



# Settlement outcomes of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

A submission to the Federal Government's  
Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes

January 2017





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## Submission to Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes

### Background

CMY is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia. Our purpose is to ensure that young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have every opportunity to succeed in Australia.

CMY strongly supports the government's ongoing investment in settlement supports and services for young people and welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Government's inquiry into settlement outcomes. This submission responds to the inquiry terms of reference, including:

- the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants;
- national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects;
- the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome;
- whether current migration processes adequately assess a prospective migrant's settlement prospects; and
- any other related matter.

In this submission CMY also responds to the direction in the terms of reference that the Committee give particular consideration to:

- social engagement of youth migrants, including involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behavior such as gang activity, and the adequacy of the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions as a means to address issues arising from this behavior.



## Executive Summary

Australia's long history of migration has significantly contributed to nation building and continues to deliver significant economic, social and cultural benefits to both new arrivals and the community as a whole. Two key factors have directly contributed to the success of migration in Australia. Firstly, a targeted migration programme that balances national economic imperatives and needs with Australia's humanitarian commitments, international responsibilities and obligations to foreign residents. Second is the ongoing commitment to investing in the outcomes of new arrivals through Australia's settlement program.

Australia's migration programme has been characterised by an investment in diversity over the last 50 years and, if maintained, will continue to return benefits to the nation as we move towards a future marked by even greater levels of human mobility and connectedness.<sup>1</sup> An ongoing commitment to past investments has also resulted in Australia having one of the most well-regarded settlement programs in the world today. It has been built on learning lessons from each successive wave of new migrants leading to the evolution of a broad suite of settlement supports and services that not only support new arrivals to settle in, but promote community connectedness and drive the national narrative on social cohesion. Snapshots of a few good practice case studies in Victoria are outlined in the body of this submission.

The strength of Australia's diversity comes from leadership and investment in Australia's brand of multiculturalism that supports a cohesive, diverse community, which a majority of Australians believe is good for the country.<sup>2</sup> In a recent review of the impact of migration on economic and social cohesion in the UK, the Migration Advisory Committee found that "new migration does not notably affect cohesion but pre-existing diversity and high levels of poverty are predictors of lower social cohesion."<sup>3</sup>

In Australia today, socio-economic disadvantage remains a central challenge for many population groups, not just migrant and refugee communities,<sup>4</sup> with disadvantage directly impeding full and equal participation. In addition, for migrant and refugee communities, discrimination (and its resulting disadvantages) remains one of the significant drivers of mental illness in Australia and reported experiences of racism are currently close to the highest levels recorded in the last decade.<sup>5</sup> It highlights the need to address disadvantage and marginalisation as a priority and to reinvigorate the national narrative that recognises the strength of our diversity.

A noteworthy evolution in our settlement service system is the development of youth specific settlement programmes to ensure good settlement outcomes for young people. This response was made in recognition of the complexity of adolescent development and, it is complementary to settlement programmes for adults. CMY believes that the next challenge is to give deeper consideration to the intersection of settlement and disadvantage for young people. We believe part of this answer is to extend settlement support beyond the five-year period for those young people who are disengaged from protective factors and at risk of falling into further disadvantage.

In addition, there are numerous examples of effective programs that promote the settlement outcomes of young people across Australia, and in Victoria, that build on the knowledge and practice of youth settlement

<sup>1</sup> VicHealth & CSIRO (2015). *Bright Futures: Megatrends impacting the mental wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 22

<sup>2</sup> Markus, A., (2015). *Mapping Social Cohesion National Report 2015*, Scanlon Foundation and Monash University, Melbourne.

<sup>3</sup> Saggat, S., Sommerville, W., Ford, R., & Sobolewska, M. (2012). *The Impact of Migration on Social Cohesion and Integration*. London: UK Border Agency, Home Office.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2013). Section 5.4 Socio-Economic Disadvantage. In ABS (2013). *Research Paper: A Review of Regional Development Australia Committee Regional Plans, 1381.0, 2013*. Canberra: ABS.

<sup>5</sup> Markus, A. (2014). cited in VicHealth & CSIRO (2015).



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around the world. Significantly, our settlement program has effectively allowed for each state and territory to tailor appropriate settlement programmes relevant to the size and shape of each state service and community infrastructure. This needs to continue.

In recent months Victoria has witnessed a series of riots and escalating issues in the state's youth justice centres, along with a perceived increase in young people engaged in gang activity alongside an apparent increase in young people featuring in progressively more brazen, violent crimes. The result has been a heightening of concerns for public safety and an intense public discussion on the state's capacity to respond to youth crime. Within this context, public scrutiny has disproportionately focused upon the small number of young people from refugee and migrant communities participating in these events.<sup>6</sup>

Given the heightened focus on control and border security in the current global context, we recognise the need for the Federal Government to respond to community fears and anxiety. However, the way we assess the character and other traits of potential entrants is not the issue here. Australia already has rigorous security checks in place that have served us well. It balances our security needs with the rights of individuals and in this case, the rights of the child.

With the advantage of a long involvement in youth issues, CMY's experience of the problematising of migrant and refugee young people in relation to youth street behavior and 'youth gang' violence is not new. In the 1990s, much space was given in the media and public policy discourse about Vietnamese youth gangs and violence. Race-based panic tends to stigmatise migrant and refugee young people and fuel anxiety about our humanitarian intake. The conflation of youth justice issues with settlement issues does little to address the fundamental reasons of young people's involvement in anti-social behaviours.

Whilst we acknowledge public concerns about safety and the need for leadership and community wide responses to the issue, we are also cognisant of needing a balanced discussion that does not simply reduce it to a race based issue. Having noted the caution, we are well aware through our work with Victoria Police, key stakeholders, and the community, that the characteristics of this small group of young people involved in the spate of incidents is a new face of youth crime. They are older adolescents who have never been involved in crime before and have now committed serious first offences. The second cohort is repeat offenders who are younger adolescents with a history in the justice system.<sup>7</sup> Given the new pattern, we require a different approach led by the state's youth justice system in partnership with settlement services, among others.

CMY believes the approach of utilising our well regarded settlement programme to manage and deal with adolescent anti-social behavior goes against the deep practice and research on ways of intervening with young people who engage in activity that includes anti-social behavior, criminal activity and group conflict. In the last decade, brain imaging technologies have increased our understanding of how the brain develops over time including changes during adolescence and into adulthood. During adolescence, the parts of the brain that are continuing to grow and change are those where rational thinking, reason and logic originate, and areas that control voluntary motor movement, balance and muscle tone.<sup>8</sup> This is not to excuse behaviours that have transgressed family and public expectations and laws. CMY believe transgressive behaviors must be met with consequences.

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<sup>6</sup> While some refugee and migrant communities are overrepresented in youth offender statistics in Victoria, the overall number of overseas born young people engaged in the activities that have garnered most public attention are considerably small. See further details below.

<sup>7</sup> Sutherland, P. & Millsted, M. (2016) *Patterns of Recorded Offending Behaviour Amongst Victorian Young Offenders*. Available at <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/research-and-evaluation/publications/youth-crime>

<sup>8</sup> Hephill and Smith (2010). "Preventing youth violence What does and doesn't work and why? An overview of the evidence on approaches and programs" (Prepared for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth). Melbourne: Centre for Adolescent Health, Department of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne.



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The questions raised by this inquiry, and the current public discourse on the Victorian situation, are both disproportionate and flawed as this is not a ‘migrant or refugee’ problem but a youth justice problem. CMY is of a strong belief that any young person, including young people of migrant and refugee background who have broken the law or committed a crime will need to be dealt with by the youth justice system, rather than having their citizenship status questioned or removed.

The current situation unfolding in Victoria is not one of poor settlement. It is a story of the emergence of a particular type of youth offending that is linked to well-researched risk factors for youth offending<sup>9</sup>, coupled with a youth justice system experiencing unprecedented stresses. Neither of which are unique to migrant and refugee young people.

