



**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION: INQUIRY INTO
MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

March 2012

Additional Information in relation to Question from Mr Zappia: *From my observation many of the issues that young people who come from overseas are confronted with, whether they be refugees or new arrivals, are not too dissimilar to issues that are confronted by other people in the community that are on lower incomes or that come from lower income families. Putting aside the matter of racism, is there anything specifically that stands out in your mind that young people that come from overseas are confronted with that perhaps mainstream Australian young people from lower socioeconomic areas are not?*

Vulnerability and risk of social exclusion increase at transition points in adolescence and young adulthood. Refugee and migrant young people, particularly those newly arrived, often face numerous and more profound transitions than their Australian-born counterparts, prior to arriving in Australia, and subsequently face another set of complex transitions upon settling into Australia. These include:

- readjusting to different family configurations,
- learning a new language and culture,
- being unfamiliar with Australia's (often complex) systems – e.g. health, education, police, legal, and the broader services system, including Centrelink,
- no or limited social capital, e.g. familiarity with the service system, cultural knowledge, networks for seeking employment or housing references,
- compensating for years of interrupted education (or sometimes no prior education),
- transitioning into age- rather than capacity-determined mainstream education settings
- navigating unfamiliar education and employment pathways.

Additional Information in relation to Question from the CHAIR: *Would you be able to just shed a bit of light and give an assessment about those young people and how programs work? I guess the whole modus operandi of the committee is to look at better ways of doing things and, obviously, to recommend to government better ways of doing things. Do you think that the approach of organisations and bureaucracy generally—if I can call them that—is adequate? Is it lacking in certain areas? Are there certain things that are being missed that could make that journey for those young people a lot better, especially the ones of African backgrounds or the obviously different?*

The MYAN would like to see an expansion of the Reconnect Specialist (Newly Arrived program) funded through FaHCSIA – as a program of good practice. This is a program that allows a flexible and responsive service approach to the particular needs of newly arrived young people.

The MYAN would also like to see an increase in the responsiveness of mental health services and DEEWR funded programs, e.g. Youth Connections, to the particular needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. It is our experience that young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds are not accessing Youth Connections, when indeed this group of young people needs particular support to remain engaged in education and training. The Youth Connections model is not one that allows a flexible or responsive approach to service delivery and most Youth Connections providers do not place value on building cultural competence.

The MYAN has welcomed the increased investment in youth mental health but is concerned that there are access and equity issues for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds – it is our experience that these programs are not culturally competent and do not meet the needs of our client group.