

**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO THE COMMONWEALTH  
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION'S INQUIRY INTO  
MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Recommendation 1**

Develop a community education program including the release of a stamp issue featuring a chronological overview of immigration history to Australia that highlights the significant contribution that migrants have made to the economic, cultural and social life of our nation.

### **Recommendation 2**

That the Commonwealth and all States and Territories endorse and adopt an agreed set of principles of Australian multiculturalism based on Victoria's approach to multiculturalism as enshrined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.

### **Recommendation 3**

That the Commonwealth Government, in consultation with the states and territories, introduces an *Australian Multicultural Act* which defines the principles of multiculturalism and lays the foundations for an open united and inclusive society.

### **Recommendation 4**

That the Commonwealth Government dedicates additional funding for jurisdictions that deliver compulsory second language education for their students.

### **Recommendation 5**

Ensure that the Commonwealth Government's social inclusion agenda encompasses the needs of multicultural communities to promote a sense of belonging and engagement within the broader Australian society.

### **Recommendation 6**

That the Commonwealth Government provides at no additional charge an Australian Citizenship certificate to all eligible children born in Australia.

### **Recommendation 7**

That the Commonwealth Government in cooperation with States and Territories develop strategies that better utilise diaspora communities in enhancing cultural academic and economic relationships and outcomes.

### **Recommendation 8**

That the recommendations of the Working Party report be progressed and built upon by the new Select Council on Immigration and Settlement or similar bodies, and involve all levels of government.

**Recommendation 9**

That the Commonwealth and States/Territories work towards ensuring that the national volunteer strategy being developed incorporates strategies that:

- proactively engage CALD communities; and
- strengthen the broader community's capacity, including community organizations, to support volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

**Recommendation 10**

That settlement planning and services in Australia be coordinated across the three tiers of Government.

**Recommendation 11**

That the Commonwealth consults the States and Territories on policy initiatives impacting on the delivery of national settlement planning and service provision.

**Recommendation 12**

That the Commonwealth develops a more coordinated strategy and resource allocation that addresses the needs of the increasing proportions of seniors from CALD backgrounds.

**Recommendation 13**

That the Commonwealth and State governments create an agreed national settlement framework that is needs based and outcome focused.

**Recommendation 14**

That the Commonwealth Government in cooperation with States and Territories continues to support a non discriminatory Migration and Humanitarian Program

**Recommendation 15**

That the role of migration in building Australia's productive capacity be recognized, supported and promoted in its role in helping to drive a more prosperous community and industries.

**Recommendation 16**

Evaluate the Commonwealth Government's 'Productive Diversity Agenda' to meet the present and future needs of Australia.

**Recommendation 17**

That skilled migration be coordinated through a national skilled migration framework developed in consultation with the states and territories.

**Recommendation 18**

That the Commonwealth Government establishes a multicultural business advisory body in consultation with the states and territories that, amongst its terms of references, develops a national strategy that takes advantage of our diversity.

## ***Introduction***

Australia is one of the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse nations in the world. A nation that has both the heritage of one of the oldest indigenous peoples of the world and characteristics of a modern nation built on the aspirations of migrants and refugees from around the globe.

The aspirations of the various waves of migrants have had a significant impact on every facet of our society and way of life. Our future cohesion and harmony will be underpinned by the extent to which we genuinely embrace the diversity of the many cultures, languages and religions which make up Australia and how we reconcile diversity with unity.

The Victorian Government strongly believes in the importance of a cohesive, multicultural society, where all people are treated equally, regardless of their cultural or religious background while at the same time, encouraging all people to share a commitment to Australia, its democratic institutions and the rule of law.

To garner the best outcomes for our multicultural nation, the Victorian Government recommends a cooperative three tier whole-of-Government and whole-of-community approach to the multicultural and citizenship portfolio as well as a strong unequivocal bipartisan support for multiculturalism in every state and territory.

This submission makes a number of recommendations and identifies strategies that support multiculturalism.

## ***Victoria's Demographic Context***

Victoria is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse jurisdictions in Australia. At the 2006 Census, the total population of Victoria was 4.93 million, of which:

- 23.8% were born overseas in more than 200 countries;
- 43.6% were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas;
- 72.8% of overseas-born Victorians came from non-main English speaking countries;
- 20.4% spoke over 200 languages and dialects at home; and
- 68.7% followed over 120 religions.

## ***Benefits of multiculturalism***

The Victorian Government believes that this diversity is one of our State's greatest strengths and defining features.

Migrants and refugees have made, and continue to make a significant contribution to Victoria's society, economy and global competitiveness. Both emerging and established communities foster important connections with the rest of the world and contribute to the prosperity and future of our society.

Previous studies commissioned through the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs highlight the positive impact of migration<sup>1,2,3</sup>. For example, *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration into Australia* states that:

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<sup>1</sup> Access Economics 2002, *The Impact of Permanent Migrants on State and Territory Budgets*, prepared for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs on behalf of the Joint Commonwealth State and Territory Research Advisory Committee, Canberra, May.

