

## Chapter 2

### Adequacy of settlement and social inclusion services

2.1 Australia has a strong program of settlement services that have international repute. Participants of the inquiry generally praised the current suite of settlement programs, however many also highlighted a number of areas that require improvement. This chapter examines some of the issues raised regarding the adequacy of settlement and social inclusion services in Australia, including the government's approach to settlement, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), changes to citizenship requirements, and employment services for new migrants and refugees.

#### Government approach

2.2 Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard a range of views on the government's approach to settlement services. A number of submitters and witnesses were critical of the division of portfolio responsibilities, policy changes to settlement service eligibility, and the lack of attention afforded to regional settlement. These were considered indicative of the government's fragmented approach to multiculturalism in Australia, and have had a flow-on effect for organisations in the settlement sector.<sup>1</sup>

2.3 The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) argued that 'in order to affect a cultural shift toward visibly embracing multiculturalism, government and its funded agencies need to set the standard for inclusive culture'.<sup>2</sup> It noted that community attitudes toward multiculturalism '[start] with a well-articulated government position that supports inclusion and welcomes diversity'.<sup>3</sup>

#### Division of responsibility

2.4 Small changes in department names, and the division of responsibility for multicultural affairs, settlement services, citizenship, and countering violent extremism, were interpreted as indicators that the government's appetite for multiculturalism has somewhat shifted over time.<sup>4</sup>

2.5 The committee noted that current policy responsibility for multicultural affairs and settlement services sits with the Department of Social Services, whilst the AMEP is administered by the Department of Education and Training. Translating and

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1 See, for example, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p.3; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., *Submission 47*, pp. 6–7; Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 2.

2 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

3 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

4 See, for example, Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 6; Professor Fethi Mansouri, Director, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation; and UNESCO Chair, Comparative Research in Cultural Diversity and Social Justice, Deakin University, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 54; Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

Interpreting services that are part of the settlement program are provided by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, as are matters of citizenship. *Jobactive* services to assist migrants in securing employment are delivered by the Department of Employment.

2.6 AMES Australia expressed concern that the fragmented nature of settlement service administration has 'created a disconnect in those critical on-arrival settlement services'.<sup>5</sup>

2.7 The ECCV echoed these concerns, suggesting that changes to department names sent a strong negative message about multiculturalism. They gave the example of the name change from the 'Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' to the 'Department of Immigration and Border Protection' as having a greater focus on exclusionary measures, rather than the social inclusion of new arrivals to Australia.<sup>6</sup> Responsibility for settlement services also shifted from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to the Department of Social Services in 2013, which ECCV claims 'swings the pendulum "from migration is good and necessary" for Australia to migration is a burden'.<sup>7</sup>

2.8 Witnesses and submitters expressed concern that indicative name and policy changes around settlement services have instigated a cultural shift that has undermined multiculturalism and social inclusion. At the ECCV Roundtable on Strengthening Multiculturalism on 5 May 2017, this was described as '[changing] the culture and flavour of multiculturalism'.<sup>8</sup>

2.9 The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. added that the portfolio position of settlement services and multicultural affairs may in fact jeopardise its success:

The record suggests that these tasks will not be given the priority that is warranted if they are located within government departments that have a broad range of other responsibilities.<sup>9</sup>

2.10 Along with many participants, the committee notes that the *National Settlement Framework* released in November 2016 is an 'important step to coordinate settlement and social inclusion services'.<sup>10</sup> However, there is concern that while the Framework provides a blue print for the respective roles of Commonwealth, state and territory, and local governments, there still lacks a single coordinating body to drive outcomes, leaving many settlement service providers apprehensive.<sup>11</sup>

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5 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 2.

6 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

7 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

8 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

9 Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., *Submission 47*, pp. 6–7.

10 Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, p. 5.

11 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 7.

### *Narrow eligibility*

2.11 Current eligibility requirements for access to settlement services are dependent on an individual's circumstances and visa class.<sup>12</sup> A number of witnesses told the committee that eligibility requirements have tightened over a period of five years, including through restricted provision of family reunion visas and decreased access to the Adult Migrant English Program.

2.12 Participants of the inquiry argued that 'on arrival' settlement services, including the Australian Government's Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) program, and Complex Case Support (CCS) program, are almost exclusively reserved for those arriving to Australia as refugees and humanitarian entrants.<sup>13</sup> New arrivals that come to Australia with a family reunion visa, a 457 visa, or otherwise, were therefore viewed as receiving less cohesive early settlement services:

...the Humanitarian Settlement Services program, generally speaking, [does] provide a very strong orientation and grounding in terms of settlement for refugees. But those other migrant groups do not have that. In fact, we are doing ourselves a disservice because we are leaving that settlement process very much to family links or spouses...They do not have English skills and they do not have that support to be able to get out, connect and integrate.<sup>14</sup>

2.13 Mr Nicholas Tebbey, Chief Executive Officer of the Settlement Council of Australia, argued that the five-year limit on funding fails to support 'people who fall through the cracks, who fall on hard times and need assistance'. He noted:

Time and time again, we hear stories of families who, potentially seven or 10 years after, or even second-generation migrants, will still come back to that first port of call, the migrant resource centre or the settlement service provider, seeking help...our members report to us that they will receive clients who are not typically eligible for services but nevertheless need the help.<sup>15</sup>

2.14 With regard to refugee settlement, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) told the committee that successive asylum policy changes since August 2012 have removed refugee service entitlements and are increasingly shifting refugees to temporary visa protections. Without the security of a permanent or humanitarian entrant visa, these individuals are denied access to imperative settlement supports. According to RCOA, this has a significant impact on social cohesion:

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12 Department of Social Services, *Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/humanitarian-settlement-services-hss> (accessed 6 July 2017).

