



Joint Standing Committee on Migration – Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

INTRODUCTION

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national umbrella body for organisations involved in supporting and representing refugees and asylum seekers, with a membership of more than 650 organisations and individuals. RCOA promotes the adoption of flexible, humane and constructive policies by governments and communities in Australia and internationally towards refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants. RCOA consults regularly with its members and refugee community leaders and this submission is informed by their views.

RCOA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration (JSCM's) Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia and is pleased that the Government is seeking input on how to renew Australia's commitment to multiculturalism.

Much of RCOA's recent research and submissions to the Australian Government is relevant to the issues set out in the Inquiry's terms of reference. This submission, therefore, draws on RCOA's past research and policy analysis, as well as on a number of other sources.

Primary among those sources is the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA's) national policy framework to manage cultural diversity issues in Australia, proposed through its *Different But Equal* document in November 2010. The Australian Government's announcement in February 2011 of a multicultural policy and the investigation of this Committee are welcome inaugural steps towards the government taking, as FECCA urges, a "proactive role in leading the reinvigoration of the multicultural agenda".

RCOA supports the principles, pillars and policies outlined in the *Different But Equal* framework, as well as the recommendations set out in the document. While the Government's *The People of Australia* contains principles related to FECCA's policy framework, RCOA believes it would be worthwhile revisiting

The implementation of these recommendations would not only assist refugees but also provide unity for all Australians.

Recommendation 1:

RCOA recommends that the Australian Government consider a number of policy recommendations set out in FECCA's Different But Equal policy framework, including but not limited to a whole-of-government driven policy led by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; a more sophisticated and prioritised collection of multicultural data and research; and enhanced service and support programs for new arrivals.

THE PUBLIC DEBATE

Given the growing concern about the nature of the public debate about asylum seekers and refugees, a national, whole-of-government-driven policy that seeks to embrace diversity while ensuring equity, inclusion and justice could not be better timed. During RCOA's most recent consultations for its submission on the 2011-12 Refugee and Humanitarian Program, former refugees highlighted their worry about the general failure in political leadership on asylum seeker and refugee issues. Unfortunately, these sentiments have been raised at RCOA's consultations over the past three years, with participants wishing that politicians on all sides of politics would present facts, use correct terminology and cease leveraging asylum issues for political gain. The negative political culture, reinforced constantly by the rhetoric of some Parliamentarians, was seen as the single largest factor in the public misunderstanding of refugees. This culture fostered the media's interest in refugee policy as a source of political conflict, creating endless opportunities for negative public discussion about asylum seekers in particular. It was widely noted that misinformation and negative coverage far outweigh facts and positive stories of asylum seekers and former refugees. RCOA's membership has also noted the widespread lack of awareness about the refugee program, the reasons refugees seek asylum or are resettled in Australia and the positive contributions they make to Australian society. The positive promotion of Australia's diversity and its role in welcoming and supporting refugees could in part be achieved through funding independent research on migration issues to improve national knowledge and planning.

While RCOA recognises that public information and education resources form part of the broader National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, we believe that the public information campaigns and education must be at the heart of Australia's multicultural policy. The presentation of multicultural policy issues, as well as refugee and asylum seeker issues and the human cost of conflict and persecution, should be included in the new national curriculum. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority – the independent authority responsible for the development of a national curriculum – has already published the framework upon which the new national curriculum will be built. The changes in educational pedagogy, in world events and affairs and in Australia's demographics have led to a shift in the priorities for education in the 21st century. These changes include the reality of global integration and increased international mobility. As a consequence, it is recognised that Australian students need to “nurture an appreciation of, and respect for, social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship”.¹ The educational goals set out for young Australians also include an appreciation of social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity; the ability to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia, to be responsible global and local citizens; and to commit to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life. These goals fit well in the framework of a multicultural Australia.

¹ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

Recommendation 2:

RCOA recommends that the Australian Government investigate ways to provide public information and education on multicultural and migration issues, including information on refugees and asylum seekers.

Recommendation 3:

RCOA recommends that specific refugee-related and multicultural components be included for consideration in the development of the national curriculum.

THE PEOPLE OF MULTICULTURALISM

RCOA is pleased that the Government's announcement of its multicultural policy received bipartisan support. The recognition of the many contributions made by people of multicultural backgrounds has long been bipartisan. In a speech marking the 30th anniversary of their arrival in a broadcast on Vietnamese community radio, the then Prime Minister John Howard acknowledged the breadth and depth of their contribution:

*"Australians with Vietnamese backgrounds have established themselves as substantial contributors to a wide range of endeavours, making their mark in the community service, education, business, sporting and cultural sectors of our society ... The success of Australia's multicultural policy is clearly demonstrated by the large number of Vietnamese people who have added a splash of their own culture in the past 30 years, enriching the lives of many Australians."*²

This bipartisan support for multiculturalism is welcome, and this degree of bipartisanship should be a model for the approach to developing flexible and humane policies for asylum seekers and refugees in Australia.