- The social benefits of migration far outweigh the costs, especially in the longer term;
- Migrants to Australia have made and continue to make substantial contribution to Australia's stock of human, social and produced capital;
- The migrant presence has substantially increased the range and viability of available recreational and cultural activities for all Australians;
- Migrants overwhelmingly embrace Australian society, its political and cultural norms and, participate in community life.<sup>4</sup>

Victoria's overarching goal is to continue to support a multicultural society that promotes both unity and diversity, where people celebrate their cultures and traditions whilst, at the same time, commit to Australian democratic institutions, laws and values.

But we must first emphasise our migration success story.

We need to highlight the enormous contributions that migrants have made to Australia. The Victorian Immigration Museum for instance has a gallery called "*Immigrant Stories and Timeline.*" Here, a chronological overview of immigration history to Victoria is presented around the perimeter wall, while exhibition cases feature stories and objects connected to individual migrants representing different time periods, cultural backgrounds and motivations for migrating.

The Victorian Government also acknowledges that certain communities, particularly some newly arrived refugee communities, do face challenges in their initial settlement. These challenges were highlighted in a recent report by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.<sup>5</sup> The Victorian Government is committed, through a range of programs and initiatives, to facilitate the settlement process for these communities.

## **Recommendation 1**

Develop a community education program including the release of a stamp issue featuring a chronological overview of immigration history to Australia that highlights the significant contribution that migrants have made to the economic, cultural and social life of our nation.

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<sup>2</sup> Access Economics 2002, *The Impact of Permanent Migrants on the Commonwealth Budget Summary Report 2001-2002 Enhancement*, prepared for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, May.

<sup>3</sup> Carrington K., McIntosh A., and Walmsley J. (ed.) 2007, *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration into Australia*, Centre for Applied Research in Social Sciences, University of New England, NSW, April.

<sup>4</sup> Carrington K., McIntosh A., and Walmsley J. (ed.) 2007, op. cit., p.xi.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Settlement Outcomes for New Arrivals*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

### ***Victoria's approach –an overview***

Victoria's approach to multiculturalism is based on the following preamble and set of principles that are enshrined in legislation (the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*).

#### **Preamble**

- 1) The Parliament recognises and values the cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria.
- 2) The Parliament further recognises that one of the central tenets of multiculturalism is citizenship and that the expression citizenship is not limited to formal Australian citizenship, but refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a multicultural society.
- 3) The Parliament wishes to promote Victoria as a united community with shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities within which people from a diversity of backgrounds have—
  - (a) the freedom and opportunity to preserve and express their cultural heritage; and
  - (b) the freedom and opportunity to participate and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria; and
  - (c) equal rights and responsibilities under the laws of Victoria.

#### **Principles of multiculturalism**

- 1) The Parliament recognises that the people of Victoria are united in their shared commitment to—
  - (a) a democratic framework governed by the rule of law; and
  - (b) Victoria and Australia and to the people, interests and future of Victoria and Australia.
- 2) The Parliament further recognises that all Victorians come from diverse backgrounds and values the richness that such diversity brings to the Victorian community.
- 3) The Parliament supports the rights and responsibilities of citizenship to which subsection (1) refers and promotes the diversity to which subsection (2) refers by recognising the following principles of multiculturalism—
  - (a) all individuals in Victoria are entitled to mutual respect and understanding regardless of their diverse backgrounds;
  - (b) all individuals and institutions in Victoria should promote and preserve diversity within the context of shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities;
  - (c) all individuals in Victoria (regardless of background) have shown that they can work together to build a positive and progressive future and this co-operation is to be encouraged so as to enhance Victoria as a great place in which to live;
  - (d) all individuals in Victoria are equally entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State;
  - (e) all individuals in Victoria have a responsibility to abide by the State's laws and respect the democratic processes under which those laws are made;
  - (f) all individuals in Victoria should be united in a shared commitment to Australia and to community service;
  - (g) all individuals and institutions should recognise Victoria's diversity as an asset and a valuable resource benefiting Australia.
- 4) The Parliament further recognises that Victoria's diversity should be reflected in a whole of government approach to policy development, implementation and evaluation.

Victoria supports these principles through relevant legislation, various policy frameworks and a range of programs and initiatives across government.

Greater detail on the range of initiatives and activities supported by the Victorian Government is outlined in the Whole of Government report on multicultural affairs, which is tabled annually in Parliament and available through [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au).

