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# INDOCHINESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT— AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT

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A large, stylized map of Australia is positioned in the lower half of the cover. The map is rendered in a high-contrast, grainy black and white style, showing the outline of the continent and its major islands. The map is tilted slightly to the right.

Report from the Senate Standing Committee  
on Foreign Affairs and Defence



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INVOLVEMENT**

**Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence**

Commonwealth of Australia 1982

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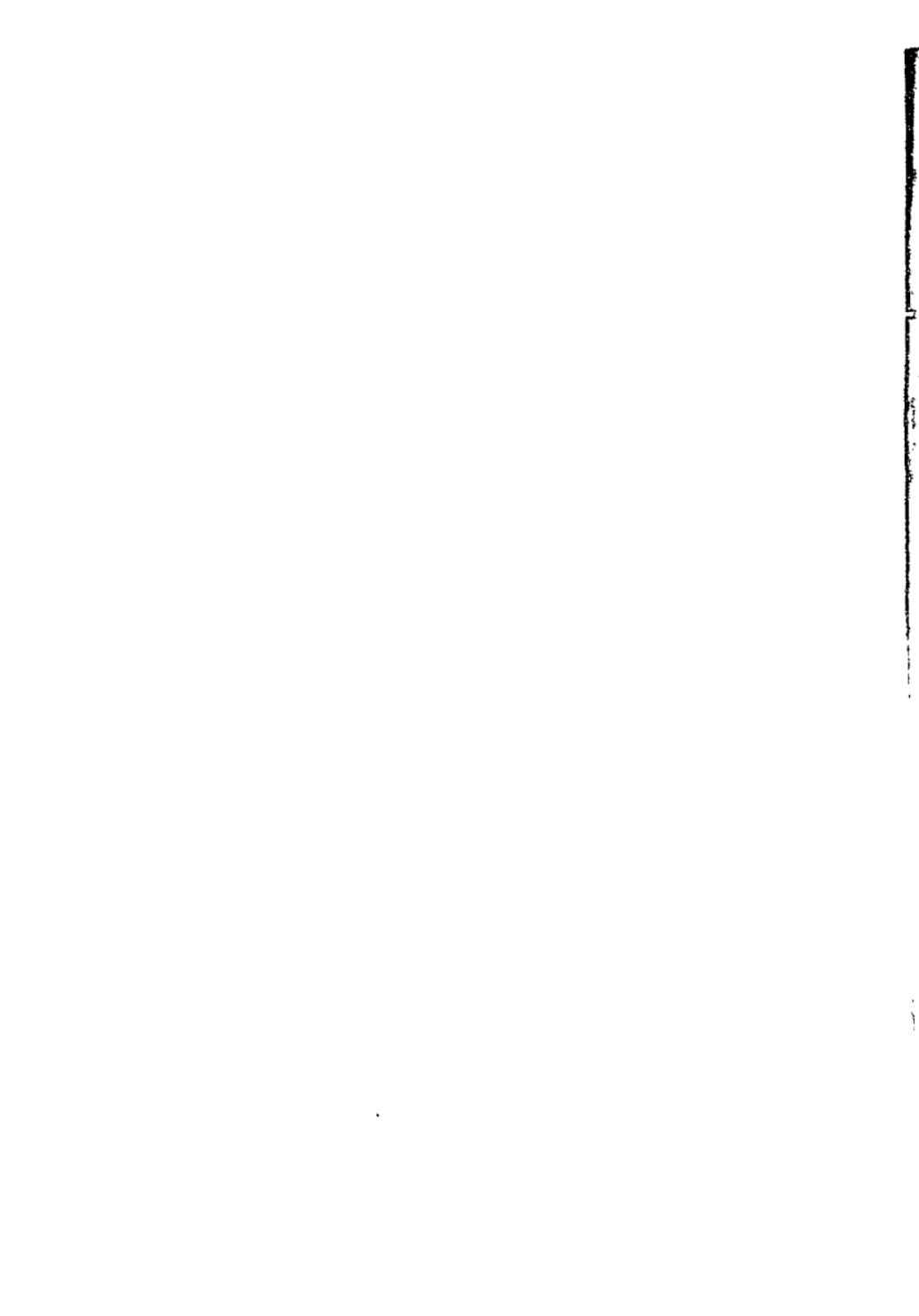
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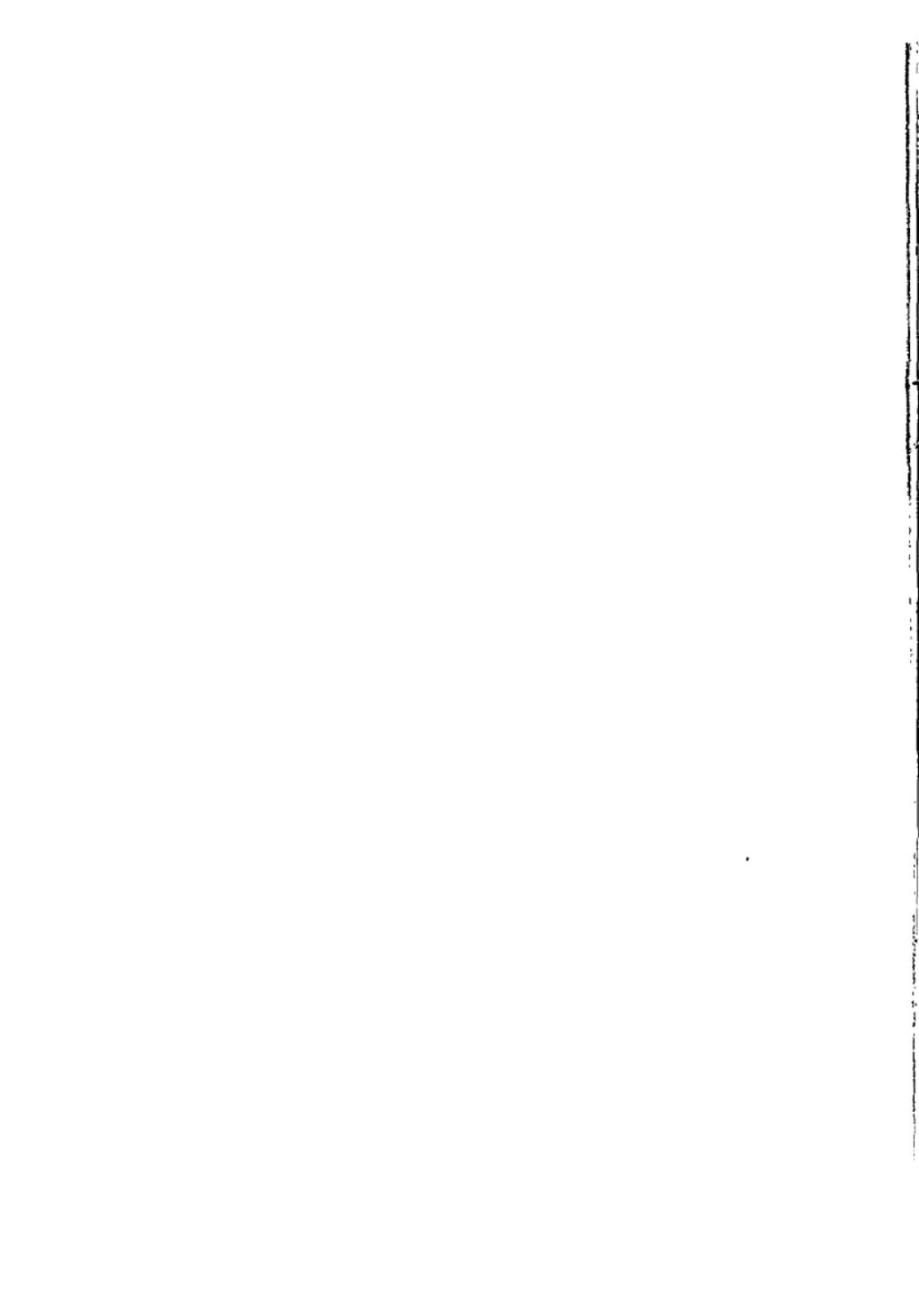
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## **Preface**

### **The Committee's terms of reference**

On 15 November 1979 the Senate referred to the Committee for inquiry and report the following topic:

'The Indo-Chinese refugee situation and Australia's role in assisting the refugees, with particular reference to the Report of the Committee on "Australia and the Refugee Problem", tabled in the Senate on 1 December 1976.'

### **The inquiry**

In June 1980 the Committee invited submissions on the reference by advertising in major Australian newspapers and journals. The Committee also wrote to organisations, agencies, Commonwealth and State government departments, academic institutions and individuals inviting them to contribute their views to the inquiry. The response provided the Committee with 59 submissions from various sources and it is noteworthy that the views expressed gave overwhelming support to Australia's contributions to the Indochinese refugee situation. The Heads of Mission and staffs of the ASEAN Diplomatic Missions in Australia met with the Committee for informal discussions on Indochinese refugee matters.

The Committee began the inquiry with field visits to Migrant Centres in Sydney and Fairy Meadow in December 1980. Public hearings commenced on 13 March 1981 and concluded on 28 August 1981. In all, the Committee had 11 days of public hearings and went into in camera session on 3 occasions. Hearings were held in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin. In addition to the field visits in New South Wales, the Committee visited Migrant Centres in Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin, a total of 5 field visits.

### **Explanatory note**

The Committee wishes to emphasise that although throughout the taking of evidence and in this report the term 'Indochinese refugees' is used extensively, it is not the Committee's intention to regard these people as a homogeneous group. The Committee recognises that among the refugees there are Vietnamese, Kampucheans and Laos, and within these nationalities there are distinct racial groups and various social and cultural traditions.

Unless it is indicated otherwise, the amounts in dollars in this report are Australian currency.



### **List of Abbreviations**

**ASEAN** — Association of South East Asian Nations

**CACS** — Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services

**CALFRIC** — Committee for Allocation of Loan Funds to Refugees from Indo-China

**CES** — Commonwealth Employment Service

**CRSS** — Community Refugee Settlement Scheme

**DIEA** — Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs

**ELO** — Ethnic Liaison Officer

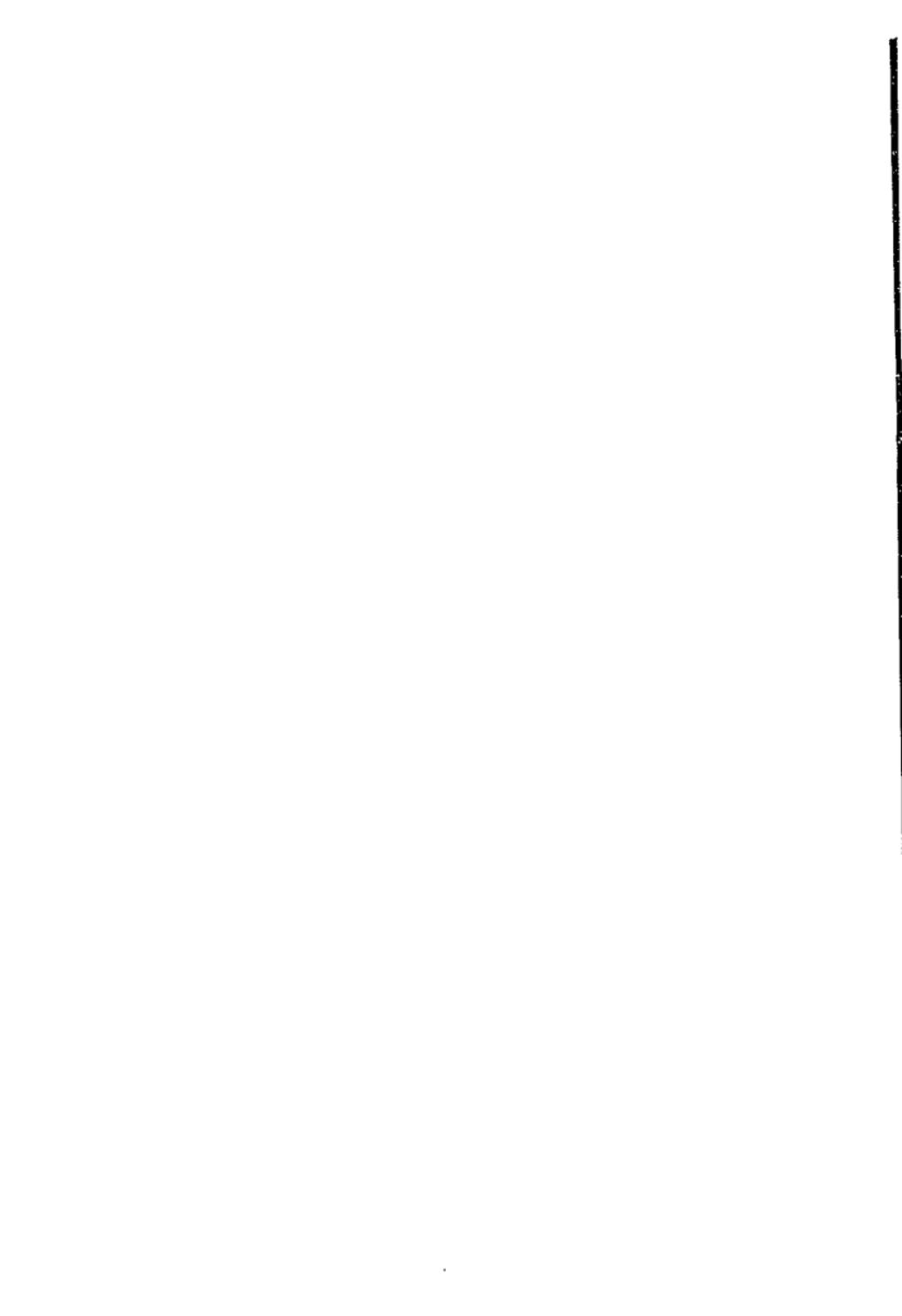
**ICRC** — International Committee of the Red Cross

**SCOR** — Standing Committee on Refugees

**UNHCR** — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**UNICEF** — United Nations Children's Fund

**WFP** — World Food Program



## Summary of conclusions and recommendations

The Committee concludes that the Indochinese refugee problem has not been totally resolved and along with the growth of refugee numbers world-wide, will continue to place demands on the international community for solutions. These situations test the adequacy of international aid agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, and the co-ordination of their efforts. The Committee believes Australia should, and when possible in concert with other countries, maintain emphasis on the need for nations to adhere to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Refugee issues have become an important element in Australia's bilateral relations, in particular with the countries of South East Asia. Their impact on Australia's multi-lateral policy is considerable. The indications are that refugee problems will continue to affect international affairs for years to come and Australia's standing in the world will, in part, be determined by its policies towards refugees. The extent to which Australia responds will require careful consideration and balance not only for its foreign policy implications but because it is a significant domestic issue. Currently Australia's aid to refugees has concentrated on the Indochinese, and this is understood and accepted internationally. Future aid will require careful judgement to ensure that Australia's responses are politically balanced and cognisant of global refugee situations.

The shortcomings in existing international laws relating to refugees are being demonstrated to Australia by the Indochinese problem. It is imperative that Australia continues to participate effectively in international attempts to develop realistic and comprehensive laws to contain and minimise the dramatic impact of massive refugee flow. Most refugee issues present problems for developing countries, and Australia's willingness and ability to respond with constructive contributions to solutions have an important bearing on its standing with Third World countries, individually and collectively. Australian assistance to Indochinese refugees will be seen by others as having committed Australia to a lasting and even wider role in refugee issues. It must therefore be expected that such issues will remain an important aspect of Australia's foreign policy and perhaps even grow in significance.

The formulation of a refugee policy accompanied by comprehensive administrative guidelines is a welcome and vital element of Australia's role in refugee issues. It is essential that the policy and the program resulting from it are understood and accepted at the international level and by the Australian community. This is an important task for Australia's representatives overseas and for the Government, in co-operation with the involved non-government sector at home. The immigration policy is an integral part of Australia's relations with many countries and the refugee policy is increasing in prominence within the policy. Therefore, the possible effects of the refugee policy on Australia's relations with its migrant source countries must not be overlooked.

The urgency of the Indochinese refugee crisis gave little time to formulate a comprehensive settlement program. Therefore, the program has been an evolving one and continues to be developed through experience. It is operating successfully and its record of settling many thousands of refugees is testimony to its effectiveness. It is appropriate that the size of the refugee intake is determined annually within the program. For the program to remain effective, it must be flexible enough to be adapted to changes in refugee outflows, the changing nature of refugees, e.g. economic rather than political, international obligations, and domestic factors which indicate the community's capacity to absorb refugees. The arrival of Indochinese refugee boats in Australian waters demonstrates the need for effective and flexible surveillance arrangements. The Committee recognises that effective coastal surveillance is both a difficult and expensive task, that

the subject was outside its terms of reference, and is under review by the Government. It is vital to the public acceptance of the refugee policy that the decision to accept refugees and the control of their entry remain the prerogative of the Australian Government.

*From the evidence received, the Committee considers that the settlement of Indochinese refugees in Australia is progressing well. The Committee commends the results achieved through a combination of efforts by the Commonwealth and State governments, voluntary groups, individuals and the refugees themselves. Settlement of Indochinese refugees has been a significant domestic issue, although the Committee received little evidence of resentment or indifference, the general acceptance by the Australian community of people with different racial and cultural backgrounds is gratifying. The Committee concludes that overall, positive measures have been introduced to assist refugee resettlement and they are a constructive response to what was envisaged in the recommendations of the Committee's 1976 report.*

#### **Australian aid to refugees**

The Committee recommends that the Government should continue to provide assistance to refugees on a bilateral and multilateral basis, and investigate further the scope for assisting Australian non-government organisations engaged in relief programs for refugees overseas. To maximise the benefits of assistance the Committee also recommends that the Government should ensure that the Australian authorities administering the program have the necessary resources to permit effective aid management and delivery.

#### **Refugee policy**

The Committee commends the development of the refugee policy and recommends that it be kept under regular review to ensure its applicability and adaptability to future refugee situations.

#### **Refugee settlement program**

The Committee recommends that the Government maintains constant monitoring of refugee situations and continues to review the relevance of the settlement program to those situations. To allow the settlement program to function effectively, the Committee also recommends that the Government continues, and where necessary increases, its support to government instrumentalities and voluntary groups engaged in providing post-arrival services and conducting settlement schemes.

#### **Personal details —overseas qualifications**

The correction of some refugees' personal details and the non-recognition of certain overseas qualifications are two matters requiring resolution. The Committee understands that both issues are under examination, they have been outstanding too long and the Committee recommends their resolution should be given a high priority.

#### **Settlement experience studies**

The Committee considers the progressive study of the settlement process and experience to be an important factor in refugee policy formulation and recommends that such studies should be conducted on a continuing basis.

## Background to the Indochinese refugee crisis

### Countries of origin

The change of governments in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (now Kampuchea) in 1975 introduced political systems which many thousands of their inhabitants found intolerable. Subsequently, deteriorating social and economic conditions made life unpalatable for many more. Their dissatisfaction has precipitated a continuing mass exodus of people from these countries, fleeing by sea and overland. While the phenomenon of escaping people from Indo-China is acknowledged internationally as the Indochinese refugee crisis, it is a problem originating from three source countries with varying circumstances and complexities causing the outflow.

### Vietnam

After the initial departures of refugees from Vietnam in April 1975, a second phase started in the middle of that year and lasted until late 1977. The outflow was primarily of people who had attempted to live under the new regime and included urban middle classes considered to be capitalists by the regime. Complaints of economic and social persecution, loss of personal freedoms and internment in re-education centres were common among the refugees who left Vietnam during this period at a rate of approximately 5600 per month.

The third phase of departures began in early 1978, provoked by the nationalisation of the remaining businesses in southern Vietnam and the Government's exploitation of traditional Vietnamese antipathy towards the ethnic Chinese population. The ethnic Chinese were considered undesirable by the Government and suspected of loyalty to China as well as supporters of the previous non-communist regime in the south. The Vietnamese Government, by late 1978 and into 1979, had implemented a program of ridding the country of ethnic Chinese. The Chinese desire to leave the country was exploited by the Government and its Public Security Bureau was directly engaged in arranging departures at a cost as high as \$US3500 per person for passages on overcrowded and often unseaworthy boats. In the period October 1978 to July 1979, over 212 000 refugees from Vietnam arrived in countries of first asylum but it is estimated that thousands more were drowned or killed en route. During this phase the mass exodus of 400 000 refugees was intended to rid Vietnam of many persons opposed to socialism and Chinese sympathisers in the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. Ethnic Chinese were harassed and discriminated against and it is estimated that some 250 000 of them entered China from northern and southern Vietnam during this period.

