



**Seizing the opportunity:
Making the most of the skills and
experience of migrants and refugees**

A research report for Multicultural Affairs Queensland
November 2018

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Acknowledgements

Deloitte Access Economics would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution to this report by the migrant and refugee community of Queensland who shared their stories with us as part of our primary research.

We would also like to thank the following people and organisations who gave their time, hosted focus groups, shared their experience in the sector, or engaged their clients on our behalf:

- Gitie House and the Toowoomba International Multicultural Society Inc.
- Bobby Augustine and the Springfield Malayalee Association
- Sebastian Chadwick, Cornelia Babbage and Multicultural Families Organisation Inc.
- Johanna Kodoatie, Meg Davis, and Townsville Multicultural Support Group
- Ali Ibrahim, Marina Chand, Tim Draper, and the staff of Multicultural Development Australia
- Alan Sparks and East Coast Apprenticeships
- Victoria Dias and the Commonwealth Department of Human Services
- Greg McKean and Business and Skilled Migration Queensland
- Sri Sripathy and the Federal Overseas Qualification Unit, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
- Brett Hall, Jane Newton and Jobs Queensland
- Commissioner Grant Jameson and the staff of the Office of the Fairness Commissioner, Ontario, Canada
- Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma
- Bundaberg & District Neighbourhood Centre
- Neighbourhood Centre Caboolture Inc
- Centacare Cairns - Multicultural Services
- Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast
- Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre
- Anglicare Southern Queensland
- ACCESS Community Services Limited
- George Street Neighbourhood Centre Association
- Good Shepherd Parish
- Nambour Community Centre
- Central Queensland Multicultural Association
- Islamic Women's Association of Australia
- MultiLink Community Services
- Mercy Community Services South West Queensland
- Michael Combs of CareerSeekers

Executive Summary

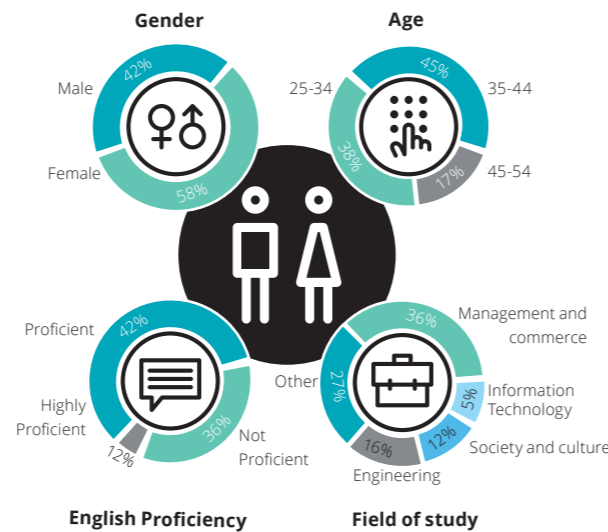
Each year, thousands of skilled migrants and refugees make Queensland their home. These people bring with them a diverse range of skills, qualifications and extensive professional experience that has the potential to bring enormous value to our businesses, our economy and our society.

Drawing on primary and secondary data sources, this report explores the economic and social imperative for better utilisation of skills and experience of migrants and refugees in Queensland, what is getting in our way, and how we might move forward to reap the benefits.

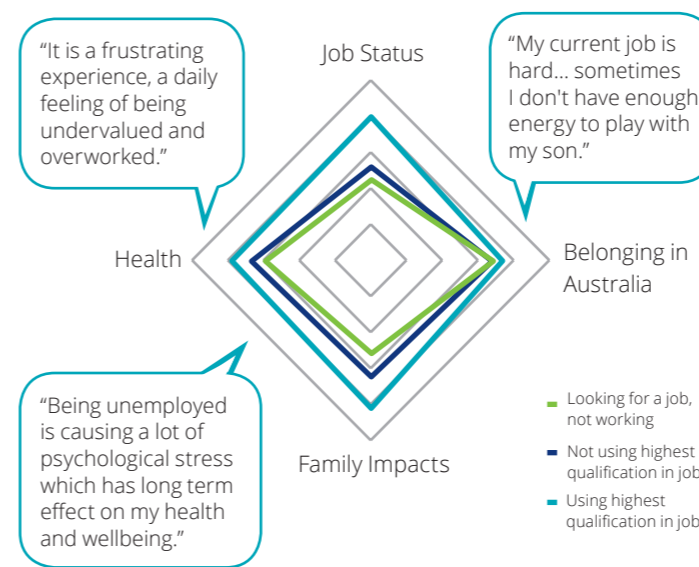
How much talent is not being utilised?



What are the characteristics of underutilised workers?



What are the top reasons skilled migrants and refugees are not applying to have their skills and experience recognised?



What is the economy wide opportunity?

Approx. **6,240** currently underutilised migrants and refugees have skills aligning with current skills shortages



How can we realise the opportunity at hand?

Long-term dividend to Queensland of higher real gross state product of **\$250 million** over ten years from better use of the skills of migrants and refugees



What are the top reasons skilled migrants and refugees are not using their talents?



27% could not find a job suited to their qualifications

What are the top reasons skilled migrants and refugees are not using their talent?

10% heard from others it was too difficult

14% too complex or difficult

18% too expensive



"The job market in Australia has been a huge disappointment to me. As a skilled worker, who got a permanent residency visa through [the] skilled migration process I would never imagine that in almost one year living here I would not be able to find a job in my field."

"The regulatory requirements to highly qualified migrant professionals are unrealistic, extremely expensive, frustrating, and time consuming."

How can we realise the opportunity at hand?

For Queensland to start reaping the economic and social benefits of inclusive growth, government, industry and the community all need to play their part to address the challenges in optimising the utilisation of skills, qualifications and experience of migrants and refugees.

- Opportunities**
- Transparency, coordination and fairness
 - System navigation
 - Local networks and experience



Queensland is faced with a \$250 million opportunity – we just need to tap into a talent pool that is right under our nose.

Background

This report explores the economic and social opportunities from better utilisation of skills and experience of migrants and refugees in Queensland, what is getting in our way, and how we might move forward to reap the benefits.

There is a growing evidence base indicating that many migrants and refugees with overseas-obtained post-school qualifications are working in lower skilled jobs, with a lack of recognition of overseas obtained qualifications and skills being identified as contributing to this outcome¹. In response, Multicultural Affairs Queensland commissioned this research with the objective of better understanding the potential net benefits, both economic and social, of increasing the skills recognition in this cohort. This clarity will allow a more informed discussion regarding the next steps for Queensland to realise the economic and social opportunity at hand.

In order to identify and quantify the potential benefits of skill recognition, the research needed to understand the nature of the impacts, the size of the affected cohort, and what was contributing to the suboptimal labour force outcomes. The approach taken was multi-modal, employing a combination of primary and secondary data collection and analysis.

To understand the nature of the impacts, a literature scan and secondary data analysis were carried out. For this stage, the key secondary data source was the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, providing insights into the social and economic impacts and costs, with the ability to understand the extent to which these impacts and costs are attributable to the under-utilisation of skills and experience. Given the data available from HILDA, there was further detail and insight that was sought from both the literature, and primary research. Migrants and refugees were engaged in the research through both an open survey, and a series of focus groups.

To determine the scale of under-utilisation, the Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (CORMS) data was utilised, providing insights into the number of migrants and refugees arriving in Queensland with overseas-obtained post-school qualifications and experience, whether or not they had applied for official recognition of their qualifications and experience, difficulties they had in securing their first job in Australia, difficulties they had in securing their current job, and whether or not they were using their skills and qualifications in their current job.

Through this multi-modal data collection and analysis, opportunities to improve skill recognition of migrants and refugees converged around key themes. A selection of government and sector representatives was engaged to identify potential program and policy responses that have endeavoured to realise these opportunities, both in local and international jurisdictions. The intention was to give an indication of principles and design features of strategies that have been used elsewhere to provide some guidance for how the next steps may be taken in Queensland.

Secondary data sources, including HILDA, CORMS and the Census, were synthesised to determine both the direct costs of skill underutilisation, but also the broader impact to Queensland's economy using computable general equilibrium (CGE) modelling. Further detail on the research methodology is provided in the Technical Appendix.

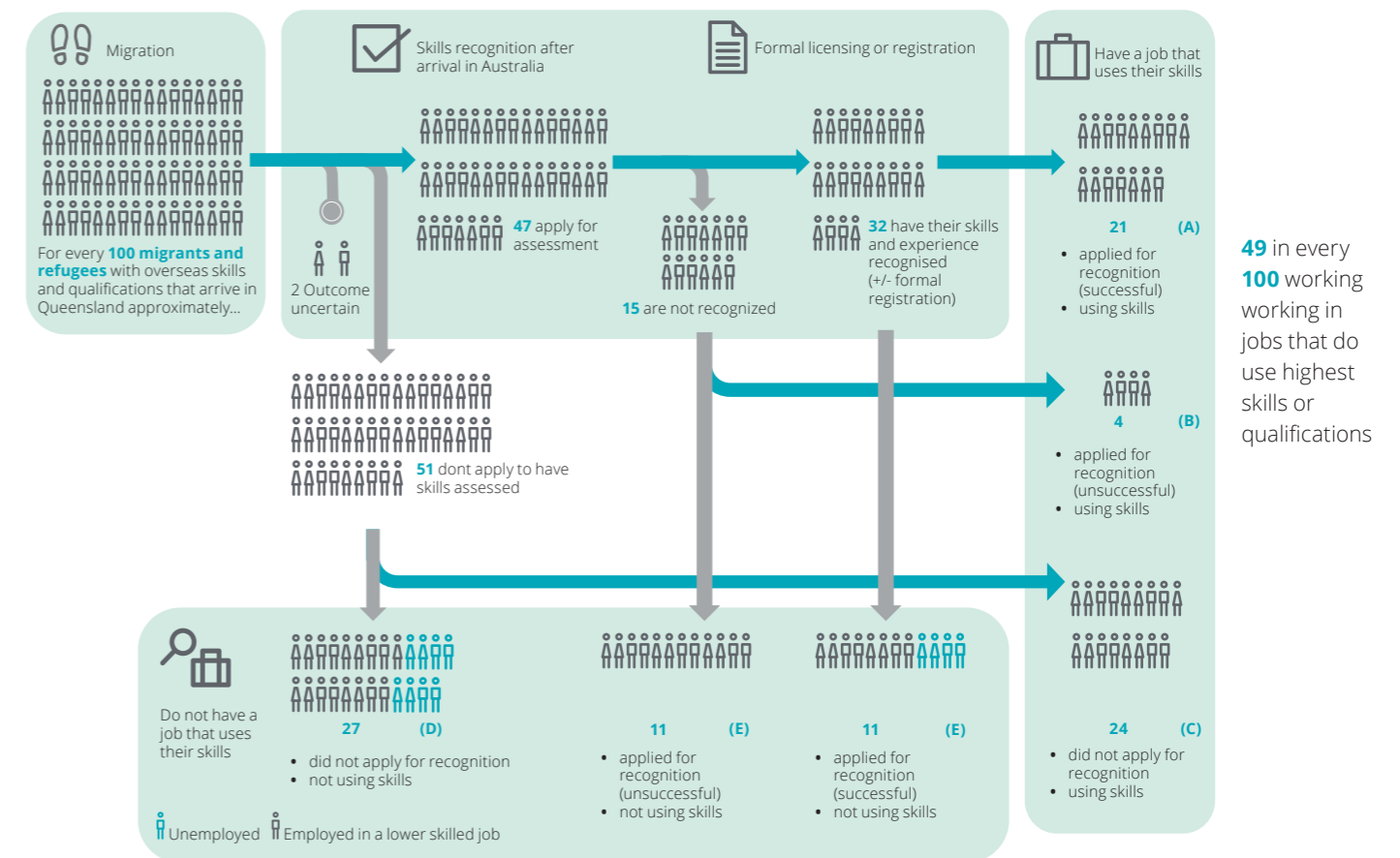
Primary data collection and consultation focused mainly on migrants and refugees to explore their experiences. Broad industry engagement was not in scope for this research; taking next steps forward necessitates industry engagement in the exploration of program and policy responses.

