



4th October 2012

Peter Dowling, MP
Chair
Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Mr Dowling,

SCOA submission on the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012

Thank you for inviting the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) to submit comments on the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012. SCOA represents a broad network of nearly 80 settlement agencies around Australia. As advocates and service providers, the sector has a unique knowledge of the realities of the settlement experience, over time, across the country, and among hundreds of different ethno-cultural communities. Within this settlement work our member agencies are in a position to assist refugees and migrants who are living the reality of multicultural Australia today.

SCOA's consultation with members and our research into the area have informed the preparation of this submission. The submission does not go into legal specifics, as that is not our (or our members) area of expertise, but highlights important issues relevant to migrant and refugee communities and the settlement sector in Australia in relation to multiculturalism. I have also attached for your reference submissions SCOA made at the federal level to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism and Migration last year.

SCOA endorses the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012 as an important step forward for Queensland in developing a legislative framework which will strengthen and support diversity and multiculturalism in Queensland. The legislative recognition of the importance of diversity, the strengthening of government responsiveness to diversity and the establishment of Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council will greatly strengthen community inclusiveness and harmony in Queensland.

SCOA has seen that access to government services in jurisdictions where multicultural plans are supported by a legislative framework is stronger. The benefits to the community through ensuring equitable access to services are widely acknowledged, strengthening community cohesion and providing resultant benefits to the community and the economy from cultural diversity. A public commitment to multiculturalism, such as proposed by the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012,

provides a clear commitment to all members of the community that diversity and respect are a core component of community life.

SCOA welcomes the strengthening of multiculturalism in Queensland which the introduction of this bill will bring. SCOA has also prepared submissions on multiculturalism at the federal level, these are attached for your reference as they may provide relevant additional information to the committee.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any queries or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sky de Jersey', with a stylized, cursive style.

Sky de Jersey
Executive Officer

Attachments: SCOA Submission to the Multiculturalism Inquiry, April 11 and additional comments, July 11



21st April 2011

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

SCoA Submission to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism and Migration.

Summary

SCoA commends the recent Government initiatives on Multiculturalism and is pleased to offer the following submission to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism and Migration. The conversation about multiculturalism in Australia is important and needs to continue, given the impact issues relating to multiculturalism have on communities across the country.

SCoA's consultation with members and our research into the area have informed the preparation of this submission, which highlights the urgent need to deepen social inclusion in Australia, to create an environment in which migrants and refugees can fully participate in all aspects of life in Australia. The rapidly changing nature of settlement, globalization and economic challenges means that fostering community harmony is more important than ever. It is widely acknowledged that diversity brings a plethora of benefits to Australia, and it is important that public discourse on multiculturalism reflects this.

SCoA proposes (detail below) that the Committee recommend:

1. the Australian Multicultural Council be enhanced legislatively, in terms of its ambit, and its resources to achieve the following outcomes in the short to medium term:
 - a. the development of Cultural Diversity Policy Statements (based on NSW Multicultural Policies and Services Plan (MPSP)) by all government agencies and departments, through compacts with the AMC;
 - b. the creation of an Australian Multiculturalism Act to give some stability to the AMC, and as a means to put comprehensively into Australian law principles and practices of human rights, cultural diversity and social inclusion covered by UN instruments;
 - c. the embedding in the National Curriculum of multicultural as well as gender and Indigenous perspectives.
2. the Government establish a 'whole of government' approach to multiculturalism, that embeds the perspective in the full range of government departments and agencies, in particular:

SCoA Submission to Inquiry into Multiculturalism and Migration, April 2011

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- a. the Social Inclusion Agenda which needs to be re-worked to ensure it fully encompasses the distinguishing factors associated with the social (economic, political and cultural) exclusion of culturally diverse populations;
 - b. health and mental health, where access to care is worse, outcomes are poorer, knowledge about health is not widespread, access to interpreters is limited, and cultural barriers to early interventions may inhibit best practice interventions;
 - c. settlement services be recognised as about 'empowering' their clientele in many different ways, ranging from leadership skills to mental health;
 - d. implements nationally a working environment familiarisation and local experience development program, through targeted EEO projects, social enterprise employment, and far better and less costly skills recognition and upgrade;
 - e. the creation of a national research and information coordination facility (perhaps through the new AMC) to ensure that Australia has evidence-driven policy, rather than creating ad hoc policy-driven evidence;
 - f. support for a sustained information and communication strategy about multiculturalism and social inclusion, addressing Australia's monocultural public culture, while also ensuring the provision in languages of all the information required for effective engagement with government and the resources it provides.
3. the Government ensures that the settlement sector is appropriately regulated so as to ensure:
 - a. charitable status, tax exemption and deductible gift recipient status is available to all not-for-profit agencies, while accepting the sector's dual roles of advocacy and service provision;
 - b. training and professional standards are regularly updated to reflect best practice, and are complemented by appropriate funding to ensure retention of qualified staff.

