



DEVELOPING A MODEL TO SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE AUSTRALIAN MEAT PROCESSING INDUSTRY

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project sought to develop and trial a model for employing a group of 10-15 migrants at a suitable processing site, selected and approved by AMPC, which can be adapted and used by other meat processing companies. The two-year project included planning, trial and review phases which enabled the model to be thoroughly tested and adjusted.

In Stage 1, MINTRAC, working with Gary Brown from Rising Teams, confirmed Thomas Foods International (TFI) (Murray Bridge) as the pilot plant and commenced planning.

In October 2016 the project team spent three days in Adelaide and Murray Bridge meeting with key TFI personnel and identified agencies, generally scoping roles and responsibilities of each and identifying further groups that needed to be included. This was followed by a face-to-face planning workshop with all identified parties in November 2016, where the roles and responsibilities of the various parties were documented, and a timeline and overall plan of action developed.

At this point it was agreed that TFI and the Australian Migrant Resource Centre would then proceed to prepare the employment advice and identify and plan for the employment of the first group of refugees with the aim of the group commencing work in February 2017.

During this stage a literature review was also completed to identify and confirm the key issues needing to be considered by both refugee and migrant settlement agencies, Job Active providers and prospective red meat industry employers seeking to fill high numbers of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled job vacancies that cannot be filled through local labour supply channels. A documented summary of the experiences of up to four other companies (not necessarily from the meat industry) which had undertaken similar programs was also prepared.

Stage 2 of the project essentially fell into two distinct halves. During the first half, a planning meeting between TFI, AMRC and the Murray Bridge Council was held. TFI and AMRC held a well-attended information day in Adelaide for potential applicants in January 2017.

Later that month a plant and town tour were held for prospective applicants and their families, and at the end of the day all attendees had expressed interest in continuing. However, subsequently there was a considerable reluctance among this group to relocate, as families were reticent to re-establish themselves into a largely unknown situation, the loss of income moving from benefits to a training wage was a deterrent, and there was an overall reluctance to be the 'first' to relocate. Eventually no-one from this group progressed with the offer of employment.

At this point, TFI and the AMRC basically started again. This time they broadened the scope of prospective clients, looking beyond the arrival humanitarian clients to people who had been in Australia for over two years, had completed their AMEP (English language) requirements and had registered to look for work. By June, sixteen prospective Burmese workers had applied for employment, and of these, eleven had commenced work.

When this project concept was first developed, it was envisaged that the pilot would commence with

one specific group and the learnings and processes would be developed and progressed as that specific group moved into regular employment and settled into the community.

The reality had been quite different. Firstly, we had not attracted families, as originally expected, and it was unlikely that this would occur until Murray Bridge became a dedicated re-settlement center. Secondly, recruitment had been ongoing, around smaller groups and the attrition rates had been quite high.

So, the staged approach to this project originally anticipated had not eventuated, as at the same time as we were reviewing induction processes and support mechanisms, we were also still receiving new recruits.

The advantage of this was that an ongoing working relationship had already been developed between TFI and AMRC and this was about to be formalised into a Memorandum of Understanding. This relationship was already well established and would endure beyond the life of this project.

The disadvantage was that the tidy, 'lock, step' approach originally anticipated had not occurred and that at every meeting we were basically reviewing and improving the entire process, not a particular stage. Therefore, at no point could we say that the processes for any stage were really 'finished', and we were unlikely to bring it all together until the project ended and we could update the draft manual into a document for wider release.

Stage 3 of the project ran from July to November 2017.

During this period, there had been further employment of migrant and refugee workers, with ten people currently still employed. The Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre continued to play an important role in providing support to arrange accommodation, arranging transport such as carpooling, and liaising with the TFI staff as employment commenced.

MINTRAC visited TFI for the two days of filming on 2-3 August and filmed four of the refugee workers as well as key TFI and AMRC personnel involved in the project.

MINTRAC staff had made four separate visits to Adelaide to meet with key stakeholders during Stage 3 and had continued to engage in regular email and telephone communication with key stakeholders.

Murraylands MRC representative continued to provide support for relocation/removals housing, liaising with landlords, bond raising assistance, education, medical. Transport to and from work remained a big challenge as many of the workers were commuting from as far afield as Adelaide, and the MRC had been assisting with arranging carpooling. English language classes through AMEP had recommenced after several months of inactivity due to a re-tendering process.

MINTRAC began developing a manual, initially for use only by the current stakeholder group, and then made available to the wider meat processing industry at the conclusion of the project.

Separately to this project, AMRC and TFI had now decided to work with the Murray Bridge Council to seek to have Murray Bridge designated as a refugee settlement centre and the submission was prepared to be submitted by the Murray Bridge Council. This application was subsequently refused by the Settlement Support Branch on the grounds that there were already 25 designated settlement

locations across Australia and that establishing too many regional settlement locations risk distributing ethnic communities too thinly and increases the risk of secondary movement out of those new locations.

Stage 4, planned to run from December 2017-February 2018, was essentially for review, evaluation and adoption.

However, on 3 January 2018 Thomas Foods International's meat works in Murray Bridge was severely damaged by fire. All employees were safely evacuated, but the factory's largest building was destroyed at a cost likely run into the millions of dollars.

In the weeks following the fire TFI worked to create new positions at its other plants to take up the production slack left by the fire. Many employees were deployed to either Lobethal or Tamworth. Understandably, the company Human Resources team was overwhelmed with the need to address pressing personnel issues, and this project was placed on hold.

MINTRAC did not manage to reach TFI's Human Resources team until early February, and then only briefly. It was agreed that the second stage of filming would not go ahead, and that we would progress to winding up the project.

At the beginning of February, following the fire, five of the workers had been moved to Lobethal, four were still awaiting placement, and one had been terminated as they were a casual employee.

Thomas Foods did provide feedback on the Stakeholder Resource Manual, enabling it to be finalised, and the completed Manual accompanies this report.

In summary, this project has resulted in an excellent short film which provides an overview of the project, features some of the migrant employees and explains the partnership between AMRC and TFI. In addition, a Resource Manual has been developed for use by other processing companies. These two resources will be useful tools for other processors contemplating recruiting migrants and refugees.

Although the project came to an abrupt conclusion at Murray Bridge, a great deal was learned. The four most critical learnings were:

- / the importance of planning and preparation, and of dedicated, experienced and well supported personnel responsible for the project within the processing company, with strong continuing management support
- / a strong, continuing relationship is essential between the settlement provider, the processing company, and the local community
- / the importance of taking time to get to know each of the migrant workers as individuals, their stories, their settlement experiences and their work experiences
- / the need for proximity to a designated refugee settlement center, to avoid further disruption to families thinking of taking up employment in the meat processing industry.

There is no doubt that many of the workers taken on at Murray Bridge have the potential to become long-term, valuable employees, and that the overall potential of migrants and refugees to fill workforce

shortages is important for the industry.

But the benefits expected from the relocation of families into the local community were not achieved, and therefore not tested. In addition, with the benefit of hindsight, there was probably a lot more that could have been done to provide structured support to company personnel in terms of staff preparation, monitoring and support, and an opportunity to implement and test these learnings is needed.

We do not believe that the 'model' developed within this project is ready, yet, for widespread roll-out across the industry. It is our recommendation that the industry invests in two further pilots, to enable the model to be further developed and refined.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This project sought to develop and trial a model for employing a group of 10-15 migrants at a suitable processing site, selected and approved by AMPC, which can be adapted and used by other meat processing companies. The two-year project included planning, trial and review phases which enabled the model to be thoroughly tested and adjusted.

The project focused on:

- / identification of available government and community support services
- / preparation, training and support for the identified migrant group
- / preparation and support for the meat processing workforce
- / preparation and interaction with the local community
- / development of transition arrangements for ongoing support beyond the life of the project.

3.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this project are to:

- / facilitate the successful employment of migrants as part of the Australian meat processing workforce
- / broaden the pool of talent available to a meat processing employer
- / improve employment retention rates of target groups successfully recruited
- / improve the skills, knowledge and expertise of employer supervisors and managers in working with people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- / support meat processors to benefit from the cultural diversity of their employees.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

This project was planned to occur in the following four stages:

Stage 1: Research, and initial negotiation with a suitable processing site (two months)

In Stage 1, MINTRAC intended to:

- / research the range of government and community services available to the planned program
- / engage with the appropriate Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (HSS) service provider (as appropriate)
- / explore and document the experiences of up to four other companies (not necessarily from the meat industry) which have undertaken similar programs
- / complete a literature review to identify case studies, research etc which may be of benefit to the program
- / work with senior personnel in the plant to plan practical components of the program, including:
 - identification and preparation of key personnel
 - process for preparation and recruitment of the migrant group
 - planning of training programs for migrants supervisors and other key staff
 - identification of suitable English language training
 - planning the process of engaging, housing and re-settling the migrant group, as required
 - understanding the importance, benefits and value of employer initiated community building around target groups
 - planning the induction program
 - developing processes for documenting and recording including but not limited to key learnings and critical response strategies.

Stage 2: Preparation and induction (three months)

Stage 2 was expected to be the most intensive engagement and preparation stage with the migrant group, involving:

- / introduction, engagement, housing and re-settlement of the migrant group
- / review and reinforcement of the AUSCO curriculum learnings
- / commencement of English Language classes

- / preparation/training of managers, supervisors and other personnel as appropriate
- / broadening of induction program to accommodate target group special needs
- / commencement of work
- / implementation of support systems to assist migrants to engage with other employee groups, essential community services such as transport, schools, health, financial and recreation
- / implementation of a company-based early detection, trouble-shooting, communication, monitoring and support system.

Stage 3: Monitoring, support and integration (nine months)

Stage three was expected to see the intensity of Stage 2 begin to lessen, as workers became familiar with their work roles and work environment and with the local community. This stage involved:

- / a decreasing schedule of regular engagement and monitoring
- / transition to established community and workplace support services as the first point of call
- / regular review of workplace relationships and issues to enhance collaboration and understanding
- / documentation of 'stories' and case studies which may benefit future program development for implementation in other workplaces
- / development of story board and initial filming.

Stage 4: Review, evaluation and adoption (six months)

In Stage four, MINTRAC worked with migrants and plant personnel to develop:

- / a SnapShot which documents the key learning and structure of the model
- / editing and approval of the final film
- / a formal review and evaluation of the trial program
- / a communication/promotion strategy to encourage engagement and uptake by other meat processing companies
- / integration of key aspects of the program into the accredited training system as appropriate
- / well maintained and ongoing professional relationships with key target group support agencies to help maintain and streamline refugee and migrant labour supply channels.

5.0 PROJECT OUTCOMES

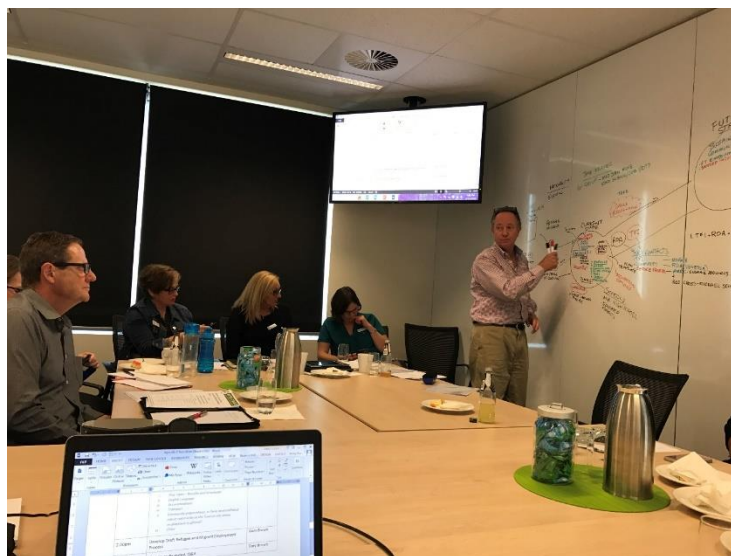
Stage 1: Research, and initial negotiation with a suitable processing site - October to December 2016

Overview

During this stage, MINTRAC engaged Gary Brown from Rising Teams as the project consultant, and all initial planning and subsequent activity was conducted with him. Thomas Foods International (TFI) (Murray Bridge) was confirmed as the pilot plant, and we immediately contacted the key personnel at TFI and began discussions.

In the first week of October 2016 the project team spent three days in Adelaide and Murray Bridge meeting with key TFI personnel and identified agencies, generally scoping roles and responsibilities of each and identifying further groups that needed to be included.

A face-to-face workshop was conducted with all identified parties on 2 November 2016. The outcome of this workshop was to document the roles and responsibilities of the various parties and to develop a timeline and overall plan of action (See Appendix 1).



Stakeholder workshop November 2016

At this point it was agreed that TFI and the Australian Migrant Resource Centre would then proceed to prepare the employment advice and identify and plan for the employment of the first group of refugees with the aim of the group commencing work in February 2017. MINTRAC would step back and take up the role of documenting the process as it progressed, but these two parties would take the lead in the preparations. Once the group had been identified and were preparing to commence work, a further workshop of all stakeholders would be held in February 2017 to plan the ongoing support arrangements.

Upon following up with TFI and AMRC a few weeks later it was clear that TFI had progressed with the preparation of employment information. However, it became evident that there was some confusion among AMRC personnel and that AMRC had been waiting for a further planning meeting to get started.

Several exchanges of emails and phone calls ensued, and an email received from AMRC on 20 November indicated that significant progress had been made, and that the program was back on track for a February start date. A further planning meeting between AMRC, TFI and the Mayor of Murray Bridge was planned to occur on 16 December 2016.

Documented summary of government and community services available to the planned program

This requirement was addressed in three stages:

- / an initial internet search and scoping of possible agencies in the Adelaide region
- / three days in Adelaide and Murray Bridge in the first week of October, where we met with the identified agencies, further scoped their roles and capabilities, and expanded the list with further referrals
- / a face-to-face workshop in Adelaide on 2 November 2016, where we documented the roles and responsibilities of each organisation (see Appendix 1).
- / Literature identifying case studies, research etc which may be of benefit to the program.

The completed Literature Review is provided as Appendix 2.

Whilst much research has been conducted into the many factors affecting humanitarian refugee and migrant settlement in Australia, this literature review focused more on how the various settlement issues impact the potential for new entrants to gain and maintain full time employment, especially in regional areas that host many red meat processing plants.

The overall aim of this literature review was to identify and confirm the key issues needing to be considered by both refugee and migrant settlement agencies, Job Active providers and prospective red meat industry employers seeking to fill high numbers of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled job vacancies that cannot be filled through local labour supply channels.

It should be noted that most of the literature available and reviewed related to refugee and migrant immediate post-arrival settlement issues. Documented and published literature relating to employer experiences and challenges in relation to refugee and migrant recruitment was much more difficult to source.

Case Studies

In this Stage we developed a documented summary of the experiences of up to four other companies (not necessarily from the meat industry) which had undertaken similar programs.

- / Case Study 1: Enabling Rural Migrant Settlement: A Case Study of the Limestone Coast (Appendix 3)
- / Case Study 2: Castlemaine African Community Project 2008-2010 (Appendix 4)
- / Case Study 3: Allianz Insurance refugee program - aimed to deliver new career opportunities and support for refugees and migrants who have settled in Australia (Appendix 5)

- Case Study 4: Small Towns, Big Returns - follows the experiences of 160 Karen refugees who have resettled in Nhill, in north-western Victoria, working with Luv-a-Duck (Appendix 6).

Agreed implementation plan with Thomas Foods International

MINTRAC and TFI staff had met several times and held numerous telephone conversations. Most of the plan of action was fairly fluid, and the initial stages had been documented as part of the workshop notes presented in Appendix 1. The first major milestone in the project would be achieved with the actual re-settlement and commencement of work of the group by February 2017. The second workshop, scheduled for February, was expected to develop the next stages of on-going support and action in more detail.

Filming production brief

Although not part of Stage 1, MINTRAC had progressed with the preparation of the Production Brief, so that the media agency could be engaged and briefed in time to cover the commencement of employment of the nominated group of refugees.

Stage 2: Preparation and induction – January to June 2017

Overview - interim progress, February 2017

By January 2017, significant progress had been made towards recruitment of a group of migrants/refugees.

On 16 December, Gary Brown attended a meeting between TFI, AMRC and the Mayor of Murray Bridge. The minutes of this meeting indicated contact had been made with local schools, English language support had been identified through AMEP, and an Iraqi doctor had been identified. Plans were put in place for an information day which included a tour of TFI and the town of Murray Bridge. AMRC also indicated that there would be some costs associated with the pilot that would need to be met by TFI, such as relocation costs, visual and print aids for WHS.

AMRC and TFI were meeting regularly, and planning was progressing well. As much as possible, MINTRAC was trying to adopt an 'observation and support' role, as essentially this project needed to result in a model that would enable future meat industry employers to engage with appropriate migrant support agencies to undertake and implement similar recruitment and re-settlement programs without involvement of organisations such as MINTRAC or AMPC.

TFI and AMRC held an information day in Adelaide for potential applicants on 10 January 2017. This was well attended and quite a bit of interest was expressed. MINTRAC was not present at this session.



Information day – 10 January 2017

Both Gary Brown and Jenny Kroonstuiwer attended the tour day on 23 January 2017. There were three cultural groups represented – Afghani, Syrian and Burmese. The group, and some of their families, met at the AMRC in Adelaide, and were then bussed to Murray Bridge. The women and children were dropped at the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Murray Bridge and then the men proceeded to the TFI tour. Later they all came back together for lunch in the park (attended by the Mayor), and then there was a short bus tour of the town, followed by an information session at the MRC. There were three interpreters who travelled with the group.



Preparing for the plant tour



Lunch in the park

Following the tour, the potential applicants met with Centrelink, as they would have a continuing involvement with Centrelink during the initial period of their employment, and the entitlements of each individual family are different. Feedback from TFI indicated that this process had gone very well.

TFI intended to put everyone from the current group into entry level positions with opportunity to fast-track where appropriate. There were three potential applicants who were butchers in their own countries, and fast tracking was a possibility for them. It had also become evident that there were some quite skilled tradesmen, particularly in the Burmese community, and TFI was looking at further recruitment opportunities following the pilot.

AMRC had nominated Heather Muirhead, to act as Murray Bridge MRC Settlement Officer and technical advisor at the recruitment and induction process. In addition, the AMRC had reactivated and convened a local coordinating committee in Murray Bridge. This committee promotes interagency communication and works towards a collaborate approach for the successful settlement of new arrivals.



Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre, Murray Bridge

Overview - end of Stage 2, June 2017

During this period there had been two intakes of migrants and refugee workers, with mixed success.

The first group, detailed above, had attended an initial briefing and site tour. However, there was a considerable reluctance among this group to relocate, as families were reluctant to re-establish themselves into a largely unknown situation, the loss of income moving from benefits to a training wage was a deterrent, and there was an overall reluctance to be the 'first' to relocate. Eventually no-one from this group progressed with the offer of employment.

At this point, TFI and the AMRC basically started again, having learned a great deal from the initial experiences. This time they broadened the scope of prospective clients, looking beyond the arrival humanitarian clients to people who had been in Australia for over two years, had completed their AMEP (English language) requirements and had registered to look for work.

AMRC commenced a community marketing process and as prospective workers were identified referred them immediately to TFI as well as the Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre for settlement assistance.

Four Burmese workers were identified and began the process of medicals etc. Concerned about the low numbers of potential recruits, MINTRAC asked to meet with Morna Young (TFI) and Eugenia Tsoulis (AMRC) in Adelaide on 24 February 2017. By the time of the meeting, there were 7 potential Burmese recruits (6 single men and 1 woman with a young child). By 14 March 2017, all had completed their medicals, secured accommodation and were due to attend induction on 17 March with a planned commencement date of 20 March 2017.

Four members of this group commenced work on 20 March 2017 – two in the lamb cutting room and 2 on the slaughter floor. The other three withdrew - the young mother because of the difficulty with shift hours and one had received alternative employment. The fate of the third is unknown.

However, through 'word of mouth' an additional 3 Burmese men also independently applied for employment and had commenced at TFI.

A report received from AMRC in 29 March indicated that two of the case-managed employees did not continue after the second day – one resigned and one was terminated due to physical unsuitability.

However, a further six case managed clients had been identified for a site tour and work interview. After the site tour, five proceeded to application. By 12 April 2017, one had failed their medical, but the others commenced employment.

Gary Brown visited all stakeholders on 15-16 May 2017. During this visit, he received the summary of employment to date from AMRC, and also compiled a summary of his impressions and the feedback from each of the major players.

A formal meeting of all the major players was convened in Adelaide on 31 May 2017 (see meeting notes in Appendix 7). This meeting reviewed current progress and began planning for the next stages.

Summary of process of engagement, housing and resettlement of the migrant group

The approach adopted in this pilot has been addressed in some detail in the above. In terms of the

ongoing model, steps to be detailed included:

- / *initial information session*: role of enterprise and migrant support agency; balance of written, visual, interpreted information; sign-up process; process for informing those who subsequently become involved through word-of-mouth
- / *tour day*: involvement of families; use of interpreters, nature of plant tour and information session; what to see in the town and how information is provided
- / *Centrelink*: when and how engaged; role in the process
- / *housing*: responsibilities for identifying appropriate accommodation, liaising with rental agencies
- / *resettlement*: company responsibilities for supporting relocation costs; in-town support; support to identify schools, process of enrolment; identifying and engaging with health facilities; English language support; identifying and engaging with local churches.

Schedule of regular engagement and monitoring

With project stakeholders

Up until June the engagement and monitoring had been predominantly by email, although MINTRAC staff had made three separate visits to Adelaide to meet with key stakeholders since January 2017, and also met up with TFI staff at the MINTRAC Training Conference.

At the meeting on 31 May, TFI and AMRC agreed to schedule regular face-to-face meetings. MINTRAC did not plan to attend these meetings and would continue to monitor predominantly through email.

At the individual employee level

Up until June 2017 the TFI Recruitment Officer only had time to check on progress of new recruits every 2 or 3 weeks unless there was a problem communicated by the area supervisor. This was discussed at the meeting on 31 May, and it was agreed that there would be closer ongoing engagement between the Murraylands MRC representative and TFI staff, as well as the identification of workplace mentors who could provide incidental support to the new recruits.

Summary of preparation of managers, supervisors and other personnel

Late in December 2016 a copy of the Cultural Diversity kit (produced by MINTRAC for AMPC a few years ago) was provided to TFI. While the overall kit provides good general information and advice, the fact sheets included did not include the cultural groups of this project. These were subsequently developed and provided to TFI.

Regular review of workplace relationships and issues to enhance collaboration and understanding

This was an area only just starting to require attention as the first group settled into regular employment. At the meeting on 31 May, TFI staff did indicate that there was a need for some supervisor training in cultural awareness. TFI had been developing a new corporate model of training for its senior staff and had agreed to address this area as part of that process.

It was also identified that a closer ongoing relationship between Murraylands MRC representative and TFI staff would give new recruits confidence in a united approach to their support as well as familiar people to whom they could turn.

It was agreed that early identification of an experienced workplace mentor from either the same or a similar cultural group would serve not only to highlight the value proposition of work at TFI from the start, but also provide access to ongoing support and advice.

Documentation of 'stories' and Case Studies which may benefit other workplaces

Conference presentation

The first step in this process was in the presentation given to the National Training Conference by Gary Brown. In this presentation (see Appendix 8) Gary detailed the steps and approach taken in the current project, as well as the learnings gained from the various Case Studies compiled at the commencement of the project.

Preparation of a manual

At the meeting on 31 May 2017, it was agreed that the processes to date would be recorded in a manual, initially for use only by the current stakeholder group. As the project progressed, this manual would be refined and modified for more general use.

Filming

In anticipation of the first filming segment proceeding in July, TFI staff were working with AMRC to identify the most appropriate people to film.

Issues and challenges encountered and how they were resolved

When this project concept was first developed, it was envisaged that the pilot would commence with one specific group and the learnings and processes would be developed and progressed as that specific group moved into regular employment and settled into the community.

The reality had been quite different. Firstly, we had not attracted families, as originally expected, and it was unlikely that this would occur until Murray Bridge became a dedicated re-settlement center. Secondly, recruitment had been ongoing, around smaller groups and the attrition rates had been quite high.

So, the staged approach to this project originally anticipated had not eventuated, as at the same time as we were reviewing induction processes and support mechanisms, we were also still receiving new recruits.

The advantage of this was that an ongoing working relationship had already been developed between TFI and AMRC and this was about to be formalised into a Memorandum of Understanding. This relationship was already well established and would endure beyond the life of this project.

The disadvantage is that the tidy, 'lock, step' approach originally anticipated had not occurred and that at every meeting we were basically reviewing and improving the entire process, not a particular stage. Therefore, at no point could we say that the processes for any stage were really 'finished', and we

were unlikely to bring it all together until the project ended and we could update the draft manual into a document for wider release.

Stage 3: Monitoring, support and integration - July – November 2017

Overview

During this period, there had been further employment of migrant and refugee workers, with ten people currently still employed, and a further information session held early in November 2017. Most of the new employees had been in Australia for over two years, had completed their AMEP (English language) requirements and were registered to look for work.

The Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre continued to play an important role in providing support to arrange accommodation, arranging transport such as carpooling, and liaising with the TFI staff as employment commences.

During this period there had been some role changes in key personnel at TFI, and some of the momentum of this project was lost. We visited TFI for the two days of filming on 2-3 August and filmed four of the refugee workers as well as key TFI and AMRC personnel involved in the project. While the top-level commitment of TFI to the project and the relationship remained strong, it was increasingly evident that it was being overwhelmed with other operational priorities at lower levels.

Jenny Kroonstuijer visited TFI on 22 September 2017 and met with the Recruitment Officer, Training Officer and MRC. While ten migrant employees were continuing and were settled into employment, many of the actions identified at the May meeting had not yet been actioned. The meeting was used to resolve a number of small operational issues, provide some cultural awareness information to the new Recruitment Officer and to give her a better understanding of what the project was all about.

Gary Brown and Jenny Kroonstuijer returned on 6-7 November to enable those filmed to preview the film and to further prepare materials for the Stakeholders Manual.

Schedule of regular engagement and monitoring

With project stakeholders

MINTRAC staff had made four separate visits to Adelaide to meet with key stakeholders during Stage 3 and had continued to engage in regular email and telephone communication.

During the most recent trip to Adelaide we had met with a Job Active service provider and discovered that relocation and commencement assistance, as well as wage subsidies and monitoring during the first 26 weeks of employment, were available through them. No Job Active provider had been willing to participate in the original planning meetings for this project, and so their potential to contribute had been overlooked. We provided this information to TFI and also followed up with some of the Murray Bridge Job Active providers to try and engage them further.

At the individual employee level

Progress checks within the company continued to be ad hoc. At the most recent meeting the Plant Manager had indicated that regular supervisor meetings had been reintroduced, and that these could be used as a means of better monitoring progress, and also for providing some support to the

supervisors.

Transition to established community and workplace support services as the first point of call

This was an area being covered by the Murraylands MRC representative. Particular focus had been on relocation/removals housing, liaising with landlords, bond raising assistance, education, medical. Transport to and from work remained a big challenge as many of the workers were commuting from as far afield as Adelaide, and the MRC had been assisting with arranging carpooling.

English language classes through AMEP had recommenced after several months of inactivity due to a re-tendering process.



Example of an English language class recorded during the filming

Regular review of workplace relationships and issues to enhance collaboration and understanding

It had been identified in May that a closer ongoing relationship between Murraylands MRC representative and TFI staff would give new recruits confidence in a united approach to their support as well as familiar people to whom they could turn. The September 2017 meeting was the first step towards this and it was evident that closer liaison was now occurring, and that senior staff were keen to foster the development of this relationship.

The Recruitment Officer advised she had been exploring several strategies to provide cultural awareness information to the supervisors, and with the recent re-introduction of supervisor meetings, it looked as if there would now be an opportunity for this to progress.

There had been no progress on establishing workplace mentors.

Documentation of 'stories' and Case Studies which may benefit other workplaces

Conference presentation

The first step in this process was the presentation given to the National Training Conference by Gary Brown, described in the section above.

Preparation of a manual

At the meeting on 31 May, it was agreed that the model would be recorded in a manual, initially for use only by the current stakeholder group, and then made available to the wider industry at the conclusion of the project. A plan for the structure of the manual was prepared and initial ideas added, and the October trip was used to gain additional comments and input from each of the stakeholders. The first draft of this manual was distributed to stakeholders for comment in December 2017.

Filming

The first stage of filming was completed over two days in August, with four of the refugees interviewed, as well as most of the other stakeholders. The first cut of the film was shown in the October 2017 visits, and without exception every person was delighted with the film, and all signed permissions had been received. (Appendix 9 – Film link)



Filming at Murray Bridge in August 2017



Filming at Murray Bridge

This film records the stories of three of the workers – the fourth interview could not be used.

We planned to undertake the second stage of filming in February 2018. This would record the employment and personal progress of the refugees as well as a review of the model by key senior staff.

Issues and challenges encountered and how they were resolved

Previously the reasons for the shift away from newly arrived families to longer term residents had been explained. Although the revised strategy had been successful in attracting employees, this had not resulted in the establishment of a community of families in Murray Bridge as originally hoped.

Separately to this project, AMRC and TFI had now decided to work with the Murray Bridge Council to seek to have Murray Bridge designated as a refugee settlement centre and the submission was prepared to be submitted by the Murray Bridge Council. This application was subsequently refused by the Settlement Support Branch on the grounds that there were already 25 designated settlement locations across Australia and that establishing too many regional settlement locations risk distributing ethnic communities too thinly and increases the risk of secondary movement out of those new locations.

The changes in personnel at TFI had been an ongoing challenge. In the running of this project we had made a point of ensuring that it was a company-led initiative to which we were providing advice and support. The change to a new Recruitment Officer who did not fully understand what the project was all about or the extent of her responsibilities, meant that internally the project lost momentum, and quickly became overwhelmed with the day-to-day challenges of the HR Department. This highlighted the need to have a dedicated person charged with responsibility for the program, and with clear lines of authority, and this had been acknowledged by TFI.

Stage 4: Review, evaluation and adoption – December 2017-February 2018

On 3 January 2018 Thomas Foods International's meat works in Murray Bridge was severely damaged by fire. All employees were safely and quickly evacuated, but the factory's largest building was destroyed at a cost likely run into the millions of dollars.

In the weeks following the fire TFI worked to create new positions at its other plants to take up the production slack left by the fire. Over 350 employees began work at the company's nearby Lobethal meat processing facility with additional positions being created. The company also worked to create approximately 150 new positions at their Tamworth facility. Understandably, the company Human Resources team was overwhelmed with the need to address pressing personnel issues, and this project was placed on hold. The Recruitment Officer who had carriage of the project had also resigned in December.

MINTRAC did not manage to reach TFI's Human Resources team until early February, and then only briefly. It was agreed that the second stage of filming would not go ahead, and that we would progress to winding up the project.

At the beginning of February, following the fire, five of the workers had been moved to Lobethal, four were still awaiting placement, and one had been terminated as they were a casual employee.

Thomas Foods did provide feedback on the Stakeholder Resource Manual, thus enabling it to be completed. This Manual is provided as Appendix 10.

6.0 DISCUSSION

This project has resulted in an excellent short film which provides an overview of the project, features some of the migrant employees and explains the partnership between AMRC and TFI. In addition, a Resource Manual has been developed for use by other processing companies. These two resources will be useful tools for other processors contemplating recruiting migrants and refugees.

Although the project came to an abrupt conclusion at Murray Bridge, a great deal was learned. If we were to ask what the four most critical learnings were, they would be:

- / the importance of planning and preparation, and of dedicated, experienced and well supported personnel responsible for the project within the processing company, with strong continuing management support
- / a strong, continuing relationship is essential between the settlement provider, the processing company, and the local community
- / the importance of taking time to get to know each of the migrant workers as individuals, their stories, their settlement experiences and their work experiences
- / the need for proximity to a designated refugee settlement center, to avoid further disruption to families thinking of taking up employment in the meat processing industry.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

During this project, it became evident that we were viewing this developing model through the lens of a relationship between the AMRC and TFI, and in a situation where families had already settled in Adelaide and relocation was problematic. In February 2017, MINTRAC submitted an application to AMPC to extend this project to enable a further two pilot programs to be undertaken. In the application we stated that it was clear that much of what we have developed needed to be tested and validated with different providers, different locations, different processors and to be sustained and expanded in the industry as an overall industry strategy. In addition, we felt it was important that the momentum and interest created by the current project was not lost.

The February application to AMPC was unsuccessful, but as the current pilot reaches a conclusion, the need for further industry investment into making this a workable and sustainable model has not diminished.

There is no doubt that many of the workers taken on at Murray Bridge have the potential to become long-term, valuable employees, and that the overall potential of migrants and refugees to fill workforce shortages is important for the industry.

But the benefits expected from the relocation of families into the local community were not achieved, and therefore not tested. In addition, with the benefit of hindsight, there was probably a lot more that could have been done within the company itself in terms of staff preparation, monitoring and support, and an opportunity to implement and test these learnings is needed.

We do not believe that the 'model' developed within this project is ready, yet, for widespread roll-out across the industry. **It is our recommendation that the industry invests in two further pilots, to enable the model to be further developed and refined.**

8.0 APPENDICES

All Appendices are provided as separate documents.

Appendix 1 – Workshop Summary, November 2016

Appendix 2 – Literature review

Appendix 3 – Case Study 1

Appendix 4 – Case Study 2

Appendix 5 – Case Study 3

Appendix 6 – Case Study 4

Appendix 7 – meeting notes 31 May 2017

Appendix 8 – Gary Brown, Conference Presentation

Appendix 9 - link to introductory film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK-ck5rsTCQ&t=13s>

Appendix 10: Stakeholder manual

Appendix 11: SnapShot