



JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

SUBMISSION ON THE INQUIRY INTO MIGRANT SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES

Executive Summary

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) and its members are committed to ensuring that refugees settle well in Australia. We therefore welcome this inquiry as an opportunity for improving their experiences of settlement.

We begin by emphasising that refugee settlement is different in many ways from migrant settlement. When we resettle refugees, our focus is rightly on their need for safety, and not whether they can speak English well or have useful skills. That is, and should remain, the fundamental principle for deciding whether people are resettled here. We therefore strongly reject any attempt to select refugees based on their religion, English language skill, or like factors.

We also strongly reject any suggestion that, when former refugees run into difficulties, our response should be to detain them or expel them on the basis of 'character'. Instead, they should be dealt with by the law of the land in the same way as any other Australian. In our view, such suggestions send a message to all those not born here that they will never be equal in this country. Such proposals undermine the principle of equality before the law and of non-discrimination, and the decades of work that has gone into building this successful multicultural Australia.

Our world-class settlement sector has been a crucial ingredient in this success. Every day, people in settlement organisations work tirelessly to ease the transition of new arrivals to life in Australia. Settlement organisations everywhere are helping people learn English, supporting them to navigate Australian services and systems, assisting them to make connections in local communities, helping them get work, and giving them a place they can feel safe and welcome.

That work has been supplemented by a flourishing civil society that exists beyond the settlement sector. Every day, RCOA hears of innovative practices and new grassroots groups, and meet passionate volunteers who befriend, teach and learn from our new arrivals. Many of these do the hard work of integrating people seeking asylum, while government policies do everything to stop these people from succeeding.

RCOA believes that there are many ways of improving the outcomes of people settling in Australia. We have made many such recommendations over the past decades, and we repeat some of them here. In particular, we believe that strengthening the collaboration and coordination between all the actors involved in settlement could significantly improve settlement outcomes. We make specific recommendations also on some of the designs of settlement services.

Our most important recommendation, however, is that at this critical point in Australia's political history, the factor that is most likely to undermine the integration of both refugees and migrants is the political rhetoric that is aimed squarely at them. This inquiry and other inquiries into racial discrimination, following years of the most punitive policies imposed on the most vulnerable, tells people they do not belong here. The most important thing this Inquiry can do is reject that premise, and reaffirm our commitment to supporting, rather than punishing, those who need protection.

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10	This Committee should recommend that all refugee and humanitarian entrants should be granted full access to specialist settlement services based on need and not on visa subclass and how they arrived in Australia.	7.8
11	This Committee should recommend an independent review of jobactive services and how they meet the employment transition support needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants, along the lines outlined in RCOA's 2016 paper, Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns.	8.4
12	Each jurisdiction should, as part of the process of improving implementation of the National Settlement Framework, conduct a whole-of-government review of settlement services provided within the jurisdiction to identify improvements in policy and practice	8.5
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14	Collaboration and coordination within settlement policy, including in the further development of a coordinating framework, should include the full spectrum of civil society including those providing services which are not funded by government.	8.7
15	The Australian Government should increase the level of funding available to refugee community-based organisations within the Settlement Grants Program, and as part of the implementation of the National Settlement Framework, identify ways to improve engagement with, and support of, refugee community-based organisations.	8.8
16	The Australian Government should extend the Building a New Life longitudinal research project beyond the initial five years of settlement.	9.1
17	This Committee should ensure it hears from refugee communities themselves as to ways to improve their settlement outcomes, learning the lessons from previous generations of refugees and humanitarian entrants. The Committee should focus on current challenges identified by communities, including the need for more flexible education and English language learning practices, the need to combat racism in all forms, and the need for better support of families adjusting to new cultures.	9.4
18	The Australian Government should foster further research into settlement outcomes for humanitarian migrants, building on existing research, combining qualitative and quantitative data, and addressing identified gaps in research.	9.5
19	The Australian Government should repeal the laws and reverse the policies that effectively exclude people seeking asylum from settling in Australia, including temporary protection visas.	10.3

1. The Refugee Council of Australia

1.1.1. The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national umbrella body for refugees, people seeking asylum and the organisations and individuals who work with them, representing around 180 organisations and around 1,000 individual members. RCOA promotes the adoption of humane, lawful and constructive policies by governments and communities in Australia and internationally towards refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants.

1.1.2. We welcome this opportunity to make a submission to this important and wide-ranging inquiry, as we and our members have a longstanding interest in the matters before this inquiry. RCOA represents members who have different interests in this inquiry (see Appendix 1). We represent many of the organisations that provide settlement services funded by the Australian government. We also represent many organisations that provide services which are not funded by the government, as well as individuals who support those in need of protection. Further, RCOA also represents refugee community organisations.

1.1.3. This submission is informed by our ongoing dialogue with our members and the wider community. This takes many forms. For example, RCOA coordinates, jointly or solely, several policy networks, including the Settlement Policy Network (co-chaired with the Settlement Council of Australia), and we are represented on many other stakeholder networks. RCOA also supports two advocacy networks in Victoria and NSW composed of people from a refugee background, the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network (discussed in section 8.8).

1.1.4. We also work closely with related peak bodies, including the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA), the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA), and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN). We have consulted closely with these peak bodies in relation to this inquiry, and support the further recommendations made by those organisations

1.1.5. Another major source of information are our series of annual consultations, which we have conducted since 1984. These consultations involve both service providers and refugee communities and are used to inform our annual submissions to the Australian Government on its refugee and humanitarian program. These consultations have a strong focus on settlement. In 2016, we completed 66 consultations across every State and Territory, in rural and metropolitan areas, and these consultations also inform this submission.

1.1.6. We also use information from our consultations and our ongoing engagement with our members to produce a range of reports, briefings and other publications. This submission draws upon these publications throughout this submission. We have also extracted key recommendations from these reports relevant to this inquiry in Appendix 2.

1.1.7. We begin this submission by addressing directly one of the main barriers to improving settlement outcomes in Australia—the increasingly divisive and inflammatory public and political debate about refugees and people seeking asylum. Both refugee communities themselves and the research report that this is one of the most important factors undermining settlement outcomes for people in Australia. We are aware that the political context of this inquiry is one that has already framed young people from refugee backgrounds as criminals, and that the terms of reference suggest that such young people should be excluded from citizenship. We therefore address the terms of reference relating to gang activity and the use of the character test next.

1.1.8. We then turn to the terms of reference relating to settlement outcomes. First, this submission describes the journey of refugees, to place the terms of reference in its proper context. We cannot properly understand where we want people to end up at the end of the settlement process without understanding where they start, and what they face during that journey. We cannot properly understand the role of settlement services without placing it in the broader context of the many factors that influence settlement outcomes.

1.1.9. We then provide a general description of the concepts of settlement, the policy frameworks that exist, and the settlement services that are provided to refugees. We include in our discussion of settlement services key recommendations that we have previously made in relation to their design. We then discuss international frameworks for measuring settlement outcomes and their value.

1.1.10. We then address the role of other key actors in settlement, including the role of employment services, State and local governments, the settlement sector, and refugee communities. We then discuss settlement outcomes, highlighting the existing research including our own, the difficulties of defining settlement outcomes, and international best practice. We also report on the views of refugee communities which we have consulted on ways to improve settlement experiences.

1.1.11. Finally, we also draw on our previous work to discuss key areas of government policy that clearly are designed to undermine the process of settlement, including delays in family reunion and the suite of punitive policies targeting people seeking asylum.

2. The public and political debate on refugees

2.1.1. For several years, the tenor of the public and political debate on refugees has been one of the most consistent concerns raised in our annual consultations. Refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia have been demonised as ‘illegal’, as potential terrorists, and as criminals. The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection has called refugees ‘illiterate and innumerate’ and accused them both of taking jobs and of languishing in unemployment queues.¹ More recently, the Australian Government has refused to condemn Donald Trump’s policies to suspend resettlement of refugees and to ban the entry of people from several Muslim majority countries.²

2.1.2. In 2015, we published two reports on the counterproductive impact of Australia’s refugee and asylum policies.³ We highlighted in those reports the views of many people from refugee communities that the negative and inflammatory rhetoric had an enormous impact on people settling in Australia. Racism and negative stereotypes mean that people feel they will not be accepted, with long-term impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. For those who have survived torture and trauma, the feeling that they are not safe in their new communities limits their capacity to heal and contribute to Australian society.

2.1.3. While the impact is greatest on those who arrive by boat, many former refugees who were resettled in Australia also told us that they felt unsafe and unwelcome by parts of the Australian community. African community members in Brisbane, for example, reported shops being defaced with graffiti urging Africans to ‘go back to your country’. Some former refugees have told us that media stereotypes make it difficult for them to engage with the wider community, especially when looking for jobs, and that Australians miss the chance to see what they can do and how they can contribute.

2.1.4. People have reported an increase in discrimination, racism and serious assaults against refugees and people seeking asylum. This is borne out by the ninth survey by the Scanlon Foundation, Mapping Social Cohesion, released in November 2016, which found:

- the highest level of reported experience of discrimination (20%) since the surveys began, with 27% of people from non-English speaking backgrounds reporting an experience of discrimination in the past year
- 31% of those experiencing discrimination report experiencing it about once a month or most weeks in the year
- 55% of those experiencing discrimination were verbally abused, 17% were not offered work or were not treated fairly at work; 10% had their property damaged, and 8% were physically attacked, and

¹ Latika Bourke, ‘Peter Dutton Says “Illiterate and Innumerate” Refugees Would Take Australian Jobs’ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 2016 <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2016/peter-dutton-says-illiterate-and-innumerate-refugees-would-take-australian-jobs-20160517-goxhj1.html>.

² ‘Turnbull’s “no Comment” on Trump’s Muslim Ban Fury’ *The West Australian*, 30 January 2017 <https://thewest.com.au/news/world/turnbulls-no-comment-on-trumps-muslim-ban-fury-ng-b88370622z>.

³ Refugee Council of Australia, *A Place to Call Home? The Impact of Australia’s Refugee and Asylum Seeker Policies on Community Cohesion* (July 2015) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/place-call-home/>; Refugee Council of Australia, *Eroding Our Identity as a Generous Nation* (December 2015) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/1512-Asylum.pdf>.

- 22-25% of people consistently report a personal negative opinion of Muslims.⁴

2.1.5. Another report by the Scanlon Foundation released in August 2016 also found:

- 77% of South Sudanese reported discrimination, and 43% of these reported experiencing property damage and physical attack
- those born in African countries reported the highest level of discrimination, averaging 54% with several groups reporting averages of more than 50%
- 25% of people from South Sudan reported experiencing discrimination at least once a month
- 51% of Muslims born in Australia reported discrimination, while 46% of those born in Iraq and 27% of those born in Iran also reported experiencing discrimination.⁵

2.1.6. This inquiry is part of this wider political context. It comes at a critical time in our ongoing national debate about what it means to be Australian. For the past four decades, Australia has transformed itself successfully and peacefully from an almost exclusively white society to one of the world's most diverse nations. It has done so in part through strong political leadership and a commitment to an inclusive multicultural agenda. As a former Minister for Immigration said not too many years ago, multiculturalism should be about:

*inviting every individual member of society to be everything they can be and supporting each new arrival in overcoming whatever obstacles they face as they adjust to a new country and society and allowing them to flourish as individuals.*⁶

2.1.7. We strongly affirm this approach. If people are made to feel unwelcome, if racism is not only tolerated but implicitly encouraged, and if the focus of government policies shifts to exclusion from inclusion, we are setting people up to fail. At the same time, we risk undermining the cohesive and largely harmonious nation we have fought so hard to build.

2.1.8. In RCOA's view, the simplest yet most important thing this Inquiry could do is to send a strong message that refugees and people seeking asylum do belong here, that we want them to flourish, and that we will support them to do so. This has become even more important given current international events. We therefore recommend that this Committee clearly reject the political discourse that demonises refugees and people seeking asylum.

Recommendation 1

This Committee should clearly reject the political discourse that demonises refugees and people seeking asylum.

3. Social engagement of young refugee and humanitarian entrants

3.1.1. The Committee has been asked to give particular consideration to 'social engagement of youth migrants, including involvement of youth migrants in antisocial behaviour such as gang activity'.

3.1.2. The statistics do not bear out the implication made in that term of reference. The statistics show that young people born outside Australia commit a disproportionately low number of crimes. Data obtained from Victoria Police, for example, shows that from 2012–2016, the majority of young people aged 10-18 involved in crime were Australian-born.⁷ Likewise, a report by the Centre for

⁴ Professor Andrew Markus, *Mapping Social Cohesion* (Scanlon Foundation, November 2016) ! <http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-Mapping-Social-Cohesion-Report-FINAL-with-covers.pdf>.

⁵ Scanlon Foundation, *Australians Today* (August 2016) <http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/australians-today/>. !

⁶ Chris Bowen, 'Multiculturalism in the Australian Context' (Sydney Institute, 17 February 2011) ! <http://thesydneyinstitute.com.au>.

⁷ Sarah Farnsworth, 'Australians, Not Migrants, Committing Most Victorian Youth Crime' *ABC News*, 4 ! December 2016 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-04/victorian-youth-crime-australian-not-migrants-statistics/8087410>; Sarah Farnsworth and Patrick Wright, 'Statistics Raise Questions about Calls to Deport ! Youth Offenders' *ABC News*, 4 December 2016 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-04/statistics-raise-questions-about-calls-to-deport-youth-offenders/8087410>. !

Multicultural Youth used current police data to show that “young people born overseas are less than half as likely to be alleged offenders compared with other young people.”⁸ Studies in NSW have also revealed that “contrary to common belief, young people who spoke a language other than English at home were less likely to be involved in crime than their English speaking counterparts.”⁹ It is disappointing to see media and some politicians drawing attention to a small minority of offenders and ignoring readily available statistics.

3.1.3. Further, this unwarranted focus on a small number of people feeds into racism, discrimination and harmful stereotyping. This in turn can foster greater social exclusion:

Continuing negative media portrayals linking young people, ethnicity and criminality have the potential to sow the seeds of alienation and disengagement amongst the very communities being reported on. It also has the potential of reinforcing existing stereotypes for individuals in positions of power, e.g. members of the police force.

3.1.4. We recognise that there are times when young people from particular refugee communities are over-represented in crime statistics. Victoria’s 2015-16 crime statistics highlighted that this was the case for young people born in Sudan. However, this over-representation needs to be understood in the context of many factors and not primarily because of any failings of settlement services. This is especially so when considering most young people born in Sudan represented in these statistics would have arrived in Australia as very young children more than 10 years ago. Their interaction with the criminal justice system must therefore be recognised as an issue not of settlement, but of social exclusion and marginalisation.¹⁰

3.1.5. It should also be recognised that some young people from refugee backgrounds may have experienced torture or other traumatic events before arriving in Australia. While many can and do access support and counselling to address these problems, trauma responses can manifest in episodes of antisocial behaviour. The appropriate response to such events is to ensure adequate social and psychological support is available to such young people. This includes improving access to torture and trauma counselling services, and ensuring mainstream mental health services are equipped to respond to the unique challenges faced by young people from refugee backgrounds.

3.1.6. Another factor that affects the statistics is the role of racial profiling and interactions between young people and the police. There have been many reported incidents involving racism within different police forces.¹¹ This has resulted in severely strained relationships between the police and multicultural communities in some areas. Racial profiling, for example, may also be responsible for the over-representation of Sudanese young people in crime statistics. For example, Victorian Police LEAP data analysed in the case of *Haile-Michael v Konstantinidis* revealed that between 2006-2009, African Australians in the Flemington and North Melbourne area were 2.5 times more likely to be stopped by police than other groups, despite having a lower crime rate.¹² These experiences of being

⁸ Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Fair and Accurate? Migrant and Refugee Young People, Crime and the Media* (30 October 2014) <http://www.cmy.net.au/publications/fair-and-accurate>.

⁹ Centre for Multicultural Youth.

¹⁰ Later in this submission (9.4.56) Vietnamese community members comment on how this phenomenon impacted on their community 25 years ago.

¹¹ Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre, *Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas* (2011) http://www.policeaccountability.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/FKCLC-report-March-2011_small2.pdf; Beau Donnelly, ‘Three Police Officers Sacked, Others Disciplined over Racist Sunshine Stubby Holders’ *The Age*, 5 March 2014 <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/three-police-officers-sacked-others-disciplined-over-racist-sunshine-stubby-holders-20140305-346mq.html>; Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre, *The More Things Change, the More Things Stay the Same* (2015) http://www.policeaccountability.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/More-Things-Change_report_softcopy.pdf; Sarah Farnsworth, ‘South Sudanese “Constantly Stopped” by Police due to Apex Stigma’ *ABC News*, 4 December 2016 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-04/young-south-sudanese-constantly-stopped-by-police/8078642>.

¹² Police Accountability Project, ‘Racial Profiling’ <http://www.policeaccountability.org.au/issues-and-cases/racial-profiling/>.

mistrusted and targeted by the police, an institution intended to serve all in the community, may contribute to the sense of social exclusion and alienation for some young people.

3.1.7. Addressing antisocial behaviour among young people, therefore, requires further investment and youth-focused support in areas such as education, employment, social inclusion, health and mental health. As we stress throughout this submission, the way to minimise antisocial behaviour is to make people feel like they belong in the community and have an investment in it, rather than through crude and counterproductive methods of exclusion.

Recommendation 2

This Committee should publicly recognise the need to support and invest in the inclusion of young people from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds, and reject the harmful media stereotyping that fosters their exclusion from our community.

4. Character test provisions

4.1. Our concerns with ‘character’

4.1.1. The terms of reference also clearly imply the ‘character’ test in the *Migration Act 1958* is not adequate to address antisocial behaviour. In RCOA’s view, the existing ‘character’ requirements in the Act are already far too sweeping. They breach the principles of the rule of law and equality before the law. They are creating a new group of people subject to indefinite detention. They are magnifying fear and vulnerability among members of our community.

4.1.2. We are especially concerned about this term of reference because in the last few years the ‘character’ test has increasingly been used to punish people from refugee backgrounds and those seeking Australia’s protection, because of the extension of powers to cancel visas on the basis of criminal convictions or charges and, for those seeking protection, through the breach of a Code of Behaviour.

4.2. Cancellation powers on the grounds of character

4.2.3. While there have been longstanding concerns about the breadth of the character test in the *Migration Act*, in recent years these powers have increased dramatically. In 2011 the character test was extended so that a conviction of any offences committed while in immigration detention, or during and after an escape from detention, would result in a person automatically failing the ‘character test’. As the Australian Human Rights Commission stated in 2013, the legislation placed us at serious risk of breaching our international human rights obligations, including: breaches of the prohibition against arbitrary detention; obligations to consider the best interests of children and to respect family life; and our *non-refoulement* obligations including under the Refugee Convention.¹³

4.2.4. In December 2014, the cancellation powers in the *Migration Act* were significantly expanded by the *Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Act 2014*. Significant concerns about this Act were raised before the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, including by RCOA and the Australian Human Rights Commission. These concerns included:

- The considerable risk of prolonged and indefinite detention, especially in relation to refugees who cannot be removed to their country of origin due to the risk that they may face persecution or other forms of serious harm in their country of origin, and stateless people who have no country which is obliged to accept them
- The mandatory nature of the visa cancellation powers, which significantly decreases the capacity of the system to consider the individual circumstances of a case before a person is detained

¹³ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Human Rights Issues Raised by Visa Refusal or Cancellation under Section 501 of the Migration Act* (Background Paper, June 2013)
<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/background-paper-human-rights-issues-raised-visa-refusal-or-cancellation-under-section>.

- The very low thresholds for visa cancellation, which trigger visa cancellations even in the absence of a real risk to the community, and
- The continued trend towards increasing the personal discretionary powers of the Minister, including to reverse decisions by merits review tribunals.

4.2.5. Our concerns have only increased since then. Since December 2014, there has been a very significant increase in the number of people being detained because of visa cancellations on 'character' grounds. This has included people on permanent refugee visas as well as on bridging visas, and stateless people, all of whom are now at risk of indefinite detention.

4.2.6. According to a recent report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, between 1 January 2014 and 1 March 2016, 1,219 people had their visas cancelled, with 983 people having their visas cancelled in 2015-2016. This was a huge increase from the 76 people who were detained in the previous financial year. Most of these people were from New Zealand (697 people) and the United Kingdom (124), with smaller numbers for people from Sudan (30), Vietnam (27), Iraq (13), Lebanon (11), Afghanistan (11) and South Africa (10).¹⁴

4.2.7. The Ombudsman's report also highlighted the inadequate processes put in place to process people's requests for the cancellation to be revoked. Of the 805 people who managed to put in a request for revocation (66% of the total), by 1 March 2016, 78% were waiting for a decision. The Ombudsman identified a range of deficiencies in the process, but a clear bottleneck was that the Minister for Immigration was personally deciding all of these requests and most of the cancellation decisions as well. Personal decisions by the Minister are not reviewable by a tribunal and are reviewable by a court only on the narrowest of grounds, making them effectively impossible to overturn.

4.3. Cancellation of Bridging Visa Es

4.3.8. A Bridging Visa (subclass E) is used to release people seeking protection in Australia from mandatory immigration detention. On 28 June 2013, the *Migration Regulations* were amended to introduce a condition that the holder of a Bridging visa must not engage in criminal conduct.¹⁵ As a result, the Minister for Immigration may cancel a Bridging E visa where the person holding the visa has been either charged with or convicted of an offence against the law of the Commonwealth, a state or territory or against the law of any other country.¹⁶

4.3.9. This power allows for consideration of the particular circumstances of each case, including the severity of the alleged or actual criminal conduct, and the impact of visa cancellation on other visa holders and family members in Australia. However, Ministerial Direction 63 states that these new grounds for visa cancellation should be "applied rigorously," and that people should "expect to be denied the privilege of continuing to hold" a bridging visa, even where criminal investigations remain ongoing and they are yet to be convicted.

4.3.10. Under these regulations, 322 Bridging E visas were cancelled between 29 June 2013 and 9 October 2016. If a person's visa is cancelled they are detained, and cannot make further visa applications. A person in this situation can only therefore leave immigration detention if the Minister personally decides to intervene, either by lifting the ban on making visa applications, or by granting them a visa without an application. Otherwise, the person will be detained indefinitely.

4.3.11. As the Commonwealth Ombudsman has recently noted, this position undermines the fundamental principle of the Australian common law that a person must be presumed innocent until

¹⁴ Commonwealth Ombudsman, *The Administration of Section 501 of the Migration Act 1958* (8, December 2016) http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/42597/Own-motion-report-into-the-Administration-of-Section-of-the-Migration-Act-1958-final.pdf.

¹⁵ *Migration Regulations 1994* (Cth) r 2.43(1)(p).

