



Tuesday, 31 January 2017

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

Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee in relation to its inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes ("Inquiry").

SCoA represents over 80 agencies in the settlement sector, which comprise the vast majority of agencies providing settlement support to recently arrived migrants, including those from a refugee background, across Australia. Our members work directly with a wide range of new arrivals from diverse backgrounds, as well as the mainstream Australian community and various government and private stakeholders.

SCoA believes that Australia should be proud of the settlement services it provides to newly arrived migrants. While there is always scope for improvement, Australia's settlement services are dynamic, responsive and, on the whole, successful in assisting those most in need to create a prosperous and happy new life in Australia. For this reason, the hard work exhibited across the vast group of settlement service agencies, combined with the commitment by government to the sector, and of course the tenacity and resilience of migrants themselves, is a success story to be shared with the world.

Our members witness firsthand the true value of the contribution made to Australia by those it welcomes as migrants, but also the challenges those people face when attempting to settle in their new communities. Our members also see the importance of fostering and strengthening best practice across the sector to ensure best possible settlement outcomes are achieved.

Through this best practice, SCoA submits, the settlement sector is delivering state-of-the-art and world-leading settlement services that generate countless positive outcomes, for both migrants and the Australian community as a whole.

If the Committee wishes to further discuss the contents of this submission, or any other matter of relevance, please do not hesitate to contact our National Office on 02 6282 8515.

We look forward to appearing before the Committee at your Canberra hearing.

Sincerely,

Dewani Bakkum, Chairperson

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Executive Summary

Australia's migration program provides a crucial opportunity to achieve mutual long-term benefits for Australia as well as the migrants whose entry it facilitates. For this to succeed, however, services must be adequate to support new arrivals as they settle in to their new homes. Migrants in Australia, including those from a refugee background, are well known for their tenacity, resourcefulness and commitment to Australia. However it is accepted that they face challenges in their relocation to Australia and, as a result, require specific services to ensure they are able to participate actively in the economy and in society more generally. Naturally, the level of services required differs greatly between different classes of migrant and, indeed, between individual migrants.

Australia has a long and proud history of delivering services that are tailored to meet the needs of new arrivals in a way that is effective, efficient and achieves the best possible settlement outcomes.

Settlement service providers have developed specialised expertise over a number of decades and are in the best position to continue to deliver a range of services that assist and empower migrants in establishing their lives in Australia and to overcome the obstacles that threaten successful settlement. It is the hard work of the settlement sector, delivering a suite of specialist services in the early stages of settlement, that enhances migrants' potential to make social, civic, political and economic contributions to this country.

However, we understand that recent events, locally and globally, including increasing coverage of "anti-social behaviour" among youth migrants and broader concerns around terrorism and radicalisation, have led to doubts being raised by some commentators and politicians as to the effectiveness of the integration of some migrants in Australia. SCoA does not accept that these factors highlight systemic problems within the settlement sector, nor do they justify the exclusion of specific cohorts from Australia's migration program. Instead, we welcome the Inquiry as an opportunity to showcase Australia's world-class settlement services.

We note the Inquiry's Terms of Reference as follows:

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration shall inquire into and report on migrant settlement outcomes with reference to:

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

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

After providing a brief overview of Australia's migrant and humanitarian programs for contextual purposes in Section 1, the majority of the SCoA's submission looks at the first item listed in the Committee's Terms of Reference, namely: the **mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants** (Section 2). In doing so, we hope to assist the Committee by providing an overview of the settlement sector, the clients it assists, and its effectiveness.

Section 2 also contains a discussion of areas where settlement services could be enhanced so as to ensure the success of the sector in achieving the "best possible" outcomes both for migrants and for Australia as a whole.

The Settlement Council welcomes the second item listed in the Committee's Terms of Reference, requiring the Committee to consider **national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects** (Section 3). SCoA members are dynamic and innovative and a key focus of SCoA is to foster collaboration between its members by identifying and circulating best practice case studies. In Section 3 we discuss the collaboration that already exists within the sector and provide insights into how collaboration can be enhanced to enshrine best practice across the sector including through the incorporation of international case studies.

The remaining items of the Terms of Reference relate to specific matters that have been identified as being of key importance to the Inquiry. Despite these matters having relevance to the broader discussion in relation to Item 1 of the Terms of Reference (Section 2), we note that they require specific attention. As a result, SCoA has consulted with its members and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry regarding **the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome** (Section 4) as well as the question of **whether current migration processes adequately assess a prospective migrant's settlement prospects** (Section 5).

Finally, SCoA notes that the Committee has indicated that it will give "particular consideration to **social engagement of youth migrants**, including involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behaviour such as gang activity, and the adequacy of the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions as a means to address issues arising from this behaviour." In Section 6, SCoA will share some key insights provided by our members who, through the provision of settlement services over many decades, have first-hand experiences of the particular challenges facing youth migrants. For a more detailed discussion of this final issue, however, SCoA defers to the submissions of our member, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), a specialist in this area with an intricate, nuanced and extensive knowledge of the impact of Australia's migration system and settlement services on migrant youth. SCoA endorses the submission of MYAN.

SCoA thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make this submission, and hopes to be invited to discuss key aspects arising from it, and the Inquiry generally, at a Public Hearing. In the meantime, the purpose of this submission is to provide the Committee with a review of the main issues of relevance for the Inquiry, and to make recommendations for the future of settlement services in Australia.

For ease of reference, these recommendations have been extracted and are reproduced below:

Summary of Recommendations

The effectiveness of settlement services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants

1. Empower the settlement sector

Owing to their sophisticated, culturally sensitive and specialised delivery models developed over decades of dedicated experience, members of the settlement sector are recognised as the best placed to provide responsive and flexible services to migrants and to assist them to reach their full potential in Australia across all identified settlement outcomes, including both social and economic.

Funding for settlement service providers should therefore be sufficiently flexible and adequate, particularly in line with any increases to client numbers, such that settlement service providers are empowered to deliver effective and tailored services to specific individual and community groups without being bound by a set of rigid, pre-determined outcomes.

2. Increase the scope of federally funded settlement services

While preserving funding for the successful, intensive, services provided to recently arrived migrants from a refugee background under the HSS and CCS (soon to be HSP) it is crucial that federally funded settlement services be expanded as follows:

- a) Settlement Grants Program funding should be increased to include a broader and more flexible range of activities; and
- b) Eligibility for settlement services should be expanded to include all migrants and should be assessed on an individual needs basis irrespective of the visa they hold or the length of time they have been resident in Australia.

3. Enhance the relationship between settlement service providers and the mainstream

Consideration should be given to enhancing the role of settlement service providers in the delivery of mainstream services to migrants and refugees either by:

- a) Transferring the delivery of these services directly to settlement service providers; or
- b) Requiring mainstream service providers to demonstrate cultural competencies, meet specific targets relevant to local CALD communities, develop an understanding of the role of settlement service providers and to actively engage with settlement service providers in order to ensure the best outcomes for migrants and refugees.

4. Improve the collection of data and enable key research into settlement outcomes

Funding should be allocated for SCoA, working collaboratively with key regional settlement service providers, to collect and analyse accurate and timely data and conduct relevant research concerning the settlement outcomes of migrants and refugees, to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of settlement services.

5. Enhance community harmony and social cohesion

Initiatives that enhance community harmony and social cohesion are crucial to promote the settlement of new arrivals in Australia. This requires an understanding that integration is a two-way process and as much focus must be given to educating the general public as is given to training recent arrivals. With this in mind, grants targeted at social cohesion should be increased, and efforts made to encourage a greater number of activities and initiatives that promote multiculturalism in Australia.

6. Protect and promote a positive discourse

The impact of leadership and media statements on community harmony and social cohesion should not be underestimated and it is therefore crucial that all Australian leaders focus on the positive impact that migrants make to Australian society and recognise the role of the Australian settlement sector in achieving this. Negative discourse which alienates specific groups and promotes disharmony must be avoided and actively discouraged. Australia should make clear its commitment to multiculturalism through an effective multicultural statement and/or developing a national legislative framework.

National and international best practice strategies

7. Foster collaboration and sharing of best-practice nationally and internationally

SCoA should be tasked with, and funded for, facilitating ongoing national and international collaboration between settlement service agencies and, where appropriate, mainstream agencies, so that existing sharing practices are enhanced and become a regular forum for the dissemination of innovative ideas and best practice examples. Where appropriate, SCoA should provide feedback to the Department of Social Services with regard to any activities that can be turned into funded pilot programs for national implementation.

The importance of English language ability

8. Prioritise English language training

English language training must be prioritised for all new arrivals, on an as needs basis, such that sufficient time is given, and funding provided, to ensure each person can learn English sufficient for them to participate in society, schooling and employment (as relevant) without being subject to the pressure of balancing English training with other obligations.

Current migration processes

9. Resist changes to migration processes that weaken Australia's non-discriminatory migration policy

Australia must strive to maintain a non-discriminatory migration policy free of any form of racial profiling. Current security, character and "Australian values" checks are sufficient to ensure Australia maintains the correct balance between protecting the public interest and providing secure and robust border processes.

10. Remove or revise policies which have a negative impact on settlement

Migration Policies which impact the settlement prospects of migrants and especially those from a refugee background must be avoided and, where they already exist, reviewed and, where possible, should be revised or abandoned.

Social engagement of youth migrants

11. Improve transitions to schooling for refugee children

State and Federal funding should be coordinated so that any Australian school with students from a refugee background is able to provide those students with sufficient and appropriate intensive English language training as well as mental health support and other tuition to ensure a smooth transition into mainstream schooling.

12. Target funding for youth-specific settlement activities

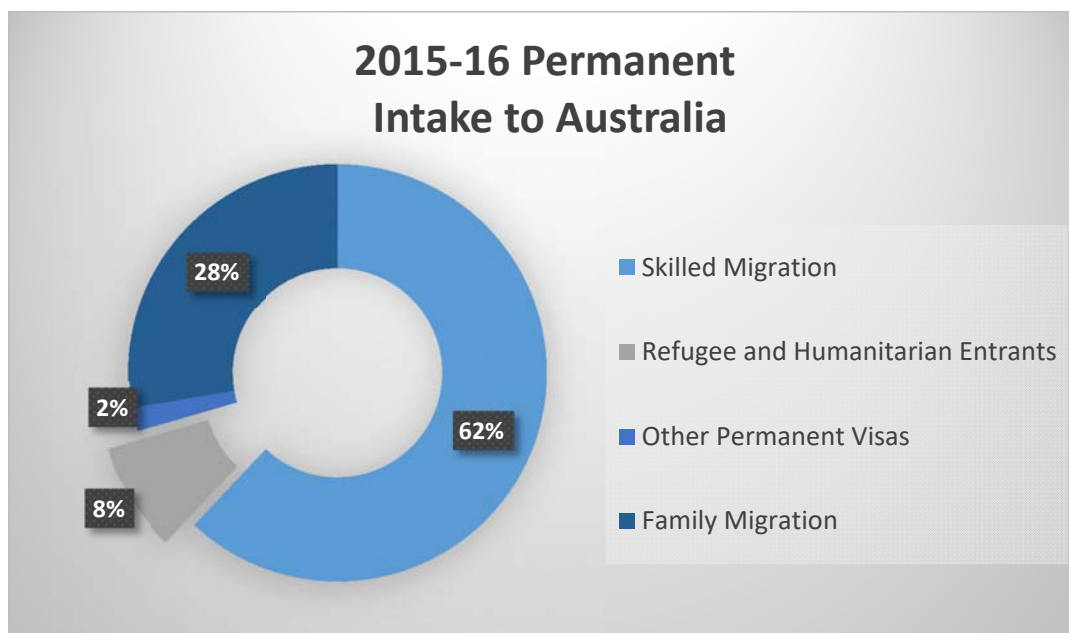
Future federally-funded settlement service programs must continue to include appropriate funding for youth-focussed initiatives and, where relevant, empower settlement service providers to enhance the range of services available to youth migrants

1. Context for the Inquiry: Australia's Humanitarian and Migration Programs

SCoA notes that the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry require the Committee to investigate the settlement outcomes of "migrants".¹ Migrants come to Australia on a variety of visas, which impact what settlement services and support they receive. The majority of migrants receive permanent residency in Australia through the general migration program, which totals approximately 190,000 spaces per year.² In addition, Australia currently grants 13,750 people permanent residency through the refugee and humanitarian intake, with government plans to increase these numbers to 18,750 by 2018.³

In addition to the program numbers set out above, Australia announced on 9 September 2015 that it would receive an extra 12,000 humanitarian entrants from Iraq and Syria, all of whom would be granted permanent visas to resettle in Australia.⁴ The grant of these additional 12,000 is expected to be spread over the 2015-16 and 2016-17 program years, with 10,092 of the 12,000 visas having been granted in the period November 2015 to December 2016.⁵

Using 2015-16 program year figures, the total annual permanent migrant program in Australia was comprised as follows:



(Data sourced from: Department of Immigration and Border Protection, *2015-16 At A Glance*, <https://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/year-at-a-glance/2015-16>)

¹ SCoA interprets this to mean all persons granted permanent residence visas to enter, or remain in, Australia.

² Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), *2015-16 At A Glance*, <https://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/year-at-a-glance/2015-16>, accessed on 9 January 2017.

³ The Hon. P Dutton MP (2015) *Restoring integrity to refugee intake*, <http://www.minister.border.gov.au/peterdutton/2015/Pages/restoring-integrity-to-refugee-intake.aspx>, accessed on 9 January 2017.

⁴ DIBP, *Australia's response to the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crisis*, <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Refu/response-syrian-humanitarian-crisis>, accessed on 9 January 2017.

⁵ Department of Social Services (DSS), *Refugee Settlement Media Hub*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/syrian-and-iraqi-refugee-crisis/refugee-settlement-media-hub>, accessed on 17 January 2017.

Australia has a proud multicultural heritage and is greatly enriched by migrants and refugees from around the world. Migrants, including those from a refugee background, contribute socially, culturally and economically to Australia.

The contribution of migration to Australia must not be undervalued. Migration contributes to the social and economic vibrancy of Australia in numerous ways and the success of Australia's multicultural population can be seen across the country in our strong and vibrant economy as well as the rich and diverse fabric of our society.

Migration is directly linked to population growth, which is crucial for Australia as it seeks to mitigate the effects of an ageing population.⁶ This growth drives commerce, employment and infrastructure across the country. While many of the economic gains from migration go to migrants themselves, the effects of migration flow through every aspect of the economy and migration results in a net fiscal benefit to Australia's bottom line.⁷

The success of Australia's migration program has been achieved through the maintenance of a suitable balance between economic and social objectives. On the one hand, government is committed to the attraction of significant numbers of highly skilled entrants who contribute to the economy as soon as possible following their arrival. On the other hand, it is accepted that certain classes of migrants, including family migrants and those from a refugee background, need more assistance to achieve their full potential. This is to be expected because these migrants have not been chosen on the basis of their economic characteristics; these streams meet broader social obligations, supporting social cohesion and Australia's role as a global citizen, and are not intended to yield an immediate economic gain.⁸

With this context in mind, it is also clear that certain classes of migrants are in need of, and therefore receive, more focused and intense settlement services than others. Indeed, a major component of government-funded settlement services, particularly those provided "on arrival" are provided to humanitarian entrants only - just 8% of the overall migrant intake (see graph on page 9).⁹

This group comprises the most vulnerable of Australia's migrant intake, often having been forced from their homes due to war or unrest, and having suffered trauma, unemployment and/or interrupted schooling as a result. This can make their settlement journeys particularly uncertain, long and difficult. This does not, however, mean that these entrants and their families cannot, and do not, contribute to Australia. Indeed, considerable research has been undertaken which demonstrates the capacity of migrants from a refugee background to become fully engaged with Australia on economic and social levels, to the mutual benefit of all.¹⁰ The OECD point to this as the dividend of Australia's humanitarian commitment to the resettlement of refugees.¹¹

⁶ Migration Council of Australia (2015), *The Economic Impact of Migration*, p14.

