

**THE ASYLUM SEEKER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING STATE CONFERENCE
REPORT**



Celebrate the Journey

**SURVIVING TO THRIVING
THROUGH VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION & TRAINING**

**9.00AM – 4.30PM
TUESDAY 29 MAY 2018
DAREBIN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE**

Introduction

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) in partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET) held the first Asylum Seeker Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) Conference on 29th May 2018 at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre in Preston.

The aim of the conference was to bring together a range of stakeholders engaged in or contributing to all aspects of the Victorian State Government's funded ASVET program between July 2016 and June 2018.

Stakeholders invited to attend, included, but were not limited to the following:

- DET and Ministerial Representation
- ASRC
- Refugee Sector
- People Seeking Asylum and Refugees
- TAFE Sector
- Learn Local Sector
- Private RTO Sector
- Community Service Sector
- Secondary School Sector
- Higher Education Sector
- Regional Victorian Sector.

The conference was titled *Celebrate the Journey – Surviving to Thriving through Vocational Education and Training*. One hundred and forty-nine people registered for the conference with one hundred and thirty people attending. Forty-three organisations from the above sectors were represented at the conference. A number of independent participants also attended the conference.

Two thirds of participants completed an evaluation form and when asked to rate the conference, 97.7% of these rated the conference as excellent or very good.

This report includes an overview of the conference purpose and conference program. The final section covers some of the conference outcomes in terms of the list of organisations represented at the conference, feedback from the four workshops and the conference evaluation.

Conference Purpose

The purpose of the conference was to provide all relevant stakeholder groups with the opportunity to share what they have learned on the journey, celebrate the many achievements along the way and explore ideas and opportunities for the future in supporting and training people seeking asylum and refugees eligible to access the ASVET program.

The conference provided an important platform to highlight the depth of knowledge and experience gained through this journey, and the outcomes eligible people have achieved. It was also an opportunity to create a vision for the next steps in the ASVET program.

Conference Program

Registration and Conference Pack

The ASVET Conference was designed for one day of delivery with registration from 8.45am-9.30am. A conference pack was given to each participant, which included a lanyard, conference bag, conference program, writing pad and pen. A copy of the conference program is attached to this report.

Conference Host

Corrine Grant hosted the conference and her emceeing skills greatly contributed to the overall success of the ASVET conference on the day.

Welcome to Country

The formal part of the conference commenced at 9.30am, with a Welcome to Country Ceremony by Sue-Anne Hunter - a Wurundjeri Woman and Traditional Owner of the Bunung-Willam-Balluk People.

Opening Addresses

The Hon. Gayle Tierney MLC – Minister for Training and Skills gave the opening address and in this announced the Victorian State Government's ongoing commitment to the ASVET program; a further \$10 million over the next 3 years for people seeking asylum and refugees to access training and education opportunities.

Mr Kon Karapanagiotidis, CEO of the ASRC responded to the Minister's address, highlighting the significance of the State Government's commitment to people seeking asylum and refugees and the way this program has

contributed to people moving from surviving to thriving through Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Panel Presentation

A panel presentation titled 'Cross Roads on the Journey' followed the Ministers address. Members of the panel highlighted the issues, challenges, impacts and strategies their respective organisations have encountered on this journey. 93% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Interview with People Seeking Asylum – Session One

Following morning tea, Somayeh Farahani and Mujahid Hussain shared their inspiring stories of the journey they have taken and moving from surviving to thriving through VET and beyond. 97% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Parallel Workshops

Participants then broke into four parallel workshops titled 'Making a Difference'. The workshops provided the opportunity for small groups of participants to discuss, the lessons learned, achievements to celebrate and ideas and opportunities for the future. 92% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Lunchtime Entertainment

During the lunch time break, participants were entertained by a group of musicians from the GADDA band. All members of this band from are currently seeking asylum in Australia.