The proposal to use the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions to address current issues is **disproportionate** and **inappropriate**. This is particularly the case as Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC). Signatories to the CROC agree to protect and promote the rights of the child to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential. Their right to learn and grow and to thrive is to be given the opportunity to learn appropriate consequences (including sentencing in a youth justice facility) to behaviours. Young people’s involvement in anti-social behavior needs a youth justice and youth work response that has been developed in consideration of adolescent development.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



## Recommendations

- *the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants*
  1. Strengthen State and Federal Government coordination.
    - i. Invest in a consistent national mechanism for data collection across government agencies and government funded services to monitor and assess settlement outcomes for young people. The data sets to be collected are to utilise the indicators as set out in the National Youth Settlement Framework and the data is to be made publicly available.
    - ii. Jointly fund settlement services and state youth focused services to develop strong settlement transitions for young people. Transitioning out of settlement requires a capable and skilled mainstream state-funded service system that can adapt to the needs of this cohort of young people. It also requires a skilled and capable settlement service that can accurately assess and respond to youth issues.
    - iii. Resource and support relevant forums for the settlement service system and state services to share knowledge, good practice and relevant approaches.
    - iv. Jointly develop policy responses to issues for young people settling in Australia. This includes federal and state program responses that are complementary. The current youth justice issue requires a joint youth justice and a settlement program response.
    - v. Jointly fund programs that target supports to at risk and disengaged young people to remain engaged in education and find employment.
  2. On arrival and first five years.
    - i. Greater focus on young people within existing settlement service programs. This includes full implementation of Youth Sub Plans within Humanitarian Settlement Services as well as youth inclusive responses in broader settlement services.
    - ii. Access to English language support for all those who need it and tailoring delivery for different needs.
  3. Investment over time.
    - i. Extend eligibility on a needs basis for settlement services beyond the five-year criteria for those young people who are disengaged and/or at risk of further disadvantage.
    - ii. Improve pathways for young people between settlement and mainstream services by supporting collaboration among providers and promoting opportunities for cross-fertilisation and linkages with multicultural youth specialists.
    - iii. Provide greater investment in targeted supports to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to sustain engagement in school; transition from education to employment; and to assist families and communities in supporting their young people.
    - iv. All levels of government must recognise the need to resource youth settlement services to build good practice capabilities within mainstream services for responding to the particular circumstances of young people in the settlement context.



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4. Social Cohesion.

- i. All levels of government must recognise the need to consistently foster a sense of connectedness and belonging in the general community through social cohesion initiatives. The degree to which newly arrived young people are able to acculturate and build a sense of belonging is dependent on the host community's ability to create an environment of inclusiveness.
- ii. Resource and support program models that employ young people as bicultural facilitators/youth facilitators. This will recognise the skills, strengths and social capital that is unique to young people. Furthermore, this approach will enable young people to have agency in local communities that go towards deepening inclusion in communities.
- iii. Invest in partnership approaches between multicultural youth specialist services and newly arrived communities to support them in identifying and addressing youth disengagement. This includes strategies to assist newly arrived communities to build community structures to support themselves and to bridge into mainstream supports.

5. Service Eligibility

- i. Review eligibility to ensure equitable access for young people to services. The current system is not necessarily based on need but on the type of visa that a young person holds. For example, Pasifika young people are not eligible for settlement services despite having similar needs to new arrivals.

- *national and international best practice*

6. In partnership with the NGO sector, establish formal linkages with relevant resettlement countries to share research, knowledge and practice on good settlement with young people.

- *the adequacy of current migration processes in assessing settlement prospects*

7. CMY does not support any move to re-introduce any form of discrimination based on ascriptive characteristics of migrants into our migration intake processes. We strongly believe that current checks and balances already serve to ensure our national security and other interests.

- *the adequacy of the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions as a means to address "issues arising" from the involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behavior*

8. The existing Migration Act 1958 character test provisions should not be amended to try and address "issues arising" from the involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behavior.





## Australia's Settlement Program

Australia has a long and proud history of migration that has been marked by economic and social achievements for migrants and the nation as a whole. Australia's targeted and carefully managed Migration Programme is an essential tool in achieving these successes that works to balance the need to meet labour force needs and contribute to the nation's productivity and development, while also ensuring Australia's humanitarian commitments and other international responsibilities and obligations to foreign residents.<sup>10</sup>

Equally central to Australia's migration success story has been sustained investment in the wellbeing, and economic, social and civic participation of migrants and their children. CMY welcomed the Federal Government's recent reinforcement of the value of this investment in the National Settlement Framework, which reaffirms the central role of settlement infrastructure in connecting migrants and new arrivals with the wider Australian community.<sup>11</sup>

Australia's settlement program has benefited from decades long commitment to the goals of providing support based on need, fostering participation in Australian society as soon as possible, fostering welcoming communities and drawing on the valuable skills and expertise of civil society to provide services and support.<sup>12</sup> An equally important foundation to this success has been bipartisan recognition and reinforcement across all tiers of government and community of "the significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population", which has been central to the success of our multicultural society and the maintenance of high levels of social cohesion.<sup>13</sup>

Today, Australia's approach to settlement is based on mutual benefits. This refers to the idea that the Australian community benefits as a whole both economically and socially from migration which brings different skills, perspectives and knowledge, while migrants benefit from joining one of the world's most stable, democratic and welcoming societies.<sup>14</sup> This approach continues to recognise that it is essential that all members of the Australian community, including new arrivals, are equipped to participate fully in the economic and social life of the community.<sup>15</sup>

Australia now has one of the most-well regarded settlement service systems in the world as a result of a sustained commitment to this approach. Recent reviews of key federally-funded settlement services have indicated that they are generally working well and are achieving their objectives; broadly meeting client needs; and, having a clear and lasting impact on client outcomes and wellbeing.<sup>16</sup>

Australia also benefits from a range of broader structures and supports for settlement that operate outside the federally funded settlement service system. This broader settlement infrastructure is reinforced through an ongoing commitment to collaboration across government, between government and civil society, and with communities.<sup>17</sup> The Australian Government's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy, which ensures

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10 Australian Government (2016). National Settlement Framework. Available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/national-settlement-framework>

11 Ibid.

12 Australian Government (2016a). Snapshots from Oz, DSS website, Available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/snapshots-from-oz>

13 In recent years this has been evident from Australian Government (2003). Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic directions for 2003-2006 to Australian Government (2016a). Snapshots from Oz

14 Australian Government (2016).

15 Australian Government (2016a).

16 Productivity Commission (2016). Migrant Intake into Australia, Inquiry Report No. 77. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia; Department of Social Services (2015). Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes (Prepared by Ernst and Young). Canberra: DSS.

17 Productivity Commission (2016).



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government services and programs are attuned to the realities of diversity in Australian society, is one example of how Federal Government investment enhances the broader settlement support system.<sup>18</sup>

However, settlement is multifaceted and complex.<sup>19</sup> Settlement needs and challenges can change over time as not all migrants and refugees settle at the same pace and different groups have different needs. This requires flexible and responsive systems and structures and a commitment to continuous improvement that is underpinned by the balancing needs with responsibilities.<sup>20</sup>

## Young people – unique experience

One quarter of young Victorians have a refugee or migrant background (either born in Australia to at least one migrant parent or born overseas and migrating as children). Eight per cent of Australia's youth population is overseas born, arriving in Australia under the age of 18 and at least partly educated in Australia.<sup>21</sup>

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are a diverse group who often face more complex transitions than their Australian born peers and those of adults. Although young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds may share common experiences as a result of the migration process – such as leaving behind friends and family, and having to adapt to a new culture and systems - important differences exist between the two groups.

Migrants have generally made the decision to move to Australia, often for employment or educational opportunities. However it is important to note that a young person migrating as part of a family unit may not necessarily have had a say in the matter.

In contrast, the refugee experience is defined by the forced nature of the migration and exposure to political, religious or inter-cultural violence persecution or oppression, armed conflict or civil discord. Young people who have refugee or refugee-like backgrounds may have experienced: a state of fearfulness for self and family members; leaving the country at short notice; inability to return to the country of origin; and, uncertainty about the possibility of maintaining links with family and home.<sup>22</sup> Often when young people from refugee backgrounds do arrive in Australia, they face a considerable lack of social, economic and political opportunities and life choices, making integration into their new homes and new communities difficult.<sup>23</sup>

In the process of meeting basic needs, such as housing, finding employment and linking into key services like healthcare, both refugee and migrant young people may face a number of challenges upon making their new home in Australia. These can include learning English, adjusting to unfamiliar systems and a new culture, and rebuilding new social networks while experiencing separation from extended family and friends.<sup>24</sup>

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18 Australian Government (2015). *The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Guide*. Canberra; Commonwealth of Australia.