13 Settlement Council of Australia, *Submission 62*, p. 12.

14 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 4.

15 Mr Nicholas Tebbey, Chief Executive Officer, Settlement Council of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 24.

This is a perfect recipe for alienation and marginalisation, even though most people who come by boat have been recognised as refugees, and will go on to live in Australia for their foreseeable future. Instead of protecting and seeking to integrate them, Australia continues to demonise them as ‘illegal’ and deliberately frustrate their ability ever to find safety and hope in Australia.<sup>16</sup>

2.15 Settlement Services International suggested that the continued restriction of Australian settlement services seemed to not only apply to particular visa classes, but to all migrant groups. Rather than increasing funding and services to meet the needs of the growing intake of refugees and migrants, there seemed to be less resources available:

I have seen in the 30-odd years I have been in the sector—about 28 years now—a process whereby we have narrowed people's accessibility to services. When I first started in settlement services there was no limit. When I was a young social worker and people came to seek my support, it did not matter how long they had been here for. Now we have narrowed it. It has been narrowed and it was capped at 15 years, then it was 7½ years and now it is five years.<sup>17</sup>

2.16 The committee heard that the inability to access settlement services can affect individuals' ability to seek employment, pursue further education opportunities, and integrate into their local community. RCOA described this as the 'wasted human potential' of new arrivals, citing the comments of a young refugee:

I came here in 2012, I'm not allowed to work, there are no funds for me to study. It's not just me, it's all asylum seekers...When I arrived, I was 17. Imagine if you are 17 and you are not allowed to go to school. Now I'm almost 20. The best years of my life are gone. When can I go to school? When can I go to college? When can I have my education?<sup>18</sup>

2.17 Another former refugee appearing before the committee provided a frank assessment of the restricted policies around refugee settlement:

The model of funding and service delivery in the settlement sector does not work for the more recently arrived refugees. Support is provided on a short-term basis and eligibility is restricted to five years after arriving in Australia. The large majority of refugee community organisations are not funded; therefore, diminishing the participation of refugees themselves in delivering settlement services.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 7.

17 Mrs Esta Paschalidis-Chilas, Government and Member Relations Manager, Settlement Services International, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 38.

18 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 8.

19 Mr Burhan Zangana, Committee Member, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 36.

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### *Support for regional areas*

2.18 The committee received evidence that the provision of settlement and social inclusion services in regional areas is complex and requires adequate resourcing and support from local and federal government.

2.19 The Multicultural Council of Tasmania highlighted the low levels of migration to Tasmania and the loss of migrant communities to the mainland over recent years, due to a lack of settlement support. They submitted that 'federal government programs are not designed to fund small community organisations' and have led to service gaps for migrants in regional areas:<sup>20</sup>

If sufficient opportunity, support and encouragement is not provided for people to build communities in Tasmania, then migrants will continue to relocate to places that have more established communities.<sup>21</sup>

2.20 The committee heard that the success of regional settlement is also dependent on the community resources available, such as the availability of accredited interpreters, or the provision of transport assistance.<sup>22</sup> The Tasmanian Government stated:

In Tasmania there is a shortage of credentialed interpreters in new and emerging languages. This occurs because the community populations are small in number and still mastering their own English language proficiency. This is also a problem for much of regional Australia.<sup>23</sup>

2.21 Participants noted, however, that it is important to ensure regional areas continue to be included as designated settlement locations. Not only are there a number of new arrivals seeking to return to the agrarian lifestyle of their home country,<sup>24</sup> regional townships can also stand to benefit from population revival and the provision of skilled labour that often result from being a settlement location.<sup>25</sup> One example provided by witnesses is of the Karen-Burmese community in Nhill, a town in North Victoria:

It is a small town of about 2,000 people. There is a large duck manufacturing processor who needed labour and could not attract any labour and was in danger of having to close. They approached us to look for mostly unskilled labour. We approached the Karen-Burmese community here in Werribee because we knew that they were keen to settle and, through a process of working with the leadership in the regional town and also the Karen leadership, settled over a period of about five years more

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20 Multicultural Council of Tasmania, *Submission 21*, [p. 3].

21 Multicultural Council of Tasmania, *Submission 21*, [p. 2].

22 See, for example, Tasmanian Government, *Submission 54*, p. 6; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Engaging Our Youth: Our Future*, June 2015, p. 76.

23 Tasmanian Government, *Submission 54*, p. 6.

24 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 10.