Background

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) represents the broad network of migrant resource centres (MRC) and settlement agencies around Australia. The MRCs were the first institutions established under the Fraser Government's Multicultural Policy initiated through the Galbally Report of 1978. For over thirty years the centres, later joined by other settlement agencies have played a pivotal role in enabling settlement, enhancing integration and ensuring equity. As advocates and service providers, the sector has a unique knowledge of the realities of the settlement experience, over time, across the country, and among hundreds of different ethno-cultural communities.

SCoA (established from the former National Council of Migrant Resource and Settlement Agencies (NCMRSA) in 2008) holds to a vision of "...an equitable, respectful and inclusive Australia where effective settlement outcomes provide every opportunity to humanitarian entrants and migrants to fully participate in society". We argue that the stakeholders in the process are not solely the immigrants nor their service providers, but the whole of Australian society. Good settlement outcomes contribute to social harmony, greater productivity, and wide social cohesion. Poor or distressed settlement processes corrode social well-being, waste human resources, and contribute to social exclusion and associated conflict.

SCoA commends the Committee for its initiative in linking the issues of settlement, multiculturalism, globalization, social inclusion and community prosperity. We note that the Parliamentary Inquiry takes place in a very “busy” policy environment, including

- the AMAC Report, *The People of Australia*,
- the Government response to the AMAC report and its own Policy Statement of February 2011,
- the Government’s submission, the Australian Human Rights Commission submission and the criticism of Australia at the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Hearings in Geneva early in 2011,
- the competing and arguably contradictory reports of the Working Groups of the Government’s Population Sustainability Inquiry,
- the public debates in Australia over the desirability of multiculturalism following European backing away from policies under that name,
- the initiatives by the states and territories (in the last year NSW and Victoria),
- and the public disquiet over the asylum seekers’ experiences.

This Inquiry enables SCoA to make specific responses to the terms of reference, and to argue for clear actions by government to advance SCoA’s concerns for participation and opportunity as the catch-cry for effective policy outcomes.

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalization

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government’s social inclusion agenda;

Multiculturalism and social inclusion should and could be rather more effective complementary agendas. Multiculturalism addresses the development of mutual respect, human rights, cultural expression and social participation. Social inclusion addresses the barriers to social participation. These policy areas have international recognition, some of which Australia has ratified, through human rights agendas such as:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Convention against Discrimination in Education
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Australia not a signatory)
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief
- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
- Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity
- Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals Who are not Nationals of the Country in which They Live.

Both Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion operate in the same terrain when they are seeking to reduce the barriers to full social participation. We welcome the fact that the Government recognises that Multiculturalism should be a “whole of government” approach. If the whole of government takes responsibility then we can better ensure the implementation of the four Multicultural principles of access and equity, human rights, social inclusion and anti-racism. However currently, the responsibility is effectively limited to the Departments of Immigration and Citizenship, Attorney General, and Community Services. We would urge it be extended at least to include education, foreign affairs and trade, defence, health, regional development, environment communities and sustainability, communication and the arts. Social inclusion is also a whole of government concern, including maternal and child health, early childhood education, education and skills acquisition, disability rights, labour market access, healthy lifestyles, secure and affordable housing, safe communities, substance abuse avoidance and recovery, and dignified ageing.

While Multiculturalism was not well-recognised in social inclusion strategies prior to its first reference early in 2010, recent agitation from civil society organizations to rectify this problem has had some results. However it is evident from the sketchiness of the policy ideas and the limited range of methods and outcome parameters, that the database remains inadequate for enabling the development, implementation, evaluation and bench-marking of social inclusion interventions that are truly inclusive of migrant and refugee communities. Nor are settlement strategies and their impact included in definitions of social inclusion policies, even though SCoA would argue that settlement is at its core a social inclusion activity. Where data exists it is fragmented and not easily accessible.

Social exclusion can occur through many different processes. The Social Inclusion policy assumes exclusion is a consequence of the interaction of many factors – inter-generational unemployment, chronic illness, chronic substance abuse, disability, family ‘dysfunction’, and locality-based deprivation. Usually it also includes the specific dynamics associated with Indigenous social exclusion – racism, cultural oppression, economic and cultural dispossession. When multiculturalism may be relevant, Social Inclusion usually only picks it up in reference to higher unemployment rates among refugee and humanitarian entrants. Yet social exclusion affects SCoA’s clientele in many more ways, especially in relation to racism in the housing and labour markets, in the need for educational support, in the failure to have qualifications recognised, in the perennial dilemma of gaining local work experience before jobs can be accessed, and the marginal and erratic funding of social agencies seeking to support ‘new settlers’.

Social Inclusion draws on the concept of social capital. Social capital refers to the capacity of individuals, families and communities to respond to their needs and engage with others. Social inclusion programs aim to build social capital through underpinning the creation of bonding social capital (within groups so that they can assist each other), and bridging social capital (between groups so that they can access a wider pool of resources). Multiculturalism draws on the settlement strategies of civil society to help create bonding social capital (community development), and through wider engagement strategies with ‘mainstream’ institutions (employment, sport and recreation, housing, charitable bodies etc) also extend and strengthen bridging social capital. In the process settlement adds to the store of social capital both within and between migrant and refugee communities and the wider society. In this sense multiculturalism is crucial to social inclusion.