19 Australian Government (2016).

20 Olliff & Mohamed (2007)., Olliff & Mohamed (2007). *Settling in: How do refugee young people fair within Australia's settlement system?* Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, Melbourne, p. 14

21 MYAN (2014). *The CALD Youth Census*. Carlton: The Centre for Multicultural Youth; OECD & European Union (2015). *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In*. Paris: OECD Publishing, p. 235 (Table 13.1)

22 Coventry L, Guerra C, Mackenzie D, & Pinkney S. (2002). *Wealth of All Nations*. Hobart: National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, p.15.

23 CMY (2011). *Refugee young people and resettlement*. Carlton: CMY

24 Victorian Settlement Planning Committee (2005). *Good Practice Principles: Guide for working with refugee young people*. Melbourne: Department of Victorian Communities, p. 7.



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In addition to these shared challenges, family configurations and dynamics are often altered as a result of the migration process. Traditional forms of family and community support can be fractured due to separation. Financial resources can also be extremely limited due to the refugee experience and/or due to the need to remit financial assistance to family members overseas, while family and community members in Australia are often less able to assist financially for similar reasons. Migrants who are not Australian citizens - for example, those from New Zealand - are unable to access government welfare or Medicare, which can place financial pressure on families and young people, particularly if they face illness or unemployment.<sup>25</sup>

These unique challenges add a layer of complexity and instability to the fundamental transitions that take place during adolescence and young adulthood.<sup>26</sup> In spite of this, young people from both refugee and migrant backgrounds are extremely resilient and adaptive, and demonstrate a strong drive to succeed and build new lives in Australia.<sup>27</sup>

Research also shows that there are key relationships between social, environmental and economic determinants of wellbeing and full and equal participation.<sup>28</sup> This means that while direct investment in the skills and capital of young people is important, equally important is investment in building the inclusiveness of the communities, services and environments in which they are settling. This would include for example, creating local community environments for acceptance of diversity and cohesion, strengthening young people's sense of belonging, social connectedness, resilience and coping skills; creating meaningful and supportive opportunities in education and employment; and reducing racism and discrimination.<sup>29</sup>

### **Case study: *I Speak Football***

Funded by philanthropic organisations, *I Speak Football* creates a sense of unity, connectedness and community amongst young people from different cultural backgrounds.

*I Speak Football*'s success is based on a strong partnership approach with funders, local government, sport organisations and most of all, with young people. There is common understanding and support amongst the partners in building social cohesion through using football as a tool, and at the same time, investing in the skills and capital of young people.

Using a youth-led approach, *I Speak Football* is built around the known benefits of role-modeling and peer-to-peer learning. Young leaders are identified and supported by CMY to develop their leadership skills and acquire coaching and refereeing accreditation. They are then supported to deliver weekly football sessions over a six-month period with young people from across Melbourne.

The football training sessions led by the young leaders are designed to include issues of social inclusion, including racism and discrimination, access and equality and participation. In addition, the young leaders extend their employment opportunities in sports by having acquired coaching and referring qualifications and skills, together with actual hands-on experience in organising and delivering football sessions.

In 2015, all of the young players and young leaders who took part in *I Speak Football* reported an increase in learning and understanding other cultures, in meeting other young people from different cultures, and in

25 Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2016). Fact Sheet – New Zealanders in Australia. Available at <https://www.border.gov.au/about/corporate/information/fact-sheets/17nz>

26 Ibid.

27 Couch, J. & Francis, S. (2006). Participation for All? Searching for marginalized voices: The case for including refugee young people. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 16 (2), p. 279; CMY (2014). *Negotiating Adolescence in Australia*. Carlton: CMY.

28 Victorian Government, cited in CMY (2014a). *Mind Matters: The Mental health and Wellbeing of Young People from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds*. Carlton: CMY.

29 Ibid.



confidence and/or leadership skills. Further to this, 75% of young leaders reported they had gained qualifications and experience that will help them to find work in the future.

*“I Speak Football demonstrates how quickly stereotypes and perceptions can be dispelled by something shared, something as simple as football.” Project Officer, I Speak Football*

## Measuring settlement outcomes

CMY do not support any move to re-introduce any form of discrimination, as well-intentioned as they may be, into our migration intake processes. This is based on the following:

1. We lack the empirical evidence to inform any reliable measure of ‘settlement potential’ and the what counts as ‘success’ is subjective
2. Research shows that the settlement context (environmental factors such as community attitudes towards migration and job and housing market) are as influential (if not more so) on outcomes than individual character

We believe strongly that current checks and balances in place serve to adequately ensure national security and other interests, and any attempt to assess migrant suitability against any other more limited measures would undermine our national narrative, weaken social cohesion and threaten the sense of belonging and safety of existing members of our diverse community.

Successful settlement is regarded as vital not only to migrants and refugees to become self-reliant, productive citizens, but for promoting social cohesion and is also often recognized as a prerequisite for the host population’s acceptance of further immigration.<sup>30</sup> However, in the absence of solid facts and figures about what contributes to and can be defined as successful settlement policy and service development decisions often entail “some element of subjectivity”.<sup>31</sup>

A broad literature has been amassed that looks at different ways to define and measure settlement.<sup>32</sup> Amid these, in 2006 CMY published *Settling In*, a report exploring what ‘settling well’ looks like for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia. Building on the CMY’s extensive experience in working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria, this publication added to the broader literature with the specific purpose of identifying gaps in services as well as positive practices in order to assist in planning for better outcomes specifically for refugee young people and the broader Australian community.

To support a consistent national approach to multicultural youth issues and in particular youth settlement, CMY shared its expertise, knowledge and experience with other states and territories in Australia to grow a network of multicultural youth specialist agencies. Subsequently, in 2006, CMY succeeded in attracting funds to resource and seed a national multicultural youth voice on multicultural youth issues. MYAN Australia grew out of this network and it engages in national policy and advocacy work. It also supports a national approach to youth settlement through the development of multicultural youth advocacy networks at the state and territory level.

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<sup>30</sup> OECD & European Union (2015).

<sup>31</sup> Productivity Commission (2016).

<sup>32</sup> See for an introduction the work of Colic-Peisker (2009). Visibility, settlement success and life satisfaction in three refugee communities in Australia. *Ethnicities*, 9(2), pp. 175–199



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Despite consolidation of what we know to be good settlement and indicator frameworks for determining good settlement outcomes, we are yet to have a nationally consistent mechanism for data collection to monitor and assess outcomes for young people. To guide future investments and efforts, a national mechanism needs to be invested in to allow for a coordinated national approach to collecting data on refugee and migrant young people's settlement outcomes.

The two frameworks outlined below provide clear guidance on good practice to support new arrivals to achieve settlement outcomes across broad domains and indicators. These domains and indicators will give us a clearer way for measuring settlement outcomes for young people.

In 2016 the MYAN developed the National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF), a practical tool designed to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of young people in settlement in Australia. The NYSF draws on national and international literature and practice, and consultations with young people and those working with young people in the settlement context to outline broad indicators of youth settlement that support active participation in Australian life in the social, economic, civic and wellbeing domains.<sup>33</sup>

During 2016 the SCOA also released the National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards, which aim to guide settlement services in understanding and measuring the effectiveness and impact of practice on client outcomes. In the same year the Productivity Commission also released the Migrant intake to Australia Report that was undertaken to articulate the economic costs and benefits of the migration program to inform future planning.<sup>34</sup>

In the following section and throughout this submission CMY draw extensively from our own practice to respond to the terms of reference. The NYSF is also used as a key source in affirming identified settlement outcomes.

### **National Youth Settlement Framework - MYAN Australia**

The National Youth Settlement Framework uses the notion of active citizenship as the optimal settlement outcome for young people, encompassing participation and agency and the negotiation of identity and belonging to become active and engaged members of Australian society.