It may be easy to forget that multicultural policy is about people. As evidenced in the literature review on the *Economic, Civic and Social Contributions of Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants*, people that have come to Australia through the refugee program have played significant roles in the building of the nation. Appendix A provides a small snapshot of the many prominent Australians who came to our country as refugees.

Below, RCOA continues our contribution to the JSCM's Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia, aligned with the terms of reference (See Appendix B for the Terms of Reference).

THE ROLE OF MULTICULTURALISM IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION AGENDA

The Australian Sociological Association's (TASA) Migration Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (MEM) Thematic Group and the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation of Deakin University convened a Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion symposium in July 2010.³ The gathering of academics, policymakers and service providers focused on multiculturalism

² J. Howard in P. Hudson, "Vietnamese boat people a boon to Australia, says Prime Minister", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (6/8/2005).

³ See Boese, Martina and Phillips, Melissa (2011). Critical Review: Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion in Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, April 2011, pp. 189-197.

and social inclusion in Australia. Themes reviewed and discussed at the symposium included employment, community and belonging, active citizenship and fostering inclusion for new and emerging refugee and migrant communities.

Participants at both this symposium, as well as people working in the multicultural sector, have observed the limited impact on outcomes for migrants and refugees that the Government's social inclusion agenda has had. Particular criticism aimed at the broadness and vagueness of the concept, with many wondering who was the aim for this inclusion, and for what type of inclusion (participation in the labour market alone or broader social and civic aims). Criticism was also fired at the social inclusion agenda's silence on racism. It is, therefore, a positive step that the Government's multicultural policy has a specific anti-racism component, recognising that various forms of racism and discrimination are still experienced by many refugees and migrants in Australia.

Also reflecting a wider criticism of the social inclusion agenda was the concern about the lack of robust data with which to measure both disadvantage and subsequent progress for new and emerging communities. These concerns reiterate the recommendations set out earlier regarding the collection of multicultural and migrant data.

Conclusions drawn from both the symposium and subsequent research and consultations include a willingness to engage with the Government's social inclusion agenda, with recognition that a opportunities may still exist for the development of a "whole-of-government response facilitated through a well-coordinated 'web of services'".⁴

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DIASPORA COMMUNITIES TO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH EUROPE, THE UK, MIDDLE EAST AND THE IMMEDIATE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

The role of diaspora communities, and particularly those with refugee backgrounds, has not yet been fully realised in Australia. The role of diaspora communities in developing bilateral relations, in economic development and in raising awareness about human rights issues is considerable and requires attention and support from both government and NGOs.

The first-hand experience of diaspora communities of conditions in their countries of origin, combined with their direct personal connections in these countries, places them in a unique position to raise awareness about human rights issues in their former nations. These communities can play a particularly important role in drawing attention to the needs of vulnerable groups which may otherwise escape international attention. Diaspora communities from a refugee background in Australia are already highly active in this regard. RCOA is regularly contacted by individuals and community organisations wishing to highlight instances of human rights abuse and bring to light the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees whose situations require urgent attention. During the past few years, representatives of a wide variety of ethnic communities have contacted RCOA or attended public consultations to raise concerns about groups of refugees in situations of great danger and/or in need of priority resettlement. The situations raised with us have included:

- Afar community in camps across the Horn of Africa – need for more resettlement places; community in Australia's lack of success in SHP applications; 'invisibility' of smaller ethnic communities in regional intake.

⁴ Ibid.

