaining stable employment (Kiesebach et al., 2006). Conversely, research on refugee mental health and immigration indicates that social dislocation and prolonged exposure to violence leads to emotional stress (see, for example, Shakespeare-Finch et al., 2010; Silove, 2004; Elliott & Gray, 2001). Most notably, most members of NEAC have come from turbulent places and war zones, and have witnessed indescribably horrible scenes. This, of course, damages their physical and mental wellbeing.

Schweitzer's et al., (2007) qualitative research explores pre-migration and post-migration traumatic events among humanitarian entry African Sudanese in Australia, the largest group of NEAC. The most common mental health issues identified in the study were emotional distress, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, and grief related disorders. A Canadian study focussing on the determinants of depression among Ethiopian immigrants and refugees in Toronto illustrates the strong nexus between unemployment and psychological distress. The study stresses that 'pre-migration stresses such as catastrophic experiences and refugee camp internment and post-migration stresses such as unemployment, underemployment, and discrimination may jeopardize the mental health of refugees' (Fenta et al., 2004, p.364).

A significant number of members of NEAC are educated, have qualifications and are experienced in a wide range of fields (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury. 2007). However, problems with the recognition of overseas qualifications are among the major challenges to employment identified in this review. Both international (for example Lemaitre 2007) and local immigration literature (for example Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007) find an association between employment-related difficulties and lack of recognition of the qualifications of NESB immigrants. QCOSS (2008) notes that for many members of NEAC who have not been in Australia long, the process is still very intricate, demanding and costly; usually more than a new

refugee can either negotiate or afford. (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker 2007, p.21) note that: 'if a previous professional is reduced to menial work, the downwards mobility inevitably affects all spheres of life, and not just their work life'. Many refugees and immigrants tend to lose hope in securing mainstream employment. Instead, they are diverted into self-employment. In the immigration economic literature this self-employment is referred to as 'ethnic entrepreneurship' (Gray & Elliott. 2001; Stiles & Galbraith. 2004).

Lack of knowledge and experience in the local employment context can result in a lack of access to formal and informal employment networks, lack of local references, poor provision of advice and low self-confidence in a relatively unfamiliar environment. One important factor identified in the immigration literature is the distrust of mainstream institutions in overseas experience, in particular those from NESB countries (Lemaitre, 2007). For those who want to gain local experience in Australia, there are no documented initiatives or opportunities. This review found no evidence of government incentives encouraging volunteer work, available in other countries such as Sweden. Hence, as African Think Tank (2007) notes, it is not surprising that there is some degree of reluctance among members of NEAC to search for volunteer work as a means of obtaining the local experience that could be a bridge to paid employment.

Lack of specialist employment services inhibits NEAC access to employment. Recruitment, as New South Wales Government (NSWG) (2008) notes, is a culturally-based practice that necessitates 'sound cultural knowledge for success' (p.x). Yet, there is dissatisfaction in many NESB communities with the service provided by mainstream employment services (see for example OMI submission to Australian Human Rights Commission Report, 2009; DIMIA, 2003, p.117; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007, p.34). Many NESB job seekers, such as members of NEAC, find the process very perplexing, despite some encouraging steps to provide interpreting/translation services in some employment agencies and job networks. Studies indicate that the dissatisfaction can be at least partly attributed to a lack of cultural awareness and a lack of cross-cultural expertise among job networks.

Lack of transport, mainly for new arrivals, is identified as an issue, particularly for women (Haque 2005; Northern Territory Working Women's Centre 2008). OMI (2009) highlights several significant factors: a lack of English proficiency needed to prepare or sit for a test; the paucity of trained, bilingual driving instructors; costs of driving lessons; and tests.

Additional challenges to employment for women include family responsibility; lack of access to childcare; and challenges associated with cultural norms (Haque 2005; Hatoss & Huijser 2010). The Northern Territory Working Women's Centre (2008) draws out the interconnectedness between these employment barriers and general implications for community participation and engagement. It notes that a lack of access to transportation affects women's freedom, flexibility, access to childcare and ability to attend English language classes. Haque (2005) points out that Australian born women with qualifications (degrees or diplomas) were more likely to participate in the labour force than NESB women with these qualifications. Yet, in comparison with males in NEAC, women in NEAC tend to find work more quickly in some fields. The Northern Territory Working Women's Centre (2008) notes that in some areas of occupation (aged care, community work, nursing, hairdressing and African cultural food supply), the women in NEAC secure employment on arrival more readily than men.

