

Business Case

Employing Refugees in the Hotels and Hospitality Industry

Context

Hospitality and tourism operators in Western Australia, including in rural and regional areas, rely upon the availability of overseas workers to address workforce shortages and provide workers where no suitable Australian workers are available. Schemes such as the [Skilled Migration Scheme](#) and [Working Holiday Maker Program](#) provided a ready supply of skilled workers. Additional schemes such as the [Pacific Labour Scheme](#) (which complements the existing [Seasonal Worker Programme](#)) enabled eligible employers to recruit unskilled and semi-skilled workers from participating Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste to gain experience and skills while being paid to work.

However, since 20 March 2020, Australia has closed its international borders, only allowing return home travellers to enter the country. The emergence of COVID-19 has restricted free movement and travel and seen a mass departure of Working Holiday Makers and other overseas workers returning to their home countries. While the Australian Government has announced some measures to enable some flexibility with the above schemes, the availability of workers in the tourism and hospitality industries in WA remains urgent, and is currently hampering the recovery effort.

Opportunity

Australia currently resettles around 12,000 refugees each year. Most are given visas which grant them work rights in Australia. Many of these people have transferrable skills and qualifications from professional lives in their countries of origin. Others may not have directly transferrable skills, but are keen to work, learn new skills and settle into their new life in Australia. There is a unique opportunity to make use of this ready-cohort of willing workers who are already onshore, and match suitable candidates into roles in the hospitality and tourism industry.

We propose that MercyCare and the Hotels Industry work together to develop a mutually beneficial approach to recruitment, including:

- Creating fast tracked pathways for refugee workers into the hotels industry.
- Increasing channels to recruit refugee workers into hospitality roles in regional WA.

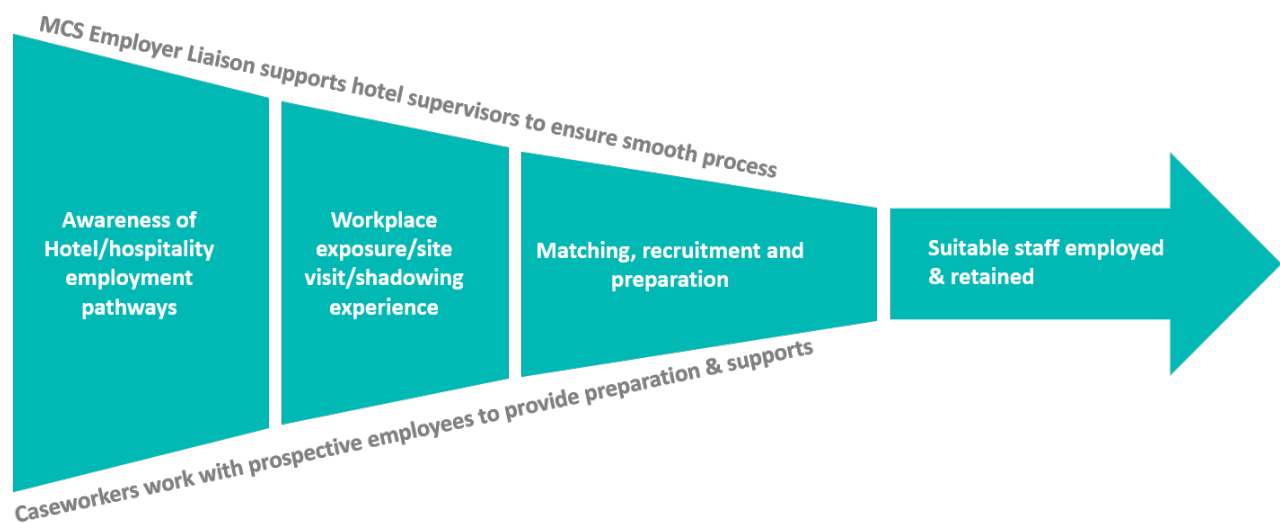
The Recruitment Funnel

Over the past two years we have trialled and refined our approach to work experience and placements in hotels. We captured our learnings with the Hyatt Regency Perth, who partnered with us to provide placements. Key learnings which will be useful in scaling up this program include:

- Early investment of time at the front end with prospective employees helps bridge expectations and provide exposure to the reality of the work, so that people can make informed choices about committing to these roles.