- Afghan community in Pakistan – offshore processing concerns (In Peshawar, applications to UNHCR being blocked by translators/interpreters due to racism; need for better translation services).
- Ahmadis in Pakistan – the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association has raised concerns for the Ahmadis in Pakistan and the increasing persecution that they face.
- Banyamulenge refugees in camps in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda – need for resettlement for people facing victimisation after being made stateless by the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Bhutanese community in Nepal and India – need for more resettlement places; problems with pre-departure health screenings; concerns regarding offshore processing and corruption; limited access to UNHCR processing in New Delhi; families being split and sent to different resettlement countries.
- Congolese community in camps in Africa – fraud in offshore processing (non-Congolese claiming that they are Congolese to secure resettlement places).
- Chin community in urban areas in Malaysia – need for more resettlement places; concerns around access to offshore processing; problems with pre-departure health screenings; insecurity of immigration status in Malaysia.
- Ethiopian community in camps across Africa – need for more resettlement places (particularly for family reunion).
- Eritrean refugees in camps in Sudan and Ethiopia and the situation of Eritrean detainees in Libya – need for more resettlement places (particularly to deal with protracted refugee situations, lack of access to protection and deteriorating security in Eritrea);
- Iraqi community in Syria and Jordan – those who escaped Iraq before 2003 and have genuine cases have been refused.
- Jewish community in Venezuela – facing growing hostility and violence in the face of politically sponsored discrimination.
- Karen community in Thailand – need for more resettlement places (particularly for family reunion); problems with pre-departure health screenings; offshore processing fraud (including selling of stories for application purposes).
- Liberian community in Guinea and Ghana – UNHCR encouraging repatriation despite ongoing concerns about instability and insecurity in Liberia; offshore processing concerns (including inappropriate use of interpreters, 'selling of stories' for application purposes and inappropriate pre-departure health check processes);
- Mandaean community in Middle East – need for more resettlement places due to complexity of needs and insecurity in Syria and Jordan.
- Oromo community in Horn of Africa – Offshore processing corruption (Government officials with money use other people's stories to receive protection, while others are too poor, do not read or write and have been unable to scribe their stories).
- Rohingya community in South and South-East Asia – need for greater priority for resettlement, particularly for vulnerable refugees in camps in Bangladesh and in urban settings in Malaysia.
- Sierra Leonean community in West Africa – amputation was used as a tool of torture during the ten year civil war in Sierra Leone, however amputee visa applications continue to be rejected; inappropriate pre-departure health check processes for people who have suffered torture/trauma.
- Tamil community in Sri Lanka – lack of success in SHP applications; lack of security for Tamils internally displaced in Sri Lanka; concerns about Australian Government

support of the Sri Lankan Government's prevention of people boarding boats and planes.

It is regrettable that the terms of reference do not include the contribution of diaspora communities from Africa, as the remittances sent by African-Australians to their families overseas has been well documented in research and represent a significant contribution to the GDP of countries of origin. There are also many active African-focused NGOs in Australia that have been set up by African-Australians that are helping to contribute to security, livelihoods and social development in African countries. As sub-Saharan Africa still is the poorest region in the world, this contribution is significant.

Other examples of active diaspora communities in Australia include the Australian Karen Organisation (AKO) and the Mandaean community organisations (the Sabian Mandaean Association and the Mandaean Women's Union). The AKO NSW Branch includes former committee members of the Karen National Union and maintains an ongoing dialogue with that organisation, also keeping in close contact with Karens in Burma and with refugees and internally displaced persons on the Thai-Burma border. The AKO is a small organisation run by volunteers that supports Karen communities overseas through advocacy and local fundraising activities. AKO members monitor the political climate in Burma and its repercussions for Karens inside and outside Burma. AKO members are employed within settlement services in New South Wales including the torture and trauma support serves and migrant resource centres. The community body provides settlement support for the local Karen community, and while still a relatively new organisation and not well-represented on committees, its members advocate through lobbying visits to Canberra and through the involvement of local politicians in cultural activities. This contact ensures that the AKO provides updates to Government and other agencies on internal (Burma-based) policy shifts and the impacts of policies on the Karen community. It is also an informal conduit for information on opportunities provided for Burmese people to participate in the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) Program.

The Mandaean community organisations have regular communication with the Mandaean diaspora worldwide, including Mandaeans in Iran. Community members hold management positions in the migrant resource centres and are represented on bodies such as the Multicultural Advisory Committee for the NSW Department of Community Services and the Liverpool-Macarthur Community Relations Commission Advisory Committee. They are well placed to contribute to Australia's understanding of the plight of the Mandaean diaspora in the Middle East and Asia.

In the recently published international book *Realizing the Development Potential of Diasporas*, the contributions of diaspora communities around the world are explored. The work examines the various channels of diaspora contribution and policies to facilitate them; identifies areas where policy can effectively leverage remittances and other capital for development; and analyses ways governments can strengthen diaspora investment and entrepreneurship. The learnings from this international research could prove useful in the Government's consideration of diaspora communities in Australia.

Recommendation 4:

RCOA recommends that the Australian Government engage directly with refugee community diasporas in developing bilateral and multilateral relations in regard to economic development and human rights issues.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR SETTLEMENT PROGRAMS FOR NEW MIGRANTS, INCLUDING REFUGEES, THAT SUPPORT THEIR FULL PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION INTO THE BROADER AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

RCOA has regularly made submissions and recommendations to the Australian Government on how it can better support positive settlement for refugee and humanitarian entrants. RCOA's annual submissions to the Australian Government on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program provide up-to-date analysis of global refugee issues, as well as compiling both the issues raised and the many innovative projects and programs developed by settlement services and community organisations in Australia. Recently, RCOA outlined these refugee settlement priorities for the 43rd Parliament. Through research and extensive consultation with our membership and refugee communities, RCOA nominated a 10-point list of policy priorities for improvements to Australia's systems of refugee settlement support, including employment, housing, education and training, supporting families and young people and the positive promotion of the humanitarian program and multiculturalism.