However, Multicultural policy should be viewed as distinct from social inclusion policy as it is not concerned with social 'deficits' in the way—or to the same extent— as is social inclusion. Not only does migration contribute to the cultural richness of our society through the arts, diet and cuisine, and spiritual traditions, it does so intellectually and creatively. The wealth derived from migration is self-evident (see below) and has been understood for a long time: the Keating Government established the Productive Diversity Program, which recognised and sought to expand these benefits. However, easily overlooked is the 'diversity dividend': the benefits that accrue to a wider society from living with diversity. For example, when service providers are trained in cultural competence this is a form of sensitisation to individual difference and need. A client-focused service will therefore be more oriented toward the needs of all its users, not just those who are culturally diverse, but to the established mainstream as well. In addition, because pluralism is a living resource, it can be researched and interpreted for more general application. For example, if sub-populations have greater life expectancy and lower morbidity to a particular chronic illness, researching their diet, activity levels, or social capital may yield important data that can help inform and shape better health outcomes for other population groups.

In order to enable the effective integration of Multicultural and Social Inclusion policies and approaches, SCoA argues that the following steps are required:

- ensure the Commonwealth introduces goal setting, output-linked strategies such as those operating in NSW through the Multicultural Policies and Services Plan (MPSP) framework, managed for the time being through performance contracts between the Australian Multicultural Council and the departments and agencies of the Commonwealth;
- ensure the Government undertakes a thorough though expeditious public investigation into the value and form of an Australian Multiculturalism Act, to enshrine in domestic law all those elements of international conventions and covenants to which Australia is and should become a signatory in relation to social participation, human rights and cultural diversity;
- ensure the full integration of multicultural perspectives across the national curriculum, similar to the principles established for gender and Indigenous perspectives, and the further development of resources such as Making Multicultural Australia;
- ensure that social inclusion strategies in relation to mental health issues as detailed in the submission of the Multicultural Mental Health Association (MMHA) are clearly embedded in all the relevant areas of the social inclusion policy, including competency standards, community mental health literacy, early and youth intervention initiatives, the availability training and use of specialised interpreter facilities, evidence collection for policy development and evaluation, and wider participation in planning and decision-making by culturally diverse communities;
- establish a nation-wide program of employment opportunities in social enterprises and the public sector to ensure new arrivals can gain an orientation to local work practices, generate some 'local experience', and have their qualifications recognised or updated as 'local residents'.

2. *The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.*

In our submission to the AMAC People of Australia Inquiry in 2009, SCoA identified the priority groups for settlement services at that time. We are sure that the Committee's identification of groups it identifies for consideration were listed by way of example, rather than to exclude all others. For SCoA the African, Burmese and Latin American communities are also important clientele, and we would suggest that the Committee change the wording of this term of reference to be inclusive of all communities who have made Australia their home.

In a globalised world, where information is communicated constantly and instantly, the way Australia manages diversity is inevitably transmitted to the rest of the world and will influence the way Australia is perceived in the same way that in Australia we are constantly informed about events and the treatment of people in other countries. There are countless positive examples accruing from the presence of diasporas. The ways in which skilled migrants, refugees, family reunion, temporary visas and many other forms of permanent or transitory settlement are managed has broad impacts. Positive settlement experiences into civil communities where elementary human functioning is met without discrimination or other barriers, will contribute to the way Australia is perceived by those settling, as well as by the vast global networks connected to those who are settling. This provides great opportunities for Australia: wealth transfer, investment, new business networks, improved international political relations and better security.

Settlement and participation

1. *Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society;*

The wide and long-term experience of SCoA members has a particular importance for this term of reference. We believe that a full scoping of the current settlement program portfolio is required, to ensure quality, comparable and evaluative data about program delivery are available for policy development. While SCoA could provide many examples of innovation in settlement programs, we believe that a series of anecdotes does disservice to the depth and range of data required. Since 1979 when the first Migrant Resource Centres were launched, one of the key orientations of the network has been to empower new arrivals to gain greater control over their lives, and take pro-active control of their own futures. Community development is crucial for effective participation and successful settlement.

The community development role has waxed and waned, dependent on the ideological thrust of the government of the day (or even just the Minister for Immigration and the Treasurer or Finance Minister) and the associated approach of the public service. During periods of support for community development immigrant community organisations have been established and have flourished, contributing both to bonding and bridging social capital. During periods of reduced support and policies antagonistic to community development, communities have become more fragmented, individuals more isolated, and community capacities have declined. Community development focused on integration produces very valuable social outcomes; on the other hand, communities with poor leadership frameworks and under-developed social networks increase the likelihood of individual crises, and are much less resilient in the face of structures of discrimination.

For detailed discussion of sub-sectoral issues, SCoA refers to submissions from our member organisations such as the Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre in Sydney, and collaborative discussions that are reflected in the Multicultural Mental health Association submission. From these and other projects in the field, SCoA argues that the following further principles should underpin the development of participation and integration strategies for new immigrants and refugees:

- new settlers have very little power to engage with the wider environment; they are often deskilled in the workforce, isolated by language, recovering from trauma, and unable in a significant way to understand or affect the world around them. The key principle here has to be empowerment. Empowerment can be enhanced through language acquisition, civics education, skills recognition, local experience opportunities, and leadership training;
- new settlers complain of the difficulty of gaining relevant local experience in the open job market, where prejudice exists and access to employment is more difficult for people without good English or with 'ethnic' names (especially from Asia, Africa and the Middle East). Initiatives that identify refugees as an EEO group for whom targets can be set and opportunities tailored (as with Brisbane City Council) should be more widespread and supported through the COAG inter-governmental process, including local government.