⁷ OECD (2014), *Is Migration Good For The Economy*, p1.

⁸ Migration Council of Australia (2015), *The Economic Impact of Migration*, p17.

⁹ A detailed discussion of the various settlement services, including which visa holders are eligible for which services is found in section 2.4, below.

¹⁰ Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants* (DIAC, 2011) and DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz: Key features of Australian settlement policies, programs and services available for humanitarian entrants*, p8.

¹¹ Liebig, T. (2007), *The labour market integration of immigrants in Australia* (OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers 2007).

Migrants are highly motivated members of the Australian community and their potential and ability to contribute to the economy should not be underestimated. This manifests itself in the fact that they are resilient, hard-working, display strong entrepreneurial qualities and help to meet labour shortages in both regional and metropolitan centres.

Each year, the Australian Government decides the size and composition of the humanitarian program after consulting with key sources including the UNHCR, peak refugee and humanitarian bodies, state, territory and local governments and the general public.¹²

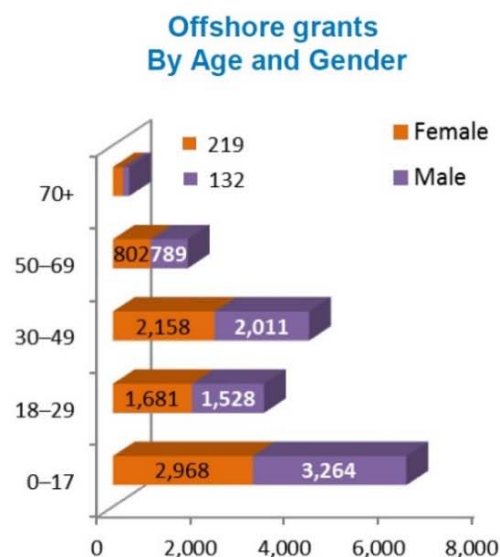
The program is designed to ensure Australia meets its obligations as a global citizen to contribute to the worldwide crisis of a growing refugee population. Its stated aims are to:

- provide permanent resettlement to those most in need, who are in desperate situations overseas, including in refugee camps and protracted humanitarian situations
- reunite refugees and people who are in refugee-like situations overseas with their family in Australia
- use resettlement strategically to help stabilise refugee populations, reduce the prospect of irregular movement from source countries of first asylum, and support broader international protection
- meet Australia's protection obligations.¹³

The group of humanitarian arrivals represents a diverse range of ethnicities, from varying age groups and possessing different levels of education, work experience and English-language ability. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection provides some useful statistics describing the profile of those arriving, as follows:

**Offshore grants
Top 10 Countries of Birth**

| Country of Birth | Refugee | SHP | Total |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Iraq | 2,069 | 2,289 | 4,358 |
| Syria | 1,710 | 2,551 | 4,261 |
| Myanmar | 1,031 | 920 | 1,951 |
| Afghanistan | 1,418 | 296 | 1,714 |
| Congo (DRC) | 580 | 77 | 657 |
| Bhutan | 137 | 378 | 515 |
| Somalia | 396 | 41 | 437 |
| Iran | 279 | 58 | 337 |
| Ethiopia | 229 | 108 | 337 |
| Eritrea | 155 | 136 | 291 |
| Other | 280 | 414 | 694 |
| Total | 8,284 | 7,268 | 15,552 |



(Source: Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2016) *2015-16 Humanitarian Programme Outcomes*.)

¹² DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p8.

¹³ DIBP (2016), *Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2016-17* (Discussion Paper), p3.

2. The mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants

2.1. What are “better settlement outcomes”?

The Inquiry’s terms of reference ask the Committee to consider how effective Australia’s settlement services are at “*promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants*”. To effectively investigate this issue, it is first necessary to consider what constitutes “better settlement outcomes” and how settlement outcomes can be achieved for the benefit both of migrants and the broader Australian community.

The concept of “settlement outcomes” is difficult to define and the prevailing consensus amongst government agencies, the settlement sector and migrants themselves is that settlement is multifaceted and complex.¹⁴ The settlement process in its broadest sense is defined by the Department of Social Services (DSS) as a combination of:

- Willingness of Australian society to welcome migrants;
- Settlement services addressing the needs of new arrivals; and
- Commitment of new arrivals to establishing their lives in Australia.¹⁵

With this in mind, it is clear that effective settlement is not an economic process alone. It also has social and personal elements. None of these are mutually exclusive and the failure to effectively participate in one dimension is likely to have multiple repercussions and could severely jeopardise progress in others.¹⁶

SCoA’s consultation with members supports this view and stresses the need to adopt a holistic view of settlement, and thus, a flexible and responsive approach to the provision of settlement services. To do so, SCoA suggests that the focus of discussion on settlement outcomes must be first and foremost on the individual migrants themselves.¹⁷ Framing the discussion in such a way, it is suggested, enables stakeholders to focus on the development of each migrant within the Australian community, capitalising on their strengths and enabling them to participate and contribute to their full potential.¹⁸

The positive achievements of humanitarian entrants need to be acknowledged. They have come through experiences that could have destroyed them but did not. Of the (sixty-five million displaced persons) in the world, they are among the tiny minority to have made it to a resettlement country. That in itself is worth noting¹⁹

As a result, SCoA has developed a framework of settlement outcomes which takes into account the experiences of migrants and their families while simultaneously contemplating the benefits that achieving “successful settlement” can bring both to migrants and to the broader Australian community.

¹⁴ See for example: *The National Settlement Framework* (2016).

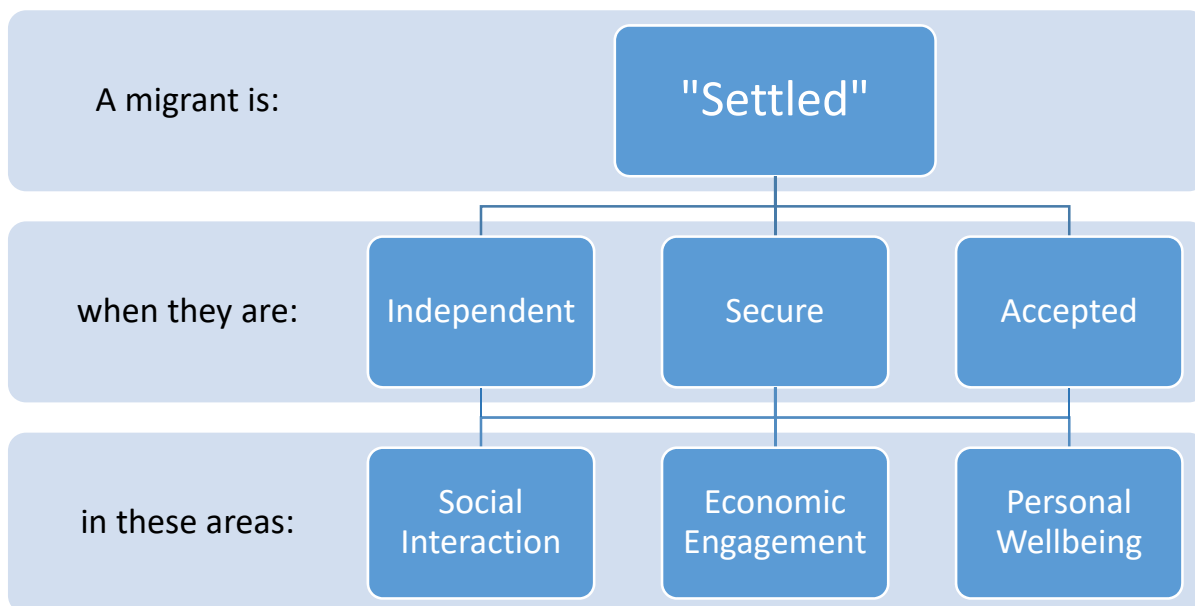
¹⁵ DSS (2013), *Settlement Needs Information*, p3.

¹⁶ OECD (2015) *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015, Settling In*, p19.

¹⁷ Piper, M. (2011), *What is Settlement?* (Small Mercies Settlement Node Working Paper, July 2011), p3.

¹⁸ Liston, K., *Valuing the Role of Humanitarian Entrants in Settlement* (2011 Migration Update Conference) p1

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p9



Each of these indicators is described in detail below. While each has its own unique characteristics, it is apparent that they overlap and are therefore interdependent.

2.1.1. "Settled"

Settlement can be viewed as a personal transition for migrants as they develop a sense of belonging in their new community. A study commissioned by the then Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), "Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals," identified this as the key aspect of settlement, and suggested that the level of comfort felt by a migrant following their arrival in Australia is perhaps the most crucial component of their settlement outcomes.²⁰

SCoA members experience first-hand the many different ways in which this process manifests itself for their clients. Based on these experiences it is abundantly clear that settlement is a personal experience, individual to each migrant and is not a linear process that can be distilled down to a single concept.

2.1.2. Independent

A migrant's independence following their arrival in Australia is a significant element of the settlement journey. This outcome requires that a migrant has been supported to achieve self-agency and empowered to take control of important life decisions. Independence can therefore be viewed with reference to a number of variables including their:

- confidence and ability to make choices and decisions for themselves and their family;
- ability to navigate regulation and access government services when needed; and
- source of income and lack of dependence on government and other support.

²⁰ Australian Survey Research Group Pty Ltd (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals* (Study for Department of Immigration and Citizenship, April 2011), p1.

Numerous settlement services contribute to a migrant's independence, including by enhancing their understanding of the rules and regulations of Australia, providing access to transport (or driver training), adequate housing, access to education, among others.

2.1.3. Secure

Settlement requires that a migrant is able to enjoy security and stability in each of their interactions with their new home. This is directly linked to a migrant's independence, but more specifically, this outcome must consider factors such as:

- job security;
- quality of housing and opportunities for homeownership;
- opportunities for education and training; and
- access to suitable and uninterrupted health care.²¹

Security is a crucial concept for migrants who need to ensure their independence is reliable and that their participation in the Australian community can develop without fear of losing their income, rights and/or status.

2.1.4. Accepted

Settlement is a two-way process, requiring both migrants and the receiving community to commit to inclusive and common practices and values, without precluding the celebration and practice of one's own culture.²² This outcome is crucial to successful settlement and fosters a harmonious and cohesive multicultural society.

Acceptance, as a settlement outcome, requires freedom from racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination,²³ as well as initiatives that welcome migrants and include them in all aspects of society.

2.1.5. Social Interaction

Settlement outcomes must take into account a migrant's social engagement and civic participation in their new community. Indicators of social interaction therefore include a migrant's access to opportunities to engage with their immediate community as well as wider society.

A migrant's social interaction includes:

- Ability to interact and participate in local activities, networks and events;
- Acceptance as a member of community; and
- Empowerment to engage with civic institutions including local council, elections, etc.

In this light, social interaction is seen as an essential element of building a sense of belonging for newly arrived migrants and is therefore crucial for successful long-term settlement.

²¹ McKinsey Global Institute (2016) *People on the Move: Global migration's impact and opportunity*, p83.

²² European Council (2004), *Common Basic Principles on Immigrant Integration*, http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf, accessed on 28 November 2016; and UNHCR (2005), *Conclusion on Local Integration* (Executive Committee Conclusion No. 93 (LIII), No. 104 (LVI) 7 October 2005, UNHCR).

²³ McKinsey Global Institute (2016) *People on the Move: Global migration's impact and opportunity*, p83.

2.1.6. Economic engagement

Engaging with the labour market is pivotal to successful settlement and is one of the most visible and important contributions that migrants make to Australia.²⁴ Migrants pursue employment as a means of acquiring economic security for their families and welcome the opportunity to contribute to their new home.²⁵ Obtaining employment is not only important in terms of economic wellbeing but also leads to greater participation of migrants in their communities, better self-esteem and protects and enhances mental health.²⁶

Economic engagement is often the easiest of the indicators to measure, and is given the highest level of priority often both by government and by migrants themselves, who view their labour market integration as vital to their “successful immigration”.²⁷

2.1.7. Personal wellbeing

A crucial aspect of a migrant’s settlement in Australia is that they enjoy a standard of health and wellbeing commensurate with that of the broader Australian population. Personal wellbeing is a broader concept than health alone and takes into account a migrant’s personal happiness and satisfaction with their new life in Australia.²⁸

Specific to health, migrants must have access to, but not be dependent on, health care and allied services as needed. In this respect, settlement services must support a holistic approach to the full range of health issues including:

- Mental health, including overcoming trauma;
- Disease and illness; and
- Disability.

2.2. When does settlement occur?

Migrants need support as they complete their settlement journeys in Australia. It is acknowledged that the settlement process is complex and takes time. There is no one-size-fits all approach to settlement and indeed many migrants will share different opinions of what, to them, constitutes “good settlement” and when that is taken to have been achieved.

As discussed above, settlement is not a quick process, and nor can it be defined within a specific timeframe.

It is acknowledged that many initial settlement needs are satisfied early following a migrant’s arrival in Australia. These include, where relevant, accessing housing, accessing government services, receiving assistance packages and receiving an orientation of relevant Australian government and social processes and norms.²⁹

²⁴ Ott, E. (2013), *The Labour Market Integration of Resettled Refugees* (UNHCR), p3.

²⁵ Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings* (DIAC, 2011), p34.

²⁶ Parsons, R. (2013), *Assessing the Economic Contribution of Refugees in Australia* (MDA Ltd).

²⁷ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p147.

²⁸ Australian Survey Research Group Pty Ltd (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals*.

²⁹ These items are largely the focus of the initial settlement services provided to humanitarian migrants under the HSS and CCS (see section 2.4.1 below).

It is broadly accepted across all levels of government that following the initial intensive settlement process, the “first five years of permanent residence in Australia after arrival is generally considered the settlement period.”³⁰ It is therefore vital that there are appropriate services in place to provide support beyond the initial settlement process, for the full “settlement period.”³¹

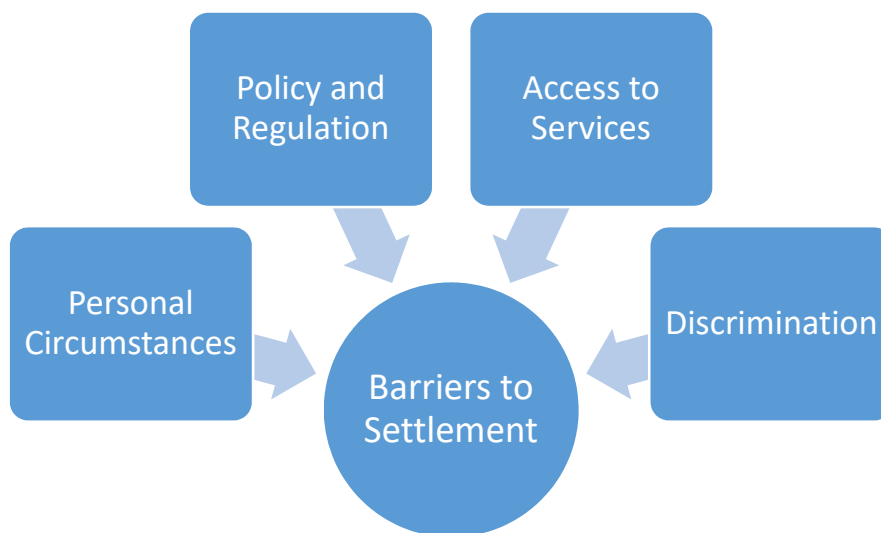
SCoA’s member consultations reveal that settlement is not a linear process; families progress through many different stages in their settlement journey and this occurs at different times, and to different extents, for each. At times this is a longer process than the defined settlement period of five years,³² and the migration journey can impact future generations of migrants, long after the period of settlement service provision has expired.

SCoA notes that much of the context of this Inquiry focuses on suggestions of anti-social behaviour among so-called migrant youths. As is covered elsewhere in this submission, SCoA does not accept that there is necessarily any link between settlement service delivery and current experiences of crime and gang violence in Australia. However, if there is to be any suggestion of a link between the two then this must come with the acknowledgement that the settlement journey is more drawn-out than previous government thinking and as a result, further research is essential to ensure that settlement services can be targeted appropriately for the full length of time required to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for migrants and their families.