While recognising the value of the many projects and initiatives that have contributed to Victoria's success in multicultural affairs, the Victorian Government has also undertaken initiatives or enacted significant reforms in a number of areas, including:

- increased independence and enhanced research and consultation functions for the Victorian Multicultural Commission;
- establishing eight regional advisory councils to work in partnership with local communities and improve settlement outcomes across Victoria;
- locating the policy and administrative functions for the multicultural affairs portfolio within a new Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC), within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC);
- improving coordination of settlement planning through the establishment of a Settlement Coordination Unit within DPC (OMAC);
- establishing a Ministerial Inter-departmental Multicultural Services Advisory Committee to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to multiculturalism and citizenship;
- increased support for communities in a number of areas including: support for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) youth; support for CALD seniors and their carers; support for new migrants trying to access employment; and support for cultural festivals;
- measures to improve communication between the Victorian Government and Victorians from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including the hosting of multicultural media conferences;
- revolutionising languages education in Victoria by creating one of the world's most diverse and effective language programs and exposing every student in Victorian schools to the benefits – not to mention the sheer joy – of being able to communicate in another language. An investment in languages is a wise investment – an important investment for our future. It will pay dividends for individual students – both personally and professionally – and it will pay dividends for Victoria. The Victorian Government believes languages education, and the cultural understanding it fosters, are fundamental to Victoria's multicultural success. As such, we see it as vital that State and Commonwealth governments provide ongoing support to languages education in mainstream schools, in community language schools and for multicultural language services;
- providing adequate interpreting and translating services is essential as it enables people with low English proficiency to access the government services they need; and
- providing funding to the Centre for Multicultural Youth to support Out of School Hours Learning Support programs and to resource 'Learning Beyond the Bell'. The main aim of the programs is to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people. The 'Learning Beyond the Bell' programs are particularly targeted at migrant and refugee students.

## **Recommendation 2**

That the Commonwealth and all States and Territories endorse and adopt an agreed set of principles of Australian multiculturalism based on Victoria's approach to multiculturalism as enshrined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.

## **Recommendation 3**

That the Commonwealth Government, in consultation with the states and territories, introduces an *Australian Multicultural Act* which defines the principles of multiculturalism and lays the foundations for an open united and inclusive society.

## **Recommendation 4**

That the Commonwealth Government dedicates additional funding for jurisdictions that deliver compulsory second language education for their students.



## **Response to the Terms of Reference**

### **1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda**

There is a need to provide a clear definition of citizenship and what makes a 'good citizen'. Citizenship is more than just the legal status of Australian Citizenship. It includes the ideals that form core civic life and community involvement. It includes a sense of belonging and a commitment to Australia, while acknowledging and respecting differences.

Governments need to continue to embrace and welcome new migrants and provide them with a sense of belonging and an appreciation of their value.

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda aims to achieve a socially inclusive society where all Australians have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. Achieving this vision means that all Australians will have the resources, opportunities and capability to:

- learn, by participating in education and training;
- work, by participating in employment or voluntary work, including family and carer responsibilities;
- engage, by connecting with people, using local services and participating in local civic, cultural and recreational activities; and
- have a voice in influencing decisions that affect them.

In current usage, the term "social inclusion" relates to how people are included (or excluded) from the socioeconomic life of a society; it therefore focuses on deficits that need to be addressed. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, whilst addressing issues of non-inclusion, also focuses on positive aspects that are concerned with how cultural, linguistic and religious diversity can be an asset to society.

The Commonwealth's Social Inclusion Agenda and Victoria's approach to multiculturalism share common ground. The importance of social and economic participation is a key tenet of both.

Multiculturalism is about building a harmonious, open society in which all of us – irrespective of our background – can feel a sense of belonging, and have the opportunity to attain our full potential. However, multiculturalism extends beyond the social inclusion paradigm and given our demographics it must continue to be afforded a unique emphasis in government policy. Our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity presents challenges but also a myriad of social, cultural and economic opportunities.

Therefore, multiculturalism, as a policy of inclusion, can help further promote social inclusion in this country, particularly for new arrivals.

#### ***Barriers to social inclusion***

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) recent release of the research report on the Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals (29 April 2011) highlights that, while people of all backgrounds experiencing homelessness or unemployment will face common issues, there are additional drivers of disadvantage experienced by some migrants and refugees, such as lack of proficiency in English and difficulties in accessing appropriate services. Key findings relate to English proficiency, obtaining education and employment and access to government services.

The Report highlights challenges faced by some refugees upon arrival in Australia, including in relation to obtaining employment. Factors such as interrupted education and English language difficulties historically have led to higher unemployment rates and lower labour participation rates in the early years of settlement. However, as the report also finds these rates tend to improve over time by acknowledging longer term settlement outcomes.

Further, the impact of discrimination should not be underestimated. The Commonwealth Government's 2010 report on the social inclusion agenda, *A Stronger Fairer Australia*, research suggests that race-based discrimination can lead to ill-health, isolation, reduced productivity, and reduced life expectancy. It can also negatively affect families and local communities, with resultant social and economic costs.<sup>6</sup>

Early intervention is fundamentally critical and enhancing well targeted education, training and employment pathways will no doubt deliver even better outcomes more quickly; facilitating greater confidence and social inclusion and thereby delivering benefits to all.

The Victorian Government supports social inclusion principles through initiatives that aim to ensure critical services such as health care are accessible and appropriate for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and refugee backgrounds. Certain recently arrived migrants and refugees in particular, may experience problems accessing services, and may also have relatively lower levels of support structures within their own communities to provide them with appropriate assistance.

The inclusion of relevant indicators related to CALD communities within the Australian Social Inclusion Board's *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring* report is welcomed, particularly with regard to the areas where being from a non-English speaking background, or being born outside of Australia (particularly in a non-main English speaking country), can negatively impact on indicators of social inclusion.

