Appendix 4

The Vietnamese Study

Jean I. Martin, 1 June 1976

Refer to p. 65 footnote (12)

The Vietnamese Study

Jean I. Martin, 1 June 1976

1. History of the Study

The Vietnamese study began in June 1975 when, following a request from the Prime Minister to the Minister for Labour and Immigration, I was invited to undertake a longitudinal study of the settlement of the Vietnamese refugees who were about to be brought to Australia under government sponsorship from Hong Kong. The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, which for the past ten years has supported a wide-ranging program of research on migration, agreed to sponsor the study.

When initiated, the survey was to be concerned with the 201 refugees who reached Sydney on 20 June. A further group of 323 who arrived in Brisbane on 9 August were subsequently added. The addition of eight people who had been picked up and brought to Brisbane in a Japanese freighter on 3 September brought the total number included in the survey to 532. On arrival, all were accommodated in migrant hostels, the Sydney arrivals at East Hills and the Brisbane group at Wacol.

The general scope of the study was laid down in Mr Whitlam's letter to Senator McClelland of 16 July. The research program was developed in more detail in my letters of 25 June and 12 September to Dr Peter Wilenski, Secretary of Labor and Immigration (copies of these three documents are contained in Attachments a, b and c).

Briefly, the object of the survey was to study the resettlement experiences of refugees without friends or relatives already settled in Australia. Mr Whitlam's letter to Senator McClelland attaches significance to the fact that this was 'the first time that Australia, without regard to racial origin, has offered resettlement opportunities to people displaced in Asia who had no identifiable connection with this country'. He went on:

> The study, therefore, should take account of the suspension of normal migration criteria and the grounds on which refugees were selected, those grounds being that persons selected were those least likely to be chosen by another country and most in need of the humanitarian assistance which entry into Australia would provide.

The research was to cover a five-year period. It was designed so that, by the end of that period, it would be possible to describe the various patterns of experience that had emerged among the refugees and to explain why experiences differed from one individual or family to another, and thus provide a basic understanding of the resettlement process which could assist the Australian Government in future policy decisions.

Two field workers were appointed in August: Miss Susan Sue Tin, a social worker who had been employed by the Department of Socal Security and

in that capacity had worked with the Vietnamese at East Hills since their arrival, and Mrs Kim Vu, who had come from Vietnam in 1967 to take a degree at La Trobe University. Miss Sue Tin was employed full-time, Mrs Vu part-time, as she was in process of completing a Master of Economics degree at Sydney University. The base for the field research was established at East Hills, where the manager made a room available for the study, but both Miss Sue Tin and Mrs Vu spent a number of weeks in Brisbane.

A part-time secretarial assistant, Mrs Sandra Kruck, was appointed in September to work at the Australian National University. My own role has been to assume overall responsibility for planning and supervising. I visited Wacol only once and East Hills four times. On these occasions Mrs Vu acted as my interpreter, as she did for Miss Sue Tin when necessary. I also met with the two field workers in Canberra or Sydney every few weeks.

In accordance with the research plan, Miss Sue Tin and Mrs Vu, between them, interviewed officials, clergy, teachers, members of voluntary bodies and other individuals associated with the Vietnamese, took part in the daily life of the hostels, attended special functions and meetings, and made initial personal contact with every Vietnamese family. Because of the long-term nature of the study we gave priority to securing the trust and co-operation of the Vietnamese rather than obtaining answers to a fixed set of questions.

Since its inception the study has benefitted from the competence, industry, high sense of responsibility and commitment of the staff and from the interest and co-operation of the Vietnamese refugees and of the government officials (Commonwealth and State) and non-government groups and individuals in contact with them. I should like to express my sincere appreciation of the help we received from all these sources.

Although I had been given to understand that the Liberal-Country Party Government which came into office in December would continue to support the study, and had made plans for 1976 accordingly, the immediate cessation of government support was announced publicly on 3 February, neither the Academy nor myself having been given previous notice of this decision. By that time the Academy had received $20 000 of the $30 000 allocated to it for the present financial year. The study has now been virtually wound down. Mrs Kruck and Miss Sue Tin have found other employment. Mrs Vu is continuing a very attenuated involvement in an attempt to tie up some loose ends and safeguard our long-term credibility in the eyes of the Vietnamese.

