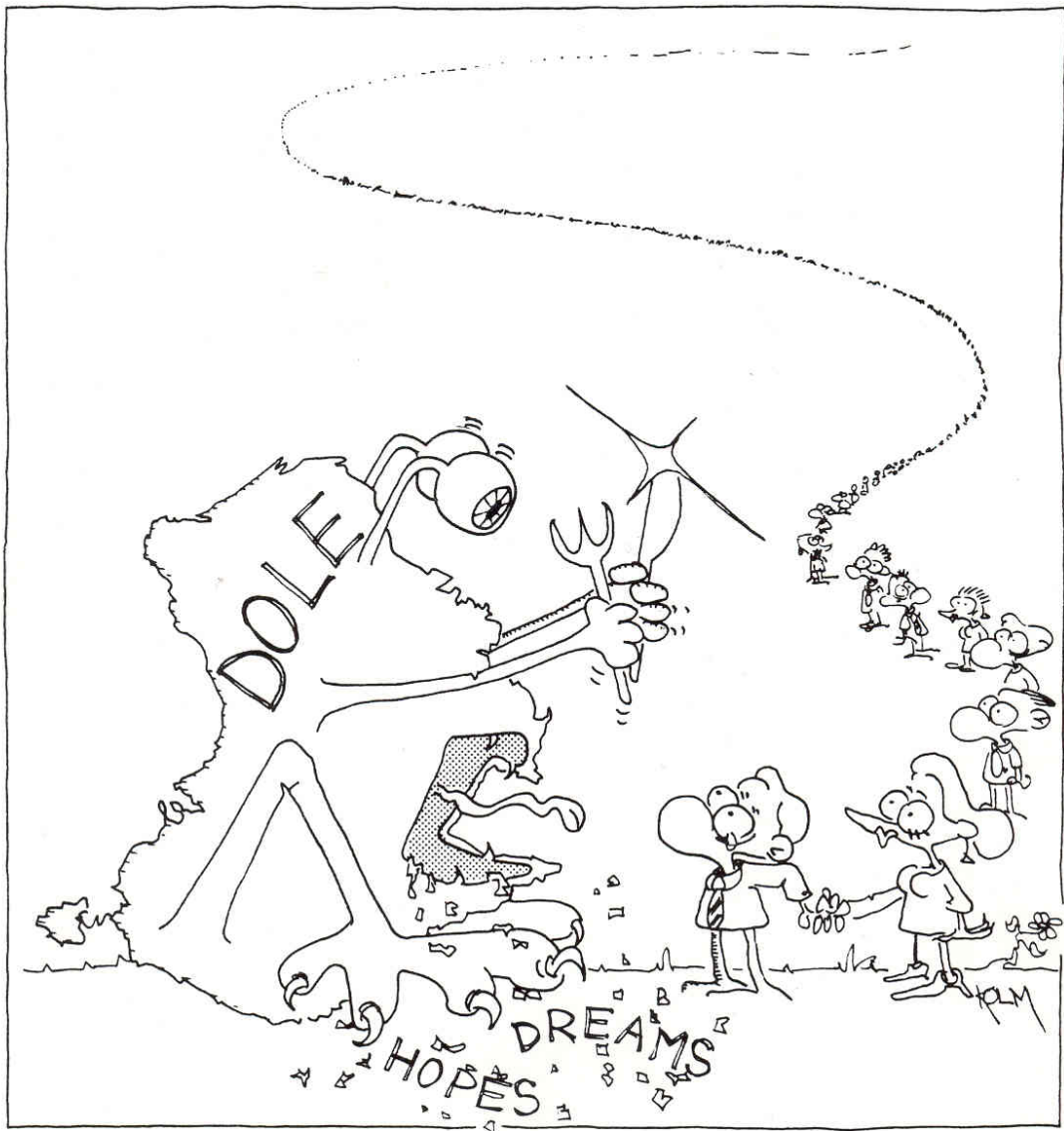


# *IN THE QUEUE*

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE POLISH  
COMMUNITY IN MELBOURNE



*Grazyna Mackiewicz M.A.Ps.S.*

AUSTRALIAN-POLISH COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

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## **UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN MELBOURNE**

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**Australian-Polish Community Services Inc.  
1997**

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**DISCLAIMER:**

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Australian-Polish Community Services Inc., the members of the Steering Committee, nor of any individual nor organisation consulted during the course of the project.

**ART WORK (COVER):** John Kolm.

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## **PREFACE:**

Australian-Polish Community Services (APCS) has a charter to provide welfare and support services; that's why we have been concerned with the plight of the unemployed Polish migrants who have come to the agency for assistance. In the 1980s APCS established a training program targeting these clients, at first through the Commonwealth Government's Employment Initiation Program (1983-84) and later through the Community Employment Program (1984-1986). These initiatives coincided with the influx of young refugees and humanitarian entrants who were escaping the political turmoil in Poland, and who were often well qualified but did not have the English language skills nor the local experience to compete within a constricting job market. The employment programs at APCS enabled training for a number of bilingual welfare aides and teacher aides, and it has been pleasing to see some of the participants in these schemes develop a career within these industries. However, funding for the EIP/CEP schemes was not permanent, so the training opportunities did not continue.

In the early '90s the issue of support for the unemployed was again tackled because of its persistence through the welfare services provided by the Grant-in-Aid worker – clients were presenting with financial problems and even family breakdown, some of which was attributable to the effects of unemployment and underemployment. These clients were predominantly from the new immigration. Consequently, the Grant-in-Aid worker (who was funded through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs) became involved with information sessions targeting unemployed Polish immigrants, and carried out a survey to document their circumstances. This research by Elizabeth Drozd indicated that the highest concentrations of the unemployed Poles in the western region were in Sunshine and St. Albans. These localities now make up the main part of the City of Brimbank (which would have one of the highest proportions of the Polish population in Melbourne) and it is interesting to note that Brimbank possibly has the highest number of the unemployed in Melbourne for the Polish community. Elizabeth's research also indicated that Polish women were further disadvantaged in accessing employment opportunities, and that higher level English for professional purposes was also a particular demand within the community. These findings on their own suggest new community support services which possibly could be tackled in the future.

In the early '90s the State Government through the then Minister for the Department of Business and Employment, the Honourable Phillip Gude, introduced the Community Based Employment Program (CBEP). So, in 1994 APCS once again took up the opportunity to establish an employment support service, with CBEP funding for a team of three staff and a target of one hundred and fifty-eight work and training placements. A similar program has been established by the Polish Community Council (PCC). Though initially both APCS and PCC had separate employment programs, in the following year a joint submission was made for a consortium-based project. Hence the development of the Polish Re-Employment Program. Two years later this joint program is still operating and it is administered through the PCC.

The rationale for further background research into unemployment within the Australian-Polish community was raised because of the general lack of documentation about ethnic unemployment issues arising out of the experiences of the ethnic communities themselves – even the Australian Bureau of Statistics qualifies its own research as having a large margin of error when dis-aggregated into birthplace groups. In 1993 the North-West MRC has documented the result of two small consultations with recent Polish immigrants, and though the 1995 survey by APCS was with a larger sample of the unemployed, the details were not published.

More recently the success of the Community Based Unemployment Programs in targeting the unemployed Poles – and in finding them jobs – deserved to be reviewed in the light of reduced staff levels and target numbers. Whilst the CBEP "job finding" programs had been successful, it was believed that other complementary support services might also be beneficial. More particularly we wanted to explore what more could be done from within the Polish community itself. Therefore during 1997 APCS commissioned social researcher Grażyna Mackiewicz to prepare an analysis for our consideration.

This report by Ms Mackiewicz provides some background material and ideas for both the Polish welfare organisations, and also for mainstream organisations to consider. The ideas would not be easy to implement, but they do provide a challenge for APCS to consider the development of complementary

services, whether they be mentor schemes, providing for local professional experience, or methods for local employers to verify experience obtained off-shore. I hope that we can translate at least some of these challenges into reality. Probably a challenge of equal magnitude will be for the two Polish welfare organisations to cooperate in developing such new ventures for the benefit of our community. As unemployment continues to affect the recent immigrants disproportionately, some continued assistance through the APCS immigration settlement program will be important, particularly in developing new community-based support services.

This research project was financed through APCS, though the funding and cost recoveries in relation to the CBEP projects have been important to the agency in this respect. In effect this “recycling” of grant recoveries has been a beneficial consequence of the CBEP scheme – for this we provide a further thank you to the Department of State Development, Employment Branch, for their continued support for the Polish community.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Steering Committee, Elizabeth Drozd and Bill Nowak, for their efforts and guidance. And thanks also to Grazyna Mackiewicz for her professional approach – and for keeping within the budget.

*Joseph Ribarow*

North-West Migrant Resource Centre  
and APCS Committee Member.

Convenor,  
Unemployment Project Steering Committee  
November 1997

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  - 3) "Mentor" scheme
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APPENDIX 1: Polish-born unemployed ABS 1996 Census Tables

APPENDIX 2: Polish-born unemployed awaiting placement data, DEETYA March 1997

APPENDIX 3: Drozd Survey results - Polish unemployment in the western suburbs, 1993.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has collected and synthesised available information in order to obtain an overview of unemployment in the Polish community in Melbourne. It examines the magnitude of Polish unemployment, presents a profile of the Polish unemployed and discusses possible strategies to address problems identified, with particular reference to ethnic community involvement.

Using available data from ABS, DEETYA, DSS and previous research studies, the report reveals that the pattern of unemployment in the Polish community is currently different to that experienced by the first wave of Polish post-war immigrants and other non-English-speaking background (NESB) migrant groups.

The "old wave" of Polish migrants who arrived after the second world war are now mostly past retirement age. This gives the Polish-born birthplace group an overall low workforce participation rate (42.8%), due to the ageing of the first wave population.

The current Polish unemployed are mostly from the "new wave" of post 1980's immigrants, who tend to be well qualified and highly skilled trades/ professionals, unlike the traditional "factory fodder" stereotype of the old wave and some other NESB immigrant groups. The current Polish-born unemployed tend to be in the prime of their working lives, mostly aged between 26 and 40 years and tend to be concentrated in pockets around Melbourne, with higher numbers in the areas of traditionally high overseas-born populations, such as Oakleigh/ Springvale and Brimbank/ Sunshine. They tend to have arrived in Australia mostly during the 1980's.

Recent 1996 Census data reveals that unemployment in the Polish community is relatively high (12.1%). Although it has decreased slightly in recent years, from 17% in 1991, it is still much higher than the unemployment rate for Australian-born persons (8.5%).

Unemployment for recently arrived Poles is extremely high, with 40% still unemployed after the first year in Australia. A large percentage of the Polish-born unemployed (over 60%) are long term unemployed, having been unemployed for over 12 months. Participation in labour market training programs tends to be low, much lower than that for Australian-born unemployed persons.

Issues and barriers to employment confronting Polish-born migrants include their recency of arrival and poor English language ability. The report reveals that despite official frequent recognition of overseas qualifications, employer attitudes and lack of local experience are major obstacles for Polish-born persons in obtaining suitable employment. Women face additional problems due to family commitments and child care. Underemployment continues to be a problem for many Poles, particularly women, who often remain concentrated in low skilled occupations. Hidden unemployment has also been identified as an issue.

While recency of arrival and English language difficulties present obvious immediate problems which hinder access to the job market, there is evidence to suggest (Drozd, 1997) that most Polish migrants do eventually find employment and settle well, despite a high incidence of initial underemployment in jobs not commensurate with their skills and abilities. There is some evidence to suggest that Polish access to professional occupations is showing a tendency to increase, although slowly.

Considering survey results which reveal that few successful jobseekers obtained their job through the CES, and the low participation rate of the Polish-born in employment programs, specific assistance such as that provided through the CBEP Polish Re-Employment Program is vital. This Program serves a very important role in providing information, support and networking for new arrivals. It has a relatively high success rate, in being able to place about a third of its clients. Given that many Polish-born clients seek assistance fairly early, up to 3 or before 8 months of unemployment, the service provides an important point of early intervention as well as assistance for the long term unemployed.

While the Government has its responsibilities with regard to adequate bilingual assistance and service provisions, there is also potentially much that could be done at the ethnic community level to assist the unemployed in the Polish community.

In order to address some of the issues identified in this report, a number of strategies have been suggested which could potentially assist the Polish-born unemployed. These include:

- addressing employer attitudes
- vocational English language classes
- "mentor" scheme
- reciprocal child care networks/ ethnic family day care
- women's resource group
- lobbying mainstream service providers
- establishing closer links with other local initiatives
- location/ outplacement of Polish Re-Employment Program workers
- greater promotion of Polish Re-Employment Program
- Australian work experience through voluntary work placements
- assistance with verifying overseas references for potential employers.
- job preparation classes

## **AIMS**

The aims of this report were to:

- \* Overview the magnitude and geographic distribution of unemployment in the Polish community in Melbourne.
- \* Present a profile of the Polish unemployed.
- \* Identify issues relating to Polish unemployment.
- \* Discuss possible strategies and solutions to address these problems identified, with particular reference to ethnic community involvement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The report sought to make use of various sources of statistics, data and information, both quantitative and qualitative in order to piece together a picture of Polish unemployment in Melbourne.

Available recent statistics were gathered from departmental sources including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA), The Department of Social Security (DSS) and the (now closed) Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (BIPR). Some of the data entailed specially requested analysis to extract the information for the Polish-born birthplace group. It should be noted that since collection of this data, some of the departments have recently undergone changes and the DSS and DEETYA have now combined to form the new "Centrelink".

A review was undertaken of available literature and reports concerning migrant and Polish unemployment. This included use of some unpublished studies, such as that undertaken by Drozd (1993, 1997).

Qualitative data was collected through interviewing workers in the field, such as the CBEP workers and also Polish-born unemployed persons themselves.

The information from all of these sources was synthesised in order to give an overview of unemployment in the Polish community in Melbourne.