How much talent is not being utilised?

Each year, thousands of skilled migrants and refugees come to Queensland to make it their home. These people bring with them a diverse range of skills, qualifications and extensive professional experience that has the potential to bring enormous value to our businesses, and enormous value to our economy and society.

Despite over 80,000 skilled migrants and refugees coming to live in Queensland over the last 10 years, analysis shows that almost half of them (49%) are not fully utilising their skills and experience in the labour force. Figure 0.1 draws on secondary data sources to demonstrate the flow of skilled migrants and refugees through the process of formal skill and qualification recognition to employment outcomes.

Figure 0.1: Skill recognition pathway for migrants and refugees with overseas post-school qualifications in Queensland



“Stable employment in a job where I feel valued is the largest barrier to feeling like I belong to the Australian community”

This highlights that in some circumstances, formal skill recognition is not strictly required to use those skills or qualifications in work (e.g. groups B and C in Figure 0.1). The lack of recognition of their overseas professional experience, however, can still be a barrier to their employment in the field. Skill recognition is also not synonymous with skill utilisation (e.g. group F in Figure 0.1).

Those in the category not utilising their highest level of skills and experience are more likely to be female (58%), aged between the ages of 25 to 34 years (45%), and have skills in management and commerce (36%). This group comprises those that have successfully had their skills recognised, those that have been unsuccessful in formal recognition, and those that have not applied for recognition.

Taking skills shortages into account, there are approximately 6,240 migrants and refugees in the Queensland labour force (employed and unemployed) whose skills align with shortages.

49 in every 100 working in jobs that don't use highest skills or qualification, or not currently employed

¹Productivity Commission 2016, Inquiry Report, No.77, <http://www.pwc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/migrant-intake/report>

What's the impact?

The impact that skill underutilisation has in Queensland is three fold:

- A total cost per annum of over \$21.9 million specifically arising from a lack of skills recognition among the migrant cohort in Queensland;
- Associated social impacts, with unemployment and skill underutilisation affecting the health, family life and sense of belonging in Australia for migrants and refugees – compounding their existing predisposition to social and economic disadvantage; and
- Overall, it is estimated that the economy would be \$250 million larger in ten years if the skills of migrants were better utilised; this economy wide impact is the result of the increases in productivity and flows through to economic outputs and consumption.

Why aren't skills being utilised?

Findings from the national datasets, and primary research carried out for this report, indicate that there are a number of different and interacting challenges contributing to underutilisation:

1. Transparency, coordination and fairness;
2. System navigation; and
3. Local networks and experience.

Transparency, coordination and fairness

First and foremost, the system is complicated, often cumbersome, and can be costly to migrants and refugees. There is no single body or agency with oversight of the whole process, with fragmentation across government agencies (both state and Commonwealth), industry bodies, and third party providers. This does not allow for optimal coordination, and can result in limited understanding of how different processes are contributing to labour force outcomes.

Migrants and refugees seeking recognition of their skills and qualifications can be faced with out-of-pocket costs for examinations, training and translation of documentation. On the other hand, there are also perverse incentives that training organisations are prone to, with reports of encouraging enrolment in courses that do not necessarily align with long-term career aspirations.

Related to this is the fact that activities involved with skill recognition are often not included as Centrelink approved activities for refugees. This can leave the cohort with a choice between reskilling (usually at a lower level) in another field, or having their Centrelink payments reduced during often lengthy examination and registration processes.

System navigation

Related to – but distinct from – transparency, coordination and fairness, is the challenge of system navigation. Regardless of how well functioning systems and processes may be, the nature of the cohort and the scenario means that the need for system navigation persists. This is largely due to cultural and language differences that can make navigating the process of skill recognition, professional registration, and job seeking in Australia difficult. In this case, the opacity and complexity of the system and processes exacerbates this challenge.

Interestingly, it is an issue not only for migrants and refugees themselves, but has also been raised by community service providers, such as not-for-profit organisations who work with this cohort.

In addition, there is lack of shared understanding regarding the need for, or outcomes of, certain processes such as qualification assessment compared to formal recognition, and how this differs across industries.

Navigation difficulties compound how protracted the process is in many instances. This can further exacerbate challenges that migrants and refugees face with currency of their skills and experience for recognition.

Local network and experience

Primary and secondary data sources indicate that many skilled migrants were able to have their academic qualifications recognised only to find this made little difference to their job search. Approximately one third of those who were successful in formal recognition were not using their skills in their current employment, and over half of those who indicated formal recognition was not required in their field were also not utilising their skills in their current employment.

There is a growing understanding that formal recognition of skills is far from synonymous with utilisation of those skills. The sometimes more intangible recognition of professional experience obtained overseas, and the importance of local networks to secure a first job in Australia is critical for optimising productivity.

Employer hiring practises that favour local references and experience, and disadvantage those without an Australian network, is another barrier to finding a skilled job in Australia. Getting a 'foot in the door' can be extremely difficult for migrants and refugees who have no local experience, and often have no local referees. Lack of

a local network can be a particular challenge when migrants and refugees are not familiar with the context of the Australian job market and culture.

The culmination of these factors give rise to misaligned expectations for migrants and refugees regarding the reality of the skill recognition process and an Australian job search. More importantly, they present a chance for Queensland to realise the immense social and economic opportunity at hand.

How can challenges be overcome?

Considering the three key challenges, it becomes clear that there is no one body, organisation or agency that will be able to address these. Nor is it solely up to one level of government or sector to respond. In order to move forward with optimising the use of skills and experience of migrants and refugees, and for Queensland to start reaping the economic and social benefits of inclusive growth, government, industry and the community will all need to play their part:

- Government in developing and implementing policies and processes that are fair and transparent, balancing rigour with red tape;
- Industry in driving a culture of not only accepting diversity, but embracing the immense value that migrants and refugees can bring to businesses and their employees; and
- Community organisations and members in continuing to develop innovative solutions to optimise the utilisation of skills of migrants and refugees, and drive forward community integration and cohesion.

The interaction of these three key players, is where the biggest impact is likely to be had.



Chapter 1

Defining the problem

The economic benefits of migration are maximised when we enable Queensland's migrants to productively utilise their education, skills and experience.

What is skill underutilisation?

It's a story you've probably heard: back home, I was a doctor. Or a lawyer. Or a teacher or a nurse or an engineer. In Australia? The doctor is driving your taxi.

That's skill underutilisation. There is no single scenario that defines it, but most people know it when they see it. It is a broad concept describing workers who are unable to fully use and benefit from their education, skills, and/or previous work experience.

There is a growing evidence base indicating that many migrants and refugees with overseas-obtained post-school qualifications are working in lower skilled jobs, with recognition of overseas obtained qualifications and skills being identified as contributing to this outcome². In response, Multicultural Affairs Queensland commissioned this research with the objective of better understanding the potential net benefits, both economic and social, of increasing the skills recognition in this cohort. This clarity will allow a more informed discussion regarding the next steps for Queensland to realise the economic and social opportunity at hand.

Throughout this report, the term 'skills' refers to post-school qualifications and work experience. The terms are used interchangeably in some instances. Migrants and refugees who did not hold any post-school qualifications prior to arrival in Australia are out of scope of the analysis.

This research considers those in the labour force using the standard definition of those over 15-years-old who are working or looking for a job. This population is then divided into three groups based on the extent to which they are using their skills (Figure 1.1).

The first group are unemployed, and their skills are underutilised because they don't currently have a job. The second group have some form of inadequate employment: they have a job, but it doesn't make full use of their skills or qualifications. Finally, the third group have a job that fully uses their skills and qualifications.

When we hear these stories of skills underutilisation, most of us recognise that there's something not quite right about it. It's not a value judgement that some jobs are better than others, but an acknowledgement that some jobs are a better fit for people with certain qualifications. An experienced electrician is a more productive worker installing the wiring in your new house than they are stripping the paint.

This research aims to quantify the social and economic benefits of migrants and refugees being more productive workers when they are able to better use their overseas qualifications and experience in Australia.

How prevalent is skill underutilisation?

While it's not just those coming to Australia with overseas qualifications – anyone's skills can be underutilised – skill underutilisation is more prevalent among migrants and refugees who have obtained post-school qualifications before arriving in Australia.

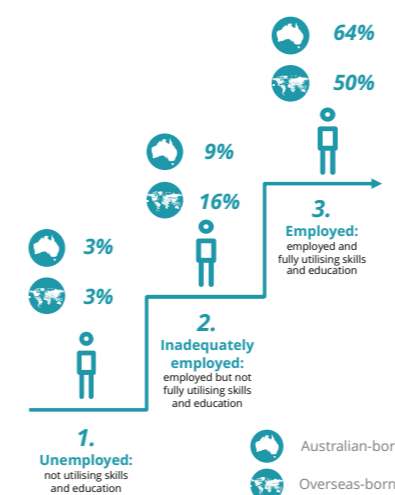
Case Study: Pedro, 40.

When Pedro arrived in Australia from Brazil a few years ago, he began applying for jobs in his field of expertise – digital marketing. After a long job search and hundreds of unsuccessful job applications, he gave up on finding a job like the one he left in Brazil. It was interview after interview only to be told he was unsuccessful because of a lack of Australian experience.

The only job he was able to successfully apply for was an entry level position as a casual product demonstrator. After coming to Australia with 17 years of experience in the corporate workplace and post-graduate qualifications in Creative Arts, he had to start over. His casual hours vary week to week and he often has to travel over 40 km to attend short shifts of only a few hours.

His job pays the bills but Pedro doesn't feel that it uses his skills and qualifications. He has more to contribute, but starting over so far into his career has been challenging. He says his experience finding a job in Australia has contributed to developing anxiety and depression.

Figure 1.1: Skill utilisation in the Australian labour market for migrants and refugees and for the Australian born.



Source: Deloitte analysis based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Survey in Australia (HILDA) survey.

Estimates vary depending on the methodology and definitions used, but taking a pooled sample from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Survey in Australia (Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey)³ this showed that 15.8% of migrants and refugees were overeducated relative to others in their job, compared to 9.2% of those born in Australia.