Active citizenship is measured against the following domains:

#### **Economic participation**

Economic participation, including engagement in education or training pathways towards employment, have an overwhelmingly positive impact upon young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, particularly in terms of increasing their confidence, social networks and developing new skills.<sup>2</sup> Access to education and employment can be significantly affected by factors such as English language proficiency, social capital, gender and length of time spent in Australia.<sup>3</sup> Indicators in this domain include: acquiring English language skills, engagement in pathways towards employment; stable income; and safe, stable housing.

<sup>33</sup> Importantly, this framework describes settlement as a process that is navigated differently by each young person according to their circumstances and influenced by a range of structural, environmental and individual factors.

<sup>34</sup> Notably, In this report, the PC is clear in noting that "The Commission's assessment has focused on the costs and benefits that are material from a community-wide perspective." And, that "... a full (monetised) social cost-benefit assessment of immigration is not feasible... (and) fiscal analysis by definition does not account for the broader economic, social and environmental impacts of immigration." PC report



## Social participation

Social bridges, network of contacts among people of dissimilar backgrounds, are important for connecting to opportunities outside of immediate social circles. Bridging networks are critical as they facilitate access to social resources and opportunities for newly arrived communities who have limited social and cultural capital. Social bonds, close connections with those of similar backgrounds, and intra-cultural connections are important for creating strong, supportive networks and a sense of identity for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Social connections also impact upon refugee and migrant young people's motivations and hopes for the future, interests and confidence, and sense of belonging in the settlement context. Indicators in this domain include: participation in community life (including recreation); free from racism and discrimination; positive peer networks; and bridging and bonding networks.

## Civic Participation

Civic participation encompasses both the formal and informal ways that young people engage and contribute to the community, learn and enjoy rights and responsibilities, and access and navigate services and supports. Key barriers to full and equal access to civic participation for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds include a lack of information and awareness of or knowledge about what is available and lack of social and cultural capital.<sup>9</sup> Indicators in this domain include: understanding and enjoyment of Australia's political, legal and civil rights and responsibilities; and, participation in democratic processes / political decision making.

## Personal wellbeing

Social inclusion is a key determinant of successful settlement for youth from refugee backgrounds.<sup>10</sup> "A positive sense of cultural identity and heritage, especially if accompanied by strong community affiliations, can be a protective factor which increases the resilience of young people. Conversely, confusion and insecurity about cultural identity, especially if accompanied by feelings of alienation and marginalisation from the dominant culture."<sup>11</sup> Additionally, being involved in the local community is important for young people of refugee and migrant background's overall wellbeing - in terms of making new friends, developing new skills, and being able to make a positive contribution to their new home.<sup>12</sup> Alongside positive physical, sexual and mental health and self-esteem, goals for the future (and understanding pathways to achieving them), well developed life skills and positive relationships are all indicators of wellbeing for young people settling in Australia.

## What do we know works?

Australia's current settlement service system is focused intensely on assistance in the very early stages of settlement, usually the 6 to 12 month period, with some supports available up to 5 years. In Australia, this is informed by the idea that "the first five years of permanent residence in Australia after arrival is generally considered the settlement period. This is a time of adjustment as migrants and new arrivals seek to become oriented, established, acculturated and independent in their communities."<sup>35</sup> However, as noted earlier, settlement is a dynamic rather than a linear process with steps often occurring simultaneously and at different speeds. This means that young people will often require different levels and types of assistance at different stages of their settlement.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Australian Government (2016).

<sup>36</sup> Complex Case Support (CCS) is a good example of a service model that allows for flexibility based on time in Australia.





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CMY believes that greater targeted investment and joint state/federal coordination and funding is required beyond the early settlement period (first 5 years) to support those who are disengaged or at risk of further disadvantage to assist with a sustained transition to and engagement with education and employment. Existing services and programs that provide targeted support to refugee and migrant young people during this stage of settlement often lack any kind of committed funding, undermining their effectiveness.

In this section CMY share some key examples of what we know works to support young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to settle well. We also identify some of the areas where there are unmet needs and provide suggestions for service system improvements, stronger investment or policy reform.

Much of this knowledge comes from our work for over 25 years with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, including on issues of youth justice, in Victoria. As such, we have also included reference to materials where the Committee can find more detailed analysis and recommendations on specific topics of relevance.

### Investment in the early settlement period (first 12 months)

- **On-arrival settlement supports for youth**

Young people face additional settlement challenges that are either distinct from the experience of adults or are experienced differently due to their age, developmental stage and position within the family. CMY strongly supports investment in building the capacity of settlement services to adopt youth-focused programming and responses into their services.

The points raised below draws on CMY's extensive experience and expertise as well as knowledge gathered from our partners and stakeholders.

- The benefits of **targeted youth support** in settlement have been recognised in recent changes adopted by the Department of Social Services in Humanitarian Settlement Services – including the introduction of Youth Sub Plans. However, these investments must be appropriately resourced to achieve quality outcomes. This includes building the skills and capacity of settlement organisations to assess and respond well to young people's needs. Additionally, corresponding appropriate levels of funding is required to ensure plans are implemented.
- **Eligibility for services and supports** is another key challenge that especially affects young people who have not arrived through the humanitarian program in the early settlement period. While young people who arrive in Australia via the humanitarian stream can access the suite of settlement supports available to new arrivals, many young people settling in Australia, particularly those who have refugee-like experiences are not eligible to receive assistance.<sup>37</sup> For some newly arrived young people, e.g., those from the Pacific Islands, their visa type precludes them from accessing basic supports hampering their ability to thrive and succeed. Our system of determining eligibility distorts real need as it is based on visa category rather than age or need. By doing so, it places some groups of newly arrived young people at risk of marginalisation and disadvantage.

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<sup>37</sup> An exception is access to AMEP.



### Case Study: Settle Smart

*Settle Smart* is funded as a youth specific settlement program delivered across Victoria. It uses a peer-to-peer model to design and deliver information sessions by young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to newly arrived young people aged 12 to 25 years.

Young peer-educators draw on their own experiences of settlement to introduce basic information valuable for life in Australia. The information sessions cover a range of topics relevant to settling in Australia, including mental health, volunteering, racism and discrimination, and participation in education, employment and participation in sports and recreation. It supports newly arrived young people to increase their knowledge about life in Australia, including choices and support services available, and to build greater confidence to get involved or seek support. *Settle Smart* is a flexible program that adapts delivery to the needs of newly arrived young people.

Research and experience has shown that peers are able to act as conduits of information as well as of desired behaviours. In addition, a trained peer is seen to be more credible than a non-peer and is considered a more immediate source of help. (WA Centre for Health Promotion Research, Curtin University)

In 2015/16, 94% of *Settle Smart* participants reported that the sessions were useful to them. They also reported a greater confidence to get involved in volunteering or sports, or seek support for mental health. 100% of participants in the racism and discrimination session said they felt confident to report discrimination after the session.

Peer-educators also benefit from their engagement in the program, reporting a deeper understanding and awareness of issues facing newly-arrived young people, increased confidence and leadership skills, and a sense of empowerment and contribution. Peer-educators also report that they have gained stronger skills and experiences to assist their participation in civic life, while their peer networks have become more culturally diverse.

*“(I have enjoyed having) the ability to raise concerns about issues which may affect newly arrived young people. Making new friends who share valuable information and experiences giving back to my community”.*  
Peer Educator

- **English Language Supports**

English language ability is a key facilitator of settlement. This is because English language ability is a basic requirement to equal participation in a predominantly English-speaking country, facilitating learning about living in Australia, engagement in work and study and supporting the building of social networks.<sup>38</sup> However, according to research conducted by the Department of Immigration, pre-arrival English language skills and post-arrival acquisition are not predictors of success of settlement.<sup>39</sup>

This said, in general, young people who come to Australia as refugees or migrants commonly demonstrate remarkable capacity to learn English language. Younger people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are significantly more likely to speak, read and write English at a higher level than older age groups.<sup>40</sup> Despite

38 Productivity Commission (2016). p. 12

39 Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) (2011). *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals: Report of Findings* (Study for DIAC prepared by the Australian Survey Research Group). Available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/settlement-outcomes-of-new-arrivals>, p. 63

40 Ibid. p. 12





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this, acquisition of literacy takes time and investment should be based on ensuring new arrivals are supported to attain requisite levels of English required to facilitate full and equal participation in Australian society.