2. *Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.*

SCoA submits that the primary policies for participation and integration should enshrine principles of community development and an anti-racism perspective that enhance inter-communal understanding and respect. Settlement agencies, as a general rule, are strong and active supporters of community empowerment as the most successful pathway to independence and full participation in Australia's social, cultural and economic life. This is an approach that SCoA advocates. Social enterprise programs can maximise settlement outcomes while providing opportunities for self-sufficiency; we believe it is in this way that humanitarian entrants and migrants who are settling into Australia can best contribute to our long-term productive and intellectual capacity while minimising risks associated with alienation and disenfranchisement. For these reasons, SCoA recommends the government work with us to implement the principles of the new multicultural policy through greater recognition and increased resources for community development and empowerment (not at the expense of casework, referral and advocacy, which are the first steps in the empowerment process).

In order to bolster the Settlement sector in its dual roles of support for the building of capacity within communities, and building networks between communities, some key reforms are required. The Productivity Commission review of the NGO sector points up the anomalies that often affect MRCs and settlement agencies. It is important that the charitable criteria for NGOs fully cover the sector; furthermore the sector should have full access to Deductible Gift Recipient status enabling the development of independent sources of funding. In particular the advocacy and policy role of the sector should be recognised and protected by relevant legislative and government administrative action.

There also needs to be a set of national settlement standards established and used to ensure adequate funding and performance outcomes for funded agencies. The creation of such a set of standards

should be a priority for whole-of-government action, focusing on the quality of professional practice within the sector, the career opportunities for staff, and strategies for making an impact on wider social inclusion programs.

We strongly support the decision by the Federal Government to charge the soon-to-be-formed Australian Multicultural Council with the oversight of the Access and Equity Strategy. This strategy has to be whole-of-government, and include a clearly-articulated blueprint for each government department and agency, with key performance indicators identifying the range of stakeholders to whom they respond. We also believe that the AMC should be strengthened to undertake the oversight of MPSP type statements identified above.

In order to fully utilise the economic and social resources contained among Australia's immigrant population, SCoA argues that two significant innovations are required. These were identified in our submission to the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council in 2009, but unfortunately were not canvassed in its report nor incorporated into its recommendations.

- The first reflects our continuing concern about the poor level of evidence used in the policy and public debate over the past fifteen years or so. This evidence deficit has had many significant consequences for the quality of services; these include poor information about innovation in services and the difficulty in sharing information about successful strategies for participation and integration. SCoA strongly urges the creation of a national research capacity that does a number of important things; it links together existing research centres and groups in universities, government, community and private sector; it sponsors national and regional research and program conferences to stimulate the sharing of research; it "brokers" collaborative research projects between agencies, government and researchers; it provides the outcomes of research in accessible forms for among others the settlement sector. It could indeed be modelled on the Bureau of Immigration, Population and Multicultural Research of the 1980s and 1990s, though it should have the independent status of an Institute.
- The second reflects the proposal for a national legislative initiative identified in 1989/90, for an Australian Multiculturalism Act. While NSW, Victoria and the ACT have legislated to some extent in these areas, there is no national legislation. The imperative for such action has grown since the refusal of the Federal Government to take forward the recommendations of the Brennan Inquiry into a Human Rights Act. SCoA strongly urges the Australian Multicultural Council to develop proposals for a national Multiculturalism Act. The Act should incorporate the human rights issues identified by the ten UN Conventions and declarations we have listed in response to the first term of reference. Furthermore in order to ensure the public environment is indeed a level playing field where racism and race-hate speech cannot be allowed to prosper, Australia should withdraw as a matter of priority, its reservation to Article 4 of ICERD, namely the section that would bind Australia to take effective anti-racism and race-hate action.

National productive capacity

1. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity;

As illustrated by Access Economics' modelling of the economic benefits of immigration, there are substantial, increasing gains to GDP associated with both skilled and humanitarian entry into Australia. In the case of skilled migration, the annual average increase to GDP is about \$6,700 per capita, increasing to \$12,190 after 20 years (2007–08 prices).[i] On this basis, the economic benefits of the migration program can be estimated over time; it amounts to more than \$11.5 million for every 1,000 permanent migrants (this includes both skilled migrants and humanitarian entrants) in 2007–08 prices. Given that the combined migration and humanitarian program totalled 158,960 individuals in 2006–07, this is about \$861.5 million for that financial year, rising to \$1.8 billion after 20 years.[ii] Bearing in mind these estimates are for a single year in a continuing migration and humanitarian program, the flow of economic benefits is vast (although this is off-set by a range of direct and indirect costs). While, these figures show how much migration adds to GDP, we must also remember that the human capital of migration expands national productive capacity by bringing skills (workforce) that are in short supply, insufficient, or unavailable for a variety of reasons, such as the limited size of the Australian population, and lack of interest and/or education and training infrastructure.