This analysis doesn't take into account other characteristics of the migrant and refugee population which could explain some of the difference in employment outcomes, such as English proficiency and more general characteristics that can impact on someone's ability to hold a job. The more detailed analysis presented in Chapter 2 was undertaken to adjust for these characteristics. However, the preliminary analysis presented here does show a sizeable difference in skill utilisation comparing migrants and refugees to the Australian born. This is despite Australia's skilled migration policy, which theoretically selects for those most likely to be successful in the labour market.

Several other research studies using different data sets over the past 25 years also find that migrants are more likely to be employed in jobs that don't use their highest qualification⁴. This research indicates that, despite changes to immigration policy over this period, the problem of skill underutilisation persists.

³ HILDA is an annual longitudinal survey of a representative sample of Australian households. Fifteen waves of HILDA data have been pooled in our analysis and treated as though every observation was taken at one point in time. Results are shown for the whole of Australia.

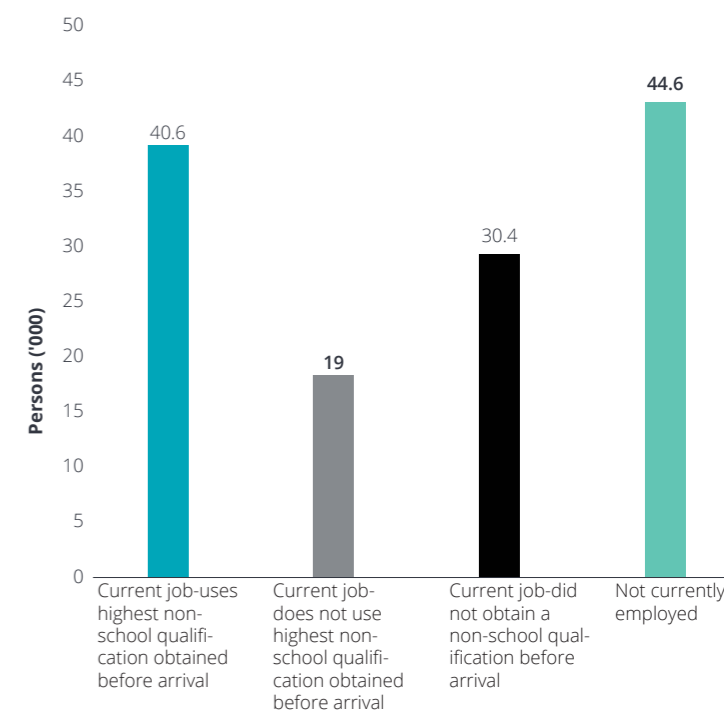
⁴ Chiswick, Barry R., and Paul W. Miller. Occupational attainment and immigrant economic progress in Australia. *Economic Record* 84.s1 (2008). Green, Colin, Parvinder Kler, and Gareth Leeves. Immigrant overeducation: Evidence from recent arrivals to Australia. *Economics of Education Review* 26.4 (2007): 420-432.

What are the characteristics of this cohort?

The Characteristics of Recent Migrants survey (CORMS)⁵ is specially designed to collect information on the demographic characteristics and employment outcomes of Australian migrants. The latest round of data was collected in 2016.

CORMS was used to estimate the number of migrants in Queensland who have overseas qualifications, but the survey also provides interesting insights into who skill underutilisation is most likely to affect. Based on CORMS, an estimated 40,600 recent migrants and refugees⁶ used their overseas post-school qualification in the Queensland workforce. About half as many (19,000) migrants did not use their highest post-school qualification obtained before arrival (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Use of highest qualification in current job by recent migrants to Queensland.



Source: Deloitte analysis based on the Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (Nov 2016)

Thapa, P. J. (2004). On the risk of unemployment: a comparative assessment of the labour market success of migrants in Australia. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 7(2), 199. Parasnis, Jaai, Dietrich Fausten, and Roland Cheo. "Do Australian qualifications help? The effect of host country qualification on migrant participation and unemployment." *Economic Record* 84.s1 (2008).

⁵ 6250.0 - Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, November 2016, ABS.

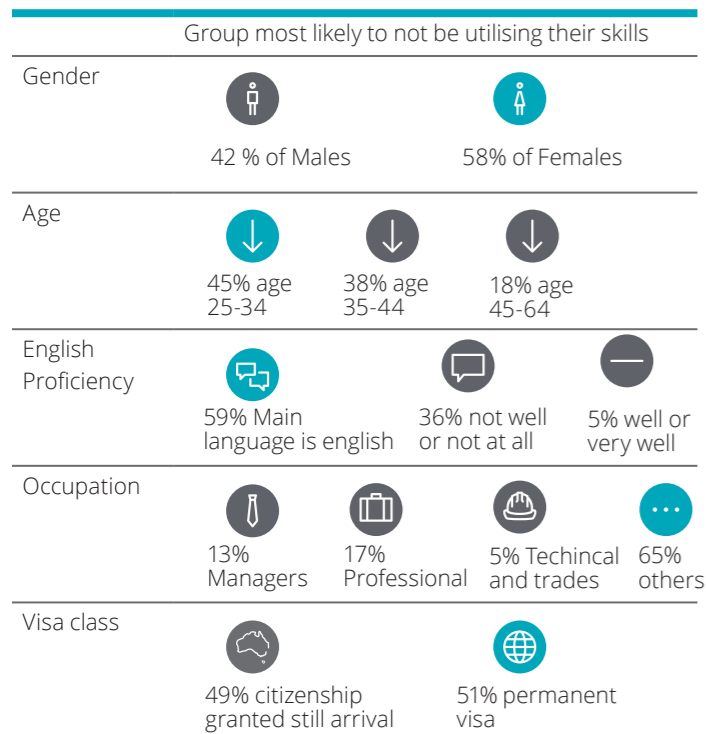
⁶ Recent migrant or refugee refers to arrival in the past 10 years

² Productivity Commission 2016, Inquiry Report, No.77, <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/migrant-intake/report>

Comparing migrants who do use their highest post-school qualification to those who do not use their highest post-school qualification, characteristics that are associated with higher skill underutilisation include gender, age, English proficiency, occupation, and visa type. These differences are summarised in Figure 1.3.

Characteristics that did not impact skill utilisation were geography (Greater Brisbane compared to the rest of Queensland), and time in Australia.

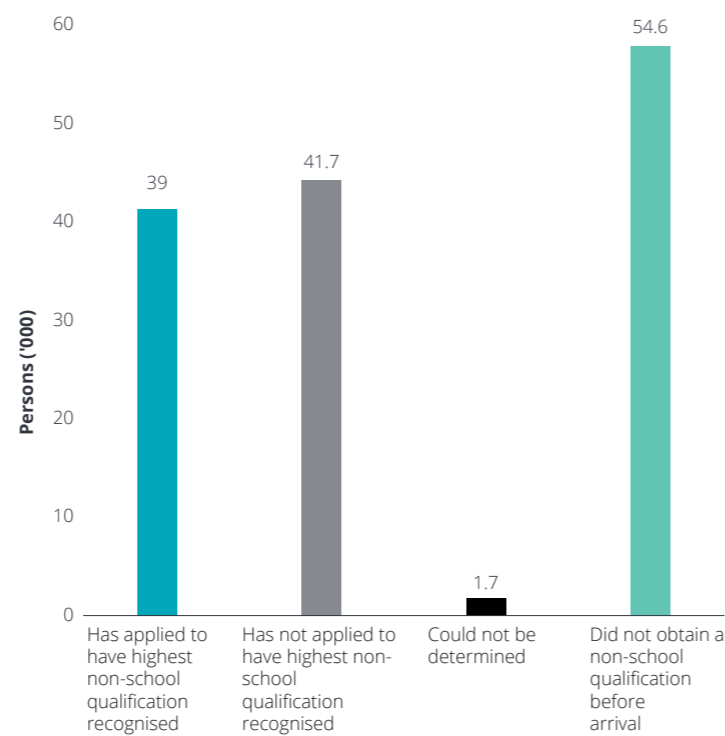
Figure 1.3: Characteristics of skill underutilised migrants



Source: Deloitte analysis based on the Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (Nov 2016)

CORMS also asked respondents if they had applied to have their qualification recognised in Australia. Analysis undertaken demonstrates almost equal numbers apply and do not apply, with approximately 39,000 recent migrants and refugees applying to have their highest overseas qualification recognised in Australia, and almost 42,000 not applying (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Recent migrants who applied to have overseas post-school qualifications recognised in Australia.



Source: Deloitte analysis based on the Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (Nov 2016)

“Being unemployed is causing a lot of psychological stress which has long term effects on my health and well being”

Of those that applied, the majority were successful: 70% of recent migrants (approximately 27,000) had their qualifications recognised as equivalent to an Australian qualification.

For the remaining migrants who applied to have their highest post-school qualification recognised, close to 80% said they were either in the process of applying or that their qualifications had been partially recognised. It was not possible to determine outcomes for the remaining 20% using the CORMS data.

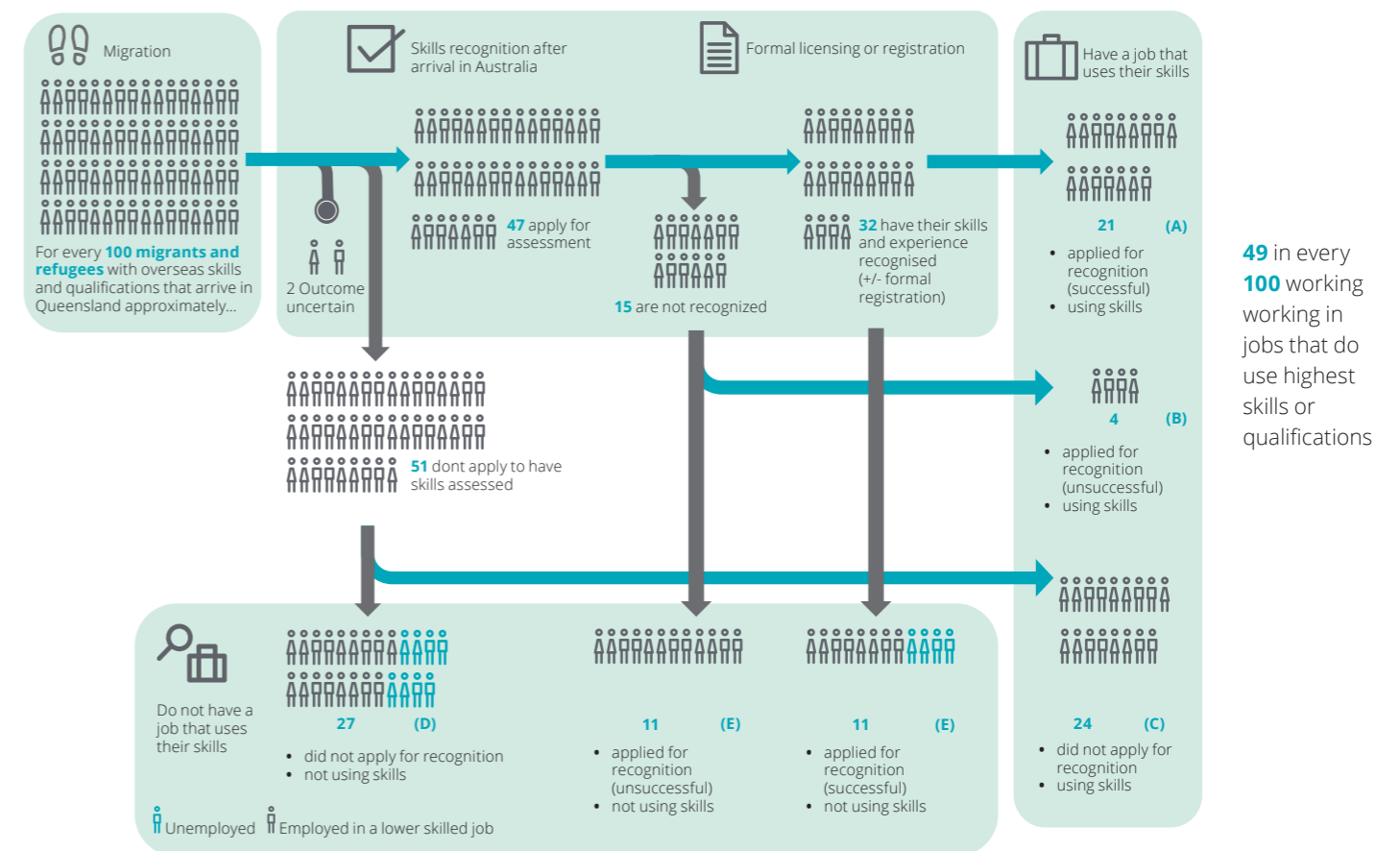
A large number of recent migrants and refugees (41,700) did not apply to have their qualifications recognised. CORMS did not ask why, so this question formed part of the primary research on the barriers to skill recognition, presented in Chapter 4.