The fourth phase of the Vietnamese refugee exodus came after the 1979 Geneva Conference on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South East Asia. International attention was focussed on the Government of Vietnam as the source of the refugee problem and it declared a moratorium on the outflow of boat people 'for a reasonable length of time'. Arrivals in countries of first asylum dropped from a peak of over 54 000 in June 1979 to between 2000 to 3000 refugees per month for the remainder of 1979, clearly demonstrating that Vietnam is able to control the outflow.

Vietnamese boat refugees in 1980 arriving in countries of first asylum averaged at over 6000 per month, with the highest numbers of arrivals during the mid-year calm weather period. Arrivals during the first half of 1981 averaged at over 8500 Vietnamese boat refugees per month in the countries of first asylum. The situation is being monitored internationally, but it has not been assessed as a breakdown of the moratorium, although it seems unlikely that departures in such numbers can occur without some

official sanction. It also reflects a continuing disillusionment and growing disaffection among people in Vietnam. Both Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese are leaving, with the majority being Vietnamese. Since 1975 over a million people out of Vietnam's population of 50 million have left as refugees.

### *Kampuchea*

When the Pol Pot regime became the Government in Kampuchea in April 1975, it regarded escaping from the country as one of the most serious crimes. Some supporters of the previous regime had escaped beforehand and some people managed to flee during the Pol Pot period. Precise figures are not known, it is estimated that between April 1975 and January 1979 some tens of thousands of Khmers escaped to Thailand and approximately 150 000 went to Vietnam. Other refugees from Kampuchea escaping the excesses of brutality inflicted by the regime were ethnic Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese, most of them going to Vietnam.

The fall of the Pol Pot Government in January 1979, following the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, provided a new opportunity for people to flee the country. Thailand bore the brunt of this exodus of people fleeing from the fighting and food shortages. The Vietnamese offensive in March 1979 led to some 80 000 border crossings into Thailand in May alone. In June 1979 the Thai Government closed the border and about 45 000 Kampucheans were forcibly sent back to Kampuchea. This policy was reversed after international reassurances to assist in October 1979. Famine conditions in Kampuchea and the threat of a dry season Vietnamese offensive against the remaining Khmer Rouge forces again brought new waves of people to the Thai border. By December 1979 there were some 150 000 Kampucheans in the Thai Supreme Command/UNHCR-assisted Holding Centres, and approximately 600 000 were in camps straddling the Thai-Kampuchean border.

The first escapees were business people, students, intellectuals and professionals. The 1979 mass exodus comprised farmers and unskilled workers, with the majority coming from north-west Kampuchea. This area is near to the Thai border and it is possible that if the food situation improves in Kampuchea and Vietnamese military activity does not increase in the region, these people can be repatriated. They are not accorded recognition as refugees in Thailand and are described by Thai authorities as 'displaced persons' or 'illegal immigrants'. In January 1981, there were 140 000 Kampucheans in Holding Centres in Thailand and 60 000 in border agglomerations.

### *Laos*

The Pathet Lao Government which came to power in Laos in 1975 imposed a centralised economy on a people entirely unused to such controls. Programs to collectivise agriculture were not successful and recent free enterprise policies have not improved the situation. Business enterprises are hindered and civil servants from the former regime are subjected to discrimination. In the south of the country farmers have found it easier to obtain food and essentials by moving to camps in Thailand.

There have been extensive military operations directed against the Hmong (Meo) hill tribes, and there are continuing accusations of aerial spraying of people with toxic chemicals'. Severe economic conditions and the restrictions on personal freedoms have provoked many Laos to seek refuge in Thailand. The Mekong river provides relatively easy access into Thailand and with assistance provided in Thai camps and the prospect of settlement in a third country, there is obvious inducement to leave Laos.

The Hmong people make up over half of the 104 000 Laos in Thai camps and there are reports from these people that the remaining 50 000 Hmong in Laos will flee to Thailand. Since 1975, approximately 300 000 Laos out of a population of 3 million have fled Laos.

### **The impact of refugees — regional country responses**

Although it is not the largest movement of refugees in the world, the continuing exodus of *Indochinese* from their homelands is a humanitarian problem with serious international implications. It is a crisis for neighbouring South East Asian countries causing economic, social, political and security problems, often exacerbating existing communal tensions. Three of the five member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have borne the main burden of the refugee influx. While the impact of refugees varies within and between the ASEAN States and it has generated some differences between them in emphasis and treatment, the differing perceptions have not seriously hampered ASEAN cohesion and co-operation on the issue. The refugee crisis has been a major factor in giving ASEAN, founded as an economic and social grouping, a political role.

In the ASEAN context, the advent of refugees has varying effects on the receiving country but some common characteristics are also identifiable, e.g. refugees invariably bring a foreign language and culture into contact or conflict with a conservative rural culture and a relatively undeveloped local economy. The direct cost of supporting refugees is largely met by international relief agencies; however, the host governments have to redeploy administrative and security resources, at considerable expense, to cope with the influx. The ASEAN governments are concerned with the impact of refugees on the local economy and the possibility of conflict between refugees and the community. Threats to security are another concern, particularly the danger of insurgent infiltration under refugee cover and, as in the case of Thailand, the problem of large numbers of armed refugees in the border areas. The refugee crisis has caused a downturn in relations between the ASEAN countries and Vietnam and has contributed to increased tension in South East Asia. The following summaries of regional countries of first refuge for Indochinese refugees is included to demonstrate the scale and impact of the problem and the differing policies these countries have adopted in response

#### *Thailand*

Since April 1975 Thailand has given sanctuary to 300 000 Laos, 216 000 Kampucheans and 55 000 Vietnamese. In June 1981 there were over 119 000 refugees in United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps and 120 000 Khmers in holding centres, most of whom would eventually be repatriated. In addition, there are some 134 000 displaced persons in encampments straddling the Thai-Kampuchean border. Thailand is deeply concerned about the security threat the refugee situation poses, particularly after Vietnam's military incursion into its territory in June 1980.

In 1979 Thailand, because of unprecedented numbers of refugee arrivals, turned back over 40 000 Indochinese, but after assurances of support from the international community it agreed to make available temporary refuge to refugees and displaced persons. Accordingly, the Thai Government does not accord the Indochinese refugee status and it is generally acknowledged that voluntary repatriation is the best solution, especially for the Kampucheans, when conditions in their homeland improve. In the meantime, Thailand faces a dilemma, allowing large numbers of Indochinese to remain imposes a considerable burden on strained resources, but encouraging third country re-settlement can make them less likely to want to return to their homeland and could attract others to cross into Thailand.

#### *Malaysia*

Peninsular Malaysia has been a major landing place for tens of thousands of boat refugees from Vietnam. During the 1978-79 refugee exodus, Malaysian authorities refused landing rights to many boats and this helped to draw international attention to their

problem. A number of European countries, in addition to the major resettlement countries, in 1979 announced new resettlement programs for refugees and helped to reduce numbers in Malaysian camps.

Malaysia has continued to grant temporary asylum to boat people. However, it remains concerned about the impact of refugees on the existing sensitive communal balance in the country. As at 30 June 1981 there were over 15 000 refugees still in Malaysia. If the refugee arrival rate increases significantly or exceeds the resettlement rate, it could be expected that the Malaysian Government would re-introduce its policy of refusing landing rights to boat arrivals.

### *Singapore*

Refugees arriving directly in Singaporean waters are turned away by the navy. Singapore has maintained a strict policy of not granting first asylum to refugees or allowing resettlement. Its territory can only be used for transit purposes by refugees who hold resettlement guarantees from a third country. As at 30 June 1981 there were over 3000 refugees in transit in Singapore.

### *Indonesia*

The arrival of refugees by boat in Indonesia is a relatively recent problem in comparison to other countries of first asylum. In June 1979 almost 23 000 Indochinese refugees arrived in Indonesia, many as a consequence of Malaysian and Thai authorities not permitting refugee boats to land on their territory at that time. The Indonesian Government's reaction was to announce that it would no longer grant temporary asylum to refugees. This attitude was based on the view that the country could not manage the burden nor risk the security threat.

On behalf of ASEAN, Indonesia offered Galang Island to the UNHCR as a refugee processing centre in May 1979. The island holds refugees who have been selected for third country resettlement and are awaiting departure. Since the Geneva Conference in 1979 it has continued to accept boat refugees, despite its earlier announcement. As at June 1981 there were some 5500 Indochinese refugees in Indonesia, excluding those on Galang awaiting resettlement.

### *The Philippines*

The location of the Philippines does not provide convenient access for many boat refugees. Nevertheless, small numbers of boat arrivals have occurred. In 1980 an UNHCR funded processing centre for Indochinese refugees with resettlement guarantees was established in the Philippines. It accommodates some 16 000 refugees with a projected capacity of 50 000. Apart from these refugees there were, as at June 1981, some 5200 refugees in the Philippines.

The ASEAN countries are not signatories to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and do not consider the refugees to be their problem. They will accommodate the existing numbers of refugees only if international support and resettlement programs are maintained. All ASEAN governments are anxious to reduce their refugee populations and are concerned that a renewed influx does not occur. Even with international assistance and resettlement, a continuing flow of refugees can aggravate sensitive domestic and regional issues for ASEAN countries and the Association.

## Other countries

### *China*

There is little information available on the impact of Indochinese refugees on China. According to its own statistics, China has accepted approximately 300 000 refugees and although not much detail is available, officials have stated that the refugees have placed a considerable strain on China's limited resources.

Boat refugees from northern Vietnam have been allowed to land temporarily and have been assisted to continue on to Macau and Hong Kong. China agreed to resettle 10 000 refugees from the ASEAN countries and has been selecting them from Thailand.

### *Hong Kong*

Indochinese refugees have a significant impact on Hong Kong's rapidly increasing population and other domestic pressures. Despite these problems, Hong Kong adopts an essentially humanitarian approach to refugees and it has accepted some 100 000 of them. The Government has stated that it will continue to receive Indochinese refugees apart from those arriving in large boats organised as commercial schemes or those arriving illegally from China where they were formerly resettled. In 1979 the Government was critical of international resettlement programs; as a result increased efforts have reduced Hong Kong's refugee population to some 16 000. Refugees in Hong Kong live in UNHCR camps, or government camps and many have found private accommodation and employment. Hong Kong has a program of settling 10 000 refugees and this is now completed.

### *Macau*

Authorities in Macau state that they are unable to accept refugees for permanent settlement, given the territory's size and problems such as water supply and accommodation. Macau has given temporary refuge to some 10 000 Indochinese refugees and the current total there is some 1600.

### *Japan*

The Japanese Government has resisted resettling Indochinese refugees on the grounds that Japan is not a traditional migrant receiving country and is culturally different from Vietnam. Japan had, by July 1981, resettled 1510 Indochinese refugees and the total number of boat people who had been granted permission to land numbered 5050. Japan has come under strong international pressure to resettle refugees, particularly from ASEAN. It has agreed to accept 3000; they are being selected from camps in South East Asia. Japan is endeavouring to arrange resettlement in other countries for those refugees who arrived directly in Japan because few of them meet Japan's selection criteria. In June 1981 Japan became a signatory to the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Financially, Japan has contributed generously to the UNHCR programs of assistance to Indochinese refugees. In 1979 and 1980 around one half of the UNHCR's total requirements were provided by Japan, amounting to approximately \$190 million.

### *Taiwan*

The Indochinese refugee problem has had little effect on Taiwan. Assistance has been provided by Taiwan through grants to international relief agencies and some 11 000 refugees have been accommodated on the Pescadores, not on the main island of Taiwan.

### **International community responses**

The dramatic experiences of people fleeing Vietnam by boat, the devastation and massacres in Kampuchea, helped to draw international attention to the plight of refugees from Indo-China. Initially the international response to the crisis was slow, resettlement of these people was left principally to the United States, Canada, France, Australia and a few European nations. By early 1978 it appeared that these countries could cope with the problem. By the middle of that year the ever-growing exodus from Indo-China, together with the repercussions on the countries of first asylum, demonstrated additional assistance was required to meet a deteriorating situation.

On the initiative of a number of countries, including Australia, the UNHCR convened in Geneva in December 1978 a Consultative Meeting with Interested Governments on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South East Asia. Thirty-six nations were represented and world-wide attention was drawn to the gravity of the refugee problem as well as paving the way to more international involvement in solving the crisis. As a result, international offers of resettlement places increased to 120 000.

The accelerating outflow of refugees from Indo-China in the first half of 1979 outpaced international resettlement efforts and imposed heavy burdens on countries of first asylum. Consequently, the Secretary General of the United Nations convened the Geneva Conference on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South East Asia in July 1979. It was attended by 66 nations and its objectives were primarily humanitarian, namely, to increase resettlement places and to obtain further financial assistance for refugee work. A second feature of the Conference was the initiative of a number of countries, including Australia, to draw attention to the policies of Vietnam as being the source of the problem. The point was made that Vietnam should ameliorate the policies provoking the exodus. The conference was successful on both counts, the number of resettlement places offered throughout the world was increased to 260 000 and the focus on Vietnam resulted in its declaring a moratorium on the outflow of boat people. Since then the UNHCR and United Nations meetings have maintained that Vietnam should ensure that it does not revert to the policies that precipitated the massive refugee outflow.

The response of the international community to resettling Indochinese refugees began to take effect by September 1979. Refugees from camps in countries of first asylum were being resettled at approximately 25 000 per month. By June 1980, over 1 000 000 Indochinese refugees had been resettled in third countries, the main receiving countries being the United States, China, France, Canada, Australia, West Germany and the United Kingdom.

The Committee concludes that the Indochinese refugee problem has not been resolved and the growth in refugee numbers world-wide will continue to place demands on the international community for solutions. The situation tests the adequacy of international aid agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, and the co-ordination of their efforts. Many countries of the international community have accepted responsibility for providing relief to refugees and they have a further task, namely to convince the source countries not to impose conditions which force their citizens to flee as refugees. States which act in this manner are not only committing wrongful acts against their people but are acting irresponsibly towards other States. Australia and other countries stressed this point during the height of the Indochinese refugee crisis and it

has been raised in the United Nations General Assembly and in the Commission on Human Rights. The Committee believes Australia should, and when possible in concert with other countries, maintain emphasis on the need for nations to adhere to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

*Endnote*

1 See transcript of evidence, Official Hansard Report pp. 239-288. The Committee gave this evidence to the Department of Foreign Affairs for the use of the Australian Mission to the United Nations.

## **Australia's response to the Indochinese refugee situation**

### **Implications for Australia's Foreign Policy**

The Indochinese refugee problem is an important domestic issue for Australia, it also significantly affects Australia's bilateral relations with many nations, whether they are source countries, first asylum countries or resettlement countries. As well, refugee issues are important elements in Australia's multilateral diplomacy and assistance programs.

South East Asia is a region of major political, economic and strategic importance to Australia and the Indochinese refugee situation is a cause of instability in the region. The situation has created differences between the ASEAN countries, these have been overcome but the possibility remains that it could again become a contentious issue between the member States. The refugee problem has been a major barrier to the development of better relations between ASEAN and Vietnam. While the refugee problem continues, it will be an unsettling factor and affect Australia's broader interests in the region. It has added new dimensions to Australia's bilateral relations with the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN group.

### **Bilateral**

#### *Relations with Vietnam*

To assist the Government of Vietnam with peaceful reconstruction, Australia committed \$7.1 million in development assistance over the three year period to June 1979. Australia also supported Vietnam's applications for membership of international organisations, including the United Nations. In reaction to Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea and its Government's policy to encourage massive outflows of refugees, Australia suspended the assistance program and cultural relations. This led to a deterioration in relations with Vietnam. The suspension of assistance has been criticised in Australia, both in Parliament and outside it. Nevertheless, the Government has maintained its stand on the issue.

Australia has concentrated on focussing international attention on Vietnam's moratorium on refugee departures and the Orderly Departures Program for Vietnamese refugees. Australia has participated in United Nations debates on the moratorium with the aim of making the undertaking permanent policy. At present the negotiations on the Orderly Departures Program are one of the few positive aspects of bilateral relations with Vietnam.

#### *Relations with Kampuchea*

During the period of the Pol Pot Government the nature of the regime was such that no direct bilateral relations between Australia and Kampuchea were developed. Australia does not recognise the Government of Democratic Kampuchea. Australia actively supports international pressures on Vietnam to withdraw its forces from Kampuchea and to negotiate a political settlement on the country.

#### *Relations with Laos*

Australia's relations with Laos during 1975 and 1979 were correct but not extensive. Since then relations have been more cordial, due in part, to more outward looking Lao policies. Refugee issues have not been a major element in the relationship, although

Australia has settled some Hmong refugees who were not prepared to accept resettlement from the hills to the lowland areas of Laos.

### *Relations with ASEAN*

In the context of Australian-ASEAN relations, Australia's response to the Indochinese refugee problem has been a positive achievement in the relationship. The refugee problem, coming at a time when Australia had major differences with ASEAN over trade and civil aviation matters, demonstrated that there is a genuine sensitivity to ASEAN's predicament and practical assistance towards a solution.

The ASEAN countries acknowledge that Australia has made a substantial contribution to refugee resettlement. However, they consider that Australia and other resettlement countries could and should do more to resolve the problem they have and for which they accept no responsibility. In the ASEAN countries there is a widespread belief that Australia, with its sparsely populated large land, could accept greater numbers of refugees. There are differences between ASEAN members in their views on Australia's resettlement policies. Thailand, for example, considers too much emphasis is given to resettling boat refugees from Malaysian and Indonesian camps at the expense of its land refugee problem. This feeling has been alleviated to some extent with Australia's recent contributions to the Kampuchean relief effort and the Kampuchean family reunion program.

The refugee crisis provided a crucial test for Australia's attitudes to South East Asia and its problems. It came at a time when there were lingering doubts about Australia's immigration policy. Australia's continuing intake of Indochinese refugees as well as migrants from Asia has provided evidence to allay those suspicions. However, the refugee problem is a continuing one and if the numbers of refugees increase substantially, exceeding the absorptive capacity of resettlement countries, including Australia, it could become a serious issue in Australian-ASEAN relations. If ASEAN countries adopt policies to deter refugees, Australia could become the target for unauthorised arrivals; in turn, such developments could affect other elements in Australia's relations with ASEAN.

### *Multilateral*

Australia has a significant involvement in international efforts to find solutions to the Indochinese refugee problem. As a member of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR and an active participant in debates in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly, Australia has sought to keep international attention on finding durable solutions to the problem. As the refugee crisis worsened in 1978 Australia, along with other receiving countries, sought to 'internationalise' the situation by persuading more countries to accept refugees for resettlement. Discussions were also held with Malaysia and Indonesia, seeking their co-operation in holding refugees in transit to enable processing for resettlement. Australia was prominent in international efforts to pressure Vietnam to call a moratorium on its refugee outflow. The efforts culminated in the July 1979 Geneva Conference when more countries agreed to resettle refugees and Vietnam imposed its moratorium on boat departures as well as agreeing to negotiate a procedure for orderly departure. Since 1978 Australia has consistently each year increased its resettlement program from 9000 to 14 000 Indochinese refugees (actual arrivals have exceeded these totals).

Other international initiatives supported or instigated by Australia to assist with solutions to the refugee situation include:

- the fund for durable solutions to which Australia contributed \$1 million. This is an UNHCR program to promote resettlement of Indochinese refugees, particularly in

Third World countries. Proposals that are being developed include resettlement in China, repatriation to Laos and settlement in Belize;

- temporary refuge, an Australian initiative to explore the international community's acceptance of the concept of granting temporary refuge in situations involving large influxes of refugees. The initiative aims to obtain international agreement to establish a region which would, in a mass influx situation, allow temporary refuge to be accorded. The receiving country could then seek assistance through the principle of international burden sharing. The proposal still exists but no progress has been made towards its implementation; and
- rescue at sea provisions are designed to encourage ships' masters to pick up refugees at sea without obligating the flag government to accept the refugees for settlement. Australia has contributed to the UNHCR pool of resettlement places for refugees rescued by flags of convenience vessels and is the largest single contributor to the pool (250 places per annum).

The Australian policy of finding durable solutions for refugee problems advocates voluntary repatriation as the ideal solution. Under suitable circumstances repatriation serves the best interests of the refugees, relieves countries of first asylum of their burden without necessarily damaging relations with the source country, and causes less disruption in both countries. In the case of boat refugees from Vietnam, repatriation has not been possible and the solution has been third country resettlement. Australia has participated in the resettlement, acknowledging that it is not the ideal solution and that it will continue its efforts to find possible other solutions. It is aware third country resettlement carries with it the strong possibility that it can serve to encourage more people to flee the source country. There are indications that this is currently motivating some of the boat refugees.

The Committee concludes that refugee issues have become an important element in Australia's bilateral relations, in particular with the countries of South East Asia. Their impact on Australia's multilateral policy is considerable. The indications are that refugee problems will continue to affect international affairs for years to come and Australia's standing in the world community will, in part, be determined by its policies toward refugees, not only those from Indo-China. Undoubtedly Australia's prominent role in Indochinese refugee matters has raised certain expectations and assumptions that Australia will be of assistance in helping to solve similar problems in other areas of the world. The extent to which Australia responds to such expectations will require careful consideration and balance. The commitment to refugees is not only assessed for its foreign policy implications, it is a significant domestic issue.

#### **Australian aid to refugees**

On a bilateral and a multilateral basis, Australia has granted or committed \$33 million in aid to refugees since July 1978. Over \$25 million of the total has been for Indochinese refugees, including Kampuchean without refugee status. This amount does not include the substantial costs of resettling refugees in Australia.

Assistance to Indochinese refugees commenced with payments to the UNHCR of \$1 million and \$1.3 million in 1977/78, followed by payments of \$3 million in January 1979, and a total of \$2.2 million in June 1979. A further \$3 million was donated to the UNHCR in January 1980, additional to \$0.5 million in response to the UNHCR request for funding a special program for Kampuchean children in Thai camps. In 1980-81 Australia contributed \$5.01 million to the UNHCR General Programs, as well as \$0.5 million to its program for displaced Kampuchean.

In its 1976 report 'Australia and the Refugee Problem' the Committee called for a more flexible, positive and humane approach to be adopted by Australia in response to

refugee situations and for close liaison with Australian non-government organisations (recommendation 7.10, page 91). The Department of Foreign Affairs has assured the Committee that Australian aid to Indochinese refugees in the period 1976 to 1980 has taken into consideration the Committee's recommendation. A demonstration of this approach to aid giving is the following examples of special additional appropriations for assistance to Kampuchians in 1979-80:

- airlifts of relief supplies by RAAF Hercules aircraft under the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) guidance;
- food aid through the World Food Programme (WFP) and through non-government organisations;
- a cash grant of \$200 000 to the public appeal by the Australian International Disasters Emergency Committee;
- financing of Australian medical teams through the Australian Red Cross, and language training by Australian volunteers in refugee camps in Thailand; and
- cash grants to UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, ICRC and to the Food and Agricultural Organisation for agricultural rehabilitation programs.

Australia has also made bilateral grants to Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to assist with refugee relief work. Australian aid to refugees is primarily concentrated on the Indochinese problem and this is recognised at international meetings concerned with refugee issues. In addition to this assistance, Australia also responds to refugee situations elsewhere in the world through its aid program. Appendix 1 shows Australian aid disbursements to refugees and displaced persons since 1978.

Increasing world-wide refugee situations are imposing additional funding problems on international agencies, including non-governmental organisations. Australia's assistance to refugees on a bilateral and multilateral basis is growing as a proportion of its total overseas development assistance program. In the 1981-82 Budget \$7.8 million have been specifically allocated to permit greater flexibility in dealing with emergency refugee and relief situations as they arise. The Committee commends Australia's participation in refugee relief efforts, it demonstrates a humanitarian commitment and is a positive contribution to international attempts at alleviating the suffering involved with such situations.

The Committee concludes that while Australia's present refugee aid is predominantly for the Indochinese, and this is understood and accepted internationally, future aid may well require careful judgement to ensure that Australia's responses are politically balanced and cognisant of global refugee situations. The Committee recommends that the Government should continue to provide assistance to refugees on a bilateral and multilateral basis, and investigate further the scope for assisting Australian non-government organisations engaged in relief programs for refugees overseas. To maximise the benefits of this assistance the Committee also recommends that the Government should ensure that the Australian authorities administering the program have the necessary resources to permit effective aid management and delivery.

### **Refugees and international law**

In recent years the world's refugee population has increased dramatically. Inevitably refugee situations are the product of political instability or change and often afflict developing countries, those least able to cope with the burden of caring for or settling a massive influx of people. The problem has passed to the international community for assistance, especially the industrialised countries of the West. The countries of Eastern Europe have remained detached from the issues, apart from their role as source countries for refugees. It appears unlikely that refugee flows will abate in the near future

that quick solutions to all aspects of the problem will be found, so their impact on international affairs will be felt for some time to come.

There is an urgent requirement for acceptable international laws to meet the humanitarian and political consequences of massive movements of refugees. There are inadequacies in existing international laws relating to refugees and legislation needs to be developed to cover, for example, the following:

- large scale influxes of refugees;
- admission of refugees (asylum or temporary refuge);
- voluntary repatriation;
- safe haven zones;
- family reunions;
- durable solutions (integration or resettlement); and
- rescue at sea and piracy.

Other refugee matters requiring consideration and resolution are the distinction between a refugee and a displaced person, the phenomenon of economic refugees and refugee situations arising from armed conflicts and natural disasters. It could be necessary to find a new definition of a refugee; the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees may be too limiting as it defines a refugee in terms of fear of persecution. New definitions and principles are also needed to ensure that the management of refugee situations is universally acceptable.

The refugee receiving countries of South East Asia are not signatories to the 1951 Convention nor to the 1967 Protocol to it. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that their attitudes to a continuing outflow of refugees will guarantee their concurrence to remaining as countries of first asylum. On occasions they have refused landing rights to refugee boats, turned refugees back at the border, repatriated refugees, admitted them only as illegal immigrants or temporarily on the basis that resettlement elsewhere is guaranteed. The unpredictability of the situation has ramifications for Australia as a continuing target for first asylum, as well as resettlement. This uncertainty emphatically demonstrates Australia's need to participate in international efforts to find solutions and to join in establishing a legal regime which will effectively minimise the severity of refugee situations. Australia has continued to draw international attention to the problems of refugees. It has sought to make existing law more appropriate and its initiative on temporary refuge prompted international efforts to examine ways of overcoming the effects of massive influxes of refugees.

The Committee concludes that the shortcomings in existing international laws relating to refugees are being demonstrated to Australia by the Indochinese problem. Whether the problem be regional or global it is imperative that Australia continues to participate effectively in international attempts to develop realistic and comprehensive laws to contain and minimise the dramatic impact of massive refugee flows. Most refugee issues present problems for developing countries; Australia's willingness and ability to respond with constructive contributions to solutions have an important bearing on its relations with Third World countries, individually and collectively.

### **Future prospects**

After six years there have been no major developments to halt the outflow of refugees from the countries of Indo-China. The numbers fleeing are lower than at the height of the crisis in 1979, but there are concerns that they could increase. To date, Vietnam appears to have upheld the moratorium on refugees, possibly influenced by the damage officially sanctioned departures did to its international image and its political interests

in the region. Other factors influencing the Vietnamese are their attitude to the remaining ethnic Chinese, relations with China and progress with the Orderly Departures Program. Kampuchea and Laos also remain as source countries for refugees. As a consequence refugee issues remain a volatile element in South East Asian affairs and retain their potential to create tension and instability.

The South East Asian region has shown its capability to produce upheavals which in turn displace large numbers of people. The possibilities exist that such events can occur elsewhere in the region when oppressive policies create sufficient disaffection. The mass movement of people outside their borders can develop strains between the countries involved and instability in the region. Acknowledging the importance of the region to Australia, it can have a considerable impact on Australia's relations.

There are no indications that the problems of refugees from Indo-China have been resolved. By the end of 1981 it was estimated that there were still some 45 000 boat refugees and some 90 000 land refugees from Indo-China in South East Asia. Adding to the concerns of the current situation are uncertainties such as the following:

- the changing nature of Indochinese refugees, e.g. economic rather than political, causing resettlement countries to review their intake policies;
- the possibility of countries of first asylum being unable or unwilling to accept additional refugees;
- deteriorating conditions in the countries of Indo-China leading to increased, sanctioned or clandestine, departures;
- traditional major resettlement countries reducing their intake of refugees from Indochinese countries; and
- in these eventualities, Australia again becoming a target for unauthorised arrivals

Throughout the years of the Indochinese refugee exodus, Australia has had a continuing role as a country of resettlement. It has also sought to persuade other countries to accede to the Convention and Protocol relating to refugees and attempted to gain increased international acceptance of burden sharing. It can be anticipated that the unresolved refugee problems resulting from the uncertainties in Indo-China will continue to be key elements of Australia's foreign policy initiatives in the region.

The Committee concludes that assistance to refugees, at this point predominantly to the Indochinese, will be seen by others as having committed Australia to a lasting and even wider role in refugee issues. Australia's performance has created expectations and its future responses will, to a considerable degree, determine its standing in the international community, especially among countries involved with refugee matters. It must therefore be expected that refugee issues will remain an important aspect of Australia's bilateral and multilateral relations and perhaps even grow in significance.

## Resettlement in Australia

### Policy

The experience of accepting refugees as settlers is not new in Australian history. Australia has accepted 400 000 refugees since 1945, many from Europe, and in the last six years over 59 000 from Indo-China. The impact of the *Indochinese refugee crisis* presented Australia with a new set of circumstances and considerations for which existing policies and administrative services were either inappropriate or lacking. The Committee in its 1976 report concluded to this effect and made recommendations directed at assisting the formulation and management of an appropriate Australian refugee program. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations, together with an outline of the ensuing action, provided by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), are in the final Chapter of this report.

On 24 May 1977 the then Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced the Government's policy on refugee matters in a *statement to Parliament* (for the text see Appendix 2). The policy is based on the following principles:

- '—Australia fully recognises its humanitarian commitment and responsibility to admit refugees for resettlement.
- The decision to accept refugees must always remain with the Government of Australia.
- Special assistance will often need to be provided for the movement of refugees in designated situations or for their resettlement in Australia.
- It may not be in the interest of some refugees to settle in Australia. Their interests may be better served by resettlement elsewhere. The Australian Government makes an annual contribution to the UNHCR which is the main body associated with such resettlement.'<sup>2</sup>

Key elements in the administration of the policy include:

- the Government designated that the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, after consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, should be responsible for:
  - '—designating refugee situations;
  - deciding on intakes and migration criteria in designated refugee situations; and for
  - regularly reviewing designations of refugee situations';<sup>3</sup>
- an inter-departmental Committee, the Standing Committee on Refugees (SCOR), was established and first met in July 1977. Its membership comprises senior officers of the Departments of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Chairman), Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Social Security, Finance, Health, Education and Employment and Youth Affairs. It meets as required and deals with policy co-ordination and mechanisms for refugee settlement in Australia; and
- another body, the Determination of Refugee Status Committee, was established in March 1978 to consider requests for refugee status from applicants in Australia. It is chaired by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, with representatives on it from the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet and Attorney-General's. Its recommendations are submitted to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs for decision. An important function of this Committee is to determine the status of all boat people making unauthorised entries into Australia.

The Committee concludes that the formulation of a refugee policy accompanied by comprehensive administrative guidelines is a welcome and vital element of Australia's role in refugee issues. It is essential that the policy and the program resulting from it are understood and accepted at the international level and by the Australian community. The promotion of this is a most important task for Australia's representatives overseas

and for the Government, in co-operation with the involved non-government sector at home. Australia's immigration policy is an integral part of its relations with many countries and the refugee policy is increasing in prominence within that policy. Therefore, the possible effects of the refugee policy on Australia's relations with its migrant source countries must not be overlooked. The Committee commends the development of the refugee policy and recommends that it be kept under regular review to ensure its applicability and adaptability to future refugee situations.

### The Program

The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, after consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and other Ministers, each year submits to Cabinet for approval Australia's Indochinese refugee settlement program. The program is within the guidelines established by the refugee policy and is reviewed annually. When it is determined, among the considerations taken into account are the following:

- the projected refugee intakes of other resettlement countries;
- the numbers of refugees currently in the countries of first asylum;
- the views of UNHCR; and
- Australia's present capacity to settle additional refugees and the adequacy of post-arrival services to cope with their needs.

The selection of refugees for settlement in Australia is handled by the DIEA and officers operating as selection teams in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Immigration officers attached to Australian diplomatic missions in the other countries of first asylum also attend to refugee matters as part of their duties.

Since April 1975 Australia has settled some 59 000 Indochinese refugees; the annual intake over that period is shown in the following table:

|                           | 1974-75 | 1975-76 | 1976-77 | 1977-78 | 1978-79 | 1979-80 | 1980-81 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Vietnamese . . . . .      | 700     | 500     | 934     | 5 458   | 10 799  | 12 991  | 12 201  |
| Kampuchean . . . . .      | —       | 235     | 58      | 328     | 137     | 563     | 1 915   |
| Laotian & Other . . . . . | —       | 302     | 216     | 1 331   | 938     | 1 401   | 888     |
| Total . . . . .           | 700     | 1 037   | 1 208   | 7 117   | 11 874  | 14 955  | 15 004  |

Source: The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

In that period some 2100 Indochinese refugees in 54 boats have made unauthorised entries into Australia. It has been estimated that approximately \$2500 is expended on each Indochinese refugee in the resettlement process. Australia's expenditure on Indochinese refugees overseas and for resettlement has exceeded \$150 million.

The Committee, in its 1976 report, stated that '... resettlement should be viewed as a continuum which commences with the displacement and flight of refugees, and ceases on their integration into the community of the receiving country'. The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, when delivering Australia's 'Refugee Policy and Mechanisms' on 24 May 1977, concurred with the Committee's opinion when he said, 'it is the Government's view that the acceptance and settlement of refugees should be a continuum beginning with a quick and decisive response to international crises and concluding, after what may be a long and difficult path for the refugee, with successful integration into the Australian community'.

In evidence to the Committee, the DIEA expressed the view that:

'The role played by Government and the community in the settlement of refugees and migrants has been an evolving one. The expectations of the Australian community and of the

refugees and migrants themselves have changed over time as the standard of living in Australia has risen, and concerns for equality of opportunity and greater access to community resources have become widespread. Today, the contributions of migrants and refugees to Australia's economic and cultural development have been recognised along with a realisation that the decision to allow entry to Australia bestows an obligation on the Government to provide post-arrival settlement assistance. The Settlement program aims at refugees becoming contributing, self-sufficient members of the community as soon as possible.

Government decisions to settle refugees are now made in the knowledge that arrangements will have to be made to provide services to facilitate their settlement. This implies the acceptance of the financial responsibility for providing post-arrival services.

The need for new emphases in settlement services was reflected, particularly, in the reports arising from the Australian Government's Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in 1975 and the Senate Standing Committee's Report in 1976. Both these reports drew together the threads of experience of those dealing with migrant settlement and emphasised the need for post-arrival assistance. To a degree this need was highlighted by the early Indo-Chinese refugee arrivals. At that time some special services were provided for refugees, although these tended to be delivered on an ad hoc basis. Generally, services suffered because of the lack of co-ordination between federal and State government bodies and voluntary agencies providing welfare services.<sup>4</sup>

The Department added that the 'Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants' report, known widely as the Galbally Report, contributed much to the streamlining of settlement procedures for migrants and refugees.

Throughout the inquiry the evidence the Committee received indicated that the settlement program is generally appreciated and accepted. Among witnesses there are varying views on the emphasis certain aspects of the program's application are given and these include:

- co-operation and co-ordination between Federal, State and Local government instrumentalities have been established on refugee matters; these can and should be improved. The Federal government must ensure it will provide adequate resources to the States for them to satisfactorily meet the additional burdens refugees impose on their services and facilities;
- the Government has encouraged community participation and assistance in settling refugees, the response has been good and has grown. There is an obligation on the Government to continue to support, financially and through co-operation, the work of voluntary agencies and groups involved with the process of settling and integrating refugees into the community;
- family reunion, a cornerstone of the program, should be more widely applied to fully recognise the importance of the extended family system among the Indochinese;
- selection procedures: some witnesses claimed that only the 'creme' of refugees was chosen to come to Australia, others did not see this to be the case;
- the program has in the past concentrated predominantly on settling Vietnamese. It is now time to examine more closely the plight of Kampuchians, Laos and minority groups such as the Hmong in refugee centres in Thailand;
- there is a limited call to increase the number of Indochinese refugees for settlement in Australia. Most witnesses do not advocate an increase and there is evidence advocating a cautious approach to any increase in the intake before carefully assessing community reactions and absorptive capacity;
- post-arrival services and facilities at Migrant Centres are generally acknowledged as being good. There is some feeling that certain services, e.g. English and orientation courses, could be altered and extended to make them more effective; and
- services available to refugees on entering the community were not always understood by them, e.g. welfare, education, benefits, housing, legal advice and financial matters. There is an ongoing need to familiarise and inform them of what is available and to

assist with this it is important to develop an improved service for informing voluntary groups of the arrival of new refugee settlers to their areas.

The varying points of view and comments on the settlement program from witnesses were referred to the DIEA by the Committee. Commenting on the program generally, the DIEA said that it has been, and continues to be, an evolving process. It is monitored constantly in the light of the international refugee situation, Australia's perceived obligations in this field and domestic factors, particularly the community's ability to absorb refugees.

In relation to the specific comments from the witnesses the DIEA gave the following responses:

- there is now improved co-operation and co-ordination between Federal and State instrumentalities at various levels on refugee matters, e.g. both are represented on bodies such as Migrant Settlement Councils;
- voluntary agencies and groups are encouraged to participate in settlement schemes. Consultations between the Department and the voluntary bodies are constant and extensive. Both are represented on consultative and advisory bodies, e.g. the Australian Council for Population and Ethnic Affairs, Migrant Settlement Councils and the Settlement Committee. Financial assistance is provided to agencies and groups from the Grants-in-Aid scheme and funding for specific projects is also available. Unfortunately budgetary restrictions inhibit the amount of assistance that is available;
- the Department acknowledges the importance of family reunions in the program. At times the complexities of situations among families may hinder or prevent reunions, but overall the Department feels the success rate is high;
- the Department denies that only the 'creme' of refugees is selected from settlement in Australia. Family reunions are the dominant criteria; otherwise the selection endeavours to cover a balanced cross-section of people. In addition, there is a conscious effort made to choose some of the more difficult settlement cases and handicapped people;
- in determining the national and ethnic composition of the Indochinese refugee intake, first priority is given to people whose immediate security is at risk. As situations alter, other problem areas receive attention, e.g. a decline in numbers in Malaysia can mean a shift of selection emphasis to Thailand. It is not possible for selection procedures to cater for all groups. The Department pointed out that among, for instance, the Hmong people polygamy is practised, and this is unsuitable in Australia's social structure. The Department keeps the composition of the intake under close examination but added that there will always be disagreement among people on whatever concentration is given to one or another nationality or ethnic group;
- the Department did not suggest an optimum number of refugees for settlement in Australia. The size of the intake is set annually, in keeping with Australia's perceived international obligations and domestic considerations;
- the Department monitors the effectiveness of post-arrival services. It is generally pleased with the way they have been developed and is continuing to seek ways to improve these services; and
- to acquaint new settlers with the range of services and facilities available to them and to promote their social and cultural life, Community Settlement Centres have been established. Fourteen are located at Migrant Centres and ten in the community in all States and the Northern Territory. Publications in a number of languages are also distributed to assist new settlers with information on available services.

The Committee concludes that the urgency of the Indochinese refugee crisis and Australia's response to its first intake of non-European refugees gave little time for the

formulation of a comprehensive settlement program. It is therefore understandable that the program has been an evolving one and continues to be developed through experience. It is the Committee's finding that overall the settlement program is operating successfully, its record of settling many thousands of refugees is testimony to its effectiveness. It is also appropriate that the size of the refugee intake within the program is determined annually. For the program to remain effective, it must be flexible enough to be adapted to changes in refugee outflows, the changing nature of refugees, e.g. economic rather than political, Australia's international obligations and domestic factors which indicate the community's capacity to absorb refugees.

The Committee recommends that the Government maintains constant monitoring of refugee situations and continues to review the relevance of the settlement program to those situations. To allow the settlement program to function effectively, the Committee also recommends that the Government continues, and where necessary increases, its support to government instrumentalities and voluntary groups engaged in providing post-arrival services and conducting settlement schemes.

### **Settlement services provided for refugees**

#### *Migrant Centres*

The majority of refugees, when they first arrive in Australia, is housed in Migrant Centres, which are run by the Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services Limited (CACSL). There are 14 such Centres operating, 4 in Sydney, 4 in Melbourne, 1 in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin and Hobart, and 1 on the coast of New South Wales, at Fairy Meadow.

Families are entitled to stay for 12 months, childless couples 6 months and single people 3 months. Extensions of these periods may be applied for to a Committee of Review in extenuating circumstances. Payment for the first seven days is met by the Government. However, then the resident becomes eligible for special Social Security Benefits, and the tariff is met partly by deductions from benefits and partly by direct Government subsidy.

Facilities provided at the Migrant Centres are:

*English Tuition:* On arrival, English courses are available at all Migrant Centres for refugees. Course lengths are varied to meet the needs of participants and may last from five to approximately ten weeks full-time or the equivalent made up of full-time and/or part-time. These courses are designed for survival English.

*Orientation.* Settlement Officers at the Centres provide information and orientation sessions, which include matters such as employment, housing, law, health, finance, social security, Telephone Interpreter Service, etc. Other orientation activities include conversation groups, craft, etc.

*Health Care:* Nursing Sisters are available at all Centres and doctors visit Centres on a regular basis, except where Centres are very close to medical practitioners' rooms. Indochinese refugees receive comprehensive medical screening during their first weeks in residence. Dental care is also provided.

*Welfare:* The Centres provide welfare services and these include, assessment of clothing needs of refugees; and initial interviews in which matters such as Medibank, documentation, general health assessment, family allowances, schooling, advice on welfare services available, contacts in case of future needs, nomination of relatives overseas and problems the refugees may have, are dealt with. Social Security Benefits are paid to refugees residing in the Centres.

*Employment:* Officers from the Commonwealth Employment Service provide assistance to residents seeking work and employment counselling at the Centres except in South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, in these Centres visits are made by officers regularly or as required. Residents who wish to have trade or professional qualifications assessed are referred by Employment Officers to local trade councils or the Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications.

*Housing:* An Accommodation Advisory Service is provided in all Centres. Housing Officers keep a comprehensive listing of accommodation available for either purchase or letting, and act as intermediaries between residents, real estate agencies and State Housing Commissions. Migrant flats located in mainland capital cities are also available to refugees once they have left the Centre. Rental for these flats is paid by the occupants and the Housing Officer controls the occupancy.

*The Committee for Allocation of Loan Funds to Refugees from Indo-China (CALFRIC):* Loans are available for Indochinese refugees and, more recently, refugees from Eastern Europe, from the loan scheme operated by CALFRIC. Money is available only to refugees resident at a Migrant Centre and the maximum loan is \$600 for families, \$300 for married couples and \$100 for single people.

In the first five months of 1981, loans were issued at the rate of 207 loans per month, at an average rate of \$426 per loan. The fund is run by voluntary agencies, is interest-free and operates on a revolving basis. The repayment period is normally two years. Its operating capital is some \$1 363 000.

*Interpreter Service:* Multilingual and bilingual staff are employed as interpreters to assist in communication with residents.

*Facilities for Children:* Houseparents are employed by CACS to be responsible for Un-attached Children classified under the Guardianship of Children Act. Child minding services are provided and include Child Care Centres for children aged over two and up to school age, and Child Watching, a facility provided for children up to two years of age.

*Catering:* All meals are provided at the Migrant Centres. At the Centres in Darwin and Hobart cooking is done by the residents. Asian meals are included on the menus.

*Recreation:* Youth recreation is provided for and includes indoor and outdoor facilities. Playgrounds are provided for younger children. Youth leaders are appointed and co-ordinate activities with other clubs. Adult recreation facilities are available at only two Centres.

*Hosting and Friendship Scheme:* This scheme provides a means by which the host community can befriend and assist newly arrived migrants and refugees. Individuals or groups in the community are put in contact with refugee families, by the Settlement Officer at Migrant Centres or by the community co-ordinator.

### **Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS)**

This Scheme was established by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and enables the Australian community to be involved in settling refugees by sponsoring Indochinese (and Eastern European) refugees. Offers of settlement are tested for viability, including the matters mentioned below, the schooling of children, and eventual establishment in the community. By October 1981, 2995 Indochinese had been settled in Australia under this Scheme.

Refugees who do not go to a Migrant Centre on their arrival in Australia are placed in private accommodation arranged by sponsors, friends or relatives. Accommodation must be arranged close to the hosts and preferably within reasonable proximity of

others of similar ethnic background. Sponsors should be aware of welfare and health services in the proposed settlement area.

The period for which CRSS sponsors are required to support refugees varies with the circumstances, but six months is regarded as a reasonable time. The same government assistance is available for these refugees, i.e. health checks, social welfare benefits, English language training, etc., but it is the responsibility of the sponsor to direct and assist the refugees in these matters. Participants in the CRSS are responsible for income maintenance and are expected to help find employment for refugees. Refugees with insufficient means of support may apply for special benefits from the Department of Social Security. Periodic follow-up visits are made to the refugees by bilingual staff from the DIEA.

Indochinese refugees already settled in Australia may sponsor individuals to join them in Australia. As at August 1981 some 60 percent of CRSS applications were for personal nominations, the majority of these was for family reunion.

#### **Other sponsorship**

The other way of bringing Indochinese refugees into Australia is through the local Migrant Settlement Council. Individuals, church groups, or community groups may make offers which are assessed by Migrant Settlement Councils in each State and Territory before they are accepted. The requirements for acceptance are guarantees of accommodation, employment and general support.

#### **Hosting and friendship schemes**

Hosting schemes operate while refugees are still living in the Migrant Centres, as previously mentioned, in the form of organised outings and providing friendship and emotional support. Support groups or individuals befriend refugees, and also help them once they have left the Centre, with welfare matters, housing, etc., and generally with living in a new community. Community groups also offer to help families in a less formal way and offers to assist in this way are handled by Settlement Officers at the Centres.

#### **Voluntary agencies**

Many voluntary agencies are engaged in refugee settlement and assistance, and have regular contact with the DIEA through the Departmental Committee on Refugees and through their applications for Grants-in-Aid, and aid schemes provided by the Commonwealth Government which enable them to employ social/welfare workers in programs for settlement of migrants and refugees. Subsidies of up to \$5000 are also available to agencies for one-off migrant projects to assist with settlement.

#### **Social Welfare**

DIEA welfare staff provide welfare programs to assist migrants to settle in the community. They assess the needs of individual refugees and ethnic groups, develop a comprehensive overview of the resources available, co-ordinate community services, promote awareness of refugee needs among service providers, develop and provide services and feedback to the DIEA on emerging resettlement issues.

### **Special services for refugees**

*Social Security Payments:* Refugees are entitled to payment of a special benefit, for the first four weeks after their arrival in Australia, after which they must apply for Social Security Benefits in the usual way.

*Education Allowance:* Refugees undertaking full-time English language classes are eligible for an Education Allowance under the Adult Migrant Education Program conducted by the DIEA which is equivalent to Unemployment Benefit.

*Clothing Allowance:* The DIEA administers a scheme to refund voluntary agencies for supply of personal requisites and clothing given on the basis of need up to the amount of \$50 per refugee.

*Education for Refugee Children:* A Commonwealth Contingency Program for Refugee Children gives special assistance to government and non-government schools for language/orientation programs for school age children newly arrived in Australia. From 1975 to the end of 1980, approximately \$7.2 million was made available and in 1980-81 \$2 335 257 was expended on the operation of this Program during the first half of the year.

### **Facilities available to refugees and migrants**

*English Courses:* Provided by Adult Migrant Education.

*Migrant Resource Centres:* Provide a base for ethnic communities to work from, facilities for cultural activities, etc.

*Telephone Interpreter Service:* Provides interpreting, information and referral services by means of the telephone.

*Translation Services:* This service facilitates communication between non-English speakers and government departments and instrumentalities, and translation of material relevant to government administration, and personal documents related to settlement.

Refugees are also entitled to a range of benefits, pensions and allowances on the same basis as any other individual. These include:

- Unemployment Benefit;
- Social Welfare Benefits; and
- Education Allowances.

### **Endnotes**

2. See transcript of evidence, Official Hansard Report p. 1171.

3. See transcript of evidence, Official Hansard Report p. 1170.

4. See transcript of evidence, Official Hansard Report pp. 1176-77.

## Issues in resettlement

Much of the evidence the Committee received dealt with post-arrival services and facilities for Indochinese refugee settlers. Comments included both criticisms and commendations of what is being done and the following section reflects the comments received by the Committee on these aspects of resettlement.

### Services at Migrant Centres

Witnesses who commented on Migrant Centres agreed that they played an important part in the initial settling-in process of resettlement; however, comments were varied and included the following matters. Migrant Centre experience should be available for everyone, as the Centre provides a transitional environment which is crucial to the settlement of refugees. Complaints were made to the Committee about the operation of welfare services in the Centres. One complaint was made about a particular welfare officer in a Migrant Centre in South Australia. The Committee referred the complaint to the CACS, and the Committee was assured that the matter had been investigated and the Company was completely satisfied with the officer concerned. Another witness felt that the welfare services were inadequate, there was need for practical assistance by the officers, the volume of work was too great for the one welfare officer at each Centre, and this prevented them from sensitively approaching deeper issues.

Several witnesses told the Committee that refugees complained about the food at Centres, particularly about the way in which rice was cooked. One witness suggested that the old and the sick should be allowed to cook their own meals, and be given a corresponding allowance if the situation warranted it. Other comments were that employment conflicted with English classes and that refugee residents in the Centres did not have much contact with the Australian community if there was no hosting scheme in operation at certain Centres.

As far as welfare in the Centres was concerned, witnesses from CACS told the Committee that the service was working well and often refugees returned to the Centres for assistance from the welfare officer after they had settled in the community. With regard to catering, CACS had only received minor complaints about food and in fact, one particular complaint was that there was too much of a bias towards South East Asian food. The management of CACS said South East Asians ate very well at the hostel and had less plate waste than other residents.

### English tuition

English proficiency is recognised as the most crucial element of successful Indochinese settlement in Australia, and many witnesses considered the English course provided at Migrant Centres was inadequate. The Committee sought the DIEA's view on the adequacy of the course offered and was told that it was intended as a survival course only, a very basic level of competence was aimed for, people's skills and attributes were taken into account in the course, and there were other courses refugees could attend which would provide a wider range of English language skills after they leave the Centres. So, the period of time for this course was intended to be a short one.

Concern was also expressed about the ability of refugees who were working, to attend English classes because they were too tired, particularly, as they would have to attend night classes, and it was suggested that employers should consider allowing refugees time off to attend English classes. Some difficulties were also expressed by refugees settled outside city areas with regard to English language training, but the CRSS

Committee was aware of the situations and told the Committee that sponsors have been able to make other arrangements in most cases.

### Education

Indochinese students are highly regarded at their schools, they are intelligent, highly motivated and have generally done well once they have become competent in English, despite the different method of conducting classes in Australia, where the students may question teachers and the teaching system is more informal than in Indo-China. A number of witnesses from education institutions agreed that more funding is required to enable them to cope with extra students, particularly as they require special training in English. More materials are also needed, particularly for the secondary school beginner and for the older age group of illiterate children.

Some witnesses expressed dissatisfaction with the criteria for attraction of contingency funding for 'English as a second language' teachers, in particular the student teacher ratio which they considered was too high.

With regard to education allowances, some concern was expressed about refugees' eligibility for the Tertiary Education Allowance, where they had already undertaken a course of study overseas. The Committee was told by the Department of Education, that applications are assessed individually, but students are not assisted to do a year of study which corresponds to a year undertaken overseas. Applications from overseas students are not given privileged treatment but dealt with on the same basis as all other applications. However, applications are treated sympathetically and if students are dissatisfied with a decision they have recourse to the Student Assistance Review Tribunals. Some witnesses also commented that the Adult Secondary Education Assistance Scheme allowances are available for students whose parents are not in Australia, but the allowance is available for one year only. At least four witnesses also stated that there should be more bilingual tutors or teachers' aides, although one Vietnamese witness expressed the view that Australian teachers were preferable to bilingual teachers.

Other witnesses were of the opinion that refugee teachers could be used in Australia, although one witness stated that the Commonwealth Teachers' Service has certain standards, not all refugee teachers have adequate competence in English, and the Teachers' Service has to make sure that local teachers are employed. The necessity for a multicultural approach to education was another matter raised in the education context. Evidence from the Department of Education included the following matters:

- state education authorities consider arrivals of refugee students a problem because they are often unannounced and schools have difficulty in coping in the short term;<sup>5</sup>
- students of secondary school age who are illiterate are difficult to cater for and more materials are needed for their successful education. However, the Department has recently begun to develop the materials needed. More people experienced in teaching illiterates generally are also needed;
- bilingual materials are needed for teaching refugee children. However, the Multicultural Education Program is producing a vast amount of such material to alleviate this need;
- assistance is provided to the States under the Contingency Program for Refugee Children, including children in non-metropolitan areas and although there is a pupil-teacher ratio, assistance for small groups such as those in the country is forthcoming under almost all circumstances. Requests for assistance are also approved very quickly;
- more support should be given to first language development in younger children;
- tertiary students have often not mastered discursive styles of educational English and support is therefore needed until full competence is achieved;

- co-operation with the States is generally good in many cases, e.g. under the Contingency Program. In some instances, however, there is difficulty in obtaining basic accountability information from some States;
- the States consider more money is needed for the education of refugee children under the Contingency Program, and that an average funding for six months is not enough;
- although the Department does not have any direct evidence, it is known that some Vietnamese students are doing very well. However, the Department had been informed that not all students were so highly motivated and in particular, Kampuchean children had had traumatic experiences and needed more support;
- the Contingency Program is in the process of being evaluated. The evaluation involves not only the educational aspects of the Program, but also the social adjustment of refugee students. The evaluation report will be finalised in the first half of 1982;
- permanency of staff is another problem. The Program is operating with casual staff who have no career prospects;
- interaction between teachers in the Program and teachers in the receiving schools is needed. Wider access to the Program would be beneficial to all students, including migrant students;
- there is an increase in demand for the language and cultural courses for professionals;
- refugee children often have dental and hearing problems which could affect their education;
- the Adult Secondary Education Assistance Scheme, from the beginning of 1982, will be changed to provide for any student who has not progressed beyond year 10 in the Australian education system and meets other requirements. They will be eligible for two years' benefits. The two year study break, which rendered students ineligible, has also been waived;
- the Secondary Allowance Scheme, which is a scheme of assistance to parents, will from 1982 be paid to students directly and means tested solely on what the student earns;
- there is no Commonwealth assistance scheme which covers students themselves at junior school level, some secondary school students, because of their inadequate knowledge of English, have to go back to junior school levels;
- the Department of Social Security now pays a double-orphans pension to a person who is looking after an Indochinese refugee child or full-time student between 16 and 24 years of age;
- as a result of the Review of Commonwealth Functions Committee report:
  - (1) State Offices of the Commonwealth Schools Commission will be scaled down, so the refugee program will now be run in conjunction with the State Department of Education offices;
  - (2) the Commonwealth Schools Commission must reduce its data collection activities, which would make it difficult to judge migrant education programs;
  - (3) the Education Research and Development Committee has been abolished, which means that educational research has lapsed; and
  - (4) the Curriculum Development Centre has also been abolished, which will leave a gap in multicultural education;
- bilingual staff are not a problem in city areas, although there could be a problem in some non-metropolitan areas, otherwise supply exceeds demand; and
- there is a need, however, to see if bilingual personnel could be used as teachers.

## Orientation

Timing of classes is of considerable importance according to a number of witnesses. Some were of the opinion that refugees are not capable of absorbing the information during their first weeks in Australia, because they are still in a state of cultural shock and are adjusting to their new environment. Other comments made were, that *audio-visual material would be helpful to the refugees in these classes, and that written information in their home languages should be given to the refugees on being selected to come to Australia.* According to other witnesses, the real need for orientation arises once the refugees are in the community and it is difficult for them to comprehend the orientation in a Migrant Centre environment. Follow-up orientation, once the refugees have settled in the community, was suggested as a solution. A contrary view was expressed by a witness from the CACS who said that orientation classes should be held early when refugees were in the Migrant Centres because some refugees left after five or six weeks.

As far as orientation classes for refugees who are settled directly into the community are concerned, the DIEA told the Committee that orientation can be quite informal, as long as sponsors are aware of its importance. In some States, classes are provided in country towns by bilingual instructors and the Department is seeking to expand these programs and give more support to sponsor groups by way of specialised advice and information kits.

## Health care

A number of witnesses expressed concern about the difficulty for health authorities in supervising the follow-up treatment of refugees who have been put on a course of chemotherapy treatment for tuberculosis, once they have left the Migrant Centre, or if they are placed directly in the community. Refugees, before their admission to Australia, however, have undergone thorough medical and radiological examination. The officials of DIEA, and Commonwealth and State government Departments of Health co-operate in ensuring follow-up treatment is carried out for the requisite time. The States carry out further health checks and sponsor groups are receiving improved information packages, which will inform them of the special provisions of mainstream health services. The Commonwealth Department of Health has also set up a small Migrant Health Unit which monitors information on the health of all migrants coming to Australia, particularly their morbidity rate. Another problem concerning at least three witnesses was the long waiting list for dental treatment, as there is a great need for dental work amongst refugee groups.

The traumatic experiences of the refugees could cause future mental health problems and this is a matter which concerned at least seven witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee. Some concern was expressed that mental health problems would occur some time after refugees had arrived and that there is a need for the Government to act now, with research into the problem and training professionals and para-professionals to be sensitive to this problem. There is, however, a major study funded by the Department of Health, being conducted into the social and psychological adjustment of recently arrived refugee groups from Indo-China, which will continue for three years.

## Welfare services

Witnesses' feelings about welfare services for refugees provided by voluntary agencies were mixed. Some witnesses thought the agencies were functioning well, while others considered that follow-up services were inadequate. This is due partly to the unavailability of lists of refugees' addresses (departure lists) once they left the Centre.

The lists are not widely distributed as there is a need to respect the refugees' privacy and confidentiality. The CACS has the view, however, that refugees change their addresses quite frequently when they leave the Centres and it is difficult for agencies to find them. The Migrant Centres have found that because refugees often were not familiar with local welfare facilities, ex-residents often return for advice and counselling. The CACS considers that its welfare service has adapted well to the needs of Indochinese refugees.

A witness from South Australia took the view that voluntary groups are not well coordinated and that both the Government and the groups themselves are responsible. Another witness from Victoria stated that welfare services do not overlap and co-ordination and consultation are good.

At least two witnesses also mentioned that Indochinese ethnic communities are now providing mutual help which is of great value. Other matters mentioned which require attention are the small number of bilingual social workers, counselling facilities, and in at least one case, dissatisfaction with liaison with the Government. There was also a general consensus among church and voluntary groups that more resources and/or funds should be provided by the Government if their work was to continue satisfactorily. The need for community participation was acknowledged by these groups, but many felt that their work was inhibited by present funding and resources.

In reply to the Committee's questioning about these deficiencies, the DIEA informed the Committee that resources are allocated to cope with the most pressing problems and that it is very difficult to have a system of services and programs involving both the voluntary and government sector which copes with all the problem areas. The Department also stated that financial assistance is being provided to ethnic Indochinese refugee organisations and that there would be a major evaluation of the Galbally report implementation which would include assistance to voluntary agencies. By the end of 1981-82 financial year \$76 075 will have been provided to ethnic Indochinese organisations.

The Department also sees its role as one not only of service and delivery, but as a catalyst to encourage refugees to become involved in the community, by means of self-help, and encouraging the community to also become involved through consultation and funding schemes such as the CRSS and the Hosting and Friendship Scheme.

Several witnesses expressed concern over the restriction which receipt of Unemployment Benefit placed on students. Those in receipt of Unemployment Benefit are restricted to eight hours of lectures a week, full-time. This issue has been thrown into doubt somewhat by media reports that students receiving Unemployment Benefit have not been restricting their studies as required. The Committee has been informed that the DIEA is investigating the matter.

Another witness was concerned that single mothers with small children received Unemployment Benefit rather than a Supporting Mother's Benefit, which meant that they had to seek work regularly and this was not practicable. Another witness pointed out Unemployment Benefit is below the poverty line.

### Qualifications

Without exception, witnesses who commented on refugees' qualifications were of the opinion that something should be done to make it possible for refugees with professional training to use their qualifications in Australia. In some cases refugees lose their certificates or cannot obtain proof of their qualifications from their former homelands. Most refugees' knowledge of English is not sufficient to enable them to sit for qualifying examinations. The Committee was told by some witnesses that there is a need for re-training and for special English classes to enable refugees to sit for qualifying examinations or become familiar with the terminology of the profession or trade

they wish to re-enter. The DIEA is aware of the problem of qualifications and informed the Committee that language is one part of the problem, i.e. insufficient command of English, and the other is, in some cases, the non-compatibility of the professional training received in home countries of the refugees. Some witnesses also suggested that refugees who had been teachers in Indo-China could be employed as teachers in Australia; the Committee understands that some have been employed as teachers' aides and some as teachers.

After consultation and co-operation with the State Ministers for Immigration, the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced that a review body is to be formed to examine the recognition of qualifications held by migrants and refugees. The review will, in particular, address the problems faced by refugees in having their qualifications recognised.

### **Employment**

Most male Indochinese workers are employed in manufacturing industry, some in Victoria in the Tramways Board, or work in other industries, such as printing, food and electrical. Women are also employed in manufacturing industries, chocolate factories, food processing factories, in the textile industries and are also in demand as domestics. Some refugees have gone into business for themselves, for example restaurants.

The majority of witnesses who expressed opinions about the employment situation agreed that many refugees were successful in their search for work. Employers have also expressed satisfaction with Indochinese employees and find them to be hard working. However, complaints were also made that these jobs were nearly always unskilled whereas some refugees were trained for professional work. The situation had been brought about by non-recognition of skills and lack of technical English. The DIEA reflected these observations in its evidence to the Committee, and said that refugees were good, stable employees, and their unemployment rate is not much higher than that in the community generally and lower than that among some groups. Many, however, appeared to be underemployed because of the non-recognition of skills, and their concentration in particular sectors of the manufacturing industry. They are a vulnerable group, and are subject to downturns in those industries. Retraining for refugees has also been suggested to overcome this problem.

Special Purpose English courses have been established to enable people with professional qualifications to practise their professions in Australia. The Committee understands that they are pilot courses at this stage, and the DIEA is attempting to gauge what demand exists for them and undertake further planning accordingly. They include tuition in English in Victoria, for example, for professionals, computer programmers, nurses, nursing aides, motor mechanics, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology has provided some courses under contract. In New South Wales, courses for professionals and technicians are being held.

Another matter raised in relation to employment was that workers already in the community sometimes considered refugees were in competition for work with them, in particular unskilled migrant workers and Australians, and this could raise some inter-racial problems. Evidence suggested a solution to this problem was to put more time and money into preparing them for white collar and trade jobs, which would spread refugees throughout the workforce.

### **Housing**

Some witnesses expressed anxiety about housing in Melbourne, where the waiting list for Commission houses had increased to 16 months and there was a shortage of rental

accommodation, which created a problem in the length of stay at Migrant Centres. One witness reported that some people in Melbourne believed that Indochinese refugees were being given preference on the Housing Commission list and that this had created tensions and resentment. Refugees were staying longer in Migrant Centres in Darwin, because of lack of accommodation in the community and its high cost. The Committee was also told that refugees are not anxious to use the migrant transitory flats available to them because only one family per flat is permitted.

### **Enclaves**

Indo-Chinese living in groups are a source of support for one another and this, as a stabilising factor, could lead to eventual successful integration into Australian society. Concentrations of Indo-Chinese are evident in Sydney in the Fairfield area, but at least one witness felt that the Indo-Chinese had been successful in overcoming any prejudice. However, evidence indicated that it is a matter of concern that some concentrations are taking place in disadvantaged areas and there should be increased expenditure on services if migrants and disadvantaged minority groups are not to bear the costs of refugee settlement. Problems in areas where refugees are grouped are not always caused by them, and many problems in Sydney, for example, were caused by outsiders. Another witness stated that a high percentage of Asian children in schools causes tensions in the playgrounds.

The DIEA was of the opinion that Indo-Chinese refugees are not as mobile as other migrants, however, one Vietnamese witness stated that although Indo-Chinese refugees first moved into an enclave situation when they left the Migrant Centre, subsequently, if they are able to buy a house they would move away from the area of their community.

The Keys Young Survey of 'The Settlement Process of the Vietnamese, Lao, Kampuchean and Timorese in Sydney' found that the existing location of friends/relatives was the major factor of community settlement. Some refugees, however, living in areas other than Fairfield were influenced by their employment. Refugees tended to remain in areas where they first settled and secondary moves were likely to result in increased concentrations of Indo-Chinese in Fairfield.

### **The Community Refugee Settlement Scheme**

Witnesses had mixed reactions to the CRSS which settles refugees directly in the community. Some were enthusiastic about the Scheme and considered that it met the personal needs of the refugees, it speeded up the 'processing' of some refugees from the camps, families had settled well in the community and it was a good Scheme because it bypassed the Migrant Centres. Refugees were most appreciative of the CRSS and had benefited by settling directly in the community. The CRSS Committee was certain in its evidence, that a smooth transition into the total Australian community was achieved by this method of settlement and despite a cautious start, the Scheme had been successful. There was, however, need for the Scheme to become more visible, and there was a wealth of generosity in the community which had not yet been tapped because of this.

There were also comments on the negative side of the Scheme, e.g. there were problems of isolation, lack of proper orientation and preparation of host groups, sometimes pressure was put on refugees to join church groups, there was no proper organised system for English tuition in Queensland and in Darwin some organisations had exhausted their funds. Funds were also of concern in New South Wales. Some witnesses considered the CRSS was inadequate and as a consequence agencies were overwhelmed

with demands for practical settlement. Other comments indicated probable participants were put off because they could not choose the family, and the Scheme could not operate in country areas because of the employment situation.

The DIEA, in response to some of these criticisms, stressed that one of the criteria for selecting CRSS sponsor groups is awareness of the importance of and the ability to provide practical orientation, but the fact that it may be informal in some cases does not make it less effective than organised programs. However, in some States bilingual information instructors give orientation in refugees' home languages in country towns soon after the refugees' arrival. Difficulties with formal English tuition are overcome to some extent by the home tutor scheme. The Department also makes efforts to try and ensure large enough groups arrive in an area simultaneously to warrant an Adult Migrant Education Scheme program, and as much warning as possible is given to child education authorities about arrivals of refugee children.

One witness felt that the Scheme had not worked the way in which voluntary agencies hoped it would because they thought it would increase the number of refugees brought into Australia, when in fact, it did not. In Queensland there were problems where small groups of refugees had been taken to country towns where the support services were not available and in some cases this had not been successful, despite the good intentions of the sponsors. Refugees in some instances, had gone back to Brisbane. The contrary view was expressed by another witness who said that provided they could get employment, their children could go to school and if there was not a negative reaction from the community, they usually stayed. The view was also expressed that refugees should be given the opportunity to go into a Centre first, where they can rest, take in the information given to them there and learn something about life in Australia before they face their new community.

Several witnesses expressed concern about supervision of the health of the refugees settled directly into the community, especially those who were receiving chemotherapy treatment for tuberculosis and who were obliged to take tablets regularly. The DIEA told the Committee that contact is made with sponsors under the Scheme, with a view to instructing host groups and State health authorities are informed by the Department of Health, as far as they know, where the refugees are going. However, resources were sometimes a limiting factor, geographic distances were a problem in some States, and the Department of Health believed that State health authorities would like CRSS refugees absorbed into the community more slowly. In Queensland additional health checks were carried out in regional centres such as Townsville. On the matter of health, the DIEA keeps in touch with the Department of Health and if concern is expressed, this would then be taken into account in determining exactly how the Scheme will continue to operate.

It was suggested to the Committee that for co-ordination and effectiveness of CRSS settlement activities, the Scheme should engage an officer or officers who could visit intending sponsor groups and counsel them. The Committee suggested this to the DIEA and they considered that the suggestion had merit.

### **CALFRIC**

Witnesses were generally in favour of the CALFRIC Scheme; however, the following critical comments were made. The size and number of loans is being kept down, which delays departures from Migrant Centres, and accordingly more money should be made available. The Scheme did not receive enough publicity and it appeared that only those refugees in contact with the voluntary agencies which run the Scheme have access. One

witness suggested that applications for loans should be means tested because some refugees in need had been unable to borrow money from the fund, whereas in other cases, those who were less in need had received loans.

The DIEA told the Committee the Scheme was an important factor in the settlement of refugees, there was a low rate of rejection and the Scheme was working well.

### Religious needs

Concern was expressed by some witnesses that the religious needs of some of the refugees were not being met. There was a need for spiritual leaders who could conduct religious ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, to be admitted to Australia. The Committee was advised by the DIEA that communities may sponsor the entry of religious personnel into Australia and there were already Buddhist centres in some of the capital cities, e.g. in Brisbane and Melbourne, which were used by the Indochinese communities, and in Melbourne some attempt has been made to link the facilities in with the Migrant Centres. Another point made was that Buddhism should be a registered religion in Australia.

### Community attitudes

While some witnesses told the Committee that refugees were accepted in most areas, in Darwin for example, there was no adverse reaction to the settlement of refugees; there was, however, an adverse reaction to *unannounced arrivals because people felt the refugees were 'jumping the queue'*.

There was a body of opinion which attributed the most resentment held against refugees to the migrant population. The reasons for this attitude were attributable to a number of factors, including the feeling that too much was being done in Australia for the refugees. Migrants wanted their families to come out rather than more refugees (i.e. refugees were again, 'jumping the queue') and there was greater competition for positions in the traditional areas that migrants work in, since Indochinese refugees joined the workforce.

One witness felt that the change taking place in areas where Indochinese were settling was too rapid and concentrated for some people and the intake should be more equally spread throughout the community. It was suggested that the media has an important part to play in public acceptance of refugee settlement but too often reporting tends to be on the negative side. Increased community education could also play an important part in helping to break down prejudices. There has been some unfortunate experiences for Indochinese refugees, for example, in Mount Druitt violent attitudes had been displayed towards refugees and had forced them to leave a Housing Commission area where they were living.

The DIEA, however, had seen a marked change in community attitudes and had found that Australians' acceptance of people so racially and culturally different from themselves greater than many would have imagined. The Department has also been involved in a number of surveys which indicated migrant and refugee intake was of less importance than, for example, inflation, strikes and unemployment. The introduction of the refugees into the community had met with little overt antagonism, but while the majority of people felt humanitarian obligations towards the refugees, they were also worried about their impact on the unemployment situation. One survey indicated Australian born, British born and people who had had no contact with the Indochinese held the most racist views. There is also concern in the community about the crowding of refugees in housing. Another survey found that there was doubling up in accommodation, but this was not necessarily seen as a long term arrangement.

The DIEA is responsible for community education and has a large range of printed and audio-visual material and displays available for dissemination. 'Refugees Facts Kit' packages have been sent to Federal and State parliamentarians, schools and inquirers, and 11 000 schools and educational institutions have been invited to seek materials. A good response for these materials has been forthcoming.

### **Correction of personal details**

The Committee was told that refugees sometimes gave false information about their ages, often mistakenly, but in some cases younger refugees had lowered their ages to avoid conscription in their home countries. In Australia this has resulted in some refugee children being placed in classes at schools for which they were too old and too mature. Another witness stated that wrong birthdates caused difficulties with re-education, employment, sport and eligibility for benefits. In its previous report on Indochinese refugees, the Committee recommended that the Government should grant a general amnesty once and for all for correction of birthdates and personal details provided by the 1975 intakes of 'hard core' refugees. The majority of witnesses who spoke on this subject agreed that an opportunity should be given to refugees to make corrections of their personal details and at least two witnesses pointed out that the correction of personal details was carried out in every country except Australia. The DIEA is well aware of the problem and it is under investigation.

### **The settlement experience**

Settlement in a new country is never an easy task and in the case of refugees, is perhaps even more difficult. The Committee considers that Indochinese refugees have settled into Australia well, despite some problems, and have taken a positive attitude towards their new country. They have a strong motivation to learn English which is the 'key' to their successful settlement; they are successful in finding work in a climate of unemployment and apply themselves diligently when they do. Refugees are also anxious for other members of their families to join them in Australia, which is an indication of confidence in their future here.

Successful settlement must rely heavily on the refugees' acceptance by the Australian population, and the Committee has been told that although attitudes vary from State to State, there has been, despite an initial reaction of indifference, a general acceptance of Indochinese refugees.

There is a concentration of Indochinese refugees in the Fairfield area in New South Wales which has been the subject of adverse publicity and comment. The area has also received a 'nickname' and is known to some as 'Vietnamatta'. As a result of the numbers of the Indochinese settling there, concern has been expressed by the Fairfield City Council about the consequential strain placed on community resources in the area. The Keys Young surveys were commissioned by the Government to obtain information about the post-migrant centre settlement patterns of Indochinese refugees in Sydney and the attitudes of the community towards them in Sydney and Melbourne.

The reports found that there was little direct overt antagonism towards the refugees and little evidence of real material hardship amongst the Indochinese surveyed. Matters which did affect the satisfactory settlement of the refugees, however, were isolation caused by lack of English, bereavement over loss of family members, depression and unsatisfactory employment.

Matters raised in evidence affecting the settlement of Indochinese refugees were isolation, for example, from refugees who settled in small towns, left and went to cities where there were more of their own people. Mental illness among refugees caused by

stress was another factor and schools reported that there were some psychiatric problems among Indochinese children. Cultural problems within families was another area of difficulty, for example, children adapted very readily to the Australian way of life, learned English quickly and as a consequence, did not always conform to the cultural expectations of their parents.

While the Committee is mindful that these problems are inhibiting factors to settlement in a new community, they are to be expected. One Vietnamese witness who spoke on behalf of Vietnamese refugees in Queensland, acknowledged the Australian Government and community for the concern and the help refugees had received, and indicated that while there were problems which he hoped would be remedied, refugees had received more than they expected.

The DIEA is satisfied with the progress of Indochinese refugees and considers their settlement 'remarkably successful', and told the Committee there is a tendency for refugees to seek citizenship as soon as possible. Since 1975 some 3400 Indochinese refugees in Australia have become naturalised. Since 1978 they include 2130 Vietnamese, 326 Kampucheans and 509 Laos. This itself is an indication of the success of the resettlement policy. The Department stated that the proportion of applicants is high compared with most other migrant groups and there is no evidence to suggest that the Indochinese resettlement program has not been of benefit to the refugees and in the general interest of the Australian community.

A further positive achievement in settlement is the development among Indochinese of ethnic community groups with support networks to assist new arrivals. These did not exist in the early period of Indochinese settlement but have since evolved.

The Government is concerned that the settlement process should continue smoothly for both refugees and the host community, and as a consequence is monitoring progress through various departments with a view to being aware of problems and endeavouring to overcome them in the future. The DIEA has been involved in a number of surveys and studies, some of which are still continuing, dealing directly with settlement patterns and community attitudes, in some State capitals. An evaluation of the Galbally report implementation has also been undertaken. The Department of Health has set up Migrant Health Units, one to study the social and psychological adjustment of recently arrived Indochinese, the other to monitor the physical health of migrants. The Department of Education is currently involved in an evaluation of the Commonwealth Contingency Program for Refugee Children.

The Committee considers the progressive study of the settlement process and experience to be an important factor in refugee policy formulation and recommends that studies such as those mentioned should be conducted on a continuing basis. Generally, Indochinese refugees in Australia are still at a relatively early stage in the settlement process. Through experience, settlement assistance is being improved and developed and this is offered to refugees, not imposed on them; eventual successful resettlement, to a large extent, rests with the refugees themselves.

### **The management of Migrant Centres**

During the inquiry the Committee made field visits to Migrant Centres in Sydney, Fairy Meadow, Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin to familiarise itself with the services and facilities available to refugees. The Committee found the facilities and services provided at the Centres to be of a high standard and the staff a professional and dedicated group. At no time did Committee members receive complaints on any aspect of the Centres from the residents. The management and staff at the Centres maintain a continuing review of services and facilities which permits flexibility to cater, as much as possible, for changing circumstances and needs among new arrivals.

Following the Review of Commonwealth Functions, the management of Migrant Centres is to be relinquished by CACS and is to be transferred to the private sector on a management fee arrangement. In addition, other services currently provided by CACS at the Centres, i.e. *welfare, housing, recreation, interpreting, nursing, child care and child watching*, will be taken over. The Committee was informed by the DIEA that it is reviewing the continuance of these post-arrival services in consultation with the Department of Administrative Services, the Public Service Board, the CACS and other relevant authorities. The position of CACS employees regarding continuity of employment is part of the review.

The Committee is concerned about the outcome of discontinuing the services to refugees and migrants provided by a long established organisation and operated by a dedicated and expert staff. The operational expertise needed to manage a large scale facility such as Migrant Centres throughout Australia cannot be acquired quickly and the Committee hopes that careful judgement is exercised before alternative forms of management are introduced. The Committee is also concerned that the work experience current CACS employees have is not lost to the Centres and that the review takes fully into account the value in continuing to utilise their accumulated expertise.

#### **Commonwealth-State relations**

In evidence, the Committee received a variety of comments on Commonwealth-State relations in refugee matters. As the DIEA pointed out, the services to earlier Indochinese refugee arrivals were delivered on an ad hoc basis and there was a lack of co-ordination between the respective Commonwealth and State government instrumentalities, as well as with voluntary agencies. In the years since that period, co-operation and co-ordination have evolved and the settlement process now functions through established procedures.

Other witnesses, when commenting on the co-ordination of functions and co-operation between the Commonwealth and State governments, pointed out specific aspects in services but were not critical of relations as a whole. In a number of cases comments were directed to shortcomings within State bodies or between State and local authorities. The range of issues in Federal-State relations covered by witnesses include:

- the high cost to the States of services to refugees must be recognised and supported more by the Commonwealth;
- there are some inordinate delays in payments to the States by the Commonwealth for refugee related expenses;
- the areas of responsibility for some services are not always clearly defined;
- some irregularities exist between the Commonwealth and States in relation to unattached refugee minors;
- there should be more consultation between the Commonwealth and the States over the size of the refugee intake to avoid accommodation and services difficulties, particularly in the education field; and
- relations and co-operation between many Commonwealth and State bodies are good and regular consultations help to resolve difficulties.

During the inquiry the Committee received no evidence to suggest that major differences exist in Commonwealth-State relations over refugee issues. The Committee acknowledges the significant and costly contribution the States make to the refugee settlement program.

*The Committee considers that the circumstances of refugee settlement are subject to change and inevitably the priorities within the services provided to refugees will alter.*

As a consequence there will invariably be differing views on the emphasis certain aspects of refugee settlement should be accorded. However, there are limitations on the resources available and it is therefore necessary to maintain and strengthen Commonwealth-State co-operation and co-ordination to ensure that resources are allocated and utilised in the most effective manner.

### Coastal surveillance

The unauthorised entry of over fifty Indochinese refugee boats into Australian territorial waters and their subsequent landings is just one example of the importance of effective coastal surveillance. There is no evidence to indicate that any boat arrivals remain undetected but it is possible, if circumstances change and boat arrivals proliferate, that they could occur. The vulnerability of Australia's sparsely settled northern areas to unauthorised intrusions is widely acknowledged, as are the consequent threats to Australia's sovereignty, human, animal and plant health undetected entries could bring.

Existing coastal surveillance arrangements include defence forces and civil resources and are designed to be utilised in a flexible manner so as to allow surveillance and enforcement measures to be varied quickly as circumstances change. The surveillance operations are due for review beginning in 1981.

In the Northern Territory, witnesses told the Committee that the operations of coastal surveillance in relation to the detection of unauthorised intrusions are inadequate. In particular, surveillance capability at night is deficient and lack of communications is an inhibiting factor. Among the measures to improve surveillance capability suggested by the witnesses are:

- improved overall capacity to respond promptly to reports of intrusions;
- appropriate equipment, particularly helicopters, to be based in Darwin;
- an increased role for the defence forces and their equipment, working in conjunction with civilian agencies; and, a clear definition of the organisational arrangements and functions in surveillance operations.

In the context of Indochinese refugee boats arriving unannounced in Australian waters, the role of effective coastal surveillance is crucial. This was highlighted in October 1981 when an unauthorised boat arrival was found to comprise of people, claiming to be refugees, who were subsequently found to have no claim on Australia for protection under the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The arrival of Indochinese refugee boats in Australian waters demonstrates the need for effective and flexible surveillance arrangements. The Committee recognises that effective coastal surveillance is both a difficult and expensive task, that the subject was outside its terms of reference, and is under review by the Government. It is vital to the public acceptance of the refugee policy that the decision to accept refugees and the control of their entry remain the prerogative of the Australian Government.

### Committee comments

The preceding comments illustrate the diverging views witnesses hold on various aspects of the services and facilities available to refugees to assist their settlement into the community. The main areas needing attention and additional support are seen as being, English tuition, educational materials, facilities and staff, orientation courses, welfare services, recognition of qualifications, the CRSS and generally improved co-operation and co-ordination between all those involved in refugee settlement. While opinions vary on these aspects of the program, there were no feelings expressed to indicate witnesses doubt that overall the settlement of Indochinese refugees is progressing satisfactorily.

The Committee is aware that some witnesses feel more could be done to assist refugee settlement. However, resources are limited and their allocation must be balanced with the need to provide services to other migrants and the community generally. Another consideration is that if too much is provided for refugees it could create a dependence which affects their resourcefulness and weakens the aims of self-help and self-reliance.

The Committee considers the services and facilities provided for assisting the settlement of Indochinese refugees are satisfactory given that there is a limit on the availability of resources. The Committee notes that in the 1981-82 Budget additional funds were provided for voluntary agencies and community groups assisting refugees and adult migrant and refugee education programs.

There are two unresolved matters adversely affecting the settlement of refugees, namely, the correction of personal details and the non-recognition of some overseas qualifications. The Committee understands that both issues are under examination, they have been outstanding too long and the Committee recommends their resolution should be given a high priority.

From the evidence received the Committee concludes that Indochinese refugee settlement in Australia is progressing well. The Committee commends the results achieved through a combination of efforts by the Commonwealth and State governments, voluntary groups, individuals and the refugees themselves. Settlement of Indochinese refugees has been a significant domestic issue, the Committee received little evidence of resentment or indifference and the general acceptance by the Australian community of people with different racial and cultural backgrounds is gratifying.

*Endnote*

5. The DIEA told the Committee that as much advance warning as possible is given to education authorities about impending arrivals.

## The Committee's 1976 recommendations

This section reproduces the Committee's recommendations from its 1976 report 'Australia and the Refugee Problem' and shows the action taken in response to those recommendations. The response to the recommendations, with the exception of recommendation 7.34, has been provided by the DIEA.

### Formulation of refugee resettlement policy

7.1 In reaching the conclusion that Australia should be in a position to respond quickly and effectively to refugee crises, the Committee considers it essential that there exist an approved and comprehensive set of policy guidelines together with the necessary administrative machinery to be applied to refugee situations. Such guidelines do not exist at present nor has the administrative machinery been established; their absence reduces our practical ability to respond to crises and in turn can become justification for not involving ourselves with particular situations.

### Related action

7.1 The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced the Refugee Policy and Mechanisms on 24 May 1977. The Policy and Mechanisms are sufficiently flexible to be applicable to all potential refugee and displaced person situations.

7.2 The formulation of a comprehensive set of policy guidelines and the establishment of appropriate machinery should assume a high priority for government and must be tackled with some degree of urgency. Such guidelines should be formulated within the general context of Australia's overall immigration program but they must constitute a separate and identifiable component which caters specially for the sudden, and sometimes unforeseen, migratory movements of people as refugees.

### Related action

7.2 The machinery established provides for the recognition of refugees as a separate but identifiable part of the immigration program.

7.3 The purpose of having a well-planned and considered program is the pragmatic one of enabling refugees to adjust quickly to life and work within a new environment. To the extent that this is achieved, two benefits will occur. The individuals themselves will be able to enjoy a full life. They will also be able to make their particular contribution to the country's economic well-being, and to its social and cultural development.

### Related action

7.3 The Initial Settlement Program established as a result of the Gaibally Report provides a general framework for refugee settlement. It is not possible to make more detailed plans for settlement of particular groups, as flexible services are required to allow adjustment in the light of experience and evaluation. The Department has however recently attempted to formulate contingency plans for the arrival of potential refugee groups. Those include planning for settlement and education programs and community involvement.

Consideration is currently being given to a method of allocating migrants or refugees to migrant centres on a yearly basis to enable planning for services at the centres to take

place in advance. Such a plan would be revised three monthly on the basis of changes to the intake program.

#### **Essential features of a new refugee policy**

7.4 In the Committee's judgement, resettlement should be viewed as a continuum which commences with the displacement and flight of refugees and ceases on their integration into the community of the receiving country; it requires a co-ordinated response to provide individuals with realistic opportunities to overcome the host of interrelated problems which they face in establishing new lives for themselves in what may be an alien country. Although refugees experience problems in common with normal migrants, they also experience problems which are unique to refugees. While some refugees can be regarded as 'a special category of migrant' others, and particularly the 'hard-core' ones, are often in the most desperate of circumstances. In general the receiving country should discriminate positively in favour of them, rather than against them as is the case at present. They, like other underprivileged groups (including migrants), need to be assured of full access to the statutory services and forms of support or assistance to which they are entitled and generally require special assistance to this end. To this extent Australia must differentiate between refugees and migrants and devise separate and appropriate admission procedures for the processing of each category.

#### **Related action**

7.4 The Initial Settlement Program provided an integrated program of support for the newly arrived. Services provided through the Program are geared to meet the needs of particular groups within its overall framework. Special services to Indochinese refugees are not considered to be justified unless there is a specific need. Such services would otherwise be seen as discriminatory by other migrants and the host community. Refugees are entitled to some special assistance in the on-arrival period. In providing this assistance the criteria has been client need. Equality of access to general community services for refugees is ensured by the provision of interpreters, bilingual instructors, bilingual staff etc.

The acceptance of 'hard-core' refugees (presumed to mean hard to settle) has other implications as well as the level of resources required to service their needs. For example, we would wish to avoid the creation of an identifiable sub-group with particular disadvantages and handicaps. Australia is, however, prepared to take small numbers of hard-to-settle groups in line with UNHCR's strategy to spread this aspect of the refugee burden uniformly over resettlement countries.

7.5 In acceding to various United Nations conventions and protocols, Australia has agreed to provide legal protection to refugees. The spirit of these instruments should continue to be manifested by admitting refugees and other displaced persons for settlement in Australia. Refuge, (and in certain instances assistances with evacuation), should be offered on the basis of humanitarian concern for a person's needs irrespective of whether he is technically a refugee, a stateless person or a displaced person. Australia's refugee policy should recognise that there is a place for a regular and identifiable intake of refugees and displaced persons who do not meet the existing immigration criteria. This intake should constitute a significant part of our broad immigration target in any one year and should be subject to adjustment in emergencies. In determining which refugees and displaced persons should be admitted, Australian policy should acknowledge the claims of those who have no prospect of obtaining permanent resettlement elsewhere or whose needs are for other reasons particularly acute. It should also take a wider view of family reunions than it does at present.

### **Related action**

7.5 In accepting 'hard-to-settle' groups particular regard must be had both to their capacity to settle effectively in Australia and to the availability of special services for their assistance. Australia supports the UNHCR in their policy of giving priority to resettling refugees if possible into a country of similar culture, and is a foundation contributor to the UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions designed to facilitate the resettlement of refugees in developing countries.

7.6 While the Committee is aware that action along the lines proposed above would result in refugees receiving in certain areas more advantageous consideration than some other migrant groups or other residents, we believe this is entirely justified. In the words of Dr Martin 'No matter how harsh the conditions from which we rescue refugees, we cannot claim moral credit simply by permitting them to enter this country. Just as the admission of refugees for reasons of humanity involves relaxing the normal intake criteria, so also does our continuing responsibility to these refugees entail modification of normal settlement practices'. The Committee believes that the 1975 and 1976 intakes of Vietnamese, Indochinese and Timorese refugees might appropriately be thought of as catalysts of change in settlement policies just as their admission to this country in the first place broke new ground in terms of intake policies.

### **Related action**

7.6 The Galbally Report incorporated some of the initiatives which had been taken in response to the needs of the early Indochinese refugees in its Initial Settlement Program. Galbally did not recommend any special programs for the Indochinese, and envisaged that their needs would be met within the framework of the Initial Settlement Program. The Department has adopted this approach; see response to 7.4.

### **The need to reconsider prevailing attitudes**

7.7 It is apparent to the Committee that considerable re-orientation of basic thinking must take place among Federal Ministers and within a number of departments if a refugee policy is to be formulated on the basis of these general principles.

### **Related action**

7.7 A number of departments are now co-operating in the development of refugee policy (see 7.9, 7.14).

7.8 Positive and constructive approaches must be adopted to ensure that adequate recognition is given to:

- the special needs of all refugees;
- the significance of their culture, their value system and the code of ethics governing their inter-personal relationships; and
- the necessity for flexible and timely action in tailoring available resources to suit the real and specific (rather than the assumed) needs of often inarticulate minority groups.

### **Related action**

7.8 The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs assists other departments and agencies to appreciate the needs and cultural backgrounds of refugees by preparing information and background papers and sensitising service deliverers at the local level

through its social welfare, settlement and community development staff. The Department has a community education program and has produced videos, pamphlets etc. Also Migrant Settlement Councils provide feedback from the community on the settlement needs of various groups including the Indochinese.

The response from other departments and agencies and community organisations has not always been as sensitive as it might be. This is partly a problem with scarcity of resources such as interpreters and bilingual staff to adequately meet the needs of refugees. However there appears to be a much greater awareness of the needs of Indochinese refugees, and increasing efforts made to meet these needs, than at the time when the Committee's report was prepared.

7.9 The Committee notes that since it began probing into the matters of refugee selection and settlement, and into some of the broader issues concerning the formulation of refugee policy, a more active approach has been adopted by several departments. We understand that a number of meetings have taken place between departments and also between their central and State offices concerning refugee problems. The benefits which would have flowed from co-ordination at the national level have now been recognised. The need has been recognised also for uniform policy and approach on such matters as the placement of refugees where settlement poses particular problems, and the provision for certain groups of full-time language courses and courses dealing with the Australian way of life.

#### **Related action**

7.9 An inter-departmental committee, The Standing Committee on Refugees continues to meet on specific refugee issues, including the provision of post-arrival services. Co-ordination is also achieved through evaluation of special projects involving several departments for example the Ethnic Liaison Officer Task Group No. 5 on the effectiveness of Commonwealth services provided at migrant centres. The establishment of Migrant Settlement Councils has provided a means of co-ordination between Commonwealth and State governments and the non-government sector.

Integrated English language and information/orientation courses are now provided at migrant centres and some community locations for all refugees and newly arrived migrants. Settlement officers at migrant centres and community settlement centres arrange special orientation activities and provide assistance and advice for individuals and groups.

Allocations between migrant centres are the responsibility of the Department of Employment and Youth Affairs in consultation with the Department of Administrative Services and this Department. Allocations are supposed to be made on the basis of employment opportunities but recently availability of space has been the major determinant. This Department is of the view that allocations should be made in a non-discriminatory manner and in groups large enough to ensure the efficient delivery of services.

#### **Australia's overall approach to refugee situations**

7.10 At the global level it is clear that many refugee situations require international co-operation for their solution. In such situations it is appropriate to regard the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international relief agencies as the authorities best equipped to assist in the provision of relief and most able to make effective use of financial aid from Australia and other countries. The adoption of such an approach should not exclude the possibility, however, that certain situations may arise in which Australia can provide immediate and direct humanitarian assistance with the

evacuation and resettlement of refugees, while continuing to co-operate in the longer-term with the UNHCR and other agencies in bringing about an overall solution. We recommend, therefore, that wherever possible this latter, more flexible, positive and humane approach be adopted as the basis of our involvement with future refugee situations. In either case, greater use should be made of the capacity which the Australian Council for Overseas Aid has for co-ordinating the overseas relief work and aid which is provided to refugees through the many Australian non-government organisations.

#### **Related action**

7.10 As a member of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner's Program, Australia is committed to working for the success of the UNHCR and other international relief agencies. The Government has appropriated since 1976 \$19 617 000 for UNHCR funding. In addition, Australia has taken the initiative, through the UNHCR, to increase international awareness of the need for assistance in refugee situations, particularly that of the Indochinese. Australia's recent assistance to displaced persons has extended to cover people in situations other than those designated by the UNHCR, and will continue to do so. While the Australian Government recognises with gratitude the continuing assistance of voluntary agencies, it has preferred to further develop the role of UNHCR as the international co-ordinating authority, depending more on assistance from voluntary agencies at the post-arrival stage.

#### **Dependence of Government on voluntary agencies**

7.11 Within the national context it is clear that 'resettlement' is a complex process which requires co-operation and well co-ordinated action by government organisations, voluntary agencies and individuals. As far as possible resettlement should be promoted through existing agencies, services and facilities. Full use should be made of these whether they take the form of Federal, State, local government or other official agencies or services, or whether they find their support in voluntary organisations (both national and international), community action or private interests. While government departments are not able and should not be expected to meet all of the settlement needs of refugee groups and individuals, voluntary agencies by virtue of their very nature and standing in the community, are uniquely positioned to provide the supportive services which are essential for successful settlement. Indeed their services have been utilised heavily and with considerable savings to the departments concerned.

#### **Related action**

7.11 The Galbally Report pointed out the importance of involving other levels of government and voluntary and ethnic organisations in migrant and refugee settlement. Voluntary agencies are involved in providing a number of support services and consideration is being given to extending the scope of their involvement. There are many other schemes involving the community including the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme, CALFRIC, Grants-in-Aid, Hosting and Friendship Scheme etc.

7.12 In the Committee's judgement the Government of the day must acknowledge the financial commitment which it incurs in accepting 'hard-core' (and other) refugees into the country. The acceptance of refugees carries with it an obligation to meet a far greater proportion of the costs —including those which are hidden—in resettling the refugees, than is recognised at the present time. Insofar as we now have, and will continue to have, a resettlement scheme which depends on joint partnership and participation of government and voluntary community agencies, this necessarily means an increased financial commitment to and support for the agencies involved.

### **Related action**

7.12 The Government has acknowledged a large financial commitment to the refugee program. This will cost an estimated \$2500 per refugee in 1980-81 (for transportation, Migrant Centre accommodation, social security benefits, English and orientation courses, provision of necessities to arriving refugees, loans to assist refugees to enter the community and special education programs for refugee children) and has been calculated on costs incurred during the first 3 months after the refugee's arrival in Australia. The Department is currently considering the feasibility of a scheme to provide financial support to agencies involved in resettlement. Some resources are already available through existing schemes. Processing officers are directed to take into account the special resettlement needs of disadvantaged refugees.

7.13 The Committee believes that a community response is an essential ingredient to the effective promotion of resettlement. Accordingly there must be a continuing awareness at all levels, of the needs of new settlers —particularly refugees and their families —of the problems they face, and of their different cultural and economic backgrounds. In one way or another, an active participation of all sections of the community is called for.

### **Related action**

7.13 As part of an on-going program, the Department undertakes a range of activities to promote community interest in, and awareness of, refugee issues. These include the provision of speakers to address interested groups, the supply of articles to various journals, and assistance to media crews covering stories about refugees. Departmental publications on refugee issues are distributed widely to all sections of the community. A number of slide/tape kits about Indochinese refugees are available for short-term loan and an information program designed for schools was initiated recently. Further information resources are currently being developed.

Sponsors involved in the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme and individuals or groups who assist refugee families through the Hosting and Friendship Scheme are briefed by the Department or by the agencies involved in co-ordinating the schemes. The Department has prepared a handbook for CRSS sponsors giving background historical and cultural information.

The level of community involvement in the settlement of Indochinese refugees has been high especially through programs such as the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme. The Keys Young Study of host community attitudes towards refugees and migrants showed that a minority of those interviewed showed some hostility, particularly in relation to potential competition for jobs etc. The survey shows that in general attitudes are more favourable than might have been expected, and concern about refugee and migrant presence in Australia was low in relation to that for other issues.

### **Policy formulation—establishment of a Refugee Policy Council**

7.14 The Committee recommends the establishment of an advisory body to be known as the 'Australian Refugee Policy Council' for the purpose of assisting the Government to formulate an Australian policy on all aspects of refugee resettlement and to review and continually assess its implementation and effectiveness. Membership of this body should be drawn from both government and non-government sources. On the non-government side, membership should comprise representatives from the major Australian refugee-receiving and overseas-aid agencies, the Australian representative of the

UNHCR (in an observer capacity), Red Cross, other organisations having practical experience in settlement work and post-hostel community support for refugees, and representatives from the academic community. A similar number of representatives should be drawn from the government side and include the Prime Minister's Department, Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Social Security, Employment and Industrial Relations, Education and Commonwealth Hostels Limited. The Committee recommends that members of refugee groups should be drawn into this forum with other government departments and agencies whenever matters which are of direct concern to them are considered by the Council.

#### **Related action**

7.14 The Government established the Australian Refugee Advisory Council in October 1979.

The terms of reference are as follows:

'To advise the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on:

- i) the reception and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons in Australia;
- ii) the development of new resettlement procedures and resources for refugees;
- iii) informing the Australian community about refugees and Australia's resettlement program;
- iv) developing a more understanding and tolerant community attitude towards refugees and better relations between refugees and the host community;
- v) other aspects of refugee policies and programs as the Minister might determine from time to time.'

Membership of the Council was not extended beyond 31 December 1980 pending a review of the Council's future in the context of the Review of Commonwealth Functions.

7.15 In addition to its primary objective of advising in detail on the formulation of refugee intake and settlement policy, the Refugee Policy Council should assist in the determination of such matters as:

- refugee situations requiring urgent Australian involvement and direct action;
- the capacity of government and voluntary organisations to resettle refugees successfully in any given situation (i.e. numbers which could be admitted to Australia);
- selection or intake criteria;
- the form and extent of any other (indirect) assistance which Australia could provide; special considerations required to meet the specific settlement needs of particular groups; and
- family reunion criteria.

#### **Related action**

7.15 As indicated in 7.14, the Government in formulating its approach to refugee policy decided that it could not abrogate its responsibility for refugee policy by delegating this role to community organisations. The community groups, however, are consulted in relation to these and other issues.

7.16 Other functions of an on-going nature include those of community education, co-ordination of government and non-government refugee work, and a watchdog function in overseeing the implementation of policy guidelines in particular situations. As some member-organisations of the Council will be directly involved as participants in the local settlement committees (mentioned below), they will be admirably placed to oversee and assess the effectiveness of particular programs and hence contribute positively to the evolving responsiveness of Australian refugee policy. Specific tasks which should

be considered immediately include such matters as the most appropriate means of funding voluntary bodies which are engaged in settlement work in the community; the scope which exists for the provision of additional grant-in-aid social workers; the use of revolving funds and resettlement grants; opportunities for rural employment and settlement; and the identification of problems requiring urgent attention.

#### **Related action**

7.16 The Government has overall responsibility for determination of refugee policy. This Department plays a major role in developing aspects of the overall policy. Relevant councils, agencies and departments are consulted in relation to development and formulation of policy.

The Galbally Report considered issues such as the provision of more grants-in-aid, the funding of voluntary bodies and identification of problems of newly arrived migrants. The question of resettlement loans was also considered not recommended. However, a revolving loans scheme (CALFRIC) has since been established for Indochinese refugees and has worked well. The scheme has been extended to Eastern European refugees. More funds are required to ensure continuing viability of the scheme, and negotiations with the Department of Finance are proceeding.

7.17 In view of the importance which the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee places on the formulation of policy, the fact that Prime Ministerial decisions will be required to meet the contingencies of certain refugee situations, and the necessity to establish a forum at an appropriate level within which a meaningful and continuous discussion between government and non-government agencies can take place, we recommend that: the Refugee Policy Council be convened (and staffed on a full-time basis) under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Department; that it be free to report to individual Ministers on matters of relevance; and, that its annual report be tabled in Parliament within 14 days of its receipt.

#### **Related action**

7.17 Apart from the Australian Refugee Advisory Council, there are a number of other formal mechanisms for co-ordination and provision of advice on refugee policy:

- The Migrant Settlement Councils have broad representation and can co-opt other experts where necessary. The Department tries to ensure that Indochinese are recommended for appointment to the Councils where appropriate;
- Commonwealth-State Co-ordinating meetings for officials and Ministers of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs;
- Seminars, meetings etc. concerning refugees which may be attended by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs or officials of the Department;
- an inter-departmental working party on migrant centres comprising representatives of Commonwealth Departments with a major involvement in the Initial Settlement Program; and
- representation of the Department on the Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services Board.

#### **Overall planning and co-ordination of government activity—establishment of a Standing Interdepartmental Committee on Refugees**

7.18 The Committee also recommends the establishment of a 'Standing Interdepartmental Committee on Refugees' with responsibility for the overall forward-planning

and co-ordination of government activity with respect to all refugee matters. Membership of this Committee should comprise those departments which are represented on the Refugee Policy Council, with other departments and agencies being drawn into the work of the IDC as required. We recommend that this Committee should again be convened and staffed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister's Department.

#### **Related action**

7.18 This Committee has been established. It is appropriately chaired by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs as the ministerial portfolio charged with overall responsibility for refugee matters.

7.19 The Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee sees the principal function of the IDC as one of assuming responsibility for initiating overall planning, decision-making and co-ordination of government activity whenever Australia is directly involved with significant numbers of refugees—either by choice or by the course of events. Such an approach is essential if we are to avoid repeating the delays, lack of concern, and poorly co-ordinated responses to the refugee situations which have been experienced since April 1975. We envisage the IDC issuing at the earliest possible stage, clear and considered guidelines for action together, where necessary, with strong central direction to departments and hence to their individual State and regional offices. It must also have the essential responsibility of advising and engaging in the necessary prior consultation with the health, welfare, housing and other instrumentalities in each of the Australian States on which the Federal Government relies for co-operation and practical assistance in the settlement of refugees. Rather than inhibiting local action, the issuing of essential guidelines—setting out priorities, establishing areas of responsibility, defining lines of communication and nominating 'contact-points' within all of the involved organisations—should aim to encourage the exercise of local initiative to resolve particular problems within an agreed framework and without undue and time-consuming reference upwards through the public service bureaucracy.

#### **Related action**

7.19 The Government or in appropriate cases, the Minister, is responsible for taking overall decisions on refugee policy. The Department encourages co-operation of other departments and agencies, through SCOR. Co-operation in resettlement planning is also sought at State and local level through various mechanisms already described. (See response to 7.14)

The Galbally Report envisaged Migrant Settlement Councils and settlement committees at the centres taking on a full co-ordinating role but it has been recognised that this is not feasible as other service deliverers are responsible to their own Ministers. Each department or agency therefore sets its own guidelines, but DIEA officers encourage co-operation in the provision of settlement services. Local initiatives are encouraged and DIEA provides funds for settlement officers to arrange special orientation activities at settlement centres.

The Initial Settlement Program provides an overall framework for the provision of these services. More rigid guidelines would not be desirable and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should continue to play an encouraging and facilitating role in relation to other departments, levels of government, and community agencies.

## Settlement Committees

7.20 The Committee concludes that, to the limited extent that refugee settlement has been accomplished, the bulk of the work has been achieved by the hostel-based settlement committees with their community and voluntary-agency support. We believe that these bodies constitute a most effective and practical means of providing essential settlement assistance to individual refugee families. We recommend therefore that the support which is presently given to them by government agencies be substantially upgraded. In making this recommendation we wish to warn against the possible tendency to 'bureaucratise' their activities and reiterate the view that these are practical bodies which are concerned to settle refugees into the community at large. Their overall aim and purpose must be one of tapping and mobilising community resources which are available to assist in the settlement of refugees.

### Related action

7.20 Settlement committees have been established at all migrant centres as a result of the Galbally report. The composition of these committees was not specified but the need for co-operation between government and non-government agencies was stressed. The committees are involved with settlement of all migrants as well as refugees.

The Joint Review of the settlement officer function conducted by DIEA and the Public Service Board found that Settlement Committees were not working as well as they might due mainly to the wide scope of their activities. It recommended the establishment of a second committee to deal with migrant centre issues to enable the settlement committees to concentrate on settlement matters including transition into the community. ELO Task group No. 5 which reviewed the effectiveness of Commonwealth services at Migrant Centres endorsed this recommendation.

Resources are not directly available to settlement committees, as they are not executive bodies. They are able to utilise resources available to the bodies and agencies represented on the committees and other resources existing in the community.

Community resources and goodwill are also tapped through programs such as the Hosting and Friendship Scheme and the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme.

7.21 In order to avoid unnecessary confusion over differing uses of terminology, we recommend that in future these committees should be known and referred to as 'Settlement Committees'.

### Related action

7.21 This title has been adopted.

7.22 The Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee recognises that problems may arise when attempts are made to co-ordinate the work of voluntary agencies and other community groups. Nevertheless co-ordination is required in order to harness the experience, enthusiasm and energies of personnel within the community. The type of co-ordination which the Committee envisages as working most successfully, is that which has evolved in practice within the hostel-based settlement committees.

### Related action

7.22 (See response to 7.19) Service deliverers and voluntary agency staff at settlement centres have resisted the suggestion that settlement officers should in any way 'direct' their staff through co-ordination. The settlement committees have therefore provided means of resolving issues and difficulties and encouraging co-operation but cannot adopt a full co-ordinating role.

7.23 In keeping with its responsibilities for the post-arrival care of migrants and refugees, the Department of Social Security is the appropriate co-ordinating body. It should assume this role formally and with the support of its Canberra Headquarters without stultifying the spontaneity of those who are involved at the working level. Co-ordination should not be imposed from above on passive voluntary agencies which are seen 'to require organising'. Nor should there be any sense of competition with the voluntary agencies or with the welfare and accommodation officers of Commonwealth Hostels Limited. Rather the atmosphere should be one of mutual co-operation and sharing of the particular tasks which occur with each refugee group and situation.

#### **Related action**

7.23 Under the Administrative Arrangements of 20 December 1977 responsibility for post-arrival arrangements for immigrants including refugees (apart from initial accommodation, health and employment) is now with the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The new co-ordination machinery established in keeping with the recommendations of the Galbally Report assumes a co-operative role with the voluntary agencies, and with other agencies of government.

As outlined above the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs cannot assume a full co-ordinating role. The priorities and objectives of the organisations involved in the Initial Settlement Program may not coincide with those of this Department. In general other government and non-government agencies look to the Department to provide resources and to encourage co-operation in relation to the provision of information and other services for newly arrived migrants and refugees. This type of role requires a longer term approach to the resolution of difficulties through consultation and discussion.

7.24 We recommend, therefore, that trained social workers from the Department of Social Security should henceforth assume responsibility for convening and chairing the settlement committees which will be established with the arrival of new intakes of refugees (and migrants) into the hostels. Although we see merit in the creation of small committees at each of the hostels, we can envisage situations where it might be desirable to convene regional settlement committees. We do not envisage these committees as being permanent bodies; they should be convened with the admission of new arrivals, work up to a peak, gradually scale down their activities and terminate as the refugees and/or migrants merge successfully into the Australian community.

#### **Related action**

7.24 Settlement committees at Migrant Centres are convened by Clerk Class 6 settlement officers who are employees of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The duties outlined for settlement officers in the Galbally Report are not those of trained social workers, although some of the officers recruited have social work qualifications. The Galbally Report in fact recommended the reduction of the Department's direct welfare services in the light of recommended increases in social work/welfare resources in the non-government sector. The Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Service has responsibility for the provision of welfare services to the Migrant Centres.

Migrant Settlement Councils have superseded the need for the suggested regional committees. Rotating membership assists in ensuring the needs of various ethnic groups are taken into account.

7.25 It is essential that in future situations representatives of the refugees be invited to participate as members of the hostel-based settlement committees. In addition, appropriate steps should be taken by the Department of Social Security to seek out and to obtain the services of those qualified personnel who exist in the community and to utilise them as consultants.

#### **Related action**

7.25 Membership of settlement committees usually comprises representatives of relevant government and voluntary organisations active in settlement; Indochinese refugee groups may be included. Former refugees may assist in settlement programs e.g. as bilingual information instructors in the education program, as interpreters or welfare officers. The Department is able to utilise professional expertise and knowledge in relation to aspects of settlement through members of the Migrant Settlement Councils, and consultation as required.

7.26 It is also essential that special measures be undertaken in future situations to ensure that comprehensive nominal rolls (detailing the composition, occupations, destinations and other information about incoming refugees) are made available to the settlement committees and to other organisations at the earliest possible time.

#### **Related action**

7.26 Settlement committees do not require nominal rolls as they do not have executive powers. Service deliverers at Migrant Centres are informed of new arrivals through copies sent directly to them. Recently more information about family relationships and personal details has been included on nominal rolls and steps have been taken to ensure that delays in arrival of the rolls at the centres are minimised so that service deliverers can plan adequately for new arrivals.

#### **Post-hostel follow-up work with refugees and the establishment of 'Settlement Offices'**

7.27 The Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee concludes that there is a real need to appoint social workers, assisted where necessary by trained interpreters, to provide continuing assistance to the Vietnamese and other refugees with welfare needs and problems during the early stages of their settlement in the community. By implication persons appointed to fulfil these functions would ideally be bilingual.

#### **Related action**

7.27 As noted in response to recommendation 7.24 the Galbally Report recommended a decrease in DIEA's direct welfare services. CACS employ welfare workers at Migrant Centres although not all of those employed have professional qualifications. This and the absence of any social workers to support the welfare officers means that migrants and refugees with more complex problems have to be referred to agencies other than CACS who employ professional staff.

The Indochinese are only just beginning to form their own welfare organisations and to seek grant-in-aid social workers and although there are some bilingual social workers employed by other community agencies, resources for Indochinese refugees in the non-government sector are scarce.

The ELO Task Group No. 5 which examined the welfare services provided at Migrant Centres recommended that CACS have a social worker as part of their welfare

team who would manage professional aspects and would examine the need for further social work staff in the service.

CACS employ some interpreters to enable their welfare and other staff to communicate with clients. For any additional welfare and general interpreting needs the Telephone Interpreter Service is used although budgetary constraints sometimes result in reduction in face-to-face services.

7.28 We reject the notion that the provision of post-hostel supportive services necessarily leads to the fostering of long-term dependency relationships. Indeed after-care responsibilities may extend, in some instances, for a period of up to two years or even longer after the refugees' arrival in Australia. Such supportive services are an essential means of assisting 'hard-core' refugees to integrate meaningfully into the Australian way of life. Rather, it is passive acceptance on the part of the refugees themselves—cultivated in an atmosphere of mutual misconception and ignorance—which undoubtedly results in a growing reliance and dependence on social welfare payments, for their support. Accordingly we recommend that the Department of Social Security institute a program of post-hostel visits to refugees by trained social workers in order to encourage the very qualities of self-help, self-reliance and the desire for economic independence which, we believe are present in most refugees and which are vital for their successful integration. The Committee believes strongly that these social workers should constitute the major point of contact for the refugees once they have left the hostel and should provide them with the necessary means of access to services and benefits to which they are entitled.

#### **Related action**

7.28 The principle of providing assistance with settlement in the initial stages to enable people to settle into the community and become self-reliant more quickly was stated in the Galbally Report and as such has been adopted as policy by the Government. As part of this initial assistance the provision of follow up services in the community is seen as a useful aid to refugees and migrants in their transition from the Migrant Centre into the community.

Some have greater difficulty in settling than others and in these cases more intensive support services are provided including assistance from trained social workers. Usually, the service is carried out by voluntary agencies without direct assistance from the Commonwealth, with involvement of DIEA welfare staff or grant-in-aid workers where necessary. The recent report by Keys Young of Indochinese settlement in Fairfield highlighted the usefulness of follow up contact visits and at present the Department is examining how their scope and effectiveness could be improved.

The Department is also establishing ten community settlement centres which will provide a point of reference for those who require information and referral services or general advice once they have left the Migrant Centres. The community centres will be staffed by Class 6 settlement officers.

7.29 As a means of facilitating the foregoing, we recommend that the Department of Social Security establish appropriately located permanent 'Settlement Offices' from which their social workers and multilingual personnel can extend the work of settlement out into the community at large.

#### **Related action**

7.29 Settlement offices are located in all settlement centres. There are now 14 Migrant Centres in Australia and three community based settlement centres. A further

seven community centres will be established this calendar year. The centres, particularly the community centres, form a focus for the provision of assistance to newly arrived migrants and refugees.

7.30 Under these arrangements it is clear that the 'Settlement Committees' must constitute the main forum in which government and community organisations with responsibilities and/or interests in providing welfare assistance, language training, accommodation advice, employment assistance and post-hostel support—can be brought together to tackle reception, orientation and settlement activities as interrelated facets of a single process.

#### **Related action**

7.30 Migrant Settlement Councils and settlement committees provide a forum for discussion and information exchange which can lead to improvement in co-ordination and effectiveness of services. As outlined above they do not have an executive role. The settlement committees undertake particular projects at the Centres for example to ensure information material is translated and given to residents.

7.31 In keeping with the Committee's recommendations concerning the need for a forward-looking approach to refugee matters, we recommend that all government departments and agencies record and maintain objective statistical data on the refugees with whom they are involved. Although such information is essential in order to determine accurately the effectiveness of the forms of support or assistance which have been provided to refugees in the past, it is generally not available at the present time.

#### **Related action**

7.31 The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and other departments and organisations keep a wide range of objective data on Indochinese and other refugees. In some cases limited resources and lack of real need prevent statistical information from being collected. Overseas movement of Indochinese refugees is closely monitored by our posts overseas and by UNHCR. These statistics are collated by the Department.

7.32 In the Committee's view, basic information should be available for all refugees and should include details by nationalities on such matters as arrivals and departures, educational qualifications, facility in English, language training, employment histories (including subsequent registrations with and the placements by the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES)) and the receipt of various forms of income maintenance.

#### **Related action**

7.32 Post-arrival statistical information gathered includes arrivals by birthplace, nationality and country of first refuge, English facility, language training, employment histories, health, and the receipt of all forms of social security. To obtain an integrated picture of settlement factors of refugees the Department has undertaken various studies for example the Keys Young study of Indochinese settlement in the Fairfield area; and a long-term departmental study of Indochinese refugees in four capital cities.

#### **English language training**

7.33 As a means of providing refugees (and migrants) with realistic opportunities for obtaining apprenticeships, appropriate employment, admission to tertiary and other educational institutions and opportunities for retraining, the Committee recommends that, irrespective of their current levels of proficiency, financial support be provided to all males and females of working age whilst they attend English language classes.

### **Related action**

7.33 All adult Indochinese refugees are eligible to attend a variety of English language and orientation courses. There is an intensive 'on arrival' English program which is full-time and a variety of other day and evening classes, part and full-time, correspondence courses, radio and television lessons and courses in the workplace. There is also a home-tutor program, staffed by volunteers. Refugees attending a full-time English language course may be eligible for a living allowance equivalent to unemployment benefit. Approximately 15 000 adult refugees were expected to attend such courses in the financial year (1980-81) at an estimated cost to the Department of approximately \$11 797.00. The Government also funds a contingency program to provide special assistance to schools accepting numbers of refugee children to assist them in learning English.

### **Positive action to provide opportunities for rural settlement**

7.35 The Committee recommends that positive and vigorous action be taken jointly by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, the CES and the Department of Social Security in exploring the possibilities which exist for placing those refugees with rural subsistence backgrounds in some form of rural occupation where they can be in close proximity to one another.

### **Related action**

7.35 Few refugees have a suitable background for rural employment. Apart from the lack of support services for refugees in remote areas, most schemes brought to the Government's attention are not considered viable. A relatively small number of suitably qualified refugees have been placed in rural occupations. The settlement schemes operating in some larger country centres are regarded as presenting better prospects for refugees.

### **Employment assistance**

7.36 The Committee recommends that positive steps be taken by the CES, to assist the refugees in their progression towards employment which is suitable in terms of their existing skills, previous training and their inclinations.

### **Related action**

7.36 The CES provides for newly arrived migrants and refugees at Migrant Centres and at their community offices; some interpreters and bilingual staff are employed to assist the Indochinese. The Keys Young Report indicated that although a number of those interviewed were assisted, some do not perceive the CES services as being of great assistance to them in finding a job. The CES puts clients in contact with appropriate bodies in relation to validation of qualifications. However the ELO Task Group No 5 noted that more attention needed to be given to assisting refugees to have qualifications upgraded or recognised in Australia. Further consideration will be given to this aspect. This Department has taken steps to mount special vocational oriented English language courses.

### **Special programs to assist the illiterate and unemployable refugees**

7.37 The Committee recommends that urgent consideration be given to developing special programs of action to assist those refugees who are illiterate and/or unemployable.

### **Related action**

7.37 Refugee selection criteria give some preference to people with a knowledge of English and employment skills. However there is a need for special programs to assist refugees with particular difficulties.

### **Correction of birth dates and other personal details provided by the refugees**

7.38 The Committee recommends that the Government declare a general amnesty to facilitate the once-and-for-all correction of birth dates and other personal details provided by the 1975 intakes of 'hard-core' Vietnamese refugees.

### **Related action**

7.38 There is a committee considering this issue within the Department. There are continuing problems because of incorrect information being given. There is a need to strike a balance between maintenance of emphasis on reliable information given by the refugees, and understanding of the refugees' position in relation to selection and maximisation of benefits in Australia. The Department has so far not taken a lenient attitude to changing incorrect details in the light of further information.

### **Family reunions**

7.39 The Committee believes that family reunions should be pursued as a matter of highest priority for those Vietnamese refugees who were admitted to Australia as special cases during 1975. This should be done both on grounds of humanity towards the Vietnamese who were separated from their families and because, in the long term, the family is likely to prove the best safeguard against emotional distress and economic hardship. As the Vietnamese family comprises an extended group, a wider view should be taken of family reunions than is presently the case.

### **Related action**

7.39 Apart from the high priority given to family reunion in refugee selection in camps in South East Asia, negotiations are continuing between the Vietnamese authorities and the Australian Embassy in Hanoi with a view to establishing substantial family reunion movement on terms acceptable to the Australian Government. The former practice of issuing Letters of Authority for Travel to Australia to prima facie eligible cases in Vietnam was suspended late in 1978 due to the problems it created. Of the 578 persons to whom Letters of Authority were issued, only 325 have been able to leave Vietnam.

### **Communication with refugees**

7.40 In order to avoid the confusion, misinterpretation and lack of comprehension which results from word of mouth communication with refugees, the Committee recommends that their own language be used in individual communication with them as well as in the preparation of documents and information sheets which are of concern to them. In the Committee's view the use of the refugee's native language for both oral and written communication is of fundamental importance if practical application is to be given to the basic principle that refugees (and migrants) be assured of full access to statutory services and forms of support and assistance to which they are entitled.

### **Related action**

7.40 Interpreters are used in communication during the selection and counselling process and in providing all those accepted with basic information about movement to Australia. Similar arrangements exist at the post-arrival stage. Indochinese languages are among those available through the Telephone Interpreter Service and the Translation Service provided by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. Other Commonwealth and State government agencies employ their own interpreters.

7.41 The Committee notes the particular care which is required in preparing information sheets for distribution to refugees prior to their embarkation to Australia. In future situations the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should ensure that all relevant departments and agencies are consulted and utilise the services of linguists having detailed knowledge and familiarity with the cultural background of the refugees concerned.

### **Related action**

7.41 Following initial production of comprehensive information sheets in the three major Indochinese languages it was found that these tended to act as an attraction to refugees who would not otherwise have wanted to come to Australia. Information now provided concentrates on basic details required for movement. Linguists employed by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs have a detailed knowledge of the cultural background of Indochinese refugees.

### **Continuation of the study into the settlement of the Vietnamese refugees**

7.42 The Committee recommends that funds be made available urgently to enable the survey commenced by Dr Martin into the settlement of the Vietnamese refugees, to be continued into a second phase during 1977.

### **Related action**

7.42 Cabinet decided on 3 February 1976 to terminate this study. A report on progress at the time of termination was submitted by Dr Martin in June 1976.

### **Ministerial consent to the adoptions of Vietnamese orphans evacuated from Saigon during April 1975**

7.43 In noting the concern which has been expressed over the delays and legal difficulties being experienced by prospective adoptive parents seeking to adopt Vietnamese orphans who have been placed in their care, the Committee concludes that these matters must be finalised without further delay. In the circumstances, therefore, and in view of the special nature of this situation, the Committee recommends that the Minister for Social Security, in whose care and guardianship the orphans are placed, should now consent to the adoption of those children who were evacuated from Saigon in the two flights during April 1975.

### **Related action**

7.43 Responsibility for the administration of the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act rests with the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. Adoption is a complex legal and social process which comes within the framework of State and Territory Legislation and Ordinances. Adoptions of these children continue to be processed by all States and Territories in accordance with the practice and procedures of their legislation. It is understood that the overwhelming majority of the children have now been adopted.

## **Guardianship and responsibility for unaccompanied Timorese refugee children**

7.44 The Committee recommends that immediate steps be taken to settle the as yet unanswered questions of the guardianship and legal and financial responsibility for the welfare of a number of children who fled with the refugees from East Timor without their parents. These matters cannot await the uncertain outcome of attempts to reunite these children with their parents.

### **Related action**

7.44 The Timorese children in question were brought within the provisions of the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act* and became wards of the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. In accordance with his responsibility under the Act to the principal officer of the relevant State and Territory child welfare authorities. Eligible children received a maintenance allowance from the Department of Social Security. The majority of the children have reached 18 years of age and as a consequence are no longer under guardianship.

The Committee in recommendation 7.34 stated:

'In view of the special circumstances in which refugees find themselves, the Committee recommends that the Department of Social Security respond sensitively to the needs of individuals and, in deserving cases, waive particular residency requirements as a means of easing financial burdens.'

The Department's reply was that the Social Services Act does not provide for positive discrimination for refugees as a group and to do so would require amending legislation after a Government decision. The Committee appreciates that circumstances have altered since this recommendation in 1976 and while payments to refugees are the same as to social welfare beneficiaries, there are some other forms of assistance available to refugees.

There are aspects of the resettlement process that are still being developed, reviewed and refined, e.g. the correction of birth dates and personal details, and bearing in mind that resources are not unlimited, it is obvious that real progress has been made since 1976. The Committee concludes that overall, positive measures have been introduced to assist refugee resettlement and they are a constructive response to what was envisaged in the recommendations of the Committee's 1976 report.

## Acknowledgments

The Committee expresses its gratitude to the persons, associations, organisations, companies and government departments for their submissions to this inquiry. The Committee very much appreciated the additional assistance it received from the people who added to their written contributions with verbal evidence at hearings.

The co-operation of the ASEAN Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Australia and their staffs in meeting informally with the Committee and exchanging views on the reference is gratefully acknowledged.

The arrangements made by the management and staff of CACS for the Committee to visit Migrant Centres proved a valuable addition to the Committee's deliberations on the reference. Committee members express their gratitude for the courtesies extended to them during their visits.

The Committee extends its thanks to the previous Chairman and Committee members for their valuable work during their time on this inquiry and towards the formulation of the report. Likewise, we would like to express our sincere appreciation of the diligence and efficiency of our Committee staff.

The Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence presents its report on the reference 'Indochinese Refugee Resettlement — Australia's Involvement'.

D. B. SCOTT  
*Chairman*

The Senate  
1982.

## Appendix I

### Australian aid to refugees and displaced persons since 1.7.78

#### Australian Aid to Refugees and Displaced Persons since 1.7.78

(including aid to Kampucheans in Kampuchea and Thailand and to Thai farmers displaced by Indo-Chinese refugees)

| Contributions to:                                | 1978-79 (\$A'000) |       |       |        | 1979-80 (\$A'000) |       |       |        | 1980-81 (\$A'000) |        |       |        | Comments   |
|--|-------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------|--------|--|
|  | Cash              | Food  | Other | Total  | Cash              | Food  | Other | Total  | Cash              | Food   | Other | Total  |  |
| UNHCR  |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| General Programs*                                | 6 090             |       |       | 6 090  | 5 460             |       |       | 5 460  | 5 010             |        |       | 5 010  | *Amount for Indo-Chinese refugees 1978/79 \$5.45m<br>1979/80 \$3.70m |
| Special Programs:                                |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Bangladesh/Burma                                 |                   | 265   | 150   | 415    |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Pakistan   |                   |       |       |        | 1 000             | 933   |       | 1 933  | 1 700             |        |       | 1 700  |  |
| Zimbabwe   |                   |       |       |        | 1 000             |       |       | 1 000  |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Sudan  |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        | 840               |        |       | 840    |  |
| Other international agencies<br>1978/79, 1979/80 |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        | Also general grants:   |
| UNICEF   |                   |       |       |        | 1 500             |       |       | 1 500  |                   |        |       |        |  |
| FAO  |                   |       |       |        | 500               |       |       | 500    |                   |        |       |        | Kampuchea  |
| WFP  |                   | 2 111 |       | 2 111  | 450               | 2 107 |       | 2 557  | 2 383             | 19 840 |       | 22 223 |  |
| ICRC   |                   |       |       |        | 500               |       | 600   | 1 100  | 460               |        |       | 460    | Kampucheans  |
| UN co-ordinator                                  |                   |       |       |        | 100               |       |       | 100    |                   |        |       |        | Kampuchean relief  |
| Non-governmental agencies:                       |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| IDEC   |                   |       |       |        | 200               |       |       | 200    |                   |        |       |        |  |
| World Vision                                     |                   |       |       |        | 100               |       |       | 100    |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Bilateral aid:                                   |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Thai Government                                  | 1 000             |       |       | 1 000  | 250               |       |       | 250    |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Indonesian Govt.                                 | 1 000             |       |       | 1 000  |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Philippines Govt.                                | 300               |       |       | 300    |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Pakistan Govt.                                   |                   |       |       |        | 775               |       |       | 775    |                   | 40     |       | 40     |  |
| Sudan Govt.                                      |                   | 344   |       | 344    |                   | 467   |       | 467    |                   |        |       |        | Through UNHCR/WFP  |
| Mozambique                                       |                   | 334   |       | 334    |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Other Aid  |                   |       |       |        |                   |       |       |        |                   |        |       |        |  |
| Hercules Flights                                 |                   |       |       |        |                   | 1 680 |       | 1 680  | 460               |        | 800   | 1 260  |  |
|  | 8 390             | 3 054 | 150   | 11 594 | 11 835            | 3 507 | 2 280 | 17 622 | 10 853            | 19 880 | 800   | 31 533 |  |

Source: The Department of Foreign Affairs.

## Appendix II

### Refugee Policy and Mechanisms

#### *Ministerial Statement*

Mr MacKellar (Warrigah—Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs)—by leave—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on refugee policy and new arrangements to enable refugee and analogous situations to be dealt with promptly, equitably and effectively. Many of our citizens were once refugees or displaced persons. They have found security and prosperity here and have made a valuable contribution to our country. When we welcomed them, it was hoped that refugees and disabled persons were a temporary post-war phenomenon. Now we have to recognise that this was not so. There still are many people in many parts of the world who can be called refugees. Unfortunately, crises which lead to the endangering and displacement of human beings have become commonplace and it is only the more catastrophic or immediate of such situations which now make the headlines. Despite the best efforts of people of good will and of the international community, we must expect that there will continue to be refugees. Apart from all other considerations, we cannot control the forces of nature. In the past year we have seen the force of natural disasters and their effects for people with associations with Australia.

As a matter of humanity, and in accord with international obligations freely entered into, Australia has accepted a responsibility to contribute toward the solution of world refugee problems. To this end: It has ratified the Convention on the Status of Refugees; it is a member of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and contributes to the resettlement funds of the UNHCR; it recognises the need through its immigration policy to fulfil the legal obligations required by the Convention and to develop special humanitarian programs for the resettlement of the displaced and/or the persecuted. These steps, taken as an involved member of the international community, must now be complemented by the adoption and application of an ongoing refugee policy and refugee mechanism. We do injustice to previous governments if we do not give tribute to Australia's contribution in resettlement of refugees in the past. We have done this partly to develop our country, partly to respond to situations demanding a humanitarian response. We have done this without an articulated policy. Such a policy is needed.

If we are to seek to act in the interests of refugees themselves and the Australian community, it is necessary to face up to many practical difficulties. Many refugees are not simply migrants beset by a few additional problems. They are often persons who are distressed and disoriented and who need specialised settlement assistance. Uprooted from their familiar surroundings, they may face the shock of cultural dissimilarities, a language barrier and perhaps the trauma of the discovery that their skills or the occupation they followed in their country of origin are not recognised or have no parallel in their country of refuge.

Those who have in the recent past exhorted the Government to accept greater numbers of refugees must take into account the need to co-ordinate and develop such Government and community resources as will assist not only in the acceptance, but also in the responsible settlement, of refugees. A fact often forgotten is that many refugees do not want to come to Australia or, at least, they prefer to go to another country where, for instance, they have close relatives or their language is spoken. Moreover, our own capacity to accept refugees is not unlimited. Australia's present and future capacity to resettle refugees successfully depends on many factors including: The prevailing economic situation; the level of unemployment; the locations within Australia to

which refugees wish to go; the background of refugees to be accepted—their capacity for early integration or otherwise; the availability of special post arrivals services—language instruction, education, training, accommodation, health and welfare; and the numbers of refugees for which voluntary agencies can care.

The Government's approach to refugees is based on the following four principles:

1. Australia fully recognises its humanitarian commitment and responsibility to admit refugees for resettlement.
2. The decision to accept refugees must always remain with the Government of Australia.
3. Special assistance will often need to be provided for the movement of refugees in designated situations or for their resettlement in Australia.
4. It may not be in the interest of some refugees to settle in Australia. Their interests may be better served by resettlement elsewhere. The Australian Government makes an annual contribution to the UNHCR which is the main body associated with such resettlement.

It is the Government's view that the acceptance and settlement of refugees should be a continuum beginning with a quick and decisive response to international crises and concluding, after what may be a long and difficult path for the refugee, with successful integration into the Australian community. We have to recognise however, that there can be refugees with the sort of background, education and skills enabling them to fit readily into the Australian scene. It may be a disservice to them to continue to single them out for special treatment as refugees after they have arrived in Australia. There are others who may not wish to be labelled as 'refugees' over a period.

In situations where refugees are under immediate and dire personal threat, acceptance of people who will face settlement difficulties in Australia is justified. More generally, we have to keep in mind that it may not be in the interests of refugees not under immediate personal threat to accept them for entry to Australia if they will face major long term settlement problems here. It may be preferable for them to be resettled in another country or to be sustained in a more suitable environment, through the UNHCR. This is the responsible approach based on the long view which takes account not only of the problem but also of the best solution.

Within the range of people who are forced by events to become refugees there will be many variations of circumstances and conditions. Needs will differ. The Government recognises that:

1. There will be people in refugee-type situations who do not fall strictly within the UNHCR mandate or within Convention definitions. Government policy will be sufficiently flexible to enable the extension of this policy, where appropriate, to such people. I shall return to this.
2. Some refugees will be capable of meeting normal migrant criteria concerning family reunion or occupational skills. Where appropriate, such refugees should be selected and resettled in the normal manner under current migrant policies. In accordance with the practice adopted by some other countries, priority in processing will be given to them.
3. Other refugees will not fall within the normally acceptable degrees of family relationship or have skills within currently acceptable criteria. Many may have great social adjustments to make in Australia. In offering resettlement to its fair share of these, Australia should first seek those who have relatives in Australia or associations with Australia and those who will be able to make the necessary social adjustments.
4. The interests of those refugees who, it is assessed, would have extreme difficulty in adjusting to the Australian environment may not be best served by migration to Australia but be better served by action by the UNHCR or other agencies to resettle

them in a more compatible environment. I would stress that the Government readily accepts that there will be people in urgent need of resettlement who will have major problems of resettlement in Australia. It would be inconsistent with the humanitarian nature of refugee resettlement not to accept some people in this category.

5. There will also be refugees, some of working age, who will be unable to qualify for selection under these refugee guidelines because of physical, mental or social handicaps. Provided that appropriate institutional care is available, Australia will be prepared in principle to accept refugees in this category. No specific quota will be set but each case will be considered in the light of Australia's capacity to provide adequate care.

6. Through its ratification of the Convention on the Status of Refugees, Australia has accepted certain obligations in relation to people covered by the Convention. Situations arise from time to time in which people such as those who enter Australia illegally—for example, deserting seamen—or who become prohibited immigrants—for example, by the expiry of temporary permits—claim to be refugees entitled to the protection of the Convention and in consequence request permission to remain permanently in Australia. A standing inter-departmental body will be established to evaluate such claims and to make recommendations on them to me. It is proposed that the Office of the UNHCR will be involved as necessary in these deliberations.

To enable Australia to respond quickly to designated refugee situations the Government has decided that new mechanisms will be introduced. These are as follows:

1. The Government will consider proposals from the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs for designating refugee situations and appropriate responses to them. The designated refugee situations will be kept under regular review. Where it is decided that the Australian response to a refugee situation should be in the form of contributions to the UNHCR or other agencies to resettle or temporarily maintain refugees outside Australia, the Minister for Foreign Affairs will continue to determine the modalities and amount of assistance.

2. A standing inter-departmental committee on refugees comprising a senior officer of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs as chairman, and senior officers of the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Employment and Industrial Relations, Social Security, Finance, Health and Education with other departments and the Public Service Board to be co-opted as necessary, will be established.

This Committee will advise the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on the capacity for accepting refugees; consult annually, and otherwise as necessary, with voluntary agencies regarding the numbers they would accept for resettlement; recommend co-ordination for arrival and immediate resettlement; and regularly review the intake of refugees against the capacity of resources in this country to ensure successful resettlement.

3. Voluntary agencies are to be encouraged to participate and indicate periodically, or as the need arises, the extent of assistance they can provide. Early consideration will be given to those refugees who are the subject of adequate sponsorship by appropriate voluntary bodies. In this respect there is a continuing flow of refugees in small groups or as individuals brought to attention by the UNHCR and/or by voluntary agencies in Australia. Provided satisfactory sponsorship is available, a small number of such refugees could be accepted on a case by case basis by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. Some agencies expect they may be able to maintain refugees approved for entry to Australia for 12 months after arrival here. This will be explored.

4. It is proposed to resume the practice of posting an Australian officer to a position in the UNHCR in Geneva and to seek to re-establish formal relations with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration through observer status.

5. The Refugee Unit of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs will be strengthened. This will enable prompt and efficient responses by experienced officers to refugee situations in which it is decided that Australia should participate. We now have considerable experience with the task force approach. The capacity to respond to refugee situations in this and other ways will be developed.

6. The first step taken under this new policy will be to locate staff in Thailand temporarily to make a continuing contribution to the resolution of refugee problems there. There will be a regular intake of Indo-Chinese refugees from Thailand and nearby areas at a level consistent with our capacity as a community to resettle them. In this operation we shall be relying greatly on the co-operation of the UNHCR, other Governments, especially the Thai Government, and voluntary agencies in Australia.

It is clear from the foregoing that the object of the Government's initiative is a declaration of a comprehensive refugee policy and the establishment of administrative machinery needed to put it into effect. It will enable us to respond to the needs of those who are displaced, without the constraint of technical definition. The comprehensive nature of this overall approach should not be seen as limiting Australia's options in particular situations. A refugee policy must be capable of coping with crises which arise suddenly and often unexpectedly. It must be cognisant of the fact that in such situations human beings have human needs which are intensified by conditions of danger and distress.

Over the past 30 years, Australia has developed an international reputation for resettlement. It reacted to the plight of displaced persons in Europe immediately after World War II and to the consequences of various events in Eastern Europe, of which the most notable were the Soviet repression of movements towards national independence in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Australia has played, and is continuing to play, a responsible part in the resettlement of distressed persons and refugees from the Lebanon and Indo-China. I believe that there would be few in this House who would not support a commitment for Australia to play the most effective role possible in refugee settlement. The Government is committed to this view. It is in the belief that there is a community willingness to assist the dispossessed and displaced from overseas in a sensible and realistic way to seek sanctuary and a new life in Australia, that I commend this statement to the Parliament and the people of Australia.

## Appendix III

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### List of persons and organisations submitting evidence to the Committee

A.C.T. Schools Authority, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Anglican Church, Melbourne, Vic.  
Aston, Mr D.M., Mount Gambier, S.A.  
Atchison, Dr J.F., Armidale, N.S.W.  
Austin, Mrs E.F., Darwin, N.T.  
Australian Red Cross Society, Melbourne, Vic.  
Australian Red Cross Society, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Australian Refugee Advisory Council, Melbourne, Vic.  
Baptist Union of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Benyei, Dr L., Melbourne, Vic.  
Birrell, Dr R., (Monash University) Clayton, Vic.  
Blengini, Ms G., Darwin, N.T.  
Bui, Dr C.T., Brisbane, Qld.  
Business and Consumer Affairs, Department of, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Cain, Mr M., Coffs Harbour, N.S.W.  
Cambodian Refugees Relief Association (Self Help Programs), Melbourne, Vic.  
Catholic Social Services, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Department of, Darwin, N.T.  
Commissioner for Community Relations, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Commission for World Mission of the Uniting Church, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services Limited, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Community Development, Northern Territory Department of, Darwin, N.T.  
Community Refugee Settlement Committee, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Coughlan, Mr J.E., Canberra, A.C.T.  
Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba, Qld.  
Dawson, Mrs B.L., Capalba, Qld.  
Dawson, Mr R.F., Capalba, Qld.  
Dinh, Mr T.S., Brisbane, Qld.  
Donnelly, Ms M.F.S., Sydney, N.S.W.  
Dorovan, Miss J., Sydney, N.S.W.  
Ecumenical Migration Centre, Melbourne, Vic.  
Education, Commonwealth Department of, Canberra, A.C.T. and Commonwealth Schools Commission, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Education, Northern Territory Department of, Darwin, N.T.  
Employment and Youth Affairs, Department of, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, Sydney, N.S.W.  
Foreign Affairs, Department of, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Fyfe, Father M.P., Darwin, N.T.  
Health, Commonwealth Department of, Canberra, A.C.T.  
Health, Northern Territory Department of, Darwin, N.T.  
Health, Victorian Minister of, Melbourne, Vic.

Hmong-Australia Society, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Housing and Co-operative Societies, N.S.W. Minister for, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Department of, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Indo-China Refugee Association, A.C.T. Branch, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Indo-China Refugee Association (Australia) Inc., Adelaide, S.A. Indo-China Refugee  
 Association (N.S.W.), Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Institute of Public Affairs, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Khanh, Mr N.V., Brisbane, Qld.  
 Lee, Dr K.C. Darwin, N.T.  
 Local Government Association of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 McAulay, Commissioner R., Darwin, N.T.  
 McHenry, Mr R.W., Darwin, N.T.  
 McKenzie, Dr D.W., Melbourne, Vic.  
 McKeon, Mr and Mrs J., Roto, N.S.W.  
 Maskelyne, Mr S.C., Surrey Hills, Vic.  
 Migrant Settlement Council of the Northern Territory, Darwin, N.T.  
 Moffett, Mr K.V., Sefton Park, S.A.  
 National Migrants and Refugee Committee (Society of St Vincent de Paul) Sydney,  
 N.S.W.  
 Narrabundah College, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Northern Territory Catholic Refugee Co-ordinating Committee, Darwin, N.T.  
 Osborne, Dr M., Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Queensland Premier's Department, Brisbane, Qld.  
 Red Cross Resettlement Project, Newcastle, N.S.W.  
 Rivett, Professor K., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Rowland, Mr T.R., Brisbane, Qld.  
 S.E.A.C.A. (South East Asian Community Assistance) Centre, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Scott, Mr K., Darwin, N.T.  
 See-Kee, Mr C., Darwin, N.T.  
 Social Security, Department of Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Society of St Vincent de Paul, Rockhampton, Qld. Steen, Ms F., Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Tran, Dr My Van, Darwin, N.T.  
 Transport, Department of, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Trung, Mr V.N., Brisbane, Qld.  
 Uniting Church, Darwin, N.T.  
 Uniting Church, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Vietnamese Association of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld.  
 Viviani, Dr N., Brisbane, Qld.  
 Ward, Mrs P.M., Adelaide, S.A.  
 Watkins, Mrs B., Darwin, N.T.  
 Western Region Ethnic Advisory Committee, Melbourne, Vic.  
 White, Mrs P.M., Woolgoolga, N.S.W.  
 Youth and Community Services, N.S.W. Department of, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Zubrzycki, Mr G., Canberra, A.C.T.