Interview with People Seeking Asylum – Session Two

Following lunch, we heard from Amir Abdi and Sarvenez Almasi who shared their inspiring stories of the journey they have taken moving from surviving to thriving through VET and beyond. 97% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Workshop Plenary

The purpose of this session was to present some of the workshop outcomes to conference participants. A detailed list of the feedback on the three areas discussed in these workshops is included under Conference Outcomes. 79% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Rural Case Study

This session provided participants with the opportunity to briefly hear from two representatives from a rural region on the challenges and opportunities to support people seeking asylum to access VET courses in the Ballarat region. 86% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Best Practice in Action

This session provided participants with an overview of the ASVET Community of Best Practice, its achievements and ideas and opportunities for the future. 80% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Final Presentation

This session focussed on the significance of the journey so far and provided participants with highlights from the conference. The focus was on outcomes achieved, partnerships developed and the life changing opportunities for people seeking asylum. It also provided the ASRC with the opportunity to thank participants, DET, speakers, presenters and the MC for their contribution to the conference. 93% of participants, who completed an evaluation form, rated this session as either excellent or very good.

Evaluation and Close of Conference

Prior to the close of the conference, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. Eighty-six participants completed a form, representing 66.3% of people attending the conference. Data and detail collated from the evaluation forms is included in the conference outcomes section of this report. A copy of the evaluation form is attached to this report.

A number of participants remained after the close of the conference for networking opportunities and refreshments.

Conference Outcomes:

As mentioned earlier in this report, 97.7% participants who completed the evaluation form rated the conference as either excellent or very good. This is an excellent outcome. Overall the conference was very successful in terms of:

- the range of stakeholder organisations that attended the conference
- the level of engagement and participation by the conference participants
- the contribution by people with lived experience of seeking asylum who both addressed the conference as guest speakers and also participated in the conference workshops
- participants developing and building on their understanding of the issues, challenges, impacts and strategies of the ASVET journey
- the range of lessons participants have learned on this journey and achievements to be celebrated and
- ideas and opportunities for the future.

The following provides some data and feedback on organisations represented at the conference, feedback from the four parallel workshops and the evaluation.

Organisations Represented at the Conference

There were forty-three organisations represented at the conference. These organisations represented a range of stakeholder groups from the DET, ASRC, Refugee sector, TAFE sector, Learn Local Sector, Private RTO sector, community service sector, higher education sector, regional Victorian sector and the primary and secondary school sectors. The following is a list of the organisations represented:

- Adult Learning Australia
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
- Bendigo Kangan Institute
- Banksia Gardens Community Services
- Brite Services
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Council of Adult Education
- Centre for Participation
- Chisholm Institute
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Dandenong Neighbourhood House
- Department of Education and Training
- Dialogue in the Dark
- Diversitat
- Emmanuel College Altona
- Foundation House

- Glenroy College
- Holmesglen Institute
- Inner Melbourne VET Cluster
- Institute of Tertiary & Higher Education Australia
- Jobs Victoria Work & Learning Centre Ballarat
- Kensington Neighbourhood House
- La Trobe University
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Monash Health
- Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education
- Red Cross
- Refugee Council of Australia
- RMIT University
- Roberts McCubbin Primary School
- St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre
- St. Michaels School
- Surf Coast Rural Australians for Refugees
- Swinburne University
- TMG College Australia
- Victoria University Polytechnic
- Victorian TAFE Association
- Victorian Interpreting and Translation Services
- WCIG Training
- Whitehorse Interfaith Network
- Wyndham Community & Education centre
- Yarraville Community Centre

Parallel Workshop Feedback

Four parallel 'Making a Difference' workshops were held at the conference. The purpose of the parallel workshops was to provide participants with the opportunity to share lessons learned, identify and celebrate the achievements on the journey and to explore ideas and opportunities for the way forward. The engagement and contribution by participants is demonstrated in the feedback which is listed below.

The feedback from each workshop is listed under the following headings:

- Lessons learned
- Achievements to celebrate
- Ideas and opportunities for the future

Red Workshop

Lessons learned

- Follow up – support and empathy
- Safe – welcomed – contributing to the community
- Post trauma issues – health issues
- Education ↔ employment
- They come with a lot of professional skills

- Refer students to small organisations for better support, then move to bigger TAFEs and unis.
- Understanding student needs
- Support and engagement
- Flexible learning hours
- Pathway coordinators
- Policy and process changes – staff PD
- Whole institute – increase understanding
- Changes to policy – doing VEVO checks, self-referrals
- Processes are complex
- Education advisor consultations need to be thorough
- Long term goals
- Enrolment in courses right for student
- Support once enrolled at institution important for retention
- Systems and processes are evolving
- The need to be flexible with training program design and delivery
- The need to have clear pathways from EAL to training/ skills
- Need to build confidence and resilience to take that journey
- Challenging but positive outcomes!
- Need to address gaps between education providers and small organisations
- Understand needs and motivation of client before enrolling in VET program.
- Understanding myriad factors effecting individuals education pathways
- Recognition of overseas qualifications
- Managing expectations