2.3. What hurdles stand between migrants and achieving “better settlement outcomes”?

As will be discussed in detail below, Australia has a comprehensive suite of settlement services in place which support and empower newly arrived migrants. Before determining how effective those settlement services are in promoting the above outcomes, however, it is necessary to consider the hurdles that can impact a migrant’s ability to achieve those outcomes.

These hurdles can be viewed in four categories:



³⁰ *National Settlement Framework* (2016), p2.

³¹ Currently this is facilitated largely through the SGP for humanitarian entrants and some other migrants (see section 2.4.2 below).

³² See section 2.9.2 below.

2.3.1. Personal circumstances of recent arrivals

The experience of newly arrived migrants is not always a smooth one, especially if they come from a refugee background. It goes without saying that the traumatic experiences that lead to their arrival in Australia can have long-lasting impacts on health and well-being. This, combined with the obvious culture shock of arriving in a new country, and the great volume of unknown and uncertain aspects to life in a new country, creates a significant challenge for any newly arrived humanitarian migrant seeking to establish a new life in Australia.

Just as the settlement journey discussed above is experienced differently by each individual migrant, so too are the experiences that led to their coming to Australia. Indeed, it is stating the obvious to note that each migrant is unique and brings with them varying levels of education, work experience and health, as well as different experiences of trauma and stress.

As obvious as this may be, it is too common that the cohort of migrants and refugees in Australia are viewed through a single lens, as a single entity, which fails to acknowledge their individuality. While new arrivals do share some common needs, it is important to recognise the unique and individual needs of each and every client.³³

In 2016, the Australian Institute of Family Studies' (AIFS) published the findings of the first wave of its survey-based research project "Building a New Life in Australia", which details the challenges of recently arrived migrants.³⁴ It found that migrants from a refugee background, for example, often face multiple disadvantages because of their experiences, and while these differ greatly from individual to individual, they can include:

- psychological distress arising from pre-arrival trauma, with the majority of participants (89%) in the AIFS survey reporting that they or their immediate family had experienced at least one type of traumatic event before coming to Australia;³⁵
- mental health issues;
- physical disabilities;
- limited, disrupted or no prior schooling.³⁶

The findings of this research are echoed by DSS which also identifies the following further hurdles to settlement:

- limited English language skills;³⁷ and
- limited opportunities to gain skills and work experience prior to arrival in Australia.³⁸

Despite this, migrants from a refugee background are resilient and enthusiastic about making a contribution to their new home, and the support they receive helps them in this regard.³⁹

³³ DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p10.

³⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2016), *Building a New Life in Australia* (Fact Sheet 2016).

³⁵ Ibid., p4

³⁶ Ibid., p3.

³⁷ DSS (2013), *Settlement Needs Information*, p6.

³⁸ DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p8.

³⁹ UNHCR (2017), *Far from being traumatized, most refugees are 'surprisingly resilient'*, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2017/1/586b78de4/qa-far-traumatized-refugees-surprisingly-resilient.html>, accessed on 10 January 2017.

2.3.2. Policy and Regulation

A second set of hurdles that can exist in the settlement process are those imposed by the host country. There is a need to strike a careful balance between government regulation and the avoidance of policy which impacts a migrant's settlement outcomes.

Australia's robust immigration laws, for example, are well-documented. The Migration Act 1958 and Migration Regulations 1994 contain a set of strict criteria detailing visa eligibility, compliance mechanisms and visa cancellation procedures. SCoA accepts that regulation is necessary for any country that wishes to maintain control of its borders. It would be unwise, however, to ignore the potential that this has to impact certain migrants' settlement prospects.

Australia's skilled and family visa streams contain specific prohibitions on access to government support (including, but not limited to, many of the settlement-specific services discussed elsewhere in this submission), at least for the first two years of residence in Australia. This can leave some migrants who may for a variety of reasons struggle in their early settlement without much-needed support and assistance to access employment, to engage with their new community and therefore may diminish settlement outcomes for those migrants.

Further, there is evidence that migrants from a refugee background in Australia can experience psychological distress associated with policies around immigration detention; the imposition of harsh conditions for those on bridging visas, and associated delays in processing; limits on opportunities for family reunification; and the use of temporary, rather than permanent protection visas.⁴⁰

The trend towards temporary residency is broader, however, and SCoA notes an increased focus on temporary migration across all visa streams over the past decade.⁴¹ By its very definition, a temporary migrant has fewer rights, less independence and clearly a significantly lower level of security due to the time limit imposed on their visa and the uncertainty surrounding renewals. This has clear consequences for a migrant's ability to achieve the best possible settlement outcomes.

SCoA accepts the Parliament's right to enact legislation as it sees necessary. However, we would urge that in the adoption of measures such as these, consideration be given to the impacts they can have on the future settlement prospects of migrants.⁴²

2.3.3. Access to Settlement Services

SCoA's member consultations have highlighted a number of issues that can impact the effective delivery of settlement services to migrants. A major theme arising from our consultations has been the limited scope of access to many of the most crucial government-funded services.

As discussed above, crucial and highly specialised "on arrival" settlement services are almost exclusively reserved for migrants from a refugee background – just 8% of the overall migrant intake. While other important services, especially in relation to language, are open to a broader cohort of migrants, approximately 92% of those arriving in Australia each year are left to navigate the initial arrival period alone, especially where they don't have family or other community links to support them.

⁴⁰ Settlement Services International (2016), *Working It Out* (Occasional Paper 1, March 2016), p12.

⁴¹ For example: the Subclass 457 skilled worker visa is a 4 year temporary visa and the government has recently announced plans to introduce a temporary, five-year visa for parents of Australian permanent residents and citizens.

⁴² Further discussion of this issue is contained in section 5, below.

There are numerous groups of migrants within this 92% who could otherwise be considered sufficiently in need to receive government assistance, but are prohibited from doing so. Indeed, it is members of these cohorts that are often featured in media reports highlighting alleged failings in the immigration system. SCoA submits, and will discuss further below, that by opening up crucial on-arrival services, on an as needs basis, to a broader cohort of migrants, Australia can unlock even greater potential in its annual migrant intake.

Furthermore, the delivery and availability of settlement services for all migrants will always be subject to budgetary constraints, regional considerations, and fluctuations in the numbers of arrivals in any given location at a specific time. These matters are managed as best as possible by the hard working members of the settlement sector.

It is also important to acknowledge that many associated services are delivered not by settlement service providers, but by mainstream agencies (whether government or private). This is regularly reported as a source of further concern for migrants, who are required to understand and engage with a large number of complex requirements of different agencies that are not necessarily well-suited to dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.⁴³

To that end, SCoA acknowledges the considerable work done by the government to ensure refugees, in particular, are settled in locations where adequate and appropriate services are available.

It is not suggested that these challenges are overwhelming, nor that they have a disproportionate impact on the overall success of the settlement sector. Rather, we have raised them as matters for consideration in the broader selection of issues that can impact an individual's settlement outcomes.

2.3.4. Discrimination

Settlement is a mutual process, requiring both migrants and the community to commit to inclusive practices and that migrants are not discriminated against as they engage socially and economically in their new home.⁴⁴ Recent research by the Scanlon Foundation points to disturbing trends in the increase of experiences of discrimination in Australia. Despite finding that the majority (over 80%) of Australians support our multicultural society,⁴⁵ the Scanlon Foundation reports that 20% of respondents have experienced discrimination. This number is the highest in the 10 year history of the Foundation's surveys.⁴⁶

While the figure of 20% is unacceptably high, this percentage takes into account all respondents to the Survey, including Australian-born. When one considers the experiences of discrimination with relevance to a person's country of birth, the numbers become even more compelling. In this regard, SCoA recommends to the Committee another research survey conducted by the Scanlon Foundation in 2015, "Australians Today",⁴⁷ which reveals the following percentages of respondents from different backgrounds who report experiencing instances of discrimination:

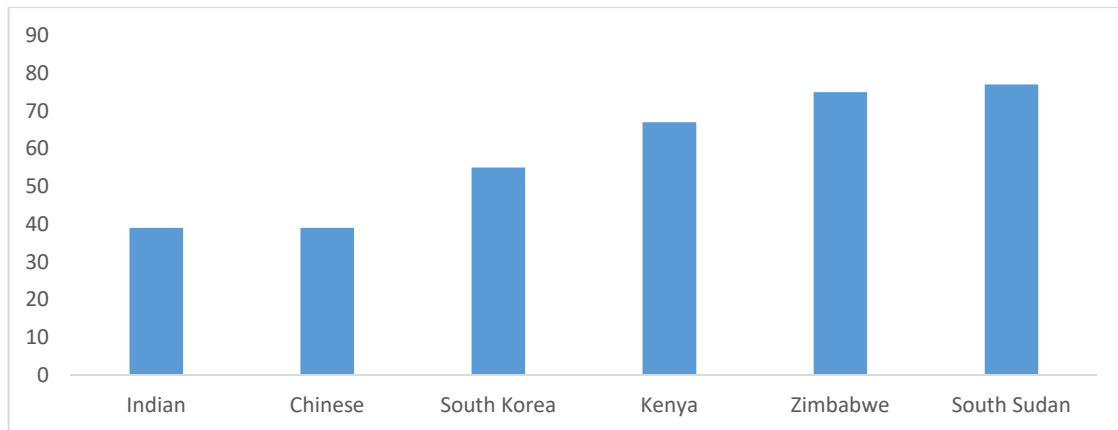
⁴³ See further discussion in section 2.9.3, below.

⁴⁴ European Council (2004), *Common Basic Principles on Immigrant Integration*, http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf, accessed on 28 November 2016.

⁴⁵ Markus, A. (2016), *Mapping Social Cohesion* (Scanlon Foundation, 2016), p54.

⁴⁶ Markus, A. (2016), *Mapping Social Cohesion*, p25.

⁴⁷ Markus, A. (2016), *Australians Today* (Scanlon Foundation, 2016).



(Source: Markus, A. (2016), *Australians Today*, p62.)

The negative experience of discrimination can have a devastating impact on individuals and their chances of achieving a successful settlement in Australia. Research suggests that racism and discrimination can have lasting negative impacts on health, especially mental health and can also impede a migrant's capacity to engage socially and economically with their new surroundings.⁴⁸

These findings highlight the significant hurdle that discrimination within society can pose for a migrant's settlement outcomes and demonstrate the need to maintain a socially inclusive society.

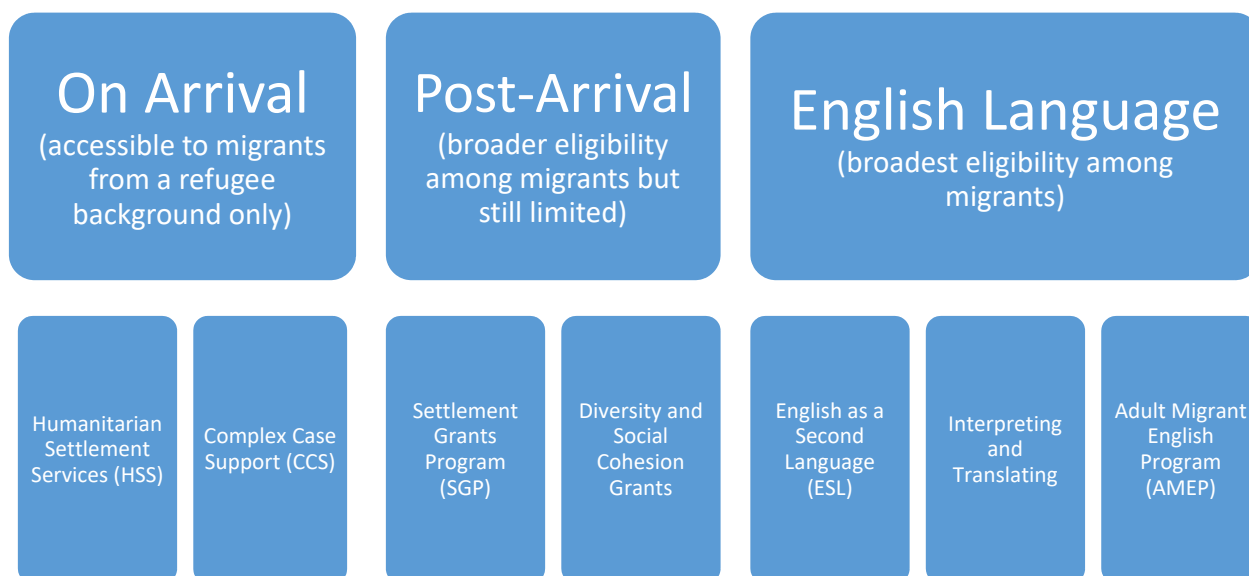
Settlement is a two-way process, requiring active commitment both by new arrivals and also by the Australian community. Negative experiences such as racism and discrimination can have a devastating impact on individuals and their settlement outcomes. The impact of leadership statements on community harmony and social cohesion should not be underestimated and it is therefore crucial that all Australian leaders focus on the positive impact that migrants make to Australian society and recognise the role of the Australian settlement sector in achieving this.

2.4. Australia's assistance for recent arrivals: an overview of settlement support services

Each group of people coming to Australia is eligible for different levels of settlement services both on arrival and in the years following. As discussed above, the majority of on-arrival settlement services are reserved only for migrants from a refugee background. However, following the initial settlement period, a broader class of migrants, though still not all migrants, can access certain post-arrival settlement services and English language assistance.

In summary, the range of federally-funded settlement services provided in Australia includes:

⁴⁸ Nelson, J., and Dunn, K. (2013), *Racism and Anti-racism* ("For those who've come across the seas..." Australian Multicultural Theory, Policy and Practice, 2013, Australian Scholarly), p269.



The Department of Social Services (DSS) has responsibility for the delivery of most settlement services in Australia while the Department of Education and Training (DET) administers Australia's migrant English programs. The DSS has developed a useful summary of Australia's settlement program and relevant statistics, including the level of government funding expended on settlement programs.⁴⁹

By way of summary, the 2016-17 Federal Budget allocates \$264.1 million for the HSS, CCS, SGP and National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) services, as well as grants for peak bodies. In addition, funding for Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) in 2016-17 is \$299.7 million and funding for the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) training is \$125.4 million. Given the importance of achieving the best possible settlement outcomes, this investment by government is to be applauded (though SCoA notes that it pales compared to the \$2.571 billion budgeted for detention and compliance-related programs and \$1.281 billion budgeted for border enforcement and border management activities over the same 12 month period).⁵⁰

The settlement services sector values its partnership with government and the ongoing commitment from government at all levels to support and fund the crucial work it undertakes.

2.4.1. "On Arrival" Settlement Services

The Australian Government funds settlement service providers to deliver a range of settlement services to migrants from a refugee background immediately on their arrival in Australia. Settlement service providers are the first point of contact in Australia for many new arrivals and the support they offer has a significant influence on future settlement outcomes. Supporting people when they first arrive to help them understand not only the practical details of living in a new country, but the underlying ethos of tolerance and respect which informs multicultural Australia is an essential step in fostering inclusion.

⁴⁹ DSS (2016) *Snapshots from Oz*.

⁵⁰ A useful study of the budget breakdown for 2016-17 has been prepared by the Refugee Council of Australia (2016) *2016-17 Federal Budget: What it means for refugees and people seeking humanitarian protection*, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2016-17-Budget-summary.pdf>, accessed on 18 January 2017.

There are currently two key settlement programs funded by the Federal Government tailored specifically for eligible migrants from a refugee background: Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and Complex Case Support (CCS).

Delivered by service providers on behalf of the Australian Government, the HSS program provides vital practical support to build the independence of people of refugee background in the first 6 to 12 months of their arrival.