An approximation of the skill recognition and employment pathways taken by migrants and refugees based on CORMS data is shown in Figure 1.5.

There are several notable aspects of this pathway; firstly, in some circumstances, formal skill recognition is not strictly required to use those skills or qualifications in work (e.g. groups B and C in Figure 1.5). The lack of recognition of their overseas work experience, however, may still be a barrier to employment in the field.

Secondly, skill recognition is not synonymous with skill utilisation (e.g. group F in Figure 1.5). Research in Chapters 2 and 3 seeks to unpack the individual characteristics compared to labour market forces, such as demand for skills, to contextualise findings.

Figure 1.5: Skill recognition pathway for migrants and refugees with overseas post-school qualifications in Queensland



49 in every 100 working in jobs that don't use highest skills or qualification, or not currently employed

Chapter 2

Economic and social impacts of skill underutilisation

Not recognising the skills and experience that migrants and refugees bring to Queensland comes at a cost to individuals, to all levels of government, to industry, and to the economy.

What are the costs?

The costs of skill underutilisation relate to the productivity lost when migrants and refugees are employed below their skill level or not employed at all. A list of economic and social costs of skill underutilisation (shown in Table 2.1) was developed based on a scan of the academic literature and other research from around the world. A summary of the findings of the literature scan is available in the Technical Appendix.

Table 2.1: Costs of skill underutilisation

	Cost	Type
Economic costs	Personal income foregone	Monetisable
	Government income/tax revenue foregone	Monetisable
	Superannuation	Monetisable
	Public housing expenditure	Monetisable
	Transfer payments [#]	Monetisable
	Foregone productivity	Monetisable
Social costs	Health and mental health	Monetisable*
	Impact on family and/or dependents	Non-Monetisable
	Community cohesion	Non-Monetisable
	Increased cost to fill skills shortages	Non-Monetisable

[#] Transfer payments include any payment from the government (may be at any level but generally Federal) to households. Examples are unemployment benefits, rental assistance and Family Tax Benefit payments.
^{*} The direct cost of foregone productivity is captured as foregone personal income and not double-counted. Flow on effects were monetised in the economy-wide modelling detailed in Chapter 3.

Some of these costs are monetisable – their dollar value can be determined. Other costs are quantifiable – their size can be estimated, but a dollar value is not readily applied. Finally, some costs are not monetisable nor quantifiable with available data – they are more intangible and qualitative in nature, for example impacts on community cohesion. The costs associated with these non-quantifiable and non-monetisable impacts are not included in the economic analysis.

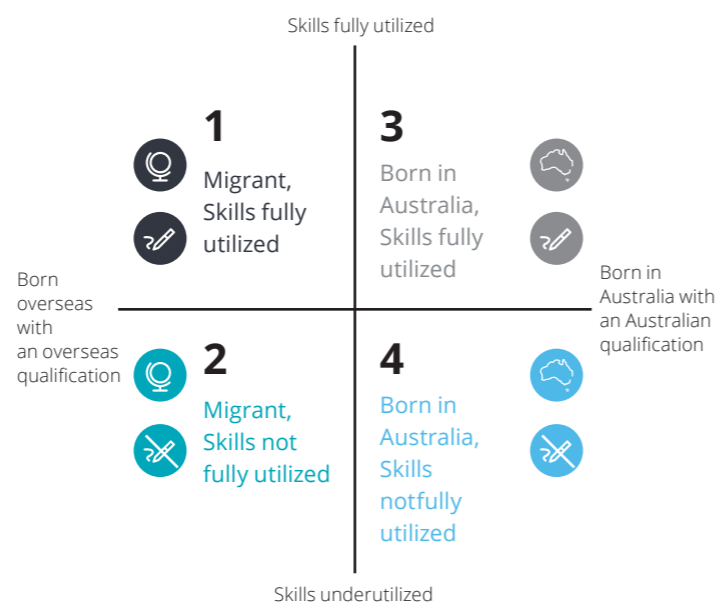
Estimating the costs of opportunity foregone

Data from HILDA and other sources was used to develop estimates of the direct cost per person attributable to skill under recognition for the three levels of skill utilisation described in Chapter 1. The cohort was divided into four groups to estimate the costs of skill under recognition, shown in Figure 2.1.

The utilisation of an employed person is determined using a person's highest education level, relative to the median highest education level for people in the same occupation. If someone's education level is significantly higher than the median for their occupation, then they are classed as skills underutilised.

Outcomes like wages and likelihood of living in public housing are estimated (controlling for other factors) for each of the following four groups in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Four groups used to estimate the cost of skill under recognition.



To isolate the direct costs that are specifically related to skills recognition from country of birth, we take the difference in outcomes between groups one and two (the cost of underutilisation for migrants) and the difference in outcomes between groups three and four (the cost of people born in Australia) and assess the gap between those two differences. If there is no lack of skills recognition within the migrant cohort, the costs of underutilisation for those born in Australia and migrants would be the same. The gap between the two differences therefore represents the cost of under recognition of overseas qualifications.

This analysis shows the following:

- A total cost per annum of over \$21.9 million⁷, specifically arising from a lack of skills recognition among the migrant cohort in Queensland; and
- Per person annual costs of \$4,332 for unemployed migrants and \$3,236 for employed but skills underutilised migrants in Queensland arising from a lack of skills recognition.

These total figures represent a lower bound rather than an upper limit to the total direct cost of skill under recognition for two reasons.

Firstly, the analysis is able to isolate the impact of skill under recognition related to overseas qualifications. The estimates therefore do not include the general costs of skill underutilisation that are applicable to both those born in Australia and those born overseas. In addition, costs attributable to migrant status itself rather than skill underutilisation are not accounted for in the estimates.

Secondly, many of the social costs could not be quantified or monetised using this method due to limitations in available data, so have been excluded from the estimate of total direct cost. Costs that weren't estimated include the impact on family, the majority of health costs (borne by government), the cost of reduced community cohesion, and the increased cost to employers/industry to fill skilled positions where there are labour shortages.

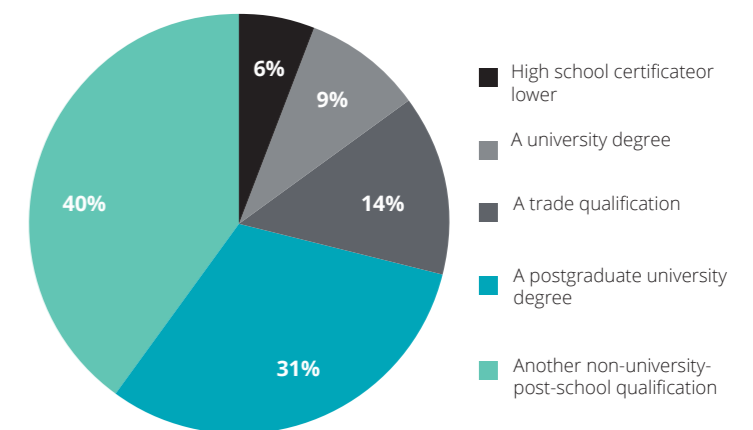
Another cost of skill under recognition not captured are the costs to migrants and refugees of further study that many undertake, such as bridging courses, or courses to reskill. In the primary data collection carried out as part of this research, 49% had undertaken further study since arrival. This represents a potentially significant out of pocket cost for this cohort, both in educational fees, and the opportunity cost of reduced capacity for skilled work.

Interestingly, 48% of those pursuing further study did so in fields

“ I had to get over my disappointments, depression and feeling about being lost, unappreciated and not acknowledged-years of work in the medical career pathway down the drain”

different to their primary field of study. This may indicate those seeking a voluntary career change; however, reported difficulties with skill and experience recognition suggest that many of these people are likely to be reskilling to work in a field different to their primary field of experience and qualification. The breakdown of the level of study undertaken following arrival is shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Level of further study undertaken following arrival in Australia



Source: Deloitte Access Economics administered survey

Further research on social costs

To better understand the social impacts of skill under recognition, an online survey of migrants and refugees was fielded as part of this research. There were 706 responses (466 complete, 240 partial⁸) from all over Australia, but the majority of respondents (69%) lived in Queensland. The findings from the survey represent responses from the Queensland respondents only.

Using a series of introductory questions as a filter, responses were only collected from migrants who:

- were over 18 years of age;
- arrived with a post-school qualification; and
- were not retired at the time they arrived.

There were 20 social impact questions that asked participants to rate their agreement with a statement about the impact of their job status on four areas: job satisfaction, family, health and feelings of belonging in Australia.

