

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers

Melbourne—Tuesday, 3 September 2019

MEMBERS

Mr John Eren—Chair

Mr Gary Blackwood—Deputy Chair

Ms Juliana Addison

Ms Sarah Connolly

Mr Brad Rowswell

Ms Steph Ryan

Ms Kat Theophanous

WITNESSES

Ms Deb Carr, Learning Coordinator, Brimbank City Council;

Mr Troy Edwards, Director, Policy and Advocacy, Municipal Association of Victoria;

Ms Maria Dimitriou, Coordinator, Local Employment Partnership, Hume City Council; and

Ms Lauren Kerr, Senior Project Officer, Flemington Revitalisation Project, Moonee Valley City Council.

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

This forum will run as a question-and-answer session. Due to the number of participants and our time limitations, it will not be possible for everyone to answer each question. We will hear two or three responses and then move to the next question. The Committee is keen to make sure that all participants have a chance to have a say. If you wish to respond to a question, please raise your hand and wait until invited to speak. Please state your name each time you speak to assist our Hansard reporters. If there is an important point you do not have the opportunity to make at this forum, you are invited to provide the Committee with your additional comments in writing after the hearing, which we will treat as a supplementary submission. Sorry, but I had to go through those technicalities with you just to ensure that we understand the proceedings when it comes to presentation at these important public hearings. I think we have got questions and answers, and I will invite the Committee to ask a question.

Ms ADDISON: I am very interested in social procurement when awarding contracts. In your experience and your view how does social procurement serve disadvantaged jobseekers if they are only employed for a short period—for example, a construction project or something like that?

Ms KERR: So for us, we have just developed draft social and sustainable procurement policy and guidelines, and I think we could say pretty confidently that we are really learning how to walk. We understand it has the potential to unlock a range of up to maybe 80 jobs. So if we were to estimate that council is spending \$80 million per year, at least at Moonee Valley, that is 80 jobs, but the sustainability element of those jobs is really questionable—we do not know. What it can do is support people to generate those first experiences with the labour market—that for our residents on Flemington housing estate they do not have. So we are excited about that, but the engagement with those jobseekers and those candidates needs to exist beyond the scope of that contract.

Mr EDWARDS: I would add to that too there are often opportunities for social enterprises to be placed on procurement panels at local government. So you might have ongoing relationships, for example, around catering, which is probably the obvious one, where a number of councils would use social enterprises to deliver catering over a 12-month period. Often multiple companies are involved, so you get an ongoing relationship built through that type of approach. So you have got the formal kind of contracting but you have got that more informal type of approach too, where procurement provisions probably provide a lot more flexibility for the sector to respond locally.

Ms KERR: I would also add that if your social procurement targets include increases in spends in local content, you will preference local suppliers and buyers. If you preference local businesses, then there is that potential that those opportunities extend, where local businesses begin to employ local people, because they typically do in our local municipality anyway. So if we start to advantage that local economic development, then we could potentially see outcomes that exist beyond contract.

Ms CARR: We are just embarking on regional employment trials as part of the Commonwealth funding, where we will be engaging a number of project partners—ArcBlue and YLab—and employment services together to work on both sides, the supply and demand sides, to bring value to employers acting in a social procurement way. We are going to be trialling this with 9 major employers in Brimbank. Brimbank City Council has committed to be one of those employers. As part of that we will be engaging YLab Associates; they will inform the development of tools to tweak recruitment and retention strategies and processes. So we are trying to take a participatory approach as well as a bottom-line approach to increase the capacity of employers to make decisions in a socially responsible way.

The CHAIR: Just on that, Deb, there is a lot of infrastructure work that is going on in the west particularly. In relation to some of those big projects that will be coming online, how is the council liaising with other tiers of government in relation to those projects and local procurement?

Ms CARR: I am glad you asked. We have Sunshine Super Hub. We believe this can be Australia's biggest social procurement project with a seat at the governance table. Brimbank's social procurement commitment will ensure key social issues can be fairly considered in Brimbank. We encourage State and Federal Governments to include Brimbank as a formal partner in a business, jobs and skills working group to leverage the project's economic and social opportunities. We have submitted a draft response strategy to the Western Rail Plan outlining such involvement, and we would like to see that as a recommendation from this Inquiry. As a priority precinct already identified by the Victorian Government, Sunshine Super Hub has looked to receive dedicated and required focus of key whole-of-government resources to progress the precinct's development in the context of jobs, skills, trade and investment opportunities in partnership with council.