HSS is delivered in 23 regions across Australia by 16 service providers. Since its inception in April 2011 to December 2014,⁵¹ 26,019 cases (representing 55,187 clients) accessed HSS services.⁵² CCS targets a much more limited number of clients who are assessed as having exceptional needs. Delivered by a panel of 33 organisations, the CCS program delivered services to 482 cases from January 2012 to December 2014.⁵³

The HSS and CCS programs were extensively evaluated in 2015.⁵⁴ This evaluation concluded that while they were working well to achieve the government's stated objectives, improvements could be made in the areas of: enhancing client settlement pathways; supporting effective service delivery; encouraging collaboration and innovation; and reducing administration burden and realising efficiencies.

In August 2016, the Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs, Senator Zed Seselja, announced a redesign of the settlement services provided "on arrival" with a focus on "better language and employment outcomes for humanitarian entrants".⁵⁵ The redesign is a result of a significant evaluation study undertaken by Ernst & Young (EY), released in June 2015, which, while finding that the HSS and CCS were largely "working well", made 10 recommendations for improvement.⁵⁶

The redesign will see the combination of the HSS and CCS into a new Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP). The HSP is currently being designed in a co-design process between the government and short-listed service providers, with a view to launching the new model in July 2017.

2.4.2. Post-arrival Settlement Services

As discussed above, the settlement process extends beyond the initial period immediately following a migrant's arrival in Australia. Many settlement service providers are therefore actively involved in a comprehensive range of settlement initiatives aimed at assisting migrants and refugees over the longer term. These include the Settlement Grants Program (SGP),⁵⁷ Diversity and Social Cohesion Grants,⁵⁸ and others.

⁵¹ SCoA notes that more current statistics do not publicly exist.

⁵² Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, p8.

⁵³ Ibid., p12.

⁵⁴ DSS (2015), *Evaluation of Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Programmes*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/evaluation-of-humanitarian-settlement-services-and-complex-case-support-programmes>

⁵⁵ Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja, <http://zedseselja.dss.gov.au/media-releases/improving-settlement-outcomes-refugees>.

⁵⁶ Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*.

⁵⁷ For more information see <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/settlement-grants-program>.

⁵⁸ For more information see <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/diversity-and-social-cohesion-program-dscp/diversity-and-social-cohesion>.

The SGP is an annual program which provides funding over a period of one, two or three years to organisations which provide services for humanitarian entrants and migrants to support successful settlement in Australia. The SGP funds settlement services under the following service types:

- Casework/coordination and delivery of services;
- Community coordination and development;
- Youth settlement services; and
- Support for ethno-specific communities.

Eligibility for the programs funded by SGP remains predominantly focused on migrants from a refugee background, though it is slightly broader, including permanent residents who have arrived in Australia during the last five years as:

- humanitarian entrants;
- family stream migrants with low levels of English proficiency; or
- dependents of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas with low English proficiency.⁵⁹

A small group of temporary residents (Prospective Marriage and Provisional Partner visa holders and their dependents) in rural and regional areas who have arrived in Australia during the last five years and who have low English proficiency also fall within the target group. Other provisional or temporary visa holders are not eligible for SGP services.⁶⁰

Diversity and Social Cohesion Grants provide funds for non-profit organisations (often but not exclusively settlement service providers) for up to three years to deliver projects that address social cohesion issues. While not specifically designed to be “settlement services” these grants clearly sit within the broader picture of settlement outcomes detailed above as they are intended to encourage “respect, fairness and a sense of belonging”.⁶¹ Programs funded under these grants do not possess the same eligibility limitations as initiatives funded by the SGP, however the level of funding provided under these grants is significantly smaller than SGP.

2.4.3. English language services

The largest portion of government funding within the broader settlement program is dedicated to the delivery of English language services, including:

- The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Skills for Education and Employment (SEE);
- English as a Second Language training within government-funded schools;
- Interpreting and Translating Services and the maintenance of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).

Many of these services and programs are available to the full cohort of migrants and persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds generally.

⁵⁹ DSS (2013), *Settlement Grants Program 2013-14 Application Information Booklet*, p11.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ DSS, *Fact Sheet: Diversity and Social Cohesion grant funding*, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/06_2015/diversitysocialcohesion_fact_0.pdf, accessed on 10 January 2017.

The AMEP is available to all eligible permanent visa holders 18 years of age or over who do not have a functional level of English language proficiency. Access is extended to some temporary visa holders, including Safe Haven Enterprise and Temporary Protection visas.⁶²

AMEP provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition within the first five years of visa commencement or arrival in Australia, provided a participant has not transitioned to another service (including employment-related training and job services).⁶³

In July 2017 the government will be releasing a new business model for AMEP which will provide access to 490 hours of additional tuition for clients who have not reached functional English after completing the initial 510 hours, and will remove altogether the cap of hours on certain English training (the Special Preparatory Program) for migrants from a refugee background.⁶⁴

2.4.4. Other sources of funding for Settlement Services

In addition to the above, there are a number of alternative funding sources utilised throughout the settlement sector:

- State, territory and local governments also provide funding for services, but this varies considerably across locations, in part reflecting differences in need and government priorities.⁶⁵
- Private enterprise is increasingly becoming involved in the sector, partnering with settlement service providers to run employment programs, for example, as well as engaging in philanthropic activities.⁶⁶
- Settlement service providers are increasingly adopting unique business models, and in particular engaging in social enterprise, where that can assist migrants and refugees in the settlement process and, ideally, without the need for external funding.⁶⁷

Of course, a significant and vital asset of the settlement sector is also its volunteers and the countless hours invested by individuals across the country, for little or no reward, to assist newly arrived migrants as they settle in their new home.

These additional programs and funding sources supplement the initial settlement support provided with federal government funding, adding to the scope and range of activities of settlement agencies, and are a key way settlement agencies contribute to building community cohesion.

⁶² Department of Education and Training (2015) *English Classes for eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants in Australia*.

⁶³ Department of Education and Training (2015) *English Classes for eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants in Australia*.

⁶⁴ Department of Education and Training (2016) *Revised business model for the Adult Migrant English Program*, <https://www.education.gov.au/revised-business-model-adult-migrant-english-program>, accessed on 17 January 2017.

⁶⁵ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p275.

⁶⁶ Roumeliotis, V. (2017), *Private sector's inspiring efforts to help refugees* (SSI Blog, Settlement Services International, 13 January 2017) <http://www.ssi.org.au/news/ssi-news-blog/886-from-the-ceo-private-sector-s-inspiring-efforts-to-help-refugees>, accessed on 18 January 2017.

⁶⁷ Instances of these are numerous, but a very successful example is the Spice Exchange operated by SCoA member Access Community Services. See: http://www.accesscommunity.org.au/the_spice_exchange accessed on 10 January 2017.

2.5. Who provides settlement services?

Members of the settlement services sector are the best placed to provide responsive and flexible services to new arrivals and to assist them to reach their full potential in Australia. The settlement services sector has built an impressive legacy and a strong culture which enables it to meet excellent governance and service standards while providing localised services and responding to the individual needs of clients. The sector is agile, and mature, exhibiting a willingness to cooperate and collaborate in order to achieve the best possible settlement outcomes for migrants.

Over 100 organisations operating across Australia deliver settlement services under one or more of the abovementioned funding models. For some, settlement services represent the major focus of work and the major source of funding. Many others, perhaps the majority, include settlement-related services as part of a suite of broader services, often including aged and disability care, for example.

Many settlement service providers commenced their operations in the 1970s and 1980s as Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) as well as community-based cultural organisations. The establishment of these organisations arose out of a government-funded program following the 1978 Galbally Review, which recommended enhancing community development and empowerment.⁶⁸

Over the intervening period the sector has evolved considerably, responding to changing policy direction and client demographics, becoming more competitive and developing a broad range of services, predominantly for the culturally and linguistically diverse population, that extends far beyond the provision of settlement services.

This has been done against the backdrop, and within the constraints, of government funding which has itself evolved over the period as successive governments, both at federal and state levels, promote different values and priorities.⁶⁹

In 2017, the sector has evolved to contain a diverse range of organisations including a number of original MRCs (usually as more mature corporate entities than they began as), larger entities with sophisticated business and service delivery models and, in some cases national and multi-national corporations.

As noted above, the delivery of services to migrants settling in Australia is not provided exclusively by settlement service providers. A suite of affiliated services are provided by mainstream agencies, including:

- Centrelink;
- JobActive – which provides government-funded employment services;
- Various housing support services; and
- Schools and tertiary institutions.

⁶⁸ Galbally, F. (1978), *Migrant Services and Programs: Report of the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants* commissioned by Prime Minister Fraser in 1977.

⁶⁹ Roumeliotis, V. and Paschalidis-Chilas, E. (2013), *Settlement and Community Development: Moving and Shaping our Civil Society* ("For those who've come across the seas..." Australian Multicultural Theory, Policy and Practice, 2013, Australian Scholarly), p85.

The diversity of organisations providing settlement services demonstrates the vibrancy of the sector and has resulted in a collaborative, effective and adaptive sector that is simultaneously business-oriented and community-focused. In this sense, SCoA submits that settlement service providers serve as a vital centrepiece for the delivery of effective settlement services. They have assisted the building of ongoing partnerships and collaboration between private, public and the community sectors which has been pivotal in supporting settlement, improving social cohesion and achieving the best possible outcomes for migrants and the broader Australian community.

2.6. The role of the Settlement Council of Australia

SCoA is the peak body for the settlement sector in Australia. SCoA represents over 80 settlement agencies nationally, who are spread across the country in every major metropolitan and regional settlement area. SCoA was established in 2003 as the National Council of Migrant Resource and Service Agencies and was incorporated as SCoA in 2008 following constitutional changes designed to reflect the broader spectrum of settlement agencies, discussed above.

With only modest government funding,⁷⁰ SCoA provides a key role disseminating information and best practice case studies across the sector and representing its members in consultations with key government departments and stakeholders which enable it, on behalf of its members, to provide input into government policy and program delivery.

In order to inform its collaboration with government, SCoA holds regular consultations with members, as well as national and international conferences which canvas the full range of settlement topics, including housing, employment, health and education. These various forums promote information sharing between settlement agencies.

A key objective of SCoA in recent years has been to develop a set of national standards for the delivery of settlement services which identify target outcomes across 9 key areas of settlement service delivery.⁷¹ The National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards (“NSSOS”) were officially launched at the International Conference of the SCoA in Melbourne in May 2016 and identify nine areas of equal importance that enable members to benchmark their service delivery against key practical considerations that contribute to each of the indicators of successful settlement discussed above in 2.1.⁷²

Rather than attempting to impose new regulatory burdens on agencies operating in the settlement services sector, these standards reflect best practice and highlight the considerable work and commitment invested by SCoA members to ensure the best possible outcomes for recently arrived migrants.

The nine NSSOS areas are reproduced below:

⁷⁰ For the 2017-18 financial year, SCoA is budgeted to receive under \$275,000.00.

⁷¹ Mirrored in the National Settlement Framework adopted across all levels of Australian Government. See 2.8, below.

⁷² Settlement Council of Australia (2016) *National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards*, <http://scoa.org.au/research-and-publications/national-settlement-service-outcomes-standards-may-2016>.

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and training pathways are paramount to the effective settlement of new arrival communities and demonstrate an evidence-base of sustainable outcomes |
| Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement services and programs provide effective, sustainable and diverse support in contributing to employment outcomes |
| Health & Wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement services clients are engaged through effective and responsive primary prevention and early intervention initiatives that encourage health and wellbeing |
| Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to appropriate and affordable housing is an essential feature of a smooth settlement process and in meeting successful settlement outcomes |
| Language services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting and translating services are a critical feature of effective communication and essential to the delivery of high quality services |
| Transport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to settlement support services is supported by a range of personal and community transport options |
| Civic Participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement service provision is outcomes focused and results in an increasing evidence base demonstrating civic participation of migrants and new arrival communities |
| Family and Social Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement services are informed in relation to the intersecting issues that impact family relationships within the settlement process and responsive to supporting clients to overcome these |
| Justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to justice is a fundamental human right and settlement services recognise that access to legal literacy is fundamental to successful settlement |

2.7. The success of the settlement sector in promoting “better settlement outcomes”

The Inquiry’s terms of reference ask the Committee to consider how effective Australia’s settlement services are at “*promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants*”.

In considering the effectiveness of settlement services in assisting *all* migrants, we repeat that it is crucial to bear in mind that not all settlement services are delivered to all migrants. As such, the *extent* of settlement services could be increased, with commensurate funding, to enable the best possible outcomes for all migrants, and not just those entrants from a refugee background who currently receive the vast majority. As will be elaborated further below, this could be achieved, for example, by implementing a needs-based assessment of all new arrivals to ensure that those who need assistance with orientation and/or making linkages in the crucial early stages of settlement are not left to fend for themselves.⁷³

Australia’s settlement services framework is renowned internationally as an example of best practice in supporting the successful settlement of migrants from a refugee background in particular. It is widely accepted that the HSS and CCS programs are largely effective in addressing the needs of newly arrived migrants and assisting them to overcome the personal hurdles discussed above as they commence the

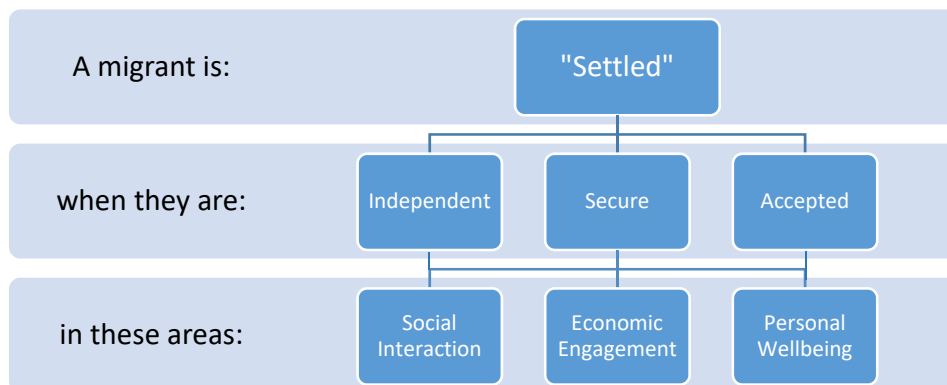
⁷³ See section 2.9.2, below.

settlement process.⁷⁴ Further, the range of settlement services described above that exist for a broader cohort of migrants are equally effective, and well-respected for the outcomes they deliver.

Of the settlement outcomes discussed in section 2.1, it is widely accepted that some are easier to measure than others.⁷⁵ While there have been a number of studies that consider migrants' settlement outcomes and personal experiences and others that have analysed the settlement sector and its operations, SCoA submits that there is no single study that assesses all of the settlement outcomes discussed in section 2.1 and measures the success of the sector in promoting those outcomes.

Notwithstanding this, below SCoA has provided an overview of key research findings in relation to the settlement outcomes and discusses the role of the sector in achieving those results. We submit that the evidence we present below demonstrates that while there are areas where improvement could further enhance outcomes,⁷⁶ settlement service providers are mature, innovative and responsive and the current suite of settlement services are a good mix, are well coordinated and are effective in promoting the best possible settlement outcomes for refugees.

For reference, the schematic of settlement outcomes contained in 2.1 is reproduced below:



2.7.1. "Settled"

As discussed above, the success of Australia's settlement services, must be measured by looking at the migrants themselves and assessing their attitudes and views regarding life in Australia.

To this end, SCoA recommends the Scanlon Foundation's 2015 "Australians Today" survey, which provides an insightful analysis of the settlement experiences of recently arrived migrants. Although it is not specifically focused on measuring settlement outcomes, it does assist in assessing the success, or otherwise, of the various settlement programs by summarising attitudes of recently arrived migrants. In short, Australians Today concludes that most indicate a positive attitude to life in Australia:⁷⁷

When asked if they are satisfied with their lives, 81% indicated that they were and only 5% that they were dissatisfied.

⁷⁴ Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, p35.

⁷⁵ OECD (2015), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015, Settling In*, p19.

⁷⁶ See section 2.9, below.

⁷⁷ Markus, A. (2016), *Australians Today*, p3.