**Policy Implications Arising From the Review**

The policy implications that arise from the review apply to six of the most common employment challenges identified in the review and cover four broad policy areas: social inclusion, employment policies, welfare, and immigration policies. Highlighting specific policy implications to address all of the identified challenges for each and every community of the NEAC is beyond the scope of this review. The Refugee Council of Australia (2010) report about what works in employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants discusses some of these issues in greater detail.

*Develop culturally responsive English language teaching pedagogy*

English language skills among members of NEAC range from proficient in English, to those with poor English, to those who are illiterate even in their own language. Addressing language-related barriers to employment in NEAC starts with improving the existing language teaching pedagogy. For skilled members of NEAC who have functional English, or fall under the category 'English good', teaching English should focus on developing vocational language skills. A generic curriculum that is not related to their skills often does not provide any employment pathway. This model has been well established overseas and in some Australian teaching institutions. For example, some Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses provide English language mainly for skilled nurses (for example RMIT 2009). This allows overseas-qualified nurses to gain English language skills related to their profession in a short period of time and become ready to work. This pedagogy should be expanded to include a wide range of other areas, such as English for mechanics, English for accountants and English for teachers. Tlhabano and Schweitzer's (2007) qualitative study highlights the vocational aspirations and visions of many young members of NEAC.

For members of NEAC who fall under the category of 'English not at all', who often tend to be illiterate in their own tongue, more hours of English classes should be provided. There is a growing literature that stresses the insufficiency of 510 hours for somebody to learn a new language and start to look for employment (see, for example, EDAC 2006, p.25). Equally important, teaching English to this category must also include class-based qualified interpreters or trained bilingual aid teachers from NEAC along with ESL teachers. There is considerable support expressed in the migration and education literature for the presence of bilingual teachers (see, for example, Rong & Preissle 2009). Bilingual aid teachers would help to serve as language and cultural brokers, making the language learning process much easier and faster. There are presently no databases or official statistics that show how many bilingual aid teachers or interpreters are recruited in English language centres.

*Introduce models of social enterprise*

For those members of NEAC who have no hope of learning a new language, the creation of unskilled jobs is a key solution to create possible employment. Adopting employment models of social enterprise is a key to solving significant language related challenges to employment. Social enterprise is an alternative to mainstream labour market programs, which employs a wide range of responsive features to improve the economic participation of traditionally marginalized segments of society (Barrakat 2008; Social Enterprise Coalition 2009). In countries such as the UK, this model has been successfully adopted. In this model, enterprises are established that can

use the existing skills of this group without requiring them to speak English. The model would include a bilingual manager acting as intermediary between the enterprise and the Australian culture. Models of community-based work projects that do not require English proficiency must be encouraged and readily available for this category of NEAC.


*Establish/Empower CALD Specialist Counselling Services*

Addressing challenges to employment in NEAC must include the psychological wellbeing of members of the community. Bilingual counsellors from NEAC should be appointed to provide culturally competent assessment of employment and personal matters to members of their communities. To avoid errors that arise from a lack of cultural knowledge, cultural competence is very important. Hepworth et al. (2006, p. 183) offer the reminder that 'errors in assessment may potentially lead to culturally insensitive interventions that may aggravate rather than diminish clients' problems'. Existing CALD counselling agencies, such as the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and Trauma and other agencies that specialize in working with refugees and asylum seekers, should be empowered with more funding and resources to accept greater numbers of clients from NEAC, with a specific goal of enhancing prospects for future employment. Moreover, the process of family re-union must be simplified for emotionally wounded members of NEAC who have family members overseas whom they depend upon for emotional support and assistance with caring work.


*Resist anti-NEAC Sentiments / Challenge Stereotypes / Compile statistics / Promote Diversity*

Federal, state, territory and local multicultural policies, anti-discrimination bodies, non-government and community organizations should raise awareness of and challenge stereotypes and prejudices against NEAC, promoting positive images of NEAC in the media by running success stories rather than negative ones.

Employment discrimination in NEAC is the product of complex processes and images. Hence, there must also be a sustained commitment to raise public awareness about discrimination in NEAC through compiling accurate statistics. Unfortunately, apart from some encouraging evidence from the National Race Discrimination Commissioner and other smaller concerned bodies, there are no official statistics that track discrimination in NEAC. Having official statistical data and publishing them would help to reduce discrimination over time. The International Council on Human Rights Policy (2001, p. 13) notes that the 'collection of sound statistics is no doubt a pre-requisite for any successful strategy to advance the rights of victimized groups'. Moreover, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) should encourage and promote cultural diversity in the workforce, which includes members of CALD groups such as NEAC.


