



Case Study @ John Hollands Interrupting Bias on overseas qualifications

Background

Australia has more than \$100 billion worth of engineering projects underway ; the infrastructure boom driving a huge demand for engineers. Jesuit Social Services has been working for nearly a decade to bring employment opportunities to marginalised communities, often focussing on migrants from Africa, looking to work with other companies to give many qualified migrants and refugees in Australia a chance.

I&D Audit

Construction giant John Holland has partnered with Jesuit Social Services in an “industry-first” employment Pathways Program to share some of the benefits of Australia’s current infrastructure boom. Australia has a shortage of engineers , but when the Pathways Program opened for applications in March, more than 450 applications were received from around the country. Almost half of the candidates taken on were from refugee backgrounds.

Bias Interrupter

The employment program Pathways, run by Jesuit Social Services and engineering giant John Holland includes:

- 6-month work placement at John Hollands
- Certificate IV in WHS to provide a learning opportunity for candidates who have never worked in the industry, a refresher to those that have been out of the industry for an extended period and those that completed their education outside Australia will be able to gain an Australian recognised industry qualification
- Pre-employment training before commencement on site which covers industry, Australian cultural and leadership training
- Opportunity to be part of a program that provides professional support through mentoring
- Opportunity to build confidence and capability over 6-month program with a possibility of permanent employment on completion of program.

Bias Interrupter Outcomes

The 23 engineers selected for the first pilot program are now on the job for John Hollands after having their credentials approved by Engineers Australia. They will work for six months, with a possibility of full-time employment post program.

Evidence-based approach

In one example, [Mamode Osikoye](#) was a chemical engineer with 7 years of experience on projects in her native Nigeria and came to Australia as a skilled migrant. She applied for hundreds of engineering jobs without success, with feedback that “they couldn't take me because I didn't have the local experience”.

Biases influence many of the hiring decisions in organisations including overlooking applicants:

- not from top-tier Australian universities
- with no local experience
- with non-Anglo-Saxon sounding names
- coded messages in job ads, such as a requirement for ‘perfect English’.

Almost 50% of the population is either first generation or second generation Australian.