Achievements to celebrate

- ASRC assisted large numbers of asylum seeker students leading to successful outcomes
- Streamlined process VET students access employment services
- Adaptive to individual needs
- Developed a scholarship for ASVET students
- Material fees, student service fees waived
- Support structures – improved PD for staff
- Scholarship system – pathway documents – to university (Monash)
- Progress English → VET courses in institutions
- Data – tracking students – times to offer critical support
- Social enterprise – lessons learnt
- Setting up programs that are responsive to what asylum seekers want and need - listening!
- More people interested in doing study / education – numbers are rising
- Context of VET – engagement and confidence within the community
- Moving from education to employment
- Regional Vic – Education to employment was successful
- Building CV from that opportunity
- Increased passion/ need to study further
- Being instilled with the taste to continue studying in the system gives so much development in other important skills, eg. Networking, communication, further employability
- Increase of scholarships, awareness and support

- Employment
- Empower students
- Respect them! Valued!

Ideas and opportunities for the future

- PD throughout the organisation(s)
- Recognise overseas qualifications and recognition of RPL
- Plan to increase numbers through financial support – scholarships
- Increased support – employment
- Careers advertised in classes
- Foodbank
- Need to find ways to support and assist with completion
- Assist asylum seeker students to navigate system
- Providers share resources and work together
- Linkage with employment opportunities – local employer commitment
- Support for graduates – support from TAFEs, work placement, employment on completion
- Document listing – processes, enrolment support - financial and material
- Apprenticeships – policy change
- More outreach / community events to help people settle into Australian life, find out education opportunities, learn English, etc.
- More connections between employers/ professional associations and training organisations.
- More recognition of overseas qualifications
- Phrases to empower potential students to engage with training organisations
- Professional career pathways
- Education advisors getting PD
- Recognition of overseas qualifications
- Regional Victoria – Further collaboration with networks and involve regional Victoria in a bigger way over the upcoming years
- Strengthen local providers ensuring ‘best practice’ in a cross sector strategy
- Persevere with uni /TAFE – they are large organisations which take time to find the correct team to work with

Blue Workshop

Lessons learned

- Resilience of individuals – including resilience to manage admin processes
- Important to take time for career counselling
- Red tape can assist with getting people into the right courses at the right place
- Importance for strong community relationships
- Effects of trauma and how this affects access to educational /job outcomes
- Issue of how education/ job ready people are

- RMIT have tried to address this through including a letter of referral to try to gauge readiness
- Making the jump to education sector – so reliant on IT skills/access is very difficult
- Need to provide assistance in navigating this journey – 20th century education to 21st century
- Making adjustments as a person seeking asylum who is moving between two different cultures even though they have skills in a particular area, eg. Teaching
- Finding asylum seekers is a problem – logistic issues, eg. Classes running M-F work hours
- Restrictions based on location of delivery
- Matching with programs
- Marketing challenges
- Based on type of eligible visas
- Hard to fill classes
- Treat all learners the same, regardless of background – based on merit
- Challenges like doing things like police checks, etc.
- Pre-accredited programs works really well v accredited
- Good processing procedures for asylum seekers
- Visa change challenges
- Varied visa types and varied accredited and non-accredited courses
- Sense of community
- Funding for myki and childcare
- Holistic approach for enrolling students
- Creating pathways and collaboration to bring skills together
- Understanding education systems
- Understanding employment opportunities
- Also understanding aspirations and knowledge of local systems
- Combining knowledge
- Asylum seekers with a specific disability need additional support
- Enrolment process can be prohibitive, eg. need to demonstrate certain skills
- Support in enrolment process
- Re- assess structure of enrolment process
- Employment and education leads to positive health outcomes
- Need more health promotion
- Getting asylum seekers into ASVET helpful
- Get asylum seekers into casual employment