For reasons set out in the letter to you from Professor F. Gruen, the President of the Academy, on 5 February, and in my letter of 15 March, I believe that the decision to terminate the project was ill-judged. In addition, the manner of its termination caused the field workers and myself serious embarrassment and inconvenience and jeopardised the trust we had won among the Vietnamese.

Because of the substantial investment, not only of money but also of thought, time and goodwill, that has already gone into the project and the high quality and irreplaceable nature of the material collected so far, I have re-thought the research program and shall attempt to obtain funds from the Australian National University or some other source to carry out a follow-up study in 1977, when the Vietnamese will have been in Australia for two years. This will allow at least a modest fulfilment of the planned longitudinal aspect of the enquiry.

My original intention was to produce brief progress reports and statements of expenditure in the course of the study, with the analysis of findings being reserved for a final publication at the end of the five-year period. In the hope that the enquiry will continue into a second phase in 1977, I still propose to adhere to this plan and have therefore not attempted any systematic examination of data in the present report.

However, the termination of the study has led me to commend to your attention at this time a number of considerations related to the resettlement of the Vietnamese. These considerations spring from my general understanding of the process of migration and, in particular, from my experience in the survey. They are set out below.

2. Resettlement policy

Without lingering over sterile questions of definition, I should begin by saying that it seems to me useful to conceive of refugees as a special category of migrant: they share the characteristics, situations, experiences and problems of migrants in general, but they are also different from other migrants in ways that need to be acknowledged and taken into account.

Like other migrants, refugees may or may not be government-assisted. It is not within the scope of the present report to consider the relative responsibilities of government and non-government agencies in bringing refugees to this country, nor to deal with the complementary roles of government and non-government bodies in programs of resettlement. The discussion is directed simply at the Commonwealth's responsibilities for government-assisted refugees. It should be emphasised, however, that the principles outlined apply to resettlement policies in general, whether within the province of government or non-government bodies, and that the effective enactment of official policy requires the co-operation of an informed and engaged network of groups and individuals, outside government, in the wider community.

In what follows there is first an outline of the two principles of migrant settlement policy on which my approach to the situation of the Vietnamese is based. The final section of the report contains a brief discussion of five areas in which action is needed now if the resettlement of the Vietnamese is to be as humane and enriching, for both refugees and for Australian society, as it readily could be.

The first principle of a resettlement policy is that migrants should be assured of full access to the statutory services and forms of support or

assistance to which they are entitled. The range of these services and forms of support is very wide indeed, and criteria of eligibility extremely complex (see Henderson, 1975).

While living at East Hills and Wacol, the Vietnamese receive help from a number of government officials whose responsibility it is to see that they obtain the benefit of these services and other resources, and few Vietnamese seem to have missed out on their entitlements. This breathing space in the protected environment of the hostel has also given many Vietnamese the opportunity to become familiar with a number of statutory provisions, over and above those to which they themselves are currently entitled. Thus, for example, an employed man may learn of the existence of sickness benefit or a student of the tertiary allowance, and make use of this knowledge after leaving the hostel.

The absence of clear policy guidelines and lack of co-ordination, particularly between the Australian Department of Education and the Commonwealth Employment Service, have however led to confusion and frustration, and often a sense of injustice, on the part of the Vietnamese. The most common problems have arisen over the need to learn English, on the one hand, and pressure to take jobs, on the other.

There is also some evidence that the very efficiency and good will characteristic of most government officials, combined with serious problems of communication between themselves and the Vietnamese, have had the effect—not uncommon in institutional settings—of encouraging the Vietnamese to become passive, uncomprehending participants in situations where other people take the responsibility for their well-being and make decisions for them. For officials to get things done, in terms of their own jobs, the unquestioning compliance of the Vietnamese is often an advantage. Problems arise when the compliance is that and no more, officials believing that the Vietnamese know and accept what is happening to them, the Vietnamese confused and resentful because they do not.

Irrespective of whether problems of this kind develop or not, many Vietnamese are moving and will eventually move from the haven of hostel life into the community handicapped by a scrappy and inaccurate understanding of their various statutory entitlements. In some cases they expect or hope for *more* than they are ever likely to receive from Commonwealth Government sources and continue to believe that, provided they present their case persuasively enough in the right quarters, they will succeed in obtaining special consideration in, for example, matters of housing or setting themselves up on the land. Many others interpret government services of all kinds as arbitrary and unpredictable; whether aware of their entitlements or not, these people have no sense of control or autonomy in their contacts with bureaucracy and are unlikely to take effective initiatives in seeking information or help. Since Australian social policy in general, and the welfare system in particular, is organised on the *de facto* principle that—unless a crisis erupts—it is the individual's responsibility to seek out the services he wants, and makes few concessions to the timid, ill-

informed or incompetent, then, in the absence of special help, these Vietnamese are likely to miss out on entitlements from which they could gain substantial benefit.