A more immediate concern about the effective use of skills is the extent to which skilled migrants are actually working in their areas of expertise. Sadly, it is a frequent experience that migrants are attracted to Australia on the pretext that their knowledge, experience and skills are in demand, only to find that a range of structural barriers (both formal and informal) preclude their full participation in the workforce. For example, migrants are often excluded on grounds that could be regarded as racist (even if this often unconscious or indirect racism). This exclusion may be due to concerns that an applicant's training is different or misaligned to the precise needs of a company, or that some skills (such as English as a second language, or cultural differences) may limit a potential applicant's ability to integrate into a workplace. A recent study highlighted the systemic discrimination of job applicants on the basis of their names, not their qualifications for a position.[iii] Some professions maintain barriers to overseas-trained applicants on the basis that their qualifications were not gained in Australia and are therefore not consistent with the education and training in Australia: the exclusion of professionals from the medical disciplines is particularly acute.

While this can be seen as unfinished business of the national productivity and competition reforms of the 1990s, there are legitimate concerns within some professions that overseas qualifications do not fully qualify someone to work in particular occupations in Australia. For instance, if knowledge of domestic legislation is needed to perform in a job, the successful completion of a bridging education program is a legitimate requirement before a skilled migrant could do so. This process should not be constrained by high costs, especially where the applicant is deemed to be an international student and charged commercial prices. Work that identifies which professional associations and industries continue to exclude skilled migrants on unreasonable grounds and that develops strategies to either limit this conduct or collaborate around workable bridging training programs is an important strategy for the government over coming years.

Conclusion

SCoA welcomes this opportunity to present evidence to the Committee, and to argue the case for more effectively-resourced settlement services sector in Australia. We believe that settlement services play a major part in sustaining Australia as a generally cohesive society. Even so we note that that inter-group hostility, discrimination and disadvantage persist, requiring vigilance and constant examination of our programs, their outcomes and their wider social impact.

The opening summary contains our broad proposals for the Committee's attention and hopefully acceptance. We look forward to a long-term collaborative relationship between the civil society organisations we represent, all levels of Government and the diverse communities with whom we work.



Cedric Manen
Chair
Settlement Council of Australia

[i] Estimate based on average of general skilled, business and employee sponsored migration, Access Economics, *Migrants Fiscal Impact Model: 2008 Update*, 11 April 2008, p.21

[ii] *ibid*, p.5 and p.21

[iii] A Booth, A Leigh and E Varganova, 'Does Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence From Three Experiments', ANU, 2009, can be accessed through:
http://www.culturaldiversity.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=40:does-racial-and-ethnic-discrimination-vary-across-minority-groups-evidence-from-three-experiments&catid=14:human-rights-articles&Itemid=24



4th July 2011

Inquiry Secretary
Joint Parliamentary Inquiry on Multiculturalism
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Hearn,

Re: Additional evidence to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry on Multiculturalism

The Settlement Council of Australia is most grateful to have had the opportunity to present to the Inquiry in person on Friday 17th June. Being able to speak directly to the members of the Committee about multiculturalism and our recommendations to strengthen multiculturalism in Australia was appreciated. The conversation allowed us all to explore the issue, which is of keen interest to our members, in more depth. Philosophical debate about the language we use in Australia as we discuss the support provided to people from a variety of cultures is important, to ensure that the terms we use are understood, and the principles which underlie them are supported and known.

In our evidence presented on the day SCOA mentioned a report on secondary movement, which is attached here for the Committee's reference. It points to the opportunities and challenges posed by regional settlement and secondary movement as refugee communities spontaneously move to new areas as they learn of job markets in regional locations. As highlighted in the recently launched report by Professor Hugo (Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, DIAC, May 11), refugees and humanitarian entrants fill important employment niches in regional communities. Regional areas present specific challenges in terms of service delivery for settlement agencies. Many regional areas are subject to fluctuating populations and service providers, so capacity building and advocacy in this milieu is an ongoing concern due to service and staff changes and the xenophobic nature of small communities that need to be constantly supported to have ownership of resettlement. Service coordination and responsiveness to support multiculturalism in settlement services and mainstream agencies is an important factor in any community, but is especially relevant in regional Australia.

Settlement agencies provide excellent support to refugees and migrants across the country, and it is important that this support is complemented by mainstream service delivery provision which has within its foundation an awareness of and sensitivity to culture and the role that culture plays in people's lives. Services, across the whole spectrum of government agencies, need to be trained and supported to enable them to provide services to any Australian, whatever their cultural heritage. If we support agencies to develop cultural competency in their service delivery, so that services will be better able to provide appropriate support to all, regardless of where people may be in their settlement journey, or how long they have lived in Australia. This approach will also pay dividends for services in equipping agencies to deal with difference more broadly, however this difference may be presented, be it a migrant, refugee, someone with a disability, or a person of indigenous heritage.