## INTRODUCTION

### DEFINITIONS

Before embarking on an analysis of unemployment in the Polish community in Melbourne, some definitions need to be clarified with regard to what is actually meant by "unemployment" and which statistics can be regarded as the official measures of unemployment. The statistics collected by different departments vary, depending on their definition and not all can be regarded as reliable measures of unemployment in the Polish community.

The broadest definition of unemployment is: currently not in paid employment and actively seeking work. This excludes those who are not in the labour force for reasons such as retirement, occupied in home duties or full-time students.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses a very specific definition of unemployment. It defines an unemployed person as someone aged 15 years or over who:

- was not employed during the week of the survey;
- had actively looked for full-time and part-time work at any time during the four weeks up to the end of the survey week;
- was available for work in the survey week or was waiting to start a new job within four weeks of the survey week;
- was waiting to be called back to a full-time or part-time job from which he/she had been stood down.

The labour force is the total supply of labour available to the labour market and includes both people actually employed and those actively looking for and available for work. The participation rate is the population in the labour force expressed as a percentage of the total population.

The unemployment rate for any group is calculated as the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the total labour force in the same group.

A person is defined as "long term unemployed" where they have been unemployed for 52 weeks or more. According to ABS figures, the long term unemployed in Australia in March 1993 represented 37.5% of the unemployed, or 4.3% of the total labour force.

Official unemployment rates do not include the "hidden unemployed"; that is, those without jobs who are not counted in the official statistics. This occurs partly because of the narrow definition of 'unemployed' used in the surveys. A person is counted as unemployed only if they had not worked at all in the week prior to the survey and had actively sought work during the previous month and were available to start work. Consequently those with casual work, discouraged job seekers, those who are not aware of their entitlements, and those who have a spouse or partner who is employed may not register with the CES as unemployed. Unemployment figures may be depressed by persons who are marginally attached to the labour force. Marginally attached and discouraged workers are those persons not actively looking for work in the ABS survey week.

There is evidence to suggest that while hidden unemployment is difficult to measure, it appears that during recessions hidden unemployment has disproportionately affected immigrants of non-English-speaking background, particularly women.

There is also a condition of underemployment. Wooden (1993) describes the underemployed as being of two types - the visible and invisible underemployed. The visible underemployed are those whose potential hours of labour are not all being used and who accept fewer working hours than they would like to. According to an ABS survey (September 1996) 6% of employed persons aged 15+ years were involuntary part-time workers working less than 35 hours per week. Invisible underemployment exists when the labour is not being fully utilised in terms of either the type of work offered to the individual or how the individual's working time is used.

## AVAILABLE STATISTICS

The Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) is an Australian wide network of offices that provide an employment service for job seekers and employers. Through the Department of Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) it provides one source of up-to-date statistics on unemployed and awaiting placement (UAP) numbers in the various CES regions. The DEETYA statistics include job seekers who are not in current employment and are actively seeking placement. This does not include those who are employed but seeking a different job, those who are primarily students looking for a part-time job, nor those on employment training programs. DEETYA make a point of disclaiming that UAP statistics are not a reliable measure of unemployment since coverage of jobseekers can vary over time as a result of changes in labour market conditions, variations in administrative procedures and the effects of Government policy, especially the impact of changes in labour market programs. Moreover, some jobseekers remain registered with the CES although they either independently found employment or left the labour force but have not notified the CES; and not all persons seeking employment register with the CES for assistance. Distortions can be especially significant at the local CES office level.

The Department of Social Security (DSS) unemployment statistics tend to be more conservative, as they include only those who are registered as unemployed and in receipt of a Social Security Allowance. This does not include those who are unemployed and actively seeking work but for various reasons not in receipt of unemployment benefits.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducts a comprehensive Census of Population and Housing of the total Australian population every five years. The ABS also conducts other smaller surveys with samples of the population, including regular Labour Force Surveys. While these are based on multi-stage area samples which cover about 0.5% of the population, they nevertheless provide up-to-date reliable information on changing unemployment trends. The monthly Labour Force Surveys are specifically designed to measure unemployment in accordance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards. These ABS figures are generally regarded as the official measure of unemployment in Australia.

However, although the ABS Labour Force Surveys are generally accepted as the most up-to-date reliable figures on unemployment for the general Australian population, when broken down by birthplace groupings, the sample sizes become much smaller, with a consequent increase in sampling error. For unemployed persons born in Poland the relative standard error of the Labour Force Surveys is over 25%, and consequently cannot be regarded as reliable. Such a high standard error causes a fluctuation in the figures, so care must be exercised when examining and drawing conclusions from this data.

Considering this problem of standard error of the Labour Force Surveys when broken down by birthplace groups and the above limitations of DEETYA and DSS data, the ABS Census remains the most reliable source of accurate statistics available regarding unemployment among the Polish-born community in Melbourne. The problem with these figures is that since they are only collected every five years, they tend to be somewhat dated. At the time of this report, full labour force information was not yet available from the 1996 Census, so much of the data which gives detailed breakdowns by birthplace group for a number of variables is derived from the 1991 Census. This has been supplemented with more recent DEETYA and DSS data and ABS Labour Force Survey data, which can be useful to give an indicative, if not definitive picture of Polish unemployment in Melbourne.

## THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Baker (1993) notes that unemployment is usually described by economists in five categories:

- Frictional unemployment - refers to people who are unemployed in the short term because they are changing jobs or in between jobs;
- Seasonal unemployment - which is due to seasonal factors such as the end of the school year;
- Cyclical unemployment - due to lack of spending in the economy, which affects demand;
- Hard-core unemployment - the unemployment which is due to the personal characteristics of the prospective employee that makes him/her unattractive to employers or disadvantaged in job seeking;
- Structural unemployment - the unemployment caused by changes in the methods of production, such as the advent of new technology which affected many blue collar workers.

Jones and McAllister (1991) state that it is generally recognised that unemployment can be attributed to both macro-economic and micro-economic factors. Macro-economic factors include economic influences such as the period of entry into the labour market, also structural factors such as the type of labour market and industry immigrants enter, relative labour costs, as well as their initial geographic location.

Micro-economic factors are those human capital skills that migrants carry with them, such as their qualifications and language ability, which influence their employability and employment prospects.

The focus of this report is on the micro-economic factors - those characteristics of the Polish people themselves which act as barriers to employment and affect their employment prospects.

As well as considering statistics and numbers, one must bear in mind the impact of the experience of unemployment on the individual. For an individual, the personal and social costs of unemployment, particularly long term unemployment, are significant. Work is central to people's lives, providing not only their main source of income, but also a sense of identity, participation and order to daily life. For immigrants coming to a new country, unemployment greatly affects their overall settlement and adjustment, as well as their material circumstances.

## **MIGRANT UNEMPLOYMENT**

### **GENERAL FINDINGS**

Migrant workers make up a significant proportion of the Australian labour force. Given the diversity of the Australian population, it is important for Australia's harmonious future that an ethnic underclass should not be allowed to become entrenched.

Since the late 1970's labour market studies of immigrants have proliferated and there have been a number of research studies undertaken addressing the problem of migrant unemployment. Most of these have concluded that migrants of non-English-speaking background (NESB) face particular disadvantages in the labour force. They tend to have higher unemployment rates and longer periods of unemployment than either the Australian-born or migrants of English-speaking background (ESB).

The Report of Commonwealth and State Ethnic Affairs Officers on Migrant Unemployment (1986) combined detailed information from each of the States and Territories and evidenced that immigrants from non-English-speaking countries were particularly disadvantaged in the labour market and experienced higher rates of unemployment than Australian-born persons. This was the case for both males and females.

A paper by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA, 1984) found that when the overseas-born unemployment rate was standardised for age and sex, the disparity between the Australian and overseas-born was even greater. Immigrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds were also found to have considerably longer durations of unemployment.

Castles (1993) found that while the Australian-born population had an unemployment rate of 10%, with a third of these being long term unemployed, people born in non-English-speaking countries had a rate of 16%, with nearly half being long term unemployed.

Underemployment has also been found to be a problem for migrants due to cultural differences, non-recognition of qualifications, lack of local experience and lack of English. Moss (1993) cites supportive evidence from studies (e.g. Iredale and D'Arcy, 1992) looking at job seeking strategies to indicate that using networks, family, friends and their ethnic community were crucial to finding jobs in a new country, even though one consequence was the risk of being channelled into poorly-paid, heavy manufacturing work.

In 1994 the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs undertook an examination of figures for the western suburbs of Melbourne (DEETYA, 1994) which showed that migrants from NESB countries were much more likely to become long term unemployed - 65% as compared to 49% of the register as a whole remained on the unemployment register for a lengthy period.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC, 1995) concluded that a disproportionate number of immigrants of non-English-speaking backgrounds experience unequal labour market outcomes when compared to the Australian-born, particularly those seeking employment in the manufacturing sector, NESB women and refugees. It has generally been noted that males and females of non-English-speaking background tended to be over concentrated in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in the blue collar sector in low paid positions with limited promotional prospects.

### **INFLUENCING FACTORS**

Research indicates that a number of factors have been found to influence migrants' poor performance in the labour force. The main ones include: English language ability, period of residence, skills and qualifications, category of migration and gender.

Wooden (1990) found generally higher unemployment rates for NESB migrant, particularly refugees, which he attributed primarily to English language difficulties and recency of arrival.

Other research also confirms that higher education reduces unemployment, although not so much in the

case of migrants. Lack of English, lack of local experience, discrimination and cultural differences are all factors identified as barriers to employment.

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

In a detailed statistical analysis Jones and McAllister (1991) found that English language proficiency was a major predictor of unemployment, as was length of residence. Refugees were more disadvantaged, while qualifications gained in Australia reduced the probability of unemployment.

English language proficiency has generally been recognised as central to effective settlement. The Government has provided for those who arrived in Australia after 1st July 1991 the entitlement of a maximum of 510 hours of English language tuition. Moss (1993), however, has noted significant problems including: lack of access to classes (waiting lists, distance, hours), courses too short, lack of bilingual teaching, deferment due to employment, financial or domestic commitments, cultural insensitivity, variability of quality and more recently, cost. Moss also noted that with English language classes there was a problem for new arrivals who were overseas qualified professionals and who needed higher levels of proficiency than functional English to adequately access employment.

DIEA (1994) noted that the differences in unemployment rates between migrants and Australian-born are complex and often differ by birthplace group. They found the most important of these to be English language proficiency. Migrants who do not speak any English or do not speak it well have significantly higher rates of unemployment than those more proficient in English.

#### RECENCY OF ARRIVAL

Inglis and Stromback (1986) found that the higher unemployment experienced by immigrants could be attributed to the settlement process. McAllister (1986) also found that the proportion of time spent unemployed corresponded to the length of residence in Australia.

Jones and McAllister (1991) found that immigrants of non-English-speaking background who were recently arrived suffered an unemployment rate 2 to 3 times higher than immigrants of English-speaking background and were also over represented in the long term unemployed.

In 1992 Federal Parliament commissioned a study (cited in Baker, 1993) which revealed that an extraordinarily high number of migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds who arrived in 1990-91 remained unemployed and were receiving benefits a year later. According to the study 31.3% of immigrants who had arrived since January 1990 were still unemployed a year later. The figure for Polish-born arrivals still unemployed one year after arrival was 40%. Even highly qualified NESB migrants had limited chances of finding a job.

Castles (1993) claimed that NESB migrants had consistently highest long-term unemployment rates. He found that there was a clear relationship between the long term unemployment rate and period of arrival, with recent arrivals suffering more from long term unemployment.

Moss (1993) noted that unemployment rates were highest in the age ranges where newly arrived migrant groups were most heavily concentrated and longer established groups least heavily concentrated.

DIEA (1994) found that recently arrived migrants had very high unemployment rates - 32% for persons arriving since January 1991. However migrant unemployment rates fall substantially with increasing period of residence. Long established migrants (resident 20 years or more) have significantly lower rates of unemployment than recent arrivals and compare more favourably with the Australian-born.

#### EDUCATION

Past research indicates that higher education reduces unemployment, although not so much in the case of migrants.

In their analysis Jones and McAllister (1991) found that qualifications gained in Australia reduced the probability of unemployment.

However, Wooden (1990) found that post-school qualifications gained overseas did not have the same employment enhancing effects as similar level qualifications gained in Australia.

Despite a large number of migrants having post-school qualifications, Moss (1993) postulated that because of lack of recognition of qualifications, problems with undertaking further training, lack of local experience and English language proficiency and employer attitudes, migrants were generally put into unskilled or semi-skilled work.

#### MIGRATION STATUS

In numerous studies refugee status has found to be a predictor of unemployment, although it is difficult to disentangle this from recency of arrival and English language ability.

A longitudinal survey of 2,825 immigrants to Australia (Williams and Murphy, 1996) provided a more detailed analysis of the initial labour market performance of immigrants. Nearly half (42%) were not in the labour force when first arriving in Australia. Of those in the labour force, 38% were unemployed. There were differences, however, for immigrants arriving in different visa categories, of different ages and birthplace groups. Those arriving under the Employer Nomination Scheme or Business Skills categories had an unemployment rate of only 3.8%, while those entering under Australia's Humanitarian Program had an unemployment rate of 81.1%, with this rate being higher for older immigrants and females. Immigrants in the Independent (points tested) categories had a 24.6% unemployment rate, while those for both Preferential and Concessional Family categories, were around 37%. Unemployment rates also varied by region of birth, with those from North America, Europe and the USSR and North East Asia being lower than other regions, while those from Africa and Southeast Asia had the highest rates of unemployment. An examination of the unemployment rates by State/Territory revealed that recent immigrants to Victoria were in the worst position, with an overall unemployment rate of 58.1%

#### MIGRANT WOMEN

Moss (1993) noted that participation rates for migrant women were generally less than that for males or Australian-born females. The participation in the workforce by the majority of women was significantly affected at some stage in their lives by their role as prime carers for their children. Informal job search methods were found to contribute to the perpetuation of segregation of NESB women in the workforce in the lower poorly paid sectors. Poor utilisation of formal methods of seeking employment such as the CES was seen by Moss as an issue for concern. In particular, access to appropriate labour market programs for NESB women was limited.

The Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (1995) found that NESB women were often shut out of training options. Findings indicated that men were favoured above women and English-speaking background people over NESBs, leaving NESB women with a double disadvantage. Language difficulties and training out of work hours were identified as significant barriers between NESB women and employment opportunities. Many women said that on-the-job English language training combined with certificate training would enable them to apply for better paid jobs. Lack of child care was a problem, as was sexual harassment in some cases. Many women were also not informed about training opportunities, award restructuring and issues surrounding multi skilling.

#### DISCRIMINATION AND EMPLOYER ATTITUDES

One further influencing factor which has not featured prominently in formal research and analysis, due to its difficulty to quantify and measure, but which has been noted anecdotally and from qualitative information, is discrimination and employer attitudes. Moss (1993) noted that there is a growing body of literature pointing to the disadvantage for NESB migrants in relation to hiring and recruitment, promotion and on the job training opportunities. The Office of Multicultural Affairs (1989) listed the following areas of concern: lack of retraining opportunities for industrial restructuring; recognition of overseas qualifications; lack of value and underutilisation of language and cultural skills; and lack of awareness among employers, particularly in the private sector, of the benefits of cultural diversity. However, despite Government initiatives attempting to make NESB migrants one of the four target groups for Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO), EEO has not generally served NESB immigrants well.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC, 1995) cite a number of studies

which suggest that after controlling for other variables, discrimination remains an important determinant to explain the unequal labour force status of NESB immigrants. Racial discrimination in employment can take the form of not hiring people of non-English-speaking background in the first place, not promoting them to levels of employment commensurate with their ability, or dismissing them before other workers when retrenchments occur. Discrimination can also manifest itself in the form of lower wages. Although there is plenty of qualitative information and anecdotal evidence, there has been little research into this area in Australia. The BIMPR, which planned to undertake systematic research into this area has unfortunately been recently closed. Despite Government initiatives such as "Access and Equity" in the workplace, there are no benchmarks by which to monitor progress nor improvements.

Moss (1993) cites studies (e.g. Foster et al 1991; HREOC, 1992) which indicate that employers are often ignorant of their discriminatory recruitment practices, which give ethnocentric preference for Australian-born workers with Australian experience. NESB immigrants are often subjected to culturally disadvantageous interviewing situations, have their qualifications and experience ignored or undervalued and encounter ethnocentric stereotypes regarding their nationality and ability to "fit in".

BIMPR (1996) note that despite having qualifications equal to those of other candidates, NESB immigrants are often screened out early from management positions because existing managers tend to choose candidates like themselves. Watson (1996) found that NESB managers tend to be more highly educated than their colleagues whose native language is English. However, according to the report, interviews with management recruiting consultants and with adult language and literacy teachers showed a range of cultural biases which are built into the recruitment and promotion procedures. The report highlights a homogenising or cloning effect, whereby managers select other managers on the basis of how well they approximate themselves. As a consequence, managers from different cultural backgrounds can be screened out of the selection process quite early, even when their technical competence for the particular job may be more than adequate. Results from case studies reveal that organisational restructuring in the 1980's and 1990's had produced mixed results for NESB managers. On the one hand it could spell disaster, while on the other the more commercial orientation of some organisations had provided NESB immigrants with new opportunities for employment and advancement.

#### SEGMENTATION OF THE LABOUR FORCE

The segmentation of the labour force is also important in considering migrant unemployment rates. ABS statistics reveal that the migrant labour force is largely concentrated in the manufacturing sector, trades and processing occupations. This segmentation has made many immigrants vulnerable to the forces of unemployment most heavily felt within the manufacturing and construction sectors.

NESB workers have been found to be particularly vulnerable to industry restructuring and workplace changes, due to their over-concentration in manufacturing industries, limited access to training and a growing demand for high level English language skills (BIMPR, 1995).

DIEA (1994) found that unemployment rates for Australian-born and migrants generally respond in the same way to changes in economic conditions, although the differential between the rates increases in times of recession. Studies cited in HREOC (1995) have confirmed that immigrants of NESB background appear to have borne the greatest burden of the 1974, 1982 and 1990's recessions.

Ackland and Williams (1992) showed evidence to indicate that the gap in unemployment rates rapidly widens during recession, but narrows only gradually, but not completely, during the subsequent recovery. Williams (1995) found that the gap between Australian-born and NESB migrants was much greater in the 1990-92 recession than that in 1982-3.

A conference organised by the three Migrant Resource Centres of the western suburbs (1996) clearly identified that immigrants from NESB countries were particularly disadvantaged in the labour market during periods of recession. In the western suburbs of Melbourne, manufacturing and building industry restructuring has worsened the position of both male and female immigrants, as reflected in their labour force participation and unemployment rates.

#### PROBLEMS AND SPECIAL NEEDS OF MIGRANTS

Moss (1993) noted that there is considerable evidence that unemployed NESB immigrants encounter a

number of major problems in assessment and referral, especially at CES offices and in the delivery and relevance of labour market programs. These include language difficulties, lack of counselling, lack of appropriate assessment particularly in regard to overseas acquired qualifications and skills, inappropriate referrals, fear of CES officers, inappropriate English Second Language (ESL) referrals, failure to qualify for ESL referral due to residence or age, lack of match between courses and jobs available, failure to refer to appropriate bridging courses, lack of childcare while in training, lack of adequate transport to training locations, stereotyped expectations of NESB capacities, and discrimination on the basis of ethnic background, age, sex, colour or accent. In addition NESB migrants have reported poor quality training courses and a strong belief that only TAFE training courses are recognised by employers.

The Report of the Ethnic Affairs Commissioners (1986) highlighted the need to work in close consultation with ethnic groups in developing strategies and initiatives.

#### LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMS

Despite various efforts by Government, community and business organisations to address the problem of unemployment, and the numerous services available, migrants remain disadvantaged in the labour market. Few services have been able to cater for the special needs of migrants and it has generally been found that they tend to have low participation rates in labour market programs.

In a comprehensive review of unemployed migrant youth and labour market programs the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA, 1985) identified the difficulties, special needs and disadvantages faced by recent arrivals and those of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Despite the much higher unemployment rates for migrant youth, the report found that the objective of greater equity in the labour market was not being realised by labour market programs. Labour market programs and services neither reached those who were disadvantaged in finding employment nor assisted adequately those whom they did reach. The research indicated that the proportion of migrants participating in labour market programs relative to their unemployment rates was low. The report recommended the need for changes to program eligibility criteria and program suitability to address these disadvantages, as well as the need for the CES to recognise the special needs of migrants.

In response to considerable inequities, the Kirby Report (1985) recommended special provisions for women and disadvantaged groups across labour market programs, which included on arrival ESL and the establishment of a National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition.

Jones and McAllister (1991) found that NESB immigrants were under-represented compared to other placements for the long term unemployed in Jobstart and Jobtrain, and as a proportion of immigrant placements in the long term unemployed component of Skillshare. They also found that women who had completed 4 years of secondary school, and were less than 12 months unemployed, benefited most from participation in Skillshare in terms of achieving better employment outcomes.

Junor et al (1994) critically examined many aspects of labour market programs including the Special Intervention Program (SIP). The authors noted that despite the aim of SIP to prevent NESB jobseekers from becoming long term unemployed by improving their skills in English, in 1993, 68% of SIP ESL places went to long term unemployed. Jobseekers who had completed their 510 hours of 'new settler' English had to wait until they became long term unemployed before they were eligible for further English tuition.

HREOC (1995) summarised research material to indicate that there remain problematic areas for jobseekers of non-English-speaking background in accessing labour market programs. There are also many indications that the needs of NESB women in particular are not being met by labour market programs.

#### SOCIAL MOBILITY

In the last decade immigrant intakes have been progressively reduced with entry increasingly limited. This has resulted in the recent arrivals from some ethnic backgrounds being more highly skilled and qualified professionals. HREOC (1995) cite evidence to suggest that some groups of skilled Asian born immigrants have entered into professional, managerial and technical jobs.

ABS (1994) found that of migrants aged over 18 years with post-school qualifications who arrived in Australia between 1970 and 1993, 59.6% had their qualifications recognised in Australia. In some disciplines, recognition was very high - science 77.4%, building 70.9%, engineering 65.8%, health, medicine 65.7%, mechanical, automotive, electrical and manual trades 63.1%, while it was lower for hairdressing and beauty 41.2% and business and administration 49.9%.

#### ETHNIC GROUP DIFFERENCES

While much research has tended to consider NESB migrants as a whole, it should be noted there are often differences as well as similarities between migrants from different backgrounds. While frequently research tends to group NESB migrants together, depending on the composition of the community and their migration circumstances, there are huge differences apparent between the experiences and particular problems of different ethnic groups.

The present report attempts to detail the particular circumstances of Polish-born migrants. While Poles may have some characteristics in common with other ethnic groups, they also have distinct and particular differences. The focus of this report is on the Polish-born unemployed in Melbourne.

## THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN MELBOURNE

### PATTERN OF MIGRATION

Before considering the patterns of Polish unemployment, it is useful to overview and understand the structure of the Polish community in Melbourne.

Examining ABS figures for settler arrivals by major birthplace, between the years 1947-51, 70,100 Polish-born persons arrived in Australia, with a further 14,800 arriving between the years 1981-85.

Melbourne has the largest Polish-born population of all the capital cities, with approximately one third of Polish migrants settling in Melbourne.

Table 1 presents the year of arrival of Polish-born persons in Victoria.

Table 1 : Year of arrival of Polish-born persons in Victoria

YEAR	NUMBER	%
Pre 1971	13,629	57%
1971-75	838	3.5%
1976-80	1,127	4.7%
1981-85	4,306	18%
1986-87	1,034	4.3%
1988-89	1,319	5.5%
1990-91	956	4%
N.S.	693	2.9%
TOTAL	23,902	100%

Source: ABS 1991 Census

Of these arrivals, 21,435 Polish-born immigrants settled in Melbourne - 10,518 males and 10,917 females.

The Polish community in Melbourne arrived in two distinct and quite different "waves". The first wave was of post-war immigrants, who arrived in the late 1940's and early 1950's. During the period from 1947 to 1954 the Polish-born population in Australia increased from 6,600 to 56,600 persons. These people came as displaced persons (DPs) and after having their lives severely disrupted by the second world war in Europe. Most were from villages and rural areas, with little education and few skills. After arriving in Australia many settled in the western suburbs of Melbourne, where land was cheap and work was plentiful in the manufacturing industries nearby. Most spent their working lives as unskilled labourers in factories and are now elderly and retired.

There was a second wave of Polish immigrants, quite different from the first, who arrived during the 1980's after the "Solidarity" movement in Poland. Between 1981 and 1991, 22,400 Polish citizens arrived in Australia. These people tended to be much better educated than their predecessors, they were young, motivated and were more dispersed in their settlement in Melbourne.

These migrants tended to come from predominantly urban backgrounds with relatively high levels of technical, tertiary and professional qualifications. They also came from an economic system where womens education and participation in the workforce was also high. Jamrozik (1983) found that while the hopes and aspirations of these new arrivals was high, many were disappointed as their high

expectations for a better future have not been met.

The Polish community includes a large proportion of elderly persons. At the time of the 1991 Census, over a third (35%) of these people were aged 65 years or more, with 12.8% aged 55 to 64 years, 10.7% aged 45 to 54 years, 19.5% aged 35 to 44 years, 10.5% aged 25 to 34 years, 5.5% aged 15 to 24 years and only 5.9% aged 0 to 14 years.

Due to the age structure of the community, which includes the large number of elderly Poles who arrived after World War 2, the participation rate in the labour market is much lower than for the Australian-born population. According to ABS Census data, the participation rate for Polish-born persons dropped from 46.3% in 1986 to 43.1% in 1991, compared to 63% in 1986 and 65.8% in 1991 for the Australian-born.

It needs to also be noted that in any consideration of Polish migrants there are limitations with statistics based on country of birth. There is a concentration of ethnically Jewish persons around the Caulfield/ St Kilda areas of Melbourne, who, although born in Poland, identify rather with the Jewish community and tend to make use of Jewish services. While there is no means of excluding these from the statistics, it is a consideration that needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the data.

## PROFILE OF POLISH COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

According to 1991 Census data, the majority of Polish-born immigrants claim to speak English well (79.2% of males and 73.8% of females), with only about one fifth (21.4% of males and 21.3% of females) claiming to speak it not well or not at all.

ABS (1991) statistics reveal that there is a great variability between different migrant groups with regard to post-school qualifications in Victoria. Of Polish-born persons aged 25 to 64 years, 34.5% had post-school qualifications, compared to the Australian-born, who had 35.7%. While Polish-born persons were not as well qualified as some migrant groups, e.g. Malaysian (63.5%) they were much better qualified than others e.g. Lebanese (10.6%), Greek (10.7%), Vietnamese (11.1%), Turkish (12.1%), and were comparable to Australian-born persons.

When considering those aged between 25 to 64 years with a Bachelor or higher Degree in Victoria (ABS, 1991), Polish-born persons were found to be better educated (40%) than even the Australian-born (33.1%).

Table 2 shows occupation by sex for employed Polish-born persons (aged 15 years and over) in Victoria. The largest proportion of men were employed in trades (22.7%) or professional (17.2%) occupations, with a substantial number even in managerial positions (12%). There were only 9.6% in labouring occupations. In contrast, a larger percentage of women were in labouring occupations (17.3%), although many were also in professional (17.1%), trades (15.3%) and managerial (9.3%) positions.

Table 2: Occupation by sex, for employed Polish-born persons aged 15 years and over, Victoria.