- A supported recruitment process can help the right people prepare, overcome challenges, and settle into the job.
- Supportive liaison with hotel supervisors helps troubleshoot minor issues and ensure a smooth process for employers.

The recruitment process functions as a funnel, whereby early investment in exposure to the realities of the work, helps weed out people who are not suited to the work, leaving a core group of people who have realistic understanding and expectations of the work and are keen and committed to proceed.



Scaling Up

We are seeking to scale up our work placements program and are seeking additional hotel and hospitality partners who are keen to provide work placements and employ new Australians.

We currently have a significant cohort of people who are looking for employment, and as we scale, can access much larger cohorts of workers through our network of multicultural partners.

There are people with a range of skills, qualifications and personal circumstances ready to be matched with employers. Some of these people are singles or couples available for regional placements. Others are keen for metropolitan based roles so that they can remain close to their families and communities.

These workers are already Australian residents, with work rights and appropriate visas, based in Western Australia, which offers a much more convenient and cost-effective option than paying migration agents to bring overseas workers onshore.

What is Involved

We can tailor a work placement process which works for you, however based on our experience with the Hyatt Regency Perth and other employers, we suggest the following process for employers who are seeking to employ multiple people into suitable roles.

1. Build Awareness of career pathways in hospitality and hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a short presentation to interested applicants. The ideal presenter may be a new migrant, with a similar background, good enough English so that refugees relate to the person. Employer and MercyCare work together to tailor job description brochures for each role which outline the job tasks, the hours/shifts expected, requirements such as license/vehicle etc, pay and any opportunities for on-the-job training/progression.
2. Brief Exposure to the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MercyCare can organise a group site visit to the hotel for a quick tour. Option for interested participants to shadow a staffer for a shift to understand the nature of the work.
3. Identification/ Matching of people with potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on site visit/shadowing interactions, Case Managers and hotel supervisors identify people with potential- the right attitude/manner, aspirations etc. and discuss with clients to proceed to an interview for relevant roles.
4. Streamlined interviewing for vacancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case workers help with resumes and preparation. Mock Interview preparation –examples of questions which will be in the interview, so that applicants can be familiar with the language. Streamlined application process- most promising applicants are interviewed. Individual or group interview with option to have Case Worker present to ensure they feel confident.
4. Workplace culture preparation/ supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCS Employer Liaison works closely with hotel supervisors to coordinate logistics, troubleshoot problems, fix back-of-house issues and answer questions to ensure a smooth process. Cultural awareness training/consults provided as needed
5. Preparing for and settling into the role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCS Case workers help successful applicants organise logistics to start the role. Multicultural Services has modest brokerage money they can use for driving lessons, basic training or to overcome other minor barriers to starting employment. Weekly worksite visits or check-ins in first month to troubleshoot any teething issues by Case Worker or mentor.

Value Proposition

We have learned that by providing some minimal staff time at the front end to promote your industry and give interested people the chance to visit your site and experience the work first hand, this will help eliminate those who may not be suited to the work. This front-end investment in the recruitment funnel will have a direct benefit in the matching, employment and retention of people who are most interested in and suited to a career in the hotels industry.

MercyCare offers a **dedicated Employer Liaison** who adds value to employers, by smoothing the process, troubleshooting any issues, providing cultural knowledge about understanding and getting the best from refugee employees and ensuring that your needs are met.

We also provide **Case Workers** to help each worker prepare for the new role, supported to problem solve any logistics with starting and settling into their new role.

The hospitality industry has traditionally engaged migration agents to secure suitable overseas employees for a fee. This project would leverage MercyCare's existing services which are already funded to support people into suitable employment. As such the matching and support would be at no cost to employers, providing a cost saving in the recruitment process.

MercyCare has also partnered with several Universities to produce a [Guide for Employers](#) which highlights many of the benefits of employing workers from a refugee background.

Contact

If you are keen to participate in our refugee placement program, please contact Jacqui Whelan at jwhelan@mercyCare.com.au or on 0408 051 976 to discuss your business needs, including locations and roles to be filled.