25 Ms Kaye Graves, Team Manager, Diversity, Bendigo Community Health Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 11.

than 200 people. That has had significant success. As well as the employer being able to stay open and do well because of it, the school was able to stay open and they were able to attract an extra nurse. They have a soccer club as well as the AFL footy club.<sup>26</sup>

2.22 A further example is that of Mingoona, a small town located on the border to New South Wales and Queensland. According to witnesses, the settlement of twenty-six Rwandan refugees enabled the struggling town to keep its primary school open, and provide valuable labour to local farmers. This was made possible through the coordinated efforts of refugee agencies and the local progress association.<sup>27</sup>

2.23 The committee noted that whilst adequate health, settlement, and support resources are crucial to successful settlement outcomes, there needs to be embedded community support. AMES Australia said this may be a matter of accessing volunteers or other such supports.<sup>28</sup> Mr Asher Hirsch from RCOA suggested that it should also come from strong leadership:

The [Karen] resettlement [in Nhill, Victoria] is a great example of the importance of political leadership. The mayor, who I met, has spent time learning the [Karen] language, and he has spoken at events where he spoke first in [Karen] and then in English. He dressed up in traditional [Karen] clothing, as well. That leadership was really vital to getting the community behind the idea that they have new migrants coming in and that this is something we should be celebrating and welcoming.<sup>29</sup>

### **English language learning**

2.24 The committee received evidence that the current English language program available to new arrivals, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), is not being utilised effectively due to a number of barriers around inflexible delivery, insufficient length of supports, and personal or cultural obstacles. The committee notes that learning English is an essential aspect of settlement into Australian life. As the Queensland Government submitted, English language education:

...affords migrants and refugees the opportunity to not only learn English, but to become familiar with civic laws, establish social networks and gain confidence to participate economically.<sup>30</sup>

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26 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, pp. 7–8.

27 Mr Matthew Hall, Ms Georgie Currie, Ms Anna McArthur-Dowty, *Submission 36*, [p. 2].

28 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 7.

29 Mr Asher Hirsch, Senior Policy Officer, Refugee Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 8.

30 Queensland Government, *Submission 98*, p. 3.

### *Delivery of the Adult Migrant English Program*

2.25 The current AMEP allows eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to access up to 510 hours of English language tuition to help them learn foundational English language and settlement skills to enable them to participate socially and economically in Australian society.<sup>31</sup> However, many witnesses said that the block allocation does not accurately reflect the amount of time required to acquire a new language in a foreign country. The Tasmanian Government noted that this concern is widespread:

Almost all jurisdictions, including Tasmania, have at various times advised the Australian Government that 510 hours of English language tuition under the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is insufficient for many new arrivals to gain English language proficiency appropriate for gaining employment and participating in education and training. This is the case for humanitarian entrants and dependents of skilled migrants who are eligible under the AMEP, alike.<sup>32</sup>

2.26 Mrs Elizabeth Lual, a member of the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network who previously completed the AMEP, stated:

I learnt through volunteer home tutoring, from volunteers at SCARF,<sup>33</sup> where we come from—I am from Wollongong. From the time I arrived I said Australia is wonderful, but the 510 hours are not enough. But I appreciate the government giving it to us. But it is not enough. I learnt in a different way, not from the 510 hours.<sup>34</sup>

2.27 Mrs Lual's evidence alludes to another issue that was frequently raised throughout the inquiry—the rigid structure of the AMEP. The committee heard that many migrants and refugees found the AMEP to be inflexible and mismatched to their needs. Participants to the inquiry said that clients come into the program at different levels, with different needs. As such, the 'one-size-fits-all, across-the-board' model is not suited to all new arrivals.<sup>35</sup>

2.28 As an example, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) pointed out that many migrants, particularly migrant women with limited literacy skills from their home countries, may encounter difficulties in attending and

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31 Department of Education and Training, *Adult Migrant English Program*, <https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

32 Tasmanian Government, *Submission 54*, p. 6.

33 'SCARF' refers to the Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families organisation in Wollongong. They provide a range of support services to refugees settling into the Illawarra region.

34 Mrs Elizabeth Lual, Member, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 40.

35 Ms Sky de Jersey, Settlement Services Programs Officer, Policy and Strategy, Settlement Services International, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 40. Also see: Ms Kaye Graves, Team Manager, Diversity, Bendigo Community Health Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 11.

learning in the structured teaching environment employed by the AMEP. They explained:

Research has demonstrated how women may learn better through 'community-based learning program [sic] where they feel comfortable and more engaged in their own communities'. FECCA's own community consultations have found there is a need for a more practical, practice oriented structure and AMEP content.<sup>36</sup>

2.29 This personalised style of learning was echoed by the Multicultural Communities Council of SA, who suggested that young parents from emerging communities required 'a safe place to practice'.<sup>37</sup> Community Hubs Australia also referred to the need for context, stating:

...learning language is not just a classroom skill; it is a life skill, and you need environments like hubs, schools, community centres, libraries, churches or mosques—places where people are comfortable being and where events happen in that language.<sup>38</sup>

2.30 The committee received a number of suggestions and endorsements of flexible learning models to fill the apparent gaps left by the AMEP. The Victorian Government expressed support for 'a flexible, responsive model of English language tuition that can be tailored to the needs of the individual'.<sup>39</sup> The ECCV recommended a similar tiered approach to allow needs-based support for migrants arriving with varying levels of English education.<sup>40</sup>

2.31 One submitter described the benefits of the Home English Teaching Scheme that she participated in 40 years ago. The home setting allowed her student to receive one-on-one tutelage at a time and in a location that suited both student and teacher, whilst also providing her with a valuable cultural learning experience:

I vividly recall being out of my comfort zone, as I accepted 'Fatima's' hospitality after each lesson, to eat Lebanese cakes and down a small cup of strong Turkish coffee! I'm sure that experience informed my teaching, in being more open to, and understanding of, diversity and difference, which I would encounter during my teaching career.

Therefore I would encourage ALL teachers college courses to contain a component which values and supports multiculturalism, in a practical program.<sup>41</sup>

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36 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 4.

37 Multicultural Communities Council of SA, *Submission 33*, [p. 2].

38 Dr Sonja Hood, Chief Executive Officer, Community Hubs Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 61.

39 Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 6.