Achievements to celebrate

- Resilience of people seeking asylum
- The extra work that people are doing to facilitate success
- The work that institutions are doing both on a policy level and then backing it up with money/support/programs
- Vic government's work in supporting people seeking asylum –public transport, education
- Backing policy with cash
- Greater compassion
- Negotiations with educational and employment organisations to reduce barriers and having success for people on SHEVs and TPVs
- Strong relationships with particular industries (ie banking) for paid

internships

- Strong multicultural society that supports one another
- People seeking asylum acting as advocates – stronger coherent voice
- Stronger ways of working with the sectors
- Strong shift in community education about people seeking asylum
- Numbers of people in training, education
- Power of combining with ACPE to advance success
- Combination of English courses and practical/vocational courses
- Local community commitment and generosity
- Mothers and children able to participate and grow confident in English classes and childcare
- Computer classes
- Classes taught by people seeking asylum
- Fee waivers with wide support
- Skills and jobs centre
- Retrain admin
- Waive upskill requirement
- Greater communication with education sector developing key contacts in organisations
- Numbers of people seeking asylum successfully completing courses, applying for higher degrees
- Vic state government contribution – free TAFE courses
- Andrews provide accommodation for asylum seekers
- Monash Health – improvement on health outcomes
- 120 went through volunteering
- 70 now going through volunteering
- 70% in paid work, may not be in chosen profession
- Interest from other health providers
- Scholarships from Holmesglen

Ideas and opportunities for the future

- Opening up more traineeships and apprenticeships
- Examine regulatory barriers and logistic barriers
- Mobilise community more – family adopting an asylum seeker family
- Tap into regional communities, eg. Luvaduck processing factory need staff
- Need to mobilise regional communities to embrace refugees – Rural Australians for Refugees
- Advocate with employers to engage people seeking asylum in paid employment, eg. traineeships, internships, etc.
- Map the collaborative journey of someone seeking asylum – supports accessed along the journey
- Pressure Federal government to deal with the issue properly
- Work with media to change rhetoric
- Work with the Labor party to reinstate safety net –SRSS
- More advocacy around skills and qualifications recognition – funding to assist with costs associated
- Increase access to services that support education and training
- Employer engagement – training is nothing without employment
- Opportunity to link with Lions and Rotary Clubs
- Connect with employment brokers

- Collaborate between services combining specialties to achieve a common goal
- Form more partnerships – particularly with other Learn Locals
- Open up pre-accredited courses more widely
- More fee waivers and supported places
- Focus on retention
- Provision of childcare is critical
- Further develop holistic approach
- Increase access for traineeships and apprenticeships with education providers
- State wide collaboration to facilitate pathways to education and employment
- State wide collaboration between organisations like VTAC and institutions to look at system wide barriers
- Improving pre-enrolment space through collaboration

Green Workshop

Lessons learned

- English requirement/study
- Employment outcome
- Culture of workplace – construction site unique – very ‘Aussie’
- Conflict –looking for a job v interests
- Skills, trades, professional jobs versus interest
- Cost still an issue – SRSS cutback
- Idea is to bring refugees into mainstream classes rather than being isolated
- Visa and communication difficulties
- Complex issues, eg. destitution
- Moveable feast – constant change
- Biggest issue is communication
- Number of organisations providing support
- Advocacy is difficult
- Confusion with enrolment – visa requirements
- Changes – part time study v full time study
- Challenges for low level English speakers
- Resilience
- ASRC – specialist organisation
- Depth of knowledge
- Thousands of places
- Other RTOs – issue administratively and expertise
- Will they get the same support and sensitivity
- Changeover and large staff base in institutions – more PD
- Right hand not aware of what left hand is doing
- Understanding of clients – front desk staff ☒ teachers
- PD helpful
- Staff in RTO have mix of staff- some people unaware of refugee issues
- Proven collaboration
- VET courses provide less support
- More need for PD to provide students with the right information
- No formal relationships between TAFEs – opportunities for shared

learning

- Filling each other's gaps
- Knowing who is offering what opportunities
- Communication between state and federal government is deficient and hinders progress with ASVET
- FSAT assessment tool used by RTO's as a training assessment – difficult to use
- Bridging visa A and C (BVA and BVC) holders ineligible- hard for those individuals
- Confusion at front line – training staff to know what a person seeking asylum (PSA) and immicard is