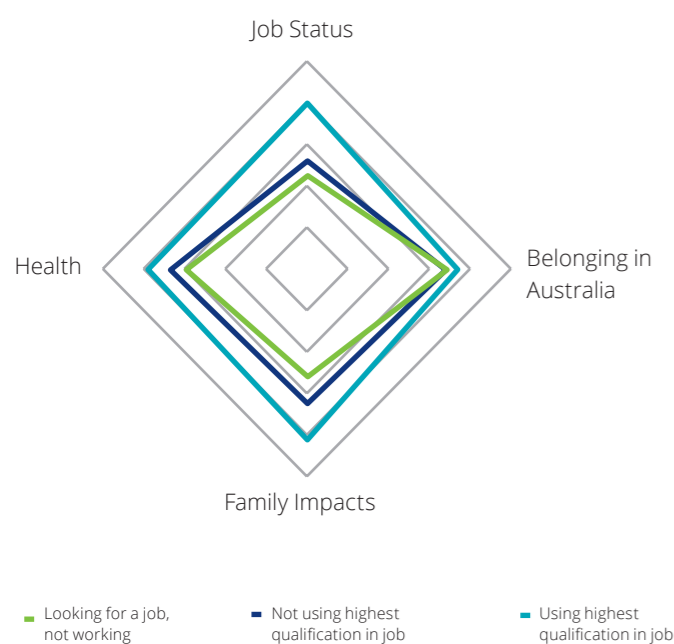
⁷ All cost figures are in 2015-16 financial year dollars

⁸ Because no question in the survey was compulsory, the number of responses to a given question does not equal the total number of responses to the survey. All survey data will be presented using the non-null responses to the relevant question(s) with the number of responses used in analysis appearing in the chart title.

Answers were assigned a numeric score based on survey responses of agreement with statements in each of the four impact areas. The absolute value of the index ranges from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a strong negative impact of job status on the index area (aligned with strong disagreement with statements in the survey), and 5 indicating a positive impact of job status on the index area (aligned with strong agreement with statements in the survey). An impact index of 3 corresponds to a neutral response. The average values by job status (skills underutilised, skills fully utilised and unemployed) are shown in Figure 2.3.

As expected, the most obvious relationship is between job dissatisfaction and job status; migrants who were fully utilising their skills reported job dissatisfaction much less frequently than migrants who are skill underutilised. A relationship that was the same in direction, but smaller in magnitude was seen for the family impacts and health indices. The impact of unemployment on the social measures investigated was more pronounced than inadequate employment.

Figure 2.3: Average impact showing the severity of the impact of job status on social impact indicators



Source: Deloitte Access Economics administered survey

These results were in keeping with the existing literature on the impact of inadequate employment and unemployment on health and family.

Establishing causality between labour market status and social impacts is difficult due to feedback between the variables – your health can determine your labour market state, and your labour market state can have an impact on your health. Moreover, there is always the possibility that employment and health outcomes are determined by other, unobserved characteristics. However, it is fairly well established that in the general population adverse employment outcomes are associated with worse overall health, particularly mental health. Specifically looking at the migrant population, Reid et. al⁹ used the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants in Australia to measure the mental health outcomes of immigrants who reported not using their job skills in wave 1 of the survey. They found that adjusting for individual characteristics, not using job skills in wave 1 was associated with lower scores on the mental health scale in wave 3.

No literature was found examining the impacts of inadequate employment on the families of migrants and refugees. However, Pedulla and Newman¹⁰ reviewed the community and family impacts of inadequate employment in the general population and found multiple studies linking unemployment and inadequate employment to marital strain, particularly when it affects a male partner. Poor employment outcomes may also have a negative impact on parenting, with higher parental stress levels linked to a reduction in nurturing behaviours and children of households, with reduced income more at risk of lower educational attainment.

Survey results support these findings in the migrant population surveyed, with respondents commenting on the impact on their children and spouses of working long hours for lower wages than they had anticipated given their qualifications.

Interestingly, skill under recognition did not have a large impact on the feelings of belonging in Australia, although many of the respondents gave caveats in the free text fields of the survey capturing additional information. Several described a stark contrast between their satisfactory social lives in Australia and their careers. One reported a strong sense of belonging which was “tempered by issues of racism and discrimination.”

Overall, it seems stable employment is a factor in migrants’ and refugees’ sense of belonging in Australia, but where stable employment is lacking, other positive experiences as part of the community compensate for negative experiences in the job market.

Because of the small sample size, no significance testing or cross-tabulation of the results using multiple characteristics was undertaken.

These areas of job satisfaction, family impacts, health and belonging in Australia were also explored through the focus group research. Stories of job satisfaction were consistent with the survey results, with a number of participants indicating also that the nature of their work limited their ability to interact and connect with their co-workers to forge relationships and networks in Australia.

Others cited the frustration with the adjustment to lower-skilled work, and the stress this placed on their livelihood. In many instances, the expectations of arriving and settling in Australia were misaligned with the reality of the challenges gaining work in their field to build a life for themselves and their family.

Further analysis of the survey data is presented in Chapter 4 and provides insights into the barriers to skill recognition for those arriving in Australia with overseas qualifications.

“I just feel worried all the time. I feel I will never be able to show my skills and experience”

Case Study: Sofia, 30.

Sofia and her husband are recent migrants from Latin America. She has a postgraduate qualification in Political Science and several years of experience working in skilled office jobs. Since arriving in Australia, Sofia has had been unable to find a job in her field of study. Instead, she has held multiple short term, low skilled jobs.

After a job involving physical labour left her in pain and unable to continue working, she has been unemployed. Her inability to find work and contribute equally to the household has left her feeling depressed and disappointed in the Australian job market.

It has also put a strain on her marriage. Sofia and her husband have been unable to make enough money to cover basic expenses like rent, food and transport. The financial stress is something they argue over in Australia that they didn’t argue about in Latin America.

After one year of living in Australia, they are deciding whether or not to stay as they feel they cannot afford to raise a family here, despite being accepted into the skilled migration program and coming to Australia with professional qualifications.

⁹Reid, A. (2012). Under use of migrants’ employment skills linked to poorer mental health. Australian and New Zealand journal of public health, 36(2), 120-125.
¹⁰Pedulla, D. S., and Newman, K. S. “The family and community impacts of underemployment” in Maynard, Doug, and Daniel C. Feldman, eds Underemployment: Psychological, economic, and social challenges. Springer Science & Business Media, 2011

Chapter 3

The opportunity for Queensland

Based on modelling of the economy-wide impacts, making better use of the skills of migrants and refugees could result in a long-term dividend to Queensland through higher real gross state product of \$250 million over ten years.

- Design, engineering, science and transport professionals;
- Health professionals;
- Automotive and engineering trade workers;
- Construction trade workers;
- Food trades and hospitality; and
- Business and other professionals.

Analysis of the main field of study shows that approximately 60% of migrants have skills in the areas where key skill shortages have been identified across Queensland.

This 60% is applied to the cohort of skill under recognised migrants and refugees to take account of skills shortages in Queensland (demand), and this gives 6,240 migrants and refugees (after accounting for an understatement in CORMS) in the labour force (employed and unemployed) who are estimated to be currently underutilised from a skills perspective and in line with key skill shortage areas.

What do the numbers tell us?

Increasing skills recognition leads to better matching of labour supply (by skill) to current levels of labour demand and the payoff is a more productive Queensland workforce.

The addition of more highly skilled labour (productive workers) in the economy results in an economic dividend for Queensland's economy, with the size of the economy increasing by \$250 million over 10 years applying a 7% real discount rate.

The change in GSP provides a measure of the total uplift across the economy after the flow-on benefits of increased recognition of migrants and refugees flow through. The analysis measures how much larger the Queensland economy could be if the opportunity was realised.

The quantum of skill underutilisation

To estimate the quantum of skills under recognition of migrants and refugees, extensive use was made of the CORMS dataset. Both skills under recognition and skills utilisation were considered when analysing CORMS to target the cohort of interest.

The number of migrants and refugees who applied to have their highest post-school qualification recognised and those in the labour force (employed or actively seeking work) was estimated using a range. This estimate of skill under recognition from CORMS is adjusted upwards using Population Census data as the coverage of CORMS is limited to the 10-year period to November 2016. This takes into account under-representation implicit in CORMS.

The quantum of skills under recognition is shown below:

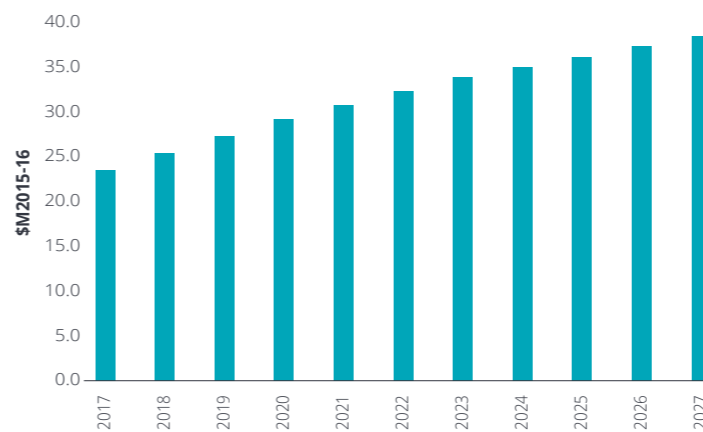
- 6,500 to 9,100 – employed
- 1,950 to 3,250 – unemployed

The quantum of skills under recognised migrants and refugees is based on the mid-point of these estimates leading to an estimate of 7,800 employed and 2,600 unemployed; that is, 10,400 persons in the labour force in total who are not currently fully utilising their highest skills and qualifications.

Labour demand and supply matching for skills in Queensland

This information from CORMS has been matched against data on skill shortages by occupation in Queensland identified by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (DET), highlighting the following occupations:

Figure 3.1: Change in Queensland Real Gross State Product \$M 2015-16 (relative to business as usual)



Source: Deloitte estimates based on economy-wide modelling

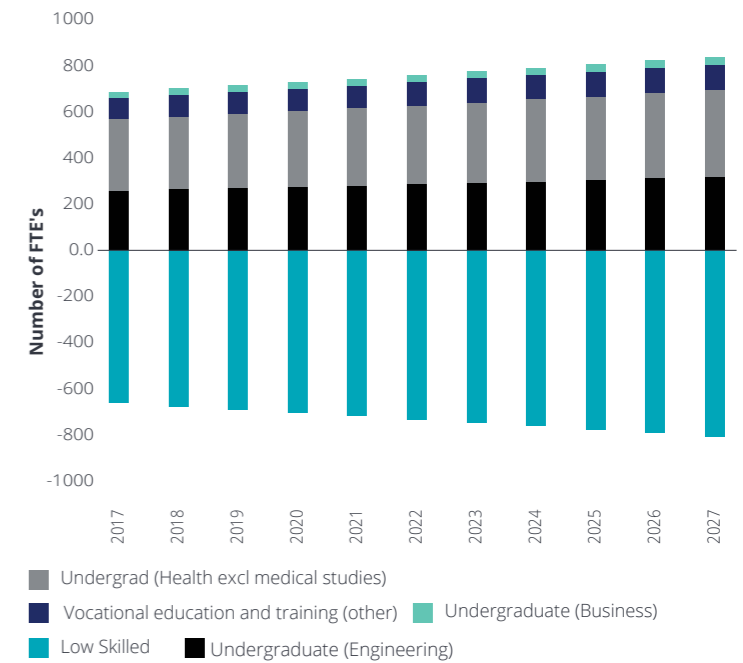
The change in employment for skills levels directly affected is shown in Figure 3.2 and sectoral output in Figure 3.3.

In aggregate, the modelling findings demonstrate that there is no substantial change in the level of employment in the Queensland economy. This net change is the result, however, of an increase in skilled labour offset by a decrease in unskilled labour (see Figure 3.2). This shift towards more skilled labour impacts the real industry output shown in Figure 3.3.