The second principle of a resettlement policy is that programs of action should be 'developed in the light of and in response to the reality of the situation—the group structure, the attitudes, values and self-images and the access to information—of the people they are intended to serve' (Martin, 1975: 181). It is implicit in this principle that serious and genuine attention should be paid to the way migrants themselves perceive their situation and to their own expressions of their point of view, needs and interests.

Four important aspects of the situation of Vietnamese refugees in Australia are the direct result of their being refugees and not normal migrants. Four more they share with many other non-English-speaking migrant groups.

First, in the present circumstances at least, they cannot return home, nor can they (with rare exceptions) go to any other country. As the returnee rate shows, these are highly realistic options for many other migrants, and their very existence can take much of the tension out of frustrations and disappointments in the early years of settlement. For the Vietnamese, as for other refugees, the realisation that they cannot go home confirms the sense that they have lost control of their own destiny.

Second, the Vietnamese arrived here after a period of physical hardship, emotional distress and extreme anxiety about the future. They did not 'choose' to come in any true sense of the word and often did not realise the finality of the decision they had made when they accepted the offer to resettle in this country. At the time of this decision they were in no state to profit from such efforts as were made to inform them about the conditions they would encounter and they arrived encumbered with misinformation and bewildered by conflicting rumours and unanswered questions.

Some of the information given the refugees before their departure for Australia lent itself to over-optimistic interpretation, with the result that feelings of disillusionment and having been let down are common. The following extracts from a translation of a document, 'General information for the Vietamese migrating to Australia', issued to the Brisbane group before they left Singapore and Malaysia, indicate how readily a misleading picture might have been conveyed:

> If the person who acts as the breadwinner in your family has not started his employment, then you will be provided free of charge with meals and facilities associated with your accommodation. After living in this place for one week, for the following weeks you will be entitled to some small 'pocket' money, plus meals and facilities free of charge.
>
> Officers of the employment service will assist you, free of charge, to look for jobs. If you wish to learn English, is can also be arranged for you free of charge.
>
> Some people will have opportunities to be retrained to take up new types of employment if they so desire.

If it is not possible to find a suitable job for your qualifications, the government will have ways to retrain you for other types of employment and during that period you will receive a benefit for yourself and your family.

The majority of degrees conferred outside Australia normally are not recognised immediately in Australia. This point is very important for those practising medicine and dentistry and other skilled and professional occupations, for example plumbers or electricians. But the government will endeavour to help you to get jobs suitable to your abilities and experience. (Translated Kim Vu)

Third, almost all these refugees were separated from close relatives during the flight from Vietnam, and many families still feel themselves to be incomplete and deprived because some members are in Vietnam or in the United States or Canada or because their whereabouts are unknown. Anxiety over the welfare of relatives and loneliness at being apart from kin are the feelings that continue to dominate the emotional life of a considerable number of these refugees and make them apathetic about the future.

Fourth, the great majority of Vietnamese arrived in Australia withou money, clothes or personal belongings. Except for a few families who suc ceeded in bringing jewellery or other assets with them, the Vietnamese are attempting to begin from scratch in establishing themselves economically. The enormity of what this involves can only be appreciated when one recalls that even Australian families, with the benefit of housing and other capital goods accumulated over the years, often find it difficult to make ends meet in the present inflationary economic situation.

Fifth the Vietnamese as a group are quite unrepresentative of the population and society of Vietnam. Migrant populations rarely constitute a cross-section of the community they come from, but in the case of refugees selelcted on humanitarian grounds the unrepresentativeness is particularly marked. The Vietnamese have a high proportion of dependents, aged and young and sick, and a correspondingly low proportion of workers. There is a wide gulf in terms of culture, experience and aspirations between the few well-educated and the many with little education. There is also a major division in terms of ethnic origin (about 70 per cent of family heads Vietnamese, 30 per cent Chinese), together with further overlapping divisions in terms of religion (about 60 per cent of individuals Catholic, 40 per cent Buddhists and ancestor worshippers), and place of origin (more than a third of family heads from the south, the rest equally divided between the north and centre).