Achievements to celebrate

- How resilient and capable people seeking asylum are, and driven/determined to overcome barriers
- Opportunities for shared, cross sector learning – building connections
- Institutions that believe that they have a duty of care to see students succeed
- Seeing people able to be put through apprenticeships – paid on the job (need TPV or SHEV)
- State government's commitment to ASVET contract
- ASVET supporting people seeking asylum to be able to compete in the labor market – not trapped in 'survival' work
- Work prevents people from being welfare dependent and improve mental health
- Larger volumes of refugees seeking courses – been able to assist with state government support
- Access greatly improved
- Direct enrolment provided
- Trained RTOs
- Spent more time with members
- Improved quality of service
- Enrolment into courses much easier – opened up opportunities
- Central place provides opportunities – easier access and engagement in community
- VU – VET to Higher Education
 - Students can transition – offering scholarships
 - Assist students to reach goals
- Tertiary institutions supportive
- Accessibility to education – state government support should be celebrated
- More places available
- Transition from access to success
- Employment outcomes
- Learning support available in some courses
- Variety of places available, eg. trades
- English language and trades courses
- Establishing a community of best practice

Ideas and opportunities for the future

- Regional communities welcome asylum seekers – establish links with agriculture industry
- Recognition of qualifications – looking for professional employment
- Journey of learning English lengthy – people need jobs
- Building employability skills – language around employability
- Provide more pathways
- Costs of courses prohibitive – some students cannot access courses even if trained
- Streamlining enrolment process – needs more support
- Transition from access to success
- Access to IT devices
- Monitoring throughout courses
- Strengthening vocational outcomes – employability, concentrate on career outcomes
- Using English language as a platform to build employability skills
- End to end support – skills incorporated
- Government policy change – automatically assist with English language support
- Streamline support
- Volunteering as a way in to work – assists with wellbeing and mental health
- More collaboration between federal and state governments
- Foundation studies to support refugees into education – develop study skills
- Platform for communicating learning and opportunities for people seeking asylum
- Pre-accredited training currently only offered for refugees not people seeking asylum
- Opportunities to offer foundation English/adult education system to people seeking asylum
- Apprenticeships and traineeships – state and federal gov align to be able to provide these opportunities to SHEV and TPVs
- Mentoring – wrap around supports, navigating the complex system
- PD for staff
- Centralised information point – ASRC to provide?
- Skilled migration pathways for SHEV – regional resettlement
- Choosing right training for job
- Identifying skill gaps and developing programs based on that leading to employment, eg. Construction for metro/Westgate tunnel
- Finding the quotas – ensuring those places are filled

Yellow workshop

Lessons learned

- Value of course advice – previous background in education and training
- Lack of acceptance of overseas qualifications is a barrier
- Acknowledge lived experience
- Provision of opportunity to demonstrate skills - work experience/placement
- Volunteering
- Relationships with employers

- Rewritten courses to be more practical-based rather than theoretical
- Teaching cultural competence
- Teaching work place culture e.g. employment systems. Need intensive one-on-one support for resume and application support
- Learn Locals run pre-accredited workplace preparation courses - ACFE funded training could be utilized more by VET sector, they understand community and provide material support
- Catering flexibly for needs e.g. evening class, youth class, English at primary schools
- Need for a contact person at each university or TAFE so people seeking asylum can go directly to the provider with confidence and know they will get support.
- Don't be afraid to ask-keep banging on the doors of the providers, the community tap into people's willingness to support.
- Councils have a willingness and ability to help with their community development.
- Subtle advocacy the power of hearing people's stories and challenges fires people up and look for solutions.
- People on BVA are slipping further and further away from creating a future for themselves
- Lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and how extreme it is to expect someone to start over, or the challenge of getting them transferred.
- Lack of Australian experience.
- Waste of resources-human resources capable people unable to work in their field and a waste of \$ resources making people start from scratch.
- Women's health organizations are starting to work outside of the physical health space and support education.
- Year 12 students' hope is dwindling, they started hopeful 5 years ago and now they feel that they are not hopeful about the future.
- Mental issues on the rise for young people because a severe of competing for so few scholarships.
- Changing visa status/policy changes make it so difficult to navigate. Also the sheer number of courses. Lots of barriers
- Childcare is a major one – not eligible for government subsidized childcare subsidy
- Agree, changing policy is so difficult for large organizations which move slowly. What we thought was providing a great opportunity was now causing destitution (re SRSS cuts).
- Need a holistic approach, to understand the barriers we can't initially see e.g. \$120 for working with children check
- If the official channels don't work, try to work around.
- What is happening is overwhelming for small organizations. Need persistence. To keep lobbying. Find another way. Small no of places – so many people needing support.
- The barriers to people studying in their preferred (previous or overseas qualification) are too high and diverts people into wrong careers
- Course advice along the way
- Provide local experience (placement, volunteering ...)
- Teach P.S.A. workplace culture
- Know key contact relationship with RTOs
- Support systems to help P.S.A.
- Childcare to be taken into account