OCCUPATION	MALES		FEMALES		PERSONS	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Managers and Administrators	568	12	198	5.6	766	9.3
Professionals	816	17.2	591	16.8	1,407	17.1
Para-professionals	241	5.1	323	9.2	564	6.8
Tradespersons	1,077	22.7	182	5.2	1,259	15.3
Clerks	177	3.7	523	14.9	700	8.5
Salespersons and Personal Service Workers	338	7.1	428	12.2	766	9.3
Plant and Machine Operators and Drivers	624	13.2	302	8.6	926	11.2
Labourers and Related Workers	455	9.6	606	17.3	1,061	12.9
Inadequately Described and Not Stated	441	9.3	358	10.2	799	9.7
TOTAL	4,737	100%	3,511	100%	8,248	100%

Source: 1991 Census - Customised Matrix Table CSC6029

This 1991 Census data reveals some changes in occupations for the Polish-born since the 1986 Census. Professional jobs have increased for males from 13.5% in 1986 to 17.2% in 1991, and for females from 13% to 16.8%. Para-professional jobs have also tended to increase, particularly for females - from 6.5% to 9.2%. Conversely some unskilled jobs have tended to decrease. Plant and machine operators dropped for males from 16.8% to 13.2%, and for females from 11% to 8.6%. Labouring occupations, however, while dropping for females from 22.1% to 17.3%, rose for males from 4.2% in 1986 to 9.6% in 1991.

Table 3 shows industry by sex for employed Polish-born persons (aged 15 years and over) in Victoria. The greatest employment sector for males was the manufacturing industry (33.3%), with many also in wholesale/ retail trades (16.5%). Many females were also in manufacturing (24.8%) and wholesale/ retail (14.5%), although to a lesser extent than the men, while there were a large percentage in community service industries (23.3%)

Table 3: Industry by sex, for employed Polish-born persons aged 15 years and over, Victoria.

INDUSTRY	MALES FEMALES		PERSONS	
	%	%	Number	%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	0.9	0.8	71	0.9
Mining	0.3	0	15	0.2
Manufacturing	33.3	24.8	2,477	29.7
Electricity, Gas and Water	1.6	0.2	82	1.0
Construction	6.1	1.4	342	4.1
Wholesale and Retail Trade	16.5	14.5	1,308	15.7
Transport and Storage	4.8	2.7	326	3.9
Communication	2.1	1.5	155	1.9
Finance, Property and Business	8.9	10.1	784	9.4
Public Admin and Defence	2.9	4.0	281	3.4
Community Services	9.7	23.3	1,279	15.4
Recreational, Personal and Other Services	2.8	5.5	326	3.9
Non-Classifiable and Not Stated	10.1	11.3	882	10.6
TOTAL	100%	100%	8,328	100%

Source: 1991 Census - Customised Matrix Table CSC6031

#### ADJUSTMENT AND SETTLEMENT OF NEW ARRIVALS

It has been noted that new arrivals from Poland do not have extensive social support networks and that there is a cultural gap between the newly arrived and long resident Poles. Jamrozik (1993) noted that while the new and old waves of Polish immigrants shared the common characteristics of language and culture, they differed substantially in demographic composition, educational and occupational qualifications, as well as in social attitudes, aspirations and expectations of their host country. They arrived in different circumstances and different social and economic circumstances from their predecessors. In some aspects conditions were more congenial for new arrivals, but in others conditions were less favourable. For example with regard to employment, the early immigrants had employment assigned, while recent arrivals must seek employment themselves, in times of high unemployment.

Drozdz (1997) has documented the settlement of the 1980's wave of Polish immigrants in Melbourne, in a comprehensive analysis through in-depth interviews with 60 participants. The peak of the second wave of Polish immigrants coming to Australia was between 1980-83, when many came under the Special Humanitarian Program, for political and economic reasons. These people came mainly as

family units, in the prime of their lives (25-34 years), with a high level of education from a highly urbanised environment.

Drozd found that after 10-14 years in Australia, these people had settled well in all aspects including English language proficiency, occupational status, social support networks, job and life satisfaction, although these achievements did not come easily. The greatest difficulty in the initial years of settlement was learning English and not being able to communicate while at the same time needing to work and establish their lives in Australia. Drozd found that their occupational adjustment was also difficult, although with time some regained their occupational status and now work in positions commensurate with their skills and qualifications. About half undertook further and additional studies in order to achieve this. Drozd found that over half of the sample worked as labourers or machine operators in their first jobs in Australia, while now only a quarter fell into this category. After 10 -14 years in Australia, the majority of the study group worked as professionals, para-professionals, technicians and service workers. Female interviewees had not done as well with occupational adjustment, with 39% continuing to work as labourers or machine operators. Only one third of the professionals were able to obtain their first jobs in Australia commensurate with their qualifications. While their second jobs tended to be somewhat better, Drozd found that there was a slow process of occupational recovery. Overall, while most respondents were satisfied with their jobs in Australia, 40% thought their occupational prestige had worsened.

Even when qualifications were recognised, Drozd found that lack of Australian employment experience continued to work against them. The main reasons given for Polish immigrants experiencing limited job opportunities included: English language difficulties, no Australian work experience and difficulty with access to work referees, lack of skills recognition, difficulty with transferability of skills, discrimination, and a preference among employers to promote their "own" kind. There was a strong belief that Australians prefer to promote "their own" (non immigrants) and if an employer has a choice he/she will employ an Australian rather than a migrant.

Many of the new arrivals had experienced long periods of unemployment, especially those arriving in Australia during the recession of the early 1980's. In Drozd's sample, 12% were unemployed at the time of the study, usually unemployed for a substantial period due to English language difficulties and overall lack of jobs. Four out of seven were long term unemployed, having been unemployed mostly for over two years. The main reasons for being unemployed were: not employable e.g. because of lack of English, housewife or househusband role, worker's compensation situations, shortage of jobs, looking after small children, and being a single mother. Almost all of the unemployed Poles in the study were in their 30's and early 40's when they arrived in Australia.

## UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE POLISH COMMUNITY

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Various statistics have been collected of unemployed Polish-born. At the time of the 1996 Census there were 1,107 unemployed Polish-born persons in Victoria, with 1,017 of these residing in the Melbourne metropolitan area. This is a drop from that recorded in the previous 1991 Census, where there were 1,755 Polish-born unemployed persons in Victoria of which 1,576 lived in Melbourne.

From the 1991 Census the unemployment rate of Polish-born persons in Victoria was 17.5%, as compared to 11.6% for the Australian-born population aged over 15 years. The unemployment rate has declined somewhat over the last five years, with recent 1996 Census figures revealing an unemployment rate of 8.5% for Australian-born persons and 12.1% for Polish-born persons in Victoria.

Table 4 presents the labour force and employment status of Australian-born and Polish-born persons in Victoria. The table reveals the higher rate of unemployment among the Polish-born than the Australian-born, for those seeking full-time as well as those seeking part-time employment.

Table 4: Labour force and employment status of Australian-born and Polish-born persons in Victoria.

Labour Force Status/ Employment Status	Australian-born (%)		Polish-born (%)	
Employee	1,264,842	83.4%	7,207	79.0%
Employer	30,377	2.0%	191	2.1%
Own Account Worker	78,816	5.2%	511	5.6%
Contributing Family Worker	14,068	0.9%	102	1.1%
Unemployed looking for full-time work	101,137	6.6%	880	9.6%
Unemployed looking for part-time work	26,986	1.8%	227	2.4%
Total Unemployed	128,123	8.5%	1,107	12.1%
Total Labour Force	1,516,226	100%	9,118	
100%				
Not in the Labour Force	799,713		12,174	
Not Stated	19,121		190	
Not Applicable	833,788		729	
TOTAL	3,168,848		22,211	

Source: ABS 1996 Census

While this Census data provides the most reliable source of unemployment figures, it should be noted that there are anomalies with statistics from other departmental sources which tend to suggest a high incidence of hidden unemployment in the Polish community. While 1,107 Polish-born persons were counted as unemployed in the 1996 Census, recent DEETYA figures (March 1997) show 1,642 Polish-born persons registered as unemployed and awaiting placement (UAP), while according to the DSS figures (June 1996), there were only 944 Polish-born persons in receipt of unemployment allowances.

The labour force participation rate of a group is calculated as the total number of persons in the labour

force as a percentage of the total persons not in the labour force plus those in the labour force. The above 1996 Census data reveals that the participation rate for Polish-born persons (42.8%) is much lower than for Australian-born persons (65.5%). This reflects the ageing of the population, with many post war migrants now elderly and retired.

According to the Census data, which provides the most reliable unemployment figures available for the Polish-born as a birthplace group, the unemployment rate for both Polish-born males and females steadily increased from 1981 to 1991. The rise in unemployment is presented in Figure 1. The 1991 unemployment rate of 17.2% for males and 18% for females was much higher than that in the 1986 Census, where only 7.6% of Polish-born men and 10.4% of Polish-born women were unemployed, or for the previous 1981 Census, where only 4.6% of males and 6.7% of females were unemployed.

More recent 1996 Census figures reveal a decline in unemployment over the last five years for both Australian-born persons (8.5%) and Polish-born persons (12.1%). The unemployment rate for the Polish-born is still nevertheless higher than that for the Australian-born.

Figure 1: Polish-born unemployment rate for males and females for 1981, 1986 and 1991.

Source: 1981, 1986 and 1991 Census data

Unemployment figures according to more recent ABS Labour Force Surveys, tend to be lower, but also reveal that since 1991, unemployment among Polish-born persons has declined. It must be noted, however, that the Labour Force Survey data must be considered with caution when looking at a particular birthplace group, since the small sample size causes a large relative standard error (over 25%) which increases the random fluctuation and decreases the reliability of the data. The figures can only be regarded as an estimate.

According to a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force, Victoria, Survey (November, 1996), while the overall rate for unemployment for persons of non-English-speaking background is 14.2%, the rate of unemployment for the Polish-born in Victoria is only 7.2%. This is only slightly lower than the unemployment rate for Australian-born persons (7.8%) and comparable to the unemployment rate for those from the main English-speaking countries (7.1%). This contrasts sharply to other migrant groups such as Vietnam (30%) and Africa (23%) which tend to boost up the NESB average.

The Labour Force Survey estimates that there are 8,000 Polish-born persons employed full-time in Victoria, 2,400 part-time, and 800 unemployed, with a further 14,900 not in the labour force. Table 5 presents details.

Table 5: Civilian Population aged 15 years and over by labour force status and birthplace, Victoria, November 1996

	BIRTHPLACE			
	AUSTRALIA	POLAND	MAIN ENGL. SP.	NESB
EMPLOYED FULL TIME	1,165,000	8,000	116,000	283,400
EMPLOYED PART TIME	413,700	2,400	45,900	63,600
TOTAL	1,596,600	10,400	162,000	347,100
UNEMPLOYED	134,500	800	12,400	57,300
LABOUR FORCE	1,731,200	11,200	174,300	404,400
NOT IN LABOUR FORCE	814,000	14,900	111,200	332,700
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	7.8%	7.2%	7.1%	14.2%
PARTICIPATION RATE	68%	42.9%	61.1%	54.9%

Source: ABS Labour Force Victoria Survey, November 1996

The participation rate is lower (42.9%) than that for the Australian-born (68%) which tends to reflect the ageing of the Polish population.

Figure 2 compares the fluctuation of the unemployment rate for Polish-born, Australian-born and other migrants over the last few years according to ABS Labour Force Survey data.

Figure 2: Unemployment rates for Polish-born, NESB and Australian-born persons in Victoria

Source: ABS 1991 Census data

The Labour Force Surveys tend to indicate that currently the unemployment rate for Polish-born persons is not substantially higher than for the Australian-born. This data indicates that the Polish-born unemployment rate has been dropping over the last year. It should be noted, however, that the fluctuation of these figures is possibly due to the large standard error when the data is broken down for particular birthplace groups and hence may not be reliable in showing actual trends.

Previous research on migrant unemployment has indicated that recent arrivals are over-represented in unemployment figures. Since there are fewer numbers of new Poles arriving in Australia in recent years it is not surprising to find that the unemployment rate has dropped according to both Census and Labour Force Survey data.

## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Figure 3 shows the distribution of Polish-born unemployed males and females by Statistical Sub-Division in Melbourne, according to the 1991 Census.

FIGURE 3 : Unemployed Polish-born males and females by Statistical Sub-Division, Melbourne, 1991

Source: ABS Census, 1991

This figure reveals that in 1991 the largest concentrations of Polish-born unemployed were in the Central and Southern/ South Eastern inner and outer areas, with a smaller peak in the Western outer area and also a scattering around Eastern middle and outer areas.

There tended to be more males than females unemployed in all areas, particularly the central area.

More recent 1996 Census data regarding the geographic distribution of the Polish-born unemployed is presented in Figure 4. Full details for each Statistical Sub-Division are given in Appendix 1.

Figure 4: Unemployed Polish-born males and females by Statistical Sub-Division, Melbourne, 1996

Source: ABS Census, 1996

While this data is not directly comparable due to the change in Statistical Sub-Divisions, it reveals some change in the pattern of geographic distribution of the Polish-born unemployed. The most notable one is the decline of unemployed Polish-born persons in inner Melbourne. The highest concentrations now are in the southern and S.E. outer areas of Melbourne, followed by the western region with smaller concentrations in inner Melbourne and the Eastern region.

Another interesting change to note is that in areas with the highest concentration of Polish-born unemployed, unemployed females now outnumber unemployed males.

More recent DEETYA statistics for March 1997 also reveal the geographic distribution of unemployed Polish-born persons, although these use different region classifications - according to regional CES offices. Figure 5 shows the recent DEETYA figures for unemployed Polish-born persons awaiting placement. The detailed statistics for each CES region are given in Appendix 2.

Figure 5 : Unemployed Polish-born males and females awaiting placement by CES region

Source: DEETYA, March 1997.

This reveals somewhat greater detail than the Census data. The areas with markedly large numbers of Polish-born unemployed are: Dandenong, Oakleigh and St Kilda, with moderately high numbers also at St Albans, Sunshine, and Springvale. This coincides with the areas which generally have the greatest concentration of overseas-born residents - in Greater Dandenong 53% of the population are born overseas and in Brimbank/ Sunshine 47% are overseas-born migrants.

#### PROFILE OF CHARACTERISTICS

Overall the 1991 Census revealed a greater number of Polish-born unemployed males (876) than females (700). This situation, however, appears to have changed over the last five years. Recent 1996 Census data shows that there is now a slightly larger number of Polish-born females (513) than males (504) unemployed and looking for work.

Figure 6 shows the age breakdown of the Polish-born unemployed in 1991.

FIGURE 6: Age of unemployed Polish-born males and females

Source: ABS 1991 Census

According to the 1991 Census, the greatest number of Polish-born unemployed tended to be in the prime of their working lives. Most frequently they were in the 35 - 44 year age group, followed by 25 - 34 year group.

This data reveals that in 1991 there tended to be more males than females unemployed. This was the case for all age groups except the two youngest age groups (15 - 24 and 25 - 34 years), where the figures were close to equal.

More recent 1996 Census data for unemployed Polish-born males and females by age group is presented in Figure 7. Full details for each Statistical Sub-Division are given in Appendix 1.

Figure 7: Unemployed Polish-born males and females by age group, Melbourne, 1996

Source: ABS 1996 Census

While both Polish-born males and females are still most frequently aged between 35 - 44 years, there has been some shift with the ageing of the population over the last 5 years. The second most frequent category is no longer the 25 - 34 year age group, but is now the 45 - 54 year age group.

With regard to differences between males and females, there now tend to be more unemployed males in both the younger (15 - 24 years) and older (55 - 64 years and 65+ years) age groups, but generally more females unemployed in the middle (35 - 44 years and 45 - 54 years) age ranges.

Figure 8 looks at the period of residence of the Polish-born unemployed at the time of the 1991 Census.

FIGURE 8 : Unemployed Polish-born males and females by period of residence

Source: ABS 1991 Census

In 1991 the largest number of unemployed Poles had been resident between 10 - 20 years, that is, they had arrived between 1976 and 1987.

There were also a large number of unemployed Poles resident less than 10 years. Since the data shows absolute numbers, not percentages, the figure is high considering the low numbers arriving.

Figure 9 shows the period of residence of unemployed Polish-born males and females at the time of the recent 1996 Census. Full details for each Statistical Sub-Division are given in Appendix 1.

Figure 9: Unemployed Polish-born males and females by period of residence, Melbourne, 1996

Source: ABS 1996 Census

While most frequently the Polish-born unemployed have been resident for between 11 - 15 years or more than 15 years, there is still a significant minority who have been resident for less than 10 or less than 5 years.

As of June 1996 there were 994 Polish-born unemployed registered for unemployment benefits in Victoria. This is a substantially lower figure than the number of Polish-born unemployed persons recorded by either the 1996 Census (1,107) or DEETYA (1,642).

Table 6 shows the number of Polish-born persons in receipt of D.S.S. unemployment benefits - Newstart, Jobsearch and Youth Training Allowance by D.S.S. Regional office for Victoria, as at 21 June 1996. Newstart Allowance was for those unemployed persons aged 18+ years. Jobsearch was the allowance paid to those aged 18 years or more whose duration of payment had been for less than 12 months. Youth Training Allowance was for those aged less than 18 years. Since the release of this data, these allowances have subsequently changed. The Jobsearch Allowance has now merged, so there are currently only two types of payments: Newstart Allowance for those aged 18 years or over and Youth Training Allowance for those aged less than 18 years.

Table 6: Polish-born persons in receipt of Newstart, Jobsearch and Youth Training Allowance by D.S.S. Regional Office, Victoria, 21 June 1996.

REGION	JOB SEARCH ALL.	NEWSTART ALL.	YOUTH TRAINING ALL.
Albury	1	0	
Ballarat	3	0	
Bendigo	1	4	1
Boronia	5	3	
Box Hill	12	11	
Broadmeadows	10	13	
Camberwell	8	5	
Caulfield	18	27	1
Cheltenham	25	23	
Corio	7	10	
Cranbourne	6	0	
Dandenong	55	35	1
Darebin NCT	4	3	
Darebin PRE	2	1	

Epping		4		3	
Essendon		5		11	
Fitzroy		11		10	
Footscray		12		17	1
Fountain Gate		11		18	
Frankston		14		14	
Geelong		7		9	
Greensborough	3		2		
Heidelberg		0		2	
Knox		12		13	
Lilydale	4		4		
Melton		1		2	
Moreland BRU site		1		2	
Moreland COB site		4		2	1
Morewell		8		11	
Newmarket		3		7	
Newport		7		6	1
Oakleigh		27		33	
Prahran	10		13		
Richmond		5		8	
Ringwood		10		13	1
Sale		1		0	
Shepparton		0		1	
Springvale		22		25	
St Albans		20		21	1
St Kilda	36		76		
Sth Melbourne		3		6	
Sunshine		17		31	
Wangaratta		1		1	
Werribee		9		15	
TOTAL		425		511	8

Source: Department of Social Security database, Canberra, June 1996

The highest concentrations of Jobsearch recipients were in the South Eastern suburbs of Dandenong (55), St Kilda (36), Oakleigh (27), Cheltenham (25), Springvale (22) with a smaller number at St Albans (20). Polish-born persons in receipt of Newstart were similarly concentrated most frequently in St Kilda (76), Dandenong (35), Oakleigh (33), Caulfield (27), Springvale (25), Cheltenham (23), although with a larger pocket in the western suburbs of Sunshine (31) and St Albans (21). There were only 8 Polish-born persons on youth training allowance and these were dispersed singly among suburbs.

Considering the duration of receipt of unemployment benefits, according to DSS data in November 1989, about 40.2% of the Polish-born unemployed had been in receipt of unemployment benefits for 12 months or more, compared to 34.8% of the Australian-born. By June 1996 this figure has risen to 51.1% of Polish-born unemployed persons in receipt of benefits for more than 12 months.

However, more recent DEET figures for those unemployed and awaiting placement, indicate a much higher incidence of long term unemployment. According to DEET January 1994 statistics, the duration of unemployment broken down by age and sex is given in Table 7.

Table 7: Duration of unemployment of Polish-born persons by sex and age, Victoria, 1994.

DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT	AGE/ SEX				TOTAL		TOTAL		PERSONS
	15-25 yrs M	26-44 yrs F	26-44 yrs M	45+ yrs F	M	F	M	F	
0-3 mths	46	46	93	87	43	39	182	172	354(14.3%)

3-6 mths (9.2%)	18	22	65	65	36	22	119	109	228	(
6-12 mths (13.2%)	34	23	76	100	55	38	165	161	326	
12-24 mths (24.0%)	40	44	174	205	68	63	282	312	594	
24-36 mths (21.2%)	26	18	170	164	93	53	289	235	524	
36+ mths (18.1%)	10	19	140	113	113	52	263	184	447	
TOTAL (100%)	174	172	718	734	408	267	1,300	1,173	2,473	

Source: DEET Jobseeker Data, January 1994.

The table reveals that 63.3% of the Polish unemployed have been long term unemployed for more than a year. There is little difference in this regard between males (64%) and females (62%). A lesser percentage of the younger 15 to 25 years age group were long term unemployed over 12 months (males 43.7%, females 47.1%), while for the older age group over 45 years, 67.2% of males and 63% of females were long term unemployed over 12 months. For those in their prime working years, aged 26 to 44 years, 67.4% of males and 65.7% of females were long term unemployed over 12 months. This contrasts to the general Australian population where in March 1993 approximately 37.5% of the unemployed were long term unemployed over 12 months.

Unemployed persons were most frequently in the prime of their working lives, with 55% of males and 63% of unemployed females being between the ages of 26 to 44 years.

The divisional location by duration of unemployment is given in Table 8. The largest concentration of the unemployed, confirming previous figures, was in the South Eastern parts of Melbourne. This is consistent with the 1991 Census figures. In all of the regions the duration of unemployment followed the same pattern as that discussed above, with the majority of the Polish-born unemployed (over 60%) being unemployed for more than 12 months.

Table 8: Polish-born unemployed by duration of unemployment and divisional location.

DURATION OF UNEMPL TOTAL LOCATION (100%)	0-12 mths	12-24 mths	24-36mths	36+mths
Country	9 (39.1%)	5 (21.7%)	4 (17.4%)	5 (21.7%)
23				
North East	172 (35%)	110 (22.4%)	109 (22.2%)	100 (20.4%)
491				
South Eastern	458 (36.3%)	302 (23.9%)	264 (20.9%)	238 (18.9%)
1,262				
Western	269 (38.6%)	177 (25.4%)	147 (21.1%)	104 (14.9%)
697				

Source, DEET Jobseeker data, January 1994

Table 9 shows occupational groups by period of unemployment for Polish-born unemployed persons. The greatest number of jobseekers were looking for basic manual work, followed by clerical/sales and science and technology. In all of the occupational categories, the majority (over 60%) had been unemployed for more than 12 months, except for the Managerial category, where, although job seekers were fewer, they appeared to be unemployed for a shorter time.

Table 9: Occupational groups by period of unemployment for Polish-born unemployed persons.

DURATION OF UNEMPL OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	0-12 mths	12-24 mths	24+ mths	TOTAL
Managerial & Administration	19	6	8	33
Science and Technology	103	157	376	
Art, Literature & Sport	51	43	59	153
Clerical & Sales	143	80	179	402
Primary Production	121	64	115	300
Manufacturing & Construction	118	61	77	256
Transport & Materials	64	51	84	199
Basic Manual Workers	218	128	304	650
NEC	3	0	0	3
TOTAL	853	536	983	2,372

Source: DEET database, Victoria, March 1994.

Table 10 shows unemployed placements of Polish-born clients in Victoria for the period July 1993 to January 1994 by age group and sex. Males aged 26 to 40 years were most frequently placed, followed by females in the same age group.

Table 10: Unemployed placements of Polish clients in Victoria, July 1993 to January 1994 by age group and sex.

AGE, SEX	Number placed - July 1993 to January 1994
15-19 yrs	
M	6
F	5
T	11
20-21 yrs	
M	2
F	5
T	7
22-25 yrs	
M	12
F	6
T	18
26 - 40 yrs	
M	33
F	18
T	51
41-44 yrs	
M	12
F	9
T	21
45+ yrs	
M	10
F	3
T	13
TOTAL	
M	75
F	46
T	121

Source: DEET database, 1994.

Results from several interesting surveys undertaken by ABS of the job search experience of unemployed persons (July 1996) and successful and unsuccessful job search experience (July 1996) indicate that while registering with the CES was the most common active step taken to find work (74% of

all respondents), only 8% of successful job seekers attained their job through the CES!

For those who had been out of work the method of job attainment most commonly reported was being notified by friends, relatives or company contacts that a job was available (20%); employer approaching jobseeker (18%); contacting likely employers (18%); and newspapers (14%). The survey found that respondents reporting "language difficulties" as the most common main difficulty in finding work had the longest average duration of unemployment for both males (104 weeks) and females (109 weeks).

## **PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS**

Government sponsored labour market programs are of obvious relevance to NESB migrants, given their over-representation among the unemployed and their concentration in vulnerable industries.

Kirby (1985) classified programs into those that assist with job placement, including wage subsidy programs; those aimed at improving skills and vocational education; employment promotion programs and programs for people with special disadvantages.

In 1992 DEET removed NESB immigrants from the "disadvantaged" category, so that they no longer had priority access to labour market programs or to targeted programs, although this could vary according to the decisions of Regional Managers.

Moss (1993) outlined the three important changes to policy and programs since DEET was established in 1987: the devolution of management to area and regional level; restructuring to offer services to particular groups of clients; and the introduction of Newstart which included a compulsory interview with long term unemployed clients concerning ways to improve their job prospects.

Past research (AIMA, 1986) has generally found low participation rates in general employment programs by migrants of non-English-speaking background. Their participation rate is generally lower than that of either the Australian-born or migrants of English-speaking background.

Jones and McAllister (1991) suggested that NESB immigrants were under-represented in comparison to other placements for the long-term unemployed in Jobstart and Jobtrain, and as a proportion of immigrant placements in the long-term component of Skillshare NESB women seem particularly under-represented in programs.

Table 11 summarises DEET statistics for the number of Polish-born clients on employment programs in Victoria in April 1994. It should be noted that these programs were those operating in 1994, but some of these have been subsequently changed.

Table 11: Number of Polish-born clients on employment programs, Victoria, April 1994

PROGRAM	NUMBER
Job Club	20
Job Train	65
Special Intervention	328
Job Start	23
Contracted Placement	18
Skillshare	12
NEIS Formal Training	3
Job Skills	1
Industry based (LAPS)	48
Accredited courses	5
Other Activity	52
TOTAL	577

Source: DEET database, Victoria, April 1994.

The major placement for Polish clients was into the Special Intervention Program (328), followed by Jobtrain (65) and Industry Based LAPS (48).

Currently, the government employment programs available for jobseekers include:

- Job Clubs
- Jobtrain
- Apprenticeships
- NEIS Formal Training
- Jobskills
- National Training Wage
- New Work Opportunities

It should be noted that while these programs are current at the time of this report, but they could again be subject to subsequent change.

Recent DEETYA figures (March 1997) reveal a similar pattern to studies of low labour market program participation found in the past. Table 12 shows participation in current employment programs for Australian-born, English-speaking background migrants, Polish-born and other NESB migrants (excluding Poland).

TABLE 12: Participation in Employment Programs

PROGRAM TOTAL		Australian born	ESB	Polish-born	Other (excl. Poland)	NESB
JOB CLUBS	Males	84	7	0	53	144
	Females	83	8	0	45	136
JOB TRAIN	Males	4	4	0	30	38
	Females	4	4	1	43	52
APPRENTICE-SHIPS	Males	601	21	0	50	672
	Females	108	7	0	8	123
NEIS FORMAL TR.	Males	113	20	1	55	189
	Females	76	8	0	17	101
JOB SKILLS	Males	22	3	0	4	29
	Females	43	0	0	7	50
NATIONAL TR. WAGE	Males	2,492	114	11	514	3,131
	Females	2,258	96	6	215	2,575
NEW WORK OPPS.	Males	37	1	1	16	55
	Females	27	0	1	5	33
TOTAL PROGRAMS	MALES	3,353	170	13	722	4,258
	FEMALES	2,599	123	8	340	3,070

TOTAL JOB	Males	85,350	9,547	805	42,504
138,206					
SEEKERS	Females	59,348	5,747	837	33,268
99,200					
TOTAL PROGRAM	Males	3.9%	1.8%	1.6%	1.7%
	Females	4.4%	2.1%	1.0%	1.0%
PARTICIPATION RATE*		3.1%			3.1%

Source: DEETYA, March 1997

\*The participation rates are calculated as the total number on programs as a percentage of the total of each group of job seekers. Figures have been rounded to one decimal place.

The overall participation rate of Polish-born unemployed persons in programs is low (1.6% for males and 1% for females). This is much lower than the Australian-born participation rates (3.9% for males and 4.4% for females). Those Polish-born, particularly males, who did participate in training programs took part most frequently in the National Training Wage Program.

There is considerable evidence that while unemployed NESB immigrants know about DSS and CES, they are not aware of the range of available training and work placement programs. The main reason is lack of information through appropriate media, inadequate information, discrimination in the informal culture of communication in CES, lack of knowledge that programs are available to the unemployed even if they do not qualify for a social security benefit, and reliance on ethnic media, friends, neighbours and informal networks for knowledge of work and training opportunities (Iredale and D'Arcy, 1992; Morrissey et al 1992; HREOC, 1993). Women in particular are excluded from Labour Market Programs for these reasons (Alcorso and Harrison, 1993).

There are also numerous other community programs operating, such as the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBEP programs which operate from community organisations. Two of these, based in the western suburbs, while having a broad focus, also target unemployed NESB clients. These are the Youth Employment Service (YES) and Western Older Workers (WOW).

## **STUDIES OF THE POLISH UNEMPLOYED**

### **DROZD STUDY - UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE WESTERN SUBURBS, 1993**

A study was undertaken by Australian-Polish Community Services Inc. in collaboration with DEET of Polish unemployed in the western suburbs in October 1993. A forum was organised, to which all of the 450 unemployed Polish-born persons in the western suburbs were invited through letters (in Polish) sent by DEET. Just over 100 persons attended and of these, 92 completed self-administered questionnaires (in Polish). The aim was to collect information to provide a profile of unemployed Poles in the area. Considering the 25% response rate, results need to be interpreted with caution, since it is not known whether the sample is representative. The tables of results from this survey are given in Appendix 3.

The sample consisted of 52 men and 40 women. Most were aged between 30 - 40 years (36), 41-50 years (23) or 21 - 30 years ( 15). This is a similar pattern to that shown in DEETYA and ABS statistics.

Respondents were from the western suburbs of Melbourne, mostly from Sunshine (32) and St Albans (16), with fewer from Footscray (11), Werribee/ Hoppers Crossing (10), Melton (5), Deer Park (4), and a few from other surrounding suburbs.

Many (37) came to Australia as Independent migrants, or through Family Reunion (30), while some came as Refugees/ Humanitarian (19).

A large number (39) had been resident in Australia for less than 3 years. There was also a peak of persons who had been resident between 10-15 years (28), which reflects the second wave of Polish migrants who arrived between 1980-84. A further 11 had been resident between 5-10 years, while 9 were long time residents over 20 years, who had been retrenched due to labour market restructuring.

Mostly respondents claimed to have a medium level of English language ability (39) or good ability (23), while others thought their English was poor (26) or very poor (4). More than half (47) were currently undertaking English language classes.

The length of time unemployed ranged from 1 to 120 months. While only 23 had been unemployed for less than one year, the majority were long term unemployed, with 26 having been unemployed between 1-2 years, 26 having been unemployed 2 - 3 years, and another 15 who had been unemployed over 3 years. Females more frequently than males were long term unemployed, with more than half being unemployed for over 2 years.

Of the sample, 29 had trade qualifications, 38 had secondary and technical qualifications, and 14 had completed further studies. Only 9 had primary schooling only, it being likely that these were the older, longer resident migrants from the post-war wave.

Of the sample 31 respondents had their overseas qualifications recognised, while 36 did not and 25 did not respond to the question. Of those who had their qualifications recognised, 12 (out of the total 14) had their tertiary qualifications recognised, 10 (out of the total 38) had their secondary qualifications recognised, and 8 (out of the total 29 ) had their trade qualifications recognised.

With regard to their work histories in Poland and Australia, while respondents claimed to have had numerous professional, technical and skilled trade positions in Poland, most of the employment they had

had to date in Australia tended to be in unskilled jobs such as labouring, process work and machine operators.

There were 12 out of the 43 females in the sample who had undertaken a course through the CES, and 16 of the 49 males had done so.

Knowledge of Labour Market Training Programs was limited. Only 23 out of the total 92 respondents had heard of Job Club; 22 had heard of Skillshare; 23 had heard of Job Train; and 27 had heard of Job Skills. The best known program was Job Start, which 55 out of the total 92 had heard of. Other programs were even less well known. Only 10 had heard of the Special Intervention Program; 6 had heard of the Interlink Program. Awareness of other employment services was also very limited. Only 10 respondents had heard of the Professional Employment Service (PES); 4 had heard of NEIS; and 6 had heard of Small Business Victoria.

The survey also examined details of unemployed Poles' job hunting processes. Only 27 respondents had been invited for job interviews after submitting job applications. Most often these were males (18) while only 9 females had ever been invited back for a job interview. No Polish females had had more than 2 job interviews in the last 12 months. The number of job interviews obtained by males also tended to be low, mostly two or less (16), while 3 persons had between 3-5 interviews, 4 had between 6 - 10, and 2 claimed to have had more than 10 job interviews.

Over a third of respondents (29) experienced difficulties in writing their resumes, and even more (32) had difficulties in writing job applications.

The questionnaire asked participants about their being able to access computer or typewriter facilities in order to prepare their resumes and job applications. Just over half (48) responded that they did have easy access, while a significant number (40) did not.

The Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) is the main register of job vacancies. Mostly respondents checked for jobs at the CES once a fortnight (29) or once a week (28), with fewer checking jobs 2-3 times a week (19) or every day (5).

With regard to job hunting methods, the most frequent methods used by both males and females to find employment were through personal contacts/ friends (78 respondents), the Age newspaper (73), and the CES (69). Fewer used cold canvassing (37). This method of job seeking was used more by males (27) than females (10).

While most unemployed Polish respondents use the Polish media, their use tended not to be regular. Only 30 read the Polish Weekly regularly, although another 46 claimed to read it sometimes, while 15 almost never or never read it. Similarly 30 regularly listened to radio 3EA, while 45 sometimes listened and 15 never or almost never listened. With 3ZZZ, again 31 listened regularly, while 45 listened sometimes and 12 never or almost never did. Far fewer respondents listened to 3RIM regularly (only 9) or sometimes (18), while most never or almost never listened to 3RIM (25).

Drozd concluded that unemployed migrants are not adequately informed about labour market training programs provided by DEET and other relevant service providers. This lack of crucial information is likely to result in them not being able to fully access available services and programs aimed to assist unemployed persons. Even if they had the necessary knowledge, they would still need to compete with other unemployed persons whose English language competency might be higher than theirs.

Drozd identified the main factors preventing Polish unemployed migrants from obtaining employment as : English language difficulties, lack of Australian work experience, and lack of knowledge of effective job hunting techniques. Drozd also cited anecdotal evidence regarding why a number of unemployed Poles are discouraged from job seeking. The main reasons for not looking for work include their belief that there were no jobs, that their English was not good enough, and that their chances of finding employment were low. Also, for some in a family situation, it was considered not worthwhile for one partner to work in a low paid job, considering the amount that would be lost in benefits and concessions.

## OTHER STUDIES - GALLIPOLI (1991) AND CZAPLINSKI (1991)

Two other small scale studies, cited in Ribarow (1993), have been carried out by the Migrant Resource Centre St Albans in 1991, which included recently arrived Polish-born respondents.

Angela Gallipoli (1991) undertook an action research project and distributed self administered questionnaires to new settlers in Sunshine and Keilor. Of the 23 Polish respondents, about half had migrated less than 3 years ago and the rest had been resident for mostly less than 12 years.

Despite 17% having completed tertiary education and 26% obtaining qualifications in technical/ trades occupations, only half of the sample had been able to get employment in the occupation for which they had trained. Overall half of the university and technical graduates had not been able to get their qualifications fully recognised in Australia.

Of the 23 respondents in the sample, 10 were unemployed - 5 had been unemployed for less than 6 months, 3 between 6-12 months, and the other 2 between 1-2 years. The main barriers to employment were identified as no vacancies and also language problems.

Although most had already attended English classes, a substantial proportion reported a need for further English training, some expressing strong opinions that English classes should be of a higher standard.

Another small study was carried out by Barbara Czaplinski (1991). Interviews were conducted with 20 Polish households to discuss their settlement experiences. Half of the sample had been resident for less than 5 years and most of the remainder had been resident between 5-10 years.

About half of the respondents had problems with understanding, speaking and reading English. Nearly two thirds would not be able to write in English.

About two thirds said they had professional qualifications, but only 3 of these were employed in a professional capacity in Australia. The most common types of current employment was in factory work (over a third), although only 6% had this type of work in Poland. Whereas 29% had trades qualifications from Poland, only 10% were employed in trades. One third of respondents were currently unemployed.

## **ETHNO-SPECIFIC SERVICES: POLISH RE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

### OVERVIEW

The Victorian Government, through the Department of State Development runs a Community Business Employment Program (CBEP). This funds 60 projects located across the state to screen and refer jobseekers and link them with potential employers. There are numerous ethno-specific Projects for ethnic groups e.g. Greek, Indo-Chinese, Croatian, Turkish. The Polish Re-Employment Program (PRP) is one of these, with offices located in the city (at the Polish Community Council of Victoria) and in Footscray (at the Australian-Polish Community Services Inc.).

This service provides free employment assistance to members of the Polish community. The program seeks to utilise local knowledge and networks to assist unemployed Poles with vocational counselling, advice and information, preparation of resumes and job application letters, interview preparation, job matching or employer canvassing, job placement and post-placement support.

It is able to provide employers with assistance with recruitment at no cost and conducts pre-selection interviews and initial reference checks. The service provides candidates with a range of skills and aims for the best possible outcome for both employer and jobseeker.

The Polish Re-Employment Program has been operation since 1994, initially funded as two separate projects, but now administered jointly under a single grant. The offices operate independently; the city office servicing mostly the South East of Melbourne and the Footscray office servicing mostly the North and West.

According to qualitative information obtained from interviewing Employment Workers, staff attempt to help clients through vocational counselling. Some of this involves breaking through preconceived mind sets and focusing on what is realistic. If the person is depressed, they need counselling in order to become more positive and improve their motivation for job seeking. Motivating clients and developing a positive attitude are both regarded as important aspects of the counselling process.

The staff assist clients with preparing or modifying their resume and also with their job application letters.

Many clients, perhaps a third, are encouraged to contact the Overseas Qualifications Unit to see whether their qualifications can be recognised in Australia. The process is made easier by one of the Unit's Polish staff coming to the Footscray MRC once a fortnight to see those with queries regarding their overseas qualifications. Being able to easily access a Polish worker in that position is considered to be extremely helpful.

Jobseekers that come to the program have usually exhausted their own networks. Some need education regarding how to look for a job and staff advise them about the Age, local press, cold canvassing and broader networking. The clients are generally followed up after 3 months to see how they are getting on and they are encouraged to ring back if they have any problems. Occasionally there are industrial relations issues, e.g. harassment. In some cases if the job was not exactly what a client wanted, once in the workforce they are more able to move on to other employment.

The clients presenting are mixed. Some are young, in their early 20's who have finished their education in Australia, have good English but few skills. Some are long term residents, in their 30's who have lost

their job and want to find another. Some are women with families who have children who wish to re-enter the workforce. A few are older workers over 40. Some clients are new arrivals who migrated under the point system or concessional family. These tend to have good qualifications, but poor English language skills. Despite their 510 hours of post arrival English language tuition, if their language ability is poor, it is difficult for staff to help them in a meaningful way. Their own networks are important. They may be referred to other English courses (e.g. at APCS) but their attitude is usually that they want a job, not to be referred to a course. Even if they find a job, staff encourage them to pursue their English and emphasise that they will continue to experience problems without good English language ability.

For women, a reluctance to put their children into child care is often a problem. Many feel uncomfortable with organised childcare and prefer a private babysitter, believing it is better for the child. Some need to upgrade their skills in order to re-enter the workforce e.g. typists who need to improve their computer skills.

The client's first initial visit generally takes between 1-2 hours, during which an agreement is made on a work entry plan. From there it depends on each individual case. Some may be clear on what was discussed in just one session, while others may need ongoing counselling.

If jobs are available the worker contacts clients by phone and arranges for them to see the employer. Employers are encouraged to ring the office if they have positions vacant. PRP advertises in the Polish press, at Polish clubs and also distributes leaflets to employers to inform them of the service. Many of the employers who contact the office are Polish, or Polish managers who work within bigger organisations. Staff may also seek out vacancies for their clients through cold canvassing employers and searching the press.

There are no official links between PRP and the CES and they do not receive referrals, although staff encourage their clients to also go to the CES. PRP is a complementary service. It also picks up the spouses of those who work. The PRP does not play a role in placing people on training programs - this is done primarily through the CES. Clients come specifically to find work. The Program does have links with Polish social workers. Often APCS may refer a client who is seeking employment, or if a PRP client has other problems, they may be referred to the Social Worker.