SCOA calls for a federal framework to support multiculturalism, which will ensure that access and equity is supported by culturally competent service provision. Such a framework as the foundation of all service provision

will, over time, break down current silos which may exist in some service areas, where some agencies and projects may be doing great work, which is unknown in other areas.

SCOA supports the ongoing use of the term 'multicultural' to describe Australia, as we feel it accurately describes the wonderfully complex blend of cultures which make Australia such a wonderful country.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if clarification is sought on any points raised.

Yours sincerely,



Sky de Jersey
Executive Officer

Attachment: Settlement and Mobility Report, 1 June 2011

Attachment (separate jpg files): Corrections to the Hansard Transcript, Friday 17th June



Refugee Council
of Australia



NATIONAL SETTLEMENT POLICY NETWORK

Settlement and mobility:

Exploring models of support and challenges faced by recently arrived refugees who move to secondary settlement locations

REPORT

BACKGROUND

The movement of refugee and humanitarian entrants from one location to another in their early stages of settlement presents a series of challenges for individuals, communities and service providers. This teleconference explored the implications of inter- or intra-state mobility and refugee settlement, with presentations and discussion focussing on the following questions:

1. After settling in Australia, where are newly arrived refugee communities moving to and from (current trends)?
2. Why do people move to secondary settlement locations (push/pull factors)?
3. What are the challenges for refugee individuals and communities who move inter- or intra-state?
4. What are the challenges for service providers in meeting the needs of refugee individuals and communities who have moved from another region or state in their first five years of settlement?
5. What are examples of support that have worked well in secondary settlement locations?
6. What needs to happen to better support the settlement needs of recently arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants who move inter- and intra-state?

SETTLEMENT POLICY NETWORK TELECONFERENCE

The National Settlement Policy Network teleconference was held on Wednesday 1st June 2011 and involved participants dialling in from hubs in ACT, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. Presenters included:

- Vincent Giuca, Refugee Support Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Michael Krafft and Tejal Thanki, ACCES Services (QLD);
- Paul Kyaw, Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia (WA)
- Anni Gallagher, Orange City Council (NSW)

OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES RAISED

The following observations and issues were raised by presenters and discussion participants, and from feedback provided by participants after the teleconference. Issues have been grouped by theme.

Background and definitions

- Secondary settlement refers to people relocating from their original on-arrival settlement location to another place within their first five years after arriving in Australia.
- Feedback received by RCOA after the teleconference raised concerns about the label “secondary settlement”, as often people can and do move multiple times and settlement is a dynamic process. It was suggested that “relocation” is a better term.
- Humanitarian entrants on permanent visas are like any permanent resident; they are free to move. Clients who exit Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) are like any other Australian; they can and do relocate.
- One participant raised the question of why we needed data on the mobility of humanitarian entrants as we don’t track any other permanent residents i.e. why is this an issue? Discussion followed about the need to understand settlement and mobility trends better to enable better planning of services. For example, services had difficulty responding to community needs in the case of the spontaneous relocation of ~500 Sudanese community members from the City of Greater Dandenong to Latrobe Valley in Victoria. Another example cited was the spontaneous relocation of mainly Afghan and Tamil single men from Brisbane to Rockhampton in Queensland. Local services struggled to get a handle on how to respond and there were no IHSS or SGP providers in Rockhampton at the time.
- Feedback from the teleconference also highlighted concerns about how people are defined and labelled. Examples given included using the terms “IMAs” (Irregular Maritime Arrivals), “migrants” and “refugees” interchangeably, as well as using terms such as “ex-detainees” and “multicultural people”. There is a need for consideration of how service providers and advocates label people and the potential impact of our language.

Data

- It is hard to find accurate statistics on the mobility trends of recently arrived humanitarian entrants as existing data sources all have limitations.
- The 2011 Census could provide the most up-to-date and accurate data when released.
- The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) uses the Humanitarian Entrants Management System (HEMS) database for HSS providers to track clients, but this is not set up as a tool for analysing mobility trends and tracks only HSS clients. Clients are not required to provide updated contact details to DIAC post-HSS.
- The online DIAC Settlement Reporting database (<http://www.immi.gov.au/settlement/>) provides longer-term data on refugee entrants, but has limitations as it is only up-to-date if people update their address with Medicare.
- Settlement Grants Program (SGP) providers do not track individual clients.
- Centrelink data is available on request and can be a good source of data, but will not capture all humanitarian entrants as they need to be getting income support to be included in the Centrelink database.

Current trends

- DIAC tries to place people where they have links, and if they do not have links, where they can be ‘at home’. However, people still move to be closer to friends/family/community or for employment, housing or lifestyle reasons.

- It is estimated that humanitarian entrants settling through the offshore program do not move that much in the first five years (5%?), however there is much higher mobility among humanitarian entrants who are granted permanent protection onshore (particularly Afghan and Tamil community).
- Some recently arrived humanitarian entrants relocate multiple times.
- In areas of spontaneous settlement, the community can be quite fluid. In Orange, for example, there has been an ebb and flow in the size of the Sudanese community. People sometimes stay for only a short time and then disappear.