CMY hear much too often that the levels of English language young people attain before they transition to mainstream schools, further education or work are not sufficient to support their successful engagement. It is vital that newly arrived young people have access to appropriately targeted and consistent educational English language learning that is adequately funded to ensure it is available equally and without exception to all young people.<sup>41</sup>

## Investment in key settlement transitions

Vulnerability and risk of social exclusion increase at transition points in adolescence and young adulthood. Refugee and migrant young people often face even more complex youth transitions because of their unfamiliarity with pathways and systems, poor social and cultural capital, limited financial resources, and new language and cultural context.

Key settlement transitions for young people typically take place after the first year, when priority needs like as housing have been met and young people are beginning to figure out what is next.<sup>42</sup> This is a critical time for young people that often coincides with a dropping of the intensity of targeted supports available (particularly, the end of ELS and HSS). Some of those in their first five years of settlement are able to access Migrant Resource Centres and other agencies funded through the Settlement Services Program, but most young people are expected to engage supports through mainstream services.

One of the key challenges facing young people in the first 2 to 7 years of settlement is finding the right information and targeted support to make important transitions a success.<sup>43</sup> When intensive settlement services cease, the ongoing options for young people can often fail to ensure young people receive appropriate targeted and culturally responsive support to re-connect and engage with the services they require. While some services and programs, including many offered by CMY, do exist to attempt to fill this gap, funding is often short term or one-off, undermining their effectiveness.<sup>44</sup>

### Case Study: Specialist RECONNECT

The Reconnect program is a Federal program that uses community-based early intervention services to assist young people aged 12 to 21 years who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. Reconnect assists young people to stabilise their living situation and improve their level of engagement with family, work, education, training and their local community.

CMY is a specialist Reconnect provider supporting the particular needs of newly arrived and refugee young people. CMY delivers Reconnect as a specialist provider working with newly arrived (in Australia for less than

41 Department of Education and Training (DET) (2015). *AMEP Evaluation: Final Report to DET (Prepared by ACIL ALLEN Consulting)*. Melbourne: DET, p. 6

42 For example, employment among Humanitarian entrants increases over time, particularly after the first two years. SONA, page 20

43 A key focus of settlement services in the first 12 months is linking new arrivals in to mainstream services. While this is a critical function, it requires that young people are fully cognisant in the early period of settlement of future needs they may have, so as to retain this information and act on it later. During the early period competing needs may lead to many seeing this information as important but not 'taking it in' at the time. Furthermore, the provision of support to families may overlook the needs and interests of young people.

44 The provision of funding on a short-term basis, leads to infrequent and fragmented support, and means programs struggle to move beyond the establishment phase. See <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/rip/1-10/18.html>; Bartels 2011, p. 12



5 years) young people from refugee background that are at risk of homelessness.

CMY's Reconnect is delivered across some of the most diverse and fastest growing areas of metropolitan Melbourne. The program incorporates family centered approaches and culturally responsive case-work utilising a variety of strategies targeted to the unique needs of the young person.

A key element to Reconnect that works well for refugee young people is the flexibility to target assistance to individual young people's needs. For example, providers can purchase services depending on a client's needs.

The model also supports CMY to provide secondary consults to assist services in supporting young people in need of culturally responsive and targeted assistance. This is part of a 'no wrong doors' approach, which works to guarantee that young people receive the help they need regardless of what service they approach for assistance. A further advantage of 'joined up' services and the 'no wrong door' approach is that young people benefit from continuous support as their needs change. Secondary consults also build relationships across the sector and streamline and enhance referral pathways.

The case management undertaken with young people through Reconnect also informs other areas of CMY's work. For example, the development of group work programs that are targeted to issues young people are experiencing.

CMY have been delivering Reconnect for more than 10 years. In this time, outcomes identified by young people and their families have included:

- increased engagement with school and other education facilities
- better family relationships and improved support for families
- increased awareness of the service system and options for support
- increased knowledge of the housing system and improved access to housing
- increased links to counselling or other therapeutic support
- a growing awareness of self, both mentally and physically, which has led to self-control, assertive communication and conflict management
- increased access to sport and recreation activities
- improved management of health issues, and
- better resolution of legal issues.

#### • Improving pathways between mainstream and settlement services

A flexible service system that incorporates greater coordinated engagement between settlement and mainstream services, focused on building cross-sector knowledge and information is needed to improve pathways. Increased engagement would strengthen referral pathways, enabling young people to build on the trusting service relationships they have established and facilitating engagement with appropriate supports early. It is vital that adequate time and resources are allocated to develop strong and effective partnerships and investment is made into supporting young people to navigate the transition from one service system/provider to another.

CMY strongly supports the co-location of multicultural specialist services within broader youth services in order to create environments where young people feel comfortable and are able to access supports. CMY is aware of successful models of co-location where professionals regularly outreach to young people in places



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where they are already participating in, such as a youth or settlement service that provides a broad range of welfare or recreational programs. This supports engagement whilst providing a degree of discretion and confidentiality for the young person. Co-location and service partnerships could also strengthen the capacity of generalist youth workers and mainstream service providers to provide more effective support.

Feedback from young people suggests many feel mainstream services and supports are underequipped to respond to the complex needs and issues of refugee and migrant youth, and would benefit from stronger support and expertise in this area. In our experience, CMY believes that there is still a need to continue to build the capacity, skills and knowledge of mainstream services to support them in working effectively with this migrant and refugee young people.

On the other hand, capacity building is also needed for non-youth settlement services and multicultural agencies to enhance their understanding, knowledge and skills in relation to youth work practice. Capacity building elements include training of workers on 'multicultural youth work practice', sharing of case studies and good practice, networks to share information on patterns and trends for young people, one-to-one consultations and advice on approaches and, creating opportunities for partnerships and collaborations.

### **Case Study: CMY Regional Presence Program**

The Regional Presence Program (RPP) was established in 2011 to strengthen support for multicultural young people in regional Victoria.

The program is funded by the State Government's Office of Youth to enhance outcomes for multicultural youth between the ages of 12 and 25 years in Ballarat and Inner Gippsland. The program's success is based on the strong partnerships and collaborations between mainstream services, generalist youth services, multicultural and settlement services, community and young people.

- strengthen the participation of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds in work, school, family and community in their region, and reduce the disadvantages they face
- strengthen young people's sense of wellbeing and belonging in their community
- assist local communities to manage and develop an inclusive environment for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and
- support and build better service capacity in engaging and working with culturally diverse young people, their families and communities.

RPP achieves this by engaging with young people to build their confidence and opportunities for participation in their local communities; working with service providers to increase their knowledge and skills around CALD young people; and by encouraging collaborative practice amongst service providers to better meet the needs of CALD young people.

Activities undertaken by RPP include:

- support for students in school, such as the delivery of social cohesion sessions, information sessions and events
- support to young people to complete work experience with local businesses, VET training and to connect with local employers and industry
- hosting social events for young people and their families, including parent engagement sessions, and



- providing professional development and training for mainstream services to improve their capacity to respond to the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, including professional learning circles, secondary consultation, and representation on local network and advisory groups.

*43% of young people agreed that supports provided had helped them to stay in school*

*75% of young people felt that RPP had helped them to feel like they belong in their community*

*70% of young people indicated that RPP had helped them to get on a pathway to a job or return to school*

## • Support to stay engaged in school

Across the OECD one quarter of young people who arrive in their host country after the age of 15 are more likely to drop out of school early – either before they arrive or on completion of compulsory schooling in the host country. This compares to just 10% of the native born population.<sup>45</sup> Research conducted with young people settling in Melbourne found that participants' experiences of mainstream Australian schools are less positive compared to ELS, with a quarter leaving school without completing secondary education.<sup>46</sup>

We need to invest in programs that keep young people in school. Early disengagement from education not only impacts upon entry into further education and training, it places young people at greater risk of short- and long-term unemployment and social exclusion, and increased vulnerability to involvement in criminal activities.<sup>47</sup> School engagement thus has fundamental and long-term implications for the young person, their family and the wider Australian community.