The Victorian Government aims to promote social inclusion and a cohesive multicultural society through citizenship and civics by emphasising the shared values of all Victorians. The Victorian Government supports the full participation in society, and therefore the social inclusion, of all migrants and refugees. The Victorian Government's provision of awareness seminars for new migrants and refugees on their rights and responsibilities will assist their understanding of the shared values of Victorians, which forms the cornerstone of a socially cohesive, multicultural society.

The seminars, proposed by the Victorian Government for early 2012, are designed to provide information to new migrants and refugees in metropolitan and regional Victoria. The seminars may cover the following areas:

- Multilingual services
- Financial management
- Laws and legal system
- Volunteerism
- Workings of Government

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<sup>6</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2009, *A Stronger Fairer Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra., p.9.

- Safety tips
- Consumer protection
- Local community involvement and interaction
- Australian history

By providing newly arrived migrants and refugees with comprehensive and targeted information, the *Migrant and Refugee Rights and Responsibilities Seminar Program* will assist their settlement and contribution to our State.

Victoria has welcomed the recent release of *The People of Australia: Australia’s Multicultural Policy* by the Commonwealth Government. Victoria supports the four multicultural policy principles contained in *The People of Australia: Australia’s Multicultural Policy*, which are consistent with our approach to multiculturalism and the principles outlined in the Multicultural Victoria Act.

The Victorian Government believes that the Policy can play an important role in enhancing social inclusion. While the new initiatives outlined in the national policy are welcomed, further information on implementation and resourcing is required before any detailed feedback can be provided.

A commitment to building local capacity and a commitment to long term, multi-year funding arrangements is required to support social inclusion initiatives for communities from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Currently children born in Australia do not receive their own certificate of Australian Citizenship. As these children become adults they have nothing to show to symbolize their belonging and commitment to Australia. Providing them with an individual certificate will provide a powerful symbol and an enhanced awareness of Australian Citizenship. While this suggestion is not new and has been recommended in the past we believe that it has merit.

Finally, the Victorian Government welcomes the establishment of the proposed new independent body, the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC), which replaces the current Australian Multicultural Advisory Council (AMAC).

Within this context, the Victorian Government believes that our multicultural policy framework can play a vital role in promoting greater social inclusion and cohesion.

### **Recommendation 5**

Ensure that the Commonwealth Government’s social inclusion agenda encompasses the needs of multicultural communities to promote a sense of belonging and engagement within the broader Australian society.

### **Recommendation 6**

That the Commonwealth Government provides at no additional charge an Australian Citizenship certificate to all eligible children born in Australia.

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

Diaspora communities make a significant and important contribution to Victoria's international relationships, particularly in our immediate region, but also in the many source countries from which we originate. Diaspora communities provide important and immediate links into their countries of origin, allowing not only powerful or influential personal relationships to be maintained, but providing a strong foundation for professional and business relationships to form and flourish. All Victorians benefit from the social, economic and business opportunities created by our diaspora communities.

- These international links promote Victoria as a desirable destination to live, study, do business and visit. Our diaspora communities allow Victoria to reach into markets to promote Victoria, and to expand our view of the world. All Victorians benefit from social and business communities that are welcoming, open, internationally integrated and competitive, and outward looking.
- Knowledge and networks are key to doing business. Through knowledge of language, institutions and culture members of Victoria's diaspora communities help bridge the gap between the organisations they work for and their countries of origin.<sup>7</sup> Victoria's diaspora communities have traditionally been the breeding ground for entrepreneurs and small business owners quick to recognise and take advantage of opportunities to do business with their countries of origin.
- Networks into business communities in their countries of origin are another way Victoria's diaspora communities help enhance Victoria's international trade and investment relationships. As well as being a source of knowledge, network ties help 'unlock doors', find local partners or agents and provide credibility.<sup>8</sup> By leveraging their knowledge and networks diaspora communities shorten the time it takes to learn about, understand and take advantage of international market opportunities resulting in faster economic returns to their organisations and the State.<sup>9</sup>
- A strong and vibrant diaspora community has demonstrable benefits to inbound tourism as well. Tourism Victoria figures indicate that 18% of international visitor expenditure in Victoria in 2010 was contributed by visitors whose main purpose is to "visit family and friends" - a total of \$714 million.

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<sup>7</sup> van Ruth, F., The internationalisation of Australian firms: how networks help bridge the psychic distance between a firm and a market, Unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Melbourne, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Recommendation 7

That the Commonwealth Government in cooperation with States and Territories develop strategies that better utilise diaspora communities in enhancing cultural, academic and economic relationships and outcomes.

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

The successful settlement of our migrant population has been due largely to a range of settlement services available across all levels of government. The Galbally Report on Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services to Migrants in 1978 (Commonwealth of Australia 1978) set the scene for the establishment of many of the services which now support cultural and linguistic diversity across the nation. Part of our successful approach has been the willingness of all levels of government to examine and improve upon previous policies, programs and approaches. Much has been done, but there is a need for continuing re-examination so that positive outcomes for our migrant and diverse population can continue to be achieved in the long term; reaping benefits for all Australians and the nation as a whole.