*Develop Ethno-Specific Employment Services/ Foster Cross-Cultural Expertise Among Job Providers*

Employing bilingual staff from NEAC in job networks, employment agencies and job capacity assessment agencies is an urgent requirement. This will help to counter difficulties arising from a lack of cultural awareness among job providers, especially where the clients are predominantly from NEAC. Furthermore, the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations should explore the establishment of nationwide CALD job search specialists to provide culturally competent and intensive job seeking assistance.

*Streamline Overseas Qualification Recognition Procedures*

The current qualification recognition process is intricate and costly. This prolongs the unemployment period for skilled members of NEAC, although they may have very good English skills. A study by Monash University (2008) found that almost half of Australia's skilled migrants from NESB are not able to get a job in their field of expertise. Alarmingly, anecdotal as well as empirical evidence from NEAC shows that doctors and other highly qualified members of the communities are working as taxi drivers or are doing menial jobs well beneath their qualification levels.

The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) should consider ways to ease and simplify the process of qualification recognition, especially in areas where there is a dire need for professionals in NEAC, such as doctors, accountants and bilingual teachers. At the community level, this has a number of benefits. Integrating skilled members such as doctors of NEAC into the labour force, in particular, would eliminate the need to rely on interpreters, a service which is costly and often not fully available. Work experience and training opportunities must be provided for overseas-qualified professionals from NEAC. Otherwise, in the long term, not recognizing such skills will 'waste available skills' that Australia needs (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2007, p.34).

*Provide Opportunities to Gain Local Work Experience/ Incentives to Undertake Volunteer Work.*

Of all factors associated with challenges to employment in NEAC, lack of local experience is demonstrably one of the most significant. The Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations should explore employment schemes that provide work placement opportunities to members of NEAC to gain local work experience in the Australian labour market and upgrade their skills. Introducing various incentives to employers to accept skilled members of NEAC are key to this. Incentives must also be considered by Centrelink for skilled members of NEAC who lack local experience to undertake volunteer work.

The provision of bridging courses for those who want to upgrade their qualifications and gain local experience is an issue that has been raised repeatedly. FECCA (2009b, p.10) reminds: 'if greater support is not given to permanent migrants to find work in their area of expertise our nation suffers from lost productivity and the individual's experience of migration is diminished'.

*Establish CALD-Focused Research Institutions/ Empower Existing Advocacy Groups*

In the past, the existence of Multicultural Affairs and the Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR) and Multicultural and Population Research played an important role in addressing issues of immigrants in this country. However, since the demise of these important institutions, research that explores issues of CALD and NESB communities has been severely limited. There is a clear need to re-establish CALD-focussed research programs, and empower community organizations such as the Think Tank and other NESB service providers that deal with NEAC in exploring and overcoming the barriers to employment NEAC in Australia.

## Implications for Research

In general, this review revealed a weak evidence base for Australian social policy in the area of NEAC employment. This indicates a need for stronger government support for a coherent, ongoing agenda of research that can inform policy. The findings of this systematic review suggest several areas warranting further research. It is recommended that further in-depth research should be conducted to explore: the specific challenges to women from NEAC; the specific challenges to youth from NEAC; and specific challenges to senior members of NEAC. It would be useful to undertake action research on innovative pedagogies for English learning within NEAC; research on the specific language related challenges; and research on the impacts of having bilingual aid-teachers in language centres. In addition, it would be wise to evaluate trials of models such as social enterprise and work experience incentives prior to broader introduction.

## Conclusion

 Unemployment is the greatest threat to the active engagement of emerging migrant communities such as NEAC in Australian society. This review identifies challenges to employment in NEAC. However, when analysing barriers to employment in the community, it is important that the challenges be viewed within the context of broader settlement problems and barriers. It is also important for policy makers, NESB service providers and the communities themselves to be more cognizant of the challenges and threats related to employment in NEAC. Any effort to address unemployment in NEAC that fails to fully consider the challenges to employment will be ineffective.

   Paradoxically, many people from the NEAC have migrated and are still migrating to Australia to escape the chaos of war and to find peace; they may accomplish this only to find the chaos replaced with long-term grinding hardship and unemployment in Australia. It is disheartening to note that, at a time when the rhetoric of social inclusion is escalating, many members of NEAC find themselves economically excluded and at the bottom of the employment ladder. Those who seek to overcome unemployment are often faced with almost insurmountable personal, cultural, and structural barriers. As these individuals are frustrated in their ambitions, soon, their newly acquired psychological peace fades, paving the way for new forms of psycho-social anguish.

   In an increasingly multicultural Australia and complex global economy, addressing the challenges to employment in NEAC requires the cultivation and development of the inherent capacities of the communities. Furthermore, it requires the adoption of incremental and innovative strategies. Finally, above all, it requires a comprehensive understanding and increased

public awareness of the employment challenges in the communities and a determination to promote greater social inclusion.

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