I might add that currently the need for all levels of government to work together is critically transpiring as we speak. We are looking to increase our workforce for early childhood to accommodate the three-year-old kindergartens. Half the enrolments in the community sector were turned away from the local training provider, Victoria Uni, because there are no work placements, so we are looking at trying to navigate work placements to build the workforce that we will need in the future. The work placements are not there to accommodate structured workplace learning, so we are looking at infrastructure problems as well.

The CHAIR: That relates to all council areas. So how are you liaising with Government? Is there more that could be done in terms of communications?

Ms DIMITRIOU: So basically Hume City Council has had well-established relationships with both tiers of government, federal and state. We have got a Hume Jobs and Skills Task Force that has been in operation since 2011, and basically we have got representatives from both tiers of government, so the relationship with government, both tiers, has been quite strong. I think it is essential to encourage the place-based approach of local jobs for local people. We have got a well-established Local Jobs for Local People program and have had great success in placing unemployed residents into local employment opportunities. Without the support of the state and federal governments, we would not have experienced the success that we have had or the track record.

Ms KERR: We have probably, candidly, had struggles trying to access the jobs that are being unlocked through the social procurement frameworks. We have had far more leverage developing our own with contracts that we have access over. For those larger builds, John Holland will have a pre-existing relationship with Jesuit Social Services, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the jobactive system, so as a local government provider you are sort of at the end of the queue. Those jobs are already targeted to parts of the employment support system. From a local government perspective we have far greater leverage over our own contracts where we know that the supply is going to be made locally, so it starts to remove some of those barriers that maybe women and young people might experience—whether they have got a driver licence. We have seen more success from local contracts.

Ms DIMITRIOU: I would also like to add that the reason why we have had success also is that we have got what is called a Hume Employment and Learning Committee, which brings together all of the jobactives, disability employment services and Jobs Victoria Employment Network members that are working in Hume. We actually collaborate together in developing a joint action plan as to what our areas of priority will be from year to year. I think having those formal governance structures in place, bringing partners along the journey and understanding where each other's place is have worked really well in Hume. Hume council is seen as that trusted mutual broker. Basically we are not working in competition; we actually are identifying the opportunities and sharing them with the whole network and funnelling people—our residents, and prioritising our local residents—through those.

Mr EDWARDS: I think from a whole-of-system point of view local government has a capacity to deliver more nuanced outcomes for local communities in variations across the state, which I think is important to bear in mind. We have obviously got some terrific examples of targeting particular sections of the disadvantaged jobseekers, but there is a whole-of-sector approach about what are the particular challenges for jobseekers in communities, be they urban, rural or regional. How do we deal with those? How do we maintain maximum

flexibility? How can we be as innovative as we can? It would be remiss of me not to point out that often with Commonwealth and state programs, with targets and those types of things, it can be very hard to get that nuance at a local level, particularly when people do not easily fit into categories. That can be a challenge to just be aware of in that relationship between the three levels of government on this one.

Mr ROWSWELL: Mr Edwards, does the MAV have a part to play in encouraging councils from a policy or support perspective to provide them with those frameworks to get the best possible outcomes, and if so, what do you actually do?

Mr EDWARDS: Yes, we do, and we have been doing a range of projects with different organisations, including councils and not-for-profits. Outlook is an organisation that you may be familiar with that provides access for the disability sector to employment, particularly around waste and recycling. We have been working with those types of groups to share opportunities, to promote new projects, to perhaps suggest to different groups of councils that we can come together on collaborative procurement in those types of spaces. We are working hard to do more of that type of work, particularly project work, including working with the relevant state agencies as well as part of that.

Mr ROWSWELL: And local councils feel well supported by the peak body in this regard?

Ms KERR: Yes; I guess MAV has driven some different procurement approaches. I think social LEAP just came out, which is a way for local government to assess how their procurement—how their dollar spend—is generating social impact. That is really valuable for us, to have access to that tool and start to implement it, and then we can drive that organisational change that needs to occur, so it is just business as usual that we are looking for social impact whenever we spend.

Ms ADDISON: Some of the submissions noted that people with a disability often face discrimination from not only the community but also employers. What do you think we could do at a state government level to do more to open up opportunities or encourage employers to employ people with disabilities?

Ms KERR: I think Troy just mentioned Outlook. That is an example of an organisation that is doing just that. Maybe you want to speak to this, Troy, having referenced it.