As noted earlier, the source countries and composition of our migrant population have diversified over the last two decades as new arrivals, especially in the refugee and humanitarian streams are predominantly from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The new arrivals add to Australia's increasing diversity and there is a need for more appropriate and coordinated planning of settlement services, especially for humanitarian entrants and refugees with high needs.

#### ***Supporting humanitarian entrants***

##### *Refugee Action Program*

Victoria has shown leadership in the area of settlement support for humanitarian and refugee entrants through the Refugee Action Program (RAP) initiative. The RAP works to gradually build the capacity of vulnerable refugee communities to access mainstream services and to plan and implement community-identified initiatives themselves. It empowers these communities to:

- More fully participate in and engage with their local communities;
- Access existing services;
- Identify local issues and concerns;
- Plan tailored, community-owned responses; and
- Enhance local capacity and improve settlement outcomes.

A key initiative of the Victorian Government is the establishment of a Settlement Coordination Unit within its Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship. The Unit will coordinate and facilitate a systemic and improved state, local and federal government response to the needs of newly arrived humanitarian migrant category entrants. Importantly, it will support the whole-of-government approach of the Victorian Government to settlement services.

The Victorian Government supplements Commonwealth support for humanitarian entrants through a wide variety of other programs and initiatives across government.

## *Settlement services*

Victoria, with support from all of the State and Territory jurisdictions, originally advocated for a systematic, comprehensive and independent review of settlement services across all levels of government, partly on the basis that such a comprehensive and independent review had not been undertaken since the 1978 Galbally Report. While this was not supported by the Commonwealth because a number of specific programmatic reviews had already been commissioned, the Ministerial Council for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs established a Working Party on Settlement Issues in July 2008.

The Working Party prepared a report on the *Stocktake of Settlement Services* in 2010, consisting of a catalogue of programs and funding by priority areas available across jurisdictions, as well as a summary of possible service gaps and best practice examples. A key theme underlying the findings is the need for reform of the funding and service systems to ensure that service delivery is outcome-focused and enhances collaboration between different funding sources and program partners; rather than a competitive process that unintentionally undermines collaboration and coordination.

The report identified education and employment as two of the most critical service areas that require more targeted funding and dedicated programs to ensure pathways to training and employment opportunities for successful settlement. The report also emphasised the need for better monitoring and evaluation frameworks and performance measures for settlement service programs and initiatives.

Young Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugee youth, often experience particular difficulties when attempting to integrate into the wider community. These young Victorians can experience difficulty with study because of their migration experience, disrupted education, English language capabilities and cultural differences. Many of these young Victorians are trying to come to terms with the strong expectations of their own culture and values, while attempting to fit in with the rest of the community.

The Victorian Government funds the Centre for Multicultural Youth to undertake research and provide advice to government concerning needs and issues important to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugee and recently arrived young people. Under its funding agreement with the Government, CMY also undertakes communication and consultation with the youth and community sector to support their capacity to work effectively with CALD young people and provides support and opportunities for CALD young people to actively participate in, and contribute to, the Victorian community.

In addition, the Government has recently committed to providing additional and specific funding support to assist young Victorians from CALD backgrounds living in rural and regional Victoria. Under this initiative, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) will receive \$1.8 million over 4 years to work in partnership with the Victorian Government on special programs, including the establishment of 2 regional CMY offices staffed by bi-cultural youth workers to provide a one stop shop to assist young people to fully participate in their local communities.

More emphasis on the arts and culture in resettlement may also provide opportunities for collaborations between resettlement agencies and refugee community-based organisations. Since many arts and cultural activities do not require proficiency in English, such programs may lead to a

much greater involvement for otherwise difficult to reach refugees. ESL programs may provide opportunities to work in cultural-related exercises.

### **Recommendation 8**

That the recommendations of the Working Party report be progressed and built upon by the new Select Council on Immigration and Settlement or similar bodies, and involve all levels of government.

#### *Employment and social outcomes for skilled migrants*

Initiatives which quickly transition newly-arrived skilled migrants into skilled employment, including the recognition of overseas qualifications, assist their settlement and integration into Australian society. This is particularly the case in regional Australia where the rate of skilled migration is lower than for metropolitan areas.

The social and economic benefits of facilitating employment pathways for migrants are not confined to the individuals who are seeking employment. Today's workforce is increasingly diverse and multicultural and delivers services in cross cultural settings on both the domestic and global contexts. To effectively manage and lead in this environment, and reap the potential benefits organisations are building the cultural competence of their staff. This incorporates strategies for the recruitment and retention of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce and building inclusive workplaces. Victoria is committed to promoting education in cultural competency across the public sector enabling the public service to better serve the community and successfully achieve its mission and goals.

To help reduce the barriers faced by overseas qualified professionals and skilled migrants from CALD backgrounds in the labour market, the Victorian Government will establish a 'CALD Job Bank Registry', where newly arrived qualified professionals and skilled migrants from CALD backgrounds can register their interest, together with their overseas qualifications. Employers will be able to access this registry and make contact directly with individuals who have registered.