Push/pull factors

- Pull: In Queensland, service providers found there was lots of interest from HSS clients to relocate to regional areas, particularly those who come from rural backgrounds (e.g. Burmese), because of the lifestyle and familiarity with agricultural labour market.
- Pull: The economic boom in Queensland and demand for labour in regional areas as drawn people to regional areas for work.
- Pull: In the case of former detainees, finding employment is a priority and they will relocate to where jobs are.
- Push/Pull: One community member highlighted that we are social animals, and that people want to live near their friends and family. Even if there are great employment opportunities and housing in a settlement location, people will be drawn and relocate to where they find their community.
- Push/Pull: The availability of affordable housing can be a key reason behind relocation.
- Push: Some humanitarian entrants find there is a lack of opportunities in urban areas.
- Push: In larger cities, some new arrivals find it harder to integrate. People from rural backgrounds feel like 'uninvited guests' in big cities.

Challenges for individuals/communities

- One community member suggested that if the local community is welcoming, new settlers will be happy and are more likely to stay.
- The bigger the family, the harder it is to relocate. One participant felt that people considering relocation should be encouraged to first visit an area before deciding to move.
- People think the grass is greener, but sometimes don't realise the implications of relocation. For example, if they move they cannot get another allocation of household goods.
- Sometimes people expect the same services to be available when they relocate when in reality there are not (e.g. there are Dinka language aides in some Sydney schools, but not in Orange).
- New arrivals moving to remote areas with limited English can make them vulnerable. There needs to be appropriate opportunities for people to learn English – particularly workplace-specific English for mature age people with limited education. For example, if someone is a carpenter, they can find it difficult to work even though the tools are the same. If there is opportunity for them to learn on-the-job English relevant to their industry, they can be productive members of the community.
- Transport is an issue, particularly in regional and rural locations where some secondary settlement is happening. New arrivals need help to get a driver's licence in these areas.
- Not all regional areas provide employment opportunities and there needs to be targeted assistance for people to find work. For example, in Orange, some of the community that relocated from Sydney have not been successful in finding employment after a number of years, even though they have participated in lots of training.
- Where people relocate and do not find appropriate support, there is the potential of exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

Challenges for service providers

- There is no funding within Job Services Australia to support the relocation of people – in this case, humanitarian entrants – to areas with labour shortages.
- In the case of spontaneous settlement in Rockhampton, the local council and services felt unprepared and had little experience working with and welcoming people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The new settlers in the area were ‘highly visible’ and the (negative) behaviour of some individuals was generalised to the whole community (e.g. Afghan Muslims).
- Local councils want to be involved, but often don’t know how to get involved.
- In the case of planned secondary settlement, there needs to be recognition and awareness of the history of local settlement. The reaction of local communities can be negative if they associate new arrivals with previous negative experiences. It is important to get local community and leaders involved and on board (e.g. Tamworth settlement experience divided the community).

What works well

- Pre-movement investment in raising awareness within local communities where relocation of humanitarian entrants is planned.
- Ensuring there are established links to schools, housing and employment before planned relocation.
- Equipping new arrivals with information and confidence to be able to make informed decisions about relocation (i.e. the grass is not always greener).
- Direct regional settlement can work well for some families that come from rural backgrounds (i.e. so they are not relocating after arriving).
- Coordination of services – in the case of Orange in NSW, housing, education, council and other services came together to form the Orange Multicultural Network to plan services and response to the spontaneous settlement of Sudanese community members which started around December 2005.
- Capacity building – providing education/training to services and the local community in the context of new people relocating to an area. For example, encouraging services to use interpreters and take on cultural competency training.
- Partnership is key in regional areas.
- Community development approach – bringing new settlers together with others in the local community (e.g. drumming and singing has brought people together in Orange and can be a non-threatening way of educating the local community); providing opportunities for new settlers to come together and support each other (e.g. sport and recreation programs for young people, mother’s groups, mentoring).
- Flexible funding to respond to mobile populations with settlement needs.
- Families moving together or being able to reunite is more likely to lead to sustainable settlement in regional areas.
- Importance of buy-in from local community, leaders, employers and other stakeholders.

Program responses

- Some changes from IHSS to HSS mean there is more flexibility for services to respond to clients who relocate. Case management plans through HEMS can be shared between service providers in cases where clients move. Although HSS services cannot be duplicated, clients can access entitlements they have not already accessed from different providers in the case of relocation.
- ACCES Services’ Rural Employment Assistance Program (REAP) – funded through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and aimed at supporting the planned relocation of humanitarian entrants from Brisbane to Biloela, and

to respond to the spontaneous settlement of humanitarian entrants in Rockhampton. The project has just been evaluated and could be a model for replication in other areas.

- In Orange, services have developed a pilot Certificate II 'Life in Australia' which is a pathway to employment. The pilot is an 18 week course and a recognised activity for JobStart.

Recommendations

- Need for leadership from Federal Government on how to embed local government in settlement services (see Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) submission in references below).
- In cases of planned secondary settlement, services need to ensure there are clear pathways into employment and stable housing.
- Need to ensure HSS and SGP funding is flexible and can respond to spontaneous settlement patterns.
- Need to ensure young people moving for employment reasons soon after arrival are able to access appropriate education and English opportunities. In particular, Afghan and Tamil young men who are working six days a week are not accessing English classes; Need to make sure there is flexible delivery of Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in these areas.