While recognising that Australia's refugee resettlement program is among the most sophisticated and comprehensive in the world, RCOA has raised concerns regarding settlement services over a number of years. These concerns have centred on limitations to funding models, the lack of involvement of former refugees in settlement services and the coordination between settlement services and sectors. RCOA acknowledges the many welcome changes to settlement services evident in the recent Adult Migrant English Program and Humanitarian Settlement Strategy tenders. However, concerns that remain include:

- The need to review the provision of settlement services for refugee and humanitarian entrants, in particular the structure of the Settlement Grants Program (SGP) and the impacts of short-term funding strategies on service delivery and viability.
- Concerns regarding difficulties in accessing Complex Case Support Services in some areas and the ongoing funding of this initiative.
- The need for the development of a clearly-articulated settlement framework to contextualise settlement services.

It is also important to remember that Australia's refugees and humanitarian entrants have found success in every field of endeavour, including the arts, sports, media, science, research, business and civic and community life. Refugees' stories are extremely diverse; however, there are some commonly mentioned "ingredients for success" including having had community support; feeling motivated to "give back" to society; and having access to training, English classes, mentoring and cultural, sporting and volunteering activities.

The 'Orientation to Australia' component of services funded through SGP remains an integral part of ensuring that people settle well. In RCOA's consultations for the latest submission to Government on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11, there was strong consensus from both settlement providers and former refugees about the need for improved post-arrival orientation for newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants. Both service providers and refugee entrants stressed the importance of effective orientation to the achievement of positive settlement outcomes. There was universal agreement that the five-day pre-departure Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program realistically can serve only as an introduction to life in Australia and that the bulk of the formal orientation process must occur after arrival. RCOA, therefore, welcomes the funding of these types of services as a core component of SGP and recommends that a clear framework be articulated that links pre- and post-arrival orientation through AUSCO, the Humanitarian

Settlement Strategy, Adult Migrant English Program and the SGP to ensure continuity of information is built into the different stages of settlement.

The recently established federal Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP) is the national social cohesion program focusing on cultural diversity. RCOA recognises that the 'Developing Communities' component of the current SGP has similar community capacity building aims to the DSCP, and also appreciates that the DSCP offers some flexibility in grant provision through its *Emerging Issues* funding. However, RCOA does not believe that the current DSCP funding pool alone is sufficient for this purpose and, therefore, recommends an increase in DSCP funding so that community development work previously funded through SGP can be sustained through the DSCP. As highlighted earlier in this submission, the recent public debate on refugees and asylum seekers has had an impact on both refugees' ability to feel safe and welcome in their community, as well as the broader communities' understanding of refugees and their settlement. This public debate has continued well after the federal election in August 2010 and, without significant commitments from Government to reframing the debate and funding community development work, the discourse will continue to impact on the ability of refugees to settle well and for the broader Australian community to welcome them.

RCOA recognises the Government's commitment to multicultural arts and festivals through its reprioritisation of DSCP grants for these purposes. Given the shift in SGP funding, however, consideration must be given to how other community development needs of refugee communities will be funded.

Recommendation 6:

RCOA recommends that consideration be given to increasing funding for the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program to meet the community development needs of refugee and humanitarian entrant communities.

THE ROLE MIGRATION HAS PLAYED AND CONTRIBUTES TO BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S LONG TERM PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

Migration and the intake of refugees can diversify and enhance the skill level of the population, increase economies of scale and foster innovation and flexibility. Refugees are often entrepreneurial as they face the need to set up and establish themselves in a new environment. One illustration of this was evident in the 2000 Business Review Weekly's annual "Rich 200" list which showed that five of Australia's eight billionaires were people whose families had originally come to the country as refugees. The efforts of refugee diasporas not only benefit Australia but often also their homelands. Outward remittances by migrants and refugees from Australia totalled over US\$2.815 billion in 2006. There is increasing evidence that remittances are crucial to the survival of communities in many developing countries, including many which have suffered conflict and produced refugees. These remittances represent a significant development resource to these countries.

The positive impact of refugees has also been especially felt in regional and rural Australia. In recent times rural areas have experienced large scale departures in population resulting in skills losses, lack of local entrepreneurship, business closures and the loss of social capital and services. Successful regional and rural refugee resettlement programs have helped plug some population gaps, supply much-needed labour and stimulate economic growth and services delivery. More generally, the young age profile of

humanitarian entrants makes a very positive contribution to a labour market in which new retirees now exceed new labour force entrants.