¹⁶ Another ground of cancellation is that the person is the subject of a notice issued by Interpol indicating that the visa holder has either committed an offence against the law of another country and is likely to commit a serious offence, or is a serious and immediate threat to public safety.

they are found guilty. It also undermines the principle of equality before the law, because people are punished twice in effect even where the charge has not been proven.

4.3.12. Further, visas can be cancelled regardless of how serious the charge is. The Ombudsman found that the department was in fact inclined towards cancelling a visa even where the charge was minor. The Ombudsman noted that it was difficult to demonstrate how detaining a person charged with a minor traffic or shoplifting offence supported the stated intention of preserving the Australian community from an unacceptable risk of harm.

4.3.13. The Ombudsman also made the following alarming findings about the Department's implementation of the Regulations:

- The Ombudsman was unable to find proof that the circumstances of each case had been properly assessed, or whether cancellations were reasonable, appropriate or in line with the regulation.
- There is very little opportunity for the visa holder to seek legal advice or support before the decision is made to cancel their visa
- Visa holders were often unaware that they could appeal the cancellation, given that information about reviews or the time frame for application is not provided in the notice of cancellation
- Some people who were aware of their right of review were still unable to make an application as they were transferred between detention facilities during the critical two-day period after the cancellation decision had been made, and
- Even where an appeal was successful, if the bridging visa expired during the appeal, they would remain in detention unless the Department brought the case for the Minister to exercise his discretion, but such matters were not consistently referred to the Minister, and were not treated with the required urgency.

4.3.14. The Ombudsman drew attention to one case in which a person remained in detention for eight months after successfully appealing the cancellation of her bridging visa, and gave birth to an Australian citizen during this period. Her case was not assessed for possible ministerial intervention, despite requests from her representative.

4.3.15. The Ombudsman also found that people were kept in detention longer than needed, contrary to the stated aim to use immigration detention only as a 'last resort', because:

- The Department did not consider that they needed to review the appropriateness of detention, or refer a case for intervention, even when criminal charges were dropped
- Matters could only be escalated by a two-step process that could take many months
- People were detained even if they were granted bail and assessed as low risk, with the result that some people had been detained for more than two years, and
- The number of people who now required Ministerial intervention because of changes to legislation had significantly increased the number of cases before the Minister.

4.3.16. Finally, the Ombudsman observed that he had not received full cooperation with the investigation, and that it had been hampered by delays due to fragmentation of case management, poor record-keeping, and difficulties in extracting and analysing the data.

4.3.17. We echo and share the Ombudsman's concerns about the Department's use of its visa cancellation powers. Since the implementation of these changes, the Refugee Council of Australia has heard consistently of issues relating to visa cancellations. In 2016, RCOA surveyed its members to gather initial information on this rapid increase in visa cancellations. The survey highlighted many of the concerns raised by the Ombudsman, such as disproportionate punishment, unreasonable delay, inadequate processes, and lack of access to legal advice or representation.

4.3.18. We also heard that visa cancellations have occurred despite significant histories of psychiatric illness, disabilities, or statelessness. Consistently with the Ombudsman's observations, people are turning up to criminal courts to be charged, only to be whisked away to detention. There have also been reports of handcuffs being used, and rapid transfers of people interstate once detained.

4.3.19. We have already seen these visa cancellation provisions result in a death in Yongah Hill, with a refugee whose visa had been cancelled burning himself to death.¹⁷ There are also concerns that the mixing of people seeking asylum in detention with those who have had their visas cancelled contributed to the death of young person seeking asylum in July 2015.¹⁸

4.4. Code of Behaviour

4.4.20. Another recent change has been the requirement that people seeking asylum on bridging visas must sign a Code of Behaviour. This makes it a condition of the visa that the person must meet certain expectations above and beyond obeying the laws of Australia, including not engaging in “any antisocial or disruptive activities that are inconsiderate”. As it is a condition of the visa, the Australian Government may cancel a bridging visa because the Code has been breached, resulting in detention.

4.4.21. In our December 2015 report on community views of asylum policies, we reported on the detrimental effects of the Code of Behaviour on those in the community.¹⁹ A support worker told us, for example, that in one household a person was suicidal but the people he lived with were too scared to call an ambulance, for fear that engaging with emergency services would mean a violation of the Code of Behaviour. Some feared engaging in any kind of public gathering or rally, including positive community gatherings.

4.4.22. In recent consultations, service providers have reported of the cascading effects of the Code of Behaviour. Some have told us that people are too afraid to ask the police when they need help. Others have spoken of the conflict they face when required to report a relatively minor incident of domestic violence, knowing that this may result in detention and the anguish of family separation. Others have voiced concerns that, when conflict arises, people have been threatened with re-detention by others in the community.

4.5. Citizenship and character

4.5.23. The *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* already contains a requirement that those seeking citizenship by conferral (rather than by birth or adoption) must be of ‘good character’, unless they are stateless.²⁰ As outlined in the Department’s Citizenship Policy document, this requires a full assessment of someone’s character and would include consideration of whether:

- they respect and abide by the law, are honest and financially responsible,
- are truthful (including in relation to providing false personal information to government)
- are not violent, involved in drugs or unlawful sexual activity
- do not cause harm to others including through negligent or drink driving, excessive speeding or driving without a licence or insurance
- are not associated with those who are involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour or others who do not uphold and obey the laws of Australia
- have not evaded immigration control or assisted others to do so, and
- are not the “subject of any verifiable information causing character doubts”.²¹

4.5.24. As well, the legislation prevents an application from being approved while there are criminal proceedings against the person, while the person is in prison or serving a sentence, and for a period of years after any subsequent offence.²²

¹⁷ Nicolas Perpetch and Graeme Powell, ‘Man Who Set Self on Fire at Immigration Detention Centre Is Child ! Sex Offender’ *ABC News*, 16 September 2015 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-16/child-sex-offender-ali-jaffari-set-self-on-fire-at-yongah-hill/6781492>.

¹⁸ Nicolas Perpetch, ‘Young Asylum Seeker Dies at WA Detention Centre’ *ABC News*, 1 August 2015 ! <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-01/young-asylum-seeker-dies-at-yongah-hill-detention-centre/6665422>.

¹⁹ Refugee Council of Australia, ‘Eroding Our Identity’. !

²⁰ *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* s 21. !

²¹ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Citizenship Policy* (1 June 2016) Ch 11 ! <https://www.border.gov.au/Citizenship/Documents/acis-june-2016.pdf>.

²² *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* s 24(6). !

4.5.25. In addition, the recent amendments made by the *Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Act 2015* expand the grounds for the cessation of citizenship. These grounds cover engaging in or being convicted of any terrorist-related activity, and serving in the armed forces of a country at war in Australia or for a declared terrorist organisation. The Minister also has a power to revoke citizenship on the basis of migration-related fraud.

4.5.26. The Refugee Council of Australia has also been campaigning recently on behalf of thousands of people from refugee backgrounds who have experienced prolonged delays in obtaining citizenship, on the basis of increased identity documentation checks.²³ Part of this process involves potential investigation of character concerns, on the basis of inconsistencies in identity documentation.

4.6. Character, citizenship and refugees

4.6.27. The existing law and policy include extremely strict provisions relating to 'character'. Already, engaging in vaguely defined 'antisocial behaviour' can result in cancellation of visas and potentially indefinite detention, as well as preventing a person from obtaining citizenship. Relatively minor offences, such as shoplifting or drink driving, have resulted in people being detained and is likely to affect the ability of people to gain citizenship.

4.6.28. Such vague and broad standards would be difficult for many ordinary Australians to satisfy. In December 2014, for example, a police operation in Victoria over less than a month caught:

- 12,305 people speeding
- 2,700 people using their mobiles while driving
- 1,638 people driving unlicensed, and !
- 1,247 people drink-driving.²⁴ !

4.6.29. All of these offences could be grounds for cancelling visas and detaining people, and for denying them citizenship, under current law and government policy.

4.6.30. Such strict standards are not only unrealistic, but have disproportionate effects when applied to people from refugee backgrounds or seeking protection. People from refugee backgrounds and seeking asylum often come from countries with far fewer rules, and certainly less strict enforcement of such rules, than in Australia. Many of them will suffer from trauma or stresses that make it difficult or impossible for them to cope with the complexity of such rules. They are likely to be unaware of many of the laws that could result in detention, and experience both cultural and linguistic barriers in accessing information about the laws.

4.6.31. Such standards are particularly draconian when applied to those seeking asylum in Australia. Government policies mean such people have been denied access to education, English classes and settlement classes that provide them with the basic introduction to settling in Australia. Until recently, many of them were unable to work legally, but received inadequate support to live.

4.6.32. Not only it is much harder for them to comply with the 'character' requirements, the consequences are also much more punitive. For these people, even minor offences can end up with them in detention. For them, there is no option to return home, meaning that such detention can be indefinite.

4.6.33. The consequences of being denied citizenship are also greater. Many former refugees have spoken to us of the importance of citizenship, as a signifier of inclusion and a symbolic step in their new life. These are people who have no effective nationality, and who therefore value their new

²³ Refugee Council of Australia, *Delays in Citizenship Applications for Permanent Refugee Visa Holders* \$ (October 2015) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/1510-Citizenship-Delays-for-Permanent-Refugees.pdf>.

²⁴ Marissa Calligeros, '500 Drivers Caught Speeding Each Day on Victoria's Roads during Operation Raid' ! *The Age*, 8 December 2014 <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/500-drivers-caught-speeding-each-day-on-victorias-roads-during-operation-raid-20141208-122m6n.html>. !

nationality greatly. For many of them, there is another extremely significant consequence—citizenship signals the possibility of being reunited with their family again.

4.6.34. As we have consistently reported (and discuss in section 9.2), limited access to family reunion is one of the most significant concerns of refugees and humanitarian entrants.²⁵ For many former refugees, there is continuing anguish and anxiety about people back home, people who are not only family but are also often still in danger. Obtaining citizenship gives them the hope of being reunited with their loved ones more quickly.

4.6.35. For these reasons, we believe that:

- The existing provisions relating to ‘character’ in migration and citizenship law are already far too sweeping and punitive, and breach the cardinal principles of the rule of law and equality before the law
- There is already clear evidence that the recently strengthened powers to cancel visas and screen citizenship applicants for ‘character’ have caused enormous and unnecessary suffering, fear and anxiety
- Continued strengthening of ‘character’ tests will only be counterproductive to good settlement outcomes, causing social isolation and a constant fear which will undermine the very safety that Australia has promised them.

4.6.36. In particular, we express profound concern at the potential application of ‘character’ requirements to young people. The criminal system has long recognised that young people need rehabilitation, not punishment. Young people need support at this critical time in their lives. The difficulties of ordinary adolescence are much worse for those who have experienced persecution and suffered trauma, whose education has often been disrupted, who often face discrimination and social isolation, and who have experienced a very significant change of culture. Yet, despite all these obstacles, there are many extraordinary young people from refugee backgrounds, whose commitment and passion for this country is inspirational.

4.6.37. Ultimately, the success of our diverse and tolerant society has been built on the recognition that policies should be designed to include new arrivals, not exclude them. Citizenship should be, as it has so long been, celebrated as a way of embracing people who have settled in Australia, rather than as another mechanism of excluding them.

Recommendation 3

The current powers to cancel visas on the basis of ‘character’ should be repealed, and there should be no further extension of ‘character’ requirements.

5. Understanding the bigger picture: the journey of refugees

5.1. Distinguishing between refugees and migrants: why it matters

5.1.1. Although this inquiry’s terms of reference include both migrants and refugees, there are important distinctions between them that have profound policy implications. We are deeply concerned that the terms of reference for this inquiry do not adequately recognise these fundamental differences.

5.1.2. Most importantly, the fundamental purpose of Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program is to address humanitarian need, rather than to address the needs of the Australian community. We select people for this program because they need protection, and that is and should remain the primary criterion.

5.1.3. It is obviously inappropriate, therefore, to suggest that knowing English should be a factor in selecting people under this program. It is also clearly inappropriate to suggest that we should prioritise people from certain religious faiths when deciding who needs protection. Such

²⁵ Refugee Council of Australia, *Addressing the Pain of Separation for Refugee Families* (21 November 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/reports/family-separation/>.

discrimination violates the basic values underlying human rights law, including the Refugee Convention itself.²⁶

5.1.4. Indeed, as we have seen recently with Donald Trump's executive order apparently prioritising Christian minorities, such discrimination is deeply divisive and is likely to alienate further an already vulnerable Muslim minority in Australia. Nor is it supported by the Australian public. As the most recent survey of social cohesion in Australia by the Scanlon Foundation reported, 69% of Australians indicated that there should be equal consideration to all religious and ethnic groups in identifying people to be resettled from the conflict in Syria and Iraq.²⁷

5.1.5. Discriminating against people because of their religion or their language would also have global significance, because Australia operates one of the largest resettlement programs per capita in the world, and is one of the few proudly multicultural communities in the world with decades of experience in resettlement. Australia is therefore extremely well-placed, internationally, to help refugees in greatest need find safety and permanency through resettlement. This, of course, now has added significance in light of Donald Trump's executive order in the US, which provides about 70% of resettlement places globally.

5.1.6. The ultimate question in the refugee context should always be who needs protection most. As UNHCR's guidelines for its officers' state:

*the notion of integration potential should not negatively influence the selection and promotion of resettlement cases. For example, educational level or other factors considered to be enhancing the prospects for integration are not determining factors when submitting cases for resettlement.*²⁸

5.1.7. Selecting those who are most in need means that these people often need more support to settle. As the Australian Government has previously stated:

*The most intensive assistance is provided to humanitarian entrants in recognition of their greater needs, in alignment with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees principles and best practice. Many have escaped from life threatening situations and war torn societies, become separated from their immediate family, lost their homes and possessions and lived for many years in refugee camps. They may face multiple disadvantages because of their experiences, including mental health issues, physical disabilities, illiteracy, poor English language skills, disrupted schooling, and limited opportunities to gain skills, qualifications and work experience. Despite this, humanitarian entrants are resilient and enthusiastic about making a contribution to Australian society, and the support they receive helps them to get started.*²⁹

5.1.8. RCOA recommends, therefore, that this inquiry should recognise that selection for the Refugee and Humanitarian Program should remain premised on the need for protection.

Recommendation 4

This Committee should recognise and reaffirm that selection of refugees for resettlement in Australia be fundamentally based on the need for protection.

5.2. The journey

5.2.1. Although this inquiry is focused on settlement outcomes, it is important to recognise that settlement is only one part of a much longer journey experienced by refugees. We should never forget that people have a history before they come to Australia, and that this history profoundly

²⁶ 'Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees' Art 3 <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>. !

²⁷ Markus, 44. !

²⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Resettlement Handbook* (2011) 245 ! <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a2ccba76.html>.

²⁹ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *The Settlement Journey: Strengthening Australia through \$ Migration* (2012). !

influences their experiences of settling in Australia. A person's origins, their persecution, and how they came to Australia are critical factors in their settlement outcomes.

5.2.2. There are at least six factors affecting settlement outcomes:

- demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, and household composition
- flight-related characteristics, such as cause of flight, type of movement, and attitude toward displacement
- host-related characteristics, such as economic conditions, ethnic composition, and attitudes toward the refugees within the host society
- policy characteristics, including international, national, regional, and local policies and their implementation
- residency characteristics, including length of residence and secondary migration (movement within the host country), and
- non-economic aspects of adaptation, such as adaptation stresses and acculturation characteristics.³⁰

5.2.3. In discussing settlement outcomes, we must first recognise the complexity of the process of settlement and the many different factors that are involved in successful settlement. Government policy and settlement services are important in influencing settlement outcomes, but there are many other factors that are involved.

5.2.4. For example, where people come from matters. The place in which a person grows up influences their norms, values and expectations of the world. Many refugees, for example, have grown up in places that have always been politically unstable or in conflict, where government is corrupt and violence is normalised. Others come from places where government authorities are oppressive and to be evaded. Often, refugees will have had limited or disrupted access to the types of social supports and services that are considered basic in Australia, such as education, health, and taxation.

5.2.5. A person's experience of persecution can also have a profound impact on their settlement experiences. Those from oppressed minorities may have experienced systematic discrimination and exclusion based on their identity. Others may have been forced to leave good lives because of an outbreak of conflict or terrorism. Many will have lost family and friends, or experienced torture or trauma, which will affect them for the rest of their lives.

5.2.6. Their journey to Australia itself will also significantly shape their settlement outcomes. Many people will have lived for protracted periods in enforced limbo, in refugee camps, or in countries that do not grant them the legal right to work or study. Some refugees will have lived their whole lives in a refugee camp, others in poor rural areas or in large metropolises in developing countries.

5.2.7. While refugee resettlement offers people the vital opportunity for permanency and a chance to look forward to the future, the early settlement period is extremely challenging. This involves

*adapting to a different culture and way of life and mastering a host of practical tasks, from establishing a household and using public transport, to negotiating new and complex education, income support and health care systems. Many resettled refugees also need to learn a new language. These tasks may be overwhelming for many people, perpetuating feelings of anxiety and loss of control.*³¹

5.2.8. There are many potential sources of stresses in early years of settlement, and refugees must negotiate these at a time where they have limited social support networks. Importantly, while some refugees will arrive as a family unit or reunite with family members already in Australia, most

³⁰ Tom Kuhlman, 'The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model' (1991) ! 4(1) *Journal of Refugee Studies* 1, 12. !

³¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Refugee Resettlement. An International Handbook to \$ Guide Reception and Integration* (2002) 22 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/405189284.html>. !

still have family and friends elsewhere in the world that they worry about or still have obligations to care for.

5.2.9. For families, the process of settlement can be fraught. Even if families arrive together, there are likely to be significant renegotiations of family relationships as each member adjusts to life in Australia in their own way. For example, younger people often adapt more quickly, potentially creating tensions within changing family dynamics. For those reuniting in Australia, coming together as a family unit after prolonged separation presents other challenges.

5.2.10. All of these changes are likely to have very significant impacts on a person. People are likely to go through many different emotions, from euphoria to anger, guilt and nostalgia, as they renegotiate their sense of self and the world.³²

6. Understanding settlement in Australia

6.1. The concepts of settlement and integration

6.1.1. As Professor Stephen Castles, who has produced a comprehensive summary of the terminology often used in this field, the concept of integration is “vague and slippery and seems to mean whatever people want it to.”³³ He identified two common usages. First, it:

*often has normative significance, with the implication that newcomers should change their values and behaviour to ‘fit in’ with the existing society. It also seems sometimes to imply that there is just one way of becoming part of a given society, or that nation-states need to be mono-cultural to be cohesive.*³⁴

6.1.2. Much political rhetoric, including in relation to this inquiry, reflect this view of integration. In contrast, the second usage of ‘integration’, which is reflected in policy and academic literature, refers to integration as

*a two-way process of adaptation, involving change in values, norms and behaviour for both newcomers and members of the existing society. This includes recognition of the role of the ethnic community and the idea that broader social patterns and cultural values may change in response to immigration.*³⁵

6.1.3. This second usage is, for example, reflected in UNHCR’s Executive Committee definition:

*The integration of refugees is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which require efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the receiving society without having to forego their own cultural identity and a corresponding readiness on the part of the receiving communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse community.*³⁶

6.1.4. UNHCR also emphasises three dimensions of the process of integration:

- **as a legal process:** refugees are granted a range of entitlements and rights which are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by citizens. These include freedom of movement, access to education and the labour market, access to social assistance, including health facilities, and the capacity to travel with valid travel and identity documents. Realization of family unity is another important aspect of integration. Over time the process should lead to permanent residence rights and in some cases the acquisition of citizenship in the country of asylum.

³² See generally United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, ‘Refugee Resettlement’. !

³³ Fiona Moore and Stephen Castles, *Integration: Mapping the Field* (Centre for Migration and Policy ! Research and Refugee Studies Office for the Home Office, December 2002) 116 ! [https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/integration-mapping-the-field\(ccb640e6-1466-471d-9957-2bf270c69a49\).html](https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/integration-mapping-the-field(ccb640e6-1466-471d-9957-2bf270c69a49).html).

³⁴ Moore and Castles, 114. !

³⁵ Moore and Castles, 116. !

³⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Conclusion on Local Integration* (ExCom Conclusions ! 104 (LVI), 2005) <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/exconc/4357a91b2/conclusion-local-integration.html>. !

- **an economic process:** refugees attain a growing degree of self-reliance and become capable of pursuing sustainable livelihoods, thus contributing to the economic life of the host country.
- **a social and cultural process:** refugees acclimatise and local communities accommodate refugees to enable them to live amongst or alongside the receiving population without discrimination or exploitation, and contribute actively to the social life of their country of asylum.³⁷

6.1.5. The concept of integration is closely linked to the concept of settlement, which is more typically used in countries such as Canada and Australia to refer to the first few years after arrival. Australia's National Settlement Framework (discussed in section 6.3) recognises that:

- Settlement is a complex, multi-faceted and non-linear process
- The needs of people will vary considerably, with additional help required for the more vulnerable, including refugees, children, young people, women and the elderly
- Both permanent and temporary migrants need to adjust to Australian society, particularly in the first five years
- The Commonwealth Government is also responsible for providing support to people seeking asylum through specialist and some mainstream services while their claim is being determined
- Settlement services are an important part of Australia's commitment to helping new arrivals to achieve full participation and adjust to their new society
- Services should be available, accessible, timely and culturally appropriate
- Effective collaboration and coordination between stakeholders ultimately leads to better service delivery and helps people transition into Australian society, and
- Settlement is based on the mutual benefits brought by migration, both to Australians and migrants themselves.

6.1.6. 'Settlement' therefore refers to the first phase of a longer process of integration. It should not be expected that people will be completely 'integrated' (whatever that is taken to mean) within five years. Rather, it is the first and hardest stage of a lifelong process. This point has been reinforced to us in our consultations for this inquiry with refugee communities.

6.1.7. In summary, when approaching this inquiry, this Committee should start with the knowledge that:

- 'settlement' is one phase of a much longer process of 'integration'
- settlement and integration are complex, multi-faceted processes that require adaptation both by those coming in and by the host society
- the 'success' of settlement depends on many factors well beyond the purview of government policy, and will vary from community to community, and from individual to individual
- settlement services are part of the Australian Government's longstanding commitment to helping people achieve full participation and adjust to their new society, and help realise the mutual benefits brought by migration.

6.2. How refugees come to settle in Australia

6.2.8. Under Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program, the Australian Government sets annually a number of places for refugees and humanitarian entrants.³⁸ While numbers have fluctuated, the Refugee and Humanitarian Program is currently set at 13,750 places, with a projected increase to 16,250 places in 2017-18 and then to 18,750 places in 2018-19 and a commitment to maintain this number afterwards.³⁹ The Australian Government has also committed to resettling

³⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe* (2012) 15 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/522980604.html>.

³⁸ This phrase is used because, as explained below, only one of the visas requires a person to be a refugee. !

³⁹ Prime Minister of Australia et al, *Leaders' Summit on Refugees* (Media Release, 21 September 2016) <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2016-09-21/leaders-summit-refugees-0>. !

12,000 people from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq as a one-off in addition to the annual humanitarian intake.

6.2.9. There are two main ways in which people come to Australia through the Refugee and Humanitarian Program: through resettlement from overseas (the 'offshore' component), and by claiming asylum in Australia (the 'onshore' component).

6.2.1. There two main categories within the offshore component of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. First, there are those who are generally identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement who are granted a refugee visa (subclass 200).⁴⁰ Second, there are those proposed for entry by people or organisations in Australia under the global special humanitarian program (SHP, subclass 202), because they are subject to substantial discrimination and human rights abuses in their home country. As well, there is another smaller group admitted as women at risk (subclass 204), and two largely unused visa classes for special cases.⁴¹ In 2015-2016, the Department granted:

- 6,730 Refugee visas
- 5,032 Special Humanitarian Program visas, and
- 1,277 Women at Risk visas.⁴²

6.2.2. The number of people identified as in need of resettlement vastly outnumbers the available number of places. For 2017, UNHCR projected 1.19 million people would need resettlement.⁴³ Globally, in 2015 UNHCR made 134,044 resettlement submissions, the highest on record. The largest number were from Syria, which together with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia and Myanmar, made up almost 80% of the total. Of those resettlement submissions, Australia received just under 7%.

6.2.3. Australia's resettlement program is consistently ranked, per capita, as one of the three most generous resettlement programs in the world. However, this is in the context of a small number of resettlement countries (33 in the world), and is normally less than five per cent of Australia's permanent Migration Program. In fact, the number of visas currently allocated to UNHCR-assisted refugees is the lowest percentage of the Migration Program for more than twenty years (only 3.2 per cent).⁴⁴

6.2.1. The other main route under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program is to come to Australia to apply for a protection visa. For those who come lawfully by plane, this option leads to a permanent protection visa (subclass 866). Following changes in December 2014 to the law, those who came by boat on or after 13 August 2012, or with an invalid visa by plane, can only receive temporary protection visas, either a three-year visa known as a 'temporary protection visa' (TPV or subclass 785), or a five-year visa known as the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV, subclass 790).

6.2.2. These temporary protection visas restrict the rights of those who hold the visas, including their ability to travel overseas and most importantly their rights to reunite with their family. This is also true for several thousand applicants who came by boat before 13 August 2012 but had not received a final decision by the time the legislation came into effect in December 2014.

⁴⁰ The Refugee visa does not require that the person be identified by UNHCR, but this is the usual practice. !

⁴¹ These are the In-country Special Humanitarian Program (subclass 201) for people being persecuted and ! unable to leave their home country and the emergency rescue visa (subclass 203) for refugees who need ! urgent resettlement.

⁴² Department of Immigration and Border Protection, *Annual Report* (2015)
<https://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/reports/annual/annual-report-2015-16>.

⁴³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Projected Global Resettlement Needs* \$
<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>. The statistics in the rest of the paragraph are from the same source.

⁴⁴ Elibritt Karlsen, *Refugee Resettlement to Australia: What Are the Facts?* (Research Paper, Parliamentary ! Library of Australia, 7 September 2016) !
[http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617 !/RefugeeResettlement. !](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617!/RefugeeResettlement.)

6.2.3. There are also a significant number of people in Australia still on bridging visa Es (BVEs) which entitle a person merely to lawful residence while their claim for protection is being considered. Others who are seeking protection are in detention.

6.2.4. The different visa classes are significant in settlement policy, because eligibility for services differs depending upon the visa that is held. In general, there is a hierarchy of access, with the greatest range of benefits available to refugees with offshore refugee visas (200, 201, 204), and very limited benefits and services available to those who came by boat. Any assessment of 'settlement outcomes', therefore, must take into account these different entitlements.

6.2.1. In recent years, the key demographics of those resettled on offshore visas include:

- They are relatively young: approximately three-fifths were aged 29 or younger
- Two-thirds were born in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Myanmar and Pakistan, with the remaining one third being born in other countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia
- Nearly three-fifths had a pre-existing link in Australia (in terms of family members, friends or a sponsoring organisation), while 42 per cent were 'unlinked'
- The bulk are initially settled in Victoria and New South Wales, followed by Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.⁴⁵

6.3. Coordination and collaboration in settlement policy

6.3.2. Settlement policy is a shared responsibility, involving all three tiers of government and the non-government sector (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 1: Division of responsibilities for settlement (Source: National Settlement Framework)

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT	STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has Constitutional responsibility for administering the Migration and Humanitarian programmes and asylum seeker policy. • Provides key specialised settlement services to eligible migrants and new arrivals during the early years of settlement. • Provide a range of mainstream services, delivered by a number of Commonwealth agencies, to meet the on-arrival and longer term needs of migrants and new arrivals. • Provides funding to State and Territory Governments for a range of other mainstream services. • Asylum Seeker support services. • Funds some initiatives to address barriers to settlement (such as racism and discrimination) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides accessible and equitable mainstream services to the Australian community. • May also fund complementary support services for migrants and new arrivals whom they consider to be a priority to settle, or to encourage settlement in a particular locality. • The type and level of support varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and community to community.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides information to the other tiers of government regarding the needs and issues for particular community groups. • Provide a range of services and infrastructure to the local community, including, where relevant and depending on financial capacity, specialised services to migrants and new arrivals and initiatives to encourage settlement in a particular locality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages with migrants and new arrivals at a grass roots level and plays a key role in advising all tiers of government on community and client groups, settlement needs and social policy issues. • Contribute to effective planning and delivery of settlement and support services based on considerable experience and knowledge. • Provides a link between mainstream services and the settlement sector, and communities. • A broad range of supports and interventions to meet particular needs (eg volunteer run programmes, emergency relief, industry initiatives, community cooperatives, ethnic associations, etc).

6.3.3. In the last few years, there has been considerable effort invested in creating frameworks for ! settlement policy. In September 2009, the Strategic Settlement Framework was developed following !

⁴⁵ Ernst & Young, *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support Programs* (Department of Social Services, Australian Government, June 2015) 10 <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/evaluation-of-humanitarian-settlement-services-and-complex-case-support-programmes>. These statistics relate to people who were resettled between April 2011 and December 2014.

national consultations.⁴⁶ Between 2011-2012, there were significant reforms to the specialist settlement services.⁴⁷

6.3.4. The Council of Australian Governments' Select Council on Immigration and Settlement was then tasked with developing a framework to improve services and outcomes for migrants. This work eventually resulted in a National Settlement Framework, agreed across the three tiers of government.⁴⁸ The Framework provides both a shared commitment and understanding of settlement, and outlines three focus areas for governments:

- supportive and collaborative settlement and support service planning structures and processes, including information sharing
- coordinated client-centric service delivery eliminating gaps and duplication, and
- evaluation and review to provide a robust evidence base for better understanding delivery and outcomes.

6.3.5. The implementation of the Framework is to be coordinated by a Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group, comprising key government officials from all three tiers of government. The Framework also calls for the reinvigoration of each jurisdiction's Settlement Outcomes Planning Committee, the development of a high-level Outcomes Plan, collaborative engagement on priority settlement issues, timely data and information sharing, and active engagement with the non-government sector.

6.3.1. In RCOA's view, the National Settlement Framework provides a solid foundation for settlement policy. However, in practice much could be done in terms of better communication, coordination and collaboration between the three tiers of government and, crucially, with the non-government sector.

6.3.2. A regular and longstanding issue is that, while most mainstream services (such as health and education) are provided by State-funded or local government services, typically there is inadequate communication to responsible authorities about projected settlement needs.⁴⁹

6.3.3. Settlement service providers also receive inadequate notice of planned settlement, which limits their efficiency and can impact their sustainability. For example, with the recent increase of numbers coming from the conflict in Syria and Iraq, settlement providers who had retrenched staff due to decreasing numbers boosted them hastily again, only to find that people took many months to arrive at first, and then came in large numbers.

6.3.4. As well, the strength of coordination frameworks varies considerably by place. In many smaller communities, networks tend to work more efficiently due to the small numbers of organisations and people involved, and the long-term nature of many relationships. Local area coordination is generally reported to be effective and practically oriented. However, in our experience, the effectiveness of coordination often depends on the commitment of individuals to drive it.

6.3.5. The missing part of the framework is coordination at the State and national level. While many practical problems can be resolved at the local level, more systemic problems that require changes in State/Territory or national policies or practice are very difficult to address in the absence of an effective State-wide or national body. For example, while the Settlement Framework calls for a reinvigoration of the Settlement Outcomes Planning Committees in each State, that has not yet been felt on the ground. Victoria's Committee, for example, failed to meet in 2016.

⁴⁶ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *The Settlement Journey: Strengthening Australia through Migration* (2012), 2. !

⁴⁷ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'The Settlement Journey', 2. !

⁴⁸ *National Settlement Framework* <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/national-settlement-framework>.

⁴⁹ Victoria and NSW made submissions to this effect in a recent review of settlement services: Ernst & Young. !

6.3.6. RCOA strongly supports the Framework’s call for a reinvigoration of collaboration and coordination across governments and with the non-government sector (including those who are not funded by the government to provide services. Some of the failings of the Settlement Framework appear to include:

- a failure to properly resource the work of coordination, with no extra resources allocated to the Settlement Framework or to facilitate the representation of the non-government sector in meetings
- a lack of transparency in the process, as it is unclear what (if any) are the outcomes of the meetings of national or State-level bodies, or the relationship between these levels
- the apparent implementation of the Framework through ‘business as usual’, without (for example) setting out clear standards and benchmarks to be reported against, and
- the lack of a driving force, especially at a national level.

Recommendation 5

This Committee should recommend that the Department of Social Services lead the development of planning infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of a whole-of-government approach to settlement that involves the non-government sector. This should be institutionalised through additional resourcing, the requirement of reporting against benchmarks, and through the appointment of a national coordinator at a senior level.

7. Specialist settlement services

7.1.1. Australia’s settlement services are renowned internationally as an example of best practice in supporting the successful settlement of refugee and humanitarian entrants. At UNHCR’s 2014 Executive Committee meeting, for example, then High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres (now UN Secretary-General) praised Australia’s resettlement program as “exemplary”, stating that the cooperation between central government, local government, and civil society was “absolutely remarkable”.⁵⁰

7.1.2. Although the current framework of settlement services is generally well-regarded, it can always be improved. We have in the past made many recommendations about improving the design of some services and the need to provide sustainable funding that respects and reflects the diversity of needs and places involved. In this section, we highlight key recommendations about specific services, and we provide a full list of other recommendations we have made in Appendix 2.

7.1.3. The main specialist settlement services for refugee and humanitarian entrants include:

- Cultural orientation (before and after arrival)
- The Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) Program and the Complex Case Support (CCS) Program
- The Settlement Grants Program (SGP)
- The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), and the
- Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT).

7.1. Cultural orientation

7.1.4. There are two forms of cultural orientation provided to refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia—pre-arrival orientation through the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program, and post-arrival orientation provided as part of settlement programs.

7.1.5. The AUSCO program provides practical advice and the opportunity to ask questions about travel to and life in Australia. It is currently delivered overseas by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It includes information on travel, settlement services and comparative cultural practices. IOM also runs similar programs for other resettlement countries, including Canada,

⁵⁰ Refugee Council of Australia, *Australia Condemned as Nations Focus on Global Refugee Crisis* (4 October 2014) http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141004_ExComAus.pdf.

Norway, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. The Australian program was last evaluated in 2009, and the key finding was that:

*AUSCO is widely supported and highly regarded by stakeholders, but ... the program is not well understood and ... there is scope to increase the level of awareness of what the program does and achieves.*⁵¹

7.1.6. Two of our previous recommendations which remain relevant include:

- a review of how information about family reunion options is communicated through the program,⁵² and
- that it should make greater use of previously resettled refugees as part of the program.⁵³

7.1.7. While pre-departure orientation is crucial, most orientation necessarily happens after a person has arrived and is negotiating their new life and environment for the first time. Post-arrival orientation occurs in elements of the other settlement services, but there is currently no overarching framework of post-arrival orientation linking these programs.

7.1.8. In our ongoing work, RCOA often hears from refugee communities that more orientation is required, often in specific areas such as housing law, employment law and child protection law. Further, orientation of this kind is more meaningful and impactful when a person is seeking to understand, deal with or navigate these issues in practice. These issues will arise at different times for different people. For example, a person may not require information about housing law until they are in a situation where they must move.

7.1.9. Issues such as these differ from state to state, and require legal advice that is beyond the capacity of most settlement providers. The need is sometimes filled by responsible state agencies, community legal centres, ethno-specific communities and our members on an ad hoc basis. However, such efforts tend to rely on the commitment of a few and are often frustrated by a lack of funding, especially given increasing constraints on community legal education funding. A very cost-effective measure for improving settlement outcomes, therefore, would be to establish a fund for agencies to provide community education on key settlement issues.

Recommendation 6

This Committee should recommend funding for community education programs to address key settlement issues.

7.2. Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)

7.2.10. The HSS program was established in 2011, although the Australian Government has been providing settlement services to new humanitarian entrants since the late 1970s.⁵⁴ The HSS program provides intensive settlement support to newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants. Currently, it is available to those who hold an offshore visa, but has not been available since 30 August 2013 for people who came by boat who were in community detention or on a bridging visa, or other people seeking asylum living in the community.

7.2.11. Another important restriction on eligibility is that those arriving on SHP visas do not have automatic access to HSS services. Instead, they must apply for support under HSS if their proposer

⁵¹ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Australia's Cultural Orientation Program for Humanitarian Entrants: The Evaluation of AUSCO 200* (2009) 2.

⁵² Refugee Council of Australia, *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-15: Community Views on Current Challenges and Future Directions* (February 2014) Rec 15 http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub/2014-15_Intake%20sub.pdf; Refugee Council of Australia, *Review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support Programs* (Submission, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, November 2014) Rec 16 <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/1411-HSS-CCS.pdf>.

⁵³ Rec Refugee Council of Australia, *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2007-2008* (2007) 35 <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub/2007-08-IntakeSub.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Ernst & Young, 14.

is unable to provide support. There is significant concern that those people, and their proposers, may be reluctant to approach HSS providers for fear of being penalised for accessing these services. There is also concern that some proposers may lack the knowledge and expertise to help orient those that have been resettled, as many have arrived relatively recently themselves and may not be able to offer the kinds of support and guidance needed.

7.2.12. The HSS aims to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency as soon as possible by providing them with specialised services on a needs basis. Through a case management approach, the needs of refugee entrants are identified and settlement services tailored to meet their circumstances. HSS focuses on equipping entrants to gain access to mainstream services. HSS services are generally provided for six to twelve months, but may be extended for particularly vulnerable clients.

7.2.13. The HSS provides four key services—case management, accommodation, local area coordination and an optional volunteer program—through a coordinated case management model. Services include:

- **Case management:** Case management plans are developed for each single client and family based on a complete needs assessment. Services provided may include meeting clients at the airport, property induction, provision of an initial food package and basic household goods package, helping clients to register with mainstream services, helping with health needs and assessments, and connecting clients to other settlement, community and youth programs.
- **Accommodation:** HSS service providers must ensure that all clients are residing in long-term accommodation within six months of arrival. Housing models vary depending on local circumstances and providers.
- **Structured Onshore Orientation Program:** HSS providers coordinate orientation sessions tailored to individual client needs and learning capacities. These sessions focus on providing clients with the critical skills and knowledge they need to live and function independently in Australia. Topics covered include money management, tenancy rights and responsibilities, relationship issues, education, health, employment, cultural issues and Australian law.

7.2.14. Clients are meant to be exited from the HSS programme once they achieve particular settlement outcomes. Clients should have:

- Long-term accommodation
- All school-age children attending school
- Links to the services identified in their case management plan, and
- Understood the skills and knowledge provided by the orientation program.

7.2.15. When clients exit the HSS, they are referred to general settlement services provided through migrant resource centres, migrant service agencies and organisations funded under the Settlement Grants Program or to the Complex Case Support Service.

7.2.16. Since its inception in April 2011 to December 2014, the HSS programme has delivered services to 55,187 clients, averaging 14,850 clients over the three financial years from 2011/12 to 2013/14.⁵⁵ RCOA represents most organisational members that provide HSS services (see Appendix 1).

Our previous recommendations

7.2.17. RCOA has made recommendations previously in relation to HSS services.⁵⁶ Some of these recommendations relate to better planning, including:

- Ensuring greater consistency in settlement patterns to ensure that quality on-arrival support services can be maintained across Australia, and
- Developing a new regional settlement strategy for resettling refugees in rural and regional areas.

⁵⁵ Ernst & Young, 10. !

⁵⁶ See, eg, Refugee Council of Australia, 'Review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex ! Case Support Programs'. !

7.2.18. As noted earlier, eligibility for settlement services varies depending on the type of visa a person holds. RCOA has consistently recommended that disparities in eligibility should be reviewed, with eligibility focusing on need rather than visa classes. For example, with restrictions on humanitarian family reunion, more family members of refugees are entering under the general Migration Program but still require specialist assistance. Perhaps most obviously, people who are recognised as refugees in Australia (whether arriving by boat or by plane) typically have access only to a very limited set of services. We therefore recommend that access to HSS services be available to all people who are recognised as refugees in Australia, and for relatives of refugee and humanitarian entrants arriving on family visas, on a needs basis.

7.2.19. Our previous recommendations have also encouraged greater flexibility and tailoring to individual needs within the HSS program. These recommendations include:

- Embedding specialist youth worker positions in the program to address the unique needs of young people from refugee backgrounds
- Unaccompanied minors turning 18 receive a comprehensive needs assessment and appropriate referrals to further support
- Providers to consider developing peer community guides programs to provide specialised support to young people
- Providing additional support for those with disabilities and tailored support for large families and single clients, and
- Greater flexibility in the 12-month time limit for eligibility for HSS services.

7.2.20. We have also made a number of recommendations to improve the sustainability and efficiency of the settlement sector in delivering these services. These include:

- Longer-term contracts for settlement services
- Managing the size of caseloads to ensure adequate support
- Replacing the current competitive tendering approach with a grants-based approach encouraging partnerships and collaborations between different agencies, and
- Requiring providers applying for funding to demonstrate specific expertise in working with people from refugee backgrounds and an understanding of the needs of communities settling in their local area.

7.2.21. Finally, another key area we have identified for improvement is the greater engagement with refugee community organisations throughout the settlement process. We have recommended that:

- Adequate funding be provided to refugee community organisations to support their work with new arrivals
- Inclusion of people from refugee backgrounds be embedded in the design and delivery of settlement services, and
- The implementation of a model similar to the AMES Community Guides program be implemented in other HSS contract regions.

Evaluation of HSS

7.2.22. In June 2015, Ernst & Young completed an evaluation of HSS and the Complex Case Support (CCS) programs on behalf of the Department of Social Services.⁵⁷ This review followed earlier evaluations of the HSS programme in 2011, and of the CCS program in 2010. Both reviews generally found that the programs were sound but recommended some improvements. The recommendations from the 2011 review have been implemented. Its key findings were:

- The programs are working well and the role and relationships between the programs are generally clear.
- The programs (including their objectives) are aligned with Australian Government policy. There is a continuing need for both programs. The underlying strategies of the HSS and CCS

⁵⁷ Ernst & Young.

programs remain the most effective means of achieving the policy goals of the Australian Government.

- The programs provide clients with a foundation for achieving language, education and positive employment outcomes. The program makes the most tangible contribution to English language outcomes due to its effective referral link to the Adult Migrant English Program.
- The programs are managed efficiently. Furthermore, the relationships between the inputs and outputs of the HSS program appear reasonable and are in line with expectations.
- The review reported that they had “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 than the current HSS and CCS programmes.”

7.2.23. The evaluation also found that, by available measures, service providers were effectively delivering the HSS program:

- **Safety and security:** 95% of providers met key performance indicators.
- **Core competencies:** Clients on average exhibited awareness (demonstrated or verified information relating to a core competency) in relation to 78% of questions asked in quality assurance interviews conducted by the Department.
- **Orientation:** 99% of providers met key performance indicators.
- **HSS delivery principles:** 98.6% of HSS provider staff in a survey responded that its organisation reflected the principles.
- **Housing:** 93% of clients had long-term accommodation within 6 months of arrival.

7.2.24. The review did, however, make some recommendations for improvement. These included recommendations to make it easier to refer people into CCS, and expanding guidance and feedback to HSS and CCS service providers. Other systemic recommendations included: incentivising collaboration and innovation; reviewing burdensome processes; establishing a provider advisory group; and reviewing the IT system.

7.2.25. 1.1.1. The evaluation also noted concerns that the contractual arrangements were too prescriptive, reducing service providers’ ability to innovate and best meet the full range of client needs, and did not provide incentives to go above and beyond. Stakeholders, for example, had identified the need for an employment pathway service. The evaluation recommended implementing additional incentives, such as an awards scheme or an innovation fund.

7.2.26. In the longer term, the evaluation suggested moving towards making the programs more outcomes-based. This arose out of the concern that the current focus on outputs could encourage providers to ‘deliver to rule’ and did not allow the Department to identify those providers genuinely maximising outcomes. In recommending moving to an outcomes-based approach, the evaluation observed that this was a long-term strategy that should be co-designed with providers.

7.2.27. Perhaps the most controversial element of the evaluation was its examination of the potential for more efficient contracting arrangements, largely by either reducing the number of HSS providers or reducing the number of contract regions. The second option was not favoured, while the first was considered worth investigating further with a feasibility study, noting that more detailed work was needed before pursuing such an option.

7.2.28. While the Department has not provided a formal response to the evaluation, it appears to have taken up at least some of the recommendations. For example, providers have been invited to workshops to ‘co-design’ principles for the next HSS tender. While, in principle, such co-design is welcomed, there are obvious problems in inviting selected participants to join such a workshop in advance of a competitive tender where the participants are all potential competitors. This is particularly so as, in light of the evaluation, there are concerns that the next tender will reduce the number of contract regions and may disadvantage smaller and not-for-profit organisations.

7.2.29. Another concern raised by the evaluation is the suggestion that, in the long term, contracts move to an outcomes-focused framework. That suggestion, and this Inquiry, raise concerns that the role of the HSS program is being fundamentally misunderstood.

7.2.30. It is therefore worth emphasising that HSS is designed initially to manage the transition of clients into mainstream services at an early stage of the process of settlement. It acts as a support and referral mechanism, rather than delivering itself outcomes such as employment or education.

7.3. Complex Case Support

7.3.31. The Complex Case Support (CCS) program delivers specialised, intensive case management services to people with exceptional needs beyond the scope of HSS or SGP services. It is available for people who have both offshore or onshore protection visas, including those on temporary protection visas. However, it is a very small program, with less than 3% of the humanitarian intake generally eligible,⁵⁸ and in some financial years less than 1%.⁵⁹

7.3.32. A person's eligibility depends on whether a person displays an inability to independently engage with appropriate supports, and they are affected by:

- disability (broadly defined)
- health needs that are severe, critical, long term and/or unmanaged
- mental health issues that significantly impact daily life
- homelessness or housing instability
- domestic and family violence
- child and youth welfare concerns, and
- parenting concerns.

7.3.33. CCS providers link clients to services to address their issues and foster self-sufficiency through case management. Services may include mental health services (including torture and trauma services), immediate medical services, family violence support, special support to manage accommodation, and financial or legal services. From January 2012 to December 2014, the CCS programme delivered services to 482 cases.⁶⁰

7.3.34. The evaluation in 2015 found that the CCS program was perceived by stakeholders as having a clear and lasting impact on client outcomes and well-being. However, the report suggested greater clarity and promotion may be needed. The evaluation explored some alternative models, including: making CSS a sub-program of the HSS service ('HSS Plus'); developing a decision support tool for automatic referral to CSS; or a fundamental overhaul in which settlement needs were assessed shortly after arrival and different services offered depending on need ('graduated services'). It considered that either HSS Plus or automatic referral were viable models with different risks, but that the costs of a fundamental overhaul outweighed the potential benefits.

7.4. Settlement Grants Program

7.4.35. The Settlement Grants Program (SGP) provides funding to organisations for programs which assist new arrivals to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival.

7.4.36. SGP services are available to permanent residents who arrived as humanitarian entrants within the last five years, as well as to family migrants with low English proficiency and dependants of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas with low English proficiency. Select temporary residents 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.

7.4.37. For an organisation to be eligible for SGP funding, they must be:

- a not-for-profit, incorporated, community organisation
- a local government organisation

⁵⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Country Chapter - Australia' in *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook* 13 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57a192f64.html>. !

⁵⁹ Ernst & Young, 67. !

⁶⁰ Ernst & Young, 12–13. !

- currently funded to deliver services under the Adult Migrant English Program, or
- in rural and regional areas, a government service delivery organisation.

7.4.38. Service providers must apply for funding which is offered for one, two or three year periods. An annual needs-based planning process determines funding priorities for particular regions and communities. There is no review or appeal process for organisations not awarded grants. RCOA represents organisational members who provide programs under SGP, covering every State and Territory (see Appendix 1).

7.4.39. Services funded under the SGP fall into four main service types:

- **Casework, coordination and delivery of services:** Casework services involve the provision of settlement-related information, advice, advocacy or referral services on issues such as education and training options, housing, banking practices, consumer rights, the Australian legal system and relationship issues. Casework and delivery of services can include coordination or provision of group services such as information sessions and sewing or craft groups.
- **Community coordination and development:** These services aim to assist new arrivals to make social connections. Examples of services include: working in neighbourhoods to support local services and creating a welcoming environment for new arrivals; supporting the development of new and emerging communities to help create a sense of belonging in the local community; and assisting government agencies to connect with new communities and arrivals.
- **Youth settlement services:** These services aim to address the specific issues and challenges experienced by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Examples of services include specialist casework services and 'orientation' programs to provide information on accessing mental health services and individuals' legal rights and responsibilities under Australian law. Youth services also provide community development activities which link young people from refugee backgrounds to existing youth services and programs which build leadership and social skills.
- **Support for ethno-specific communities:** These services provide targeted support to new and emerging communities to build their capacity to assist new arrivals to settle. Examples of services include working in partnership with emerging communities to build their capacity to be self-sustaining, fostering connections between different communities and supporting new and emerging community leaders or organisations by providing training and mentoring, as well as referring new entrants to existing ethnic support groups.

7.4.40. In addition to SGP, the Diversity and Social Cohesion Grants program provide funds for up to three years to deliver projects that address social cohesion issues. These are not exclusively awarded to settlement services providers, and are not designed to be 'settlement services', but they clearly are designed to contribute to settlement outcomes. However, although eligibility is broader than for initiatives funded by the SGP, the level of funding is significantly smaller.

7.4.41. The SGP was last independently reviewed in 2009 by the Australian National Audit Office.⁶¹ That report was directed towards the Department's management of the program, rather than the design or delivery of the program. Although the more recent evaluation of the HSS and CSS programs excluded a review of the SGP, the evaluation did note stakeholder suggestions that there should be greater alignment between the SGP and HSS, including stronger referral pathways between the two programs.⁶² We are aware that the Department has commissioned recently an independent evaluation of the program.

7.4.42. RCOA endorses SCOA's recommendation that funding for the SGP program should be increased and include a broader range of activities. As discussed in section 8.8, we also support strengthening funding under this program to refugee community-based organisations.

⁶¹ Australian National Audit Office, *Settlement Grants Program* (Performance Audit 36, May 2009) <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/settlement-grants-program>.

⁶² Ernst & Young, 57–58. !

Recommendation 7

Funding for SGP should be increased and include a broader range of activities.

7.5. Adult Migrant English Program

7.5.43. The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is a program offering free English language tuition to migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English. It is intended to assist eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants in the development of English language skills that are needed to access services in the general community, provide a pathway to employment, undertake further study or training and participate in other government programs.

7.5.44. All permanent and temporary protection visa holders are eligible for AMEP. Refugee and humanitarian entrants under the age of 25 with low levels of schooling are eligible for up to 910 hours of English classes. Humanitarian entrants over 25 years old are eligible for 610 hours. All other migrants are eligible for 510 hours. These time limits changed in 2015 after a review of the AMEP (discussed later in this section).

7.5.45. Clients can undertake training through four tuition modes:

- **Classroom-based:** full or part-time classroom tuition during the day, evening and weekends and in formal or community-based settings
- **Distance learning:** curriculum materials specifically designed for out-of-classroom learning, supported by regular contact with a teacher, often over the internet or the telephone
- **Home Tutor Scheme (HTS):** trained volunteers provide one-on-one English language tuition to clients, usually in the client's home (under the HTS, AMEP service providers train and provide professional development for home tutors)
- **Self-paced e-learning:** online learning modules available to all AMEP clients to supplement AMEP tuition.

7.5.46. The program also allows eligible clients to access additional support and tuition under two sub-programs—the Special Preparatory Program (SPP) and the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training (SLPET) Program—as well as supporting the learning and settlement needs of clients through the provision of counselling services, childcare and a translation referral service.

7.5.47. In addition to the AMEP, the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program—also funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training—provides language, literacy and numeracy training to help people looking for jobs to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force. It caters for different groups with literacy and/or numeracy training needs, including eligible refugee and humanitarian entrants. The SEE program provides initial, basic and advanced accredited English language training, as well as basic and advanced literacy and numeracy training. Clients are streamed and provided with a tailored training plan.

Our previous recommendations

7.5.48. Our most recent recommendations regarding AMEP were provided in our submission to an evaluation of this program in 2014.⁶³ Some of these recommendations concerned a need for greater involvement of community members in the program, including:

- Greater use of bicultural teachers and teachers' aides
- Increased use of mentor and volunteer activities to increase support, and
- Greater engagement with, and support for, refugee community organisations in the design and delivery of the program.

7.5.49. Many of the recommendations reflected a need for greater flexibility and tailoring of the program to individual needs, including:

⁶³ Refugee Council of Australia, *Adult Migrant English Program Evaluation 2014* (Submission, December 2014) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/1412-AMEP.pdf>.

- Removal of the 510-hour limit for the program and replacement with a needs-based assessment
- Greater flexibility for teachers including reducing the number of assessments
- Greater access and consistent implementation of part-time and evening classes
- Greater flexibility for people to leave the program and return
- Alternatives for those with higher English fluency wishing to prepare for tertiary level study and professional employment
- Free childcare
- Flexible start and finish times to suit needs of parents with children in school
- Funding of carers to enable those with caring responsibilities to attend
- Funding for AMEP contractors in regional areas without Intensive English Centres to introduce flexible models of English language provision and training
- A loading for refugee youth to offer targeted youth-specific courses,⁶⁴ and
- A strategy for improving access to refugees with pre-school children.⁶⁵

7.5.50. Some of the recommendations concerned the link between the program and its link to employment, including:

- That the AMEP remains focused on settlement, with employment as one of several outcomes, and be managed by the Department of Social Services
- Investment in bridging programs to support young people in their transition from AMEP to further education or employment
- Options for supported work placement and volunteer opportunities to assist students to undertake experiential education, and
- Better information be provided to employment (jobactive) providers about the role of AMEP and the importance of clients prioritising AMEP completion before being referred to other training courses.

7.5.51. We have also recommended that AMEP be extended to people seeking asylum and those on temporary protection visas.⁶⁶

Evaluation

7.5.52. An independent evaluation of the program was conducted in 2015.⁶⁷ The evaluation found that overall the AMEP is a valued programme that is providing substantial assistance to eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants in promoting and supporting the acquisition of English language skills necessary for successful settlement in Australia. In developing English language skills, it also is providing a strong focal point for drawing together a range of humanitarian and other related settlement services.

7.5.53. The evaluation recommended retaining the primary objective of AMEP, namely to provide settlement for migrants. It also recommended retaining the benchmark level of English at the current level of functional English, with those wanting a higher level of English should be subsidised through other programs. It recommended retaining the entitlement of 510 hours, while recognising that many would not reach a level of functional English within that time limit. The evaluation also recommended clearer communication of the objectives of the program to stakeholders, to avoid misunderstanding of its role in employment pathways.

⁶⁴ For an example, see Jan McFeeter, *Preparing for the next Step: A Proposal to Invest in AMEP Youth \$ Programs* (AMES, June 2014) !
http://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/AMES_YOUTH_ResearchReport_LR_FA.pdf.

⁶⁵ Elisha Riggs et al, 'Flexible Models for Learning English Are Needed for Refugee Mothers' (2012) 52(2) !
Australian Journal of Adult Learning 397. !

⁶⁶ Refugee Council of Australia, 'Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-15: Community Views ! on Current Challenges and Future Directions', Rec 28(b).

⁶⁷ ACIL Allen Consulting, *AMEP Evaluation Report* (Department of Education & Training (Cth), 22 May 2015)
<https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/amep-evaluation-report>. !

7.5.54. The evaluation also suggested that measuring the outcomes of the AMEP could be improved through developing and implementing the necessary systems in partnership with other government agencies to track individual outcomes over time, and/or instituting a longitudinal-based approach using a sufficiently robust sample or subset of the AMEP clients to demonstrate and periodically confirm the program's contribution towards its objectives. It suggested commissioning further research to measure client satisfaction, provider innovation and the extent to which client needs were being met.

7.5.55. The evaluation did recommend considering a personalised AMEP entitlement based on need. It also recommended implementing incentives for innovative delivery, such as a grants program. Other recommendations included:

- Reducing the administrative burden on AMEP providers
- Considering extending eligibility to temporary humanitarian visa holders, and
- Introducing greater competition per contract region.

Response to the evaluation

7.5.56. RCOA is aware that changes have been made to the new draft AMEP service provider instructions as a result of the evaluation. RCOA wrote a joint letter with FECCA welcoming some of the changes, including the decision to expand the 510 hours available to certain students up to another 490 hours under AMEP Extend, and the introduction of different streams, recognising the various skills and backgrounds people come to Australia with.⁶⁸

7.5.57. However, RCOA and FECCA expressed some concerns about other changes, including:

- The absence of minimum qualifications for teaching in the new Social Stream
- The lack of use of bicultural workers
- The requirement that students with mutual obligation requirements with Centrelink must be enrolled in the pre-employment stream
- The doubling of class sizes under the Special Preparatory Programme
- The reduction of funding for the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training Course
- The removal of funding for counsellors
- The adequacy of the funding for child care
- The need for adequate safeguards in work experience programs to prevent exploitation
- The need to retain the AMEP's objective as a settlement program, and
- The need to provide access to AMEP for people seeking asylum.

Recommendation 8

This Committee should reaffirm the value of the AMEP as instrumental in improving English language proficiency for new arrivals, and recommend extending eligibility to AMEP to people awaiting decisions on their protection claims living in the community.

7.6. Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

7.6.58. TIS National is a federally funded interpreting service for people who do not have the required English proficiency to communicate with agencies and businesses. TIS National has access to almost 3,000 contracted interpreters across Australia, speaking approximately 170 languages and dialects. TIS National is an internal business unit within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and it also provides services to clients under the Settlement Services Program, to eligible clients for whom the services are free, and fee-paying clients.

7.6.59. Services are free for non-English speaking Australian citizens and permanent residents communicating with the following approved groups and individuals:

⁶⁸ *Adult Migrant English Program - Our Response* (31 October 2016) Refugee Council of Australia <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/ourwork/settlement-ourwork/adult-migrant-english-program-response/>.

- private medical practitioners providing Medicare-rebateable services and their reception staff to arrange appointments and provide results of medical tests
- non-profit, non-government, community-based organisations for case work and emergency services where the organisation does not receive funding to provide these services
- Members of Parliament for constituency purposes
- local government authorities to communicate with non-English speaking residents on issues such as rates, garbage collection and urban services
- trade unions to respond to members' enquiries or requests
- Emergency Management Australia, and
- Pharmacies for the purpose of dispensing medications.

7.6.60. The Australian Government also provides the Free Translating Service to refugee and humanitarian entrants (including those on temporary protection visas). This provides free English translations of up to 10 personal documents, including identity records and education and employment certificates, within the first two years of visa grant or arriving to settle permanently in Australia (whichever is later).

7.6.61. The Australian National Audit Office reviewed the management of interpreting services in 2015, and found its management of interpretation services to be effective although stronger administrative arrangements were recommended.

Our previous recommendations

7.6.62. RCOA has previously recommended that greater use be made of TIS by health practitioners,⁶⁹ an issue that has been well-documented and researched.⁷⁰ This issue continues to be raised in many states during our annual consultations, along with underuse of interpreters by other authorities including police. We also note and support the work of FECCA in expanding the supply of interpreters and translators in new and emerging community languages.⁷¹

7.6.63. Another issue arises is access to TIS National. While many of our members have access to TIS services, it is not available for people seeking asylum or people on temporary protection visas. As a result, many of our members are self-funding interpreting services in critical areas including access to migration advice and representation. This is likely to be of increasing concern because, even when people are granted temporary protection, they will not have access to TIS National.

Recommendation 9

This Committee should recommend that TIS National be made available to refugees granted temporary protection visas and people seeking asylum to ensure their safety and the safety of others in the community.

7.7. Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma

7.7.64. The Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) provides specialised support services to humanitarian entrants living in the community who are experiencing psychological or psychosocial difficulties associated with surviving torture and trauma before coming to Australia.

7.7.65. PASTT provides:

⁶⁹ Refugee Council of Australia, *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community Views on Current Challenges and Future Directions* (February 2010) Rec 40 <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub/2010-11-IntakeSub.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Yu-Ting Huang and Christine Phillips, 'Telephone Interpreters in General Practice: Bridging the Barriers to Their Use' [2009] *Australian Family Physician* <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/19861>; Foundation House, *Promoting the Engagement of Interpreters in Victorian Health Services* (June 2013).

⁷¹ Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), *Australia's Growing Linguistic Diversity* (2016) <http://fecca.org.au/publications/australias-growing-linguistic-diversity/>.

- direct counselling and related support services, including advocacy and referrals to mainstream health and related services, to individuals, families and groups who are survivors of torture and trauma
- education and training to mainstream health and related service providers
- community development and capacity building activities
- rural, regional and remote outreach services to enable survivors of torture and trauma to access comparable services outside metropolitan areas, and
- resources to support and enhance the capacity of specialist counselling and related support services to deliver effective services to survivors of torture and trauma and to respond to emerging client needs.

7.7.66. PASTT is delivered by member agencies of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), a network of specialist rehabilitation agencies that work with survivors of torture and trauma. All of these agencies are members of the Refugee Council of Australia.

7.7.67. Recovering from torture and trauma is an essential step towards settling well in Australia. This national network of specialist counsellors is vital in that step. RCOA has received consistent feedback that these specialist agencies are far superior to mainstream mental health supports, and often these agencies are the ones keeping people on the brink afloat.

7.7.68. There are, however, issues of access to these services. First, people seeking asylum are not eligible for funded services, although some of the agencies do provide services to people seeking asylum. Second, member agencies have noted that the rate of referral to such services appears lower than expected.⁷² Third, some refugees have reported that lack of access to face-to-face interpreters has been a barrier for them in accessing these services.

7.7.69. For service providers, a major concern is that government policies themselves often impede their ability to help people. This is particularly the case with people seeking asylum, as government policies actively undermine the sense of safety that is necessary to help people recover from torture or trauma, as we discuss in section 10.

7.8. Access to specialist settlement services

7.8.70. As the above has suggested, there are a number of well-established, well-regarded specialist settlement services. While there are different ways in which the effectiveness of each could be enhanced, an overarching and cross-cutting recommendation is that these specialist settlement services be available to all refugee and humanitarian entrants, regardless of visa subclass or mode of arrival in Australia.

Recommendation 10

This Committee should recommend that all refugee and humanitarian entrants should be granted full access to specialist settlement services based on need and not on visa subclass and how they arrived in Australia.

7.8.1. Standards and frameworks

7.8.2. In recent years, both SCOA and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) have developed standards and frameworks to establish outcomes frameworks for those supporting settlement. SCOA's National Settlement Outcomes Standards provide a consistent set of best practice benchmarks focused on the nine priority areas identified by the National Settlement Framework. MYAN's National Youth Settlement includes key indicators and good practice capabilities designed to be adopted into policy and programs across the NGO sector and within government.

⁷² Ernst & Young.

7.8.3. We support these initiatives and their further development. They provide well-considered frameworks for driving better practice and outcomes for clients, and should be at the forefront of any discussion about settlement outcomes in Australia.

8. Other key actors involved in settlement

8.1.1. Alongside specialist settlement services, there are many other key actors that are crucial to the settlement experiences and outcomes of refugee and humanitarian entrants. These include employment services; state and local governments; and the non-government sector and civil society, including refugee communities themselves.

8.4. Employment services

8.4.2. RCOA's experience is that refugee and humanitarian entrants arrive with a variety skills and employment experiences relevant to the Australian labour market and, given the chance, many are highly aspirational, entrepreneurial and hardworking.

8.4.3. At the same time, there are many barriers to employment that make transitions complex, including: lack of work history in Australia, lack of recognition of overseas skills, qualifications and experience, limited English proficiency or previous education, lack of understanding of the local labour market and work culture, limited social networks to facilitate employment, and racism and discrimination.⁷³ Employment services are therefore an essential service for supporting the transition of new arrivals into work in Australia and in settlement outcomes.

8.4.4. In July 2015, jobactive replaced the Job Services Australia (JSA) program as the main federally-funded employment support service in Australia. This change included new penalties for failing to report and for missing appointments, the removal of specialist providers, new stream levels with less support, introduction of Work for the Dole programs, and an increase in the required number of job applications.

8.4.5. RCOA has consistently raised concerns regarding the support and assistance of federally-funded employment services. The feedback we have received about the new jobactive program is detailed in a paper on the concerns raised by service providers and refugees.⁷⁴ In this we highlight:

- A lack of targeted and specialised support, with feedback that jobactive providers often have limited cross-cultural communications skills and some lack a basic understanding of the needs and experiences of people from refugee backgrounds
- A lack of communication regarding transitions to jobactive and new reporting arrangements
- Continuing reports of people being taken out of AMEP classes to attend jobactive appointments, interviews and other requirements, disrupting the language learning that is instrumental in finding meaningful and skills-relevant employment
- A failure to recognise the lack of experience many refugees have with the technology required for reporting
- Reports that almost all providers are not using interpreters in their communication and meetings with clients
- Concerns that people are being incorrectly assessed into streams of support, and concerns that people seeking asylum are eligible only for the lowest level of support
- Concerns that people would be taken out of English language classes to participate in the Work for the Dole program, and
- Concerns that Work for the Dole programs may not be culturally appropriate or meet the needs of refugee communities.

8.4.6. Our recommendations included:

⁷³ Refugee Council of Australia, *What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants* (June 2010) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2010-Employment.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Refugee Council of Australia, *Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns* (13 April 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/jobactive-refugee-community-service-provider-concerns-april-2016/>.

- Considering the development of a national specialist employment service
- Reviewing the effectiveness of employment services in meeting the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants
- Supporting and funding the use of interpreters and bilingual caseworkers
- Requiring providers to undertake cultural competency training and requiring an independent cultural competency audit of jobactive services
- Conducting a comprehensive review of the streaming process under jobactive, and
- Investigating ways in which jobactive providers can be encouraged to enhance employment outcomes for people seeking asylum or from refugee backgrounds.

Recommendation 11

This Committee should recommend an independent review of jobactive services and how they meet the employment transition support needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants, along the lines outlined in RCOA's 2016 paper, Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns.

8.5. The role of state governments

8.5.7. State governments play a critical role in providing mainstream services, including health and education services, for refugees and humanitarian entrants. There have been many excellent examples of initiatives by state governments, some of which supplement or compensate for deficiencies in federal services.

8.5.8. For example, several states operate specialist refugee health clinics or fund refugee health nurses. Victoria also funds a Refugee Health Network that provides a coordinating mechanism for refugee health service provision in Victoria.

8.5.9. Another vital service provided by state governments is education. Educational arrangements vary (including within states), but we have heard consistent feedback of excellent practice by several schools in different states, such as Milperra High School in Brisbane. Some states have less effective education provision for new arrivals. For example, until very recently, Western Australian public schools did not provide education to children seeking asylum.

8.5.10. Another key settlement issue that depends upon states is access to transport. Many refugees live in areas where there is greater housing affordability, including regional and outer metropolitan areas, and state policies on driver training often make it difficult for them to obtain licences. Access to transport is critical to accessing services and jobs.

8.5.11. A key feature of some states is a responsible lead agency for coordinating multicultural (including refugee-related) affairs. Policy leadership is required to provide a whole-of-government response in settlement, but the strength of these agencies varies from state to state and over time. However, recent audits of state government services suggest that much work could be done by state governments to better coordinate and collect data.

8.5.12. In Victoria, a 2014 audit concluded that Victorian government departments could be doing more to “provide a consistent, coordinated and efficient approach to service planning and provision”.⁷⁵ The report observed that “[I]ack of regular and accurate Commonwealth settlement data on newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers makes service planning difficult for departments”, but considered that “service delivery departments and service providers could be doing more to collect and analyse client feedback and other relevant data for planning and evaluation purposes”. The audit also found that:

Whole-of-government structures and processes are not resulting in informed and coordinated service planning and delivery. Despite some examples of departments working together effectively, these collaborative activities are not consistent,

⁷⁵ Victorian Auditor-General, *Access to Services for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (29 May 2014) xi http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_and_publications/latest_reports/2013-14/20140529-migrants-services.aspx.

embedded or systemic. The two public sector entities tasked with whole-of-government roles and responsibilities—OMAC and VMC—are not being used to their full potential. As a unit within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, OMAC cannot hold other departments to account. As an independent advisory body, VMC lacks the statutory mandate to do so. This leaves a significant gap in the monitoring and reporting of whole-of-government service accessibility, responsiveness and effectiveness.⁷⁶

8.5.13. In NSW, a 2012 audit concluded:

New South Wales is not meeting its responsibility to humanitarian entrants as well as it could. There is no overall settlement plan for New South Wales that responds to the needs of either current or expected humanitarian entrants. This means that New South Wales is not influencing the settlement of humanitarian entrants, for example by identifying where and what are the necessary supports and opportunities that will best assist humanitarian entrants to make a life in New South Wales.⁷⁷

8.5.14. Part of the problem was because NSW (like all state governments) received very little information about the number, destination and background of refugee and humanitarian entrants before or after their arrival. It also found that the reporting framework for multicultural plans did not include outcomes specific to humanitarian entrants.

8.5.15. The audit recommended reinvigoration of the coordination framework and a strengthening of focus on humanitarian entrants. It found that NSW did not have a coordinated approach to settling people or providing services to them, resulting in gaps and duplication.

8.5.16. In 2012, the Tasmanian Government reviewed its services for humanitarian entrants and identified specific recommendations for improving service delivery, including continuing the coordination framework required to implement the report, improving communication technologies, increasing cultural competency, and reviewing and adapting programs to adapt to a more diverse population.⁷⁸

8.5.17. Similarly, a 2008 audit of services provided in WA found that:

- Agencies had limited information on how humanitarian entrants used their services and whether they were effective
- Humanitarian entrants may not be identified as at risk until significant problems arise
- Agencies had not adequately addressed language and literacy obstacles and considered the most effective delivery approach
- Inflexible application of policies and criteria can prevent humanitarian entrants getting the most appropriate service, and
- There is a lack of coordination between agencies and in overall settlement planning policy frameworks.

8.5.18. As discussed in section 6.3, RCOA considers that there is an important role for State-wide planning. As part of an overall implementation of a coordination framework, therefore, we recommend that each jurisdiction conduct a whole-of-government review of services to identify improvements in policy and practice.

⁷⁶ Victorian Auditor-General, xi. !

⁷⁷ Audit Office of New South Wales, *Settling Humanitarian Entrants in New South Wales* (Performance Audit, ! 23 May 2012) 2 <http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/news/settling-humanitarian-entrants-in-new-south-wales>.

⁷⁸ Community Development Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet (Tas), *Better Access to \$ (Tasmanian) Government Services for Former Humanitarian Entrants Report* (2012) [http://www.ttmhn.org.au/_literature_6047/Better_Access_to_\(Tasmanian\)_Government_Services_for_Former_Humanitarian_Entrants_Report_2012.](http://www.ttmhn.org.au/_literature_6047/Better_Access_to_(Tasmanian)_Government_Services_for_Former_Humanitarian_Entrants_Report_2012.) !

Recommendation 12

Each jurisdiction should, as part of the process of improving implementation of the National Settlement Framework, conduct a whole-of-government review of settlement services provided within the jurisdiction to identify improvements in policy and practice.

8.6. The role of local governments

8.6.19. Local governments can also play an important role in assisting refugees settle. Local governments can provide funding and support for local activities and organisations, help coordinate and facilitate place-based coordination, and can be key in providing a sense of welcome to new arrivals.

8.6.20. The Refugee Council of Australia's longstanding initiative of Refugee Welcome Zones allows local government to play a role in actively welcoming refugees.⁷⁹ Councils sign a declaration committing themselves to welcoming refugees and receive bulletins about their work. There are currently 143 Refugee Welcome Zones in Australia.

8.6.21. Many local councils are leaders in promoting integration of refugees. Councils with high settlement rates, such as Fairfield in NSW and Brimbank in Victoria, play an active role. Councils are also crucial in fostering regional settlement.

8.6.22. The excellent work of many councils could be leveraged through better information-sharing and network opportunities. We are aware that in some jurisdictions, such as in Victoria, regular network meetings do exist to discuss these issues. We could build on these networks and initiatives and networks by incorporating, as part of the National Settlement Framework's improved coordination mechanism, funding for better coordination between local governments to share best practice.

Recommendation 13

Local governments should be supported in their initiatives to settle refugees and humanitarian entrants through funding to enable them to share best practice and collaborate on projects.

8.7. The role of the settlement sector and civil society

8.7.23. Settlement services are delivered by independent organisations, many of whom are members of the Refugee Council of Australia. The sector itself is diverse and evolving, but our members are not-for-profit community organisations which have a long history in helping people settle. Most of them deliver a range of services extending beyond refugee settlement and have diverse funding models.

8.7.24. For many new arrivals, settlement service providers are their first and crucial link to Australian society. Service providers are often the first place people go to get help, and play an important mediating function with mainstream services and providing a wide range of activities to help people integrate. Most settlement providers run a wide range of activities beyond the settlement services funded by the Australian Government. Common activities include:

- Social activities, including ones typically targeted at women and young people
- English conversation classes
- Homework classes
- Driver training programs
- Friendship groups
- Employment assistance, such as CV and interview workshops, or capacity-building programs
- Community engagement forums, and
- Leadership and mentoring programs.

8.7.25. As not-for-profits, our members typically also benefit from the enthusiasm of many volunteers, which both leverages government funding and builds social inclusion as friendships are

⁷⁹ 'Refugee Welcome Zones' <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/our-work/refugee-welcome-zones/>.

forged. Our members also typically complement their federal funding with funding by state or local governments, private donors and their own fundraising. Members also often provide jobs or training to their former clients, creating pathways to employment. Many members participate in key forums with stakeholders and publish relevant research that is informed by frontline experience.

8.7.26. As well, beyond those organisations which are funded to deliver settlement services, there are also many local, non-government-funded groups and organisations that help people settle. These include refugee community organisations, which we discuss separately below.

8.7.27. Some of these groups and individuals focus on gaps in services, such as settlement support for people seeking asylum. Others are local initiatives meeting local needs, such as free English classes or material aid. Some are friendship projects, such as Welcome Dinners. There is a large segment of Australian society out there, every day, helping people settle through their own passion, all of which contribute to settlement outcomes.

8.7.28. We are aware of, and support, SCOA's submission which provides more specific recommendations about the role of the settlement sector. However, it should not be forgotten that many organisations and individuals outside the government-funded settlement sector also support refugees and humanitarian entrants. In reinvigorating the process of collaboration and coordination contemplated by the National Settlement Framework, it is important that this part of civil society should also be included, to ensure representation of the full spectrum of civil society.

Recommendation 14

Collaboration and coordination within settlement policy, including in the further development of a coordinating framework, should include the full spectrum of civil society including those providing services which are not funded by government.

8.8. The role of refugee communities

8.8.29. Refugee communities provide a crucial role in the settlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants. Both refugee community organisations and tireless individuals play an essential, yet underappreciated, in helping people navigate the complex challenges of finding their way in a new country, especially in the early stages of settlement.

Refugee community-based organisations

8.8.30. RCOA has recently published a report, *The Strength Within*, into the vital yet often invisible roles refugee community-based organisations play in the resettlement of community members in Australia.⁸⁰ As that report identifies, these organisations play an important role in supporting the social participation, economic wellbeing, independence, personal wellbeing, life satisfaction and community connectedness of new refugee communities. However, their major role in resettlement, and in promoting development in their home countries, is all too often neglected and unfunded.

8.8.31. In the context of forced migration, it is natural for refugee communities in host countries to seek what is familiar to them in order to build bridges that help them understand their new reality drawing strength from their shared experiences, language and cultural understandings. The loss of self-determination often drives people to seek a sense of belonging and internal strength, which fosters the development of refugee community-based organisations. This is also promoted by the high level of volunteering and a genuine desire to give back to other new arrivals and the broader Australian community.

8.8.32. In that report, RCOA emphasised the need to recognise the role of refugee communities as a vital aspect of the resettlement process for new arrivals and as instrumental in international development. Our recommendations included undertaking further research on the roles played by such organisations, their challenges and how they can be strengthened, and the development of a

⁸⁰Refugee Council of Australia, *The Strength within: The Role of Refugee Community Organisations in Settlement* (May 2014) http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/1405_StrengthWithin.pdf. These are defined as any group, association or structure that is created by refugee and humanitarian entrants for the benefit of their own self-defined cultural community.

strategy for supporting, strengthening and incorporating them into the National Settlement Framework. As well, it was recommended that funding bodies should consider ways to support such organisations; policy-makers should consider ways of critically engaging with them; and there should be consideration of initiatives to build capacity to support the development of leaders and robust community structures.

8.8.33. Many refugee community organisations exist entirely through the dedication and fundraising of those driving the organisations, as funding is extremely limited. One of the few sources of support for refugee community-based organisation is the SGP program. However, over the years, RCOA has observed that the funding for ethno-specific community organisations has decreased in this program, undermining a vital source of support for refugees. Further, RCOA also observes that funding and recognition of ethnic community organisations varies widely between States and Territories, and that this is a significant factor in their viability and strength.

Recommendation 15

The Australian Government should increase the level of funding available to refugee community-based organisations within the Settlement Grants Program, and as part of the implementation of the National Settlement Framework, identify ways to improve engagement with, and support of, refugee community-based organisations.

Refugee Communities Advocacy Network

8.8.34. RCOA is committed to mobilising the strength of refugee communities. This commitment has led RCOA to initiate the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network (RCAN) in Victoria and NSW, supported by the Victorian Government and the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS).⁸¹ The aim of RCAN is to amplify the voices of communities with refugee backgrounds and is strategically placed to fill in the gap between communities with refugee background and the processes that impact their lives including policy development, service delivery, advocacy and public discourse. Over 20 different refugee communities participate in RCAN and its ongoing work that contributes to a stronger and more effective influence on key government policy decisions that affect refugee communities.

8.8.35. RCAN defines itself as a network led by refugee community members. The members of RCAN are people of refugee backgrounds, including people seeking protection. It is built on a foundation of strength, where the refugee communities come together and build an enduring relationship with each other as new Australians. In addition to joint advocacy, and policy input, the network also has the function of a learning, knowledge, capacity-sharing platform as well as a problem-solving platform to benefit all refugee communities.

8.8.36. This Network fills a void by recognising and promoting the voices of people from a refugee background advocating on the issues that matter most to them. Refugee community members have long voiced their frustration over their absence from key discussions and decisions in relation to the issues that impact their lives the most. RCAN helps rectify this by connecting community members to advocacy opportunities, such as opportunities to present before parliamentary inquiries. As one RCAN member has said, “refugee communities as a collective should not only be talked about, but talked with.”

8.8.37. For this inquiry, RCOA has sought to consult specifically with people from refugee community-based organisations, including through RCAN and our refugee community organisational members. We have included within this submission a section reflecting that feedback (see section 9.4).

⁸¹ *Refugee Communities Advocacy Network (RCAN)* Refugee Council of Australia
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/our-work/rcan/>.

9. Settlement outcomes

9.1. Building on existing research and policy-relevant resources

9.1.1. Although we do not believe that ‘integration potential’ should influence the selection of refugees resettled in Australia, RCOA strongly supports improvements in policy and practice that would promote settlement in Australia. This includes developing the evidence base for improving settlement outcomes.

9.1.2. For example, RCOA participates in advisory meetings of the Department of Social Services’ Building a New Life longitudinal study of refugees. This important initiative is a world-class research project that will provide detailed and robust data about the settlement process. We note that, while some of the data is now in the public domain, the data so far only covers the initial part of the settlement journey, so needs to be treated with caution.

9.1.3. We understand that this study is planned to finish after five years, and we strongly recommend that the study be extended. As discussed, settlement reflects only the first phase of a much longer process of integration. As eligibility to access settlement services typically ends after five years, there is very little evidence about how people fare beyond the five years. Feedback received for this inquiry and more generally strongly indicate that, for both refugees and service providers, this time limit is not flexible enough to meet the needs of individuals. We therefore strongly recommend that the Building a New Life study be extended beyond the initial first five years of settlement.

Recommendation 16

The Australian Government should extend the Building a New Life longitudinal research project beyond the initial five years of settlement.

9.1.4. There is also a wealth of existing research and policy-relevant resources that provide evidence of settlement outcomes and identify areas where government policy could be strengthened. While further research is therefore welcome, it is important to recognise that there is already a solid evidence base on many aspects of settlement.

9.1.5. For example, two research reports funded by the Australian Government were published in 2011 on settlement outcomes, the *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals* (SONA) report⁸² and the *Economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants* report (Hugo Report).⁸³ The Refugee Council of Australia has provided an analysis of these two reports.⁸⁴

9.1.6. The SONA report focuses primarily on humanitarian entrants and the relationship between settlement (defined as ‘comfort in Australia’) using; education, interaction with government, employment, income, accommodation, English proficiency, regional location and social connection as variables. Importantly, the SONA report found that:

- After four years, most humanitarian entrants could speak English well or very well,⁸⁵ that there was generally high satisfaction with AMEP and evidence that AMEP did result in more positive outcomes, including beyond learning English.
- While they were less likely to be working, they were far more likely to be studying full-time, studying and working, or studying and looking after families.

⁸² Department of Social Services, Australian Government, *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals* <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/settlement-outcomes-of-new-arrivals>.

⁸³ Graeme Hugo, *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants* (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, May 2011) <https://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/economic-social-civic-contributions-about-the-research2011.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Refugee Council of Australia and Settlement Council of Australia, *Measuring Settlement: Exploring New Research on Refugee Settlement Outcomes and Its Implications for Settlement Services and Policy* (Settlement Policy Network report, 17 August 2011) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/spn/110817-SPN.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Department of Social Services, Australian Government, 12–16.

- People reported generally good health and connections to others in the community.

9.1.7. The report also identified a high proportion were receiving Centrelink benefits, that they had considerably lower incomes, experienced greater issues with housing, and while most thought they were well-treated, were significantly less positive than other migrant streams. There was, however, very significant demographic variation, with younger people generally much more positive, those living in rural and regional areas more positive, and those without pre-existing links in Australia more likely to do well at learning English, study and get a job.

9.1.8. However, as we identified, there are some key limitations to the SONA report. The methodology involved compromises including the self-completion and self-selection of research participants, and the disproportionate representation of some demographic subgroups. Further, the research covered only the experiences of people who had been in Australia less than 5 years.

9.1.9. In addition, proxies were used in the SONA report for complex concepts that may have had difference cross-cultural connotations such as the concept of 'settlement' being expressed as 'comfort of living in Australia'. Further, the findings presented regarding Centrelink dependency failed to disaggregate types of payments and the proportion of household income derived from Centrelink.

9.1.10. The Hugo study determined that over time there is a strong pattern of economic and social adjustment among refugee and humanitarian entrants as well as wider significant contributions to the economy and society. This was determined by looking at the contributions made by humanitarian entrants in terms of Australia's population profile, labour force engagement and participation, economic contribution beyond labour force participation and social and civic contributions. The Hugo report was limited by the lack of disaggregated data sets that are fully representative of migrant populations, and in particular humanitarian settlers.

9.1.11. As the report emphasised, the specific nature of humanitarian migration means a longer period of adjustment to society should be expected. For example, while in the early stages humanitarian migrants experience significantly higher unemployment, lower incomes and concentration in lower status jobs beyond that attributable to specific indicators of disadvantage, over time these outcomes begin to converge. For the second generation, some groups exceed Australian-born levels of labour market success.

9.1.12. The report also identified barriers likely to contribute to these outcomes, including problems with the structure of employment assistance, access to English language training, recognition of skills and qualifications, and the need for education of employers. The Hugo report also found that humanitarian migrants demonstrate more entrepreneurial attributes, are filling important labour shortages in the Australian economy and develop economic linkages with countries of origin. The Hugo report also identified high levels of volunteering, including significant support to their own communities with engagement broadening over time.

9.1.13. As well as these key reports, there has been a wealth of academic and other research on the settlement of humanitarian migrants. The eighth edition of a bibliography of research in settlement published in July 2016 recorded 1,451 publications, more than 40% of these published since January 2010.⁸⁶ RCOA, and some of our members, are also involved in producing research informed by experience.

9.2. RCOA's research on settlement issues

9.2.14. RCOA has also contributed significantly to the evidence base on settlement issues. We highlight here some of our key recent work in this field.

Employment

9.2.15. In June 2010, RCOA published *What Works?*, a research report on best practices in employment of refugees. Five key elements were identified as improving employment outcomes:

⁸⁶ Klaus Neumann, 'The Resettlement of Refugees in Australia: A Bibliography' [2016] *Swinburne Institute for Social Research* http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/neumann_resettlement_bibliography_15_july_2016.pdf.

- Specialist employment services targeting refugee and humanitarian entrants
- Employers who value and are committed to workforce diversity
- Coordination and collaboration among refugee entrants and their communities, education and training providers, employment services and employers
- Initiatives tapping into the entrepreneurial spirit of former refugees through social enterprise and small business development, and
- Building awareness within refugee background communities about career pathways in Australia.

9.2.16. Our research found that there was a need for targeted approaches to supporting the employment transitions of refugee and humanitarian entrants. In particular, targeted approaches meant service providers recognising the barriers that refugee entrants' face in entering the Australian labour market and that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be successful in meeting the needs of such a diverse group of jobseekers.

9.2.17. Overall, effective approaches provided by targeted employment services that were identified in interviews included:

- Individual casework and referral to other services
- Work experience placement
- Support with applying for work: job search, applications and interview skills
- Advocacy and liaison with employers
- Orientation to Australian work culture and systems
- Career advice, guidance and planning
- Mentoring
- Post-employment support
- Services for asylum seekers
- Employing bicultural/bilingual workers, and
- Addressing racism and discrimination in employment and the wider community.

9.2.18. While specialist services were important in facilitating supported employment transitions for refugee and humanitarian entrants, there was a consensus among those consulted that employment services can only do so much. For refugee entrants to be able to find meaningful, sustainable employment in Australia, employers also need to see the value of workforce diversity and be willing to give someone a chance to apply their strengths, skills and experience in an Australian workplace.

9.2.19. For recently arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants, navigating complex and unfamiliar service systems can be extraordinarily challenging. A strong theme that emerged in our report was the benefits of strong coordination and collaboration between service providers, industry and communities. Many interviewees talked about the positive flow-on effects of developing strong links between settlement and employment services, education and training providers, industry or employer groups, and refugee entrants and their communities.

9.2.20. Research suggests that assisting former refugees to establish their own businesses can contribute to creating employment opportunities for refugee and humanitarian entrants who are more recently arrived, although the benefits of such initiatives are only likely to be seen in the longer term.

9.2.21. The final theme that emerged was the need to foster realistic expectations and awareness within refugee background communities about career pathways in Australia. While this may be part of the role of specialist employment services, interviewees talked about community awareness-building needing to happen through a variety of different avenues and at different stages of settlement.

9.2.22. Several recommendations were made in our report:

- The Australian Government should develop a national refugee employment strategy to map out settlement pathways and supports that will lead to more sustainable and meaningful employment outcomes for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

- The Department of Employment should review the effectiveness of job services providers in meeting the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants, including evaluating how they are working with local employment initiatives targeting refugee entrants.
- The Department of Employment should ensure that the Innovation Fund Panel includes sufficient representation of organisations with specialist expertise in assisting refugee and humanitarian entrants.
- There should be greater investment by both private and public funding sources of Intermediate Labour Market programs and social enterprise initiatives that assist refugee and humanitarian entrants.
- The Department of Employment should establish an incentive scheme to encourage and support employers to provide traineeships and apprenticeships targeting refugee and humanitarian entrants, including and particularly through the Federal and State public service.
- The Australian Government should conduct a proactive national communications campaign promoting the business benefits of cultural diversity, and further promote national Diversity Awards that help recognise employers who take initiative.

Family reunion

9.2.23. Family separation in situations of displacement and flight are particularly common, decreasing the possibility of all family members being resettled together in a country such as Australia. Family reunion and the devastating psychological, economic and social impacts of family separation are some of the most pressing issues for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. RCOA has reported for years on these issues, most recently in November 2016.⁸⁷

9.2.24. People from refugee backgrounds often tell us that the physical security offered by Australia is offset by the ongoing mental anguish of family separation. People commonly refer to their serious concerns for the safety and welfare of family members left behind. A former refugee living in Melbourne, for example, reported that her brother had been kidnapped and killed in Iraq after having twice had a visa application refused by Australia. The effects of family separation include significant psychological, social, and financial costs, and effects on social cohesion.

9.2.25. The main avenue for family reunion for people from a refugee background is through the SHP program, but waiting periods and costs for this program are significant, eligibility is restricted, and requirements are often unrealistic. Similar problems exist with the family stream of the Migration Program. This forces many to try and apply for a very small program, the Community Proposal Pilot, which requires families to raise even higher costs to bring families over.

9.2.26. More recently, there have been newer restrictions affecting refugees who arrived by boat. Those who came after 13 August 2012 will be allowed the opportunity to reunite with their families and can only travel to visit them with permission. For those who arrived before this time, their visa applications are given the lowest priority for processing, effectively denying them any possibility of family reunion.

Housing

9.2.27. The challenges faced by people from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds in finding affordable, appropriate and sustainable housing is consistently raised as one of the primary issues affecting humanitarian entrants in Australia. Communities and service providers across Australia have adopted various strategies to assist humanitarian entrants to overcome barriers, including practical support, acting as an intermediary, drawing on community connections and exploring non-traditional settlement options. In a report we published in 2014, RCOA examined these challenges

⁸⁷ Refugee Council of Australia, 'Addressing the Pain of Separation for Refugee Families'.

and profiled local projects to enhance access to suitable housing for refugees and people seeking asylum.⁸⁸

Barriers to education for people seeking asylum and on temporary protection visas

9.2.28. Refugees on temporary visas and up to 30,000 people in Australia awaiting processing of their refugee status applications are being denied an opportunity to study in the tertiary sector. These people do not have access to Commonwealth Supported Places and federal loan schemes, meaning they must pay international student rates which they cannot afford. This effectively denies them access to further education.⁸⁹

Citizenship delays

9.2.29. Citizenship provides refugees with a sense of meaningful security and protection, and better enables them to sponsor family members for Australian visas and travel to visit family. However, in 2015 we heard that many people from refugee communities, especially those who came by boat, were experiencing significant delays in obtaining citizenship. RCOA reported on interviews or surveys with 188 people in this situation.⁹⁰

Young people

9.2.30. In 2016, RCOA published with MYAN a report following a series of consultations held in Australia with young people from a refugee background, culminating in advocacy in Geneva with UNHCR.⁹¹ The report identified key issues raised and solutions identified by young people before and after their arrival in Australia, including in relation to education, employment, health, racism, family reunion and relations.

9.3. Measuring outcomes

9.3.31. Our understanding of settlement is greatly affected by what is measured, and who gets to decide what is measured. As the SONA report acknowledged:

[The Department] defines successful settlement differently from how Humanitarian entrants think about settling well, where an equivalent phrase for settling well is living comfortably in Australia. Where [the Department], like other agencies, defines successful outcomes in terms of systemic outcomes (social participation, economic wellbeing, level of independence, and personal wellbeing), Humanitarian entrants define settlement in terms of life outcomes (personal happiness and community connectedness).⁹²

9.3.32. This point was repeated by UNHCR in a recent major survey of refugee integration. As UNHCR noted:

Understandings of what integration is underpin government direction on integration policy and integration support and vary considerably between governments, policymakers and stakeholders. There are also differences between these

⁸⁸ Refugee Council of Australia, *The Home Stretch: Challenges and Alternatives in Sustainable Housing for \$ Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (July 2014) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/spn/SPN-HomeStretch-draft.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Refugee Council of Australia, *Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on \$ Temporary Visas* (December 2015) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/1512-Education.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Refugee Council of Australia, 'Delays in Citizenship Applications'. !

⁹¹ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) and Refugee Council of Australia, *Speaking Out: Voices of \$ Young People from Refugee & Asylum Seeking Backgrounds* (30 November 2016) <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/reports/speaking-voices-young-people-refugee-asylum-seeking-backgrounds/>.

⁹² Department of Social Services, Australian Government. !

understandings and refugees' understanding of what integration means to them which may lead to different perceptions of "successful" integration.⁹³

9.3.33. Defining the 'outcomes' of settlement is not a value-neutral exercise. In particular, the 'benchmarks' of successful settlement must be appropriate. For example, in our review of the major reports for this inquiry, we noted that it was common for settlement outcomes of refugees to be measured against those of immigrants, or against those of the native-born generally.

9.3.34. Yet these benchmarks are fraught with difficulties. As one review of the available literature on refugee integration has noted, these studies often fail to control for any or all obvious determinates of labour market integration, such as age.⁹⁴ Some outcomes (such as employment) may be better compared with local populations than with national populations.⁹⁵ As well, studies often fail to even note, or quantify, the effect of changes in the economy over time, such as recessions or the rapid decline in lower-skilled work. Another gap that appears to have been overlooked is that, just as refugee policy changes and the composition of refugee streams changes over time, so too changes in migration policy over time will greatly affect the 'benchmark' comparison with other immigrants. For example, in Australia, the comparison is greatly affected by significant changes in the composition of skilled migration, and many changes made to the selection of migrants to favour better labour market outcomes.

9.3.35. An important consideration in thinking about measuring settlement outcomes is that, if we rightly put those who are most in need first in our Refugee and Humanitarian Program, we should expect that these are people who will likely need more support. We should therefore expect, for example, their greater need for health services and their poorer health (including mental health) should be factored in when considering its impact on other outcomes, such as employment.⁹⁶

9.3.36. Another overlooked dimension is the effect of time. There are relatively few longitudinal studies, and even fewer that extend beyond five years. Indeed, the Hugo report appears to be the only report examining the impact of second generations.

9.3.37. Another significant factor is that the methodology matters, especially in this field. Refugee and humanitarian entrants are often very mobile in the first few years of settlement, often arrive with limited English proficiency, and will present a host of ethical and logistical challenges in research. These inevitably result in significant limitations of any research.

9.4. Feedback from refugee communities for this inquiry

9.4.38. As noted above, the views of those who are settling, or have settled, in Australia as to what constitutes good 'settlement outcomes' are often different from those emphasised by policy-makers. RCOA has therefore sought feedback specifically from refugee communities for this inquiry, which we set out below. However, such consultation was limited by the short timeframe for the inquiry and by the fact that submissions were open during the traditional end of year break.

Lessons learnt by the Vietnamese communities in relation to settlement

9.4.39. There is a tendency in such an inquiry to focus on newer arrivals to Australia, which neglects the experiences of those who have settled in Australia over a longer term. RCOA therefore sought feedback from the Vietnamese community, as it includes former refugees with many years' experience of settlement with a wisdom when it comes to lessons learnt in the past 40 years.

9.4.40. The settlement of the Vietnamese community played a crucial role in the shift from a White Australia to a multicultural one. The Vietnamese community grew from virtually nothing to a community of over 250,000. While other Asian migrant groups such as the Chinese had histories of

⁹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'A New Beginning', 9. !

⁹⁴ Eleanor Ott, *The Labour Market Integration of Resettled Refugees* (PDES/2013/16, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, November 2013) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5294b1935a8.html>.

⁹⁵ Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, *Indicators of Integration: Final Report* (Report 28, Home Office, 2004) <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr28.pdf> !

⁹⁶ Ager and Strang. !

migration spanning thousands of years, the Vietnamese migration was not only foreign for Vietnamese people themselves but also for Australia, the host country. Both groups were unprepared and their arrival was marked by culture clash and social paranoia.

9.4.41. The first generation of Vietnamese settlers saw Australia as an ideal place to thrive and saw its educational system as a means of realising their educational aspirations for their children. To ensure that their children were employed in professions that they could not get into, Vietnamese parents were determined to get extra tutors for their children even when it meant that the parents would work in three to four jobs at a time. The Vietnamese community members commented that this process was in fact re-creating the traditions, cultures and expectations of the homeland, by achieving prestige and power through becoming a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer.

9.4.42. This strong focus on education means that Vietnamese children generally exceed their Australian-born peers academically. The benefits can be seen in second and the third generations who are in professions of influence which the first generation did not get to experience. One community member gave as an example:

In Cabramatta, a hotspot for the Vietnamese population, there is a clear demonstration of this success. It has Vietnamese in every field and profession, from shopkeepers, professionals service providers, real estates, lawyers, doctors, barristers and all other trades in one place. They are employing the locals, creating social enterprises.

Educational support

9.4.43. Much like the Vietnamese refugees, current and emerging refugee communities place great emphasis on the school and educational system for their children's success. However, there are numerous unmet needs. For instance, it is critical to their transition that students are placed in Intensive English Centres (IECs) for a sufficient period. Currently most IECs allow a student for a maximum of five semesters. A refugee youth commented that the foundational help at the IEC and preliminary stages of settlement determines their success. Refugee students should be allowed to stay at IECs on a needs basis.

9.4.44. Refugee community members also commented that there needed to be ongoing social and academic support at high school level and tertiary level. Refugee students continue to feel socially and academically marginalized at mainstream schools. Members of refugee communities suggested that settlement service providers need to build links to carry out programs with schools, IECs and other educational institutions to ensure that young people succeed.

English language classes design and delivery

9.4.45. The Vietnamese experience indicates that the most effective way of learning English is through immersion, rather than through lecture-style classrooms. One Vietnamese community member commented, "It is like putting a square cake into a round hole and forcing it in. They need to look at the mandate and the delivery." This is compounded by the fact that the entitlement of 510 hours (modified recently) is widely thought to be insufficient.

9.4.46. Instead of teaching people English in an environment that is very non-visual and foreign to them, students should be immersed in meaningful interactions to be able to pick up the language. In the case of one Sudanese woman, she could speak eight languages after living in a refugee camp, where she participated in daily transactions through trading and bartering. There is a need to be immersed in the context of employment and learn the language of a workplace. Therefore, the mode of learning in different cultures is different and this need to be recognised in the methods of teaching. English language classes need to be fused into vocational programs, targeted for refugees to be beneficial.

English language and employment

9.4.47. While English language is crucial in obtaining employment, lack of English literacy alone does not necessarily result in unemployment. There are many other attributes refugees possess that should be valued. For instance, one refugee community member said:

My mother is illiterate but very driven and has extensive business savviness and being illiterate does not stop her from running her business on the side and has done so for the past 36 years. While one refugee may be a surgeon and comes to Australia and does an impressive work, you can also have a refugee who was a farmer or a stay at home mum and be an entrepreneur here. It's about tapping into their existing skills and familiarising them with the language of an industry.

Employment

9.4.48. Finding employment for the first generation of Vietnamese refugees was very difficult, given the mix of Vietnamese refugees that ranged widely in wealth and literacy. Members of the community who had sufficient English became key in finding jobs for others in the community. They took jobs in factories, garment industries and other demanding occupations where progression in their career proved very difficult. Most stayed in their jobs at the factories all their lives until their retirement. As one Vietnamese refugee community member commented:

They remained in low-paid and demanding jobs, not because they had no other aspirations, but because they had limitations. However, they transferred their aspirations to their children. That was the transformation from the first to the second generation.

9.4.49. The members of the Vietnamese community commented that both men and women tolerated long hours and exploitation as they lacked an understanding of the tax system, work health and safety laws and were not aware of complaint and lobbying mechanisms. It was the Vietnamese communities themselves that lobbied and advocated for better conditions by contributing to guidelines.

Social integration and civic participation

9.4.50. Refugee community members had strong views on integration. They observed that there are good reasons why people stay within their own communities. They echoed that people fleeing conflicts prefer to settle closely together to create another homeland for themselves. An Iraqi community member commented that "groups living together should not be looked as detrimental to the integration process. Living together means living within a support network that is not foreign."

9.4.51. The Vietnamese community members emphasised that while integration is a collective and personal journey, it is significantly defined in the public eye by political leadership. The Vietnamese refugees were welcomed by a visionary who led public opinion. Many expressed concerns that the current political debate and lack of leadership undermined integration with rhetoric that fed prejudice and racism, and damaged civic participation and any sense of integration.

9.4.52. The Vietnamese community further commented that negative media depictions of their community had contributed greatly to a collective sense of not belonging. Media coverage about youth gang, crime and drug use defined the identity of the community for a period. This has been the greatest source of the community's alienation. While crimes are committed across all communities, generalisation by the media outlets greatly harm social cohesion.

9.4.53. The community members also emphasised that the journey to integration is not a uniform process for all refugee groups. It is unreasonable to assess all groups based on one model of integration and not take into consideration variables such as the type and depth of trauma and loss, the grieving process and different personalities. An Afghan community member commented, "It has been 25 years since we fled our country and left everything behind, but my parents are still grieving and hope to go back."

9.4.54. One Vietnamese community member commented:

My mother has been able to keep a job for decades, she is able to navigate, she is able to build friendships with her neighbours, she raised 5 children while working in a factory, she has integrated in her own way and may not fit a model of integration.

9.4.55. Another Vietnamese community member commented:

There was a point where I was ashamed of my family's lack of integration as expected by the mainstream Australian public. Unless, the trauma, the journey, the aspirations, the context from which the refugee communities have fled are understood, there will always be misunderstanding about integration. I have spent many years, trying to defend why my family has not integrated based on someone else's interpretation.

Youth marginalisation and gang groups

9.4.56. Members of the Vietnamese community commented that the current antisocial youth behaviour being reported in the South Sudanese community in Melbourne is strikingly similar to their experiences in the 1990s. They commented that the formation of these groups is in large part a result of racism, whether real or perceived. The racism is not confined to overt racism, but extends to institutional and structural racism. It is also because they are seeking a sense of validation, a sense of value that they are neither getting from mainstream communities or their own communities. One member of the Sudanese community commented:

If you are a young person and have not yet developed cognitive maturity and are subjected to daily hurt and ridicule and told that you do not belong recurrently, it is only natural for you to resort to defensiveness and become frustrated.

9.4.57. Another woman commented, "I have had instances where I had to hold a steel bar even though I am not a violent person, but to defend myself from racism, I had to resort to it." Additionally, inside the community there is very minimal support to guide young people to alternative programs, so they can channel those energies in a different direction.

Overcoming marginalisation through sports

9.4.58. Young people expressed the view that one way of overcoming the difficulty of integrating with other youth and the new community was through sport. For instance, one young person said that, after he moved to a new community, he found himself isolated. By joining the local footy club, he could connect with his peers and find a place for himself. He then went on to encourage his other community members to join the club.

Parenting in a new environment: family and social support

9.4.59. Many refugee community members have spoken about the dilemma of adjusting family roles and parenting habits as they grapple with settlement barriers in a new country. Most refugee families come from a background where parents tell what their children should do, standards they should aspire for and the lifestyle they should choose socially, economically and academically. The recurring dilemma parents share is that the children do not follow these norms and have developed a language, lifestyle, attitude that parents cannot identify with. On the other hand, their children feel that their parents speak, live and have expectations that do not resemble theirs.

9.4.60. Young people from refugee backgrounds have repeatedly said that the parents need to be taught to change their expectations so that they are not more authoritative but more consultative. Parents do not have these tools, so they need to develop these tools. In the Vietnamese communities, counselling projects have been designed by the community for parents to let go of unrealistic expectations, dreams and aspirations. Parents often feel shame, loss and disappointment at the changes in their children. Building a social outlet is an important aspect of recovery that involves communicating with other parents who have had the same experiences. While settlement services need to develop programs with communities to overcome marginalisation of young people, they also need to develop programs that mediates the challenges of changing roles within a family in a new country.

Recommendation 17

This Committee should ensure it hears from refugee community representatives as to ways to improve their communities' settlement outcomes, learning the lessons from previous generations of refugees and humanitarian entrants. The Committee should focus on current challenges identified by communities, including the need for more flexible education and English language learning practices, the need to combat racism in all forms, and the need for better support of families adjusting to new cultures.

9.5. International best practice

9.5.61. One of the terms of reference in this inquiry addresses 'international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects'. RCOA has therefore reviewed some of the key recent literature on the integration outcomes of refugees. This literature has grown substantially in recent years, spurred on by an increasing interest in the integration outcomes of migrants more generally.⁹⁷

9.5.62. We conclude from our review of this literature, however, that this field is in its infancy, with Australia and traditional resettlement countries still leading significantly in the research field, and major methodological limitations in the existing evidence base internationally. Indeed, in one international review of the literature on labour market integration of refugees, the author concluded:

*The lack of rigorous quantitative research means that important questions cannot be answered. There is a real possibility of policy makers and practitioners doing harm by not designing or implementing interventions to meet needs in the context of refugees.*⁹⁸

9.5.63. There is also such variation between countries in terms of refugee flows and government policies that the value of international comparisons is considerably reduced. For example, much of the most recent work on refugee integration has been developed in the European context. In this context, however, most European countries are referring to refugees who came to Europe as people seeking asylum, rather than through refugee resettlement. Where there are resettlement programs, these are often so small or so recent that they provide no real basis for comparison with Australia's program.

9.5.64. Even when comparing Australia with the two other larger traditional resettlement countries, the US and Canada, there are very significant differences in policy context that make it hard to draw any conclusions. For example, the composition of refugee resettlement in the three countries will vary considerably across and within these countries over time.

9.5.65. Further, there are significant contextual differences in the resettlement programs of each country. For example, in the US, there are different types of programs for resettled refugees, and the delivery of those programs varies considerably from state to state. In Canada, the existence of a significant element of community sponsorship also changes the context of settlement services. While each country offers a broadly comparable suite of services, details of the differences (let alone operational differences in each country) make this quite difficult. Indeed, as a recent review of resettlement policies by the Government Accountability Office in the US aptly concluded, 'little is known' about the effectiveness or otherwise of resettlement programs.⁹⁹

9.5.66. Finally, as UNHCR's research in the integration of refugees in Europe emphasises:

⁹⁷ For a discussion of the development of refugee integration indicators in recent years, see generally United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'A New Beginning', Ch 4.

⁹⁸ Ott, 24. !

⁹⁹ United States Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Assistance: Little Is Known about the Effectiveness of Different Approaches for Improving Refugees' Employment Outcomes* (GAO-11-369, March 2011) <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11369.pdf>. !

The individuality of each person's integration process is particularly important for refugees who arrive in EU Member States from very different individual backgrounds. Challenges can only be addressed if refugees are recognized as individuals.¹⁰⁰

9.5.67. However, there are some useful international projects and reports that identify best practices that can be adopted. We summarise these below.

The Migrant Integration Policy Index

9.5.68. In 2004, the Migration Policy Group and the British Council developed the first Migrant Integration Policy Index, which has subsequently been revised (most recently in 2015) and expanded to include 38 countries, including Australia.¹⁰¹ The Index is based on 167 policy indicators in 8 areas,¹⁰² and is designed to evaluate and compare what governments are doing to promote the integration of migrants across countries.

9.5.69. In the latest version of MIPEX, Australia scored 66 out of 100 in its score and ranked 8th out of the 38 countries. The key findings (for 2014) noted:

Since 2010, the AU federal government has maintained its long-standing commitments to equality and non-discrimination, settlement services and multiculturalism, and its clear well-supported path to citizenship. However, little has been done to remedy its long-standing weaknesses and gaps, for example on consultative bodies, anti-discrimination and the rights of permanent residents and temporary workers. Restrictions on healthcare entitlements and access for detained asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants also raise integration and public health concerns. Complicated and changing provisions to access permanent residence and family reunion may delay or discourage eligible residents from investing in their long-term integration in AU. These changes lost AU -1 point on MIPEX from 2013 to 2014. Looking ahead, 2014's austere federal budget cut several of the government's grants that make settlement work in AU, such as support for multicultural community organisations, human rights education and workplace English training.

9.5.70. The Migrant Integration Index covers all immigrants, although within the more detailed levels, changes to humanitarian policy are reflected in the scores. The index is the most closely linked to government policy, but the data is not based on outcomes for migrant populations themselves, but rather on changes to policy. It therefore provides a useful benchmark for comparing different national governments' policies and changes across time, but does not provide a way of measuring settlement outcomes.

UNHCR research

9.5.71. In the last few years, UNHCR and other partners have also invested further in work on refugee integration, with the benefit of European funding. From 2011, a resurgence of interest led to various publications including literature reviews and mapping projects.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'A New Beginning', 9. !

¹⁰¹ *Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015* (2015) <http://www.mipex.eu/australia>. !

¹⁰² The eight areas are: labour market mobility, family reunion, education, health, political participation, ! permanent residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination.

¹⁰³ See, eg, Jennifer Hyndman, *Research Summary on Resettled Refugee Integration in Canada* (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e4b77842.html>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Integration of Resettled Refugees: Essentials for Establishing a Resettlement Programme and Fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes* (2013) <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/52a6d85b6/integration-resettled-refugees-essentials-establishing-resettlement-programme.html>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Integration – A Fundamental Component in Supporting Diverse Societies* (January 2016) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56b9f8034.html>. !

9.5.72. This activity included two major projects exploring refugee integration in Central Europe and in Western Europe.¹⁰⁴ As part of the project, the Migration Policy Group was commissioned to pilot an online Integration Evaluation Tool (IET), designed in consultation with UNHCR and relevant stakeholders. The tool includes 231 indicators, of four types: policy indicators, legal/administrative indicators, financial indicators, and outcome indicators. They all require different types of expertise and all include giving voice to refugee opinions and needs.¹⁰⁵ This tool was used to inform the two projects which sought to map different aspects of refugee integration. This work is being built on in a six-year project, begun in 2016, monitoring refugee integration in 14 EU member states.¹⁰⁶

9.5.73. In a report from one of these projects, UNHCR recommended as best practice initial targeted integration support, which should reflect an understanding of the individual nature of integration and the principles of empowering refugees.

9.5.74. With respect to labour market integration, UNHCR recommended supporting employment agencies in recognising the skills of refugees and in directing them to appropriate employment, introducing practical skills assessments, combining work and language opportunities, and ensuring the provision of clear and simple documents to assist employers.

9.5.75. With respect to language learning, UNHCR recommended making available higher levels of language training, providing language training as early as possible and promoting opportunities for practice including through work experience. Promoting subsidised access to higher education, social networking, and providing support to find suitable housing and to educate landlords about housing refugees were also recommended.

9.5.76. UNHCR identified as an under-researched field the effect of family reunion on the integration of refugees, and recommended simplifying the family reunion process and applying the definition of family flexibly. Another under-researched and cross-cutting issue was the impact of health on refugees' integration.

9.5.77. UNHCR recommended support for all people seeking asylum, reducing the length of asylum procedures, and preparing people seeking asylum for future integration, including through language or vocational training opportunities. It also identified education among those working with refugees about the challenges for refugees in obtaining documents. To foster community engagement, UNHCR recommended a strong anti-discrimination framework, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and the promotion of sports clubs and recreational activities.

9.5.78. UNHCR also made some recommendations for improving the evidence base, including by focusing on under-researched areas, and longitudinal studies combining quantitative and qualitative data and including refugees' experiences in the design of such studies and the evaluation of integration support.

9.5.79. UNHCR has also sponsored a literature review on the labour market integration of refugees. The review emphasised that the basis for promising practices was disaggregating the refugee population to understand particular needs and capacities, and identified the inadequacies of existing research for policy interventions. However, the review did identify some promising practices, including:

- tailored employment plans !
- outreach to and education of employers, especially in the private sector !
- language training integrated into work training, and.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'A New Beginning'; United Nations High Commissioner ! for Refugees, *Refugee Integration and the Use of Indicators: Evidence from Central Europe* (December 2013) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/532164584.html>.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'A New Beginning'. !

¹⁰⁶ 'Refugee Integration Tool' <http://www.migpolgroup.com/diversity-integration/refugee-integration-tool/>. !

- employment mentoring programmes, such as the Family Federation of Finland's WOMENTO project that helps educated immigrant women, including refugees, into social networks and working life through personal mentorship.¹⁰⁷

OECD, 'Making Integration Work'

9.5.80. In 2016 the OECD published a guide of best practice for integration of humanitarian migrants, which included ten policy lessons based on their research:

- Provide activation and integration services as soon as possible for humanitarian migrants and asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay
- Facilitate labour market access for asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay
- Factor employment prospects into dispersal policies
- Record and assess humanitarian migrants' foreign qualifications, work experience and skills
- Take into account the growing diversity of humanitarian migrants and develop tailor-made approaches
- Identify mental and physical health issues early and provide adequate support
- Develop support programmes specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling
- Build on civil society to integrate humanitarian migrants
- Promote equal access to integration services to humanitarian migrants across the country
- Acknowledge that the integration of very poorly educated humanitarian migrants requires long-term training and support.¹⁰⁸

9.5.81. According to the OECD, one of the most important lessons is that "early intervention is crucial". The OECD therefore recommends shortening the time taken to process asylum applications and, where that is not feasible, providing early assistance to those with good prospects of staying. This is particularly important where children are involved, as every year lost jeopardises their educational outcomes.

9.5.82. Norway, for example, offers up to 250 hours of language training in its reception centres, while Germany since November 2015 has opened up its induction courses (involving 600 hours of language and 60 hours of civic education) to people seeking asylum with high recognition rates.

9.5.83. Some countries, such as Spain and Belgium, offer people seeking asylum adult and civic integration courses, job-related training and, more rarely, skills assessments. Those in Italy are offered personalised education including language, adult and civic integration classes.

9.5.84. The OECD also recommends strongly the value of mentorship schemes. Denmark and Norway, for example, run large-scale mentorship programmes. The OECD singled out for praise AMES' Community Guides program, which uses former humanitarian migrants as mentors for newer arrivals. The OECD also singled out for praise the Brotherhood of St Laurence's 'Given a Chance' program in Australia which offers specialised employment support for refugees.¹⁰⁹

9.5.85. Lesson 9 in the OECD's review of integration policies is to "promote equal access to integration services to humanitarian migrants across the country". While acknowledging the difficulties of doing so, it suggests some simple measures including: setting minimum standards, enabling mechanisms to share resources and identify best practices, and funding and financing or incentivising outcomes at a local level. This lesson is particularly relevant given our recommendations for eligibility services to be determined by need rather than by visa subclass.

9.5.86. In the OECD's review of lessons to be learnt from integration policies, the OECD recommends that policies to disperse people through a community should include employment-

¹⁰⁷ Ott, 27–38. !

¹⁰⁸ Anne-Sophie Schmidt and Thomas Liebig, *Making Integration Work - Refugees and Others in Need of \$ Protection* (Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), 28 January 2016) !

<http://www.oecd.org/migration/making-integration-work-humanitarian-migrants-9789264251236-en.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ Schmidt and Liebig, 56. !

related considerations in the decision-making. Examples of this include Sweden, which systematically informs those recognised as refugees of job opportunities and uses public employment offices to match them to an appropriate locality. In New Zealand's new settlement policy, where there is a choice between resettlement areas where there are ethnic or family links, employment conditions are factored in. Norway is developing a fast-track skills assessment procedure to match people's professional profiles with labour markets.

Recommendation 18

The Australian Government should foster further research into settlement outcomes for humanitarian migrants, building on existing research, combining qualitative and quantitative data, and addressing identified gaps in research.

10. Asylum policies and settlement

10.1. Asylum policies designed to prevent integration

10.1.1. A key lesson identified in international best practice is that best practice in integrating resettled refugees should also apply to those seeking asylum. While Australia's suite of settlement services and framework for resettling refugees is world-class, Australia's asylum policies and practices contradict everything we know about what makes good resettlement. These asylum policies have meant that thousands of people suffer needlessly from prolonged and indefinite immigration detention, years of limbo while claims are processed, and inconsistent and ever-changing policies designed to impede their ability to settle.

10.1.2. The Australian Government has developed a suite of asylum policies that is expressly designed to prevent integration. These include policies:

- to transfer people to offshore processing centres and prevent them from entering Australia
- that mandate prolonged and indefinite detention
- that keep people in fear of returning to detention, including through the cancellation of visas and the Code of Behaviour discussed in section 4
- that keep people in limbo waiting for their claims to be assessed
- that keep people from working legally
- that keep people from being able to study
- that prevent access to settlement services available to other refugees, including limited access to AMEP and to much-needed mental health services
- that limit their ability to access appropriate employment assistance
- that ensure that, for those who arrive by boat, protection is only temporary and citizenship is never possible, and
- that prevent people from reuniting with families overseas or even visiting them.

10.1.3. This is a perfect recipe for alienation and marginalisation. This is so even though most people who come by boat have been recognised as refugees, and will go on to live in Australia for their foreseeable future. Instead of protecting and seeking to integrate them, Australia continues to demonise them as 'illegal' and deliberately frustrate their ability ever to find safety and hope in Australia.

10.1.4. RCOA examined these issues in detail two publications in 2015, drawing on the voices of those affected by these policies.¹¹⁰ Here we briefly focus on the waste of human potential and the effect of temporary protection.

10.2. Wasted human potential

10.2.5. Over the past decade, RCOA and our members have continually expressed concern about the waste of human potential resulting from detention, denying people seeking asylum the chance to work or study, and keeping them in limbo without access to a fair process for claiming protection.

¹¹⁰ Refugee Council of Australia, 'A Place to Call Home'; Refugee Council of Australia, 'Eroding Our Identity'.

10.2.6. It defies logic to deny people already in Australia the right to work, the right to study, and access to an efficient and robust system to determine their protection claims. Instead, the Australian Government has forced them to rely on income support or locked them up in closed detention, at great cost to both their mental health and to the Australian people. Many people seeking asylum in Australia are highly skilled and can contribute significantly to our economy and society. As one community member told us:

the Government is paying to detain asylum seekers and to implement offshore processing and is paying Centrelink when they could save money by allowing people to work and release people into the community. Refugees have skills and talents that are being wasted.

10.2.7. 11. Even though many people seeking asylum have been released from detention and granted work rights, they still do not have access to supports like intensive case work, English language tuition, and targeted employment support. The lack of English and further education opportunities for people seeking asylum is particularly counterproductive: most people seeking asylum have been in Australia for over four years, many much longer, and they have not had access to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

10.2.8. Many people seeking asylum have told us about their keen desire to improve their English and to undertake further education so they can contribute to Australia. However, the denial of subsidies for people seeking asylum and refugees who arrived by boat effectively prevents them from undertaking further education.¹¹¹ As one person told us:

I want to be a psychologist. I self-studied this. I've been sitting here for 18 months. I can hardly pay the rent and eat. We have no right to education. I can't study English, I feel isolated from the community.

10.2.9. 13. The loss to the Australian community through the denial of these basic rights is highlighted by the comments of one young person:

I lost my dad, I lost my brother and I couldn't stay anymore. I came to be safe here. I came here in 2012, I'm not allowed to work, there are no funds for me to study. It's not just me, it's all asylum seekers. I am involved in many organisations to raise awareness about what is happening. When I arrived, I was 17. Imagine if you are 17 and you are not allowed to go to school. Now I'm almost 20. The best years of my life are gone. When can I go to school? When can I go to college? When can I have my education?

In the circumstances in which I'm living, do you think I will be safe? You can't be sustained, you just stay home all day and do nothing, just keep worrying. Your family is not safe at all ... There are 30,000 people in my circumstances, staying home all day and doing nothing. I escaped from my country because I couldn't go to school. The only thing I wished to have was a better life, a safe life, to be educated and I can't have that. 18.

10.3. Temporary protection and settlement

10.3.10. The reinstatement of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and the creation of Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) for people fleeing persecution has meant that even when people are found to need protection, they are not afforded the security that permanent safety offers. People on TPVs and SHEVs will never be able to truly call Australia home. The TPV system means not only that a person must re-apply every few years and fear being returned to danger but also that the settlement supports available to other refugees who arrived via the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and other permanent residents are not available to them. People may live here for decades or even their entire lives but will not have access to the same supports and opportunities as other residents and citizens.

¹¹¹ Refugee Council of Australia, 'Barriers to Education'.

10.3.11. The chances of success are made even smaller by the extremely short time that service providers have to transition people once they get a visa. When that happens, service providers have to exit them (most often within mere days) from the service that has been supporting them, while helping them to fill out the extensive paperwork and giving them a lot of new information.

10.3.12. There is considerable evidence that temporary protection for refugees is harmful and has a compounding negative impact on people lives and ability to settle. A study in 2006 comparing the mental health of refugees with temporary versus permanent protection visas found that while the levels of pre-migration trauma of both groups were not significantly different, the proportion of people holding TPVs who experienced difficulties exceeded that of permanent Protection visa holders on all items assessed.¹¹² The checklist items of unemployment, insufficient money to buy food, pay rent and buy basic necessities and bad working conditions were endorsed by over 90% of those on temporary protection visas compared to 10% to 13% of those holding permanent visas. Communication difficulties were reported by 100% of TPV holders compared to 54% of those with permanent visas and over 90% of TPV holders reported loneliness and boredom, and isolation, compared to 3% (loneliness and boredom) and 15% (isolation) for those on permanent visas. Moreover, TPV status was by far the greatest predictor of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms, accounting for 68% of the variance. The authors of the study concluded:

Our study provides consistent evidence that the migration trajectory experienced by TPV holders ... is accompanied by persisting and wide-ranging mental health problems and associated disability.¹¹³

10.3.13. As one counsellor with firsthand experience of supporting people on temporary visas told RCOA:

I have seen the first-hand impacts of TPVs on people and people being left in limbo. I am really concerned about what we are doing to a whole population of people. We are creating a long-term negative legacy. I can't work effectively in an environment where people are uncertain and where they are threatened every day. The main premise for trauma treatment is safety, security, attachment, belonging and connection but that is not available. People are suffering. We are creating secondary trauma which will not be possible to treat. Economically, we are setting ourselves back. If we are detaining people and confining people to TPVs, we are creating more problems with mental health in the long term.

10.3.14. TPVs have found to be

- **Discriminatory and hinder settlement:** TPVs do not allow refugees to access the full range of services that are necessary for their successful settlement in Australia. Limited entitlements for and access to essential services prevent refugees from actively participating in the Australian community and increase the likelihood of them becoming stuck in a cycle of dependence. TPV restrictions also compound psychological strains of past trauma. Restrictions to healthcare, training and employment, accommodation and family reunion cause additional psychiatric issues that multiply the effects of prior suffering.
- **The cause of uncertainty and tension:** Temporary status promotes feelings of uncertainty and insecurity and tensions within communities. The constant threat associated with the re-evaluation of refugee status makes settlement intrinsically difficult for TPV holders
- **Damaging to families:** The denial of family reunion and travel rights is punitive and causes negative psychological effects. TPV holders have expressed concerns that restrictions on travel and family reunion are particularly designed as punishment. Studies have shown this distress was a leading cause of psychological problems among TPV holders.

¹¹² Shakeh Momartin et al, 'A Comparison of the Mental Health of Refugees with Temporary versus Permanent Protection Visas' (2006) 185(7) *Medical Journal of Australia*
<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2006/185/7/comparison-mental-health-refugees-temporary-versus-permanent-protection-visas?inline=true>.

¹¹³ Momartin et al, 360.

10.3.15. Temporary protection deliberately the potential that we and many of our members have seen in people seeking asylum. As one support worker told us:

If people are allowed to stay, I can see great potential. The unaccompanied children are an impressive group of young people – young and as keen as mustard to settle and contribute. If they are allowed to stay, it will be a very positive story for Australia.

10.3.16. The waste of potential is especially counterproductive for ensuring the integration of young people seeking asylum, as is illustrated by the following two case studies.

Case study: Hamid, a child separated from his parents

Hamid arrived in Australia at the age of 16 and was placed in immigration detention. Before fleeing his native Afghanistan. Hamid had been tortured. The trauma of his experience and the separation from his parents contributed to Hamid's deteriorating mental health. After spending close to two years in detention, Hamid was released into the community receiving intensive casework support and lived in a share house with other unaccompanied minors under the responsibility of a full-time carer. Turning 18, Hamid was informed he would be placed on a Bridging Visa that would allow him to stay in the community with work rights. Hamid was exited from the share house he had lived in since his release from detention and the intensive casework and support provided to him over a six-week period. During this time Hamid was referred to services that would assist him in finding employment and housing. At age 20, Hamid struggles with the torture he endured, the impact of his detention and ongoing separation from his family. Hamid has not been able to secure ongoing work and is at risk of homeless. Hamid faces more uncertainty as he awaits the decision of his protection claim.

Case study: Joe, unable to finish school and his potential stolen from him

Joe was living in closed detention for months before he was released into community detention for unaccompanied children and was then completing his VCE. At the end of August, Joe turned 18, at which point funding for his education ceased. Although Joe was able to complete Term 3, the school was unable to have him continue without funding support into Term 4. This change significantly impacted on Joe's day to day wellbeing. The option of transitioning in to the few hours per week of English support at the local community group did not appeal to him as he was previously completing advanced subjects at school, and reported that his English is too advanced to return to English as Another Language classes. Joe reported feeling disconnected, isolated and that his motivation to maintain a daily routine was minimal, often sleeping for significant hours during the day, and keeping to himself.

10.3.17. This inquiry's terms of references require it to examine how to improve the settlement outcomes of migrants. People seeking asylum should be included in this examination. If people live in Australia, it is of benefit to them and to Australian society to ensure they are supported and included as they adjust to a new life. Even if the Australian Government does not approve of their method of entry, it is fundamentally counterproductive to deliberately exclude and marginalise people within our society. Our asylum policies are doing just that, punishing people who need protection. The political support for these policies also send a broader message to refugee and migrant communities that our presence here is conditional, and that those born elsewhere are guests to be tolerated, rather than embraced.

Recommendation 19

The Australian Government should repeal the laws and reverse the policies that effectively exclude people seeking asylum from settling in Australia, including temporary protection visas.

11. Conclusion

11.1.1. Over the past decades, Australia has built a society that welcomes people from different cultures and helps them flourish. Over a quarter of people in Australia were born elsewhere, one of the highest rates in the world, and we have one of the highest immigration rates in the world. Despite all the challenges of integration, Australia has done a remarkably good job of it. We are an affluent, highly diverse, and peaceful society. We have gained so much from those who have come here to share our boundless plains.

11.1.2. Yet the trend of government policies in recent years has been steadily to undermine the foundations of our success. Policies punishing people seeking asylum are simply the most extreme of those policies. We see evidence of this everywhere, with continual strengthening of character tests and limitations on citizenship, with the undermining of crucial protections against racial discrimination in the name of freedom of speech, and most visibly with the increasingly toxic and inflammatory public and political debate over migration. This inquiry is part of a wider political context in which the Australian Government is flagging the possibility of deporting children who have grown up in Australia, because a handful of people have committed crimes.

11.1.3. The Refugee Council of Australia and its members do not suggest that those who have committed crimes should not be punished by the law. What we do say is that they should be punished by the law in the same way as anyone else, consistent with the fundamental principle of equality before the law and the human right against discrimination. Further, their punishment, and their vilification by the media and the public, needs to be placed in context, recognising all that they and their families have been through to get here, and all the challenges they have suffered since.

11.1.4. As the Vietnamese community reminded us, we have been here before, but last time we had the benefit of bipartisan political leadership which celebrated diversity and emphasised the importance of welcoming new arrivals. In an environment where racism and discrimination appears to be supported by some politicians and those abroad, it should not surprise any of us that some young people from culturally different backgrounds feel isolated and unwelcome. That is why we say that the most important outcome of this Inquiry would be a reaffirmation of the principles that have helped us succeed so far as a country—principles that see those who come here not first and foremost as migrants valuable for our labour, but as Australians.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 List of RCOA's organisational members by type

Table 1: List of RCOA members providing HSS services

RCOA members providing HSS services	State
Access Community Services Ltd	QLD
AMES Australia	VIC
Anglicare North Coast	NSW
Auburn Diversity Services Inc	NSW
Australian Migrant Resource Centre	NSW
Ballarat Community Health	VIC
Bendigo Community Health Services	VIC
Catholiccare Tasmania	TAS
Centacare Cairns	QLD
Communicare	WA
Diversitat	VIC
Kildonan Uniting Care	VIC
Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre	NSW
Maccarthur Diversity Services Initiative	NSW
Melaleuca Refugee Centre	NT
Metro Assist	NSW
Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc	WA
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT Inc	ACT
Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tasmania)	TAS
Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga	NSW
Multicultural Development Association Ltd	QLD
New Hope Foundation	VIC
Settlement Services International	NSW
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre	VIC
St Vincent de Paul Refugee Support Services	NSW
St Vincent de Paul Society Refugee and Migrant Committee (WA)	WA
Sydney Multicultural Community Services	NSW
SydWest Multicultural Services Inc	NSW
Townsville Multicultural Support Group	QLD

Table 2: List of RCOA members providing CCS services

RCOA members providing CCS	State
Access Community Services Ltd	QLD
AMES Australia	VIC
Anglicare North Coast	NSW
Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors	WA
Australian Migrant Resource Centre	NSW
Australian Refugee Association	SA
Baptist Care Australia	
Centre for Multicultural Youth	VIC
Communicare	WA
Companion House	ACT
Core Community Service	NSW
Diversitat	VIC
Illawarra Multicultural Services	NSW
Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre	NSW
Maccarthur Diversity Services Initiative	NSW
Metro Assist	NSW
Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tasmania)	TAS
Northern Settlement Services	NSW
Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre	VIC
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre	VIC
Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Services	SA
SydWest Multicultural Services Inc	NSW

Table 3: List of RCOA members with SGP funding

Note: This list has been identified through cross-matching with the Department of Social Services' grants directory, and may be incomplete.

RCOA members providing SGP services	State
Access Community Services Ltd	QLD
Advance Diversity Services	VIC
Anglicare Refugee and Migrant Settlement Services	NT
Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors	WA
Assyrian Australian Association	NSW
Australian Migrant Resource Centre	NSW
Australian Refugee Association	SA
Ballarat Community Health	VIC
Bendigo Community Health Services	VIC
Brotherhood of St Laurence, Multicultural Communities Team	VIC
Catholiccare Tasmania	TAS
Centacare Cairns	QLD
Centacare Wagga Wagga	NSW
Centre for Multicultural Youth	VIC
Centrecare	WA

RCOA members providing SGP services	State
Communicare	WA
Diversitat	VIC
Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka	WA
Illawarra Multicultural Services	NSW
Inala Community House	QLD
ISHAR Multicultural Women's Health Centre	WA
Jesuit Social Services	VIC
Lutheran Community Care South Australia	SA
Mercy Community Services	QLD
Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc	WA
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT Inc	ACT
Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tasmania)	TAS
Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania)	TAS
Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga	NSW
Multicultural Development Association Ltd	QLD
Multicultural Services Centre of WA	WA
Multilink Community Services Inc	QLD
New Hope Foundation	VIC
Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma	QLD
Refugees and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)	QLD
Save the Children	VIC
Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors	NSW
Settlement Services International	NSW
Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre	VIC
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre	VIC
St Vincent de Paul Refugee Support Services	NSW
Townsville Multicultural Support Group	QLD
Wimmera Development Association (Wimmera Settlement Association)	VIC
Women's Health in the South East	VIC
Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc	VIC

Table 4: Other members of RCOA

Act for Peace
ActionAid Australia
Adventist Development and Relief Agency of Australia Ltd (ADRA Australia Ltd)
Advocacy for Oromia Association in Victoria
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia
Aireys Inlet Rural Australians for Refugees
Amnesty International Australia Refugee Team
Anglican Diocese of Adelaide
Anglicare Refugee Services
Armidale Rural Australians for Refugees
Armidale Sanctuary
Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Health
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

Asylum Seekers Centre
Australia for UNHCR
Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
Australian Council For International Development
Australian Council of Trade Unions
Australian Education Union (Federal Office)
Australian Education Union New South Wales Teachers Federation Branch
Australian Karen Foundation
Australian Karen Organisation Inc
Australian National Committee on Refugee Women
Australian Red Cross (Migration Support and Services Hub)
B'nai B'rith Australia/New Zealand
Baptcare (Sanctuary)
Baptistcare Incorporated
Barnabas Relief Education and Development
Bhutanese Australian Association of South Australia
Bhutanese Organisation In Australia Inc
Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group
Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation
Cabrini Health
Canberra Refugee Support Inc
Caritas Australia
Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba, Social Justice Commission
Catholic Education Office Wollongong
Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Archdiocese of Brisbane
Catholic Religious Australia
Catholics in Coalition for Justice & Peace
Centacare Catholic Family Services SA
Central Victorian Refugee Support Network
Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees
ChilOut
Coexistence Inc.
cohealth
Compass Housing Services Queensland
Coptic International Union Ltd
Eagle Arts & Vocational College
Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education
Ethnoconnect
Executive Council of Australian Jewry
Familycare
Fitzroy Learning Network
Foundation House
Friends of HEAL Foundation
God's Dwelling Place Bethany City Church Inc
House of Welcome
Immigrant Women's Speakout
Immigration Advice and Rights Centre

Indigo Foundation
International Commission of Jurists, Australian Section
International Society for Human Rights Australia Inc
Jesuit Refugee Service
Jesuran Wellness Centre
Josephite Community Aid
Justice and Freedom for Ceylon Tamils
Justice for Refugees SA
Lentara Uniting Care
Life Support Ministries
Life Without Barriers
Life Without Barriers
Life Without Barriers
Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
Loreto Sisters
Marist Sisters
Marist Youth Care
Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office
Mercy Works Ltd
Mission and Ministry Unit, Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia PNG
Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group
Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency
Multicultural Council of Tasmania
Multicultural NSW
Multicultural Youth Affairs Network NSW
Muslims Australia - Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
NSW Council for Civil Liberties
Occupational Opportunities for Refugees & Asylum Seekers Inc
Organisation for Support to underprivileged Children and Women of Afghanistan, Inc
Oromia Support Group in Australia
Overseas Services to Survivors of Torture & Trauma
Oxfam Australia
Pax Christi Australia (NSW)
Pratt Foundation
Queanbeyan Rural Australians for Refugees
Refugee Advice and Casework Service
Refugee Connect
Refugee Health Service
Refugee Legal
Salvation Army
Salvos Legal Humanitarian
Sanctuary Australia Foundation
SCALES Community Legal Centre
Sisters of Charity of Australia
Sisters of the Good Samaritan NSW
St Bede's Social Justice Group
St George Youth Services
St James' Church, King St, Sydney

St Vincent de Paul Refugee Support Services
Stand Up
Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families
Sudanese Online Research Association & SAIL
TAFE Queensland English Language and Literacy Services
The Humanitarian Group
The Mercy Foundation
The Multicultural Network
The Tasmania Opportunity
Toowoomba Refugee and Migrant Support
Unitarian Church of South Australia
Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod
Uniting Church of Australia WA Synod Social Justice Unit
UnitingJustice Australia
UTS Art Gallery
UTS Faculty of Law
Valerio Daniel de Simoni Association Inc
Victorian Arabic Social Services
Waverley Council
Welcome to Australia
West Wagga San Isidore Refugee Committee
Western Region Ethnic Communities Council
Whittlesea Community Connections

Appendix 2 List of RCOA's previous recommendations regarding settlement by policy area, 2009-2016

Citizenship	
The Australian Government should: (a) improve its communication to those affected by delays, including explaining to those affected the reason for the delays; and expedite processing of citizenship applications as a matter of urgency.	Australia's Response to a World in Crisis' (2016)
RCOA recommends that the Minister for Immigration clarify if there has been a policy change in regard to citizenship applications for refugees with a permanent visa, specifically in relation to those who arrive by boat.	Delays in Citizenship Applications for Permanent Refugee Visa Holders (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Minister for Immigration take steps to process the citizenship applications of refugees immediately, or otherwise clarify the specific reasons for the delay to each individual applicant.	Delays in Citizenship Applications for Permanent Refugee Visa Holders (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Minister for Immigration ensure that those who have a permanent physical or mental incapacity which means they are not capable of understanding the nature of their application be exempt from the citizenship test, and that the Department accept professional medical reports attesting to this.	Delays in Citizenship Applications for Permanent Refugee Visa Holders (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Minister for Immigration make every effort to expedite citizenship application and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs for applications by refugees and humanitarian arrivals, as required under Article 34 of the Refugee Convention.	Delays in Citizenship Applications for Permanent Refugee Visa Holders (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government: (a) Consider waiving the requirement to complete the Australian Citizenship Test for refugee and humanitarian entrants and stateless people. (b) Address the difficulties faced by people with limited literacy or English Language skills in completing the citizenship test through providing alternative options such as a spoken or test papers in different languages.	Delays in Citizenship Applications for Permanent Refugee Visa Holders (2015)

English language learning	
RCOA recommends that the Department consider options to employ bi-cultural teachers and teachers' aides, especially for the lower level English classes.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that more work be done with refugee community organisations to better improve the design and delivery of the AMEP, and that refugee community organisations be recognised for the work they already do in this area through grants and other support options.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the 510 hour limit for AMEP be removed and replaced a needs based individual assessment.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that more flexibility be given to teachers to teach according to the needs to of the students, by reducing the number of assessments and providing more flexibility in the curriculum.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that a nationwide system be introduced for people to leave the AMEP program if needed and return at a later date to complete the reminder of their hours.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that asylum seekers and those granted TPVs and SHEVs be given full access to the AMEP.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the AMEP remain a settlement focused program, in which employment skills is one of several outcomes. Furthermore, AMEP should maintain its strong connections with other settlement programs, including HSS and Settlement Grants.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the AMEP program be managed under the Department of Social Services.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that a special per capita refugee youth loading be available to AMEP providers to be able to offer targeted youth-specific courses based on documented best practice.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends investment in bridging programs to support young people in their transition from AMEP to further education or employment.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that mentor and volunteer activities be incorporated into the AMEP to increase one-on-one support for students.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends the Department consider options for work placement and volunteer opportunities to assist students to undertake experiential education.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that free childcare facilities be provided and these arrangements cover the time it takes for parents to travel to and from classes. Furthermore, RCOA recommends that AMEP classes be flexible in their start and finish times to suit the needs of parents with children in school.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that funding be made available to provide professional carers to those with caring responsibilities in order to provide respite for the family member to attend the AMEP.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that JSA providers be better informed about AMEP and that JSA clients not be instructed to attend other courses until they have completed their 510 hours of AMEP.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that adequate funding be provided to ensure that AMEP counsellors are able to offer sufficient support to every student.	Submission to the Adult Migrant English Program evaluation program (2014)
RCOA recommends that a special per capita refugee youth loading be available to AMEP providers to be able to offer targeted youth-specific courses based on documented best practice, and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship refine criteria for its allocation and use to inform future tender specifications and accountability audits	Finding the Right Time and Place: Exploring post compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW (2010)
RCOA recommends that the provision of childcare be incorporated into the new AMEP contracts to enable successful tenderers to provide accessible childcare facilities.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)

English language learning	
RCOA recommends that AMEP contractors in regional areas where there are no Intensive English Centres be funded to introduce flexible models of English language provision in school-based settings for young people.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)
RCOA recommends that the NSW Department of Education explore the possibility of establishing an additional senior IEC campus in NSW based on a similar model to that of Bankstown IEC and located in an area of high refugee settlement	Finding the Right Time and Place: Exploring post compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW (2010)

Employment and employment services	
The Australian Government should: (a) ensure adequate support and funding for the use of interpreters and bilingual caseworkers; review the process for assessing employment streams to ensure the appropriate identification and weighting of disadvantages experienced by refugee and humanitarian entrants; require Jobactive providers to ensure staff are trained in cultural competency, including in the use of interpreters and cross-cultural communication, and ensure that this requirement is independently monitored or audited; review the effectiveness of employment services in meeting the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants with a view to encouraging the improvement of employment outcomes for people seeking asylum and refugees; and restore and increase funding to employment providers with expertise in working with refugee and humanitarian entrants.	Australia's Response to a World in Crisis (2016)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government consider developing a national specialist employment service for people of refugee backgrounds and asylum seekers, in partnership with existing settlement service providers.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government review the effectiveness of employment services in meeting the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants, including evaluating how Jobactive providers are working with other local employment initiatives targeting these groups.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
RCOA recommends that adequate support and funding be allocated for the use of interpreters and bilingual caseworkers to facilitate communication with Jobactive clients from non-English speaking backgrounds.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
RCOA recommends that all Jobactive providers, and other officers who come in contact with people from refugee backgrounds, be required to undertake cultural competency training, including training in the use of interpreters and cross-cultural communication.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
RCOA recommends that an independent body undertake a cultural competency audit of Jobactive services as part of the Australian Government's commitment to Access and Equity.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
RCOA recommends that a comprehensive review of the Job Seeker Classification Instrument and the Jobactive streams be undertaken to ensure that employment disadvantages for refugee and humanitarian entrants are appropriately identified and weighted when streaming clients for Jobactive services.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
RCOA recommends that the Federal Government investigate ways in which Jobactive providers can be encouraged to improve employment outcomes for asylum seekers and people from refugee backgrounds, such as through revised incentives and benchmarks.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns (2016)
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RCOA recommends that the Federal Government investigate ways in which Jobactive providers can be encouraged to improve employment outcomes for asylum seekers and people from refugee backgrounds, such as through revised incentives and benchmarks.	Jobactive: Refugee Community and Service Provider Concerns. (2016)
RCOA recommends that DEEWR and DIAC work together to strengthen career guidance and pathways planning to refugee and humanitarian entrants and strengthen the relationship between Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS), the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and JSA providers at both a service provision and policy level.	Job Services Australia: Refugee Community and Service Provider Views (2012)
RCOA recommends that DIAC and DEEWR develop a national refugee employment strategy to map out settlement pathways and supports that will lead to more sustainable and meaningful employment outcomes for refugee and humanitarian entrants.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)
RCOA recommends that DIAC and DEEWR establish a fund to provide subsidies to assist refugee entrants undertaking bridging courses to have overseas qualifications recognised.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)
RCOA recommends that DEEWR undertake a review of NEIS and its accessibility to people with lower literacy levels and develop targeted programs to assist refugee entrants in setting up small businesses.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)
RCOA recommends that DEEWR fund research into the accessibility of apprenticeships to young people from refugee backgrounds with the view to developing targeted apprenticeship initiatives.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)
RCOA recommends that the DIAC and DEEWR develop a national refugee employment strategy to map out settlement pathways and supports that will lead to more sustainable employment outcomes for refugee and humanitarian entrants.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA recommends that DEEWR, as part of its ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the new Job Services Australia (JSA) model, review its effectiveness in meeting the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants, including evaluating how JSA providers are working with local employment initiatives targeting refugee entrants and how to better utilise the expertise of specialist JSA providers.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA welcomes the re-introduction of the Innovation Fund as part of Job Services Australia model, and calls on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to ensure that the Innovation Fund Panel includes sufficient representation of organisations with specialist expertise in assisting refugee and humanitarian entrants.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA recommends a greater investment by both private and public funding sources of Intermediate Labour Market programs that provide a bridge for refugee and humanitarian entrants into longer term employment.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA recommends greater investment in social enterprise initiatives that bring together services and refugee and humanitarian entrants and their communities and have a focus on employment outcomes.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA recommends DEEWR establishing an incentive scheme to encourage and support employers to provide traineeships and apprenticeships for refugee and humanitarian entrants, including and particularly through Federal and State public services.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA recommends a proactive communications campaign promoting the business benefits of cultural diversity.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)
RCOA recommends the further promotion of national Diversity Awards that help recognise employers who take initiative.	What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)

Education and training	
Replace age-based determination for school level entry with a merit or skills-based measure.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Increase provision of English language classes in schools.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Create opportunities for young people from refugee backgrounds to engage in dialogue with teachers, school administrators, and educational forums to present their experiences and challenge the existing negative narratives around young refugees.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Create opportunities for further education for refugee young people by for example, subsidising school fees and increasing the number of scholarships.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Remove restrictions to asylum seeker access to further education beyond the age of 18 years.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Engage interpreters and culturally sensitive teachers' aides to support students and their families during orientation to schools.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
RCOA recommends that the Federal Government grant people seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas access to Commonwealth Supported Places and high education loan scheme.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the State Governments grant people seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas access concession rates for TAFE and other vocational courses.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Federal Government allow TPV and SHEV holders to receive income support under standard programs, to ensure that they are not excluded from higher education.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Federal Government provide people seeking asylum access to 510 AMEP English Language hours and the SEE program.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Federal and State Governments ensure consistency in enrolment policies so that young people seeking asylum and refugees on TPVs and SHEVs are able to complete secondary school, up to the age of 21.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Federal Government allow students in secondary school access to additional financial support for school until they complete their final year.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Federal and State Governments ensure complete access to traineeships and apprenticeships for people seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas, including access to incentive programs and loan schemes.	Barriers to Education for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees on Temporary Visas (2015)
RCOA recommends that the NSW Department of Education conduct a review of the capacity of schools to work collaboratively with vocational education and training providers and community services	Finding the Right Time and Place: Exploring post compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW (2010)
RCOA recommends that Federal and State education departments work in partnership to investigate education provision for refugee entrants by state, including monitoring and evaluating the impact of the National Education Agreement on refugee and humanitarian students, and develop a National Refugee Education Policy to ensure a consistent level of education provision across all states and territories, including the coordination and resourcing of Homework Support for refugee and migrant students.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions
RCOA recommends that state and territory education departments increase funding and support for Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs targeting students from refugee backgrounds.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions
RCOA recommends that state and territory education departments fund appropriate models based on the River Nile Learning Centre for young mothers from refugee backgrounds to remain engaged in education.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions
RCOA recommends that the Australian Human Rights Commission, state and territory anti-discrimination bodies and Ombudsman services participate in post-arrival settlement	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current

Education and training	
education processes, including in regional and rural areas where access to advice on discrimination matters may be limited.	challenges and future directions (2010)

Disability and settlement services	
The Australian Government should: (a) ensure settlement agencies are given adequate and timely information about the health and disabilities of people being resettled; fund settlement agencies to provide support to newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants with disabilities; ensure that refugee and humanitarian entrants gain access to disability services, occupational therapists, specialist equipment and other required medical services in a timely way; and ensure that refugees with a disability who are resettled to Australia are able to receive access to Complex Case Support, immediate access to relevant medical and disability specialists and adequate accommodation on arrival.	Australia's Response to a World in Crisis (2016)

Health	
Mental health service providers engage across the broader community to break down stigma and shame surrounding mental health.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Engage bicultural youth workers to build awareness and provide support to newly arrived youth accessing mental health services.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
RCOA recommends that the Department of Health increase funding for targeted and culturally sensitive mental health programs for refugee communities.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-2015: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government work with states and healthcare providers, drawing on existing best practice, to develop specialist refugee health services in all states and territories able to deliver consistent and culturally appropriate health assessments soon after arrival, as well as systems to better coordinate ongoing care. Such strategies could include the establishment of more Refugee Health Clinics with interpreters on site in order to address the specific needs of refugee entrants.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends that national benchmarks be established for health service provision for newly arrived refugee entrants, including the development of a standardised health screening tool and full immunisation services.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends that DIAC work collaboratively with all IHSS service providers to ensure a minimum level of health support for all refugee entrants, including a comprehensive health assessment on arrival and appropriate recording of existing health conditions identified during pre-departure health checks.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)

Housing	
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government work with the state, territory and local governments explore strategies to increase the availability of affordable housing stock, such as direct housing development, financial incentives, community and private sector partnerships and alternative social housing models.	The Home Stretch: Challenges and Alternatives in Sustainable Housing for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government and state/territory governments establish additional financial support programs (such as rental subsidies and bond loans) for people on low incomes.	The Home Stretch: Challenges and Alternatives in Sustainable Housing for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government, through the Department of Social Services, provide funding to support the delivery of professional development and	The Home Stretch: Challenges and Alternatives in Sustainable Housing

Housing	
training opportunities for real estate agents, specialist housing and homelessness services and other housing providers, to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of asylum seekers and people from refugee backgrounds.	for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government provide additional funding under the SGP and ASAS/CAS programs for specialist housing workers to provide more intensive support with housing issues.	The Home Stretch: Challenges and Alternatives in Sustainable Housing for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government and state/territory governments develop partnerships with refugee communities to support their role in addressing settlement issues and challenges, including those related to housing.	The Home Stretch: Challenges and Alternatives in Sustainable Housing for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (2014)
RCOA recommends that DIAC, in consultation with FaHCSIA and State agencies, coordinate a comprehensive housing strategy to address the specific needs of refugee entrants.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends that DIAC explore options for developing a partnership with FaHCSIA to ensure that some of the new social housing funding announced in 2009 benefits refugee entrants, particularly those with large families.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends that greater resources be allocated to IHSS and SGP providers for housing support services to reflect current challenges in accessing affordable housing, and that these services be extended to all clients on a needs basis.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends DIAC work with the Real Estate Institute of Australia on improving housing solutions for refugee entrants through awareness-raising and incentives such as national or state/territory awards recognising good practice.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)

Media, community education and public perceptions	
DIAC, the Australian Government and politicians take on a more proactive role in engaging with the media on asylum and refugees issues, with the development of a Government communications strategy to support the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-2012: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2012)
The Australian Government examine Amnesty International Australia's Let's Change the Conversation campaign and consider implementing similar training and education opportunities.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-2012: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2012)
The Government reinstitute funding for the Australian Human Rights Commission for the provision of information and educational materials related to asylum seekers, refugees and human rights.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-2012: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2012)
Specific refugee-related components be included for consideration in the development of the national curriculum.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-2012: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2012)
DIAC consider funding (through the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program or similar programs) the development of a NGO-coordinated national training and media strategy to improve the quality of reportage on refugee and asylum seeker issues and enable refugees and the organisations working with them to engage with the media and the Australian public.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-2012: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2012)
That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and RCOA develop a strategy to support and promote the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, considering options for	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current

Media, community education and public perceptions	
improving public information, developing specific campaigns and equipping organisations and individuals to enhance their work in community education.	challenges and future directions (2010)
RCOA advocates for the development of local initiatives and programs to increase the opportunities for former refugees and the wider community to have meaningful and regular interaction.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2010)

Orientation and community education	
RCOA recommends that the information on family reunion opportunities provided to refugees prior to resettlement in Australia be reviewed to ensure its accuracy.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that legal and financial education for newly-arrived refugee entrants be enhanced	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)

Regional and rural settlement	
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government develop a new regional settlement strategy, assessing potential and established regional areas as settlement locations, working with regional providers to plan and prepare for new humanitarian settlers, and ensuring sufficient numbers of referrals are made within each intake year to retain capacity and momentum in regional settlement locations.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government develop a new regional settlement strategy, assessing potential and established regional areas as settlement locations, working with regional providers to plan and prepare for new humanitarian settlers, and ensuring sufficient numbers of referrals are made within each intake year to retain capacity and momentum in regional settlement locations.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government develop a new regional settlement strategy, assessing potential and established regional areas as settlement locations, working with regional providers to plan and prepare for new humanitarian settlers, and ensuring sufficient numbers of referrals are made within each intake year to retain capacity and momentum in regional settlement locations.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-2015: Community views on current challenges and future directions. (2013)

The role of refugee communities in settlement	
Funding bodies consider ways to support refugee communities to build viable organisational structures.	The Strength Within: The Role of Refugee Community Organisations in Settlement (2014)
Local, State and federal government policy-makers consider ways of critically engaging refugee community leaders in decision-making forums.	The Strength Within: The Role of Refugee Community Organisations in Settlement (2014)
Capacity building initiatives be considered that focus on refugee community leaders and supporting the development of robust community structures.	The Strength Within: The Role of Refugee Community Organisations in Settlement (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government recognise the important role played by refugee community organisations in the settlement process through providing adequate funding to support their work with new arrivals	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the inclusion of people from refugee backgrounds in the design and delivery of on-arrival services be embedded within the HSS and CCS programs.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)

The role of refugee communities in settlement	
RCOA recommends that, in partnership with other HSS providers, a model similar to the AMES Community Guides program be implemented in other HSS contract regions.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)

Settlement services	
RCOA recommends an increase in targeted services for refugee young people, including more refugee youth- and culturally specific counselling and support services.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Engage young people in genuine collaboration to assist them to shape and improve programs aimed at refugee youth.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Engage young people in workings towards the elimination of racism, discrimination and prejudice through awareness-raising by youth and their new communities, and information sharing about refugee youth experiences.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Support young people to undertake community education by sharing their stories in order to contribute to public knowledge on refugee matters.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Provide increased support for young refugees arriving alone.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Ensure that changes to biographical data are accommodated, post-settlement.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Develop peer-to-peer educational programs within all detention centres accommodating young people, supported through relevant community organisations.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Ensure that funding social services is contracted in a manner that encourages young people to deliver programs, provide supports and develop skills and capacities in themselves.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Fund settlement services to deliver refugee youth-led programs, for example, post arrival orientation programs.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Engage in dialogue with young people from refugee backgrounds to hear their experiences and create opportunities to challenge the existing negative narratives around refugees.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Provide more platforms for young people to mentor newly arrived young refugees from similar backgrounds to provide advice, information and support.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Support and establish mentoring programs for parents and elders, to assist in understanding how young people are impacted by the challenges of settling into life in Australia.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Train and mentor young people from refugee backgrounds to become involved in community education and awareness building on refugee youth experiences and concerns.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Support young people to engage with social media to raise identified issues in a positive and proactive manner.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
Support young people to take up volunteering opportunities in the broader community and their own ethnic community.	Speaking Out: Voices of Young People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds (2016)
RCOA recommends that funding to the Settlement Grants Program be increased in proportion to projected increases in need resulting from the 2012-13 expansion of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and the reduced eligibility to Humanitarian Settlement Services for people granted Protection Visas.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-2015: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2015)
RCOA recommends that the Federal Government develop a plan for ensuring smooth transitions between services for asylum seekers funded by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and services for Refugee, SHP and Protection visa holders funded by	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-2015: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2015)

Settlement services	
the Department of Social Services (DSS), as well as transitions between settlement services and mainstream services funded within the DSS portfolio.	
RCOA recommends that all Special Humanitarian Program visa holders receive routine needs assessments during the initial period of settlement to ensure that they are receiving adequate on-arrival support.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the current time-limited eligibility period for settlement services be replaced with an individualised needs assessment process.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the Australian Government seek to ensure greater consistency in settlement patterns to ensure that quality on-arrival support services can be maintained across Australia.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that all Special Humanitarian Program visa holders receive routine needs assessments during the initial period of settlement to ensure that they are receiving adequate on-arrival support.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the current time-limited eligibility periods for the HSS and CCS program be replaced with an individualised needs-assessment process	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that longer-term contracts be granted for on-arrival settlement services where possible.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the size of HSS caseloads be managed in a manner which ensures that providers have sufficient time and resources to adequately support all clients.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the current competitive tendering approach to funding of on-arrival services be replaced with a grants-based approach, with a focus on encouraging partnerships and collaboration between different agencies.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that organisations contracted to deliver settlement services be required to demonstrate specific expertise in working with people from refugee backgrounds and an understanding of the needs of communities settling in their local area.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that all Protection Visa and Temporary Protection Visa holders be granted access to the HSS program on a needs basis.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that relatives of refugee and humanitarian visa holders arriving on family visas be granted access the HSS program on a needs basis.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that unaccompanied humanitarian minors who are turning 18 receive a comprehensive needs assessment and appropriate referrals to CCS or other forms of support as required.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that HSS providers consider developing peer community guides programs to provide specialised settlement support to young people.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that the HSS program include provisions for offering tailored support to large families and single clients.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support program (2014)
RCOA recommends that additional support arrangements for refugee and humanitarian entrants with disabilities be embedded in the HSS and CCS programs.	Submission to the review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and

Settlement services	
	Complex Case Support program (2014)
The Australian Government and all parties represented in the Australian Parliament take up the framework and reforms set out in FECCA's National Multicultural Agenda "Different But Equal".	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-2012: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2012)
RCOA recommends that there be uniform eligibility criteria, settlement service standards and measures of successful outcomes applied across the full network of services within the new framework, for all refugee and humanitarian entrants, irrespective of whether their visa was granted onshore or offshore or under a fully-funded or sponsored component of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends that the need for a whole-of-government approach to settlement be recognised, and that DIAC exercise leadership in developing the infrastructure to facilitate its implementation, including the establishment of relevant agreements and key relationships across state/territory and local tiers of government, as the foundation for further engagement by contracted service providers.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions(2011)
RCOA recommends that DIAC develop a strategy to enhance the supported engagement of ethnic community organisations in the provision of settlement services.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)

Sport and recreation	
RCOA recommends that agencies tailor sport programs to the specific needs of refugees.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies consult with their target communities when developing sport programs to serve their needs.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies adopt a flexible approach to program delivery.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies implement specific strategies to minimise or break down the barriers to participation faced by refugees.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies establish strong relationships with refugee individuals, their families and communities.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that sporting agencies establish partnerships with other agencies, particularly those which work directly with refugee communities.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies implement strategies for introducing refugees participation to sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies develop ongoing, sustainable sport programs for refugees.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies ensure all volunteers involved in program delivery are well-supported and understand the needs of refugee participation.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies adopt an organisational approach to the issue of increasing refugees' involvement in sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of

Sport and recreation	
	Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that agencies establish realistic expectations with regards to increasing refugees' involvement in sport and adopt appropriate methods of evaluation which look beyond traditional markers of success.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that the NSW government establish targeted, ongoing funding opportunities for programs which aim to increase the involvement of refugees in sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that the NSW government increase coordination between government agencies and the different levels of government, in relation to the issue of refugees' involvement in sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that the NSW government develop a targeted policy approach to the issue of refugees' involvement in sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that further research be conducted into the issue of refugee participation in physical recreation, as opposed to sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)
RCOA recommends that further research be conducted into the issue of adult refugee participation in sport.	A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities (2010)

Translating and interpreting services	
RCOA welcomes the DIAC initiative to extend access to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) to real estate agents and recommends this be reviewed at the end of the pilot phase with a view to expansion.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)
RCOA recommends that urgent steps be taken to facilitate the greater use of Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) by General Practitioners, specialists and other health professionals through training and awareness-raising, as well as the introduction of financial incentives and appropriate sanctions.	Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community views on current challenges and future directions (2011)