

Media Release

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Harness the skills and experience of migrants and refugees to meet workforce needs in South West Sydney

Some of the critical elements required to meet South West Sydney's economic and employment needs were the subject of a wide-ranging discussion among experts at a gathering in Sydney this week.

CORE Community Services, a not-for-profit organisation operating in the region, released its South West Sydney Employment Snapshot Report 2023, to business and community leaders at a breakfast function at Warwick Farm.

The Snapshot Report provides an overview of South West Sydney's employment area and growth priorities, with a focus on emerging trends in two areas of its operations – Refugee and Migrant Settlement Services, and Aged and Disability Care.

"With over a million people living in South West Sydney, there is an urgent need to harness the people and the skills already in the region if we are to deliver vital services to the community," the CEO of CORE Community Services, Juana Reinoso said.

Approximately 80 people from a wide cross section of business, not-for-profit and community organisations gathered to hear speakers, including:

- **Juana Reinoso**, Chief Executive Officer, CORE Community Services
- **Tom Nance**, Manager of Strategy and Delivery, Western Sydney University
- **Scott Hudson**, Chief Executive Officer, Western Sydney Wanderers Football Club
- **Amanda Larkin**, Chief Executive Officer, South Western Sydney Local Health District
- **Nhu Tran**, Aged and Disability Care Service Manager, CORE Community Services
- **Shama Pande**, Manager of Multicultural Communities, CORE Community Services

The meeting heard that demographic changes will place heavy demands on already stretched service providers. South West Sydney already has a higher proportion of aged care recipients needing assistance than the average for NSW, and this is expected to increase by about 74% by 2031.

Yet, aged care is widely perceived to be a low status job with a low rate of pay. Currently, the supply of workers relies heavily on an international and migrant workforce which has been severely curtailed due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

South West Sydney has a rich multicultural fabric, with a large number of migrants and refugees residing in the area.

"Refugees and migrants bring a wealth of knowledge and professional experience acquired from their home countries," Shama Pande, Manager of Multicultural Communities at CORE said.

“Yet many are not able to gain recognition for their qualifications and end up working in low skilled jobs or in positions well below their ability.

“We have identified nearly 30% of refugees and migrants with transferrable skills acquired in their country of origin, however due to tedious and costly processes, they find it difficult to work independently in Australia,” Ms Pande said.

The meeting also heard of the need to better recognise the importance of migrant and refugee women who can add significantly to workforce needs.

CORE is urging greater collaboration between service providers, educational institutions and employers to help people upskill, gain new skills and find pathways into employment.

The meeting heard of one collaboration – the Pathways for Refugees into Health initiative, a partnership between CORE Community Services, TAFE NSW, and the South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD). This aims to create pathways for refugees to enter the healthcare industry by providing specialised training, support and employment opportunities.

Another initiative involves a partnership between CORE Community Services and Western Sydney University to support overseas qualified medical GPs.

As a way of better incentivising employment, it was suggested that policymakers could consider implementing earned income tax credits, wage subsidies, or targeted financial assistance programs to provide additional income support for individuals who secure employment. These incentives could bridge the gap between welfare benefits and earnings, ensuring that individuals are financially better off by working.

Offering access to training programs, skill development initiatives, and career advancement opportunities would also empower individuals to enhance their employability and increase their earnings potential, further incentivising work over long-term reliance on welfare.

See the CORE Community Services South West Sydney Employment Snapshot Report 2023 <https://corecs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Employment-Snapshot-Report-online-1.pdf> .

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CORE Community Services Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation operating in South West Sydney since 1979. We run a wide range of activities, and programs across our key services; Children’s Services, Youth Services, Multicultural Communities, Aged and Disability Care and Community Hubs with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse communities and vulnerable communities.

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