40 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

41 Name withheld, *Submission 94*, [p. 1].

2.32 The need to tailor the delivery of English language learning to increase accessibility and participation was promoted by the Victorian Multicultural Commission:

If we require this of them but do not facilitate the training we are not only setting them up for failure but placing an added burden on many who are already facing considerable adjustment and financial pressures.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Barriers to learning***

2.33 Participants to the inquiry drew the committee's attention to cultural and personal barriers to the AMEP. Witnesses revealed that many migrants who arrive and are eligible for the program have competing priorities that can cause them to miss their AMEP entitlement in the first five years of their arrival. Dr Sonja Hood, Chief Executive Officer of Community Hubs Australia, noted:

...if you come here with small children or you come here and have a baby, your priorities as a family will be: finding housing, settling the children into the school or their new life and settling your husband into his job. In a lot of families, that is just a fact. Your language and your needs will come last, which is why you often see people turning up after 10 years.<sup>43</sup>

2.34 The committee was also told that a number of migrants and refugees that arrive may not be literate in their own language—they 'might have moved from country to country, with disrupted schooling'.<sup>44</sup> These individuals struggle to benefit from the 510 hour allocation and require a more flexible approach:

...language learning should be embedded in everyday life—for example, via workplace English language training, or training that is delivered locally, where communities are in situ. English classes should also be offered for a longer period of time, enabling people to catch up.<sup>45</sup>

2.35 Community Hubs Australia added that many migrants and refugees may not recognise the need to learn English upon arrival, instead leaving it until beyond the first five years of settlement:

... it is actually quite easy to live in your first language in a culture which does not speak it. You can read the papers from home, you can watch television from home and you have probably got a family group. For women, if you are the wife in that family, particularly if you have come in—as many Vietnamese women do—to marry men who have grown up here, you will have a family group that speaks your language so there may

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42 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 6.

43 Dr Sonja Hood, Chief Executive Officer, Community Hubs Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 60.

44 Dr Irene Bouzo, Executive Officer, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 19. Also see: Queensland Government, *Submission 98*, p. 3.

45 Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

be no interest from anybody else in your learning either—the situation reinforces itself, if you like.<sup>46</sup>

2.36 Beyond migrants' recognition of the need to learn English, the committee was told that psychological trauma, caused by circumstances and experiences prior to their arrival in Australia, could also be a barrier for some new arrivals. Mr Lachlan Murdoch, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma, referred to the impact of torture and trauma on the brain:

There is clear evidence that exposure to trauma impacts the capacity to learn. It has an effect on concentration and memory. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that trauma exposure can actually affect areas of the brain that are associated with language acquisition. So it is important to be aware of that, because many people coming from refugee backgrounds have experienced trauma, and that can then impact their capacity to acquire a second language.<sup>47</sup>

2.37 The committee also heard that there may be confusion about social norms when refugees and migrants arrive, such as classroom and learning expectations. Mr Atem Dau Atem, Public Officer at the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, described the contrast between his learning experiences in Australia, compared to school in Africa:

Australia has its own way of doing things...when I went to school in Africa, you sat down and listened to your teacher. You did not say anything. You raised your hand to speak. When I came here, I went straight to university. I went to a tutorial. I could not understand a thing because the tutor was chatting and saying all these things, and everybody was chatting, and then they would go back to this thing and talk about that, and then everybody goes on to something else. So I was confused: 'What is going on?' The way things work here sometimes, if you do not have that experience and understanding, it does not matter how much support you get. It is just difficult.<sup>48</sup>

2.38 Community Hubs Australia stated that policy makers need to 'stop thinking about English as something that gets delivered in a 510-hour block and start thinking of it as a life skill'.<sup>49</sup> Chief Executive Officer, Dr Sonja Hood, was of the view that cultural understanding is key to genuine settlement, such that new migrants are not only able to speak English, but to apply it to context and participate in day-to-day life.

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46 Dr Sonja Hood, Chief Executive Officer, Community Hubs Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 60.

47 Mr Lachlan Murdoch, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 40.

48 Mr Atem Dau Atem, Public Officer, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, pp. 40–41.

49 Dr Sonja Hood, Chief Executive Officer, Community Hubs Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 62.

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For new migrants, English skills are essential for participation and independence, such as when purchasing items from a store, applying for a job and taking children to school.<sup>50</sup>

### **Citizenship requirements**

2.39 Throughout the inquiry, witnesses told the committee of the aspiration to obtain citizenship status, and the psychological and social benefits of being able to call oneself an Australian citizen. To new migrants and refugees, Australian citizenship represents a sense of security, an identity, and a chance to start afresh.<sup>51</sup> The inquiry evidence revealed that the legal protection and implications of citizenship status allowed otherwise stateless refugees to feel that they were valuable and could contribute to society through work, taxes, or otherwise. As Mr Burhan Zangana from the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network described:

It is about safety and security. Being a permanent resident, you cannot get out of Australia—or you can but that safety and security is not there. Once you have your citizenship and you apply for your Australian passport, you feel human again. That is what citizenship means for refugees, especially those who become stateless or have a fear of going back or being returned to the country that they left. They went through danger. No-one leaves for fun. No happy person leaves their country and says, 'I'm not going to go back.'<sup>52</sup>

2.40 Compared to its overseas counterparts, Australia's citizenship model of multiculturalism is particularly unique. Whilst in many European countries migrants may be perceived as 'guest workers' and be expected to assimilate; Australia is distinguished by its 'two-way' integration approach that encourages migrants to become full members of the Australian community, whilst also being free to express their cultural identity and heritage.<sup>53</sup> For new arrivals, obtaining citizenship is an important milestone, one that is 'counted down' from the moment of arrival.<sup>54</sup>

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50 Dr Sonja Hood, Chief Executive Officer, Community Hubs Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, pp. 61–62.