These compelling numbers were confirmed by AIFS' ongoing "Building a New Life in Australia" longitudinal survey. In the first wave of results of this survey, released in 2016, a vast majority of the 1500 respondents reported that they had been made to feel welcome in Australia and felt a sense of belonging.⁷⁸

SCoA submits that settlement services provide crucial assistance in the settlement process for migrants and that the settlement sector plays a vital role in achieving the best possible settlement outcomes, as further discussed below.

2.7.2. Independent

On arrival, migrants may experience lower levels of independence than the general population, especially where they do not have existing support networks already in Australia. This lack of independence arises out of an unfamiliarity with Australian systems and the community in general, and can impact a migrant's initial settlement period, irrespective of their skills, language ability, etc. However, it is acknowledged that migrants from a refugee background often feel this more acutely, given that they are not pre-selected for their skills and English ability (as are skilled migrants) and don't necessarily have existing support within Australia (as do family migrants). These migrants are therefore highly dependent on settlement service providers to offer orientation, assistance and guidance until they themselves are sufficiently comfortable in their new surroundings.⁷⁹

SCoA suggests that Australia is consistently successful at assisting migrants to achieve their independence, as was demonstrated in the DIAC commissioned 2011 research study "Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals" which found a significant increase in reported levels of independence among migrants from a refugee background who had been in Australia for between 12 months and 5 years:⁸⁰

- A majority (over 60%) had become *confident* or *very confident* in relation to finding out about what is happening around them; and
- Over 70% had become *confident* or *very confident* about making choices about their life in

A migrant's journey to independence requires numerous factors: adequate and suitable settlement services, supportive communities and access to employment and other crucial socio-economic elements are just the beginning.

SCoA suggests that the Committee needs to consider the whole suite of services provided by the settlement sector to see how it contributes to this process: providing access to housing, employment and education are crucial, but so too are the less tangible services including supporting migrants as they deal with government bodies such as Centrelink, assisting migrants to learn to drive on Australian roads, and generally providing a safe environment for migrants to test their understanding of Australian systems and customs.

The combination of these factors empowers migrants and enables them to achieve independence for themselves and their families.

⁷⁸ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2016), *Building a New Life in Australia*, p6.

⁷⁹ Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants* (DIAC, 2011), p257.

⁸⁰ Australian Survey Research Group (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals*, p48.

2.7.3. Secure

A migrant's level of security has not specifically been measured by any of the studies and surveys referred to in this submission. However, SCoA submits that measures of independence and overall happiness are directly relevant to this indicator as, without security, those indicators are less likely to be positive. As a result, indicators of whether or not a migrant feels secure can include:

- level of confidence;
- access to full-time, ongoing employment that suits skills and provides upward mobility;
- appropriateness of housing, including suitability and long-term security; and
- education and training opportunities.

The settlement sector is integral in assisting migrants as they navigate the complexities of life in Australia. In this way, the sector is pivotal in the development of a migrant's security in their surroundings and in the absence of programs that specifically target this outcome, SCoA suggests that the Committee need only look at the full suite of activities undertaken by settlement service providers in order to understand how successful they are in this regard.

2.7.4. Accepted

Community acceptance of migrants has historically been a source of contention both in Australia and globally. At its heart is the public's perception of migrants within a community and the impact this has on social cohesion and multiculturalism.⁸¹

The Scanlon Foundation in its 2016 Mapping Social Cohesion report ("Report")⁸² presents the results of the Foundation's 2016 probability-based survey of 1500 Australians and provides a timely and insightful snapshot of the values and opinions held across a cross-section of the Australian community.

The Report demonstrates continuing high levels of support nationally for multiculturalism (83%⁸³), a clear indication that Australia is largely welcoming and supportive of the diverse mixture of cultures it currently enjoys. Similarly, Australians exhibit strong support for our immigration programme. The Report notes the lowest levels of concern in its history,⁸⁴ ranking Australia globally as the nation most supportive of its immigration intake.⁸⁵

There is also very strong support for Australia's humanitarian program (80%⁸⁶) and a majority (58%) of Australians support the government's plan to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to Australia,⁸⁷ and almost 70% support the view that there should be equal consideration for refugees of all religious and ethnic groups.

⁸¹ Productivity Commission, Migrant Intake into Australia (April 2016), p280

⁸² Markus, A. (2016), *Mapping Social Cohesion*, (Scanlon Foundation, 2016) accessible at http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/research_surveys/2016/

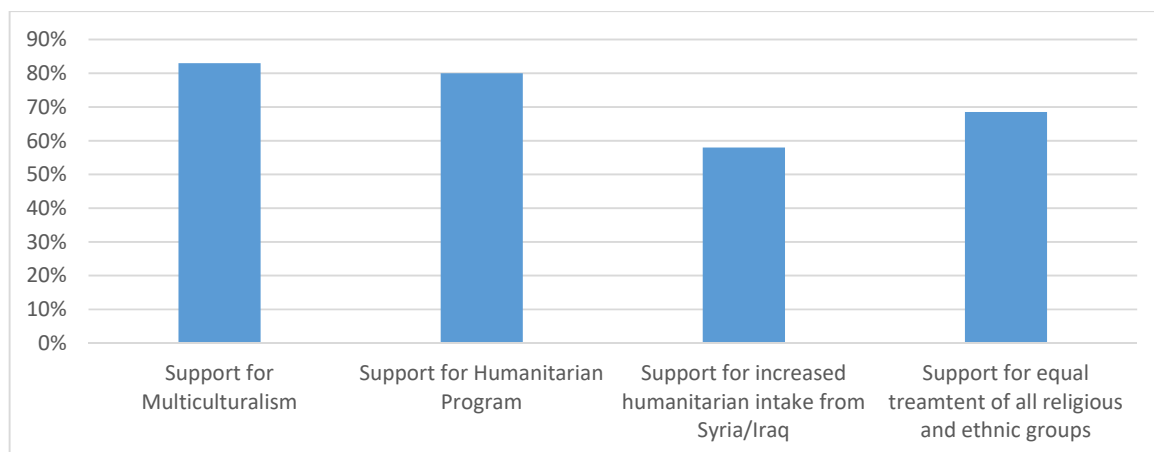
⁸³ Markus, A. (2016), *Mapping Social Cohesion*, page 54.

⁸⁴ Ibid., page 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid., page 40.

⁸⁶ Ibid., page 49.

⁸⁷ Ibid., page 49.



(Source: Markus, A. (2016), *Mapping Social Cohesion*.)

These statistics paint a very positive view of the general population’s acceptance of immigration and the country’s welcoming approach to migrants, and while discrimination and racism remain as issues for further attention,⁸⁸ they indicate that Australia is well-placed to continue its highly successful migration program.

SCoA submits that the tireless work of the settlement sector, largely through the delivery of activities funded under SGP and the Diversity and Social Cohesion grants program make a significant contribution to the overall acceptance of migrants within Australia. SCoA recommends to the Committee the countless examples that our members can provide, including various multicultural activities as well as general educative practices, which assist in building community understanding and cohesion.⁸⁹ We submit that this work is crucial to the successful settlement outcomes of migrants and should be reinforced and strengthened through further government funding.⁹⁰

2.7.5. Social Interaction

A key indicator of successful settlement, the facilitation of social interaction remains a high priority in the funding of settlement services and activities.

Significant research over the past ten years has investigated the effectiveness of settlement services in achieving social participation for migrants, and especially those from a refugee background. The overwhelming impression arising from this research is of a relatively high level of social and community engagement, which increases over time.⁹¹ This engagement starts within the migrant’s own community in Australia and over time, “interaction with the broader community increases.”⁹² Such interaction is often facilitated directly by settlement service providers who are instrumental in arranging migrants’

⁸⁸ See section 2.3.4, above.

⁸⁹ Roumeliotis, V. and Paschalidis-Chilas, E. (2013), *Settlement and Community Development: Moving and Shaping our Civil Society*, p90.

⁹⁰ See section 2.9.5, below.

⁹¹ See for example: Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings*, p55.

⁹² Ibid., p55.

participation in cultural activities in their local communities, volunteer opportunities and engagement with broader social networks.⁹³

In its recent report into Australia's migrant intake, the Productivity Commission supports this finding, concluding that:⁹⁴

...most immigrants integrate well into Australian society, and by many measures immigrants do better in Australia than in comparable countries.

Similarly, DIAC's 2011 "Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals" study asked recent arrivals of their social engagement with Australia and a majority indicated that they felt they were well connected with their community.⁹⁵

This outcome becomes even more pronounced in second generation migrants, who have several advantages compared with their parents; they are more likely to be proficient at English, and they have been educated in the Australian education system and are therefore familiar with local culture and lifestyle.⁹⁶

SCoA members report a common experience across the country: that the more they focus on building social capital and promoting integration, the better the outcomes for social participation among new arrivals. This is echoed by the above-mentioned studies, which recognise the importance of targeted activities and coordinated events that encourage social participation.⁹⁷ This naturally extends beyond the initial suite of settlement services, and includes a number of initiatives and activities that foster connectedness and engagement.⁹⁸

SCoA submits that the Committee can be satisfied that the current suite of settlement services provided by the settlement sector in Australia are integral to the long-term social integration of migrants and are successful at promoting this settlement outcome. It is crucial therefore that, while policy focus may shift from time to time, including a recent increase in focus on economic outcomes, government must not lose sight of the importance of investing in services designed to enhance social engagement.

2.7.6. Economic engagement

SCoA submits that the labour market outcomes of most migrants are positive and provide a solid basis for contributing to the Australian economy. This is because migrants, whether skilled, family or humanitarian, exhibit strong resilience and adaptive capacity which renders them, on the whole, as productive and efficient members of the workforce.

It is accepted that overall, it takes time for newly arrived migrants to achieve the same levels of labour market engagement as persons born in Australia. Similarly, within the broader class of migrants, different groups, such as migrants from a refugee background, report lower levels of economic

⁹³ Hugo, G (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants*, p215.

⁹⁴ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p247.

⁹⁵ Australian Survey Research Group (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals*, p42.

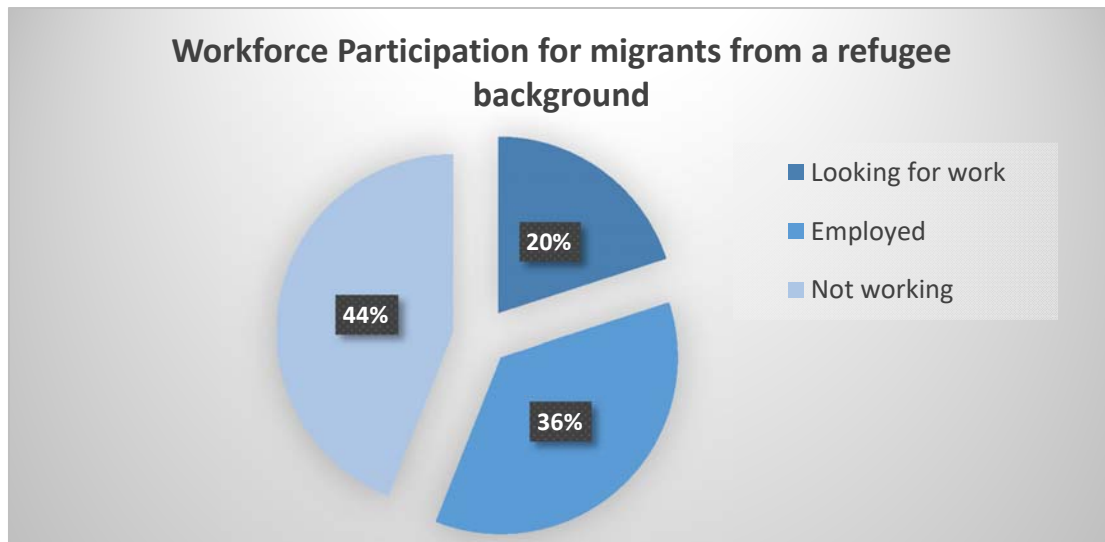
⁹⁶ Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants*, p241.

⁹⁷ For example, Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants*, p238 and Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p280.

⁹⁸ Roumeliotis, V. and Paschalidis-Chilas, E. (2013), *Settlement and Community Development: Moving and Shaping our Civil Society*, p90.

participation than others.⁹⁹ This is a result of a number of different factors that impact a migrant's employability and economic independence on their arrival in Australia, including lack of Australian work experience, difficulties in obtaining skills assessments and challenges faced as they develop their English language skills.

SCoA notes that many newly arrived migrants from a refugee background experience problems securing work, as highlighted in the Scanlon Foundation's 2015 "Australians Today" survey:



(Source: Markus, A. (2016), *Australians Today*, p3.

Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the difference in employment outcomes between migrants and the Australian-born population is smaller in Australia than in comparable countries, with a recent OECD study identifying Australia as a leader among OECD nations.¹⁰⁰

It is hardly surprising that many migrants from a refugee background take longer to become fully participating members of the labour market as they build a life in their new country. However, research indicates that these entrants pursue employment as a means of giving something back to the country that has given them a new chance, as well as ensuring economic security.¹⁰¹ Further, while migrants from a refugee background are less likely to be working compared with other streams of migrants, research suggests that they are more likely to be studying full-time, studying and working part-time or studying and looking after their families.¹⁰²

Over time there is a convergence of labour market outcomes for refugees and, by the second generation, employment outcomes for both men and women from refugee backgrounds are actually higher than for the Australian-born.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings*, p34.

¹⁰⁰ OECD (2015) *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015, Settling In*, p88.

¹⁰¹ Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings*, p34.

¹⁰² Australian Survey Research Group (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals*, p28.

¹⁰³ SSI (2016), *Working It Out*, p13.

It has also been discovered that migrants from a refugee background display greater entrepreneurial qualities compared with other migrant groups, with a higher than average proportion engaging in small and medium business enterprises. This phenomenon is no more obvious than when one considers that five of the eight billionaires in Australia in the year 2000 were of humanitarian settler background.¹⁰⁴

The above examples of migrants' ability to contribute positively to the labour market have not occurred by accident: Australia's approach to the provision of settlement services has been identified by the Productivity Commission as playing a crucial role in empowering migrants to seek employment outcomes that are suitable and provide a solid foundation for establishing life in Australia.¹⁰⁵

While direct employment services are not typically funded through settlement service providers (as discussed above they have historically been provided by mainstream agencies), it is increasingly the case that members of the settlement sector are including innovative and highly successful employment programs in their suite of services to new migrants.¹⁰⁶ These include training migrants in Australian workplace skills, assisting with job searches and, most importantly, making sure migrants (particularly those from a refugee background) are progressed to employment in a way that supports their overall settlement process and is nuanced and responsive, taking into account trauma, health issues and other socio-economic concerns. In recent years, many settlement service providers have been directly contracted by the government to fulfil the role of the mainstream employment agencies.¹⁰⁷

In this regard, SCoA submits that members of the settlement sector have demonstrated their ability to deliver successful economic outcomes for migrants in a way that is appropriate and compassionate, and are well placed to do more in this regard.

2.7.7. Personal wellbeing

According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), an objective study of 38 countries, Australia ranks 4th overall for delivering good health outcomes for migrants.¹⁰⁸ Australia is considered as having healthcare services that are responsive to migrants' needs, and while specific healthcare entitlements are not uniform for all migrants in Australia, the overall health of migrants is considered to be equal to the general population.¹⁰⁹

For migrants from a refugee background, specific data on health outcomes is difficult to obtain, however DIAC's 2011 research study into Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals found that most reported "excellent or good physical and mental health in the period 12 months to five years post arrival."¹¹⁰ These findings have been confirmed in the Australian Institute of Family Studies' "Building a New Life in Australia" survey, with the first wave data results showing over 87% of migrants from a refugee background surveyed reported their overall health as being "fair", "good", "very good" or "excellent", and 56% reported their health had improved since arriving in Australia.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings*, p38.

¹⁰⁵ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p178.

¹⁰⁶ SSI (2016), *Working It Out*, p14

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) <http://www.mipex.eu/australia>, accessed on 12 January 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Australian Survey Research Group (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals*, p34.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2016), *Building a New Life in Australia*, p5.