Mr EDWARDS: Just to pick up on that point from Lauren, Outlook provides kind of waste management contracts for disability services. Obviously there are opportunities to look at that. I think for local government one of the key things is that when the programs come into place it is for the state to maintain flexibility so that different communities can respond to different needs. I have just spent eight years at Yarra Ranges, where the bulk of our work with disadvantaged jobseekers was in the disability sector and working with local providers like Knoxbrooke and others, but in other municipalities there are far more kind of pressing and publicly recognised challenges. I think having that subtlety from programs is really important as part of that.

Ms CARR: We operate a place-based co-located learning hub, Brimbank Learning Futures, and we approach the centre as a partnership. We have Hester Hornbrook, Inclusion Melbourne, Travancore and other providers for education of young people and adults. We find your first presentation there with the researchers—the tight-loose-tight concept with funding—very helpful. This facility is funded through the Department of Education and Training. To have the outcomes tight but the process be flexible—it is not a programmatic approach; it is individualised, it is strength-based—we have been able to engage multilingual outreach officers to reach those hard-to-reach people in communities and be able to do innovative ways and out-of-the-box thinking with that loose component of funding in a place-based co-located hub.

Ms KERR: I guess some council examples about how you create those soft entry points for marginalised jobseekers to access work—as an employer ourselves we feel like we need to walk the talk—that is done through Crown Street Stables. It has a traineeship that is specifically targeted to work with people living with disability, provide them with hospitality workplace experience and then transition them in the future—certainly hopefully—into parts of the business that have that front-facing customer service. That is what we are working towards now. But it is things like student placements that are very tailored and work experience that is needs-based—all of these workplace opportunities that maybe do not always have that social justice lens that is applied across them. We are seeing some good wins through our labour hire activity. Local government has lots

of short temp work to offer, but we do not have a social justice lens across that. Who can we work with—like the Brotherhood of St Laurence—so they can bid for some of those roles that we know will be well suited to different jobseekers? And from a scale point of view that is huge for local governments—maybe not direct recruitment, we are sort of contracting, but for labour hire we are not. So that is a really significant opportunity.

Ms DIMITRIOU: I would also like to draw your attention to possibly also looking at building the capability of businesses to adopt inclusive employment practices and social procurement. The work that ArcBlue have done through the Grow initiative in Geelong as well the Gippsland Grow initiative is—

Ms ADDISON: And we have got one coming to Ballarat, which I am very excited about.

Ms DIMITRIOU: Yes. I think because we talk about building the capacity of jobseekers, that is important, but I think we also need to look at building the capacity of businesses to actually be inclusive and look at social procurement. When you asked what state government can do, maybe there is an opportunity to look at the ArcBlue model universally statewide, because it provides that formal framework. And also through their tools, their resources and their dashboards they sort of champion inclusive practices by employers, and people want to join the bandwagon.

Mr EDWARDS: There are probably two things I would point out. One is the *Beyond Value for Money* work funded by DELWP, which was led by the MAV with Yarra, Dandenong and Cardinia around social procurement and was almost a toolkit for how councils can get involved, particularly again for those smaller rurals and regionals. The other one is to note that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is currently reviewing the *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan*. The local government working with the state around Indigenous employment will be one of the activities in there as well. So there are a number of key, headline activities going on in a policy sense that can really help, I think, address some of the key sectors here.

We would make the point that councils often grapple with, ‘How do we retain disadvantaged jobseekers that have perhaps been on traineeship programs with councils?’. Councils work very hard to try and retain them. It is not always easy, so that is something worth exploring. Particularly in my recent role in Yarra Ranges with the Indigenous community about how we retain Indigenous trainees that we have good access to from the Healesville community, often they are looking for different things in the next phase of their career and we cannot hang on to them. It is not for want of trying or desire, it is just that there are other opportunities they have. So there is something there for how the sector might be able to work with state and other levels of government to try and do a bit more there.

Ms CARR: Just furthering that, we are currently working with Head Start as an alternative to the schools-based apprenticeship system, where they provide additional support for the employer, making it a lot more attractive. Currently we are working with people in performance and visiting each department within the council and selling Head Start as an alternative to engage with apprentices and trainees, which is quite a good program. We are looking at it as an opportunity.

Mr BLACKWOOD: So do any of those programs cut across ex-offenders and their access to employment, or have you got other programs that have been successful in that space?

Ms CARR: Our Brimbank Learning Futures is a co-located place with those service providers. We work together in a partnership capacity where we are sharing resources and transitioning cohorts because it is already a very familiar and safe environment.