In summary, the modelling findings are driven by the increase in a real allocation of labour to more productive use and subsequent flow-on effects, which is reflected in an overall but sustained increase in Queensland's real GSP.

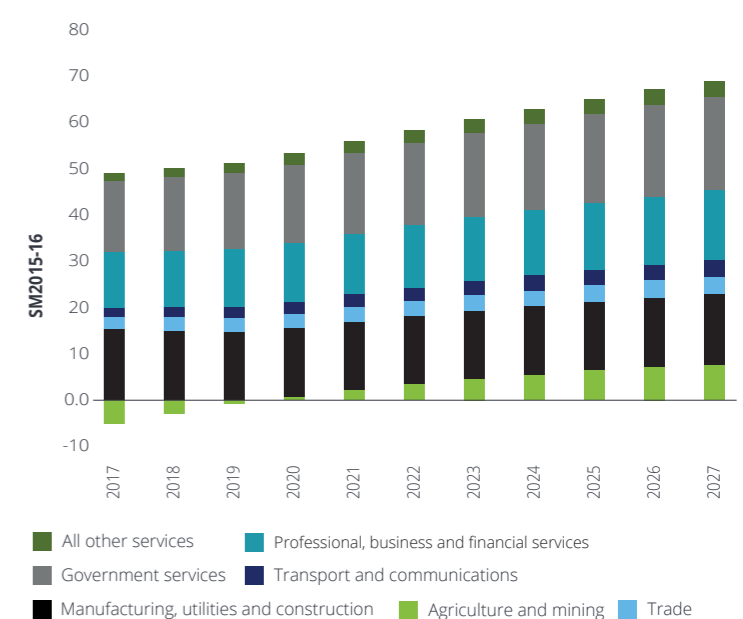
The industry results shown in Figure 3.3 demonstrate that sectors standing to benefit the most include government services (e.g. health, education and other government services), Professional, Business and Financial Services, and industries including Manufacturing and Construction. This reflects the key occupations where migrants are currently most underutilised and is also in line with key skill shortage areas in Queensland (e.g. engineering and related technologies skills are in high demand by industries such as manufacturing and construction and management; commerce and business skills are in high demand by industries such as professional, business and financial services).

Figure 3.2: Change in employment by skill level FTEs (relative to business as usual)



Source: Deloitte estimates based on economy-wide modelling

Figure 3.3: Change in real industry output \$M (relative to business as usual)



Source: Deloitte estimates based on economy-wide modelling

Chapter 4

Seizing the opportunity

To understand how the economic opportunity could be realised, research explored the challenges for skilled migrants and refugees in Queensland finding skilled employment, and how these could be addressed

Research

Insights into the barriers for skilled migrants and refugees finding skilled employment was drawn from secondary data sources, supplemented by primary research, encompassing an open survey and a series of focus groups in regions with high levels of overseas migration.

Secondary data

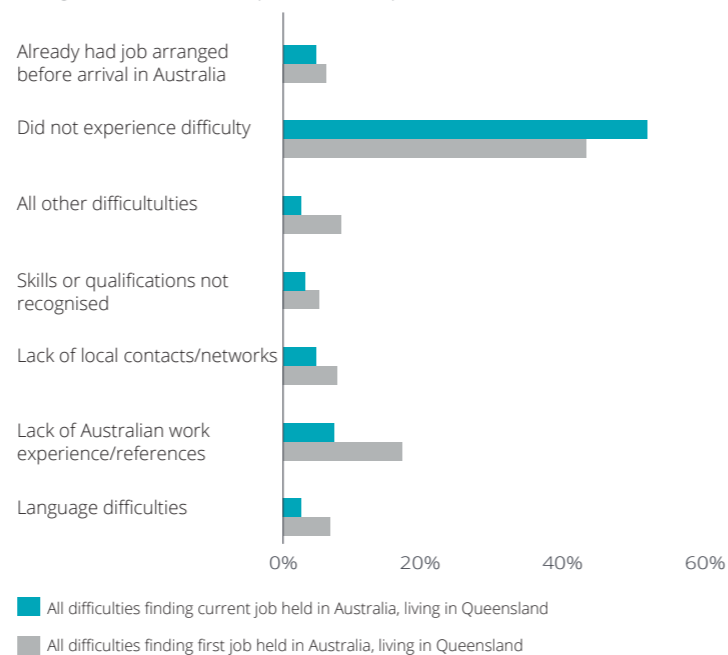
Data obtained from the CORMS survey was analysed firstly to understand some of the difficulties reported by recent migrants finding their first job in Queensland. This data was collected for all CORMS respondents, and was not specific to whether they were using their highest post-school qualification in their current employment.

From this initial analysis, it was found that whilst 49% of respondents either already had a job arranged before arrival to Australia, or reported they did not experience difficulty finding their first job, another 29% reported either that:

- their skill or qualification was not recognised (5%);
- they had a lack of local contacts or networks (8%); or
- they had a lack of Australian work experience or references (16%).

Language difficulties were cited by 7% of the cohort. What is also evident from CORMS data presented in Figure 4.1 is that all difficulties reduced in prevalence for current jobs held, compared to challenges experienced in finding their first job in Queensland.

Figure 4.1: Reported difficulties in job searching for migrants and refugees with overseas post-school qualification (%)



Source: Deloitte analysis based on the Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (Nov 2016)

This starts to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of this challenge, beyond the binary recognition of qualifications or skills, to the sometimes more intangible recognition of professional experience obtained overseas, and the importance of local networks to get a 'foot in the door' in the Australian job market. The primary research sought to understand and validate these findings from CORMS.

Survey and focus groups

In the survey, of 486 respondents to the question on current job status, 61% of migrants and refugees reported not fully utilising their skills and education, either because they were not using their highest qualification in their current employment (38%) or because they were unemployed (23%).

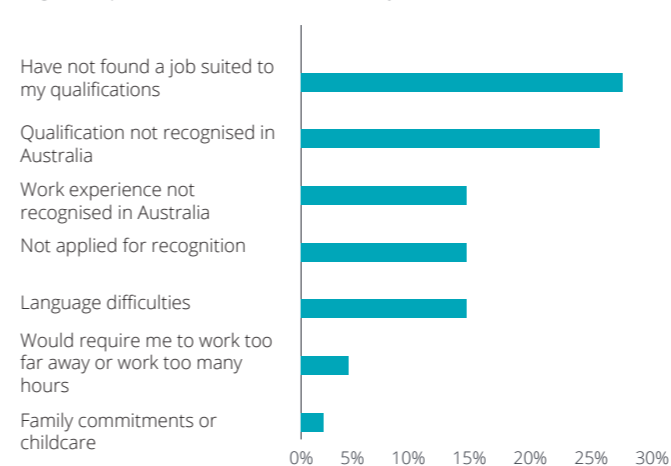
Migrant and refugee respondents who reported working in a job that did not use their highest qualification were asked what they saw as the main reason they weren't utilising their skills.

The most common response was difficulties finding a suitable job. The second highest response was that their skills were not recognised in Australia. Equal numbers also reported English proficiency, work experience that was not recognised as equivalent to Australian work experience and not having applied for skill recognition as reasons (Figure 4.2).

"Despite being trained and having experience in aged care, I was advised that it would be easier for me to train to become a barista rather than trying to continue my existing career in Australia"

"The regulatory requirements to highly qualified migrant professionals are unrealistic, extremely expensive, frustrating and time consuming"

Figure 4.2: Main reason migrants and refugees were not using their highest qualification in their current job

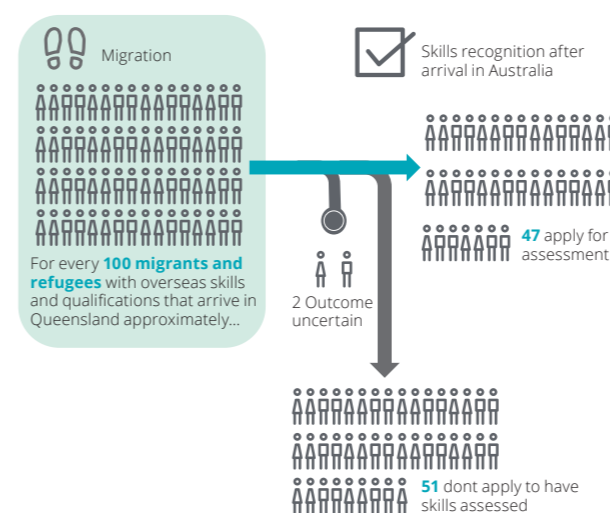


Source: Deloitte Access Economics administered survey

Cited reasons such as qualifications not being recognised, and work experience not being recognised are consistent with the CORMS data. There are, however, two other areas to take into account when considering the barriers in this scenario.

It is understood from the CORMS data that the majority (51%) of recently arrived skilled migrants and refugees did not apply to have their skills or qualifications recognised; this group are those highlighted in Figure 4.3 an excerpt from Figure 1.5.

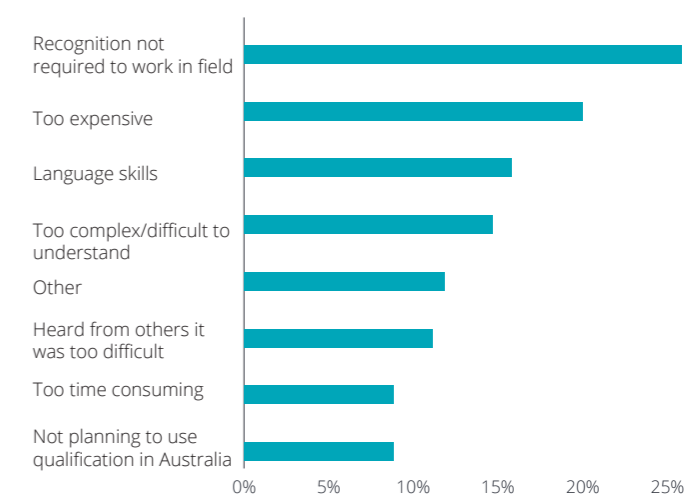
Figure 4.3: Skilled migrants and refugees not applying for skill recognition



In the survey administered as part of this research, respondents who did not apply to have their skills recognised gave reasons, including almost a quarter who cited recognition was not required to work in their field. Despite this, 57% of this group were not using their highest skill of qualification in their current role (i.e. group D in Figure 1.5).

Around half of those respondents who did not apply for formal recognition of skills reported this was because it was either too expensive (18%), too complex or difficult (14%), heard from others it was too difficult (10%) or too time consuming (8%), as shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Main reason migrants and refugees did not apply for formal recognition of skills



Source: Deloitte Access Economics administered survey

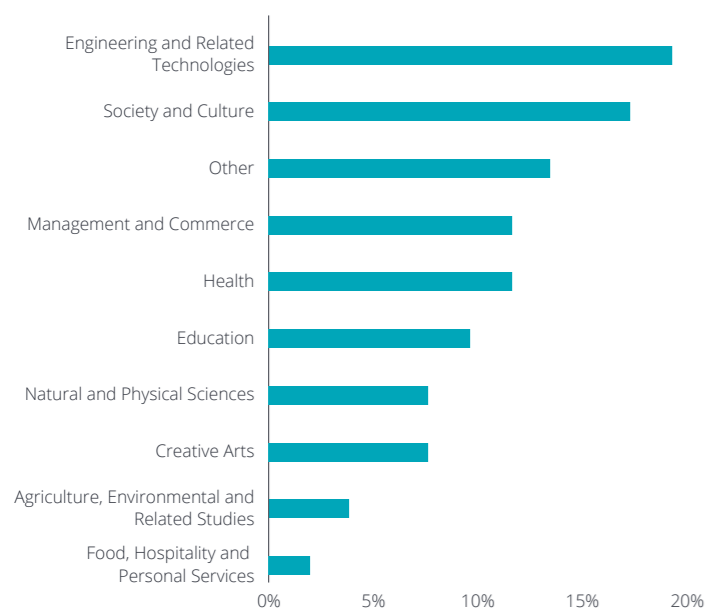
The other notable response to the survey was that 24% of respondents who were not using their highest skills or qualifications (either unemployed, or employed in jobs not utilising their skills or experience) indicated this was because they could not find a suitable job in their field.

This finding was reiterated in focus group discussions, with a number of participants indicating that despite being granted a skilled visa, there was insufficient demand for their skills when they entered the labour market. This appeared to be pronounced in the instance of skilled regional visas, where specialist skills of migrants were reportedly misaligned with skills demand in these geographical areas.

“While I am highly qualified overseas and in Australia I still feel marginalised by my accent, skin color and name in many circumstances”

Looking at the fields of qualification of migrants and refugees who reported they could not get a job because there were no suitable jobs in their field, the most common respondents were engineers (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.5: Fields of qualification of migrants and refugees who reported they were unable to find a job suited to their qualifications. (n=54)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics administered survey

Key challenges

These findings from the secondary data and primary research exploring the experiences of overseas qualified or trained migrants and refugees converged on three challenges:

1. Transparency, coordination and fairness;
2. System navigation; and
3. Local networks and experience.

Case Study: Amara, 38.
 Amara is a trained psychologist from India who migrated to Australia ten years ago. When she arrived, she began the process of becoming registered to practice in Australia.

Her qualifications had already been recognised for her visa application, but the professional registration body required English proficiency scores higher than those she had attained, and translations of all her academic transcripts for her Bachelors and Masters degrees, amounting to more than 200 pages which she estimates would cost thousands of dollars to have translated.

Undeterred, she took a job as a counsellor and enrolled in a preparatory course to improve her English language test score. But when she sat the test again, she still fell short of the high benchmark in the writing portion of the test. Over the next few years, she attempted the test again multiple times.

Ten years later, she is still struggling to accept that despite qualifying for the skilled migration program on the basis of her qualifications, she will never be a registered psychologist. She describes the requirements for professional registration as unrealistic, extremely expensive, frustrating, and time consuming.

Amara still works as a counsellor. Her job is challenging and fulfilling, and she works with clients that require highly specialised support. But she is paid less than a registered psychologist would be, with her same level of qualification and experience.

The experience has been a blow to her self-esteem as she feels she studied so hard and so long, only to underachieve in her career.

Challenge #1: Transparency, coordination and fairness

No single source of current, correct and objective advice exists for migrants and refugees who come to Australia with qualifications and skills obtained overseas.

There is insufficient oversight regarding how effective the various processes are in contributing to labour market outcomes, exacerbated by fragmentation. This includes fragmentation of responsibility across levels of government and across departments, industry bodies, and front end services assessing qualifications and granting visas.

Parts of the current system are also prone to perverse incentives and perceived conflicts of interest. For example, Registered Training Organisations contracted to deliver English classes financially benefit from provision of further certificate-level qualifications to new arrivals, but have no incentive to refer those with existing qualifications and skills for assessment. A number of focus group participants felt they were being advised to pursue courses that did not contribute towards their career goals.

Compounding this are challenges such as the fact Centrelink approved activities do not include activities related to skill recognition like studying for or sitting registration exams. This means qualified refugees trying to gain entry into registered professions in Australia face a choice between having their Centrelink payments and sole source of income reduced during the lengthy examination and registration process, or simply reskilling (usually at a lower level) in another field.

Another example is that often the organisations carrying out assessments to recognise an individual’s skills (e.g. registration bodies, registered training organisations), are also those receiving payment of examination fees by this cohort who want to register to practice in Australia.

Other coordination issues manifest with the interaction and order of processes. A number of migrants and refugees expressed frustration that International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test – required for recognition and registration purposes – expired every two years. Given the often drawn out nature of recognition and registration, migrants and refugees reported having to pay to sit the test multiple times over the duration of skills recognition process.

Despite this, no single government body has oversight over the entire skill recognition process or assesses the reasonableness of timing, requirements, and costs. Whilst the Fair Work Ombudsman has processes for migrant workers in Australia, these are focussed on treatment of migrants in the workforce. There is no apparent recourse for migrants and refugees going through the process of skill and experience recognition.

These factors combined mean many migrants find their expectations misaligned with the reality of the skill recognition process and an Australian job search.

The administrative requirements can also be impractical and unduly costly. Migrants and refugees seeking recognition of their skills and qualifications can be faced with out-of-pocket costs for examinations, training and translation of documentation. The standard of documentation of qualifications and experience can also be very high, and may not be possible, particularly for humanitarian entrants who have had to flee their homes, and whose belongings may have been destroyed by war.

Whilst programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work funds training and support for unemployed or underemployed people, this program is geared towards skilling or reskilling, as compared to the challenge of this cohort who have pre-existing skills and qualifications. There may be, however, fundamental and transferrable features of this program that could be applied successfully to address some of the challenges faced by the skilled migrant and refugee cohort, such as the job readiness and traineeships features.

“The job market in Australia had been a huge disappointment to me. As a skilled worker, who got a permanent residency visa through skilled migration process. I would never imagine that in almost one year living here I would not be able to find a job in my field”

Challenge #2: System navigation

The Australian skill recognition system is complicated. The pathway to a skilled job is often unclear, expensive, and time consuming for new arrivals.

Related to – but distinct from – Challenge #1, is the challenge of system navigation. Regardless of how well functioning systems and processes may be, the nature of the cohort and the scenario means that the need for system navigation persists. This is due largely to cultural and language differences that can make navigating the process of skill recognition, professional registration, and job seeking in Australia difficult.

The opacity of the system and processes in this scenario exacerbate this challenge, make navigating the system more of a guessing game than a structured process in many cases; this is particularly so for people coming from very different cultures and who speak English as a second language. Outcomes can depend not necessarily on merit (the skills and experience a migrant has), but on the people and agencies they seek advice from, and when.

Service providers, as well as migrants and refugees themselves, have reported that the processes are confusing. For example, this research has found that there does not appear to be a shared understanding regarding the need for, or outcomes of, certain processes; one example is confusion about the difference between qualification assessment (made at qualification level, not subject matter level), as compared with qualification recognition or equivalency that would be required to actually work in a given field.

This difficulty with navigation of a complex system can compound how protracted the process is in many instances. This delay in recognition can further exacerbate issues with recency/currency of skills and experience.

The optimal pathway to navigate the system is largely dependent on an individual's circumstances, their English proficiency, and their career goals. Yet there appear to be insufficient individualised support for migrants and refugees. Skilled migrants are not entitled to Centrelink services like Jobactive, and refugees receive the same support as all Australian jobseekers despite the obvious and unique challenges they face.

A note on English proficiency

English proficiency is clearly linked to employment outcomes for both refugees and skilled migrants, despite the English language requirement to obtain a visa for the latter.

In many workplaces, proficiency in English is required for an employee to be able to perform their responsibilities and maintain Australian safety standards. For this reason, we don't consider English proficiency as a separate barrier. However, the importance of a coordinated, user-centred approach to resettlement services can't be understated.

For skilled migrants, English proficiency requirements for practicing in the applicant's profession can be more advanced than the minimum entry requirement for their visa, such as many health professions. This is another driver of expectations mismatch and disappointment felt by skilled migrants when they come to Australia to work in their field after a skilled visa has been granted.

"I got my permanent resident visa here as a skilled migrant nominated by Queensland in my first year in Australia. Since then, I have had to leave my profession due to lack of opportunity"

"It has been difficult finding a job here, as employers are expecting you to have Australian experience, and do not seem to understand that experience from other places in the world can be very valuable"

Challenge #3: Local networks and experience

Employer hiring practices that favour local references and experience, and disadvantage those without an Australian network, are another barrier to finding a skilled job in Australia.

Speaking English with an accent, being newly arrived without Australian work experience, and not understanding the subtleties of the Australian job market are all self-reported barriers to finding skilled employment.

Many skilled migrants were able to have their academic qualifications assessed as equivalent to an Australian qualification only to find this made little difference to their job search. Employers were after people with a local work history and Australian references.

The value of facilitating links between migrants and refugees and local professional and industry networks and employers cannot be understated. It is a critical step to overcome the lack of Australian experience for migrants and refugees and assist in connecting skills with employment opportunities.

Participants in the research indicated that they felt they were judged too soon on their written job applications. Several thought that they would have been more successful in the labour market if they had opportunities to talk to someone about their experience, or demonstrate the skills they had.

This lack of Australian experience is a challenge that becomes an increasingly prohibitive factor as time passes, and skills and experience become less current. Skilled migrants and refugees discussed that a number of them had taken up unpaid volunteer work as a last resort to develop a network and get exposure to a potential employer. Those participants who had taken this approach found that it had helped convert them into paid employment.

This barrier is not only about connecting with people or networks that may be able to directly assist with job opportunities, but also having access to advice about the culture of the Australian workforce and how job seeking and application works.

Perceived barriers pertaining to racial and cultural discrimination were not specifically pursued; however these were raised unsolicited by some participants. Evidence suggests that unconscious bias can contribute to adverse labour force outcomes for culturally diverse populations; this reiterates the importance of industry's role in addressing this challenge.

With each challenge comes opportunities

What is clear from this research and analysis is that there is a great economic and social opportunity at hand for Queensland that could be realised with better utilisation of skills and experience of migrants and refugees. What is also apparent, however, is that there are some significant challenges that are limiting the ability to realise this opportunity.

Considering the three key challenges set out above, it becomes clear that there is no one body, organisation or agency that will be able to address these. Nor is it solely up to one level of government or sector to respond. In order to move forward with optimising the use of skills and experience of migrants and refugees, and for Queensland to start reaping the economic and social benefits of inclusive growth, government, industry and the community will all need to play their part:

- Government in developing and implementing policies and processes that are fair and transparent, balancing rigour with red tape;
- Industry in driving a culture of not only accepting diversity, but embracing the immense value that migrants and refugees can bring to businesses and their employees; and
- Community organisations and community members in continuing to develop innovative solutions to optimise the utilisation of skills of migrants and refugees, and drive forward community integration and cohesion.

The interaction of these three key players, taking multipronged approaches across the challenges, is where the biggest impact is likely to be had.