- Recognize overseas qualifications
- Value of course advice
- Value of contact relationship with RTO
- Advocate internally for P.S.A.
- Manual intervention from staff to help P.S.A. (in enrolment, admin...)
- Keep regular contact with P.S.A. to check how they go with course, are they OK, remind them that exams are coming soon
- Check and explore if there are other opportunities (grants, scholarships) for P.S.A.
- Teachers debriefed about trauma, know how to deal with P.S.A. experiencing trauma
- Flexibility about assessments, take into account appointments for Immigration, clinic or other things they may want to do
- Provide bread, clothes from current networks
- Organize regular events for P.S.A. and include them in the planning of those events.

Achievements to celebrate

- EAL – VET courses
- Undergrad course scholarships at unis
- ACFE Asylum Seeker Stats – students who have done EAL & VET have a better success rate than mainstream
- VET outcomes
- e.g. Cert IV Community Services to volunteering at BSL to job at BSL
- Tracking 6 month post course e.g. BRITE
- ASRC follow-up enrolment & employment outcomes
- Networks with community and education providers
- Funding
- Lobbying state government
- Success stories to be shared.
- Better success rate of P.S.A. from EAL & VET courses
- Share success stories (P.S.A. who have done well)
- Share information
- Building the team of Education advisors (from 2-3 to 10 Education advisors)
- Be able to refer more than 800 people during the 2 years
- Be able to provide material aid such as myki-card
- Be able to include P.S.A. in the marketing campaigns and in the public relations
- Enable P.S.A. to study the right English level course (which was not the case for many years)
- Be able to mix them with other people (e.g. AMEP students) in the class, then they can be part of the wider community
- Dedicated admin team to help P.S.A.

Ideas and opportunities for the future

- Change community perceptions of negativity to new arrivals
- ASRC research through conversations project: 20% with government, 20% with asylum seekers, 60% wavering. Good news
- Publish success stories

- Demonstrate impact of education and training on people's lives
- Knowledge is power
- Decrease the burden of paperwork on education institutions. Compliance paperwork is destroying creativity in education
- Have a contact person at each educational institutional to seek info.
- More community based support
- More education opportunities for BVA
- Recognise prior qualification.
- Educating school and universities staff on asylum seekers education policies
- Extremely important to provide well-informed advice on pathways
- Fantastic to have a sector-wide training day to co-ordinate this, especially given the constant changes
- To keep information consistent
- To avoid pointing people in the wrong direction
- Consider where a direct injection of cash to a person seeking asylum may be more cost –effective than a long pathway.
- Lobbying State Government to relax the restriction to BVE, to allow BVA
- The care needed not to echo the Federal Government's classification of people in our own processes – keep principles of "fair treatment" in mind.
- Change perspectives of P.S.A. in the community
- Educate TAFEs/ Unis for P.S.A. rights, right information regarding P.S.A.
- Sector-wide communication
- Lobbying for the P.S.A
- Keep improving our processes
- Keep current State Government (to help P.S.A.)
- Increase collaboration between institutions
- Keep improving processes
- Be part of the community of best practice to share ideas/opportunities

Conference Evaluation Feedback

Eighty-six evaluation forms were completed and the following is a compilation of the responses from participants.

1. What attracted you to attend today's conference?

Participants were asked to identify what attracted them to attend the conference. Many participants identified more than one reason for attending the conference.

- 50% of participants identified understanding the journey for people seeking asylum.
- 44% identified understanding ASVET Best Practice opportunities.
- 49% identified acknowledging and celebrating achievements for people seeking asylum.
- 71% identified identifying ideas and opportunities to make a difference in the future.