In a larger population people of common religion or ethnic background could be expected to generate some degree of solidarity, mutual help and formal group structure, but the numbers of the Vietnamese are so small that few if any viable sub-communities of this kind are likely to develop. In Sydney attempts have been made to form an umbrella-type body, embracing the various sections of the population. The potential size of even this group is so small as to limit severely the range of activities it could undertake, but it could have a number of useful functions. It could be a

source of emotional support to the Vietnamese as they scatter to settle among strangers. It might provide a form of organisation through which the Vietnamese can interact with other groups and take their part in community life, providing a channel for the development and expression of a welfare function and, where appropriate, act as the agency for the delivery of welfare services, as other ethnic groups are now doing (see Cox, 1975).

Sixth, while there may be some doubt about the basis for a viable and effective ethnic community, there is little doubt that the salient group for most of the Vietnamese in Australia is their family. Kin relationships are extensive and extremely complex, but it appears that the survey population consists approximately of 6 per cent single individuals, 4 per cent who are members of one-generation units (married couples or unmarried siblings), 30 per cent who are members of nuclear families (parents and children only), and 60 per cent who among their fellow-refugees have kin beyond the immediate nuclear family (the size of these kin groups varies from 3 to 34, with 50 per cent of the total survey population having 12 or more relatives within the refugee group).

To say that the family is 'salient' means a number of things. It means for one thing that in the minds of many Vietnamese the family unit still includes kin in Vietnam or other countries. It also means that members of the nuclear family (parents and children) and commonly also the larger extended family are expected to interact continuously and to share activities, responsibilities and interests, which implies also that they live in the same household or as near neighbours. The salience of the family also involves a less tangible expectation that the fortunes of the family members will rise or fall together. In economic terms, it means the pooling of resources within the nuclear family and a high degree of sharing of resources in the larger family group. A family structure of this kind is likely to prove a valuable buffer against economic hardship and in some cases the foundation for co-operative economic ventures (e.g. in family farms or businesses).

Vietnamese culture, traditions and identity constitute a seventh and crucially important aspect of the reality of their situation and behaviour in Australia. The educated Vietnamese from the cities to a large extent share common western European cultural patterns and traditions with Australians (though they also belong firmly in the Vietnamese tradition), but the less educated and those from the rural areas are probably more culturally distinct than the great majority of other post-war migrants (including other Asians, who mostly speak English and have been educated or obtained job qualifications along lines familiar in the Australian context, see Cox, 1975: 116-124).

It is not possible at this stage of our study, or in this kind of report, to elaborate on the aspects of Vietnamese culture that are most significant for understanding their behaviour in Australian conditions, but it is appropriate to emphasise that they do have customs, ways of coping with problems, attitudes and values that are strange to most Australians and which we have to appreciate if we are to understand their behaviour.

Finally, the eighth aspect of the situation of the Vietnamese is that their contacts with other people—officials, employers, voluntary workers, teachers etc.—occur to a considerable degree in a context of mutual misconceptions and ignorance. Since in these contacts the Australians are usually in control and the Vietnamese on the receiving end of other people's decisions (an imbalance that will obviously be modified to some extent in the future), it is the Vietnamese who are the more conscious of the inadequacy of communication between the two. Their failure to get their message across confirms the sense of impotence which is in some senses intrinsic to their position as refugees. In turn they try to fathom the meaning of communications *to* them and to explain the attitudes of Australians and the decisions made on their behalf when in fact they lack the background of information or experience from which to construct such meanings and explanations.

For their part, most Australians who come into contact with the Vietnamese do the best job they believe possible in the conditions of imperfect communication to which past experience with non-English-speaking migrants has inured them. Their expectations are not high and they commonly have an unquestioning faith in their own knowledge of the situation and in the success with which they are conveying information: the feedback from the Vietnamese is rarely efficient or direct enough for them to realise how often they are wrong.