Program and policy response case studies

This section profiles some selected examples of policy and program responses that are seeking to address one or more of these challenges. A summary of the case studies and how they align to the challenges and the responders outlined in the previous section is set out below.

		Challenges			Responders		
Office of the Fairness Commissioner	Ontario, Canada						
Immigration South Australia	South Australia State Government						
Career Pathways Pilot	Commonwealth Department of Social Services						
Assessment Subsidy of Overseas Trained Professionals	Commonwealth Department of Education and Training						
Work and Welcome	Multicultural Development Australia						
New Australians Internship Program	Career Seekers						

Legend:

Challenges		Responders	
	Transparency, coordination and fairness		Government
	System navigation		Industry
	Local networks and experience		Community organisations

Office of the Fairness Commissioner – Ontario, Canada



Location: Ontario, Canada.

In 2006, Ontario introduced a legislative requirement to improve licensing processes for regulated professions. As part of the legislative change, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act established the Office of the Fairness Commissioner whose mandate is to supervise and oversee the regulated professions on systemic basis, monitoring and assessing their registration processes against the measures of transparency, objectivity, impartiality and fairness. This came in response to a growing recognition that efforts to grow the economy through migration were not always translating into economic and social successes for individual immigrants. The processes by which the regulated professions assessed skills and qualifications of immigrants were identified as a major barrier to access to those professions.

In the twelve years since establishment, the Act has been expanded to include certain trades and currently overseas 28 health professions, 15 non-health professions, and 23 skilled trades that were added to the remit in 2013. One of the functions of the Fairness Commissioner is to periodically assess the registrations processes of regulatory bodies for transparency, objectivity, impartiality, and fairness. Regulatory bodies deliver annual reports to the Office outlining how they have modified processes in response to recommendations from these assessments.

The function and acceptance of the Office has evolved over this period, with an initial approach taken of assessment and continuous improvement in response to early resistance from the industry, with transitions to a more robust and objective standards based approach and plans for a risk management and approach to be taken in future.

To mark the ten-year anniversary, the Office of the Fairness Commissioner published an annual report detailing the positive changes to licensing processes in Ontario since its inception.

Office of the Fairness Commissioner website

Immigration South Australia – South Australia State Government



Location: South Australia.

Immigration South Australia is the State Government agency that administers South Australia's state-nominated visa program. The agency aims to attract migrants to South Australia who have skills the state needs or who want to start a business.

As part of this strategy, Immigration South Australia facilitates a workshop series specifically for skilled migrants who are unemployed, underemployed or not working in their field of qualification.

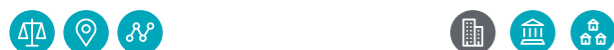
The Job Essentials for Migrants Workshop is described as an "orientation to the South Australian job search market." The workshop teaches migrants about local job search strategies, how an Australian job search differs from a job search in a migrant's home country, how to describe their professional experience in a way that will resonate with Australian employers and how to meet industry requirements. The workshop is practical, and participants develop an Employment Action Plan to enable them to use what they learn in a more effective Australian job search.

The Ideal Job Interview Workshop targets interview performance and educates migrants on the expectations of Australian employers during the interview process.

For migrants who require additional support, monthly group sessions are available that use coaching to help migrants evaluate their current job search and implement new strategies based on their individual goals. The group format allows migrants to learn from the experiences of others facing similar barriers or challenges.

Immigration South Australia migrant resources website

Career Pathways Pilot – Department of Social Services



Location: six pilot sites: Melbourne, Canberra, Perth, Hobart, Sydney, and Toowoomba.

The Career Pathways Pilot is a program funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS), intended to provide tailored career support to a specific cohort of humanitarian entrants, in addition to other settlement and mainstream services provided to all newly-arrived humanitarian entrants.

The Pilot is aimed at people who: have arrived in Australia in the past five years through the offshore humanitarian program; speak English well; have professional or trade skills or qualifications that are relevant in Australia; would like to pursue the same or similar career in Australia; and are 'work-ready'. It is not a requirement for the humanitarian entrant to be unemployed to be eligible for the Pilot.

The objectives of the Pilot are to:

1. Provide timely and comprehensive career advice and employment information to participants;
2. Assist participants to develop informed career pathway plans, including consideration of the same or a similar career;
3. Allocate targeted financial support to participants most likely to benefit; and
4. Assist participants to progress along pathways to satisfying employment.

A key feature of the Career Pathways Pilot is the focus on a career, rather than just a job, as a key contributor to sense of purpose and belonging, and successful settlement. This pilot is still in early stages and an evaluation is underway.

Career Pathways information for participants

Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals - Department of Education and Training



Location: Australia-wide.

The Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals (ASDOT) was a Commonwealth funded program that operated from 1989 to 2015. For eligible candidates, the subsidy covered the cost of examinations and/or assessments required for overseas trained professionals to gain registration and employment in Australia.

The professions with examinations approved for ASDOT funding were mostly health professions, and overseas-trained doctors were among the greatest users of the program. Outside of health, the program also covered examinations for architects.

Eligibility was restricted to those who had an overseas qualification in one of the approved professions, who met citizenship requirements and who held a Centrelink Concession card (as proof of financial hardship or disadvantage.) Applicants were only eligible to receive ASDOT funding once.

The program is an example of removing the financial barriers to skill recognition in approved professions. While on a per person basis the average funding paid by ASDOT was small on the scale of government budgets, skill recognition can be a significant expense to individuals. The eligibility restrictions meant it was not an uncapped expense, and that only the most in need were able to access the program.

ASDOT ceased to operate on 30 June 2015. No new program with the same objectives was implemented by Commonwealth or State governments.

Work and Welcome - MDA Queensland



Location: Queensland

Work and Welcome is a workplace giving program that has been developed and implemented by Multicultural Development Australia to help refugees gain local work experience.

12-week paid internships are funded through staff donations at the host workplace. Placements are targeted based on a refugee's existing skills and qualifications to ensure a two-way exchange between employer and employee.

The Work and Welcome program has worked with host employers across the public and private sectors, in large and small organisations. Host employers include Queensland Government departments, law firms, libraries, companies, and schools.

The goals of the program are multifaceted. First and foremost, the program aims to improve access to local work experience for refugees. For refugees, the program provides an orientation to Australian working life and a chance to earn an income using existing skills. For workplaces, it is an opportunity to expand the diversity, for charitable giving, and to learn about other cultures.

The program originated in Queensland schools and has been operating since 2000

Work and Welcome information page

New Australians Internship Program – CareerSeekers



Location: Sydney, Melbourne

CareerSeekers is a not-for-profit social enterprise with the aim of creating employment opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers. The New Australians Internship Program has two streams, a student and a mid-career stream. The program involves partnerships with organisations – large and small – to connect skilled workers with 12-week paid internships in their field.

The placement of candidates is driven by their career aspirations, and linking them with industries and organisations where their skills and experience are in demand. The program takes a multifaceted approach, with investment in readiness activities for the candidates in the form of a 5-day pre-employment academy, equipping participants for interviews and navigating the Australian workplace. In addition, pre-internship Working with Refugees training is provided to the host team, ensuring the team is prepared for integrating the intern into their team, as seamlessly as possible, with ongoing support for the intern's manager.

The New Australian Internship program focuses on industries and professions where skill recognition is not strictly required for working in the field, taking the pragmatic stance that the industry is best placed to determine the suitability of the skills and experience of a candidate through an internship approach. The approach is not, therefore, applied to professionals such as doctors or pilots.

Of the 434 participants to date, approximately 80% of mid-career candidates transition into full-time employment at completion of the paid internship. Those who don't are supported to find employment with alternative organisations. The success of the program has been credited to a combination of strategic industry selection where skills shortages exist, and investment in employer and employee readiness activities.

CareerSeekers website

Chapter 5

What's next?

In recognition of the opportunity at hand for Queensland, there are a number of findings that can guide the way forward.

As has been established through this research, there are both social and economic opportunities that could be realised with the increased utilisation of overseas skills and qualifications of migrants and refugees. As well as direct impacts on individuals, there are broader economic impacts where skilled workers are able to be utilised in skills-shortage areas to optimise productivity. What is also clear, is that the factors contributing to the underutilisation of the skills and experience of migrants and refugees go beyond the binary formal qualification recognition, to the sometimes more intangible recognition of professional experience obtained overseas, and the importance of local networks.

This research has demonstrated first and foremost that there is a misalignment of expectations regarding the process and outcomes of gaining skilled employment for migrants and refugees. As an example, the granting of a skilled visa is merely granting the right to work, not the ability to work, nor the registration to work. In a similar vein, the assessment of a qualification is not synonymous with the recognition of that qualification which would be made by an employer and/or a registration body, required to actually work in a given field.

Consideration of the value, and **sequence**, of processes may garner mutual benefits. For example, commencing skill or qualification recognition (and professional registration processes) prior to migration and granting of skilled visas, allows an individual to continue to work in their field and keep their skills current through this process, and increases the likelihood that they will be job ready on arrival rather than facing a protracted delay to utilise their skills, and displacing lower-skilled workers from lower-skilled jobs. This also benefits the economy, by creating more surety that the people being granted skilled visas to meet shortages will actually be ready and able to gain employment in those fields, enabling Queensland to reap the productivity benefit of this sooner. This would also likely reduce costs incurred by the government.

Whilst this would require investment from an individual to be carrying out this process earlier, those who participated in this research indicated that this could be an acceptable option, as compared to the large investment in relocation, that is often followed by an inability to gain skilled employment on arrival. **Using technology to facilitate practical testing of skills** remotely may be feasible in some cases where this is required.

It is recognised that, in the scenario of refugees, the luxury of lead time and preparation outlined above does not exist. There is, however, still a sequencing consideration at hand. Understandably, for refugees settling in Australia, there is a primary focus on housing, health and ensuring welfare arrangements are in place. Consultation with both refugees and service providers in the sector, indicated that an **earlier focus on employment** can be a foundation to enable more self-sufficiency in terms of housing and health, reduce the dependency on welfare, and fast track social inclusion.

What can't be underestimated is the 'Catch 22' challenge of securing their first job. This is not an issue unique to this cohort by any means, but certainly one that is exacerbated in the scenario of a job seeker who lacks local networks and understanding of the nuances and culture of the Australian job market. In the context of skilled workers, every day that passes increases the complexity of recognition of overseas skills and experience. This highlights the merit of approaches such as **internships and mentoring**.

More awareness regarding **alternative paths to employment** in regulated industries may also warrant exploration. For example, as shown in the CareerSeekers model, in industries such as engineering there are roles that do not require registration. This can be an opportunity for an overseas qualified professional to utilise and demonstrate their technical skills in practice, whilst getting exposure to the job market and the local industry. This may also contribute to formal registration further down the track.

Whilst there are obvious safety and quality considerations in a number of industries, a more pragmatic and practical approach may be worth exploring. A **focus on skills shortage areas as a priority, will help Queensland to actually realise the benefits of skilled migration**. Realisation will be through enhanced productivity and diversity of thought, as well as delivering on the promise of social inclusion. This needs to be a conversation that goes beyond government policy, to **bring industry and the community to the table**, as the best outcomes will be achieved when the mutual benefits are understood and backed.

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