51 See, for example, Ms Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, Community Services Coordinator, New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 41; Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 11.

52 Mr Burhan Zangana, Committee Member, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 39.

53 See, for example, Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 6; Professor Andrew Jakubowicz and Ms Ly Ly Lim, *Submission 8*, p. 7; Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 27.

54 Ms Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, Community Services Coordinator, New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 41.

2.41 The committee heard, however, that new arrivals who are unable to obtain citizenship can feel alienated and unwelcome.<sup>55</sup> This is particularly the case for those arriving as a refugee or asylum seeker:

People on these visas will never be able to truly call Australia home. The temporary protection regime means not only that a person must reapply every few years and be found again to be a refugee but that they may be returned to danger. That also means that they are unable to access settlement supports that other refugees get. People who live here for decades or even their entire lives do not have access to the same supports and opportunities as other residents and citizens.<sup>56</sup>

2.42 The Australian Psychological Society contended that the impacts of this are two-fold:

Not only do incoming people not feel valued and recognised when they do not get this help but the broader community also gets the message that incoming people do not deserve support.<sup>57</sup>

2.43 RCOA reinforced this, saying that new arrivals that are denied citizenship, or experience delays in being granted citizenship status, are not included and therefore find it difficult to settle in Australia:

If we think about the fact that we want people to make Australia their home, we want them to feel like they belong, we want them to put down roots here—start businesses, send their kids to school—if you only have a three-year visa and you think you are going to be sent home or you are not sure what is going to happen, you cannot settle in Australia. That also undermines social cohesion and multiculturalism.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Changes to the citizenship test***

2.44 On 20 April 2017, the government announced a commitment to strengthen the requirements to become an Australian citizen. The changes were introduced into Parliament on 15 June 2017 through the Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017 (the bill).<sup>59</sup> A major aspect of the bill was the increase of the general resident requirement, such that applicants must demonstrate a minimum of four years permanent residence before applying for citizenship. The previous requirement allowed time spent in Australia as a temporary resident to be counted

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55 Settlement Council of Australia, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

56 Mr Asher Hirsch, Senior Policy Officer, Refugee Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 2.

57 Professor Ann Sanson, Fellow, Australian Psychological Society, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 57.

58 Mr Asher Hirsch, Senior Policy Officer, Refugee Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 8.

59 Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017.

towards a four year qualifying period, and only required a minimum of 12 months as a permanent resident, immediately prior to applying.<sup>60</sup> Individuals applying for citizenship after April 2017 are also asked to demonstrate their integration into the Australian community through providing documentation to show they are working, educating themselves, paying taxes, or contributing to the community.<sup>61</sup>

2.45 As part of the bill, the government has also introduced a new citizenship test, with additional questions about applicants' attitudes toward gender equality, domestic violence, genital mutilation and child marriage. New applicants must complete an English language test and achieve a pass mark of 75 per cent, equivalent to Level 6 of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).<sup>62</sup>

2.46 In 2015, the take-up of citizenship by migrants to Australia was reported to be 82 per cent for those that had been residents for between 15 and 19 years.<sup>63</sup> The Scanlon Foundation's 2015 *Australians Today* report also showed that citizenship take-up increased the longer residents were in Australia, with 50 per cent of those who had been a resident for between 5 and 9 years becoming citizens, 59 per cent of residents for between 10 and 14 years, and 82 per cent between 15 and 24 years.<sup>64</sup>

2.47 Despite the high levels of uptake, a number of inquiry participants expressed concern about the proposed changes to the citizenship test and the message this sends about multiculturalism in Australia. Witnesses were primarily concerned about the content of the new test and the level of English language proficiency required.<sup>65</sup>

2.48 While supportive of the requirement for applicants to pass an English language proficiency test, some witnesses suggested that the mandatory level of proficiency proposed 'may not be the best way to implement the requirement'.<sup>66</sup> The Executive Council of Australian Jewry noted that the IELTS on which the test is based was originally designed for the purpose of measuring entry into academic institutions and professional associations.<sup>67</sup>

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60 Australian Government, *Strengthening The Test For Australian Citizenship*, April 2017, pp. 9–15.

61 Australian Government, *Strengthening The Test For Australian Citizenship*, April 2017, pp. 9–15.

62 See, for example, Australian Government, *Strengthening the test for Australian citizenship*, April 2017, p. 6; The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, 'Labor's citizenship smokescreen', *Media Release*, 21 June 2017.

63 The Scanlon Foundation, '*Australians Today*', August 2016, p. 2.

64 The Scanlon Foundation, '*Australians Today*', August 2016, p. 103.

65 See, for example, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, pp. 7–8; Public Health Association of Australia, *Submission 50*, p. 6.

66 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 9.

67 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 9. Also see: RMIT ABC Fact Check, 'Fact check: Will the Government's new citizenship test demand a university-level standard of English?', *ABC News*, 29 June 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck/2017-06-28/tony-burke-citizenship-test-university-level-english-dutton/8656754> (accessed 16 August 2017).

2.49 Witnesses to the inquiry felt that the citizenship test changes were indicative of a broader government shift away from principles of social inclusion, and would negatively impact on settlement outcomes:

The message from the proposed changes to citizenship application to many is that Australia is going to make it difficult to non-English speaking people to obtain Australian Citizenship... The new rules act as antidote to the principles of inclusion. It fails to take into consideration the complex issues that prevent a large cohort of refugees from attaining that level of English.<sup>68</sup>

2.50 The Settlement Council of Australia claimed that the changes 'have the potential to alienate certain members of Australia's multicultural community, for whom citizenship may become unattainable'.<sup>69</sup> Rather than uniting Australians, the new citizenship requirements were viewed as a threat to Australia's multicultural fabric.<sup>70</sup> Ms Olyvia Nikou QC from the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria stated:

Knowing about Donald Bradman or lamingtons is not going to assist us moving forward as a rich society that draws from many perspectives.<sup>71</sup>

***Recognising migrant contributions and integration into Australian life***

2.51 Rather than making changes to the test, many witnesses called for a broader recognition of allegiance and integration into Australian life. They suggested that this approach would provide a more accurate reflection of Australia as a multicultural nation, subscribing to democratic values of equity, justice, and respect.<sup>72</sup>

2.52 The Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria suggested that citizenship should be demonstrated by levels of engagement. They provided the committee with evidence of migrants' contribution to Australian society through volunteering and community work.<sup>73</sup>

2.53 The Refugee Community Advocacy Network noted in its submission:

Australian citizenship is an allegiance to the country and is not determined by the level of English but rather, one's faithfulness to Australia and hard work to contribute to the country.<sup>74</sup>

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68 Refugee Community Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 7.

69 Settlement Council of Australia, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

70 Edmund Rice Centre, *Submission 26*, p. 14.

71 Ms Olyvia Nikou QC, Co-Chair of Cultural Committee, Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 10.

72 See, for example, Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 15; Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 22; Australian Multicultural Foundation, *Submission 31*, [p. 2]; Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 8.

73 Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, *Submission 7*, p. 6.

74 Refugee Community Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 8.

2.54 Volunteering SA&NT submitted that 'multicultural communities contribute extensively to the social fabric of the wider Australian community, through voluntary participation'.<sup>75</sup> The volunteering experience can also facilitate positive settlement outcomes through encouraging community participation. For new migrants and refugees, volunteering offers a social network, work opportunities, and connections with the broader community.<sup>76</sup>

2.55 Other suggestions to recognise and improve allegiance to Australian values centred on education. RCOA suggested that educational goals for young Australians should reiterate what it means to be an Australian citizen, and to 'commit to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life'.<sup>77</sup> The Executive Council of Australian Jewry suggested that the values underpinning Australia's democratic tradition should extend beyond the non-core subjects of civics and citizenship, but instead be integrated into broader school education, in subjects such as English, history, the sciences and geography.<sup>78</sup>

2.56 The Australian Multicultural Council noted that this is not a new idea, saying that several Government reports and reviews have previously 'identified the importance of a stronger civics program in schools to encourage participation with, and pride in, both community and political life in Australia'.<sup>79</sup>

### **Employment services**

2.57 The committee heard that many refugees and migrants experienced difficulty securing employment through both the government's *jobactive* services, and the Skills for Education and Employment program.<sup>80</sup> The ability to find work, and receive a regular income can have a significant impact on an individual's settlement. According to AMES Australia, '[b]eing settled is about how you feel about yourself—self-worth and self-esteem—and being employed gives you a sense of being valued and of contributing'.<sup>81</sup> RCOA also said that employment can have a therapeutic effect on refugees that have come from torture or trauma situations and are seeking fulfilment in a new country.<sup>82</sup>

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75 Volunteering SA&NT, *Submission 27*, [p. 1].

76 Volunteering SA&NT, *Submission 27*, [p. 3].

77 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 15.

78 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 9.

79 Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 4.

80 See, for example, Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 4; Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 5; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *6250.0 – Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, November 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/E92EA270A32AF8F1CA256953007D9AFA?OpenDocument> (accessed 16 August 2017).

81 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 2.

82 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 14.

2.58 Issues raised with existing employment services for new migrants and refugees included ineffective employment pathways, a lack of recognition of overseas professional qualifications, and inadequate cultural understanding of Australian recruitment processes.

### *Employment pathways*

2.59 Witnesses told the committee that employment assistance provided through 'jobactive' did not recognise the unique barriers that refugees and migrants face in entering the Australian labour market.<sup>83</sup>

2.60 According to the Victorian Government:

The Commonwealth's Jobactive employment model lacks targeted and comprehensive support for migrants and humanitarian entrants, leading to poor rates of success both in terms of short and long term employment. Jobactive figures indicate the retention rate for humanitarian entrants in full time employment beyond 26 weeks is less than 25%.<sup>84</sup>

2.61 Mr Asher Hirsch from RCOA noted that the job seeker classification system used by *jobactive* was ineffective in identifying gaps in skills and experience. This was exacerbated by a lack of training for *jobactive* staff in providing services for individuals from diverse backgrounds:

The [job seeker classification] system does not recognise the additional needs that people have. It might not put a high-enough emphasis on the lack of Australian experience or a high-enough emphasis on the fact that a person speaks three or four different languages but English might be their third language. So the job seeker classification instrument does not recognise their skills and then they do not get enough support when they go to the jobactive provider, because the jobactive provider is not necessarily skilled to support people who are new to Australia who are from diverse backgrounds.<sup>85</sup>

2.62 Ms Catherine Scarth from AMES Australia pointed out that the *jobactive* Star Ratings and Performance framework causes providers to be unequally focused on putting migrants into work, rather than recognising education needs that could provide long-term assistance to migrants' job prospects.<sup>86</sup> Ms Scarth explained:

...providers may be disposed to put people into work—any work—as quickly as possible, because that links to how their business is reallocated and allocated through the star system. There is quite a complex analytical framework around the stars, but you are disadvantaged by having people in education programs for a period of time. The length of time taken to find

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83 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 4.

84 Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 5.

85 Mr Asher Hirsch, Senior Policy Officer, Refugee Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 5.

86 Department of Employment, *jobactive Star Ratings and Performance*, [www.employment.gov.au/jobactive-star-ratings-and-performance](http://www.employment.gov.au/jobactive-star-ratings-and-performance) (accessed 16 August 2017).

people work goes against you, so, often, providers are looking to get people into work as quickly as possible. It kind of does not favour a refugee and migrant group who would really benefit from further education and language skills.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Recognition of overseas qualifications***

2.63 Skills accreditation also concerned new arrivals. AMES Australia highlighted its research showing skilled migrant women were highly unlikely to secure jobs in their chosen profession, describing it as a 'waste in terms of the benefit of the migration program'.<sup>88</sup>

2.64 This issue is clearly highlighted in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey*. The Survey showed that in November 2016, only one third of recent migrants who had obtained a non-school qualification before arrival had their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia. This is despite high levels of education amongst recent migrants, with 65 per cent holding a non-school qualification before arriving in Australia, and 76 per cent of these being a Bachelor degree or higher.<sup>89</sup>

2.65 As witnesses noted, greater recognition of overseas skills and qualifications is not only of benefit to the individual that is settling in Australia, but there are also 'tangible and important outcomes...for both Australian businesses and culturally and linguistically diverse communities' as well.<sup>90</sup>

2.66 The committee notes that the Productivity Commission's 2016 report on migrant intake into Australia made a similar argument, suggesting that enhanced skills recognition would assist migrants in contributing to the economy faster.<sup>91</sup>

### ***Alternative employment supports***

2.67 Due to a perceived lack of support in securing permanent employment, several witnesses revealed that migrants and refugees are seeking alternative pathways to get a job. Volunteering was put forward as a common pathway:

I job hunted for 4 months in aged care after doing my training with nothing and then got a job after 2 weeks of volunteering in aged care.<sup>92</sup>

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87 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 5.

88 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 4.

89 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6250.0 – *Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, November 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/E92EA270A32AF8F1CA256953007D9AFA?OpenDocument> (accessed 16 August 2017).

90 Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, *Submission 15*, p. 2.

91 Queensland Government *Submission 98*, p. 2.

92 Volunteering SA&NT, *Submission 27*, [p. 3].

2.68 Witnesses also referred to a number of state and territory investments that have been made to fill the gaps left by the Commonwealth *jobactive* model. This includes the Tasmanian Government's investment of \$1.2 million over four years for a 'Safe Haven Hub' to help with employment pathways and education support,<sup>93</sup> and the Victorian Government's \$6 million investment in employment programs for culturally diverse communities, including the delivery of 'Recruit Smarter'—an initiative to address unconscious bias in recruitment in both private and public sectors.<sup>94</sup>

2.69 A number of participants suggested that employment assistance should ensure that new migrants and refugees are prepared for work in the Australian context.<sup>95</sup> The Queensland Government suggested that this should include preparation for interviews and assistance in navigating the jobs market.<sup>96</sup> AMES Australia similarly suggested that simple role-play interviews and resume writing would be beneficial.<sup>97</sup>

### **Engagement with local organisations**

2.70 Throughout the inquiry, many submitters and witnesses raised the need to improve communications between governments and the multicultural affairs and settlement sector. One witness expressed particular concern that ethnic communities councils were not consulted with regarding the changes to the citizenship test:

We were disappointed to pick up the paper and find that decisions had been made on citizenship without consultation.<sup>98</sup>

2.71 Participants noted that governments need to consult with the right people, by asking who they are, who they represent, and whether or not they are truly passionate and engaged, rather than 'just power hungry people at the top of some organisation'.<sup>99</sup>

2.72 Many witnesses suggested that there should also be engagement between communities at the grassroots,<sup>100</sup> to ensure knowledge and experience is shared:

Consultation cannot just be plucking a few people who are seen to be leaders in the community; you really have to get into it at the grassroots level, because sometimes the best spokespeople for these communities are

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93 Tasmanian Government, *Submission 54*, p. 4.

94 Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 6.

95 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 5.

96 Queensland Government, *Submission 98*, p. 2.

97 Ms Catherine Scarth, Chief Executive Officer, AMES Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 4.

98 Ms Olyvia Nikou QC, Co-Chair of Cultural Committee, Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 10.

99 Ms Olyvia Nikou QC, Co-Chair of Cultural Committee, Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, pp. 15–16.

100 Dr Joshua Mark Roose, Secretary, Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, pp. 12–13; Ms Olyvia Nikou QC, Co-Chair of Cultural Committee, Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 15.

not those who are the heads of particular organisations. Really meaningful consultation, not just a tick-a-box exercise, is really important.<sup>101</sup>

2.73 Speaking from a community organisation perspective, Ms Huong Truong from the Victoria Chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, supported this, suggesting:

...what we appreciate as communities is that you come to speak to us and listen to us and be part of our meetings and our gatherings in a way that builds the cultural literacy between communities as well as of the political class.<sup>102</sup>

2.74 Witnesses were adamant that the grassroots community organisations, and the work they do, should continue to be supported by government.<sup>103</sup> They felt that policy makers often fail to recognise and draw on the wealth of knowledge retained in the sector. The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria explained:

Multicultural service providers have generational organisational knowledge through lived experience of migration and settlement which enables them to impart experience with newer communities and shorten their learning curve through mentoring and coaching opportunities. These service providers also stated that they collect a wealth of information, including on unmet need, which is a valuable resource for government planning and funding of services to impact on communities at the local level.<sup>104</sup>

## Committee view

2.75 The committee acknowledges the 2015 review of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programs, undertaken by Ernst and Young. The review found that the programs are achieving objectives and broadly meeting client needs, and are having a clear and lasting impact on client outcomes and wellbeing.<sup>105</sup>

2.76 The committee is also aware that the current Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support contracts will end in 2017 and are currently being re-designed into the new Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP).<sup>106</sup> With the new HSP proposing to take on the recommendations of previous reviews, and build upon the government's commitment to improve English, employment and education

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101 Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 10.

102 Ms Huong Truong, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 17.

103 Ms Carmel Guerra, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 31.

104 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

105 Ernst & Young, *Evaluation of the Humanitarian Settlement Services and Complex Case Support programmes*, June 2015, p. 3.

106 Department of Social Services, *Submission 10*, p. 5.

outcomes for humanitarian entrants, the committee is hopeful that new arrivals will experience improved services over the next few years.

2.77 With regard to the Adult Migrant English Program, the committee notes that as part of the 2016–17 Budget measures, the Department of Education and Training recently announced changes to the program's business model.<sup>107</sup> The changes, which commenced on 1 July 2017, seek to help clients achieve better English language outcomes in order to find sustainable employment and participate independently in society. The committee supports the following features of the new business model, as relevant to the issues discussed in this inquiry:

- providing access to a capped programme of up to 490 hours of additional tuition for clients who have not reached functional English after completing their legislative entitlement of 510 hours;
- increasing flexibility and innovation in service delivery by allowing providers to choose a curriculum that best meets their clients' needs, as well as providing access to an innovative projects fund;
- enhancing flexibility and support for clients by offering choice of tuition streams that will deliver tailored tuition to meet their needs and goals; and
- a trial of a competitive model for delivering AMEP services, encouraging service providers to become more responsive and creative in the way they engage clients.

2.78 Although these changes have the potential to enhance the current settlement services available to migrants and humanitarian entrants, the committee recommends greater coordination and symbolic support on the part of federal government, through establishing a coordination body to drive outcomes under the *National Settlement Framework*.

### **Recommendation 1**

**2.79 The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider electing a single department or government body to take an oversight role in settlement services through:**

- **coordinating and monitoring settlement services, including the new Humanitarian Settlement Program, the Adult Migrant English Program, and new arrivals' employment services;**
- **conducting regular evaluation of settlement outcomes, including analysis of the differences between outcomes for migrants compared with humanitarian entrants;**
- **establishing state and territory partnerships to drive outcomes under the *National Settlement Framework*; and**

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107 Department of Education and Training, *Revised business model for the Adult Migrant English Program*, <https://www.education.gov.au/revised-business-model-adult-migrant-english-program> (accessed 7 July 2017).

- **considering and responding to the recommendations from the Joint Standing Committee on Migration inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes when made available.**

2.80 With regard to the proposed changes to citizenship requirements, the committee agrees that new migrants and refugees should be required to demonstrate an adequate level of English language ability when applying to be a citizen. However, the committee views the level of English proficiency required in the newly introduced Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017 to be unnecessarily high.

2.81 The committee is of the view that the Australian Government should seek to lower the required standard of English proficiency from 'competent' to 'basic' to reflect a foundational level of English language required for ordinary daily activities.

2.82 The committee also suggests that the Australian Government consider the outcomes of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee inquiry into the proposed Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017 when available.

## **Recommendation 2**

**2.83 The committee recommends that the Australian Government do not proceed with their proposed changes to the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, and associated changes to the Australian citizenship test, which may severely impact on the well-being of individuals seeking citizenship in Australia.**

2.84 The committee accepts that employment pathways for new migrants and refugees are convoluted and often slow in leading to a positive outcome. They observe that there is no specific employment service available for new arrivals to Australia, and individuals are instead referred through the Commonwealth *jobactive* service or the Skills for Education and Employment program.<sup>108</sup> These programs, delivered through the Department of Employment and the Department of Human Services respectively, emphasise the need for an integrated employment assistance service that meets the unique needs of migrants and humanitarian entrants.

## **Recommendation 3**

**2.85 The committee recommends that the Department of Employment consider developing a specific migrant-stream employment service under the current *jobactive* model. The model could incorporate the following elements:**

- **a robust assessment framework that recognises overseas education and qualifications;**
- **stronger coordination with the Adult Migrant English Program;**

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108 Department of Human Services, *Help for refugees, humanitarian entrants and new arrivals*, <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/help-refugees-humanitarian-entrants-and-new-arrivals> (accessed 16 August 2017).

- **alternative assessment guidelines under the *jobactive* star rating performance framework; and**
- **comprehensive cross-cultural training, including torture and trauma training, for all staff.**

2.86 The committee further recognises that there is a need for regular consultation between government, policy makers and the settlement sector to ensure settlement services are adequately meeting the needs of clients. Therefore, the committee broadly recommends ongoing consultation with community organisations with regard to future legislative and policy changes.