The factors which allow misconceptions and mutual ignorance to develop and persist are complex and cannot be fully unravelled at this time. Some contributing influences can however be pointed out. One is that the personal records on many individual Vietnamese are incomplete and contain countless inaccuracies. Like other people caught up in war and political strife, some of these refugees have over a long number of years been involved in reconstructing their life histories in an attempt—often realistic, though not always successful—to minimise the impact of a threatening environment. This has involved them in reporting wrong ages (often to avoid military conscription), wrong information about their family connections (often to prevent sanctions being brought to bear on their kindred), and wrong or incomplete data about their past whereabouts and involvements. Partly because they were already committed to these reconstructed stories and partly in an attempt to present themselves in terms most likely to enhance their chances of being selected to come to Australia, some Vietnamese confirmed and elaborated on these inaccuracies and omissions—or even substituted new ones for old—during their period of asylum in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. Difficulties of communication and lack of documentation (regarding birth certificates and trade qualifications, for example) and the anxiety of officials to put *something* down on the record, however approximate, are further sources of error, and add to the accumulating inconsistencies. Many Vietnamese are now seriously concerned to set the record straight on matters pertinent to their lives in Australia (age, for example), but fear the outcome of admitting having given wrong information in the past. Even if they take

the risk, they are likely to be met by a blank wall: the official truth is what is down in black and white and cannot be changed except by other black and white evidence, that is, by documents which are never in fact likely to be obtainable. In this atmosphere confusions are continually confounded and many Vietnamese are locked into an inescapable process of sustaining false identities and fostering ignorance about their background and characteristics.

Another quite different factor which bedevils communication from Australians to Vietnamese is that the Vietnamese receive almost no written communications in their own language. Information is conveyed to them partly through letters or news sheets in English (a recent example is the news sheet announcing the visit to Wacol of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence), or by word of mouth, with or without the use of interpreters. Personal communications in Vietnamese are restricted mainly to information about hostel tariffs and to admonitions or threats to residents who are in arrears with board or have contravened hostel regulations in some way.

Since there are virtually no bilinguals in the hostel groups, nor more than one or two among the officials and other Australians involved with the settlement of the Vietnamese, verbal communication takes place through interpreters or by means of signs, gesture and an extremely limited use of language. Of the official interpreters employed by government departments, very few have been trained for the job, some are untrained as interpreters but competent, and some have had no training and possess a poor command of English. Australians have not always been able to judge the skills or suitability of the people they have chosen and used as interpreters; neither have they always been sensitive to the role of interpreters in selecting what is communicated, to the power which interpreters can wield or to the fact that the interpreters used have not in all cases been accepted and trusted by the Vietnamese. The existence of the Telephone Interpreter Service is unknown to most Vietnamese and, if Australians know about it, they rarely use it.

3. Areas where action is most needed

Like much previous research on migrants in Australia, our study points to some intransigent problems that result from the history and structure of Australian institutions: problems of communication and co-ordination between higher and lower levels within the one government body, between one Commonwealth or one State department and another, between Commonwealth and State departments, and between government and voluntary bodies, and among voluntary groups themselves; and problems arising from the rigidity of bureaucratic structures, their slowness to adapt to changed conditions, and the difficulty they have in responding sensitively to the needs of small minorities and the inarticulate.

In the long run, when our study is completed, we expect to be able to examine in some depth how these basic conditions have affected the settlement of the Vietnamese and we hope that this analysis will help to inform the development of a policy and program of refugee resettlement.

In the meantime, however, I wish to indicate several areas in which official action could be taken now to assist substantially in the resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees. In making these proposals I am well aware that many of the matters raised are or have been under active consideration by official and other bodies. They are put forward, not in ignorance of this attention, but in support of it, and because, at least for the Vietnamese, the issues at stake remain unresolved and full of tension. These areas are as follows.

First, the production of documents and information sheets in Vietnamese and the use of the refugees' language in individual communications to them.

Second, the pursuit of family reunions as a matter of high priority, both on grounds of humanity towards Vietnamese separated from their kin and because, in the long term, the family is likely to prove the best safeguard against emotional distress and economic hardship.

Because the Vietnamese family is an extended kin group embracing a potentially very large number of individuals, Vietnamese aspirations about family reunion are likely to appear totally unrealistic to Australians. This is not, however, a good reason for our failing to discriminate between the more urgent and the less urgent cases. It is also suggested that the present guidelines for the selection of migrants are inappropriate as a basis on which to assess the position and claims of refugees.

Third, urgent consideration of problems and prospects of employment. Overall guidelines are needed to dispel the uncertainty and clear up the countless unanswered questions which make their work future a source of serious anxiety to most Vietnamese, and to enable them to begin to re-organise their lives and see the possibility of economic stability and independence ahead. The matters at issue lie within the province of a number of departments, both Commonwealth and State. They concern principally opportunities to learn English, access to tertiary institutions and allowances, retraining, the right to unemployment benefit during the early stage of establishing a business, industry or farm, access to farming land, and the possibility of group or community farm settlements.