This successful outcome is a result largely of generous government policies that entitle these migrants to Medicare, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and Australian Childhood Immunisation Register from arrival. Care is taken to ensure that interpreters are available to assist recent arrivals seeking medical attention and a number of specific refugee-focused health services have been established around the country – often as a partnership between settlement service providers and mainstream health providers.¹¹²

The review of a migrant’s personal wellbeing is not complete without considering their happiness with life in Australia. This has been considered in a number of the surveys discussed in this submission, which attempt to measure happiness levels among recent arrivals. Notably, the Scanlon Foundation’s 2015 “Australians Today” survey found:¹¹³

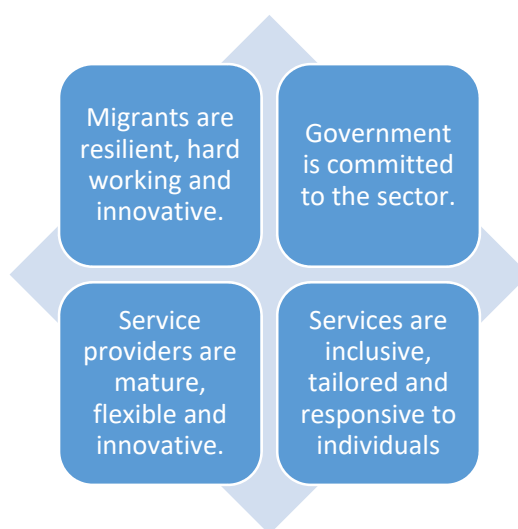
Almost two out of three (62%) of those who arrived since 2001 indicated that they were ‘very happy’ or ‘happy’, one in four (23%) that they were ‘neither happy nor unhappy’, and close to one in eight (13%) that they were ‘unhappy’ or ‘very unhappy.’

A similar result was discovered in DIAC’s “Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals” survey in 2011 which reported that just 7.3% of migrants from a refugee background reported being unhappy, while the numbers for skilled and family migrants were even lower, just 1.3% and 1.4% respectively.¹¹⁴

The contribution of the settlement sector to the personal wellbeing of migrants should not be underestimated. As the initial point of contact, and a respected and trusted source of information, settlement service providers provide crucial information to migrant families about their options and entitlements, and assist with accessing services, especially where a translator or interpreter is needed.

2.8. Factors critical to the success of settlement services

Many factors contribute to successful settlement outcomes for migrants in Australia. These can be characterised as follows:



¹¹² DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p41.

¹¹³ Markus, A. (2016), *Australians Today*, p29.

¹¹⁴ Australian Survey Research Group (2011), *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals*, p47.

DSS has identified the following principles as being particularly important factors of the success of Australia's settlement service delivery:

- Humanitarian entrants generally need intensive initial support. Providing early intensive support through HSS and CCS therefore helps refugees get settled and participate in society as soon as possible. Early intervention helps to prevent longer term reliance on welfare services.
- English proficiency, employment and education are key factors of good settlement outcomes for migrants and particularly humanitarian entrants.
- Services should be tailored to the needs of each humanitarian entrant. The needs of humanitarian entrants are particular to their circumstances, so a uniform level of servicing is not appropriate to all entrants.
- It is important to involve the surrounding community in the settlement of humanitarian entrants. In Australia's experience, settlement works best when the community in which refugees settle are prepared for their arrival, have information about their refugee experience and can play a role in helping them to settle, for example through volunteer programs.
- Involve multiple sectors of government and civil society, and develop a strategy for ensuring stakeholders, including different levels of government, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), community, private sector and individuals, consult and work co-operatively.
- Continually evaluate, assess and refine programs, to ensure they are providing the best outcomes for humanitarian entrants.¹¹⁵

Of importance, SCoA notes the recent release of the National Settlement Framework, a "structural blueprint for the three tiers of government... to work in partnership to effectively plan and deliver services that support the settlement of migrants and new arrivals in Australia."¹¹⁶ The strength of this document is its practical approach to the planning, delivery and evaluation of settlement services and its adoption of the same 9 outcomes standards as adopted by SCoA in the NSSOS.¹¹⁷

SCoA submits that the adoption of the National Settlement Framework is further evidence that the settlement sector is in the best position to assist new arrivals to overcome the considerable hurdles discussed above, and to achieve the best possible outcomes from the settlement process. They do this with considerable government support and by delivering dynamic, responsive and community-focused settlement services that are tailored to the needs of their clients and which facilitate the cooperation of a variety of stakeholders in delivering crucial services and achieving the best possible settlement outcomes.

The settlement sector's role in promoting the best possible settlement outcomes has been the subject of research which overwhelmingly concludes that the suite of settlement services funded through federal government programs have been crucial in facilitating Australian settlement.¹¹⁸

The sector has evolved and been refined over many years resulting in robust governance standards and a service delivery model that is closely aligned to client needs and which successfully leverages the strong connections providers have within their communities.¹¹⁹ The sector is agile, and mature,

¹¹⁵ DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p7

¹¹⁶ *National Settlement Framework* (2016), p1.

¹¹⁷ *National Settlement Framework* (2016), p3.

¹¹⁸ See for example: Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants*, p257, as well as Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p274.

¹¹⁹ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p274.

exhibiting a willingness to cooperate and collaborate in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients

Specialist knowledge has been built up over time resulting in service providers generating significant expertise in program delivery and risk management.

Further, settlement service programs have developed within an environment where client demographics and needs change considerably over time. Flexibility and responsiveness is innate in their business practices, enabling settlement service providers to respond to new cohorts of migrants and refugees as they arrive in Australia and cater to the needs of a wide variety of cultural and demographic groups.¹²⁰

Settlement service providers have developed strong community links and, vitally, trust, including through constant and direct consultations which provide evidenced based service development and improvement. Service providers have developed significant language and cultural competence to cater for a variety of ethno-specific cultural groups and have large volunteer programs which contribute to program outcomes and provide a practical way to foster social inclusion for newly arrived migrants.¹²¹

Settlement agencies have developed a specialist suite of unique services producing sustainable outcomes in volunteering, education, employment and community harmony. Many provide mentoring and support to newly arrived migrants, providing people the opportunity to become familiar with local workplaces and improve their English skills.¹²²

Settlement service providers have also been instrumental in building the capacity of, and engaging new arrivals with, mainstream service providers. This involves the development of partnerships and collaborations with agencies that do not have strong cultural competence or are not directly involved in the settlement space, for example local councils, police, state and federal government agencies, service clubs, and sports clubs.

SCoA notes that the work of the settlement sector is only one element of the story and must be viewed in conjunction with the commitment, loyalty and hard work of recent arrivals as they make their lives in Australia. SCoA is confident that a continued dedication to the provision of high-quality settlement services and the adoption of a more nuanced understanding of the settlement process across all levels of government will enhance the settlement of all migrants and will continue to reap countless benefits for Australia.

Settlement services are delivered successfully to migrants from all cultural backgrounds without discrimination based on race, religion or nationality. The sector's dedicated workforce possesses a vital understanding of the needs of different cultures, providing culturally aware services that are sensitive, relevant and appropriate.

¹²⁰ Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, p18.

¹²¹ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p279.

¹²² SSI (2016), *Working It Out*, p14.

2.9. Ensuring the best possible outcomes from the delivery of settlement services

The above discussion demonstrates the appropriateness of Australia's current suite of settlement services and establishes that members of the settlement services sector are the best placed to provide responsive and flexible services to new arrivals and to assist them to reach their full potential in Australia.

As demonstrated above, the settlement sector has developed a maturity and flexibility that is unique to the industry and reflects the ever-changing nature of its client base and government policy settings.¹²³ In its consultations with members, SCoA has identified the following principles, which underpin the success of the sector:

1. *Outcomes Focus*: Client-centred design with clear definitions of successful client outcomes and an outcome focused performance framework which SCoA suggests should be guided by the National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards (NSSOS);
2. *Specialist Services*: Service provision provided by organisations with specialised knowledge; a history of success in the sector; and strong relationships with local and migrant communities;
3. *Needs based approach*: A holistic, client-focused needs based approach to assessing and assisting clients which gives clients the time and support required to achieve settlement in their own way and on their own terms;¹²⁴
4. *Community-led settlement*: Focus on capacity building within communities which involves meeting needs and developing confidence without imposing a set of pre-determined outcomes;¹²⁵
5. *Flexibility*: Program design that enables flexible service delivery in response to individual needs;¹²⁶
6. *Collaboration*: Program design that encourages collaboration and sharing of good practice;¹²⁷
7. *Administrative simplicity*: A commitment to minimising red-tape and reporting requirements to avoid administrative burden on service providers;
8. *Innovation*: Program design that encourages and rewards innovation that leads to better settlement outcomes and the investment of an innovation fund which creates a financial incentive to innovate;¹²⁸ and
9. *Data collection*: Collection, analysis, and interpretation of key data regarding outcomes that enable both broad policy settings and specific activities to be measured.¹²⁹

With these guiding principles in mind, SCoA is confident that the sector can continue to evolve and maintain its commitment to achieving the best possible settlement outcomes. However, SCoA's member consultations have highlighted a number of issues that impact the effective delivery of settlement services.

¹²³ Roumeliotis, V. and Paschalidis-Chilas, E. (2013), *Settlement and Community Development: Moving and Shaping our Civil Society*, p83.

¹²⁴ UNHCR NGO Consultation 23 Nov 2016, Canberra.

¹²⁵ Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants*, p257.

¹²⁶ UNHCR NGO Consultation 23 Nov 2016, Canberra.

¹²⁷ Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, p73.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p130

¹²⁹ Ibid., p130

While it is not suggested that these challenges are overwhelming, nor that they have significant impact on the overall success of the settlement sector, they present opportunities to further improve the sector and the outcomes it achieves. For this reason, combined with this discussion, SCoA submits to the Inquiry a number of recommendations that could be used to enhance the effectiveness of Australia's settlement services in achieving better settlement outcomes for all migrants.

2.9.1. Ensure funding is sufficient and contracts promote the best possible outcomes

Recommendation 1

Owing to their sophisticated, culturally sensitive and specialised delivery models developed over decades of dedicated experience, members of the settlement sector are recognised as the best placed to provide responsive and flexible services to migrants and to assist them to reach their full potential in Australia across all identified settlement outcomes, including both social and economic.

Funding for settlement service providers should therefore be sufficiently flexible and adequate, particularly in line with any increases to client numbers, such that settlement service providers are empowered to deliver effective and tailored services to specific individual and community groups without being bound by a set of rigid, pre-determined outcomes.

As has been established above, the cohort of migrants arriving in Australia each year is a diverse and varied group with differing needs. The focus of the settlement sector and the services it is funded to provide is to assist and empower migrants, and particularly those from a refugee background, as they develop independence and security and are accepted into their community.

The settlement sector is the best placed to provide these crucial services, given its evolution into a dynamic and responsive industry with crucial cultural and language competencies and an understanding of the nuances of settlement. Over decades of experience, settlement service providers have developed a collective repository of knowledge which must be recognised and celebrated.

As a result, it is essential that funding for settlement services be maintained and increased as program levels increase, and contractual requirements are sufficiently flexible so that service providers can focus on delivering services tailored to the specific needs of the individual. While this is successful for the most part there is room for improvement, both in terms of the requirements imposed on service providers in respect of how they deliver services and also in the management of the entry, and destination of, migrants generally.

SCoA accepts and supports the government's focus on employment, education and English language ability as being of crucial importance to the settlement outcomes of new arrivals. SCoA suggests that the discussion in section 2.7 above provides clear proof that the settlement sector remains in the best position to meet these policy objectives. However, we caution the Committee that a focus on these outcomes to the detriment of other, less tangible but equally important considerations, would have long-term impacts on successful settlement that must not be underestimated.

Most settlement service providers operate lean and busy agencies, heavily dependent on external funding. They are therefore beholden to policy changes and government decisions that can have a

significant, and often immediate, impact on the viability of their businesses.¹³⁰ Any cuts to funding, for example, will impact viable and critical businesses and lead to poorer settlement outcomes for migrants.

SCoA members suggest that a significant issue in this respect relates to their ability to plan. SCoA members commonly report having insufficient notice of the arrival of new cohorts, and uncertainty around the numbers, characteristics and circumstances of their incoming clients. This prevents them from being able to adequately adapt, and in some cases limits their ability to deal with complex cases with the urgency needed.

In some areas agencies are given indicative numbers for the year but receive no arrivals, or all the clients arrive simultaneously. The cyclical nature of dealing with peaks and troughs of client referrals is familiar to agencies, but it does have an impact on their ability to manage the program to achieve the best possible outcomes. A steady flow of arrivals would translate to cost reductions and service improvements but so too would a commitment to a more flexible funding model that ensures adequate funding and enables settlement service providers to focus on delivery of services from a position of financial security and flexibility.

2.9.2. Increase the scope of Settlement Services

Recommendation 2

While preserving funding for the successful, intensive, services provided to recently arrived migrants from a refugee background under the HSS and CCS (soon to be HSP) it is crucial that federally funded settlement services be expanded as follows:

- a) Settlement Grants Program funding should be increased to include a broader and more flexible range of activities; and*
- b) Eligibility for settlement services should be expanded to include all migrants and should be assessed on an individual needs basis irrespective of the visa they hold or the length of time they have been resident in Australia.*

A resounding theme in SCoA's member consultations is that the time-limits imposed on the provision of funded settlement services is arbitrary and unhelpful. This is less so for the HSS program which, most SCoA members agree, is adequately delivered during the period of initial arrival for the cohort of migrants who need it most, but more of an issue for the SGP, which targets only migrants who have been in Australia for less than five years.

SCoA members witness first-hand that settlement can be a much longer process for some clients, though not for all, and therefore requires a flexible funding model that does not result in clients in need being turned away due to the length of time they have been in Australia. Arguably, this extends not just to first-generation migrants but also their families who, despite being Australian-born in some cases, may still need access to services and programs, but who, due to the timeframe imposed under SGP, are denied such access.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Roumeliotis, V. and Paschalidis-Chilas, E. (2013), *Settlement and Community Development: Moving and Shaping our Civil Society*, p83.

¹³¹ Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants*, p241.

The provision of federally-funded settlement services should therefore be assessed based on needs and not the length of a migrant's stay in Australia.

Settlement service providers are largely funded at the Federal level only to assist migrants from refugee backgrounds. Settlement service providers already provide services (often unrecognised and unfunded) to other groups of recent arrivals however there is scope to do more. With appropriate funding the sector is well-placed to increase the provision of services to other groups of migrants to ensure successful settlement outcomes can be enjoyed more broadly.

As has been established above, the percentage of migrants for whom the intensive "on arrival" settlement services are funded is significantly small at just 8 per cent. This results in the vast majority of migrants being excluded from crucial orientation and settlement services. Recent studies, including the Productivity Commission's 2016 report "Australia's Migrant Intake", have confirmed the view that in addition to migrants on humanitarian visas, other cohorts of migrants may also need extra assistance to settle successfully.¹³²

While not every migrant will require the full suite of settlement services, the advantage of implementing a needs-based model will be that crucial services are available to those who need them most, irrespective of the visa they hold. This has the potential to further enhance the settlement outcomes of all migrants, without necessarily resulting in a significant budgetary increase.

The provision of federally-funded settlement services should therefore be assessed based on needs and not the visa held by a migrant.

A key characteristic of the sector is the willingness of service providers to assist clients without the specific funding to do so. SCoA members report that this includes both providing services that are not specifically resourced, and assisting clients who are not the primary target of funded services (for example skilled and family visa holders and migrants from a refugee background who have been in Australia beyond five years). This arises largely because these providers are well-known for the services they provide and, accordingly, become a central hub for migrants of all types and a trusted source of information and assistance. It is clearly not palatable to these agencies to turn away those in need and so services are provided effectively in a volunteer capacity without reward or recognition.

SCoA submits that, without significant budgetary impact, a more inclusive approach to settlement services can be implemented so that the needs of all migrants can be assessed and any migrant who needs assistance in some aspect of their settlement, whether it be orientation to Australia, assistance to access employment or being empowered to engage with their new community, can be supported and the best possible settlement outcomes achieved.

¹³² Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p277.

