THE AUSTRALIAN

Software firm Iress filling its talent gaps with refugees

EXCLUSIVE

By **DAVID SWAN,** REPORTER

7:55AM FEBRUARY 11, 2020 • 💬 1 COMMENT

ASX-listed financial software company Iress is turning to a non-traditional route to fix its talent gap, hiring displaced refugees thanks to a partnership with non-profit Talent Beyond Boundaries.

In a recent report commissioned by the Australian Computer Society, Deloitte Access Economics estimated demand for technology workers will grow by 100,000 between 2018 and 2024, but Australian universities produced fewer than 6000 technology graduates in 2017. Iress CEO Andrew Walsh said that gap posed a significant risk to growth in the local technology sector.

Mr Walsh said displaced talent such as refugees, an often excluded talent pool of skilled workers, could help fill the growing skills shortages in the tech sector in Australia.

"With the depth we are looking for, and the experience we are looking for, it can be limited when you're just looking at the Australian talent pool," Mr Walsh said.

"That's not to say those capabilities aren't there, but we've continued to extend our recruitment channels and that includes partnering with Talent Beyond Boundaries."

Steph Cousins, the Australia director for Talent Beyond Boundaries, said she hoped more companies followed Iress's lead and hired refugees. "We're a very new organisation, trying to create a win-win for refugees," she said.

"There are about 26 million people stuck in limbo, and we want to create a solution for that group of people, as well as businesses that have skill sets. Refugees do have the skills and talent, and it's always struck me they really are a highly skilled group."

Derar Alkhateeb, an Iress software engineer, was a refugee in Jordan. He is one of two refugees Iress has hired, and it's aiming to hire more. "The Talent Beyond Boundaries program has

changed my life," he said.

"When I was a refugee in Jordan, I had no ID, no security. I was stateless. I worried about how I was going to support my wife and children. This program has literally saved me and my family."

DAVID SWAN, REPORTER

David Swan is a tech reporter for The Australian. With deep experience across start-ups, business and tech David is uniquely positioned to cover Australia's fast-growing technology ecosystem and how it's changi... [Read more](#)