While existing information about the educational and labour force outcomes of the children of refugees is limited, available sources point to above average rates of success in education and employment, consistent with the successes achieved by children of non-humanitarian migrants from similar non-English speaking countries. An analysis of information on the children of migrants from Poland and Hungary (two major source countries for post-war refugees) shows that they are significantly more likely than third generation Australians to continue their education, to achieve a university degree or diploma, to work in a professional or managerial position and to have purchased or be purchasing their own home. Information on second generation Australians of Vietnamese background under 20 years of age show much higher than average rates of involvement in education, consistent with the commitment to education demonstrated by the first generation from Vietnam. This contributes to higher social mobility for people of Vietnamese background (both first and second generation) who live in lower income suburbs. Children of migrants with lower English proficiency are more much likely to remain in education longer, complete a university degree and work in a managerial or professional role than children of parents with higher English proficiency. One researcher suggests second generation children have a cognitive advantage in literacy skills owing to their proficiency in languages additional to English, while others describe levels of motivation among migrant parents as part of an “ethnic success ethic” or “ethnic advantage”.

Because refugee resettlement is commonly viewed as an international obligation and an act of generosity by the country receiving refugees, the many benefits refugees bring to their new country are often overlooked. Refugees make substantial contributions to their new country – expanding consumer markets for local goods, opening new markets, bringing in new skills, creating employment and filling empty employment niches. Refugees should not be defined as a welfare problem requiring “relief” and “care and maintenance” but rather as people who have problems but who also have determination to survive and put their energies into productive work that can benefit their hosts. In the analysis of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) 1, researchers found that the highest satisfaction rating among migrants was for refugee and humanitarian entrants.⁵

While the benefits of resettling refugees can be great, it is important to recognise that the gains cannot be accrued unless investment is made in the settlement of new arrivals. This investment must be formulated with the ultimate goals of social inclusion, freedom from discrimination and access to economic resources in mind. In this sense, adequate planning that promotes inclusion in the cultural, economic, political and social systems that underpin the host community is critical.

It is also worth noting that a large amount of settlement support is provided by former refugees themselves, and much of this support is provided on a voluntary basis. Mission Australia reports that more than half of volunteers at its Migrant and Refugee Services are from non-English speaking backgrounds including people from the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, India, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Liberia.⁶ Many refugees have come from situations of conflict, violence, persecution, poverty and

⁵ Carrington, K, McIntosh, A and Walmsley, J (eds) (2007). *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration to Australia*. Centre for Applied Research in Social Science, University of New England.

⁶ www.missionaustralia.com.au/news/media-releases/402-national-volunteers-week

disadvantage, yet have overcome adversity to settle successfully and participate in Australian life. Their stories demonstrate over and over again that people who have surmounted the odds to reach safety in a new country have the capacity, resilience, strength and initiative to succeed when given the right support. Many refugees also feel a very strong sense of gratitude to their new homeland and are committed to “giving back” to the community. They recognise that they have valuable skills and experience which can help others, including newly-arrived refugees and migrants.

THE PROFILE OF SKILLED MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH AUSTRALIA IS FULLY UTILISING THE SKILLS OF ALL MIGRANTS

The underutilisation of the skills of people who have come through the Refugee and Humanitarian Program has been documented in RCOA’s research, and it provides evidence that Australia is not fully utilising the many skills of its migrants.

As referenced to in RCOA’s 2010 research report *What Works: Employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*, refugees continue to confront significant difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. The limited research that has been undertaken supports RCOA’s anecdotal evidence that refugee and humanitarian entrants are overrepresented among the ranks of underemployed, lowly-paid, low-skilled, precariously employed and casualised members of the Australian labour force. Apart from the social costs of unemployment and underemployment, the loss of economic opportunities from a failure to find pathways to rapid, sustainable employment is also significant.

The reasons described in research for why refugee and humanitarian entrants are concentrated in low-paid work with poor conditions well below their capabilities include:

- The perception among the general Australian community, some employers and generalist employment service providers that refugee entrants should be available for unattractive jobs where labour shortages are acute. For example, in 2006, the JSCM provided a case study of a 34-year-old skilled refugee entrant from Sierra Leone who has his post-graduate qualifications in engineering assessed and recognised, but was told by a Job Network provider that “he consider working in factories or as a manual labourer” as he is “a strong and healthy young man, able to lift heavy boxes”.
- Many refugee and humanitarian entrants cannot afford to wait until the best job for them becomes available due to economic necessity. Not only is there pressure to support their family in Australia and to send remittances to relatives who remain in unsafe situations overseas, there is also strong pressure placed on refugee and humanitarian entrants by Centrelink and (previously) Job Network providers to find work as quickly as possible once registered. This pressure is exacerbated by the system of non-compliance which threatens their income.
- The capacity for refugee and humanitarian entrants to leave low-paid and low-skilled jobs decreases the longer they remain in those industries, due to loss of original skills and missed opportunities for networking and career progression. This is a dual loss to both Australia (through under-utilisation of skilled workers) and to individuals.

POTENTIAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO BETTER ASSIST MIGRANT COMMUNITIES ESTABLISH BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

As identified in RCOA's *What Works* research, refugees and humanitarian entrants are particularly successful in building small businesses. Tapping into this entrepreneurial spirit not only benefits the people developing the business but also strengthens Australia's economy and community.

In 2002, an assessment of the Federal Government's New Enterprise Initiative Scheme (NEIS) indicated that this scheme has been relatively effective in promoting self-employment among non-English-speaking migrants, with survival rates (i.e. enterprises still running two years after the program) being significantly higher than among the native-born and immigrants from English-speaking countries (65% versus 55%). Although wages or salary were the main source of income of only 32% of all refugees, 21% received their main income from their own business, a proportion which was much higher than for any other migration category.

The factors inherent to refugees may account for some of the observed pattern, and the data could be interpreted as an indicator of greater entrepreneurial behaviour among refugees than other groups, or of cultural factors and predispositions, as well as niches of demand. It should be recognised, however, that exclusionary processes and constraints on employment opportunities in mainstream enterprises can act as a barrier to a person's ability to develop self-employment opportunities.

In light of these positive entrepreneurial outcomes, it is worth exploring how mentoring-oriented schemes such as NEIS may be particularly effective in fostering migrant self-employment. Research has found that there is value in enabling and assisting migrants from newer communities to establish their own businesses because this can and will contribute to creating employment opportunities for other refugees and humanitarian entrants arriving in Australia, although the benefits of such initiatives are likely to be seen only in the longer term.

For the *What Works* research report, RCOA also explored initiatives that tap into this entrepreneurial spirit and interviewed employment services involved in supporting small business development, as well as employees and supervisors involved in social enterprise initiatives. The strategies that emerged as influential in enabling entrepreneurs from refugee backgrounds to start and sustain their own businesses as a pathway into the Australian labour market included small business training and support; enterprise facilitation; and social enterprise.

Recommendation 7:

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.

RCOA is grateful to have been able to contribute to this Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia and is happy to provide additional information or testimony if required.

April 2011

Summary of recommendations

1. RCOA recommends that the Australian Government consider a number of policy recommendations set out in FECCA's Different But Equal policy framework, including but not limited to a whole-of-government driven policy led by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; a more sophisticated and prioritised collection of multicultural data and research; and enhanced service and support programs for new arrivals.
2. RCOA recommends that the Australian Government investigate ways to provide public information and education on multicultural and migration issues, including information on refugees and asylum seekers.
3. RCOA recommends that specific refugee-related and multicultural components be included for consideration in the development of the national curriculum.
4. RCOA recommends that the Australian Government engage directly with refugee community diasporas in developing bilateral and multilateral relations in regard to economic development and human rights issues.
5. RCOA recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship articulate a more detailed settlement framework, explaining the goals of the settlement program and the respective roles of each funding program.
6. RCOA recommends that consideration be given to increasing funding for the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program to meet the community development needs of refugee and humanitarian entrant communities.
7. 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.

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APPENDIX A – Prominent Australians from a refugee and humanitarian background

Michael Gawenda – Award-winning journalist, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Age*

Michael Gawenda was born in a refugee camp in Austria just after the end of the Second World War. His family arrived in Australia in 1949 and settled in Melbourne. Michael studied economics and politics then became a cadet journalist at *The Age* in 1970. He rose to become editor in 1997 and editor-in-chief in 2003. In 2004 he returned to writing as a special correspondent for *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, based in Washington DC, until 2007. He has received the prestigious Walkley Award for journalism three times. He was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001 for outstanding service to the media industry. He is now the Director of the University of Melbourne's Centre for the Advanced Study of Journalism.⁷

Dr Karl Kruszelnicki – Scientist, media presenter

Karl Kruszelnicki was born in Sweden to two Polish refugees from European concentration camps. His father had been a member of the Polish resistance and was imprisoned in Russian jails and German concentration camps. When Karl was two, they decided to migrate to the US, but missed the boat because he was ill and ended up catching the next boat, to Australia. Karl lived for some time a migrant camp in Bonegilla near Albury, before moving to Wollongong. Karl is now a scientist, a medical doctor, a well-known radio host and an advocate for various causes.^{8 9}

