

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Building Arabic Businesses in Central Western Sydney

Professors Phillip O'Neill and Tong Wu with Dr Felicity Wray of the UWS Urban Research Centre, and Dr Geoffrey Lee of the College of Business with Dr Jane Pollard of the University of Newcastle-on-Tyne, UK, have investigated ways to encourage the growth of Arabic businesses and related employment opportunities in the western Sydney area. This research has been funded by Industry and Investment NSW.

'There are above-average concentrations of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in central Western Sydney that are operated by people from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB)', says Professor O'Neill. 'The key ethnic groups with high SME activity in this area are Arabic-, Chinese- and Korean-Australian, with Arabic businesses being a significant majority. The research identified significant potential for major expansion of employment activity with Arabic businesses and for a region with above-average unemployment and poor workforce participation among NESB groups and women. There are, however, barriers to overcome for businesses trying to expand within the restraints of the current regulatory environment and with the reduction of business spaces as more areas are being rezoned for medium density housing.'

A major survey of Arabic businesses was undertaken as well as in-depth interviews with Arabic businesses in focus group settings to determine what operational constraints might be present and what range of business operations were occurring. Comprehensive case studies included the examination of finance sources, co-ethnic supply chain and business relations, labour relations and practices and regulatory systems. A detailed report of the potential for employment generation from Arabic business activity informed local and state government policy development.



Supporting Arabic businesses to grow and provide more employment for the community is a positive step in improving employment-related outcomes for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds in the western Sydney area, with great potential for similar improvements for other ethnic business groups in Australia.

**Project Title:** Building Arabic Businesses: Alternative Pathways to Employment Generation in Sydney's West Central Sub-region

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