Apart from providing practical assistance to skilled migrants in gaining meaningful employment, the Victorian Government's emphasis on citizenship and civics will assist them participate in and contribute to Victorian society and its economy. By becoming active members of the community they will come into contact with people, businesses and industries that will assist them not only in gaining knowledge of local job opportunities but provide them additional information that they can include in their curriculum vitae.

As outlined in the beginning of this submission, the Victorian Government believes that Australian citizenship and civics are the basis on which to build a strong and unified society. It is an important means to further support the full participation of new migrants and refugees into the broader Australian society. The Victorian Government believes that we can forge a more inclusive Australian society based on our commitment to our nation, its democratic institutions and laws. The Australian Constitution is at the heart of our democracy and our Australian national flag must be the symbol of our national unity.

While the inclusion of 'Citizenship' within the Victorian multicultural portfolio, the provision of awareness seminars for new migrants and refugees on their rights and responsibilities and related

programs will go some way towards facilitating the full participation of new arrivals into Australian society, the Victorian Government believes more can be done.

The Victorian Government believes that acquiring Australian Citizenship is more than just the status and privileges that come with it. We believe that acquiring Australian Citizenship is also about belonging to the wider Australian community, about a sense of pride in our nation and a pathway to serving the wider community. Living in Australia requires all of us, both new and established arrivals, to contribute and link to the wider community.

The participation of people from CALD backgrounds in the communities, in particular through volunteering, delivers a range of reciprocal benefits. For people from CALD background volunteering can provide important opportunities to:

- develop and strengthen key social networks;
- build new skills; and
- find employment.

In Victoria, people from CALD backgrounds have a history of participation and contribution that is sometimes under recognised. Volunteers have always been an integral part of Victorian society and instrumental in building Victoria. Our many service clubs and organisations perform charitable work and assist those in our community who are less fortunate.

There can be challenges, such as language, that sometimes prevent individuals from being able to access opportunities to volunteer or participate. Targeted initiatives designed to overcome the real or perceived barriers for both individuals and the broader community could enhance participations rates. It is also important that community organisations, that provide the majority of volunteering opportunities, are supported to ensure that opportunities are accessible by people from diverse backgrounds.

For this reason, the Victorian Government is supporting a number of initiatives that build on the volunteer ethos within Victoria's multicultural communities and strengthens the broader community's, including community organisations', capacity to support volunteers from diverse backgrounds. The Victorian Government supports a coordinated national approach to volunteering through a national strategy targeting new and recent arrivals and those who have just acquired Australian Citizenship. As such, the Victorian Government welcomes the Commonwealth's commitment to developing a national volunteer strategy.

## **Recommendation 9**

That the Commonwealth and States/Territories work towards ensuring that the national volunteer strategy being developed incorporates strategies that:

- proactively engage CALD communities; and
- strengthen the broader community's capacity, including community organizations, to support volunteers from diverse backgrounds.



## ***Key Challenges***

As our diversity increases, and the makeup of our multicultural society changes, there are a number of issues that will continue to be key considerations for future multicultural policy and program development.

### *New arrivals*

The range of source countries for new migrants has increased and therefore our diversity is greater than ever before; with a particular increase in numbers originating from Southeast and Northeast Asia as well as small but significant increases in migrants from the Middle East, Southern and Central Asia and the sub-Sahara region. Some, such as refugees, will arrive with unique and complex needs, which will differ from those of more established communities and transient groups such as international students and temporary skilled migrants.

### *Settlement patterns*

Increasing numbers of migrants who are settling in areas such as outer Melbourne and regional Victoria, which have not been sites for large migrant settlement in the past, require appropriate support services and infrastructure to ensure a successful transition.

### *Ageing migrants*

Australia's and Victoria's population from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds is ageing at a greater rate than the general population, and as people increasingly access health and aged care services there will be an increase in demand for language services and culturally appropriate services.

The 2006 Census showed that people born in non-Main English Speaking Countries were over-represented among older people. They comprised 18 per cent of Victoria's total population, but accounted for 26 per cent of all Victorians aged 65 years and over.

The rapid ageing of Non Main-English Speaking Country communities will continue in the foreseeable future. Projections by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicate that by 2011, 31 per cent of all Victorians aged 65 yrs and over will be from a Non Main-English Speaking Country background.

The Institute concluded that "by 2011 Victoria is projected to have the most culturally and linguistically diverse older population of any state or territory in Australia".<sup>10</sup>

Such demographics means that the CALD component needs to continue as part of the core consideration including forward planning and service delivery that enables equitable access to the service system, in particular programs such as Home and Community Care, Community Aged Care Packages and Residential Care.

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<sup>10</sup> The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2001, *Projections of Older Immigrants: People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 1996–2026, Australia*, prepared for the Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra, p.40.

The Victorian Government recognises that (while the Victorian and Commonwealth governments jointly fund some aged care programs, such as Home and Community Care,) Aged Care is largely a Commonwealth Government responsibility. We would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Commonwealth to create better outcome-based outputs in this area.

#### *Diverse language needs*

As outlined above, changes in migrants' countries of origin will result in increased demand for language services for new and emerging communities, while established and ageing communities will also require greater support.

The changes in migrants' countries of origin and the educational levels of migrants in their own languages places demands on educational services to provide specialist and targeted programs. This requires the training of educational providers and teachers in understanding the particular needs of these clients. Many have suffered from torture or trauma so their educational needs will be more complex than those of migrants from traditional source countries.

The Victorian Government believes that achieving better settlement outcomes requires a two pronged approach: First, that there is a nationally coordinated approach to settlement and settlement services involving all three tiers of Government and second, that the promotion of citizenship and civics be an integral part of a national settlement planning framework.

#### **Recommendation 10**

That settlement planning and services in Australia be coordinated across the three tiers of Government.
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#### **Recommendation 11**

That the Commonwealth consults the States and Territories on policy initiatives impacting on the delivery of national settlement planning and service provision.
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#### **Recommendation 12**

That the Commonwealth develops a more coordinated strategy and resource allocation that addresses the needs of the increasing proportions of seniors from CALD backgrounds.
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#### **4. Incentives to promote long-term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.**

New migrants make an important economic and social contribution to our State by creating new businesses, filling labour market shortages, and growing our intellectual, social and cultural capital. At the same time, the Victorian Government believes that it is important to maximise the capacity of our domestic human resources and opportunities presented by our diverse population to make Victoria and Australia a better place to live.

Settlement planning and skilled migration should benefit both regional and metropolitan Victoria. Historically metropolitan areas benefit the most from overseas migration flows as migrants perceive that there is less opportunity in the regions for employment or support to assist their establishment in a new country. However, the skills demands of regional Australia are just as pressing as metropolitan areas. Victoria has progressed with regional planning initiatives to make provincial Victoria attractive for local and overseas migration.

##### *Regional Advisory Councils*

The Victorian Government is establishing eight Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). The RACs will work in partnership with local communities to identify settlement initiatives and improve settlement outcomes across Victoria. The Victorian Government believes that a National Settlement Framework would further facilitate the work of RACs in improving settlement coordination.

Social and economic benefits, along with community building, are persuasive arguments for including arts and cultural concerns in resettlement planning. Through its *Emerge Cultural Network* and *Emerge Cultural Hubs* initiatives, Multicultural Arts Victoria has developed a cultural network mentoring arts program in both metro and regional areas within the target emerging and refugee communities. MAV's programs address the issue of language; economic disadvantage and social isolation.

#### **Recommendation 13**

That the Commonwealth and State governments create an agreed national settlement framework that is needs based and outcome focused.
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#### **Recommendation 14**

That the Commonwealth Government in cooperation with States and Territories continues to support a non discriminatory Migration and Humanitarian Program
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## **5. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia’s long term productive capacity**

Immigration is an important component of Victoria’s economic growth and skilled migration brings a number of significant economic benefits that help to increase the State’s productivity and economic performance including:

- meeting the skill needs of the Victorian economy that cannot be met locally, helping to address economic constraints on business;
- boosting the skill composition of Victoria’s human capital and assisting Victoria’s internationally recognised high-technology processes, advanced manufacturing, and knowledge creation and utilisation industries, through a more productive and competitive workforce, technical expertise and high-level skills that are not readily available in Australia;
- increasing population, boosting supply of new housing and demand for locally produced consumer goods (assisting increased GSP);
- enhanced international encourage travel for business, tourism and international education purposes; and
- offsetting some of the social and economic impact of Australia’s ageing population.

It is important to maintain an appropriately-sized and well managed skilled migration program to continue to deliver these benefits for both the Victorian and Australian economy.

We have a rapidly changing workplace environment and workforce where greater weight is placed on competencies and competitiveness. This is a time when we should be using innovative ways of increasing productivity and maintaining our competitiveness. One valuable resource at our disposal is our culturally and linguistically diverse workforce. Australia’s culturally and linguistically diverse workforce can give business the edge when it comes to knowledge of different languages, business networks, understanding of different cultures as well as an awareness of overseas business practices and customs.

Businesses should be making greater use of our cultural diversity to gain greater access to overseas markets and increase Australian exports. Our cultural diverse workforce provides us with a means to not only evaluate domestic cultural niche markets for sales but to evaluate potential products for export that are attuned with the culture and language of the country that you wish to export to.

The Commonwealth Government should be actively promoting and marketing the benefits of our cultural and linguistically diversity and encouraging businesses to value and utilize its diverse workforce to expand and capture new markets.

### **Recommendation 15**

That the role of migration in building Australia’s productive capacity be recognized, supported and promoted in its role in helping to drive a more prosperous community and industries.

### **Recommendation 16**

Evaluate the Commonwealth Government’s ‘Productive Diversity Agenda’ to meet the present and future needs of Australia.

## **6. The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants**

The Victorian Government is cognisant of the range of work across governments and departments that deals with skilled migration and seeks to place these targeted actions within a framework that takes a wider view of the economic potential and settlement needs of all new migrants.