Participants also identified the following reasons for attending the conference.

- getting people seeking asylum into education and employment
- learning about ASVET – new to it all
- meeting colleagues in the education sector and identifying pathways and opportunities
- education and minority groups
- connect regional and metro
- getting a picture of the sector as a whole
- networking opportunities (3)

2. Participants were then asked to rate each of the conference sessions from excellent through to poor. The ratings have been expressed as percentages of the total 86 evaluation forms completed.

Session	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor
Panel discussion	60.5%	32.5%	7%	nil
Interview – session one	72%	25%	3%	nil
Parallel workshops	50%	42%	8%	nil
Interview – session two	71%	26%	3%	nil
Workshop plenary	35%	44%	21%	nil
Rural case study	38%	48%	14%	nil
Best practice in action	36%	44%	20%	nil
Final presentation	57%	36%	7%	nil

3. **Which part of the conference was a highlight for you?**

Participants were asked to comment on which parts of the conference were a highlight for them. The following is a list of the responses by participants:

- Stories with people seeking asylum and the crossroads journey and honesty. Amazing networking opportunities
- Hearing the individual hardships of people seeking asylum
- Inspirational speakers (2)
- When Sarvenez and Amir spoke about their journeys and let us know about their education
- Hearing personal stories of lived experience, chatting with peers, lunch, music, variety of speakers – Corrine was great
- Workshops were good and I loved hearing about as experiences
- Session 1 of people seeking asylum stories
- It's always great to hear the first hand experiences. They're very brave but it's helpful so that we can advocate on their behalf

- Panel discussion – I got to know about more strategies to cope with our current status
- Networking opportunities, future funding announcement, acknowledgement of success so far
- Hearing from a range of people about what is needed and what has worked
- The Ethiopian band (3)
- Hearing that eligible PSA will have access to new priority courses
- The workshops (4)
- All of it as very new to the sector
- Speaking and networking to capitalise on future opportunities
- Hearing the refugees
- All of it (4)
- Best practice in action
- Interviews and stories with PSA (18)
- Networking with diversity of support services
- Listening to challenges of all stakeholders
- Hearing about work being done at a direct service level across the sector
- Hearing voices of people who have experienced the journey of ASVET. Meeting with, hearing from others working in the space
- All of it – loved the welcome to country
- The parallel workshops with gave me an opportunity to talk to people about the various issues that impact PSA
- Panel discussion (4) – depth of knowledge and sharing the learnings, now a broader deeper support in VET for people seeking asylum
- Hearing people seeking asylum share their personal stories of resilience. Also the panel session sharing best practice
- Interview with PSA were engaging and insightful
- Workshop plenary, hearing from Kon,
- Ideas and future
- Liked all of it (3)
- Interviews - really interesting first person point of view
- Best practice – ASVET
- Hearing about opportunities in Ballarat
- Panel discussion to hear what particular orgs are doing and what are the issues (2)
- Workshops – because there were wonderful ideas raised along with solutions for problems.
- Hearing directly from people who have been supported through ASVET
- The opportunity to share experiences with others in the parallel workshops
- Sharing of experiences between all sectors and all people
- Learn local grass roots initiatives
- Workshops – meeting diversity of sector
- Parallel workshops. It was good to share ideas and very informative

4. What were some of the key learnings from today's conference?

Participants were also asked to comment on what the key learnings were for them from the conference. The following is a list of the responses by participants:

- More time – 2 days please
- Affirmation of what we're doing.
- Rural experiences
- Learned about courses from different institutes
- Got to know successful stories that will further help to motivate clients
- Educating not only the community but the education providers, universities, TAFEs.
- Follow up with students – support and engagement – pathway co-ordination
- Commitment by people to keep doing more
- Greater understanding how ASRC fits with VET program
- Keep advocating – the more the community at large understands what we can do to support people seeking asylum
- Great to hear about the \$10 million and access to the free VET courses. Keen to continue the conversation and work more collaboratively to support people to continue to study whilst going through the stress of losing income.
- Lots to think about
- The need and importance of career advice
- Link up with VET and TAFE opportunities
- Lots of ideas about how to help our students and engage other partners
- Get it right from the beginning – train staff to know what to do and when
- Importance of resilience
- Individual focus and career counselling
- Keep on advocating for change
- Discover more ways to work with PSA
- Community of best practice
- Motivation and looking for an opportunity of learning
- None of us are experts. We need to collaborate and use our own specialties in order to achieve the best outcomes
- The key learning is to pursue your career and not give up
- Future funding, applying awareness around challenges facing PSA to access education in my work place
- What institutes are doing to support PSA
- Apprenticeships might be an option
- What we are doing at Dandenong is good
- Networking with the sector (2)
- Working collaboratively (2)
- Listening, patience, good career advice, learning and earning
- Some program adjustment/review ideas for DET
- Increasing connections
- Announcement of continued funding

- A number of things, but a deeper level of understanding of the issues
- Lots of things, mainly understanding what the journey must be like for people seeking asylum
- 12 pages of notes – I'm not sure yet
- Innovative approach to responding the issues
- Sector collaboration and sharing of practice
- Reviewing our program to include pathways to VET
- Ideas on the way forward – how to find more employment and training opportunities for people seeking asylum
- How organisations can collaborate more
- Was great to hear from Ballarat organisations. Wasn't aware of ASVET Best Practice
- Best practice opportunities
- Need to get information out to year 12 students
- Simply the knowledge of the many players and the success of many initiatives
- The necessity for child care, and before and after school care, to be provided free by the government for people seeking asylum so that they can fully access study and work options
- That it is possible for us to succeed
- Hearing the synergies that exist in terms of challenges and successes. Inspiring and reassuring. Connections between us
- Challenge the status quo
- Pathways to employment
- Collaboration between RTOs and organizations
- The state funded conference is a significant marker for PSA in education in Victorian communities
- A great conference, guidance, panel, speakers, food – keep up the great work ASRC
- Networks – their significance and impact on practitioners are pivotal to successful outcomes
- Importance of holistic approach – care, education and employment
- Support from start to end in education
- New ideas of next steps and gaps that will still need addressing
- Need to share outcomes, need to change government at a federal level

5. Participants were asked to rate the conference venue and catering. **98.9%** of participants rated the conference venue and catering as either excellent or very good.

Excellent **65.2%** Very good **33.7%** Good **1.1%** Poor **nil**

6. Participants were asked to rate the conference overall. **97.7%** of participants rated the conference overall as either excellent or very good.

Excellent **67.5%** Very good **30.2%** Good **2.3%** Poor **nil**

7. The final section of the evaluation form asked participants to include any other comments about the conference. The following is a list of these comments:

- Very interested in joining community of best practice
- Great host and great conference
- Not enough time – can we have it over 2 days please?
- Corrine Grant great MC – she did a great job in summarizing the important issues
- Great combination of speakers and topics
- Great achievement that this conference even exists
- A great experience
- Already perfect
- Thanks ASRC – I have so much admiration for you all
- Thanks very much (5)
- Everything was perfect
- Brilliant – can we have one every year?
- So well organized, great energy, great networking – thank you
- Would love to know what’s next. A follow up email with actions and learnings would be great
- Great first conference. Would have liked more time in workshop as lots of rich conversation but little time
- Well done everyone
- Being connected with education providers from across the sector and getting a feel for the diversity, roles and commitment of this sector to refugees and people seeking asylum.
- Experiencing the inspiration and energy from over a hundred people all committed to the same goal and focused on the same issues
- Many thanks for a great networking opportunity
- Great venue, good facilities, well organized, flowed well
- Being connected with education providers from across the sector and getting a feel for the diversity, roles and commitment of this sector to refugees and people seeking asylum.
- Experiencing the inspiration and energy from over a hundred people all committed to the same goal and focused on the same issues
- The importance of sharing information on student outcomes, and making useful contacts with colleagues
- The extent of work involved by institutions as they adjust to meeting the needs of this small but unique cohort of students
- The need to support these students with the online environment required of them in tertiary education these days when they may not have experienced computers at this level.
- The importance of all in the sector being aware of critical dates that impact on student participant as government policies change.
- Having run and attended scores of conference and academic events over the years, I’d like to say that the conference was excellent – relevant content, excellent organisation, smooth and timely running with a most efficient and engaging MC
- I learned a lot and met some interesting people
- Congratulations to the conference organisers.