Tuong Quang Luu AO – former Head of SBS radio, public servant, refugee advocate

At the time of the fall of Saigon on April 30 1975, Tuong Quang Luu was 34 and acting head of South Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He escaped by boat, was rescued and taken to Bangkok by Thai fishermen and was later reunited with his family in Canberra. Over the years, he rose from a research job at the Australian National University to become head of SBS Radio (1989-2006). He received a Centenary Medal in 2001 for service to broadcasting, became an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2002 for service to broadcasting and the community particularly through promoting understanding between diverse cultural groups and was named Australian Achiever of the Year in 2002. He was also a senior executive in the central office of the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in Canberra and served as the Department's NSW State Director from 1987 to 1989. He is a tireless advocate for refugees and those fleeing persecution, spending much of his free time in volunteer community service.^{10 11}

Les Murray AM – SBS football broadcaster

Les Murray and his family fled their home near Budapest, Hungary in 1956 when Les (known then as Laszlo Urge) was 11 years old. After six months as refugees in Austria, they arrived in Australia in 1957 and lived in the Bonegilla migrant camp for three weeks before settling in Wollongong. Les has played a major role in building the popularity of soccer in Australia. He worked his way from newspaper journalist to SBS subtitler to football commentator, presenter and eventually a producer. For over two decades, Les has been anchor and executive producer of SBS' coverage of numerous international and national football championships. Les was SBS Head of Sport from 1996 to 2006, then returned to sports journalism to become SBS Sport's editorial chief, his current role. In

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Gawenda

⁸ <http://www.sweetcommunication.com.au/files/ausdoc/profiles/2000/karl.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/talkingheads/txt/s2262211.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/08/02/1028157845552.html>

¹¹ http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Tuong_Quang_Luu

2006 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) and is a member of Football Federation Australia's Hall of Fame. He is chairman of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union Sports Group, a director of the Johnny Warren Football Foundation and serves on FIFA's Ethics Commission. Les has written or co-written four books.^{12 13}

Judit Korner - Businesswoman

As Hungarian refugees Judit Korner and her mother were held in a camp in Europe for some time. They chose to move to Australia because it was so far from upheavals in Eastern Europe. Judit arrived in 1957 with no prior knowledge of English. Today she is acknowledged as one of Australia's premiere business women. She is the director of a group of companies, including Madame Korner Salons and Colleges.^{14 15}

Dr Berhan Ahmed – Researcher, community advocate

A former refugee from Eritrea, Berhan Ahmed arrived in Australia in 1987 as a 23-year-old. He worked as a tram conductor for 10 months, then drove taxis while studying Animal Science at La Trobe University. He spent 10 years working as a researcher at the CSIRO, while doing his PhD at the University of Melbourne. He is now a senior research fellow in the Department of Forest Ecosystem Science at The University of Melbourne. In 2004, Berhan was the first Senate candidate from an African background to run for federal election. He is also head of the African Think Tank and works extensively to help African communities in Australia grow strong and to engage with each other and mainstream society. He was recently named the 2009 Victorian Australian of the Year and Australian of the Year finalist.¹⁶

Maha Krayem Abdo OAM – Community advocate

Maha Krayem Abdo is a former refugee from Lebanon who arrived in Australia in the 1960s, speaking barely any English. In the late 1980s she felt a need to begin building better understanding between people of Anglo-Australian and Muslim backgrounds. Since 1991 Ms Krayem Abdo has been involved in the United Muslim Women's Association, serving as president for more than a decade. She won the 2002 NSW Premier's Award for her role in setting up the Muslim Foster Care service and the Affinity Intercultural Foundation's Muslim woman of the year award in 2003. In 2008 she received a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to Western Sydney's Muslim community, particularly in the area of Muslim women's leadership training, social justice and inter-faith dialogue.¹⁷

Afaf Adlouni – Community advocate

Afaf Adlouni used her experiences of settling in Australia as a refugee to support and assist other newly arrived refugees to settle and start a new life in Australia. She is the founder of the Multicultural Australian Women's Association which aims to support women from all backgrounds with opportunities in educational courses and English classes, community participation projects, social interaction and community wellbeing. She has been instrumental in encouraging many women to take a positive attitude to their settlement and new lives in Australia. She was recognised for her contributions with a Liverpool City Council Refugee Week Award in 2007.¹⁸

¹² http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2008/080611_Les_Murray_NSW_launch.pdf

¹³ http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/refugeeweek/Les_Murray_NSW_RW08_speech.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.madamekorner.com.au/about/about-judit-korner.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3d985b304.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.landfood.unimelb.edu.au/community/berhanahmed.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/hansArt.nsf/V3Key/LC20080626048>

¹⁸ <http://www.liverpool.nsw.gov.au/LCC/INTERNET/me.get?site.sections&PAGE1029>

Dr Dung Tien Kien – Physicist

Dung Tien Kien arrived in Australia when he was 19 via a refugee camp in Pulau Bidong, Malaysia. He settled in Brisbane and took casual and shift work until he was able to enrol in the University of Queensland in 1981. Since then, Dung has been a research physicist at three Australian universities. After completing his PhD at the University of Edinburgh, he became a resident fellow at Linacre College, Oxford. Dung is now doing research in particle physics at the University of Melbourne.¹⁹