Ms KERR: It is absolutely one of our target cohorts that we want to be working with, as our project’s funded until June next year. We know that it is a cohort that we want to be working with. Council certainly has roles that do not prohibit ex-offenders operating in a range of spaces, like customer service. We are just trying to do a stocktake of what is available and what we can start doing to make sure that that is a group that is in our workforce. I would probably point out that in any initiative that is supporting workforce diversity, councils need to flex and be agile too. We have some very rigid expectations sometimes of our staff base, so I think the learning is a two-way street. That is a challenge for us as an organisation to accommodate those new staff.

The CHAIR: Tell me about the neighbourhood houses. Obviously a lot of work gets done through those neighbourhood houses in various parts of the state, including in my electorate in Geelong. What is the support that is given in terms of adult education opportunities, for example, at those centres, and how can the Victorian Government better utilise Learn Local organisations in terms of supporting jobseekers facing disadvantage?

Ms CARR: On the note of neighbourhood houses, we have just released a new strategy where we are looking at reaching out more to those emerging communities, particularly the African communities as well as the Pasifika communities. We are also looking at some service level agreements with Victoria University to provide career advice as well as small campuses, localised campuses, where courses can be run. Many people have trouble with transport, so that accommodates those people locally.

In regard to Learn Locals we have found particularly that young people find work easier when they maintain a positive attitude, motivation and passion and remain resilient in the face of continued employment rejection. Young people say networks and prior experience, as mentioned before, made it easier for them to find work. Better support, we feel, would look like more meaningful connections with employers, a more collegial approach with each other and with other community organisations, and a more human-centric service—one-on-one time and less workload—for the providers. We found that 22% of young people between 18 and 24 have experienced discrimination on the basis of skin colour and ethnic origin or religion. So we are talking about looking for more social and emotional support as jobseekers.

Ms DIMITRIOU: In summary, I think the LLENs and the Learn Locals are actually immersed in community already. So they are best placed to work with disadvantaged jobseekers as the first entry point or soft entry point as well as the opportunity to build up the employability skills of jobseekers, because most of the training that Learn Locals do provide is pre-accredited. But at the same time a neighbourhood house is a point where individuals can also participate in other activities and feel socially included. Learn Locals and neighbourhood houses have got a key role to play in terms of connecting with the community.

Also in Hume we are fortunate that we have also got a school hubs program where basically we have got school hubs and connection points in primary schools. So as parents are dropping off their children, they are actually engaging in either conversational English or whatever it is that is relevant for that cohort or that community. So it is customised to suit the needs of that particular community.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: In terms of the Learn Locals and indeed other service providers, is there any challenge around them competing for funding to provide the services that they provide? Does that go to—I guess it was mentioned earlier—the transactional nature of what we are doing here to try and help jobseekers versus the emotional supports and those other sorts of supports that they might need? Can you comment on that?

Ms CARR: Just a quick comment to confirm that. We are currently running a project reference group where we have asked for or are trying to facilitate a more collegial approach and find that there is an adversarial culture. We suggest that it might be because of the funding model. I would confirm that there is that culture.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: And is there any recommended change in the funding model that you would suggest, or is it just an observation?

Ms CARR: I would suggest that there are some incentives for a collegial approach more centred on the learner rather than the outcomes, so that if I am referring to a different service provider, that is not a negative against my numbers—that is actually supporting that learner's journey, even though it does not add to my numbers.

Ms DIMITRIOU: I would also like to add that, for example, in Hume we have got what is called the Hume Jobs and Skills Taskforce. So when you are looking at dispersing of funding, we have got Banksia Gardens Community Services represented on the task force too and some community service organisations. Banksia Gardens is also a Learn Local. I think it is important that you look at it in terms of place when you are looking at funding—for example, for Hume looking at the Hume Jobs and Skills Taskforce—and consult with place as to what will be an appropriate dispersion of funding.

Mr EDWARDS: Just to build on Maria's point, I think it is very important—in local government we can get caught up on this too—that we focus on the people in this and the outcomes that we are looking for from the people rather than what sort of system outputs we require, how many boxes we need to tick and how many people need to move through. We actually want to focus on people, and the outcomes for the community are really important in these types of areas. So that is something that is a reminder for all levels of government. We can often lose sight of that.

Ms CONNOLLY: I just wanted to ask: how do you think that employers should be altering their recruitment strategies to better attract jobseekers from disadvantage, and do you see that those strategies are different for small business and for the big end of town?

Ms DIMITRIOU: So basically with our Local Jobs for Local People program we actually work on a demand-led approach, and Local Jobs for Local People is actually built into our investment attraction framework. Labour market facilitation is built into council's labour market facilitation framework. I do not think you sell the jobseeker as being disadvantaged, you actually match the jobseeker to the employment opportunity, irrespective of their disadvantage. And I think we have had great success in employers actually hiring people with disabilities; new migrants and refugees; and young people—youth. So I think it is more about facilitating that relationship with employers and working with the networks to provide a supply of jobseekers into those employment opportunities.

Ms CONNOLLY: Is council finding that difficult, though? Are you able to reach into the businesses in the community and then the bigger ones, like the big end of town?

Ms DIMITRIOU: In our case it is dependent on the employer. Employers are coming to us, we do not need to actually seek out employment opportunities and go out to businesses anymore, because of our track record.

Ms ADDISON: Amazing.

Ms DIMITRIOU: Businesses are coming to us and wanting to hire unemployed jobseekers.

Ms ADDISON: That is great.

Ms CONNOLLY: What about across the others?

Ms KERR: I think there is a lot to be changed in recruitment approaches that is a bit more evidence based. So if we are after the best candidate, there is some really great research that the Rockefeller Foundation has produced that aids the key selection criteria and the three-person panel, face-to-face interviews. These can be really scary for marginalised jobseekers. So there is an approach to still get a sense of what talents and skills and capacities that potential employee has, and the recruitment approach is probably not fit for purpose sometimes. Certainly that is something that we are looking at, and 'How can we get the right candidate for the job?' is the approach we are taking through our recruitment practices.

The right way of doing it I think—PwC and Ernst and Young, they are not necessarily looking at degree qualifications. They might be offering higher apprenticeships, where you are getting people straight out of secondary school—straight into a workplace. So I think there is a litany of different approaches that people can take. In terms of us being able to leverage local businesses, it is really through our social procurement: if you want to be competitive in council tenders, then let us have a conversation.

Ms CARR: We are finding a dominant narrative from employers that actually attributes blame to young people for not working, so we are looking at working on the employer's capacity to effectively engage with young jobseekers. Initially we are finding that addressing the selection criteria is really very difficult for new workers, being able to transfer transferable skills into an interview or their learning from informal learning into that job in particular, added to the language barrier and things like that. So I think this project that we are doing with regional employment trials is actually talking with young people and asking them, 'What are some different ways that we can recruit and retain people?' rather than us saying what needs to change.

Ms DIMITRIOU: I just wanted to add that another practical approach that we have adopted in Hume is where an employer has a bulk recruitment need and has got multiple vacancies. We would invite them along to

our global learning centre and actually present to a group of jobseekers about their opportunities, their organisation, their employment—you know, what they are looking for—so jobseekers are hearing it straight from the horse's mouth. Prior to that we actually undertake targeted workshops with those jobseekers so when they come to this employers session they can put their best foot forward because they have been prepared about the vacancies that are on offer. We have had some success through just such a practical approach in placing jobseekers into employment, so you are actually cutting out the recruitment red tape.

Ms ADDISON: Maria, can I jump in there? We did have a discussion about the logistics industry with a previous group. What are jobseekers looking for? What makes a job a really good job to apply for? What do they want?

Ms DIMITRIOU: I think predominantly they are driven by money. It is; it is pay. And then I think it is just a job. So you have to somehow match the demand of the job to the aspiration of the jobseeker and that they are in a job that they see will lead them into a future career. It may not be, but it is a step towards a goal. And I think they are looking for businesses that treat them with respect.

The CHAIR: When you talk about the duplication of services, obviously the Federal Government have jobactive and we have Jobs Victoria. In terms of the duplication that you might see between those two different policies, what are the challenges in terms of how can it be merged to be one powerful tool to assist jobseekers?

Ms DIMITRIOU: I feel that we need to remember that jobactive is the primary provider, because a person's income support is dependent on them being engaged with a jobactive provider. JVEN should be a complementary service. I think even in the work my team undertakes it is about looking at the service gaps and value-adding as opposed to duplicating. So, for example, jobactives are funded to provide post-placement support to a jobseeker. We are not going to do that. We will do it with the employer and make sure it is about just identifying where the gaps are, working in collaboration with the service sector and understanding where we fit into the jigsaw puzzle.

Ms KERR: I think it is difficult because both models are based on maybe an inadequate evidence base that incentivising at 26 weeks for the outcome can sometimes create a churn. If we are looking at transformational outcomes, we are looking at working with marginalised groups for two years, not 26 weeks. A lot of the JVENs would say that their work is really intensive often and their remit is to work with people with extremely complex needs and get that outcome, but a lot of the preliminary work is really significant that they do. So we kind of need to incentivise across the course of a longer term period, I think, if we are really looking to see how we can support people onto a pathway out of disadvantage. We need a longer term view.

Ms CARR: Just in response to what kind of jobs, I do not know if it is what kind of jobs they are looking for, but they are looking to see the connection between the entry level and where that could progress to—so from learn to earn. If they can see that pathway, then those entry-level jobs become a whole lot more attractive.

Mr BLACKWOOD: Do you have a view on how well the free TAFE courses are working to help jobseekers who are disadvantaged?

Ms CARR: I will be quick. In our sector, community services, which is where we are needing an additional workforce, we need job placements, and they come with those enrolments. The TAFEs are being inundated with enrolments, but they are not being able to provide those work placements. We see that as a critical need for building a workforce.

Ms KERR: We would agree that, at least in Flemington social housing, many of the women and young people we work with do have qualifications. What they do not have is the pathway into employment. So we would suggest that if you are going to be delivering free TAFE courses, how are we tying in requirements for lots of workplace exposure so they can build those résumés and leave that qualification having worked professionally.

Mr BLACKWOOD: So we need to look at it more in conjunction with the free TAFE course work experience?

Ms KERR: One hundred per cent; make it very practical and meaningful for people.

Ms CARR: Meaningful, yes—structured workplace learning so it is supported and has structure around it. What am I learning? What am I getting out of this? This is meaningful. How is this going to lead to my career?

Ms THEOPHANOUS: What, then, do you suggest the Victorian Government can do to encourage more employers to take up work experience people?

Ms DIMITRIOU: Can I use an example of what we have tried as a collaborative project in Hume, and that is the Hume Hospitality youth path program. In the absence of funding we actually leveraged from an existing Federal Government program and basically developed a project with Delaware North. We put young people through employability skills training, which was already funded by the Federal Government and with a hospitality twist, so tailored towards the jobs available at Delaware North at Melbourne Airport. Young people were offered an internship, a six-week internship, and then employment. Some of the stats from that—I will just have to find them—actually 35 young people completed the employability skills training and internships, with 25 being offered employment after their internship at Delaware North. Some young people have also progressed into leadership and team leader roles. Again, I cannot stress enough how important—and this is a collaborative model. The Council was the lead in terms of the coordination point, but we worked with the jobactive and members of the Hume Employment and Learning Committee, Kangan Institute and Delaware North to achieve those outcomes.

The CHAIR: I am just mindful of the time. One more question.

Ms ADDISON: Can I just ask Maria to give us a bit more detail. Were those 35 people of a certain cohort—that they were young or they were—who got chosen to be—

Ms DIMITRIOU: They were long-term unemployed youth, 16 to 25, and a mixed cohort. Some came from a CALD background, new migrants and refugees.

Ms ADDISON: Do you think that it is harder for older workers to try and get them into such programs?

Ms DIMITRIOU: I would love to see this program duplicated for older workers. Currently you have got what is called the national work experience scheme, but I think something for older workers could work.

Ms ADDISON: Do you think there is a mindset amongst employers that it is one thing to give a young kid an opportunity; it is another thing entirely different to give an older worker who may have been retrenched—do you see that as a real barrier?

Ms DIMITRIOU: I think it can be, and it is dependent on the employer.

Ms KERR: I would agree, especially in hospitality, because generally they are casualised jobs. Older workers might have greater financial responsibilities and families, so they may not even be attracted to those opportunities as opposed to different kinds of industries.

Ms CARR: On that point with older workers, we know adults in Brimbank are almost twice as likely to not have attended any formal schooling compared to the Victorian average. So on skills recognition of people that have migrated here, we have found that parents of migrated families have actually sacrificed their own education for their children and they are looking for work for themselves. The recognition of skills achieved through informal learning has low uptake and is actually disincentivised by the Victorian Government.

Brimbank City Council is working with VU to develop a series of workshops that help jobseekers value, recognise, articulate and advocate for their own skills and knowledge achieved through informal learning environments. When people can articulate and advocate for their own skills, they can approach jobs and interviews more selectively and confidently, and they can also target their education choices.

The CHAIR: Very good. Thank you for your attendance.

Witnesses withdrew.