With regard to underemployment, staff believed that most of their clients placed were underemployed. Some Poles had extremely high overseas qualifications, but even with official recognition of these, they were not able to secure positions for which they were qualified and experienced.

One example was a client, a very highly qualified metallurgist, who had been long term unemployed and was unable to secure even a low level position in the male dominated field of Engineering, but could only find work as a casual domestic cleaner, despite her English being good and her qualifications officially recognised and having completed further studies in Australia. Often those with good qualifications were underpaid and taken advantage of when they did find jobs in their related field. Many Poles with secondary and trades qualifications ended up in unskilled work in factories, where it was difficult to advance.

Despite official recognition of overseas qualifications there were indications that employers had little understanding of people's overseas employment background. This ignorance, together with discrimination against the overseas-born were significant barriers to employment. Considering the waste of talent and the human resources that the overseas-born bring with them, staff believed that employers need to be educated to have a more open mind, to use these people for maximum benefit. The standard of education in Poland is extremely high and many qualified Poles come to Australia with specific skills which are being underutilised and wasted. It was considered that there may be a misbelief among employers as to what people had done in Poland.

Polish employers are often found to be willing to employ the Polish-born, and often other migrant employers also, as they recognised this potential. Once the Polish-born can get a job and obtain local experience, in several years they could often move on.

Staff believed that the characteristics of those who were successful in finding work were mostly personal

motivation and their own attitude. Those who were very focused on finding a job due to economic pressures and those with self confidence and pride tended to do well. If their attitudes were negative, even people with Doctorate Degrees (PHDs) found it difficult to find work. Hence a large part of staff counselling focused on encouraging and motivating people.

The service was considered better able to meet the needs of the Polish unemployed than mainstream services because of the cultural understanding of how Poles think and their expectations, as well as the obvious advantage of being able to speak to someone in their own language.

#### STATISTICAL PROFILE OF POLISH RE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM AND CBEP CLIENTS

The Department of State Development collects statistics on clients making use of CBE programs. Table 13 presents the numbers of Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE Programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by gender.

Table 13: Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by gender.

1995/96						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL	
MALES 105	119	182	100	506		
FEMALES	140	89	209	164	602	
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1,108	
1996/97						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP		Other CBE	TOTAL	
MALES 80	163		56	299		
FEMALES	123	209		120	452	
TOTAL	203	372		176	751	

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

Numbers of Polish-born clients registered at the Footscray office and other CBE programs appear to have declined slightly, while there has been an increase in numbers using the Melbourne office, particularly Polish-born unemployed females.

Table 14 presents a breakdown of Polish registrants by age group at each of the locations.

Table 14: Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by age group.

1995/96						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL	
18 - 24 YRS	34	15	46	19	114	
25 - 39 YRS	113	109	173	86	481	
40 + YRS	92	83	167	159	501	
N.S.	6	1	5	0	12	
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1108	
1996/97						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP		Other CBE	TOTAL	
18 - 24 YRS	20	36		14	70	
25 - 39 YRS	95	167		56	318	
40 + YRS	86	169		106	361	
N.S.	2	0		0	2	
TOTAL	203	372		176	751	

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

As can be seen from the table, the greatest majority of registrants in both Footscray and Melbourne in 1995/96 were aged 25 to 39 years, while Oakleigh and other CBE projects dealt with a large number of unemployed Poles aged over 40 years. During 1996/7, however, there has been an increase in the number of older Poles making use of the Melbourne office. This probably indicated picking up some of those who may previously have gone to the Oakleigh office.

Table 15 presents Polish-born registrants by the duration of unemployment (months) at registration with CBEP.

Table 15: Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by duration of unemployment (months) at registration with CBE.

1995/96	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL
0 - 3 MTHS	83	66	123	60	332
4 - 8 MTHS	30	33	47	49	159
9 - 12 MTHS	18	17	32	20	87
13 -18 MTHS	13	11	25	18	67
19 - 24 MTHS	15	12	21	14	62
25 - 36 MTHS	23	24	36	30	113
37+ MTHS	44	42	87	58	231
N.S.	19	3	20	15	57
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1108

1996/97	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Other CBE	TOTAL
0 - 3 MTHS	95	159	52	306
4 - 8 MTHS	23	40	37	100
9 - 12 MTHS	14	27	17	58
13 - 18 MTHS	12	20	12	44
19 - 24 MTHS	14	21	11	46
25 - 36 MTHS	15	35	12	62
37+ MTHS	27	69	32	128
N.S.	3	1	3	7
TOTAL	203	372	176	751

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

As can be seen from this table, the tendency appears to be for the majority of clients to register early on in their unemployment, mostly in their first 3 months, or after having been unemployed for 4 to 8 months.

There is also, however, a large number of long term unemployed making use of the Project after having been unemployed for over 2 or 3 years.

Table 16 presents statistics for Polish-born registrants by year of arrival in Australia.

Table 16: Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by year of arrival in Australia.

1995/96	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL
Prior to 1960	0	2	7	31	40
1960 - 69	4	2	7	25	38
1970 - 79	12	9	22	18	61
1980 - 89	123	92	191	105	511
1990 - 96	105	103	162	74	444
N.S.	1	0	2	11	14
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1,108

1996/97				
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Other CBE	TOTAL
Prior to 1960	0	8	18	26
1960 - 69	3	5	18	27
1970 - 79	9	11	18	35
1980 - 89	100	186	68	359
1990 - 97	91	158	44	293
N.S.	0	3	8	11
TOTAL	203	372	176	751

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

These statistics reveal that the great majority of Polish-born clients making use of the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs are relatively recent arrivals who migrated to Australia during the 1980's and 1990's. These accounted for 86% of registrants during 1995/96 and 87% of registrants during 1996/ 97.

Table 17 summarises Polish registrants by their first language spoken at home.

Table 17: Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by first language spoken at home

1995/96						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL	
ENGLISH	3	1	0	44	48	
POLISH	242	207	390	215	1,054	
OTHER 0	0	1	5	6		
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1,108	

1996/97						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Other CBE	TOTAL		
ENGLISH	3	0	29	32		
POLISH	200	371	143	714		
OTHER 0	1	4	5			
TOTAL	203	372	176	751		

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

The majority (95%) of Polish-born registrants with the program spoke Polish as their first language at home. A smaller number spoke English, with several speaking another language as their first language at home.

Almost all of those registering with the Polish Re-Employment Program spoke Polish as their first language at home, while those Polish-born unemployed who did speak English or another language at home registered mainly with other CBEP programs.

Table 18 provides a summary of Polish registrants by level of education.

Table 18: Polish-born clients registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 by level of education

1995/96						
	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL	
Primary 1	1	1	1	4		
Secondary	15	3	37	33	88	
VCE (or equiv)	48	23	58	128	256	
Trade Qualif	53	57	43	153	306	

Certif/ Diploma	39	67	44	45	195
Degree	50	57	66	50	223
N.S.	1	0	1	3	5
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1,108

Note: Accurate 1996/97 figures are not available.

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

Mostly the Polish-born unemployed registered with the employment programs had trade qualifications (28%), VCE (23%), Degrees (20%), or certificates or diplomas (18%). Only 8% had secondary and less than 1% had only primary school as their highest level of education.

There was some variability, however between the different programs. Those attending the Polish Re-Employment Program tended to more frequently have degrees, certificates, diplomas and trade qualifications, while those attending other CBE programs most frequently had only VCE or trade qualifications.

A breakdown of Polish registrants and their placement status is presented in Table 19. Those placed were placed across a range of different industries.

Table 19: Polish clients-born registered with the Polish Re-Employment Program and other CBE programs for 1995/96 and 1996/97 and their placement status.

1995/96

	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Oakleigh PRP	Other CBE	TOTAL
Placed/ Claimed	91 (37%)	85 (41%)	116 (30%)	91 (34%)	383 (35%)
Placed/ Unclaimed	7	0	1	3	11
Unplaced	147	123	274	170	714
TOTAL	245	208	391	264	1,108

1996/97

	Footscray PRP	MelbournePRP	Other CBE	TOTAL
Placed/Claimed	58 (29%)	94 (25%)	27 (15%)	179 (24%)
Placed/ Unclaimed	1	6	4	11
Unplaced	144	272	145	561
TOTAL	203	372	176	751

Source: Department of State Development, Employment Branch Data Base, 1997

It appears that the programs were more successful in 1995/96, when overall over a third (35%) of Polish-born registrants with the Re-Employment Program were placed. This level of success was evident across each of the programs, and was particularly high at the Melbourne PRP, where 41% of registrants were successfully placed.

The success rate appears to have declined somewhat during 1996/97, with overall only 24% of registrants being successfully placed during that year. Moreover, there was some difference evident between programs, with the highest success rate at Footscray (29%) and the lowest placement of Polish-born registrants at other CBE programs (15%).

## COMPARISON OF CENSUS AND CLIENT PROFILES

Over the last yearly period (1996/97) the Polish Re-Employment Program dealt with a total of 575 clients. This indicates that the program is reaching a significant proportion (about a third) of the total Polish-born unemployed in Melbourne.

The majority of clients seen were in the 25 to 39 year age group. This is consistent with Census data which indicates that this is the most frequent age range for Polish unemployed persons. Most clients using PRP were from the post-Solidarity wave of Polish migration, with 87% having arrived in Australia after 1980. Again, this is consistent with Census data. Clients seeking help mostly had trades qualifications, degrees, certificates or diplomas, again concurring with other figures which indicate a generally high level of education among unemployed Poles.

With regard to length of unemployment, as well as dealing with a large number of long term unemployed some of who had been unemployed for over 2 or 3 years, PRP also deals with many during their initial unemployment stage, where they have been unemployed for only 0 - 3 or 4 - 8 months. This indicates useful early intervention which may assist some Polish-born clients from becoming long term unemployed.

During 1995/96, a total of 292 clients were placed through PRP and during 1996/97 a further 152 were successfully placed. This indicates a high success rate of 35% in 1995/96 and 24% in 1996/97. The large number of clients seen and the successful placement rates are both indications of the effectiveness of the program.

## DISCUSSION

While a lot of research has been undertaken documenting the disadvantageous labour force position of immigrants from NESB backgrounds, relatively few detailed studies have desegregated the information by specific birthplace groups.

Piecing together available information, this report reveals that while the overall unemployment figure for the total Polish-born is higher than for the general Australian population, there are particular patterns of unemployment and problems in the workforce particular to this birthplace group.

### PROFILE OF THE UNEMPLOYED

Findings in this report reveal that:

- There is a low workforce participation rate due to the ageing of the Polish population, with many of the first wave now past retirement age.

- The Polish unemployed tend to be from the "new wave" of Polish immigrants who arrived during the 1980's and tend to be relatively highly skilled and qualified trades/ professionals, mostly in the prime of their working lives (35 - 44 years) unlike the traditional "factory fodder" stereotype of the old wave and other NESB immigrant groups.

- The Polish-born unemployed tend to be concentrated in pockets around Melbourne, particularly in areas which traditionally have high overseas-born populations, such as Oakleigh/ Springvale and Brimbank/Sunshine. Service providers such as the Polish Re-Employment Program need to assess their locations according to need and ease of accessibility for clients.

- The unemployment rate for Polish-born steadily increased between 1981 and 1991, with 17% unemployed at the time of the 1991 Census. This figure has dropped to 12.1% at the time of the 1996 Census.

- Of those Polish-born who are unemployed, over 60% are long term unemployed over 12 months.

- Unemployment for recent arrivals is extremely high, with 40% still unemployed after their first year in Australia.

- Recency of arrival and English language difficulties present immediate problems which hinder their access to the job market.

- Basic post arrival English is insufficient for re-entry into professional occupations.

- Despite the initial difficulties of lengthy unemployment and gaining entry into the Australian workforce, evidence suggests that the new wave of Polish migrants tend to fare reasonably well over a period of time.

- Despite having qualifications officially recognised, underemployment is a significant problem with employers reluctant to accept overseas qualifications and experience. Due to financial pressures and insufficient fluency in English, Polish professionals tend to accept jobs not commensurate with their

qualifications and skills. Women in particular, despite qualifications, often remain concentrated in unskilled occupations. There is some evidence to suggest that Polish access to professional occupations is increasing, although very slowly.

- There is some evidence of hidden unemployment in the Polish community, although due to the discrepancy of departmental figures, this is difficult to measure exactly.

- Training program participation continues to be low, as it is for most NESB groups. It appears that relatively few persons find their jobs through CES, but mostly through contact networks or directly through employers.

- Ethno-specific services such as CBEP provide a valuable service which fills the gap left by mainstream services, particularly in providing individual counselling and motivation for Polish-born clients. Their effectiveness is evidenced by the large number of clients seen and a high successful placement rate.

## ISSUES - BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

As can be seen, the current picture of unemployment in the Polish community is markedly different from that which applied to the post-war wave of Polish immigrants or that of other ethnic groups. Unlike the traditional picture of unskilled migrants clustered in manufacturing industries, recent Polish immigrants tend to be well qualified and highly skilled with a lot of potential to offer their new host country. Despite this, however, they still experience significant barriers to employment which disadvantage them in the labour market and lead to high and long term unemployment, as well as underemployment.

A number of issues have been identified as problems and significant barriers which hinder Polish-born migrants in accessing suitable employment in Australia:

### REGENCY OF ARRIVAL

As has been repeatedly found in numerous previous studies, unemployment is most directly linked to recency of arrival and poor English language ability. The disruption during the resettlement process impacts directly on employment prospects as new arrivals must establish themselves in a new country, rebuild their networks and contacts, establish new information sources and familiarise themselves with new culture, services and bureaucratic operations. There are numerous services and provisions in place attempting to assist with the resettlement process: on-arrival English language classes, bilingual information, bilingual workers and various ethno-specific services designed to assist new migrants with the settlement process. Despite this, unemployment continues to be remarkably high for new arrivals, with 40% of Polish new arrivals still being unemployed one year later.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

Without a high proficiency in English, despite the Government's provision of 510 hours of post arrival English classes, new immigrants are disadvantaged in every respect until they gain some reasonable mastery of the language and familiarity with the new systems operating around them. Feedback received indicates that the 510 hours of English is not sufficient to achieve the desired proficiency to help a person cope in their new country. Particularly for a professional or skilled trades person, basic English is insufficient to enable re-entry into their field of employment.