2.9.3. Striking the balance between mainstream and dedicated settlement agencies.

Recommendation 3

Consideration should be given to enhancing the role of settlement service providers in the delivery of mainstream services to migrants and refugees either by:

- a) Transferring the delivery of these services directly to settlement service providers; or*
- b) Requiring mainstream service providers to demonstrate cultural competencies, meet specific targets relevant to local CALD communities, develop an understanding of the role of settlement service providers and to actively engage with settlement service providers in order to ensure the best outcomes for migrants and refugees.*

As identified above, the delivery of services to newly arrived migrants requires the involvement of both specific settlement service providers as well as mainstream agencies.

While some mainstream agencies have acknowledged the need to do more to better service migrants from diverse cultural backgrounds, and are open to more collaboration with the settlement sector, it is often noted that many mainstream service providers lack cultural awareness and sensitivity, particularly across a diversity of cultures, and for smaller, newly-emerging cultural groups.¹³³

This can have negative impacts on the settlement outcomes of migrants, who are excluded, often unintentionally, and therefore miss out on crucial services.¹³⁴

The delivery of services to migrants therefore often results in settlement service providers providing extra assistance and guidance to mainstream agencies, a service which is not resourced through existing funding arrangements, or otherwise assisting those migrants who are not able to be assisted in the mainstream and therefore risk falling through the cracks.

SCoA suggests that the settlement sector has demonstrated innovative and collaborative practices in the areas of employment, housing and others, as highlighted above, which puts it in the ideal position to broaden the scope of services it provides and, should the government desire it, to take over delivery of what have traditionally been seen as mainstream services.

It is crucial that the delivery of mainstream services to migrants and refugees is undertaken by providers that are culturally competent and are able to meet the needs of clients in a responsive and efficient manner. Where those services are delivered by agencies outside of the settlement sector, it is also vital that they understand the settlement sector and are able to work collaboratively with it to ensure best possible outcomes for clients.

Much more work needs to be done achieve this.

¹³³ Schetzer, L. & Henderson, J. (2003), *Public consultations: a project to identify legal needs, pathways and barriers for disadvantaged people in NSW, Access to justice and legal needs* (Vol. 1, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney), p61.

¹³⁴ Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, p57.

2.9.4. Coordination of cooperation, sharing and data collection

Recommendation 4

Funding should be allocated for SCoA, working collaboratively with key regional settlement service providers, to collect and analyse accurate and timely data and conduct relevant research concerning the settlement outcomes of migrants and refugees, to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of settlement services.

At present, there are significant limitations on the collection and availability of data, both relating to the migrants themselves and the services provided to them. This includes both large-scale research on settlement outcomes, and also the collection of statistics, experiences and case studies that illustrate the settlement process. The reason for this is largely an absence of available funding,¹³⁵ although SCoA has commenced work designed to facilitate greater sharing between members, including by developing an online Policy Hub and Innovation Centre,¹³⁶ and through the organisation of meetings, forums and conferences such as its highly successful international conference, “Settlement and Citizenship in Civil Society”, held in Melbourne in May 2016.¹³⁷

With only limited further coordination, the sector could enhance data collection and collaboration, enabling it to be better informed and to enjoy the benefits of enhanced cooperation, as discussed below.¹³⁸

SCoA therefore recommends that with a more structured approach, and specific government incentives to do so, the sector would welcome the opportunity to share data, case studies and best practices on a more formal basis.

2.9.5. Broader considerations of Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion

Recommendation 5

Initiatives that enhance community harmony and social cohesion are crucial to promote the settlement of new arrivals in Australia. This requires an understanding that integration is a two-way process and as much focus must be given to educating the general public as is given to training recent arrivals. With this in mind, grants targeted at social cohesion should be increased, and efforts made to encourage a greater number of activities and initiatives that promote multiculturalism in Australia.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p34

¹³⁶ Soon to be launched on SCoA’s website: <http://www.scoa.org.au>

¹³⁷ For a report of the conference, *Settlement and Citizenship in Civil Society*, please see: <http://scoa.org.au/research-and-publications/triennial-and-international-conference-of-the-settlement-council-of-australia-report>.

¹³⁸ See section 3.

Recommendation 6

The impact of leadership and media statements on community harmony and social cohesion should not be underestimated and it is therefore crucial that all Australian leaders focus on the positive impact that migrants make to Australian society and recognise the role of the Australian settlement sector in achieving this. Negative discourse which alienates specific groups and promotes disharmony must be actively discouraged. Australia should make clear its commitment to multiculturalism through an effective multicultural statement and/or developing a national legislative framework.

A regular issue reported by SCoA members and confirmed in recent surveys relates to the broader community's willingness to welcome migrants and, in conjunction with that, the prevailing discourse in media and politics on the subject. Despite the negative dialogue sometimes found in certain mainstream media and some corners of politics, Australia is a welcoming and compassionate society, largely supportive of immigration and our humanitarian program.¹³⁹ SCoA believes that this goodwill indicates that multiculturalism is alive and well in Australia and that Australia is therefore well-placed to reap the benefits from a strong migration program which delivers dynamic settlement outcomes.

However, the settlement sector is concerned about continuing high levels of discrimination in the community, and SCoA members regularly hear reports of direct and indirect discrimination and racism experienced by their clients.

As discussed above in section 2.3.4, the negative experience of discrimination can have a devastating impact on individuals and their chances of achieving a successful settlement in Australia.

Thus, it is essential that leaders across Australia strive to maintain a socially inclusive society and work with community to reinforce standards of respectful and welcoming behaviour. Since the mid-1970s, Australia has promoted multiculturalism as being a cornerstone of society.¹⁴⁰ While the focus of multicultural policy has changed between successive governments, there is no denying that it forms part of the fabric of modern Australia. However, it remains crucial that multiculturalism and diversity be protected and, indeed, celebrated, in order for Australia to continue to enjoy the successes this brings.

SCoA notes current efforts being undertaken to update Australia's Multicultural Statement. However, it is time for Australia to give serious consideration to adopting a whole-of-government and longer term approach to multicultural policy by developing a national legislative framework on multiculturalism, through a robust process that includes both legislative inquiry and consultation. To this end, we refer the Committee to the submission of our colleagues, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA):

The fundamental principle of multiculturalism needs to be embedded not just in government policy, but also in the political system, through a whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs, which recognises and values cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity.

¹³⁹ See further discussion at section 2.7.4, above.

¹⁴⁰ Ho, C. (2013), *From Social Justice to Social Cohesion: A History of Australian Multicultural Policy* ("For those who've come across the seas..." Australian Multicultural Theory, Policy and Practice, 2013, Australian Scholarly), p31.

3. National and International best practice strategies for settlement services

The Settlement Council notes that the second item in the Inquiry's terms of reference asks the Committee to have regard to "national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects".

Australia is repeatedly recognised as a global leader in settlement service delivery.

SCoA is confident that the Committee will hear from a number of our members who have inspiring success stories of settlement-focused initiatives. In addition, SCoA asks the Committee to consider some broader issues concerning the sharing of best practice both nationally and internationally.

3.1. National best practice

As the peak body for settlement services in Australia, SCoA is committed to increasing collaboration and innovation within the settlement sector. SCoA is confident that the Australian settlement sector, given its maturity and flexibility, is already a good example of industry collaboration. However, it should be noted that settlement service providers are not specifically funded to engage in such activities and so only do so when it is financially possible.

Notwithstanding the reality of the sector's funding model, SCoA can identify a number of key mechanisms for the sharing of best practice strategies amongst members of the settlement sector. This is facilitated through regular conferences and seminars, the existence of broad networks of service providers, and the sharing of best practice case studies including through SCoA's website and bi-monthly newsletter to members.¹⁴¹ A recent example, featured by DSS in its booklet "Snapshots from Oz" was SCoA's successful international settlement conference.¹⁴²

SCoA also notes that the NSSOS referred to above have provided the foundation for further collaboration and training including a series of forums and workshops to be held in 2017 which aim to increase capabilities across the sector by sharing best practice models of service delivery.

While a majority of SCoA's members confirm that they feel well-connected, particularly within their state of operations, it is accepted that there is scope for even greater collaboration and SCoA remains committed to assisting its members. As discussed above, SCoA intends to further enhance sharing between members, including by developing an online Policy Hub and Innovation Centre, which will be launched later in 2017. It is suggested to the Committee that the ongoing provision of funding support for such activities by the government would further enhance the capacity of the sector to collaborate and share best practice.

3.2. International best practice

While collaboration occurs frequently within Australia, there is a paucity of available analysis of international settlement practices. Nevertheless, there have been some attempts both to compare processes and services around the world, and also to measure various countries' success at the settlement of migrants.

¹⁴¹ While SCoA's website has always had a "case study" facility, a new "Innovation Centre", to be launched in the first half of 2017, will provide even greater emphasis on the sharing of best practice strategies among SCoA members.

¹⁴² DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p14.

3.2.1. International Case Studies

One of the most recent attempts to consider key international alternatives to Australia's settlement services was by Ernst & Young (EY) in its 2015 report *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and complex Case Support programmes*.¹⁴³ Having conducted a review of various international approaches, as well as alternative models suggested by stakeholders, EY concluded:¹⁴⁴

... we have not identified any alternative strategies to delivering settlement services to new humanitarian entrants that would appear to offer a superior means of achieving the objectives of the Australian government...

In reaching this conclusion, EY considered the settlement service delivery methods of Canada, Sweden and the US. While across each of these jurisdictions settlement services were considered broadly to be similar in scope and extent, some key lessons were identified, including:

- The US has a focus on short term employment which has drawn criticism as being inconsistent with longer term settlement goals and failing to provide an effective mechanism for integration;¹⁴⁵
- Sweden has a high focus on employment outcomes to the exclusion of other social elements but this has translated into lower than average actual results of employment;¹⁴⁶
- All jurisdictions maintain a "strong emphasis on providing refugees the means to develop self-sufficiency and independence", with Canada and Australia's settlement services proving to "have a more holistic approach, where client self-sufficiency and independence are not measured solely through employment outcomes."¹⁴⁷

Other, independent studies have confirmed that Australian settlement service delivery consistently achieve good results (see below) and provide a useful example of best practice for other jurisdictions.¹⁴⁸

3.2.2. International 'rankings' of settlement policies

According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), an objective study of migration and settlement policies in 38 countries,¹⁴⁹ Australia's policy and regulatory framework ranks eighth overall for facilitating the settlement of migrants.¹⁵⁰ Rather than assessing settlement outcomes, the Index considers each country against 8 key policy areas, providing rankings for each of those policy areas, as well as the overall ranking. Australia's policies are assessed as follows:

¹⁴³ Ernst & Young (2015), *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, p29 and Appendix D.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p28.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p129.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p129.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p28.

¹⁴⁸ See for example: Shields, J., et al (2016), *Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services and the Role of Nonprofit Service Providers: A Cross-national perspective on Trends, Issues and Evidence* (Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement, Canada).

¹⁴⁹ Predominantly developed countries that are considered popular destination countries for migrants, including Finland, Turkey, Germany, South Korea the United Kingdom and the USA.

¹⁵⁰ Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), <http://www.mipex.eu/australia>, accessed on 12 January 2017.

| Policy Area | Australia's rank (out of 38) |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Labour market mobility | 19 |
| Family reunion | 11 |
| Education | 2 |
| Health | 4 |
| Political participation | 9 |
| Permanent residence | 25 |
| Access to nationality | 5 |
| Anti-discrimination | 13 |

(Source: Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), <http://www.mipex.eu/australia>)

It is noted that in some areas, there is room for improvement, particularly in relation to Australia's regulation of family reunion and access to permanent residency. Recent changes to law and policy on these issues have seen Australia receive less than favourable rankings. In particular, Australia receives a significantly poor score on the subject of permanent residence, largely due to the government's increasing focus on temporary visas instead of permanent migration options.¹⁵¹

We note also that Australia scores poorly in relation to labour market mobility, again because of the country's increasing focus on temporary workers and the commensurate limitation of worker rights associated with that.¹⁵²

These issues, while not directly relevant to the delivery of settlement services, have an obvious impact on a migrant's ability to settle in Australia and therefore need to be given attention.¹⁵³

On topics specifically relevant to the provision of settlement services, including education and health, it can be seen that Australia ranks very highly.

SCoA suggests that an important lesson can be learnt from the Index, which provides a cautionary tale against adopting policies that are too heavily weighted in favour of temporary residence, but acknowledges the strong commitment of Australian government to providing access to effective settlement services.

3.2.3. International 'rankings' of settlement outcomes

As mentioned above, the OECD has conducted a comprehensive review of integration measures across OECD and EU countries.¹⁵⁴ In order to measure integration, the report compared a range of outcomes of immigrants with those who are native-born.¹⁵⁵ An important disclaimer to the OECD's work is that it found it difficult to compare countries comprehensively due to obvious differences in migration programs, policy objectives and, more broadly, demographics, social issues and history.¹⁵⁶

With this in mind, the OECD refrained from providing an overall rank for each country. Instead, the OECD's research focused on a number of what it considered "key integration measures" (labour market

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ SCoA has previously made public recommendations in the past concerning both issues and, in particular, highlighting the importance of the availability of family reunion to a migrant's settlement prospects.

¹⁵⁴ OECD (2015) *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015, Settling In*.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

outcomes, job training, housing, civic engagement and social cohesion, etc). In each, Australia ranks highly in comparison to other countries included in the survey.¹⁵⁷

The findings of these two ranking exercises provide a positive acknowledgement of the success of Australia's settlement services. Nevertheless, SCoA acknowledges that there is room for Australia to share and, where relevant, learn from other countries and the best way to achieve this will be to establish a facilitated dialogue between key settlement peak bodies globally.

Recommendation 7

SCoA should be tasked with, and funded for, facilitating ongoing national and international collaboration between settlement service agencies and, where appropriate, mainstream agencies, so that existing sharing practices are enhanced and become a regular forum for the dissemination of innovative ideas and best practice examples.

Where appropriate, SCoA should provide feedback to the Department of Social Services with regard to any activities that can be turned into funded pilot programs for national implementation.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., in particular Chapters 5, 7, 9, 11 and 12.

4. The importance of English language ability on settlement outcomes

The third item in the Inquiry's terms of reference asks the Committee to consider "the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome."

English language skills play a critical role in successful settlement. However it is not practical nor feasible to make English language competency a condition of entry to Australia for all migrants. Instead, the Government must maintain its commitment to delivering practical and useful English language training for all recent arrivals who require it, thereby ensuring they are empowered to interact with government, contribute to their community and obtain meaningful employment.

A resounding theme arising out of SCoA's most recent member consultations identifies English language ability as crucial to a migrant's ability to settle well in Australia, especially where that migrant and their family lacks a personal support network in Australia already fluent in English.

SCoA refutes any suggestion that English language skills should be considered as a condition of entry for all migrants. To do so would be contrary to the public interest, particularly in relation to humanitarian and certain family visa categories where English language ability is not relevant to visa eligibility. This would be unnecessary given the commitment of settlement service providers and, increasingly, some government services, to cater for culturally and linguistically diverse clients; a commitment manifested through providing translators, interpreters and, often, staff fluent in community languages.

Nevertheless, given the complexities of life in Australia, including navigating regulation, dealing with government bodies such as Centrelink, barriers to employment, and of course the need to engage with the broader community, a migrant without at least a functional level of English will experience a slower and more complex settlement process, and require intensive English-language training¹⁵⁸

The impact of English language skills on a migrant's potential for labour market participation is particularly relevant, with lack of English language proficiency commonly cited as a major barrier, especially to migrants from a refugee background, in entering the labour market.¹⁵⁹ Further, migrants with lower English language skills are typically funnelled into lower-skilled employment with little upward mobility, irrespective of their level of pre-arrival skill.¹⁶⁰

For these reasons, SCoA supports the view that English language ability is crucial to a migrant's long term settlement outcomes. We therefore applaud the government's commitment to providing various language services as described in section 2.4.3 above, aimed at enhancing the English language ability of recently arrived migrants through programs such as AMEP and SEE.¹⁶¹

SCoA members report that while current levels of government-funded training through AMEP and SEE are appreciated, there are circumstances where they are insufficient, or their effectiveness is diminished. For example, the obligations surrounding seeking a job, including requirements for making

¹⁵⁸ Productivity Commission (2006), *Migration, Population and Productivity*, p170

¹⁵⁹ See for example: Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings*, p34; SSI (2016), *Working It Out*, p14; and Migration Council of Australia (2015), *Migration in Focus: An Analysis of Recent Permanent Migration Census Data*, p22.