Dr Gary Yia Lee – Researcher, author, public servant

Dr Gary Yia Lee is a refugee and former Colombo Plan student from Laos. After the Lao civil war erupted in 1961, his family became displaced and joined other Hmong refugees in Vientiane. After arriving in Australia in 1965, he completed a degree in Social Work from the University of New South Wales and was the first Hmong to complete a PhD in anthropology, from the University of Sydney in 1981. Gary has taught at Sydney University and Macquarie University and was recently Visiting Fellow at The Australian National University. He also served as Senior Ethnic Liaison Officer for the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW. He has written many articles on the Hmong refugees and their cultural traditions which have been put on his own website for the benefit of young Hmong readers and other researchers.²⁰

Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen – Author, researcher

Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen holds an Australian Research Fellowship at the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne. After completing a degree at the University of Melbourne she won a Commonwealth Scholarship to the University of Oxford, where she obtained her doctorate. Her book, *Vietnamese Voices: Gender and Cultural Identity in the Vietnamese Francophone Novel*, was nominated for four international awards, including the Kiriya Prize.

Frank Lowy AC – Businessman, founder of the Lowy Institute

Frank Lowy is a Czech Holocaust survivor, though he lost his father in Auschwitz. As a teenager at the end of the war, he sailed on a crowded refugee boat for Israel. After fighting for Israel, he migrated to Australia, arriving in 1952 as a 21-year-old fired with determination. He made his way up from delivery driver to factory worker to deli owner to fledgling property developer. These days Frank oversees a \$33 billion portfolio of 130 malls in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and US, and the Lowy family is listed as number 222 on Forbes Billionaires List. He was on the board of the Reserve Bank of Australia. He was awarded a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2000 and a Centenary Medal in 2001. He is chairman of the Football Federation of Australia and has established the think tank Lowy Institute for International Policy.^{21 22}

Huy Truong, Jardin Truong and Dinh Truong – Entrepreneurs

Huy, Jardin and Dinh Truong arrived with their parents in 1978 from Vietnam via a refugee camp in Jakarta. They started their new life in the Nunawading hostel in Melbourne, knowing no English. In 1999 Huy and Jardin started an online retail company called Wishlist. Wishlist is one of Australia's most successful e-commerce companies capturing a large slice of the local online retail market. The company now employs over 100 staff in

¹⁹ The Positive Twenty Years: a special edition marking 20 years of Vietnamese settlement in Australia 1975-1995, p.116.

²⁰ http://www.pandanusbooks.com.au/author_bios.php?searchterm=leexg_ant

²¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2006/s1689994.htm>

²² http://www.forbes.com/lists/2008/10/billionaires08_The-Worlds-Billionaires_CountryOfPrmRes.html

Melbourne and Sydney. Huy is chairman of Wishlist and is also the CEO of CH Experko. Jardin and Dinh are on the senior management team of Wishlist.²³

Alex Jesaulenko MBE – former Australian Rules Footballer and coach

Alex Jesaulenko was born in Salzburg, Austria to a Ukrainian father and Russian mother. The family emigrated to Canberra as refugees from Ukraine in 1949. Alex started playing Australian Rules football in his teens with the Eastlake Football Club in Canberra. He made his senior debut in 1967 and went on to play 256 senior games for the Carlton Football Club. In total he kicked 424 goals and won four premierships with the club (1968, 1970, 1972 and 1979). He immortalised his reputation in the game by taking the Mark of the Century in the 1970 VFL Grand Final. In 1979 he was the playing coach of Carlton's team, which took the premiership, perhaps "his finest moment in football". He was selected for All-Australian honours in 1969 and 1972. Alex was renowned for his high marking, mercurial ground play, superb balance and goal kicking. He is regarded as one of the game's greatest-ever players and is an official Legend of the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

Timas Harik – Runner, Under 17 Australian Champion

Timas Harik spent four years in war-ravaged Sudan, four years in a refugee camp in Egypt and has now lived in Australia since 1993. At 13 years of age, he won the under-14 800 and 1500 metres at the Australian All Schools championships in 2007, and again won both titles in the under-17 championships in 2010. He is both a pace setter within the Sudanese community and an Honorary Ambassador for not for profit organisation, Sports Without Borders.

²³ <http://www.fastlook.com.au/ibs/Marketing/wishlist.htm>

APPENDIX B – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda; and
2. The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

Settlement and participation

3. Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society; and
4. Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

National productive capacity

5. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity;
6. The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants; and
7. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises.