

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration****Chair: Ms Vamvakinou MP****Deputy Chair: Mrs Louise Markus MP**

Social inclusion for the most vulnerable: co-ordinating Human Services

The Government's Social Inclusion Agenda aims to ensure that all Australians can enjoy the benefits of the nation's cultural, social and economic life. But how does the agency charged with co-ordinating services to the most disadvantaged in the community advance that agenda?

In Canberra this Wednesday, 21 September 2011, officers from the Department of Human Services will explain how service delivery reforms are targeting the needs of the most vulnerable in Australia's culturally diverse community, and reducing social exclusion.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and its agencies, including Centrelink and Medicare, are responsible for Australia's social services support network. According to DHS, these lead agencies are now working to put the client's needs at the centre of service delivery, rather than using a 'top down' approach.

One of the main obstacles for new arrivals and ageing migrants is a lack of information about the services they are entitled too. Low English skills and fear of officials can prevent them from filling in forms correctly or asking necessary questions.

The Chair of the Committee Ms Vamvakinou MP observed: "Medicare and Centrelink are among the first government agencies to assist refugees and humanitarian entrants settle into their new communities. It is essential that these early contacts are supportive, accessible and respectful to encourage successful community connections."

"The Committee welcomes innovations to better support the most vulnerable. Cultural and linguistic diversity should not prevent those entitled from accessing services to help them lead happier, healthier, and more productive lives," Ms Vamvakinou said.

The Committee's public hearing will commence at **10.45 am in Committee Room 1R4, Parliament House, Canberra.**

Proceedings will be audio broadcast on <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Further information about the inquiry can be obtained from the Committee's website www.aph.gov.au/mig or from the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560.

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