When skills and expertise cannot be sourced locally, skilled migration is an important means of addressing the skills needs of Victorian employers. There are substantial benefits in reframing Australia's Skilled Migration Program to favour a demand-driven (employer sponsored) system, rather than a mainly supply driven system with a focus on lists of occupations. A demand-driven approach will make it more likely that the skills and experiences of the migrant are being effectively utilised and that there is less likelihood of oversupply of skills and occupations that are not in demand. The Commonwealth needs to cooperate more effectively with State and Territory Governments to ensure that the labour needs of each jurisdiction are being met by the skilled migration program.

Additionally, Victoria's participation in state sponsorship under the State Migration Plan relies on industry assessment of applications to ensure that the Victorian Government selectively sponsors individuals whose skills are prized by the Victorian economy. Post arrival monitoring of state sponsored migrants has found that this selective sponsorship has resulted in the proportion of Victoria's sponsored migrants working within their nominated occupation exceeding the Victorian Government's minimum benchmark of 80 per cent.

There is no objectively stated desirable "profile" of the skilled migration stream, other than it should enable those individuals, with the transferrable skills, qualifications and experience desired by employers to migrate to Australia – regardless of age and nationality.

### ***Victoria's skilled migration strategy***

*Global Skills for Victoria (GSV)*, Victoria's skilled migration strategy, aims to attract skilled and business migrants to the State to address the skills needs of the Victorian economy. GSV is supported by a range of initiatives with its key objectives including:

- expanding and enhancing Victoria's skill base;
- marketing Victoria as a destination of choice for skilled and business migrants;
- assisting skilled and business migrants to make the most of their skills; and
- attracting and retaining skilled migrants to provincial Victoria.

One of the important elements of GSV is *Global Skills for Provincial Victoria*, aimed at assisting regional economies to meet their skills needs through migration. The strategy includes developing a network of 11 regional partnerships that assist regional employers to attract and retain skilled migrants, through working closely with regional employers and communities to develop and implement services to attract migrants to their region, and through linking migrants with local employers and professional communities. The strategy also provides locally developed solutions to assist newly arrived migrants into employment, which may include local workplace orientation, mentoring, and access to local employer and professional networks.

## Recommendation 17

That skilled migration be coordinated through a national skilled migration framework developed in consultation with the states and territories.

### 7. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises

Small Business Victoria (SBV), within the Department of Business and Innovation, provides a range of low-cost programs, services, information and tools to assist new and prospective small business people to get their enterprises started as quickly as possible. These services include: online, telephone and in-person information on starting a business, licensing and registration; workshops and seminars on starting a business; and the month-long Energise Enterprise Small Business Festival each year.

The Victorian Government has recently called for expressions of interest from multicultural business owners to join its new Multicultural Business Ministerial Council. The Council's purpose is to provide advice on policy initiatives and priorities to support multicultural businesses, including the 30 per cent of Victorian small business operators born overseas

With regard to newly arrived prospective business owners, SBV provides translated online content and telephone translation services for regulatory and business information in 15 languages other than English.

In addition, Small Business Victoria – through the *Global Skills for Victoria* program – presents an information briefing on SBV advocacy, programs and services at the Victorian Government's bi-monthly "Live in Victoria Business Migrant Seminar". The tailored content of these seminars is generally presented in Chinese (Mandarin) as the predominant language of business migrants to Victoria.

### Victorian Multicultural Business Advisory Council

#### Overview

Victoria's Multicultural Business Ministerial Council has the aim of facilitating business opportunities that take advantage of Victoria's cultural and linguistic resources. The Multicultural Business Ministerial Council provides important input from the perspective of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) business communities. Specifically the Council's focus is on developing Victoria's export capabilities through better use of the multicultural diversity which exists in this state.

#### Terms of Reference

The Council provides a peak body facilitating Government interaction with Victoria's ethnic business community. It contributes to the Government's overall aim of improving the utilisation of business skills and opportunities presented by people from non-English speaking backgrounds to assist in employment and wealth creation for all Victorians.

The Council will operate under the direction and at the request of the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business and will:

- identify trade opportunities and recommend strategies for developing the export capabilities of Victorian small business

- advise the Government on potential trade fair and mission opportunities and strategies to involve Victorian small business
- actively promote Victoria as a culturally diverse business centre by assisting the Government communicate policy and programs to the multicultural business community
- support the development of Victorian trade in emerging markets by identifying opportunities and utilising overseas networks
- provide a forum for strategic business networking between multicultural business communities

### **Recommendation 18**

That the Commonwealth Government establishes a multicultural business advisory body in consultation with the states and territories that, amongst its terms of references, develops a national strategy that takes advantage of our diversity.

### **Conclusion**

The Victorian Government believes that multiculturalism and citizenship are complementary. We believe that the promotion of citizenship and civics to new migrants, including refugees, to better understand Australian values, institutions and laws within our democratic society is an approach that should be pursued in cooperation not only at all three tiers of government but also with every political leader in Australia. Australian multiculturalism is too important to be used as a political football.

It is critical that governments of all political persuasions continue to recognize the economic, social and cultural benefits migrants from around the world have brought to our nation which have enriched it and will continue to do so into the future.