While official decisions on some of these questions have certainly been taken, or decisions are being made as a routine application of general policy, the Vietnamese have no overall picture of their employment situation, and neither does it appear to be the responsibility of any one authority to grasp the interdependence of these several questions of education, employment and economic independence.

Our findings so far point strongly to the fact that, unless positive initiatives are taken to help the adolescent and adult Vietnamese gain the knowledge of English and qualifications necessary for reasonably-paid and stable jobs, then many breadwinners will have broken and highly unproductive employment histories and many families will suffer periods of economic hardship and will from time to time become dependent on social services.

As with other migrant groups (see Martin, 1975), the contribution of the wife's income will be needed to keep many families economically viable; this factor adds weight to the contention that, where they wish it, adult and young women should be given equal opportunities with men for learning English and obtaining job qualifications.

It is particularly important that the Vietnamese (like other migrants) be given realistic encouragement to learn English: that is, be provided with financial support while attending English classes, irrespective of their current level of proficiency.

Fourth, the establishment of a visible and easily accessible source of information and liaison to assist both the Vietnamese and also officials and others in contact with them during the transition stage of the next year or so as they move out of the hostels into the community. By implication, persons appointed to fulfil this function would have to be bilingual.

Fifth, the appointment of social workers, assisted where necessary by trained interpreters, to provide continuing assistance, during the early stages of their settlement in the community, to Vietnamese with welfare needs and problems. Experience with other migrant groups suggests that the period during which the Vietnamese would need special help, over and above the regular community welfare services, would be at least two years from the time of their arrival (see Martin, 1975).

Sixth, the cultivation of deeper knowledge and understanding of the culture and history of the Vietnamese among Australians involved in their resettlement.

There exists in the community, besides the Vietnamese themselves, a number of academics, public servants, army personnel and others who know a great deal about the Vietnamese and their country. Many of them could be used as resource personnel in seminars or discussions bringing together groups of officials, people working in private agencies, churchmen, teachers and others.

I am aware that to act along the lines proposed would involve some degree of positive discrimination in favour of the Vietnamese and would result in their receiving in certain areas more advantageous consideration than some other immigrant groups or Australians. This appears to me to be justified on two grounds. The first applies to all refugees selected on humanitarian criteria, that is, on criteria other than their capacity for economic absorption. 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 *selection* criteria, so also does our continuing responsibility to these refugees entail some modification of normal *settlement* practices.

It is important to note that the position advocated here in relation to refugees is in line with the principles laid down by Professor R. F. Henderson in *Poverty in Australia*. The second principle on which the

Commission of Inquiry into Poverty based its analysis and recommendations was that:

> . . . every person should have equal opportunity for personal development and participation in the community. To achieve this, government intervention will be required not only to redistribute income but also to ensure a fair distribution of services and power to make decisions. Special consideration for disadvantaged groups, positive discrimination and devolution of power will be necessary (Henderson, 1975: 2).

The second justification for the action proposed is related to the general question of the evolution of social policy. Major policy changes are commonly stimulated by specific attempts to resolve specific, local problems. At the frontiers, small-scale innovations stretch the boundaries of accepted views and action to the limit (and sometimes beyond). These efforts may not be seen by anyone as experiments, but they nevertheless demonstrate new possibilities, both of *perceiving* issues and of *doing* something about them. The development of one of our major national policies concerning migrants, the Child Migrant Education Program, provides an example. After a number of abortive and isolated endeavours in all states during the fifties and sixties, several Victorian schools began in the mid-sixties seriously developing new approaches, which demonstrated both the needs of migrant children and ways of tackling those needs, and this experience became the major influence in determining the scope and thrust of the Commonwealth program inaugurated in 1970.

Change does not and cannot occur evenly, and for the community as a whole to benefit from more humane migrant settlement policies, established practices have to be re-thought and a range of ways of responding to migrant needs have to be tried and demonstrated with particular groups in particular situations. To a modest degree, the Vietnamese might appropriately be thought of as catalysts of change in settlement policies, just as their being brought to this country in the first place broke new ground in terms of intake policies. Since it so happens that there has been a more systematic attempt to observe and understand the Vietnamese since they came to Australia than has been the case with any previous migrants or refugees, we stand to learn more than is normally possible about the impact of our settlement policies on the group itself and ultimately, of course, on the larger community.

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