Research indicates that schools are also important support sites for settlement, as they provide young people with a sense of belonging, a sense of safety and security, for establishing trust and acceptance, for social support, and for acting as a bridge to success in the broader community.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the key factors contributing to challenges for young people remaining engaged with education include: young people not gaining enough English language capability before they enter school; school curriculum that does not cater to their specific learning needs; a lack of understanding of their diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences, and impacts on education and learning; financial constraints impacting participation (this may effect academic work, but can also impact sense of belonging at school<sup>49</sup>); unfamiliar school systems; a lack of support and/or conflict in the home, resulting in young people not receive the family support they need to remain engaged in school.

**Flexible learning environments** that support targeted approaches to meet individual learning needs. A key educational challenge that many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face is adapting to a new educational system. This adjustment occurs for most newly arrived young people, however it can be particularly difficult when there are stark differences with the educational system they have come from or if they have had disrupted or no prior education.<sup>50</sup> Young people and their families need targeted assistance to transition well into school and successfully navigate the education system. Adding to this adjustment can be

45 From research conducted in 2013 – see OECD & European Union (2015). p. 250

46 Gifford, S., Correa-Velez, I. & Sampson, R. (2009)., p. 82

47 CMY (2014c). *Fair and accurate? Migrant and Refugee Young People, Crime and the Media*. Melbourne: CMY, p. 5; See also, AIFS (2016). *Family factors in early school leaving*. Available at <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/family-factors-early-school-leaving>;

48 Gifford, S., Correa-Velez, I. & Sampson, R. (2009)., p. 82

49 Taylor, J. and Nelms, L. (2008). *School engagement and life chances at 15 & 16*. Melbourne: Brotherhood of St Lawrence.

50 Refugee Education Partnership Project (2007). *The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria*. Melbourne: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.



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the need to fit into an inflexible school curriculum based on the presumption that young people have undergone a linear progression in their learning that is tied to their age. Faced with a school curriculum that does not meet their learning needs many young people experience feelings of failure and hopelessness. This can result in them disengaging early from learning.

*"It's really hard. Sometimes you feel like you don't want to come to class because everyone is ahead of you and you don't know anything. Sometimes it feels like you hate yourself, like why am I not like them? Or why did I come here? They already know everything. Why did I come to this country? They know everything and I don't know nothing. You are thinking a lot of things and so you feel bad."*<sup>51</sup>

**Safety and security:** School is also an important site for development of social relationships with success in education supported by the quality of the relationships that young people and their parents forge in the school setting. Schools also play a critical role in the facilitating cultural and social capital for young people and for their families. Social support and feelings of safety at school are thus integral to success. Experiences of racism and discrimination result in further marginalization for young people contributing to educational disengagement.

**Support for schools:** Workers from CMY's education programs note that schools and teachers have reported feeling ill-equipped to meet the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. A lack of cultural responsiveness or awareness of the impacts of the refugee and migration experience on young people can lead to misinterpretation of student behavior, resulting in negative responses or the failure to identify needs early. This can be particularly acute for students who are disengaged or are experiencing marginalization from the community, are from areas of high disadvantage, and parents who have limited knowledge of the Australian education system.<sup>52</sup> The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's 'Exclusion report' identifies young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as having increased vulnerability to being excluded from school due to lack of capacity to meet these students specific needs.

**Support for parents:** According to the most recent State of Victoria's Children authors, evidence shows that parents' actions and behaviours exert an "early, strong and lasting effect on children's outcomes in terms of learning and development, wellbeing, social and emotional functioning and health."<sup>53</sup> The report emphasizes that of all factors in the home learning environment, parent encouragement and expectations for their child's educational achievement contribute most to student achievement."<sup>54</sup>

Parents' lack of knowledge of the school system and curriculum, own English language ability, disjuncture between expectations for their children's educational prospects and young people's language and literacy abilities, and lack of support to facilitate young people's engagement in school in Australia were factors identified by CMY workers as key contributors school disengagement among young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Schools are also critical sites for the development of knowledge and skills to navigate post-education pathways, both for students and their families.

Another key factor impacting upon educational engagement among refugee and migrant young people can be "juggling the requirements of education with expectations to help out at home and other pressing

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51 From Brown, et al. (2006). cited in RCOA (2010). Finding the right time and place: Exploring post-compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW. Melbourne: Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), p. 20

52 See Matthews (2008). CMY (2014d). Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People. Melbourne: CMY, p. 17

53 DET (2016). State of Victoria's Children Report – 2015. Melbourne: DET, p. 83

54 Ibid., p. 28 & 83



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settlement issues.”<sup>55</sup> Young people can also be under pressure to find employment in order to contribute financially to support family members in Australia and overseas.

In 2015 CMY made a submission to the Victorian Government’s consultation on the Education State in which we highlighted a number of recommendations to improve education opportunities for young people of refugee and migrant background that look beyond English language acquisition alone.<sup>56</sup> In addition to these, investment in programs within schools that holistically combine mentoring, social support and incentives for young people and, support for parental and community engagement in education are known to work well in addressing many of these issues.<sup>57</sup> Other approaches include programs that support young people to engage in their learning in school and can range from targeted in-school academic and social support, to activities aimed at supporting young people to develop positive peer relationships through recreation and sport. Also important are programs that encourage families and parents to be part of the school community.

### **Case Study: CMY Multicultural Youth Workers in Schools**

In 2015, CMY and the Western English Language School (WELS) recognised the significant crossover between the high number of newly arrived young people that engaged with both organisations. In response, a collaboration was established that enabled CMY to intervene early with WELS’ students experiencing settlement related concerns.

Central to the collaboration is the location of a CMY Multicultural Youth Worker at WELS one day per week. The Multicultural Youth Worker liaises with the school’s welfare coordinator to discuss potential referrals raised by the welfare coordinator or directly from students themselves. (This approach relies on a good relationship between the Multicultural Youth Worker and staff at the school.) The Multicultural Youth Worker meets with the young person at the school and establishes support needs.

As a result of this relationship, CMY is in a position to identify needs early and link young people with case management support through either CMY’s Reconnect (NAYSS) or Complex Case Support (CCS) programs, or other support services, depending on the young person’s support needs.

This approach means young people are able to access case management support and information easily at their school, with many otherwise unaware of the assistance available to them. Young people are also able to meet with a youth worker confidentially and not in the presence of family members, which may be a barrier for some. This collaboration allows the school to focus on students’ education needs, while the Multicultural Youth Worker support students to address other factors of their settlement that can impact on educational participation. The collaboration is also an example of early intervention that addresses young people’s slide into marginalization and disengagement.

CMY is currently trialing this approach in three schools across Melbourne. Early reports suggest that this may be a model of collaboration that could be scaled up to ensure specialist knowledge and support is available to young people when and where they need it.

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<sup>55</sup> RCOA (2010), p. 4

<sup>56</sup> CMY (2015). cited in CMY (2015). *What’s important to YOUth from refugee and migrant backgrounds* (response to the Victorian Government’s Youth discussion paper). Carlton: CMY.

<sup>57</sup> Examples in Victoria include the Victorian Cooperative Children’s Service for Ethnic Groups and New Futures Training work directly with young people, parents and teachers through peer support, mentoring pathway plans, life skills support, goal setting and school engagement career options.





- **Support to further study, training and/or employment**

Youth unemployment is a growing concern in Australia, with the unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 24 more than twice the national figure. Additionally, economic changes are radically changing job opportunities through globalisation, automation and more flexible work, highlighting the importance of complex, multifaceted responses.<sup>58</sup> In Victoria, young people born outside Australia have a slightly higher unemployment rate than those born in Australia.<sup>59</sup> For some groups of young people, the picture is dire. For example, statistics show that 20 – 24 year olds from households where African languages are spoken have an unemployment rate more than double the same age group in English-only speaking households.<sup>60</sup>

Characteristics of contemporary youth unemployment point to:

- A prolonged period of transition between education and employment, with young people less likely to be in full-time employment and more likely to start full-time work at a later age.
- Around one in five young people are not fully engaged in work or study, while just under one in ten young people are disengaged entirely from education, employment and training (NEETs).
- Young people in their early 20s are more likely to be not fully engaged or completely disengaged from education, employment and training than teenagers (aged 15 – 19 years).<sup>61</sup>

Key factors negatively impacting upon the transition to employment include: lack of critical networks such as family and friends in employment; limited vocational skills relevant to the Australian labour market; limited work experience prior to arrival; and lack of familiarity of systems and pathways. Both research and practice have shown that programs and services are not adequately addressing the employment related needs of migrant and refugee young people. Issues continually highlighted include inadequate language support, orientation to the Australian workplace, racism and discrimination and cultural insensitivity.<sup>62</sup>

*“It is a known fact that the transition from school to work can have long-term consequences for labour market integration. Youngsters with immigrant parents who struggle to make the transition are at a considerable risk of experiencing further difficulty in finding a suitable job.”<sup>63</sup>*

A 2010 review of education and training pathways for refugee and migrant young people in Australia found that while many are not ready for a job there are no suitable education or training options.<sup>64</sup>

Added to this, when it comes to finding employment, many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds lack the social and cultural capital and networks to find work and simply do not know ‘what pathway to choose’. For most, the Australian labour market is new and different and there is no simple road map to guide them. They often lack the support of parents and others who have successfully navigated this system before them, and many find that the support/assistance provided in relation to jobs and careers does not adequately meet their needs.<sup>65</sup> Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds also struggle to gain relevant work experience to meet the demands of the current job market, and need greater support to access this.

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58 OECD & European Union (2015), p. 252

59 CMY (2014d). P. 10

60 Ibid. p. 11

61 Australian Government (2014). *Labour Force Participation: Youth At Risk and lower skilled matured aged people – a data profile*. Canberra: Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, p.9

62 FECCA (2014). Fact Sheet 3: Youth Employment in New and Emerging Communities. Canberra: FECCA. RCOA (2016). Jobactive: Refugee community and service provider concerns. Melbourne: RCOA.

63 OECD & European Union (2015), p. 252

64 RCOA (2010).

65 CMY (2014d); Kellock (2016).



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Research conducted in 2014 by University of Melbourne in partnership with CMY revealed that factors central to facilitating the transition to employment include services needing to recognise that refugee and migrant young people have distinct needs and the need to provide wellbeing support alongside education and employment services. Other identified processes include engaging employers and local business in programs to establish networks for young people, and building understanding, cultural awareness and recognition of what refugee young people have to offer. Service coordination was also identified as necessary to ensuring that the cross-cutting needs of young people is met with an integrated service response. The authors also highlighted the importance of service engagement with employers to encourage culturally inclusive workplaces and to highlight the economic benefits of workforce diversity.

### **Pathways to Opportunity**

Initiated in 2016, Pathways to Opportunity is a pilot project funded by philanthropic organisations to trial an employment and education pathways program for young school leavers from communities that are facing the greatest barriers to finding work. The program targets young people from Pasifika and African communities in the inner northern and western suburbs of Melbourne, over-represented in youth unemployment data. It is a partnership project with AFL SportsReady who have a number of partnerships with employers in a variety of industries, not just the sport industry; and Master Plumbers.

Young people are given the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills in the job search process, to access formal education and training relevant to the work environment; and to engage support and mentoring throughout the program, including regular workplace visits, check-ins and support to resolve workplace issues.

Participants receive support from CMY and volunteer mentors to access traineeships and apprenticeships in growth industries in Victoria, and to also connect with networks and systems that will help solidify their work prospects for the future.

Other than providing young people with support into work or managing a new job, Pathways to Opportunity aims to encourage broader community participation in workplaces by employer young role models. Young people as peers offer a different role model to younger members of their community and in the process, employers gain a better understanding about the communities from the people they are employing.

Learn more about this program at [www.cmy.net.au/pathways](http://www.cmy.net.au/pathways)

- **Support for families and the community**

Family relationships – whatever form they may take – are particular sources of strength and support for newly-arrived people negotiating settlement. “Ideally, family relationships provide young people with a sense of belonging, support in negotiating challenges and difficult transitions, and connection to shared values, culture and history.”<sup>66</sup>

Adolescence is a significant time for young people as they form their sense of identity. For many migrant and refugee young people this occurs while also negotiating a new cultural, social and legal context. This creates additional complexities for migrant and refugee young people and their families. While this process of

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<sup>66</sup> CMY (2011). *Good Practice Guide: Youth Work in the Family Context*. Carlton: CMY.





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negotiating cultural values and norms can be positive, allowing for new perspectives to be developed, at the extreme it can also lead to conflict and family breakdown.<sup>67</sup>

Families need culturally appropriate support and information on how to address parenting challenges in a new country often without extended family members to support and guide them. Support for families could include information about expectations and misconceptions for young people and parents/ guardians, the types of issues that may naturally be a source of conflict during settlement and acculturation, and that it is okay to seek help. Empowering families with knowledge, in a supportive environment, should alleviate rather than exacerbate some of the insecurities and anxieties experienced in settlement.<sup>68</sup>

### **CMY's Refugee Education Support Program (RESP)**

RESP is a partnership between CMY, Foundation House and the Department of Education and Training, and delivered in collaboration with Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria. Recognising the particular needs of refugee and newly arrived students, RESP is funded by the State Government Department of Education and Training to improve the educational outcomes of students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. It is a unique program in Australia that has demonstrated outstanding outcomes through independent evaluation research.

RESP provides holistic and targeted support to selected schools to strengthen the connections between student achievement and wellbeing and student, family, school and community engagement.

One of the focus is to support to schools to deliver out-of-school-hours learning support programs (OSHLSP). These programs provide high quality tuition and learning support to children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and their families. They also assist families to better support their children's learning at home.

#### **RESP - Focus on parental engagement and support**

Family engagement RESP projects work directly with parents and carers to increase the connection between families and schools. Family engagement projects facilitate two-way learning and engagement between schools and families, to improve students' learning and wellbeing outcomes. These projects can include ongoing groups work or a series of short-term interactive workshops. They can be held before, during or after school.

Family Learning Groups provide an ongoing opportunity for families to connect with each other and the school, and are supported by school staff such as Multicultural Education Aides, principals, and teachers, and community bilingual workers.

*"Very helpful to us and support our children for better education ... school took seriously about homework club and it has been started."* Parent – Chin Parents' Group

Family Workshops for parents and carers is a series of interactive workshops focused on increasing their understanding of school, the education system, transitions, educational and career pathways, and ways that families can support their children in their learning.

*"Parents appear to be more confident with accessing information - asking for assistance when needed."* Teacher

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



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Family Learning Space is where schools create a welcoming and culturally appropriate space for families at school. The space provides an environment where children and families can work on learning tasks together and where families build their social networks through informal interactions with school staff and other families.

Family Learning Club: teachers or adult volunteer tutors work with families and students together, to enhance student engagement and build the capacity of families to support their children's learning, both at the club and in the home environment.

*"Through this program we're learning about how people deal with each other, about culture and about how school works."* Parent and family learning club member

### **Community supports:**

*"At a community level, a child's access to a rich social network can improve their mental health and behaviour outcomes, reduce school drop-out rates and increase the likelihood of meaningful employment later in life. Communities can provide a child with a sense of belonging and positive role models, which have been shown to improve school performance, behaviour and wellbeing."*<sup>69</sup>

Building on a community development approach, strengths-focused work is vital in working with young people and their families. Many migrant and refugee families have high levels of resilience and have managed to deal effectively with many challenges already. CMY believes that service providers need to do more to engage community members and leaders to provide support and assistance in building community infrastructure that can be a vehicle for the community to address challenges for themselves and their young people. For example, in the last 6 years, CMY has been working with Pasifika community elders and leaders to build a trusting partnership in order to support the establishment of a Pasifika community peak body to represent their own issues as one voice. In the process, CMY have had deep engagement with this community to identify issues for their young people in a way that is culturally appropriate, sensitive and respectful of their culture and needs. The culmination of this approach is the recent funding by State Government of a Pasifika youth and families project. The project is a genuine partnership between CMY and the Pasifika community peak body, to address challenges young people face in education, employment and in youth justice. More importantly, the project is also an opportunity to strengthen community structures and to support their access into mainstream services.

## **Invest in refugee and migrant young people as part of the mainstream**

One in four young Victorians are from a refugee or migrant background - multicultural youth are becoming the mainstream. Despite this, gaps remain in the skills and capacity of mainstream services and organisations to effectively support this group. Many youth or other key services are not equipped to provide the culturally relevant support young people need, leading to lower than average service utilisation among this group of young people and in young people slipping through the gaps.

The 2015 State of Victoria's Children report highlights the role of services in "tipping the scales" towards children's positive development. Research has also established the importance of services demonstrating respect and understanding of a young person's cultural background and migration experience.<sup>70</sup> In the words of one young person from a refugee background:

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<sup>69</sup> DET (2016). p. 82  
<sup>70</sup> CMY (2014b).



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*"They don't really have faith in the system to begin with... and I think that if they have the information and they want to come... and then the system is not culturally appropriate for them, you can really damage them in [the] long term whether or not they would access the system again."*<sup>71</sup>

Responding appropriately and empathically to the needs of multicultural youth requires that service providers build a deeper knowledge of these young people and build skillsets for engaging respectfully, responsively, and meaningfully with them. CMY strongly recommends for continued investment in capacity building for mainstream services to enable them to have the confidence, skills and knowledge in working effectively with migrant and refugee young people.

More than ever, as our mainstream population becomes more diverse, there is a need for stronger state and federal government coordination and joint investments in our service system to ensure that the settlement service system is well coordinated with state service infrastructure. Stronger coordination may also identify overlaps and cost savings. It will also give service providers a clearer map of the pathways across state and federal service systems to meet the settlement transition challenges faced by young people.

## Youth justice and young people of migrant and refugee background

*"...the number of young offenders in this state is actually decreasing. What we are seeing is a rise in a smaller number of repeat youth offenders committing more serious and violent crimes."* Deputy Commissioner Andrew Crisp, Victoria Police<sup>72</sup>

Youth crime in Victoria, and most states around Australia, is on the decline. The Crime Statistics Agency 2006 - 2015 figures show that the number of offenders under 25 years of age has decreased over the past five years.<sup>73</sup> The Victorian Crime Statistics Agency's research report *Patterns of Recorded Offending Behaviour Amongst Victorian Young Offenders* confirms previous research that shows the vast majority of young offenders (89%) commit few crimes (an average of 0.4 % at the peak of their criminal offending)<sup>74</sup>, suggesting the recent spate of criminal activity among youth is limited to a small group of offenders and is not endemic.

The overall number of youth offenders from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria has not increased over the last five years, across the entire population or among overrepresented groups. Instead, the statistics show that overseas born young offenders are underrepresented in the statistics (12% youth offenders overseas born compared to 17% of Victoria's youth population being overseas born).<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, rates have in fact fallen significantly among some groups previously singled out as 'problematic', such as those born in Somalia.<sup>76</sup>

However, the statistics highlight the overrepresentation of young people from certain refugee and migrant communities. This includes New Zealand born young people who comprise 2.56% of the total alleged youth

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Crisp, A. (2016) Youth Crime: A Deputy Commissioner's Perspective. Victoria Police News, 17 November 2016, Available at <https://www.vicpolice.com.au/cops-and-bloggers/blogs/youth-crime-a-deputy-commissioners-perspective>

<sup>73</sup> Sutherland, P. & Millstead, M. (2016) *In Fact: Downward trend in number of young offenders, 2006 to 2015*. Published online by CSA. Available at [www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au](http://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au)

<sup>74</sup> Sutherland, P. & Millstead, M. (2016) *Patterns of Recorded Offending Behaviour Amongst Victorian Young Offenders*. Available at <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/research-and-evaluation/publications/youth-crime>

<sup>75</sup> Youth offender data provided by CSA on 27 January 2017, drawn from data extracted from LEAP on 18th October 2016: MYAN (2014). *CALD Youth Census* based on data from Australian National Census 2011.

<sup>76</sup> CMY (2014c).



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offender population in Victoria, while representing 1.47% of the total youth population, and young people born in South Sudan, who make up 1.56% of the unique youth alleged offender population, while representing 0.23% of the youth population.<sup>77</sup> Young people from these two overseas born populations have also been identified as overrepresented in relation to certain more violent offences.<sup>78</sup>

The overrepresentation of a particular cultural groups in offending data is not a new social problem. In Victoria in the 1990s, there were relatively large numbers of young people from Southeast Asian backgrounds involved in offending behavior as a proportion of their total population. This was addressed with targeted social policies and programs that have contributed to the successful settlement of this community. This community is now underrepresented in offending data.

The overrepresentation of young people from African and Pasifika backgrounds in offending data is a complex issue that needs to be addressed by targeted and culturally responsive strategies and programs. We are aware that the nature of offending and characteristics of a small group of young people is emerging as a new pattern of offending. Through our work with Victoria Police and key service providers, we know that this group of young people fall into two main categories of firstly, older adolescents who have never been involved in crime before and are now committing serious first offences. The second group is repeat offenders who are younger adolescents with a criminal record and a history of coming into contact with the police. Given this pattern, we do require a different approach. The State Government's review of the justice system and the Department of Justice and Regulation Youth Crime Prevention Grants provide the Victorian community the opportunity to re-shape a youth justice response.

### **Case study: Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP )**

YRIPP is an award-winning State Government funded program established to support young people in police custody. YRIPP is a model of a mainstream service (i.e. for all young people) that includes tailored responses for multicultural and Aboriginal young people. It is delivered by CMY and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in partnership with community legal centers, Uniting Care and Victoria Police. A key element of its success is its unique set of partnerships. YRIPP works in partnership with State and Local Government, Victoria Police and community agencies across the youth, multicultural, indigenous and legal fields. The diversity of the partnership enables YRIPP to represent an holistic approach to youth crime prevention.

YRIPP is the first program in Victoria to set up a state wide infrastructure for the provision of Independent Persons. Through calling a single telephone number, police can be provided with a trained, Independent Person (IP) to attend the police station usually within 30 minutes. From the same number, the young person in custody can receive free telephone legal advice from a rostered solicitor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, provided by Victorian Legal Aid. Police can also access Independent Third Persons provided by the Office of the Public Advocate.

Language diversity and the lack of familiarity with the justice system mean many refugee and migrant young people are often not aware of the Victorian legal system. The presence of a culturally trained IPs can help diffuse tensions and dispel misconceptions between the young person and police.

<sup>77</sup> MYAN (2014).

<sup>78</sup> For this data see, Farnsworth, S. & Wright, P. (2016). Victoria youth crime: Statistics raise questions about calls to deport youth offenders. ABC News Online, 6 December 2016. Available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-04/statistics-raise-questions-about-calls-to-deport-youth-offenders/8087410>



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*What is YRIPP's impact on preventing or reducing crime and/violence?*

YRIPP links young people in with local health and welfare support services, aiming to reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors associated with youth offending. The referral to specialist services by a trained IP is of particular benefit to refugee young people who may experience isolation from families and their cultural community. When the callout results in a referral, it is anticipated that the program improves community safety in the long term.

YRIPP reduces the time police need to spend on administrative duties. As a result, police can focus their attention on tasks more targeted towards reducing offending and violence by young people.

*"I would like to sincerely thank Lachlan ( a YRIPP volunteer) for his attendance at Melbourne East police station yesterday arvo to attend an interview with my son I am really thankful that such a services as YRIPP exist. Thank you."* Parent

Any change to the Migration Act 1958 character test that would impact on young people's visa or residency status will further entrench negative stereotypes of all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Community fears and inappropriate stereotyping need to be addressed by leadership at a political level that challenges media stereotypes and presents arguments based on the facts. Victoria Police should be commended for their public leadership on these issues. Governments and political leaders must cast aside media pressure, consider the facts and the evidence about what works and without panic develop and oversee the implementation of effective social policy.



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