¹⁶⁰ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p178

¹⁶¹ For more information see: <https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-0> and <https://www.education.gov.au/skills-education-and-employment>, accessed on 13 January 2017.

job applications, attending interviews and undertaking other courses, often conflicts with AMEP class schedules and forces migrants to decline opportunities to further their English language training long before they have achieved suitable levels, or completed their allocated hours.¹⁶²

Further, while the current cap of 510 hours of AMEP training will soon have an optional increase, it is suggested that this will still be insufficient for some migrants. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the 510 (soon to be up to 1000) hours is ample for other migrants. In this sense, SCoA's member feedback suggests that AMEP needs to be further refined to ensure policy takes into account individual circumstances, including level of literacy in the migrant's own language, and is tailored to better balance with other obligations faced by new arrivals. This is a view that is supported by the Productivity Commission, which recently found:¹⁶³

The AMEP appears to be well targeted, but for some ... the hours of language tuition are less than required, or of a nature that does not fully support immigrants' labour market and social needs.

Migrants who have lower than usual levels of literacy, even in their own language, are particularly impacted and members report to SCoA that recent changes to the funding of AMEP have resulted in a decrease of community-focused social English training, which was previously provided through outreach programs specifically funded within AMEP. These outreach programs were crucial to ensuring that migrants from a refugee background were able to develop English language skills in a supported environment taking into account their specific needs.

To fill the gap arising from these changes to funding for English language learning, many SCoA members provide additional language services, including conversation classes, on a volunteer basis. The ability to do so greatly varies from location to location, however, and demonstrates a clear need for a more uniform approach to this crucial service nationwide.

For the above reasons, SCoA notes that English language skills play a critical role in successful settlement, and recommends to the Committee the considerable work of the sector, and of the government, to bridge the language gap and overcome language barriers. This important work should continue, and needs to be funded appropriately, ensuring that all migrants are empowered to interact with government, contribute to their community and obtain meaningful employment.

To this end, SCoA commends the government for its efforts to enhance AMEP, especially for migrants from a refugee background. SCoA sees the potential for recently announced changes to deliver considerable benefits for migrants, and submits that members of the settlement sector should be engaged in the design and delivery of those services.

Recommendation 8

English language training must be prioritised for all new arrivals, on an as needs basis, such that sufficient time is given, and funding provided, to ensure each person can learn English sufficient for them to participate in society, schooling and employment (as relevant) without being subject to the pressure of balancing English training with other obligations.

¹⁶² Refugee Council of Australia (2016) *Jobactive: refugee community and service provider concerns*.

¹⁶³ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p282.

5. The role of current Migration processes in assessing settlement prospects

The Settlement Council notes that the fourth item in the Inquiry's terms of reference asks the Committee to have regard to "whether current migration processes adequately assess a prospective migrant's settlement prospects".

SCoA believes that within this item of the terms of reference there are three issues that warrant consideration by the Committee:

- The adequacy of existing migration processes;
- The scope for additional regulation which assesses and/or ensures a migrant's settlement prospects; and
- The impact of policy on settlement outcomes.

5.1. Existing migration processes

Existing migration processes include a robust array of checks and balances designed to ensure that all migrants meet public interest criteria.

SCoA notes that existing migration processes strive to ensure a balance between meeting the public interest and ensuring a sufficiently compassionate and responsive migration program.

It is not our intention to provide the Committee with a detailed analysis of the *Migration Act 1958* and its regulations and policies however we note that Public Interest Criteria¹⁶⁴ are designed to ensure new entrants to Australia meet comprehensive tests of their character, health and commitment to Australian values. As part of this, prior to a migrant's arrival in Australia, considerable effort is made to assess their character, including the involvement of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and conduct of biometric testing.¹⁶⁵

SCoA notes that the Migration Act also contains considerable powers to cancel visas (including for permanent residents) where a migrant has engaged in conduct that renders them unfit to remain in Australia.¹⁶⁶ The cancellation of migrants' visas is becoming increasingly common, and demonstrates that the government is willing and able to use the resources presently at its disposal.¹⁶⁷

For these reasons, SCoA submits to the Inquiry that Australia is well-protected by the current suite of law and policy, imposed both prior to, and following, a migrant's arrival in Australia and there is no case for any increase to those checks and balances currently contained in the Act.

¹⁶⁴ *Migration Regulations 1994 (Cth)*, Schedule 4.

¹⁶⁵ It was reported in October last year that these checks resulted in up to 22 potential humanitarian entrants being denied entry to Australia as part of the 12,000 Syrian cohort: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/syria-refugee-intake-reveals-22-terror-cases/news-story/0d2c7eeb093f0e5af47a48686235f3e3>, accessed on 13 January 2017.

¹⁶⁶ For example, cancellation for migration-related fraud in section 109 and broader character cancellation provisions in section 501 and related sections, *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)*.

¹⁶⁷ See for example the recent findings of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/media-release-documents/commonwealth-ombudsman/2017/9-january-2017-ombudsman-releases-two-investigation-reports-relating-to-the-department-of-immigration-and-border-protection>, accessed on 13 January 2017.

5.2. Assessing and ensuring migrants' settlement prospects through policy and processes

It is not practical to test a person's likelihood of successfully integrating before their arrival, nor to attempt to extend that test to future generations of a migrant's or refugee's family. To attempt to do so could amount to racial profiling and is contrary to Australia's non-discriminatory migration policies.

SCoA is concerned at a growing dialogue surrounding enhanced testing for potential migrants that goes beyond traditional public interest and character criteria and attempts to determine a migrant's ability to settle in Australia. SCoA does not consider it possible to assess, with any degree of certainty, how well a migrant will eventually settle, nor their likelihood of finding employment or even of one day committing a crime. We suggest that it is even more difficult, if not impossible, to somehow test a migrant to determine what the settlement prospects of future generations of that migrant's family may be.

SCoA is also aware of recent reports in the media that suggest Australia may consider imposing a temporary or provisional visa on all migrants as a precondition to obtaining permanent residency. For the above reasons, SCoA believes this is unnecessary as there are already ample protections within the Migration Act that empower the government to deal with migrants who fail character and other public interest requirements.

Furthermore, SCoA is concerned that the types of changes to the Migration Act that have been suggested are likely to cause unintended harm to migrants and could severely impede settlement prospects. For example, imposing a mandatory temporary visa on all migrants would actually be counterproductive to settlement outcomes, as discussed further below. SCoA and its members are sceptical that any such approach could ever effectively measure how well a migrant and their family is settled in Australia as an objective measure to be tested as a pre-condition to granting permanent residency. Instead, SCoA fears that these changes would simply exacerbate existing problems by creating significant uncertainty and a group of non-citizens in Australia who are denied various basic rights. Further, such policies could amount to racial profiling and are contrary to Australia's commitment to non-discriminatory migration policies.

In the context of Australia's humanitarian program, this is particularly problematic; the program is established on social and moral principles which require it to be compassionate and non-discriminatory. This commitment is enshrined by the government in its statement of objectives of the humanitarian program as reproduced above in section 1.

It is SCoA's position, and we trust that the above evidence will assist the Committee in reaching the same conclusion, that so long as settlement service delivery is inclusive, targeted, flexible and comprehensive, it will not be necessary to depart from current migration processes which are themselves robust and effective.

Recommendation 9

Australia must maintain a non-discriminatory migration policy free of any form of racial profiling. Current security, character and "Australian values" checks are sufficient to ensure Australia maintains the correct balance between protecting the public interest and providing secure and robust border processes.

5.3. Current migration policies that impact settlement

Finally, in considering the role of migration policy, SCoA repeats earlier comments in section 2 and urges the Committee to have regard to areas of existing law and policy that negatively impact certain migrants' settlement prospects.

In particular, SCoA is concerned that migrants from a refugee background in Australia can experience psychological distress associated with specific policies including:

- immigration detention;
- delays in processing for the so-called "legacy caseload" and the harsh conditions imposed on bridging visa holders;
- limits on opportunities for family reunification;
- delays in citizenship; and
- the use of temporary, rather than permanent protection visas.

A resounding theme through SCoA's member consultations is that certain vulnerable members of the migrant population suffer significant harm as a result of increased periods of uncertainty around their status and that of their family members. This casts doubt on the ability of these people to truly "settle" in Australia and denies them access to the best possible settlement outcomes.

For many of these migrants, even those who have not personally been subjected to some or all of these policies, there remains a potential for mental health issues, especially depression and anxiety, while others are denied much needed settlement services due to their visa class. For some, the perception that they are in a perpetual state of limbo has proven too much and has resulted in the most serious of responses.

SCoA does not deny the parliament its right to enact laws as it sees fit. However, we suggest that given the focus of this Inquiry on settlement outcomes, these policies, and their ability to diminish settlement prospects, must be carefully examined and, where appropriate, recommendations should be made for certain policies to be revised or repealed to ensure a better balance is struck between Australia's need for strong borders and the maintenance of a compassionate humanitarian program.

Recommendation 10

Migration Policies which impact the settlement prospects of migrants and especially those from a refugee background must be avoided and, where they already exist, reviewed and, where possible, should be revised or abandoned.

6. Social engagement of youth migrants

Pursuant to the Terms of Reference, SCoA notes that the Committee has indicated that it will give “particular consideration to social engagement of youth migrants, including involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behaviour such as gang activity, and the adequacy of the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions as a means to address issues arising from this behaviour.”

As established above, SCoA’s members operate at the coal face of settlement service delivery. They are therefore in direct contact with migrant youth and have first-hand experience of the particular challenges facing them. The following observations are therefore informed by ongoing work of SCoA’s members:

6.1. Migrant children risk interrupted education and suffer other disadvantage compared to general school populations

The circumstances leading to the arrival in Australia of migrant youths from a refugee background are, for reasons discussed above, likely to include trauma, distress and situations of upheaval. This is likely to have resulted in an interruption in their education and, for some, education may not have been possible at all. Additional barriers exist in respect of ensuring a student has adequate levels of English language, as well as secondary concerns surrounding their health, housing and family/social support networks.

For other migrant youths the issues may not be as pronounced, however significant upheaval, as well as the challenge of seeking acceptance, can also impact their ability to settle quickly in their new education environment.

This creates significant challenges for both teachers and students, and there is a crucial need for better support for young people from a migrant background, and particularly former refugees, entering mainstream education.¹⁶⁸

SCoA notes that on a state-by-state level various attempts have been made to address this issue, with varying degrees of success,¹⁶⁹ but we suggest that a uniform approach is crucial to ensure that no migrant children are disadvantaged.

Recommendation 11

State and Federal funding should be coordinated so that any Australian school with students from a refugee background is able to provide those students with sufficient and appropriate intensive English language training as well as mental health support and other tuition to ensure a smooth transition into mainstream schooling.

¹⁶⁸ DSS (2013), *Settlement Needs Information*, p6.

¹⁶⁹ See for example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training’s comprehensive support program for refugee students <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/eal/Pages/ealsupportrefugee.aspx>, accessed on 17 January 2017; and also the considerable work being conducted in this area in South Australia as a partnership between government, schools and settlement service providers.

6.2. There is a need for specific funding for youth-focused settlement activities

The government funds a number of youth-specific activities within existing settlement services, and many SCoA member organisations have used that funding to employ youth case workers and to provide targeted services for youth.¹⁷⁰ Australia is the only country, to SCoA's knowledge, that provides dedicated funding for youth-focused settlement services.

However, there is a need for consistency across Australia to ensure that regardless of a migrant youth's location, they are able to access funded services that are specifically tailored to meet their needs. To this end, the settlement sector needs support and education to ensure it understands the specific needs of youth migrants and how best to address them.

In this respect, SCoA recommends the National Youth Settlement Framework launched by MYAN in April 2016.¹⁷¹ As described by DSS:¹⁷²

(The framework) provides the foundation for improvements in service delivery across the youth and settlement sectors - supporting a more targeted approach to addressing the settlement needs of young people in all areas of their engagement with the service system.

The framework is comprised of four components that provide the basis for understanding and facilitating good settlement for young people. These are:

1. Understanding the refugee and migration experience for adolescents.
2. Understanding the Australian settlement context.
3. Facilitating good youth settlement through active citizenship.
4. Facilitating active citizenship through good practice capabilities.

Recommendation 12

Future federally-funded settlement service programs must continue to include appropriate funding for youth-focussed initiatives and, where relevant, empower settlement service providers to enhance the range of services available to youth migrants.

SCoA is not otherwise qualified to comment on issues of anti-social behaviour, including alleged criminal activity and gang violence which have been identified in the terms of reference. In this regard, SCoA defers to the submissions of our member the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), a specialist in this area with an intricate, nuanced and extensive knowledge of the impact of Australia's migration system and settlement services on migrant youth. SCoA endorses the submission and recommendations made by MYAN.

In light of the above, SCoA considers the overwhelming feedback received during its member consultations clearly demonstrates that so long as settlement service delivery is inclusive, targeted, flexible and comprehensive, it provides the best possible opportunity for young migrants to successfully settle in Australia and to enjoy all of the benefits that flow from that.

¹⁷⁰ See for example the "youth sub-plans" provided within HSS and youth-specific services made possible by SGP grants.

¹⁷¹ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network <http://www.myan.org.au/our-work-with-the-sector/156/>, accessed on 17 Jan 2017.

¹⁷² DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz*, p8.

7. Conclusion

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull praised Australia's settlement program for migrants. He stated:

We have a long experience of, and commitment to, settlement services to ensure our immigrants, especially refugees, become successfully integrated into our society.¹⁷³

SCoA agrees that Australia should be proud of the settlement services it provides to migrants, and especially those from a refugee background. While there exist some ways in which service delivery may be enhanced, Australia's settlement service providers are, on the whole, dynamic, responsive and successful in creating a prosperous and happy new life for the approximately two hundred thousand migrants arriving in the country each year.

SCoA celebrates the work done by its passionate, hard-working members and commends them and the efforts they make. Further, we acknowledge that the success of the sector relies heavily on ongoing support from government. Most importantly, SCoA pays tribute to the resilient and enthusiastic group of migrants who have chosen to make Australia home and who are committed to building their lives here.

With that in mind, SCoA urges the Committee not to lose sight of the complete, and often subjective, picture of what is "good settlement" and the services that migrants need in order to achieve that.

For this reason, we remind the Committee of our National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards (NSSOS) and the commitment by our members to meet those standards. We hope that they may be considered an example of global best practice and look forward to sharing them internationally in due course.

As the peak body for the settlement sector, SCoA is well placed to continue working with the sector to foster collaboration and innovation. SCoA has a strong working relationship with government and represents an overwhelming majority of the sector. With appropriate funding, SCoA is therefore in an ideal position to perform crucial data collection, to provide avenues for sharing success and to improve Australia's link with international counterparts to ensure that Australia's settlement sector has access to case studies detailing best practice not only from Australia but globally.

More broadly, SCoA is confident that the settlement services sector is in the best possible position to continue delivering settlement outcomes for Australia's migrant population. With the implementation of only a few program changes as recommended above, SCoA submits that Australia can further confirm its position as a global leader in the delivery of settlement services, and can maintain its historically strong record of achieving excellent settlement outcomes without the need to change existing migration processes that affect the selection of migrants in the first place.

In summary, SCoA submits, the settlement sector is delivering state-of-the-art and world-leading settlement services that generate significant positive outcomes, both for migrants and for the Australian community as a whole.

¹⁷³ The Hon. M Turnbull MP (2016), *Australia's National Statement*, <http://malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/australias-national-statement-in-the-general-debate-of-the-71st-session-at>, accessed on 30 January 2017.

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