NEXT STEPS

- Follow-up suggestions and comments from this teleconference should be forwarded to Louise Olliff in RCOA's Melbourne office, settlement@refugeecouncil.org.au
- We welcome comments and suggestions for topics for future Settlement Policy Network teleconferences, which RCOA/SCOA will be holding quarterly.

SCOA AND RCOA UPDATE

- RCOA member bulletin has just been released. More information about what RCOA has been up to and can be viewed at: www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/bulletins.php
- *2011 Refugee Conference: Looking to the Future, Learning from the Past*, to be held 14-17 June in Sydney, and marks the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention. More information can be found: <http://refugeecon2011.arts.unsw.edu.au/>
- Refugee Week is 19-25 June – the theme is 'Freedom from Fear'. Posters designed by Shaun Tan are available for pick-up (see www.refugeeweek.org.au/resources/poster.php). For more information and to register your Refugee Week event, go to: www.refugeeweek.org.au.
- SCOA's draft strategic plan has been the subject of recent consultations, the final Strategic Plan will be ready shortly and will be circulated.
- SCOA would like to introduce their new Membership Services Officer, Laura Anderson.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Casey, S. (2011). *Reaping the Benefits of Migrant Settlement Planning and Co-ordination: An evaluation of the Rural Employment Assistance Program, ACCES Services, Queensland*

An evaluation of the REAP Program will be available on the ACCES Services website shortly (go to www.asi.org.au) or email annieh@asi.org.au to request a copy.

IBIS – Integration: Building Inclusive Societies

This "on-line community" is a relatively new resource showcasing international good practice around local migrant and refugee settlement and social inclusion projects. IBIS is a joint

project of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). UNAOC are currently in discussions with a range of organisations (including DIAC, SCoA, RCOA & MAV) to plan an IBIS regional launch and a one day forum in Melbourne on 7 October 2011.

www.unaoc.org/communities/migrationintegration/

LEAD – Locally Embracing & Accepting Diversity

Currently, there are two demonstration pilots in the City of Whittlesea and the Greater City of Shepparton. These involve the development of locally-based responses, all aimed at increasing acceptance of diversity and reducing discrimination. These responses will include a range of different approaches such as community awareness, community development, and supporting organisations with training and other resources.

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Programs-and-Projects/Freedom-from-discrimination/Localities-Embracing-and-Accepting-Diversity.aspx

<http://www.unaoc.org/ibis/2011/05/27/localities-embracing-and-accepting-diversity-lead-program/>

Melbourne University ARC Linkage Project – Visible Migrants and Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia

Three-year project aims to examine the interrelated social, economic and political factors that shape the resettlement experiences of recent visible migrants and refugees who live primarily in rural and regional Victoria.

www.ssps.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/vmr

Municipal Association of Victoria (2011). *Submission to the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism.*

The MAV has lodged a submission to the *Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia* and includes recommendations on involving local councils in settlement.

[www.mav.asn.au/CA256C320013CB4B/All/934835C60BCC8E1ACA2578A00019CFF5/\\$file/Multiculturalism%20Inquiry%20Submission%203.pdf](http://www.mav.asn.au/CA256C320013CB4B/All/934835C60BCC8E1ACA2578A00019CFF5/$file/Multiculturalism%20Inquiry%20Submission%203.pdf)

National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies (2007). *Attracting and Retaining Immigrants: A toolbox of ideas for small centres*, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, Canada.

http://integration-net.ca/english/ini/wci-idca/tbo/EN_Toolbox.pdf

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (2011). *Family Reunion under the Humanitarian Program: Guide for Migration Agents and Volunteers*, RAILS, Brisbane.

RAILS have developed a resource for volunteers assisting people who are applying to bring family members to Australia under the offshore Humanitarian Program, and particularly as 'immediate family' members ('split family' applications). The plain English guide is designed for use by registered migration agents; community volunteers assisting in form-filling; and as a 'self-help' kit for those able to prepare their own applications.

www.rails.org.au/education/RefugeeFamilyReunionGuide.pdf

RRAC/RCOA (2010). *Annotated bibliography of Regional Settlement Reports*

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/current/Regional_Settlmt_bibliography.pdf

Shepley, C. (2007). *Regional Settlement in Australia: Research into the settlement experience of humanitarian entrants in regional Australia, 2006-07*, DIAC

www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/government-programs/settlement-planning/pdf/evaluation-regional-settlement-australia.pdf

Taylor-Neumann, L. V. N . and Balasingam (2009). *Sustaining Settlement in Murray Bridge, South Australia*, Lutheran Community Care

[www.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Sustaining Settlement in Murray Bridge.pdf](http://www.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Sustaining_Settlement_in_Murray_Bridge.pdf)

Victorian Settlement Planning Committee (2009). *Drivers and success factors in regional refugee settlement*, VSPC, Melbourne.

www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1148/1/DriversandsuccessfactorsforRuralVIC-VSPC2009.pdf