### RECOGNITION OF OVERSEAS QUALIFICATIONS

Evidence suggests that Australia has come a long way in recent years with regard to recognition of tertiary overseas qualifications and enabling easier access for immigrants to do this. While there is still room of improvement, particularly with regard to recognition of technical and trade skills, the problem in the Polish community appears to be not so much the official recognition of their qualifications on paper, but with employer attitudes in accepting them. The recognition of overseas qualifications is useless without corresponding acceptance of these qualifications in the working world.

### EMPLOYER ATTITUDES

Employer attitudes generally have been identified as a major problem. While it may not necessarily be a

case of outright discrimination, employers tend to prefer the safely familiar. Preference for local qualifications and experiences severely disadvantages Polish migrants from obtaining positions for which they are well qualified and experienced. Lack of local experience and local references are major obstacles. Employers need to be given some assistance in assessing and checking overseas experience and references. They also need to be educated about the untapped potential of well qualified migrants whose skills are being overlooked. It is not only a problem for the unemployed, but a great pity for employers not to be able to make use of this large reservoir of unused expertise which could be of great advantage to them.

#### UNDEREMPLOYMENT

While eventually most Polish-born immigrants do find some sort of employment, underemployment remains a huge problem. Due to lack of acceptance, as described above, Polish immigrants are often unable to secure suitable employment, but settle for a much lesser job and are often disadvantaged in applying for training or promotions. Consequently much of their skills, experience and potential is wasted.

#### HIDDEN UNEMPLOYMENT

There is evidence to suggest that there may be some problem of hidden unemployment, with not all unemployed Polish-born persons in receipt of unemployment benefits nor officially counted an unemployed. Spouses who may not be eligible for an allowance could also be job seekers, as well as people who might be in temporary employment, or those undertaking training courses. While the exact extent of hidden unemployment is difficult to measure, anomalies between different departmental figures tend to give some indication. While the 1996 Census officially counts 1,017 Polish-born unemployed persons in Melbourne, March 1997 DEETYA data registers 1,642 Polish-born persons as unemployed awaiting placement, although the number of Polish-born unemployed persons in receipt of social security allowances in Victoria is only 944.

#### GENDER

With regard to gender issues, it appears that women face particular disadvantages in the workforce although this does not always show up as unemployment, but may be hidden unemployment if they drop out of labour force participation. Those who do find work appear to often be underemployed in unskilled occupations not commensurate with their qualifications and skills. Particular issues appear to include child care commitments and the lack of availability of part-time work and job flexibility to incorporate work and family responsibilities. Again, there is a huge loss of potential when well qualified and skilled women are unable to put their skills to use due to the inflexibility of the labour market and constraints of their family circumstances.

Child care is an important problem identified for women. However, this is not simply a case of the provision of more child care, but must involve a consideration of the types of care and the acceptability of this for particular migrant groups such as the Poles. Many Polish women are reluctant to leave their children in the care of strangers, preferring relatives or trusted friends. Service providers may need to consider the possibility of introducing innovative new approaches.

## **POSSIBLE STRATEGIES**

The focus of this report has been to identify issues with particular concern for how ethno specific agencies can become further involved in assisting the Polish unemployed. The following are particular suggestions for possible action, which address some of the issues raised above.

### **1) ADDRESSING EMPLOYER ATTITUDES**

Despite great advancements in the official recognition of overseas qualifications, these qualifications are generally still not acknowledged nor accepted among employers, leaving well skilled and well qualified Polish immigrants still unable to secure suitable employment. Polish ethnic organisations such as APCS could investigate the possibility of mounting a promotional/educational campaign for employers. This would aim to educate them on the loss of potential contribution that well skilled Polish migrants could make due to employers' lack of acceptance or understanding of their skills and qualifications. The provision of some sort of assistance with verifying overseas experience and references could also be explored, since employers may be hesitant to accept something which they don't understand nor are able to follow up. Any such promotional campaign would need to be more than just the provision of pamphlets, but would need to involve more direct discussion and interaction with employers. Perhaps the possibility of obtaining Government funding could be explored to assist with this. Perhaps several ethnic groups or umbrella organisations such as Migrant Resource Centres could join together to mount such a campaign, or conduct a conference summit with local employer groups.

### **2) VOCATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES**

While recent arrivals are provided with 510 hours of English language tuition, this has generally been found to be insufficient to reach sufficient fluency in English to assist with employment.

Community organisations could investigate the possibility of providing further language classes, particularly for vocational English, familiarising Polish new arrivals with the vocabulary particularly relevant to their employment field e.g. the language particularly suited for computers or office work. Funding could be explored for the provision of these more specialised English classes. Again, it may be feasible to combine with other ethnic groups at central locations e.g. Migrant Resource Centres.

### **3) "MENTOR" SCHEME**

Recency of arrival is a significant barrier to employment, but is not an easy obstacle to overcome. One innovative possibility might be the instigation of a "Mentor" scheme where volunteer Poles who are already well established in Australia are paired with a new arrival for the first year. The volunteer could help them with information, advice and introduce them into existing networks and services which could assist with the settlement process. This could be established as a voluntary network along the lines of the "Home Tutor Scheme", where a volunteer was paired with a new arrival to give them regular assistance in English. Such a one-to-one scheme could provide individual assistance, although it would require some organisation to match and co-ordinate volunteers. Since many unemployed persons successfully find employment through personal contacts and friends, expanding social networks for recent arrivals is very important.

### **4) RECIPROCAL CHILD CARE NETWORKS/ ETHNIC FAMILY DAY CARE**

Given that despite many Polish women being well skilled they drop out of participation in the labour market due to the limits imposed upon them by child care commitments and lack of suitable flexible part-time work, it may be possible to assist the situation through the establishment of reciprocal child care networks. This could involve groups of women sharing child care, e.g. alternating picking children

up from school, thus enabling them each to have the opportunity for several full days of work.

Furthermore, the problem of childcare is not simply one of providing more facilities, but of having access to suitable and acceptable care. Given the traditional means in Poland of having grandparents or relatives caring for children, it may perhaps be more acceptable for Polish women to put their children in ethnic family day care situations, to be cared for in a family atmosphere with a Polish family. This situation may be more culturally appropriate and would enable the child to be with people of similar cultural background and to converse in the Polish language. Ethnic organisations could take the lead in co-ordinating, fostering and encouraging this. As well as providing appropriate childcare for women wishing to return to formal work, it would also provide another avenue for home-based employment for Polish women whose external employment prospects may be limited.

#### 5) WOMEN'S RESOURCE GROUP

Ethnic organisations might also try to organise "women's self help groups", in which women could address issues, share resources and learn from each other. As well as addressing employment and child care these groups could include a broader range of issues e.g. health, family law etc.

#### 6) LOBBYING MAINSTREAM SERVICES FOR ACCESS AND EQUITY OF PROGRAMS

There is an important role ethno-specific organisations could play in lobbying the Government and other service providers to consider the special needs of migrants such as the Poles. Participation in employment programs is generally lower for the Polish-born than Australian-born unemployed. There is a need for closer contact with organisations such as the CES and other programs, monitoring the low participation of Poles and lobbying for a fairer share of access and equity to programs.

#### 7) ESTABLISHING CLOSER LINKS WITH OTHER LOCAL INITIATIVES

Establishing closer links with other local initiatives, such as the Youth Employment Service or Western Older Workers would also be desirable, particularly when these programs are in areas of high migrant concentration and have a specific aim of catering for NESB groups. Pamphlets, posters and cross referrals are all possibilities which could be explored.

#### 8) LOCATION OF POLISH RE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM WORKERS

Presently the Polish Re-Employment Workers are located at two Polish organisations in the City and Footscray. Whether these are located in the most accessible places to reach areas with high concentrations of unemployed Poles needs to be addressed. Given that the greatest concentrations of Polish unemployed were in the outer south eastern area and the Western outer region, perhaps the regular outplacement of workers to other locations might be a strategy worth considering to ensure greater access for potential clients in areas of high Polish unemployment.

#### 9) GREATER PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Many unemployed Poles might not be aware of the existence of the Polish Re-Employment Program for assistance with seeking employment and the preparation of their resumes and job applications. Posters at CES and cross referrals with other organisations would be useful, as well as greater publicity at Polish clubs and in the Polish press and radio. The workers at PRP could make a more active effort to seek out and reach potential new clients.

#### 10) AUSTRALIAN WORK EXPERIENCE THROUGH VOLUNTARY WORK PLACEMENTS.

Given that lack of local work experience is one of the major stumbling blocks for unemployed Poles in obtaining employment, it would be very valuable if a system of voluntary work placements could be established in order to give them this opportunity. This could be co-ordinated through Polish ethnic agencies or the Polish Re-Employment Program. The placements could be either for work with voluntary community organisations or with actual prospective employers. A placement could give employers the chance to "try before they buy" and would provide the unemployed person with valuable recent work experience and references as well as some initial contacts in the working world. This sort of system has been found valuable for post-graduate tertiary students.

#### 11) VERIFICATION OF OVERSEAS REFERENCES AND EXPERIENCE

Overseas references and experience are very difficult for employers to verify, particularly where a different language is involved. Employers cannot be blamed for finding it much easier to follow up and

select local applicants. While overseas qualifications can be officially recognised, it is more difficult for employers to accept overseas references and experience at face value. There is a very valuable role that ethno-specific services such as the Polish Re-Employment Program could play in the initial follow up and verification of overseas references and experience, which could give prospective employers greater confidence in accepting these.

#### 12) JOB PREPARATION CLASSES

While counselling of unemployed Poles is presently undertaken on an individual basis, there may be scope for running more structured group sessions on particular aspects of the job seeking process such as presentation at interviews, preparation of resumes and job application letters. Whether there is a demand for these types of structured classes would need to be assessed.

#### 13) FURTHER RESEARCH

There is scope for undertaking further research in order to identify the particular needs and problems of specific sub-groups of the Polish unemployed. The particular circumstances of the hidden unemployed is a little researched area worthy of further investigation. The situation of Polish-born unemployed and underemployed women is another area in which further understanding of the causes and problems would be beneficial for the planning of appropriately targeted service provision.

#### GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

The focus of this report has been on considering ways in which ethnic organisations might try to tackle the problem of unemployment in the Polish community. There could also be a range of additional strategies and initiatives which the Government could instigate. These could include such things as:

- new job creation schemes;
- greater access and equity to programs and services through targeting and affirmative action;
- special work placements and programs for the NESB unemployed;
- campaigns aimed to promote awareness of migrant skills among employers;
- creating more flexible work arrangements and job sharing, particularly for women;
- work-based child care;
- more appropriate and easily accessible bilingual information about employment services;
- more bilingual staff in mainstream employment services such as Centrelink;
- vocational English classes;
- on-the-job English;
- and even the consideration of the possibility of work contracts for new arrivals.

However, discussion of these is outside the scope of this report, which concentrates on initiatives which ethnic community groups could undertake. The major involvement of Government in the strategies outlined would be the provision of funding to enable community groups to undertake these tasks.

## CONCLUSION

The current Polish-born unemployed do not fit the traditional stereotype of migrant "factory fodder". They tend to be well skilled, well qualified and in the prime of their working lives. They migrated to Australia mostly during the 1980's, and differ substantially from the ageing wave of post-war Polish immigrants.

The statistics reveal a high incidence of unemployment in the Polish community (12.1%) with over 60% of these being long term unemployed. There is evidence to suggest, however that despite initial setbacks of unemployment and underemployment in occupations not commensurate with their skills and qualifications, Polish immigrants do eventually settle well into the Australian workforce.

This is despite experiencing barriers in obtaining employment due to their recency of arrival, lack of proficiency in English and unaccepting employer attitudes. There is a high incidence of underemployment and also hidden unemployment, with women in particular experiencing obstacles.

Services such as the Polish Re-Employment Program are vital in assisting unemployed Poles settle into the Australian workforce. Since few unemployed persons obtain their jobs through the CES, and participation in labour market training programs tends to be low for Polish-born persons, PRP provides an important complementary service. The program plays a valuable role in counselling and motivating clients, assisting with resumes and application letters in English and in generally broadening their contacts and networks, which, although essential, are generally not extensive for newly arrived Polish migrants.

Ethnic groups should not rely on the Government to undertake initiatives, but could become more proactive in initiating their own innovative approaches. Various strategies have been suggested for ethnic organisations to tackle some of the issues identified and become more involved with assisting the unemployed in the Polish community. These include such things as providing vocational English, establishing a mentor scheme, ethnic networks of child care, women's resource group, Australian work experience through voluntary work placements and job preparation classes. Employer attitudes have been identified as a major problem and there is an urgent need for greater liaison with and education of employers to open their eyes to the great reservoir of available human potential which Polish immigrants bring to Australia. Ethnic groups also need to lobby mainstream services for greater access and equity to mainstream programs as well as establishing closer links with other local initiatives.

While the Polish community is not as badly off in terms of unemployment as some other migrant groups, there is still a substantial queue of wasted human potential, which could be of great value to Australian employers, lined up waiting to be integrated into the Australian working world.

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**APPENDIX 1:** Polish-born unemployed ABS 1991 Census Tables

**APPENDIX 2:** Polish-born unemployed awaiting placement data, DEETYA, March 1997

**APPENDIX 3:** Drozd Survey Results: Polish unemployment in the western suburbs, Australian-Polish Community Services Inc., 1993