

Language barrier complicates process

IF you think decoding job ads is hard, spare a thought for those people for whom English is a second language.

Sarina Russo Job Access consultant Mai Tran says working out what a job really means is a tough task for many of her clients.

Tran works as a recruiter in Inala, specialising in finding jobs for those people whose first language is Vietnamese.

"A lot of my clients cannot read the job ad at all as they cannot read and write, even in their own language," she says.

"There are some who can read but still find it hard to compete with English-speaking people because of the language barrier. They have to use me to interpret the job ads. I phone the employers on their behalf and assist them at the job interview. I help them all the way, even reverse-marketing them to employers. I mentor them while they are working, providing post-placement support until both employer and jobseeker are fine on their own."

She says many of the jobseekers she helps have a low skill level and are placed in processing work, as a factory hand, doing labouring, packing and as a trades assistant. Getting those jobs would be made so much easier if employers more clearly described the conditions of employment and what type of worker they required, she says.

"If I could, I would ask employers to use plain language or simple English when writing job advertisements," she says.

"Or, if they are looking for good employees from a non-English speaking background, to please call me."

Tran recently helped Vietnamese immigrant Lien Le,



RECRUITER Mai Tran and jobseeker Lien Le.

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"She can't speak English at all, so it is difficult to find her a job," Tran says.

"But I have referred her to a couple of cleaning jobs, but they are only casual positions and on call. Her employer says they love her, but can't offer

any more work than casual (because of the economic climate). She would like something more permanent. So I am trying to match her with a Vietnamese employer.

"The market is very slow at the moment so we are still waiting."